

# ROMANTIC SLOW STITCHING: MAKE A VINTAGE JOURNAL COVER

by Kerry Karram



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## Finished Size: variable

In the recent Summer issue, I shared with you the joys of slowing down and becoming more mindful of the process as we create. That article was written prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. I now feel like it was almost a foreshadowing of things to come. Our world became somewhat of a dangerous place and we were instructed to stay home.

I'm at loss for words for how to start my second segment. To say that the world has changed in the last little while is an understatement. What we have been experiencing is beyond imagination for most. In our family, we have grieved the loss of a senior in a care home, encouraged others through illness and yet others through the loss of their businesses. We are out each night at 7 pm cheering in gratitude for our dedicated health care providers and frontline workers, which are numerous in our family. My outlook on life has been forever altered.

Keeping a journal can help us deal with overwhelming emotions, helping to manage stress and anxiety, and improve mental health. My hope is that in this project you will remember and honour the women who created exquisite doilies, crafted beautiful lace and trimmed linens with delicate crochet. I hope you will revisit their lives as you place, layer and stitch, and that you find connections to their traditions. Let's create a journal cover together, one bound in history for you to record your own memories – a place to write, to sketch and to contemplate.



Playtime! Slow stitching is very tactile; there are memories in every touch.

During your 'stay-at-home' time, did you delve into long forgotten linen drawers? Did this warm your heart and stir memories? Do you have a collection of wonderful linens, lace and hankies that you can cut and layer for our project? I'll let you in on a secret – I not only found more lovely handmade laces and doilies, I found my grandmother's pearls! One of her deep beliefs was, "Love's greatest gift is remembrance". I encourage you to look at vintage textiles in a new repurposed and 'upcycled' way.



### GETTING STARTED

So, lets begin. Gather your collection. Find an anchor piece, one with the colours you will be using in your cover that is large enough to wrap your journal. I am fortunate to have vintage drapes with lovely cream and rose colours that will support a mixture of ivories, creams and beiges. I also have another set of drapes in greys and blacks which look beautiful with white linens and laces.

Next you will need a selection of vintage fabrics and linens, lace and delicate silk hankies. Take the time to reflect on what is being created and how the lace and fabric pieces relate to each other. When assembling your creation think about having a focal point and unity – the flow and balance of colours. Explore your composition. >



Yo-yos will be made from a silk boudoir tablecloth; pearls add dimension and an elegant touch.



## METHOD

Lay your anchor piece on the table right side facing you. Begin to layer and arrange your collection. Take a deep breath and cut (not the anchor piece!). Yes, it's okay to cut into silk hankies or round doilies. You are giving these pieces a new life, a new purpose. Keep layering, clustering and moving the various fabrics and textures. You may choose to weave and separate wide laces. I often take photos with my phone as I create.

Because we are making a journal cover, you will want to ensure that the pieces you use are suitable for handling. To do this, we will use good old-fashioned embroidery (you may also wish to stitch by machine). Some crochet might be best with a touch of fray check along the edges, or you can layer a more substantial piece overlapping the edges. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Just remember to touch, feel and enjoy the process.

It won't take long before you are totally engrossed in the technique as you tell a cherished story through your vintage linens. There have been many a night when dinner was, well, let's just say there was no dinner. I was completely absorbed in what I was doing. This is the time to use what you have. (If you really need to have a piece of your drapes, you can cut some of the hem...and yes, I've done this, too!)

Once your collage is layered (and sure, it may sound corny) and it speaks to you, take a photo that you can refer back to as you work.

Now it's time to stitch. You can use any number of threads and stitching designs – lovely silk and velvet threads, cotton floss, running stitches, meandering vines, lazy daisy stitches and French knots. Lots and lots of French knots. You may decide to add a sheer overlay and use your machine to add decorative stitches. As with layering, there is no right or wrong way, there is only your way. Do what makes you feel happy.



Stitch with embroidery stitches, or by machine. If you have fancy threads in your sewing box, why not use them?

## COVER THE JOURNAL

Measure your journal; front, back and spine will determine the width. The height of your journal will be the measurement for the height of your anchor piece, the area where you will layer and collage.

My journal measures as follows: front 7½", back 7½", spine 1", for a combined width of 16". The height measures 9¾"; add ½". So, for this project, my anchor piece – the area that I will embellish with vintage linens and lace – will measure 16" wide x 10¼" high.

Add 15" to the width of your anchor piece; 7½" extensions on each side will become the inside pockets that the journal covers slide into. Feel free to embellish them with vintage fabrics, piece them or embroider your name on these panels.

Cut your lining fabric so that it is a ½" narrower than the width of your anchor piece; in my case 15½". Place the right side of your anchor piece face down on the table and centre the lining on top of it, right side facing you; the lining will be ¼" narrower on both the left and the right edges.

Measure ¼" from the left edge of the anchor piece and finger press. Measure ¼" from the right edge of the anchor piece and finger press. Fold over the ¼" anchor piece on both the left and right sides; these folds will overlap the lining, covering its raw edge. Topstitch to secure the lining to the anchor piece.

## MAKE THE INSIDE POCKETS

You now have your anchor piece attached to the lining on both ends; the top and bottom of the cover are not stitched. Lay the cover on the table with the lining facing up. Finger press a fold 7" from the left edge, folding the edge towards the centre of the cover; pin in place. Repeat for the right side. Topstitch along the top and bottom edge using a ¼" seam allowance.



Use smaller pieces of vintage fabrics to piece the pocket. Why not embroider your initials or the date inside?

Topstitch ¼" across the top and bottom edges to join your collage anchor piece and the fabric lining. This will secure the inside pockets.



You have the option to topstitch along the top and bottom edges and leave them raw, or bind them using your favourite binding technique. If you choose bind them, I cut my strips 2"-2½" wide.



A slow stitched journal cover is as individual as you are.

Mark Lipinski first introduced me to the slow stitching movement. He says, "During slow, conscious stitching, recognize and be grateful for the process, materials, and tools you are working with. Gratitude is just one of the ways to manifest increased creativity in your life while creating beautiful, well-crafted art for the world." Sometimes it takes looking back so that we can see the future.

**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:** In Kerry's *Slow Time with Slow Stitching* article in the Summer 2020 issue we neglected to credit the work of students Susan Hughs (page 64) and Kathy Alexander (page 65) from a workshop that Kerry taught with Carol Smith and Wendy McNaughton. We regret the oversight.

## ADDITIONAL INSPIRATION

There are no limits to what you can create when designing a slow stitching project. ✨



ABOVE TOP Black and white with a touch of grey create an impact. CREDIT: TRACEY DAVIDSON

ABOVE LEFT Starting with an upcycled bark cloth drape, Wendy McNaughton added yo-yos and buttons to her pillow covering, then embellished it with running stitches in contrasting thread.

ABOVE RIGHT Layers of textures, stitched together with ribbons and cord; buttons add interest. CREDIT: CAROL SMITH



Kerry Karam and her daughter Mikaela operate Wool Penny Rug Supplies in North Vancouver. Visit them at [woolpennyrugsupplies.com](http://woolpennyrugsupplies.com)