

# by royal appointment

绣出经典风华

不论中外，绣娘十指春风、穿针引线，一时为他人作嫁衣裳；一时临摹山水名画。  
今天更有艺术家以此为媒体，展现刺绣丰富的内涵。

撰文 罗宇正

陈慧娴与团队的其它成员一针一线地为英国皇妃凯特·米德尔顿绣出幸福的回忆，可是有关这项工作的一切详情都属于高度秘密。她签了保密协议，在往后的日子可能只会成为自己最私密的回忆。

英国威廉王子与凯特大婚，婚纱由亚历山大·麦昆的创作总监莎拉·伯顿设计，而刺绣的工作则由英国皇家刺绣学院负责。在香港土生土长的陈慧娴是学院的第一位华人毕业生，成绩卓越，被选为刺绣团队成员之一。该刺绣团队为凯特手工缝制婚纱、面纱及鞋面上的蕾丝。这袭婚纱在威廉王子与凯特大婚之日成为了国际传媒的焦点，这不单奠定莎拉在时装界的地位，更让不少人重新认识了久违的刺绣工艺。

刺绣已有数千年的历史，可以说是最美的手工艺形态之一。近年刺绣在“复古”热潮下重新成为时尚界的宠儿，同时吸引了不少人学习传统的刺绣针法。此外，有些艺术家、时装设计师还混合不同的物料、媒介来重新包装这门古老的工艺。

现时陈慧娴已回港并创办了“游走刺绣”工作坊，开班授徒，还不时到内地学习中国刺绣技巧，以提升自己在这方面的知识和技巧。“在中

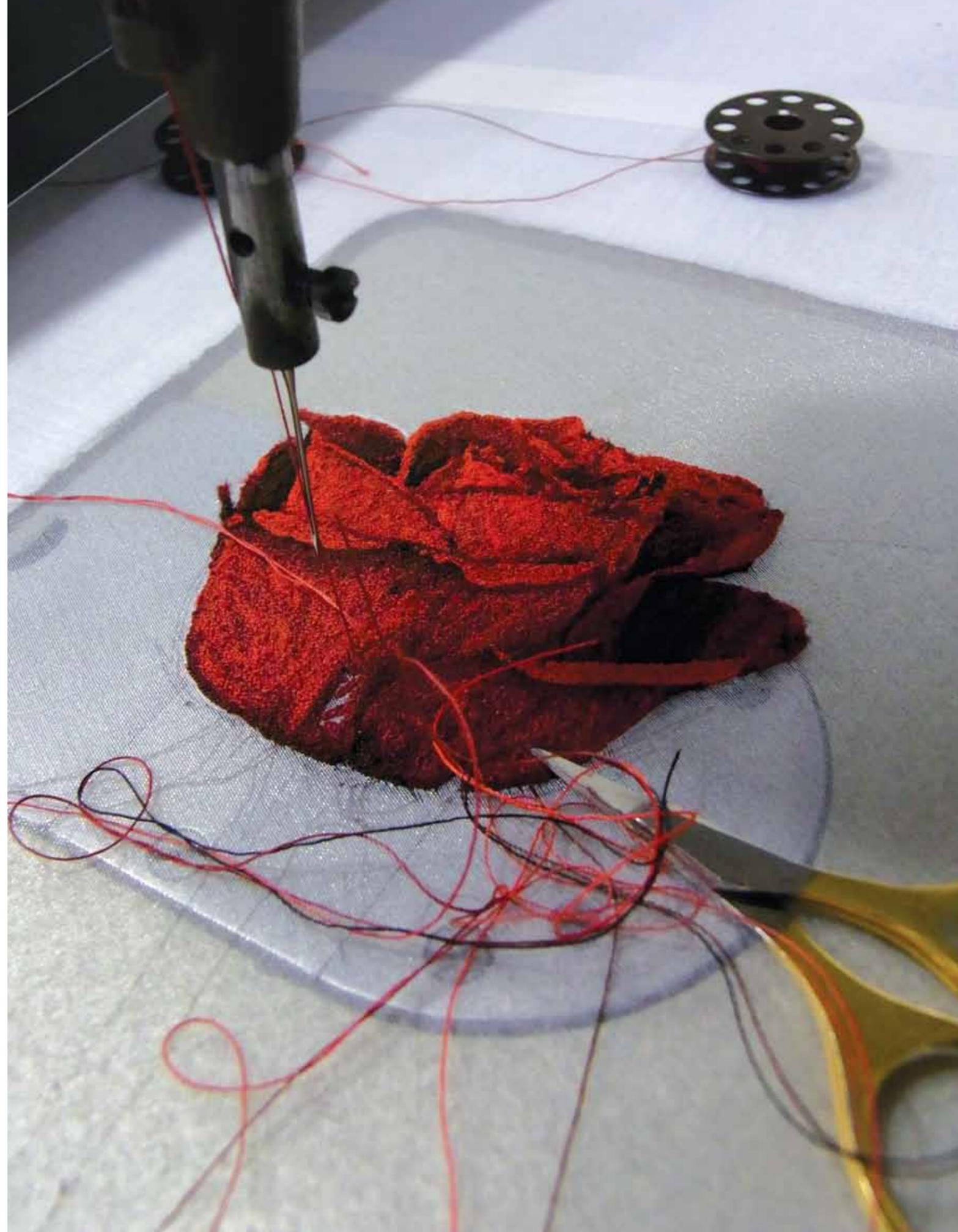
Millions of people around the world marvelled at the bridal gown Kate Middleton wore for last year's wedding to Britain's Prince William.

The dress was designed by Sara Burton of the Alexander McQueen fashion house, and required intricate lacework. So Burton called upon two dozen of the best embroiderers from Britain's Royal School of Needlework (RSN) to complete this historic task. Among Burton's team was Hongkonger Mimi Chan Wai-han, the only Chinese to have attended the school's diploma course, and the best embroiderer in her class. Chan was delighted to assist in the silk dress' meticulous handstitching, and equated the appointment with "winning the jackpot".

The work was a great honour for the school, which celebrates its 140th anniversary this year. Established for the restoration, education and promotion of embroidery, the RSN has created many historic pieces, including decorations for the royal train in 1937, and the Robe of State for Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

刺绣只是一种媒介，艺术家的创意才是关键。  
Embroidery is a medium in which the creativity of the artist is key.

Photography: AOYAMA Satou, courtesy Mizuma Art Gallery





忙碌的香港人尤其适合学习刺绣，  
由此可以好好锻炼耐性，

Embroidery has recently been brought alive, as fashion “returns to tradition”, however. Many people are drawn to its traditional stitching skills, while artists and fashion designers combine the use of mixed media to revitalise the ancient craft.

“The collaboration with Sarah Burton on Princess Kate’s wedding gown has greatly enhanced the RSN’s profile, and we are receiving more support for our work,” says Becky Hogg, an RSN tutor on certificate and diploma courses. An experienced embroiderer; Hogg has written a guide book, *RSN Essential Stitch Guide – Blackwork*, and co-authored *The Stitch Bible* with other experts.

Back in Hong Kong, Chan has opened the Tour Embroidery school and studio, while enhancing her skills and knowledge by taking lessons on the mainland.

“In Britain, we are not allowed to drink, eat or speak while sewing, to keep the works pristine. However, in Suzhou, tutors serve us with fruit and snacks while we chat and stitch,” Chan says. “Different cultural backgrounds call for different working styles.” In the old days, Chinese women took care of their children and household chores while they embroidered, an activity that formed an integral part of their daily lives.

Chan also launched the Hong Kong Young Embroiderer Programme and recruited a dozen young people on Facebook. They are learning the traditional art to complete a large embroidery piece that in six months’ time could raise funds for charity at an auction.

Chinese embroidery is marked by frequent use of traditional motifs, and the use of silk threads in different colours for the designs, reminiscent of chiaroscuro in drawings.

“Chinese embroidery is different from its European counterparts in the use of embroidered materials,” says Dr Jeanne Tan, assistant professor at the Institute of Textiles and Clothing at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. “The former uses silk threads on very thin silk fabrics, resulting in a smooth surface with intricate embroidery, whereas European craftsmen use cotton threads, metal wires, tiny beads or even gems for stitching on cotton or wool to create a more three-dimensional effect.”

In his embroidery workshop in Suzhou, Gu Yulai and his family have hired 100 embroiderers, headed by three provincial embroidery masters, to work on traditional motifs and duplications of master paintings

国学刺绣，学的主要是丝绣的技巧，针法集中在长短针、套针、乱针等；欧洲的刺绣针法比较多，有些在亚洲已经失传，只能在欧洲学习到。”

在不同国家学习、观摩，也令陈慧娴有另外一番体会，“在英国上课时，老师很严格地规定我们不可在工场中进食和饮水，也不可以谈话，避免弄脏绣品；我在苏州学习刺绣时，老师会主动送上水果和零食，绣娘也会一边工作一边闲话家常。可见文化背景不同，工作模式也大相径庭。”的确，中国的刺绣起源于寻常百姓家，在以前，妇女要一边照顾孩子和做家务、一边刺绣，日常生活和工作密不可分。

陈慧娴指出，忙碌的香港人尤其适合学习刺绣，由此可以好好锻炼耐性，“刺绣是慢工出细活，一急便会出错。我曾试过下错针，结果要把已经绣好的线拆掉重来。后来习惯了戒急用忍，才发现原来专心一致做好一件刺绣最能令我放松，更是一种享受。”为了在香港推广刺绣工艺，最近她开展了“香港青年刺绣师计划”，在

面书上招揽了十多位年轻人，教他们刺绣。它计划在半年后完成一幅大型作品，并将进行拍卖，把所得款项捐给慈善团体。

谈到在欧洲学习刺绣工艺，便不得不提陈慧娴的母校英国皇家刺绣学院。该学院于1872年成立，至2012年刚好是140周年。学院肩负起保存和传授刺绣工艺的重责，并承接了不少重大任务。学院在1937年为英皇室列车刺绣装饰；1953年时召集学院专家日夜赶工，用了3500小时为英女皇伊丽莎白二世刺绣加冕典礼上使用的礼袍。

碧琦·贺斯是学院的导师和资深刺绣艺术家，负责教授学院的证书课程，并为学院编写教材《RSN Essential Stitch Guide – Blackwork》，最近还与其它专家合撰刺绣百科全书《The Stitch Bible》。

碧琦和刺绣的缘份始于大学时期：“当时我在英国拉夫堡大学艺术学院攻读纺织学位，毕业作品展是有关如何以不同物料修复有破损的古老纺织品，这项研究令我认识了英国皇家刺绣学院，并令我深深爱上刺绣。”

左上顺时针：香港的陈慧娴以手工为凯特·米德尔顿的婚纱绣上图案；英国皇家刺绣学院的卓越作品之一，以长短绣在丝绸面绣上立体玫瑰图案的设计。Clockwise from above left: Hongkonger Mimi Chan assisted in the hand stitching of Kate Middleton’s bridal gown; examples of the Royal School of Needlework excellence, work in silk and gold and rose design in silk shading.

Photography: SCMP



“在中国，不少绣娘养活一家大小，  
所以我们在欣赏刺绣的时候不要忘了  
妇女们投入的心血。”



青山悟的校园作品，可见其繁复高超的刺绣技巧（上）；正在刺绣的绣娘们。  
Intricate embroidery of the Satoru Aoyama School yard (above); Bueyi people at work embroidering.



刺绣的针法和技巧种类繁多，很多刺绣艺术家都会先专注于几种，之后再作钻研，可是碧琦却与众不同，“我没有偏好任何一种技巧，这在刺绣艺术家中算是比较特别的。我喜欢针步当中蕴藏的创意，再结合客人或自己对作品的要求进行设计。最近我在研究利用金属线在羊毛冠上作刺绣，以制作一系列的首饰。”

“大家都希望可以在传统工艺上加入新创意，令学院的学生大增。和亚历山大·麦昆的创作总监莎拉·伯顿合作设计凯特的婚纱更令学院的知名度大大提升，学院的工作也获得更多人的支持。”

和欧洲的刺绣品比较，中国的刺绣多用传统的图案，而且着重以不同颜色的丝线构图，如同绘画中的明暗法。“中国和欧洲的刺绣不同的地方在于刺绣物料的应用。中国的刺绣多用针把丝线绣在薄薄的丝绸上，所以完成品一般表面都很平滑，绣工很精细；而欧洲的刺绣利用棉线、金属线、小珠甚至宝石等不同的物料，用针、线绣在棉、羊毛等布料上，所以比较有立体感。”香港理工大学纺织及制衣学系助理教授陈芊瑞博士说。

顾雨来和他的家族在苏州开设了刺绣工作室，有百位绣娘，还请了三位省级的工艺大师坐镇。作品以中国的传统图案及复制名画和摄影作品为主。他们在香港、上海开店，近年来还在香港和大学合作开办刺绣班，以推广传统刺绣艺术。

“中国的刺绣一般用丝线、金线，做工精巧，而且可以长时间保存而不变色走样。最贵重的丝线比头发还幼，可以绣出非常精致的图案。”顾雨来指出，中国刺绣广受欢迎，可是近年的刺绣作品的收藏价值仍不及其他艺术品，主要是因为原创性不足，即使很完美地复制了一幅名画，却还是别人的创作；很多刺绣公司为了应付客人对传统刺绣品的需要已经非常忙碌，投放在创作的资源较少。“现在苏州的绣娘大部分是40多岁，还有十多年便到退休年龄，加上新入行的年轻人不多，所以中国的刺绣行业可能会面临青黄不接。”不过顾雨来并不担心：“这也是个好机会，刺绣行业可能会因而走向高端化，更重视创意。”

近年英国、日本等地有不少年轻的艺术家把刺绣融入他们的作品中，大胆利用不同的工具和物料来刺绣，如塑胶、鱼丝，甚至把线缝在纸张、塑胶片上，非常有创意，日本的刺绣艺术家青山悟便是一例。陈芊瑞特别提到青山悟曾学习过艺术和纺织，“刺绣是一个媒介，而艺术家的创意和感性才是创作的关键。”

陈芊瑞认为，刺绣在欧美的艺术或工业生产的层面上已找到了新方向，在中国亦应更受重视。“刺绣一直以来都是属于女性的产业，很多人便觉得这些只是家庭小手作而已，可是我并不认同。刺绣需要耐性和精密的计算，一步也错不得，一幅小小的刺绣可能得花数个月来完成。在中国，不少绣娘因为精于这门手艺而养活一家大小，可是她们不会把这些成就大肆宣扬，所以我们在欣赏刺绣的时候不要忘了妇女们投入的心血。”

#### 灵动纤细 形神兼备

简单来说，刺绣就是用针线在布料上绣出不同图案的装饰织物，用于装饰家俱、衣服、日常用品、舞台等。

现时最古老的刺绣品出现在西元前四世纪建成的巴泽雷克古墓（Pazyryk burials，位于现今俄罗斯西伯利亚）中，当中有鸟类图案的刺绣，由此表明这门手艺在当时已有非常高的水准。

在中国，刺绣是传统手工艺之一，至少有二、三千年历史，在春秋战国时已有几何、花鸟、瑞兽纹式的刺绣品，而现在发展得最完善、最为世人所知的有苏绣、湘绣、蜀绣和粤绣。苏绣以针法丰富、绣工精巧细腻而见称，运用该刺绣方法绣山水能分远近，绣人物则能展现其生动的表情；湘绣以独创的掺针使不同色的线掺合，色调更和谐；蜀绣以其独有的晕针表现色彩的浓淡晕染效果；粤绣够饱满，讲求装饰效果，针步纹理清晰分明。

最近《长恨歌》的作者王安忆出版新作《天香》，讲述了晚明时代上海仕族申氏的兴衰史。这个家族出了多位有名的刺绣艺术家，王安忆对这个家族及刺绣工艺进行了详细的研究，并以细腻动人的笔触娓娓道出申家绣娘在生活和艺术上的挣扎。

and photo works. There are also branches in Shanghai and Hong Kong, where Gu offers classes in collaboration with local universities.

Gu says that despite its popularity, the value of embroidery works falls behind other artefacts because of an absence of originality. Embroidery workshops are pre-occupied with traditional embroidery orders to spare more resources for creative innovations. “Most of our embroiderers are in their 40s and will retire in 10 years’ time or more,” Gu says. “Young newcomers are few, so a big gap is looming.” However, he remains hopeful, saying: “Here also lies the opportunity to go for high-end and creative designs.”

Young artists from Britain and Japan are starting to integrate embroidery into their works, using plastic and fishing line, or stitching the threads on pieces of paper or plastic. Among them is Satoru Aoyama, whose background is in art and textiles. “Embroidery is a medium through which the creativity and sensibility of the artist is the key,” Tan says.

“In China, many expert embroiderers are the breadwinners of the family. But these women [keep a low-profile] and are shy about their own achievements. In appreciation of their embroidery, one has to show respect for their dedicated efforts, time and energy.”

#### Rich history on the mainland

Chinese embroidery is a traditional folk art with more than 3,000 years of history. The Suzhou Su Embroidery, Hunan Xiang Embroidery, Sichuan Shu Embroidery and the Guangdong Yue Embroidery are the most famous, fully developed styles. Su Embroidery is renowned for its tight stitching, refinement and delicacy, while Xiang Embroidery uses random, uneven stitches to create a soft, harmonious tone. Shu Embroidery is famous for its colour contrasts and gradation, while Yue Embroidery is rich and complicated in content with strong decoration and structured stitching.