

HOOKING

A Historical comment --

Hooking is an old needlecraft, probably a little younger than weaving. Certainly its method is simple: nothing but drawing a loop of thread or material through the mesh of a strong but coarsely woven fabric. This is done with the most primitive tool, the shepherd's crook, which even Stone Age men carried to seize things beyond arm's reach and which we now use, in tiny size, to make the American hooked tapestry.

Underneath the stretched burlap or canvas, the fingers of your left hand lightly guide the strand to be looped up by the hook in your right hand, you are repeating an action older than history. For thousands of years, sea-faring men and home keeping women did this to make mufflers and wraps and bedcovers. But hooked rugs and wall-hangings are new. Colonial women invented them in America, not two centuries ago.

Twice, since then, this art has been neglected, almost lost. However today, with an intense interest in all expressions of our culture, hooking has become one of the liveliest arts. Women are thronging to classes in hooking; curators are bringing out rare treasures of earlier hook work; librarians are meeting an increasing demand for research into the materials and implements of hooking.

This revival of an almost lost art is a bit of the renaissance that Americans began during the years between the wars, 1919-1939, and are now continuing vigorously. Synagogue women have found this medium a most challenging one in the making of Synagogue Appurtenances. Wall hangings in hooking or combination of hooking and needlepoint, crewel, or embroidery are magnificently attractive.

The revival of hooking is part of the revival of personal independence and self-reliance, of individual self-expression. With the little hook in your hand, you make your design express you, yourself. Your design becomes the size you want, in the colors you have chosen, and in the motif that most pleases you. You can do what you want, and, yes, **YOU CAN DO IT!** You can do it better than the peasant woman in Isfahan can...and she gets paid for it!

You will not do it quickly, for hooking is not hurry up, slapdash work. It requires precision and time (even with the newest hooks). You will be pleased with the patient persistence you did not know you had, and you will enjoy the tranquillity of leisurely creation.

You can, of course, buy a stamped pattern, but think of the deep satisfaction when you draw (by chart) your own picture of the Western Wall or a Rabbi, or use the sketches of the months in our Nes Hachodesh packet of the Convention banners in your own variation.

HOW TO HOOK

Canvas

A large-hole canvas

Hook

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There are two types

- 1) Hand hook resembles a crochet hook set in a wooden handle. They vary in size and lengths. Select one best fitted to your hand. With hand hooks you work from the front. This allows a great deal of versatility in designs, length of loops and choice of materials.
- 2) Automatic hook is worked from the back and works up faster. These are sold with manufacturer's instructions.

Planning Colors

Most designs are adaptable to varying color schemes. Choose color combinations that are most pleasing to you. Color your pattern before you start the wall-hanging. This gives you a more secure feeling as to the effect. You may, of course, change as you go along, if you desire.

Frames

Some people prefer to work without a frame if they are using a hand hook. When an automatic hook is used, it is necessary to use a frame because the backing must be taut. A frame can be made from strips of lumber (1"x2") or may be purchased in exactly the size you require. To use a frame comfortably, place it across the backs of chairs so that it will be the correct height when you are working in a seated position.

Transferring a Design

If the design is graphed, enlarge it by taking a piece of wrapping paper the size of your completed piece, and ruling the paper into the same number of equal squares. Copy design on the wrapping paper, square by square. If the design is not on a graph, you can use tracing graph paper available at art stores. Place this over your design and draw an outline of the design directly on the tracing paper. To transfer the design from the paper to the canvas, hold the paper against a window, with the design side against the floss. Duplicate the outline of the design on the side of the paper towards you, using heavy wax crayon or china-marking pencil. Place the paper, crayon side down on the canvas and iron with a hot iron. Remove paper and trace the faint impression made with a crayon or a felt tip brush, if you have a knack for freehand drawing, you can draw the design right on your canvas, using the chart as a guide. Much of the charm of a wall-hanging comes from the asymmetrical freedom of a pattern.

Mark off the outside of your design and leave a hem all around. Follow the lengthwise and crosswise threads if you are using a fabric, and use a ruler in order to make certain the edges are straight.

Hooking

Hooking is the process of pulling loops of yarn, usually wool or material, (although other yarns such as rya may be used) through a canvas. Pull all ends to the front and clip even. Practice until you can hold the yarn in your left hand, taut but loose enough to cover the canvas. In all hooking, first hook the outline of the design, then fill in. Work the background last.

Finishing

Dampen the top of the canvas with a damp cloth, place design down on several layers of newspaper covered with brown paper and press down on it. Let dry.

The quiet self reliance with which generations of our ancestors created by hooking is expressed in their art. Most of our American ancestors created in the "Grandma Moses" style or that "Shalom of Safed". This quality of personal character is the source of everlasting good in both our world. Your wall-hanging or rug, whichever you choose, will show this essential quality. Trust yourself and do your best!

For reference and inspiration, we refer you to---

Judaic Stitched - Dorothy Lotstein

The Art of Judaic Needlework - Ita Bar

The Animal Kingdom - Erica Wilson (for magnificent animals)

Creative Handicrafts Packet #1 - Shalom Wall Hanging

Creative handicrafts Packet #2 Patterns and instructions for Synagogue Appurtenances; Torah Mantle, Parokhet and Kapporet, ktubah and Pulpit Accessories

Creative Handicrafts Packet #4 - Instructions and suggestions illustrating the seven species of Bikkurim and flowers of Israel make magnificent pillows)

Creative Handicrafts Packet #5 - Sketches and suggestions for 28 Nes Hahodesh designs

Enjoy! Enjoy! Enjoy!

Shuttle hooker

Latch Hooking

Easy — Attractive

People all over the country are latch hooking, and the growth of this medium is endless. The Hobby/Craft and Needlecraft Industries realize that latch hooking is not a "new, hot trend" but an art that is here to stay. It is, possibly, the fastest growing craft. Although it goes back to the last century, the revival of the art is due

to the many new designs and products that have been developed over the past decade. Furthermore, the inception of dimensional treatments has opened up an endless potential of new products.

Thus, the latch hook medium is like a new-born child. It has been revitalized, and developed so that, at the Present time, it is beginning to reach an all- time high,

One of the newer developments is the bulky pre-cut Latch Rook Rug Yarn. This new yarn has the unusual characteristic of bulking up after it is hooked. When the creative wall-hanging rug is completed, it looks and feels like broadloom. The yarn is top quality Aurilan fiber from Monsanto. It is moth proof, non-allergic, colorfast, machine washable and comes in 36 colors. The yarn is sold pre-cut and it is packaged in a pilfer-proof poly bag of 320 pieces to the package.

Traditionally, hook latch items (pre-stamped) were sold in specialty yarn shops or in yarn departments of department stores. However, in recent years, latch hook known as a Soft Craft has crossed over into craft stores.

Kids Can Make a Point Too!

In the past, Latch Hooking was thought of as a woman's or old age craft clue to its ease and use in home decor. Today, with the different size canvases and the colors available, and with its intricate stitches, it has no limitations as to those who might be involved in this craft form, of either sex or age.

The tool used gives a man the feeling of masculinity as he thinks of it as similar to a hammer and not to a sewing needle. The speed at which a project is completed is deceptive compared to the beauty of the product and this appeals to all ages. More recently, there has been a growing demand for a new area of latch hooking: Shapes. One can see the canvas and design a 3 dimensional shape (animals, boats, cars) which may then be stuffed to make pillows, playtoys or may even be appliqued on a large wall-hanging. For children, the more traditional canvas is best. Any familiar design becomes of great interest to young people eight years and up. There are kits that contain a plastic base with a number of circular cut-out, designed to hold the pre-cut yarn. A special book of plastic is included. In this kit, a Fashion Skein Loader, makes it simple for a young person, to stop and start his/her work without having to reorganize each time s/he desires. With the improvement in advanced yarn technology, young people should make latch hooking their favorite handicraft.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LATCH HOOK

Materials

Latch hook canvas

Latch hook

Pre-cut yarn (wool, Persian)

To Prepare Canvas

Place masking tape along all the raw edge of canvas to prevent unravelling.

To Hook

1. Select correct color yarn and fold evenly under shank of hook, below bend. Keep in place with index finger.
2. Insert hook into first hole and up through hole directly above, until latch is through, in an open position.
3. Hold both ends of yarn with free hand, bringing back over, between hook and latch.
4. Bring hook back slowly until latch closes.
5. Let go of loose ends, continue to draw back until ends pass completely through looped yarn to form knot.
6. Gently pull on ends to tighten knot. Repeat in next hole.

To Begin Hooking

Begin hooking with correct color at lower right corner of canvas. Hook each mesh along same row, working from right to left, until you reach outline. Change colors of strands, where necessary, to correspond with your drawing. Continue to begin next rows at right again and work across. **NEVER WORK DESIGN FIRST AND THEN FILL IN BACKGROUND.** Always work canvas from bottom to top, keeping the finished work nearest you, so that your hook will not run into completed knots.

Finishing

1. Clip any uneven strands for an even pile.

2. Trim unknotted canvas along edge so that a 1" hem remains. Fold under one inch side sections and baste or backstitch down to back of completed canvas. Fold end sections under one inch and baste down.

Cleaning

For best results, latch hook creations should be dry cleaned.

TROUBLE SHOOTING FOR STITCHING

Loops appear on wrong side:

Are you lifting the needle off fabric as you stitch?

Is fabric too loose in the hoop?

2. Uneven depth of loops on right side:

Are you punching down until the needle stops itself?

Are you holding the needle at more of an angle to the fabric than shown in diagram 4?

Is the fabric too loose in the hoop?

3. Gaps between loops on right side:

Your stitches are not small enough. *Keep practicing.*

4. No stitches at all or messy stitches

Are you obstructing the feeder thread?

Are you lifting the needle off the fabric as you stitch?

If you are re-working an area, did you forget to straighten the fabric threads or cut off used thread?

Are you holding the needle correctly and with the open side facing the direction in which you are stitching?

Did you forget to thread the eye?

Has the plastic gauge slipped down towards the pointed end of the needle? Push it back into place.

Be sure you are holding the needle by the handle.

Is the fabric stretched drum-tight across the hoop?

Fabric may be too loosely woven or too stretchy to hold stitches. Try a lighter weave.

Thread is of poor quality. Try machine embroidery thread.

Shorten the plastic gauge to slightly deepen pile.