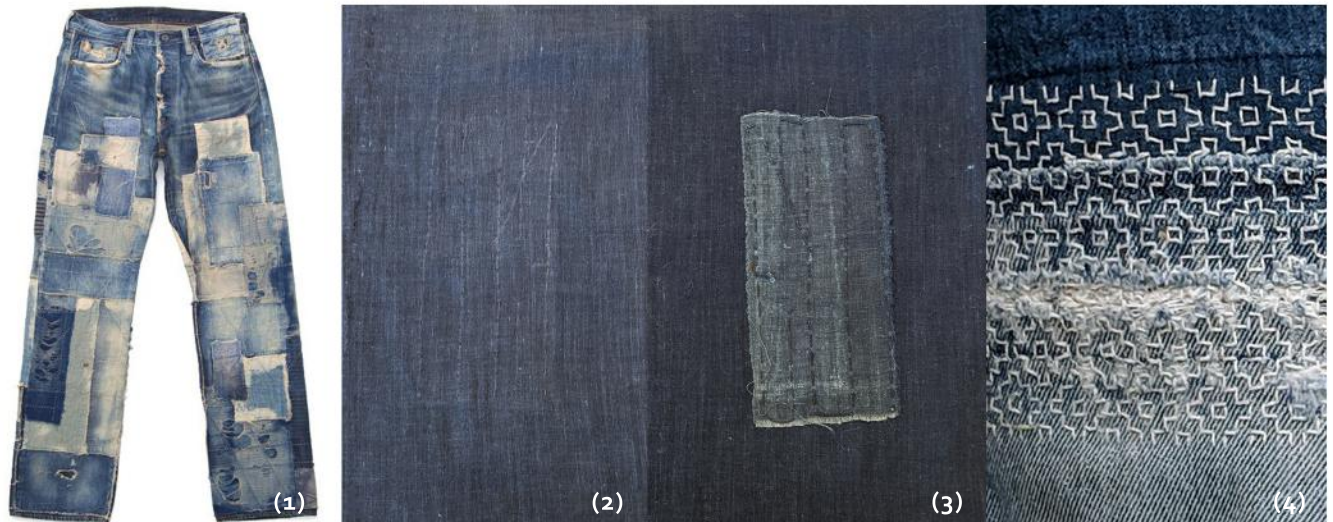


The Wondrous World of Boro Textile

Learn to sew a decorative sashiko patch for mending your own “boro” textiles!



ABOUT BORO AND SASHIKO

Every corner of the world has its own aesthetic and relationship to thrift. Japanese “**boro**” is indicative of how individual repair methods can become popular fashion trends. Historically, the term refers to “worn out” rags stitched together by impoverished people to maintain usable household textiles. Once kept hidden from household visitors or sewn to the inside of a garment to hide the repairs (and shameful connotations of poverty), “boro” style clothing is now a lucrative fashion industry, and original “works” are put on proud display.

Another popular Japanese craft, **sashiko**, has its roots in rural women who took on projects during the long months of snowbound winters. The purpose of sashiko was to quilt layers of fabric together to create sturdy and hard-wearing materials for use of the family doing hard labor. The practical became aesthetic through the complexity of pattern and clear skill of the stitchers as they created designs to invoke luck and protection, or to identify their family. This method of sewing fabrics together with large decorative stitches creates textiles that receive an extended life with an abundance of functional but beautiful handwork.

(1) Modern jeans by Japanese fashion brand Kapital

2) Right side of a vintage Japanese boro textile – repairs are barely visible

3) Wrong side of the same textile, showing the patch behind the repair

4) Detail of a boro-inspired jacket by Judilee Fitzhugh, made from torn denim repaired with sashiko stitching

Making a Sashiko Patch

MATERIALS

fabric for patch (*preferably lightweight denim, heavyweight cotton or linen*)
fine sharp needle
strong cotton thread (*buttonhole twist, perle cotton, or sashiko thread*)
small sharp scissors
chalk marker or light colored pencil
clear ruler (*optional*)
item to be mended (*optional*)

METHOD

1. Using a chalk marker or pencil, draw your desired shape onto your fabric. Then use your ruler to draw horizontal and vertical lines $\frac{1}{4}$ " apart inside the shape.
2. Thread the needle with 2-3 feet of thread and use a stem stitch to outline the shape. This sets the boundary for your decorative sashiko stitches.
3. Using the grid as a guide, sew a running stitch along the horizontal lines, entering the fabric at the intersection of the grid lines. Alternate your stitches on each row so that the surface stitches are staggered along the grid.
4. Now sew a running stitch along the vertical axis of the grid, this time making little crosses over the first stitches. You could stop here if you wish!
5. Now comes the tricky part: sew a running stitch diagonally between alternate rows of the crosses. The stitches are made between two crosses on every other row.
6. Sew the last set of running stitches perpendicular to the stitches in step 5. Again, the stitches are made between two crosses on alternate rows.
7. To use your patch, either sew it to the wrong side of a garment with a hole in it so that your sashiko stitching will peek out of the hole, or turn the edges under $\frac{1}{4}$ " and applique the patch onto a fabric that needs repair.



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