



Old-Time Tools & Toys of Needlework

Gertrude Whiting

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It was quite fashionable among the ladies of Marie Antoinette's court to employ stilettos and punches for *parfilage*. They unpicked the gold and silver threads from the richly embroidered material of their gowns and cloaks. A set of bone bobbins was found in England with the Lord's Prayer spirally incised phrase by phrase along each bobbin's length. A clever French inventor designed a pair of scissors with eighteen different uses — screwdriver, nail file, cigar cutter, ruler, lid pryer, buttonholder adjuster — to name just a few. These and many other artifacts and instruments of sewing, weaving, and spinning are considered from a historical, cultural, and antique collecting point of view.

Gertrude Whiting, Honorary Fellow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Fellow of the Institute Professional Neuchâtelois de Dentelles, describes and illustrates nearly all the paraphernalia, accoutrements, appliances, accessories, and doodads associated with all yarn and thread handicrafts from knitting, embroidery, and dressmaking to warp weaving, batik making, and lace making. Examples of winders, scissors, thimbles, measures, knitting needles, crochet hooks, bodkins, punches, sewing needles, pins, pincushions, hoops, frames, bobbins, shuttles, spinning wheels, and sewing machines are taken from such widely scattered cultures as Java, ancient Egypt, Victorian England, and pre-revolutionary Russia. For each artifact, the author gives a history of its invention, an etymology, its age, lore, use, and a variety of literary and artistic sources in which it is mentioned or depicted.

This unique work is extremely rich in illustrations, including many photographs of objects from private collections. It will certainly awaken those who take these tools for granted to a new world of possibilities and will spur those who collect them on to new endeavors.

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