



Very Super-Stitches

The term “crazy quilt” is misleading. These works are neither as chaotic as the name implies, nor are they quilted. Makers composed organized designs by sewing pieces of fabric to cloth and adding decorative stitching. Rather than functioning as bed covers, these labor-intensive textiles were typically ornamental.



Crazy Quilt, ca. 1880

Take a closer look

Mary A. Stinson (dates unknown) decorated *Crazy Quilt* with elaborate embroidery, highlighting fabric seams and embellishing the center of each block. As you examine her work, see how many different stitch patterns you can identify.

Something to talk about

For her floral designs, Stinson employed the satin stitch—stitches worked in close, parallel lines. Not unlike brushstrokes, satin stitches yield gradations in color and texture, creating a three-dimensional quality. Consider how these flowers compare to those in Rachel Ruysch’s still life in the Great Hall.

Who knew?

Though crazy quilts are patchwork, they incorporate luxurious textiles such as silks and velvets. Quilters did not just use scraps from previous projects. They traded fabrics with friends, gathered remnants from dressmakers and tailors, or purchased “scrap bags” from department stores.

Mary A. Stinson, *Crazy Quilt*, ca. 1880; Silk; 81¼ x 81½ inches; Brooklyn Museum, Designated Purchase Fund, 1995.87; Brooklyn Museum photograph (Gavin Ashworth, photographer), 2012

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