



Stitching Rites: Colcha Embroidery along the Northern Rio Grande

Suzanne P. MacAulay

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In the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado, there thrives a folk tradition with links to both the past and future.

Colcha embroidery is a traditional Spanish colonial style of textile, bed covering, or wall hanging dating from the early nineteenth century. In the first book to consider this craft, Suzanne MacAulay provides a detailed account of this folk art tradition that is both old and constantly renewing itself, presenting a sensitive portrayal of artists and the contexts in which they live and work.

Stitching Rites reveals how art, history, and memory interweave in a rich creative web. Based on archival research and on extensive interviews with artists, the book reveals the personal motivations of the embroiderers and their relationships with their work, with each other, with their community, and with outsiders. Through stitchers like Josephine Lobato and the San Luis Ladies Sewing Circle, MacAulay shows how colcha creation is bound up in a perpetual round of cultural commentary and self-reflection.

MacAulay includes detailed descriptions of changes in stitching techniques, themes, and styles to show the impact of a wide range of outside influences on the lives of the artists and on the art form. She also provides a discussion of New Mexican Carson colchas and their place in the collector market. By focusing on the individual creative act, she shows how colcha embroidery is used to record how a stitcher's memories of her life are intertwined with the history of her community.

Through this picture of a community of embroiderers, MacAulay helps us to understand their stitching rites and sheds new light on the relationship between Hispanic and Anglo cultures.

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