



Cultural Threads

A Textile
Craft
Curriculum
for Child and
Teen/Adult
Education



Copyright © 2024 by Stitch Buffalo, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of Stitch Buffalo.

All photographs by Stitch Buffalo unless otherwise noted.

Stitch Buffalo, 1215 Niagara Street, Buffalo, NY 14213

www.stitchbuffalo.org



Financial support for the development of this curriculum was provided by the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation and the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo.

Contents

Introduction

The Stitch Buffalo Story	4
--------------------------------	---

About the Curriculum

What to Expect.....	5
Skills Learned	5
Ages and Cultural Relevance.....	5

About Stitch Buffalo

Our Mission	6
Our Values.....	6

1. Hand Embroidery

What Is Hand Embroidery?	6
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	6
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	7
Curriculum Details.....	8

2. Block Printing

What Is Block Printing?.....	9
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	9
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	10
Curriculum Details.....	11

3. Pom-Pom Making

What Is Pom-Pom Making?.....	12
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	12
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	13
Curriculum Details.....	14

4. Jump Rope Making

What Is Jump Rope Making?.....	15
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	15
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	16
Curriculum Details.....	17

5. Stencil & Appliqué

What Are Stencil and Appliqué?.....	18
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	18
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	19
Curriculum Details.....	20

6. Macramé

What Is Macramé?	21
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	21
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	22
Curriculum Details.....	23

7. Weaving

What Is Weaving?	24
How Does It Reflect	
World History and Cultures?.....	24
How Is It Practiced in Western New York?	25
Curriculum Details.....	26

Additional Info

Pricing and How to Schedule.....	27
Instructors	27
References and Resources.....	27



The Stitch Buffalo Story

In 2014, Dawne Hoeg founded Stitch Buffalo as a weekly embroidery class for refugee women. Her goal was to build a supportive community among the diverse women on Buffalo's West Side.

They began by meeting in borrowed space on Lafayette Street where about thirty women gathered and stitched together. But there was much more than embroidery happening around the table. As they worked together, the participants developed their English language skills, explored personal expression, preserved cultural traditions, and developed a multicultural community of support and creativity.

These factors had a ripple effect that improved the lives of refugee women, their families, and our community as a whole. As we continue to learn every day at Stitch Buffalo, relationships are strengthened when we make things together.

In our *Cultural Threads* curriculum, Stitch Buffalo builds on this transformative power of craft to engage learners of all ages and skill levels. These activities engage the body and mind, while building creativity, resilience, cultural awareness, personal expression, and community.

We look forward to sharing the power of craft with you!



Stitch Buffalo Founder and Executive Director Dawne Hoeg. Photograph by Michael Mandolfo.



An early meeting of the weekly embroidery class for refugee women.

About the Curriculum

■ What to Expect

Stitch Buffalo is excited to share our love of textile arts and provide instruction to learners of all ages and skill levels. When you book a class from our *Cultural Threads* curriculum, a Stitch Buffalo instructor will come to your location and provide comprehensive instruction to your group. All supplies for the project are included. Participants will learn fundamental techniques while developing design and collaborative skills in a relaxed environment that encourages exploration and personal expression.

■ Skills Learned

The *Cultural Threads* curriculum by Stitch Buffalo establishes a core set of textile art projects/skills that reflect traditional techniques used in many cultures from around the world. These include:

1. Hand Embroidery
2. Block Printing
3. Pom-Pom Making
4. Jump Rope Making
5. Stencil and Appliqué
6. Macrame
7. Weaving

■ Ages and Cultural Relevance

For each of the seven core disciplines, the curriculum includes three related projects that

correspond to different ages and ability levels: beginner (elementary school); intermediate (middle school); and advanced (high school through adult). Each unit also identifies the specific skills learned as well as relevant New York State Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts.

We have also provided information on the cultural context of each project, including how people from various cultures are practicing these traditional techniques today—right here in Western New York.



About Stitch Buffalo

■ Our Mission

Stitch Buffalo is a textile art center committed to: **empowering** refugee and immigrant women through the sale of their handcrafted goods, **inspiring** creativity and inclusion through community education, and **stewarding** the environment through the re-use of textile supplies.

■ Our Values

Community Building: Bringing people together through the textile arts.

Empowerment: Maintaining a welcoming environment that fosters fair and equitable opportunity and self expression.

Trust: Forging an inclusive and trustworthy space where each individual's cultural traditions and lived experiences can be expressed and preserved.

Passion: Working, learning and celebrating together in pursuit of innovation and personal expression.

Environmental Stewardship: Reducing waste by keeping useful materials out of landfills and in the hands of creative people.

■ Cultural Threads and Our Community

This curriculum was designed to reflect the mission and values of Stitch Buffalo. Each of the projects is rooted in a practice of the refugee women artisans who participate in our programs. Additionally, almost all of the projects in the curriculum use upcycled supplies, donated for re-use by crafters and businesses in our community. While sharing our passion for creativity in the textile arts, we center each class on the values of trust and empowerment.

Photograph by Michael Mandolfo.





1. Hand Embroidery

■ What Is Hand Embroidery?

Life's necessities were originally made by hand. Over time, these day-to-day objects were made more beautiful and meaningful through the addition of surface designs and decorations. Often the method of decoration used was embroidery, the word used to describe the process of applying decorative designs onto fabric using a needle and thread.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

Just as each culture developed unique clothing and home goods that were specific to the needs of the people and the climates in which they lived, every culture also developed a vocabulary for embroidery designs and techniques. These designs represented each culture's unique lifestyles, beliefs, and surroundings.





From simple to complex, the designs were often inspired by nature, expressing each artist's style of trees, flowers, animals, people, the stars above, and the life experiences of the individual stitching the design. Hand embroidery frequently includes a mix of patterns, colors, and stitch techniques that are thoughtfully combined to achieve harmony in each finished piece.

■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Participants in *Cultural Threads* embroidery workshops will have opportunities to view a selection of embroidery samplers from the Refugee Women's Workshop artists at Stitch Buffalo. These pieces represent each artist's technical skills and personal design talent, as well as the traditions of their cultures. Work by women from Bhutan, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, India,

“Every culture developed a vocabulary of embroidery designs and techniques.”

and Peru are represented in this collection of embroidery.

By examining these works, students will gain a better understanding of how each part of the world has a style unique to that area and population. They will also gain insight into the rich cultures, traditions, skills, and values these new members of our Western New York community bring with them from their countries of origin.

Hand Embroidery Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 8–9+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Beginner

Backstitch Affirmation



Intermediate

4-inch sampler (4 stitches)



Advanced

6-inch sampler (5 stitches)



Session Duration

90 minutes. Advanced project requires two 90-minute sessions. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors

2. Block Printing

■ What Is Block Printing?

Traditional block printing is a craft that uses hand-carved wooden blocks to transfer a print to fabric, paper, or any other surface. The design on the surface will appear as a mirror-image of the carved pattern.

To make the block, a design is drawn and then carved into the wood block using a special knife. Depending on the size and detail of the design, this can be very labor-intensive. The carved block is then coated in a thin layer of specially prepared

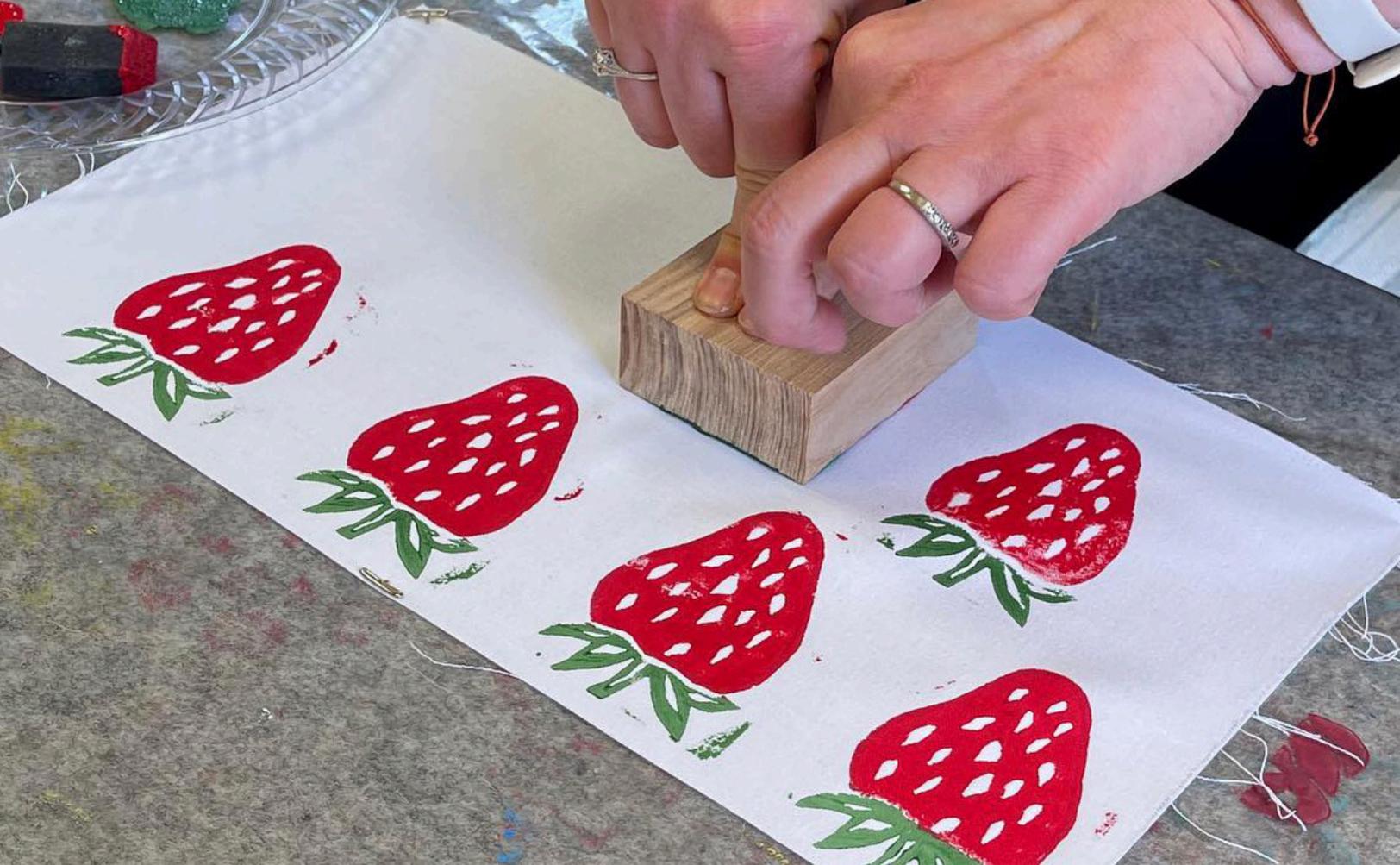
dyes or pigments and pressed onto the surface being printed.

Block printing by hand is a slow process. It is, however, capable of yielding highly artistic results, some of which are unobtainable by any other method.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

Block printing is thought to have its origins in China over 4,000 years ago. It then disseminated





throughout Asia and has been found in traditional cultures throughout the continents. It was on the Indian subcontinent where block-printed fabric may have reached its highest visual expression, with a vast array of designs and processes used to create a never-ending supply of unique, often very colorful items.

The traditional, labor-intensive processes of hand block printing became endangered in the 20th century as the textile industry shifted to machines and mass-production to meet increased demand. However, young hippies traveling from Europe to India during the 1960s and 1970s caused a resurgence of these hand-printed fabrics. Contemporary print collections were created and sought, being worn in many cultures for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, and other special celebrations.

■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Participants in *Cultural Threads* block printing workshops will have the opportunity to view a particular style of block printing called Ajrak printing. This style of block printing comes from the province of Sindh in Pakistan, and reflects the traditional styles of the Indian subcontinent. Stitch Buffalo artist Munawara Sultana has been instrumental in reigniting this ancient craft from her home country of Pakistan.

At beginner-level workshops, students will work with pre-carved stamps to create their design. Intermediate students will work with craft foam to design their own stamps. Advanced students will carve stamps using rubber blocks.

Block Printing Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 8–9+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Beginner

Pre-cut blocks, print a bandana



Intermediate

Make your own foam blocks (2–3), print a bandana



Advanced

Carve your own rubber block, pattern play considerations, bandana or cotton garment



Session Duration

90 minutes. Advanced project requires two 90-minute sessions. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors. For advanced level, students may bring their own white cotton garment to print.

3. Pom-Pom Making

■ What Is Pom-Pom Making?

Pom-poms are ornamental balls, commonly made of yarn or fabric, and used on clothing as well as in household items. They are typically constructed by assembling short strands of fabric/yarn into a thick bundle, then tying the bundle tightly at the center. This causes the ends of the strands to spread out, creating a ball shape around the tied center.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

Pom-poms have been used around the world for thousands of years. Compared with tassels and jeweled trinkets, pom-poms were an affordable embellishment that could be assembled with leftover scraps of yarn or fabric.

In South America, traditional garments of both men and women were being decorated with differently colored pom-poms as a signal of their marital status.

In the age of the Vikings (800–1066CE), the god Freyr was often depicted wearing a hat or helmet with a pom-pom on it.

In Rome, clergymen wore square-peaked caps called birettas. The color of the pom-pom that crowned each biretta signified the wearer's religious order.

In Scotland, men wore two styles of hats (called balmorals or tam o'shanter) that were both topped with pom-poms.





■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Participants in *Cultural Threads* pom-pom making workshops will learn how Nepali refugees in our community use pom-poms as the basis for their door blessings. These garlands, affixed to the tops of doorways as a way to show love and protection, are an ancient tradition that is still part of life today.

The door blessings are attached at entryways to sweep away any “bad” spirits and prevent them from entering the building. Each interior doorway is also bedecked by a door blessing, keeping areas within the home safe and “clean” of any harmful spirits.



“These garlands, affixed to the tops of doorways as a way to show love and protection, are an ancient tradition that is still part of life today.”

Pom-Pom Making Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 6+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

One Level

Select yarn, tie pom-poms, and string a garland



Session Duration

60 minutes. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors

4. Jump Rope Making

■ What Is Rope Making?

A rope is a group of yarns or other fiber strands that are twisted or braided together into a larger and stronger form. The twist of the strands in a rope not only keeps the individual strands in the rope together, but gives the rope its strength. Ropes can be used for dragging, lifting, and other tasks.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

The use of ropes for activities like attaching, carrying, lifting, and climbing dates back to prehistoric times—**perhaps as early as 40,000BCE**. The earliest "ropes" were probably naturally occurring lengths of plant fiber, such as vines, followed by the first attempts at twisting and braiding these strands together to form the first proper ropes. Because the history of rope-making is so long and varied, it's hard to know exactly where or when rope-jumping originated.

Historians believe the **ancient Egyptians** were probably the first civilization to develop special tools to make rope, around 4000 BCE. In addition to using ropes in everyday tasks, early Egyptians also used ropes for jumping, as a form of exercise and athletic training.

The **Chinese rope makers** included rope jumping as part of their New Year's celebrations

and called it the "Hundred Rope Jumping" game or "Jumping 100 Threads."

The **Aboriginal people of Australia** also have a tradition of jumping vines and bamboo for fun.

Since the 20th century, **generations of girls have spent their childhoods jumping rope**, skipping in and out in turn to songs that required some touching of the ground or turning around and around—all in the name of fun. Over 35 countries now have clubs and organizations devoted to single-rope events and Double Dutch





events. (Double Dutch is a form of the game using two long ropes moving in opposite directions.)

Jumping rope is excellent for developing strength, speed, and endurance. Two famous advocates include boxer **Muhammed Ali** and martial artist **Bruce Lee**.

■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Because of our connection to shipping, Buffalo has a long history of rope making. On Buffalo’s West Side, streets named “Cordage Alley” and

“Pooley Place” still exist today. These mark the location of the Pooley & Butterfield rope factory, founded in the 1850s, where workers made 3 tons of rope every day!

“Because of our connection to shipping, Buffalo has a long history of rope making.”

Jump Rope Making Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 6+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

One Level

Select yarn colors, use provided equipment to twist jump ropes.



Session Duration

60 minutes. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors

5. Stencil & Appliqué

■ What Are Stenciling and Appliqué?

Stenciling and appliqué are two different techniques used to apply a design to a surface, such as a piece of fabric:

- **Stenciling** is a technique for reproducing designs by passing pigment over openings cut in paper, metal, or plastic and onto the surface to be decorated. The open areas allow the pigment to reach only some parts of the surface, which creates the design.
- **Appliqué** is a technique for creating designs and patterns on fabric by overlaying smaller pieces or patches of fabric. These are attached either by hand stitching or machine sewing.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

Stenciling. Images of human hands made by spraying pigment over a hand held against a wall (as a stencil) are found from over **35,000 years ago** in Asia and Europe, and later prehistoric dates in other continents. Later, stencils were used to color cloth. In **Japan**, for example, a stenciling technique called “Katazome” was developed as an inexpensive and faster alternative to creating highly-patterned woven fabrics. The Katazome stenciling technique was used on silk clothing beginning in the 1600s and became its own highly developed art form.

Appliqué. Appliqué dates back to a humble beginning when fabric scraps were used as a way to patch holes or strengthen worn areas in garments and household items. Soon, however, it developed into an artistic technique of its own and can be seen in artifacts from around the world.

Archaeologists have discovered ancient examples of appliquéed leather in **Egypt** (980 BCE), and leather and felt appliquéed have been found on carpets, wall hangings, and saddle covers in 4th century BCE tombs in **Siberia and Mongolia**. Appliquéed cloth is also an important art form in **Benin, West Africa**, where it has been a tradition since the 18th century.

There are folk traditions to embellish garments with leather appliqué in **Scandinavia, Russia, and Eastern Europe**. Leather appliqué is also found in **Pakistan and Morocco** where it is used to decorate men's clothing and leather slippers.

Felt appliqué is used on women's aprons in **Eastern Europe**. It is also used among the nomadic tribes of **Central Asia** to decorate yurts, floor covering, and bags. Reverse appliqué is used on the Mola textiles of **South America**.



■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Many of the artisans in the Refugee Women’s Workshop at Stitch Buffalo bring along with them the techniques of appliqué as part of their cultures’ embroidery practices. Participants in *Cultural Threads* stenciling and appliqué workshops will be able to study examples of this artisan-made work as inspiration for personal projects.

Both stenciling and appliqué are used as core techniques in Stitch Buffalo’s ongoing Stitches Stories program. This program focuses on supporting individual storytelling through textile collage. Frequently, these stories center on participants’ lived experiences of social justice issues but they may also focus on personal responses to a book or other work of art.

Stencil & Appliqué Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 14+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

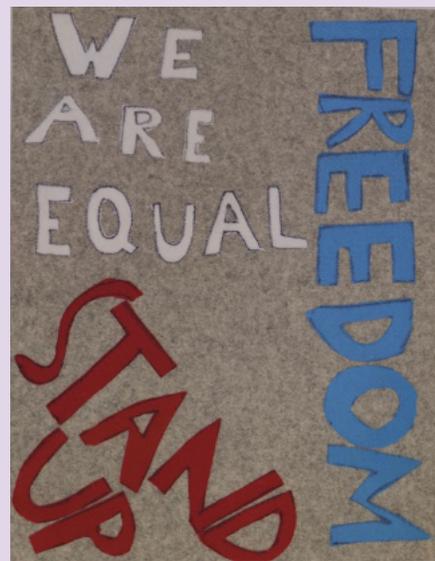
8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

One Level

Create a storytelling textile collage using stencil and appliqué techniques.



Session Duration

60 minutes. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors

6. Macramé

■ What Is Macramé?

Macrame is an ancient crafting technique of knots and cords to make various forms and textures. The materials used in macramé include cords made of cotton, linen, leather, and yarn. Belts, hanging plant holders, decorative wall hangings, and jewelry are often created with macramé techniques. Most friendship bracelets exchanged among schoolchildren and teens are also created using this method. Macrame is simple in that it requires no tools beyond your hands and the ability to make each knot—yet when practiced by skilled artisans, it produces works of incredible beauty.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

One of the earliest recorded uses of macramé-style knots appears in the stone carvings of the **Babylonians and Assyrians**, which depict macramé trims adorning the clothing of the time. Traditional **Arab** weavers used the technique to create decorative fringes on hand-loomed fabrics by knotting the excess thread along the edges of carpets, towels, and veils. The Muslim Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (modern day **Spain and Portugal**) brought macramé to Europe around 715CE.

In the late 1600s, it was introduced in **England** where Queen Mary taught it to her companions.

“One of the earliest recorded uses of macramé-style knots appears in the stone carvings of the Babylonians . . .”

In the 1800s, the Victorian Era, macramé became highly fashionable on table linens, curtains, bedspreads, draperies and clothing. While it was a widely favored hobby for women at the time, **British and American sailors** also made macramé objects to occupy themselves on long sea expeditions. When they landed, they sold or bartered the macramé hammocks, decorative knife handles, and belts created during the journey.

Macramé's popularity resurged in the 1970s for making wall hangings, clothing, accessories, plant hangers, and jewelry—particularly in **America**. By the early 1980s, macramé again began to fall out of fashion, only to be revived by millennials in the mid-2010s



■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Participants in *Cultural Threads* macramé workshops will be able to study exceptional examples of macramé jewelry made by Stitch Buffalo artisan Anhar Ibrahim.

Anhar came to the U.S. from Egypt in 2015. As a working professional with two advanced degrees, Anhar had also remained creative in the textile arts throughout her life. When she arrived in Buffalo, her daughter brought her into contact with Stitch Buffalo where she was offered the opportunity to expand on her interest in

embroidery and encouraged to explore another art form she had learned from her friends long ago in middle school: the art of macramé.

Encouraged and empowered by the sale of her work, Anhar began to focus on macramé jewelry items. Her exceptional talent was showcased in her sophisticated designs. Her unique work is inspired by her past and flavored by things she currently observes—all of which are interpreted through her vivid imagination. Anhar has also become a popular teacher at Stitch Buffalo, passing on her macrame skills to eager learners throughout the Western New York community.

Macramé Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 8–9+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Beginner

Chunky bracelet



Intermediate

Bracelet



Advanced

Bracelet with beads



Session Duration

90 minutes. Advanced project requires two 90-minute sessions. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors

7. Weaving

■ What Is Weaving?

Weaving is one of the primary methods of textile production. It involves interlacing two distinct sets of threads at right angles. The vertical threads are called the warp and the horizontal threads are called the weft. It can be done by hand or with machines called looms. The different ways in which these threads are interlaced affects the look and feel of the cloth.

■ How Does It Reflect World History and Cultures?

Weaving is one of the oldest textile crafts and traces back to **Neolithic times**, approximately 12,000 years ago. The basic principles of weaving were probably first applied to interlace branches and twigs to create fences and shelters for protection. Weaving to create textiles was known in all the great civilizations, but no clear point of origination has been established.

In each culture, weavers developed methods of using the fibers in their area. For example, **Chinese weavers** often worked with silk, weavers in the **South America Andes** favored wool or alpaca fibers, and **North African** artisans wove primarily with cotton. Textile weaving, using cotton dyed with pigments, was also a dominant craft among pre-contact tribes of the **American southwest**. Every culture developed its own unique weaving designs and techniques.

Weaving cloth by hand on a simple loom was a household activity, practiced by both men and women, for thousands of years until the **Industrial Revolution** (1760-1815). Then, the introduction of mechanized power looms dramatically changed the role of the weaver. With this came a growth in opportunity for women to work within textile factories. However, their work was perceived to have a lower social and economic value than work done by their male counterparts engaged in factory work. The conditions were frequently harsh and unsafe, leading textile workers to be among the founders of modern labor movements. Today, most textile needs are met by a large and complex industry in which many workers around the world continue to face difficult and dangerous conditions.



Photograph by Michael Mandolfo.

■ How Is It Practiced in Western New York?

Many refugees from Burma and Bhutan bring with them the rich cultural tradition of back-strap loom weaving, a vibrant art form that has been handed down from generation to generation. Usually set up outdoors, one end of the back-strap loom is affixed to a rod and looped around a tree or post. The opposite end is attached to another rod with straps that wrap around the weaver's back. Sitting on the ground, she leans back to provide the tension necessary to weave.

For many refugee women, weaving is a way to express their culture and maintain vital connections to now-fractured families. Sadly, weavers are often forced to leave their looms behind when they depart the camps. With a grant from the Simple Gifts Foundation, Stitch Buffalo created a unique system to adapt looms for portable indoor use—allowing women to weave once again.

We are pleased to support this sharing of art and culture (among native residents as well as with other ethnic groups), which research has demonstrated leads to a strong sense of self-identity and helps refugee groups survive and prosper in their new country.

Participants in *Cultural Threads* weaving workshops will be able to study examples of the weavings created by these local artisans and watch videos of them at work to gain a better understanding of the complexity of these processes.



Weaving Curriculum

Ages

Appropriate for ages 8–9+

Skills Learned

- Hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Following verbal directions
- Measurement
- Spatial awareness
- Aesthetic decision-making
- Developing concentration and patience

Relevant NYS Anchor Standards for the Visual Arts

Creating:

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
3. Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

Presenting:

5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Responding:

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

Connecting:

11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Beginner

Mini wall hanging



Intermediate

Zipper pouch



Advanced

Small pillow



Session Duration

90 minutes. Advanced project requires two 90-minute sessions. Kits containing all crafting supplies are included in cost.

Additional Classroom Supplies Needed

Scissors



Pricing and Capacity

We offer flat-rate pricing for each project/session with a class size of up to 15 participants. Please visit www.stitchbuffalo.org/cultural-threads for current rates. Larger groups and extended class times can be accommodated for an additional fee. We are happy to work with you to determine the best strategy for your group and budget. To get a quote or book a session, please contact Stitch Buffalo Executive Director Dawne Hoeg at dawneh@stitchbuffalo.org.

Instructors

Lead instructor Dawne Hoeg is the founder and Executive Director of Stitch Buffalo. She is an experienced instructor who served as the handwork teacher at the Aurora Waldorf School and taught in the Textile and Fiber Arts Design Department at Buffalo State College. For larger classes, she is assisted by skilled volunteers with strong teaching experience and artists from the Refugee Women's Workshop.

Additional instructors include local textile artists with strong backgrounds in arts education for all ages. If your institution or organization requires specific credentials, please let us know.

Additional Resources

We have compiled a directory of resources with supplemental information on each of the core skills in this curriculum. These may help you to engage participants or structure additional content in preparation for the hands-on workshop. These resources are available at: www.stitchbuffalo.org/ct-resources.



Store/Studio

1215 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14213

Contact

Dawne Hoeg
Executive Director
(716) 495-9642
dawneh@stitchbuffalo.org

Donate, Shop, Volunteer

www.stitchbuffalo.org

Follow Us

Instagram: @stitchbuffalo
Facebook.com/stitchbuffalo
YouTube: @stitchbuffalo
TikTok: @stitchbuffalo_ny