

**ART AT HOME**  
**KYLIE STILLMAN: PAPER SEWING**



## **KYLIE STILLMAN**

“With a career spanning over 20 years my practice explores an interest in using everyday materials and hand crafted methods to produce sculptural work. This interest is directly connected to my background in domestic craft and having learnt to sew and construct garments from a young age, influenced by the memory of laying fabric flat and working with a pattern to construct something that forms to the contours of the body has informed a practice that explores what it means to show three-dimensional forms in a two dimensional plane.

For this activity I introduce a simple technique creating ‘drawings with thread’ that can be used to made small artworks or gift cards. This same technique was used to create a large scale artwork ‘Borrowed Landscape’ 2017 made from over 10,000 individual stitches.”

Image: Kylie Stillman ‘Borrowed Landscape’ 2017

Hand-stitched thread on paper

76 x 56 cm

Courtesy of the artist, collection of Town Hall Gallery, Hawthorn

### **Curriculum links**

Level 5 – 6: Visual Art

Explore and Express Ideas

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Explore visual arts practices as inspiration to create artworks that express different ideas and beliefs (VCAVAE029)

Visual Arts Practices

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Select and apply visual conventions, materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to different art forms when making artworks (VCAVAV030)

### **THINK BEFORE YOU MAKE**

- Read the instructions below carefully and [watch the instructional video](#).
- Spend time thinking about which shape you would like to use from the template. Which shape did you choose, and why?
- Take some time to think about what card you will use for your paper sewing. Will you choose plain or patterned card?

## **ACTIVITY**

Explore Kylie's practice and spend some time drawing with thread in this card-making activity developed by the artist.

### **Tools**

Pencil  
Eraser  
Scissors  
Push pin  
A4 sized sheet of packing foam or dry sponge for padding

### **Materials**

Sewing thread  
Sewing needle  
A5 heavy weight paper folded in half to make a card

### **Instructions**

1. For this activity you will be working with geometric forms, see the sample template that includes shapes, animals and characters. Start with the butterfly pattern to practice the technique.
2. Using a pencil draw the shape on front of the card, remember your drawing is made from straight lines, mark with a dot where each line connects as this is where the needle will pass through the card.
3. Open the card and lay it flat with the image facing up. Take a sheet of packing foam, fold to form several padded layers and place it underneath the card. This will allow you to make pilot holes in the paper for the needle to pass through.
4. Using the push pin make a puncture hole at each point where the lines connect. Check all the dots have been punctured then remove your pencil marks with an eraser.
5. Cut a length of thread approximately 100cm long. Then double thread your sewing needle by passing the thread through the needle eye and pull it through until your two thread ends meet up. Tie the ends together with a knot to the thread coming off the needle.
6. Now we start sewing by choosing one of the puncture holes and passing the needle through it.

Note: It is important to start from the underside of the card to hide the knot. This is the 'messy' side of the card. Now stitch in and out through each puncture hole until you have made all the 'lines' from your original drawing.

You may need to refer back to the image from the template as you no longer have the pencil marks to guide you. Many stitches may need to pass through puncture holes several times and they may be connection points for more than one line.

Work carefully, gently pulling the entire length of the thread through each hole, making firm stitches trying to avoid twisting the thread or tearing the paper by pulling too tight.

If your thread gets too short cut the thread and tie it off on the underside and start a new double thread.

7. Once you have completed all your stitches cut the thread and tie it off on the underside.

Note: You will notice there is a neat side (that looks like your drawing) and a messy side (that does not look like your drawing and shows the knots). You can choose to over this messy side by pasting a small piece of card or paper to the inside of the card, or you may like leaving the messy side visible as it shows the care and work that has gone into making the artwork.

Variations: Now you feel confident with the process consider some variations on your card making. Choose a patterned paper stock or create a collage from magazines or wrapping paper then create a stitched drawing over the top. Use two different shades of thread for different areas of your drawing or start to use more complex drawings, or try stitching a name or an word like 'love' 'happy' or 'party'.

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- Kylie's activity uses thread to mark lines onto paper, creating a picture. What other unusual materials could you use to mark lines onto paper? How would this change the way your artwork looks?
- Materials found in everyday life are often the artist's preferred materials to work with. Look around at your house. Are there materials at your house that you could use to make an artwork?
- How would the meaning of an artwork change if you used expensive materials rather than cheaper, more available materials?