



## Trashmagination Podcast #110 – Visible Mending

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown. Today is episode #110 and it is about visible mending. So when I was growing up, when you needed mend something, you tried to sew it in a way so that you would hopefully not be able to see where the item was repaired. But these days, there is a trend to make mending visible and even decorative.

There are many benefits to this trend. First, people are finding a whole new interest in fixing torn or worn items, rather than just tossing them and buying new cheaply made clothing. We have learned how many items are produced in unethical ways, from the fabric to how the workers are paid to how quickly they fall apart and become trash.

Second, when people learn how to mend their clothing or linens, they tend to learn that some items are made with higher quality materials. Hopefully the result will be that people buy less, and repair more, thus reducing the impact on the earth. We are motivated to extend the life of the clothes we have at home that we love. This is all part of what is called the Slow Fashion movement.

Third, people are finding that this type of stitching can be a form of meditation during this stressful time. So today I want to introduce you to visible mending so you can also enjoy this creative reuse trend.

Let's start with the work of Katrina Rodabaugh. I have her book on my desk and it's called *Mending Matters: Stitch, Patch and Repair Your Favorite Denim and More* [<https://www.instagram.com/katrinarodabaugh/>]. I mentioned Katrina's work in my episode on creative reuse of denim, which is 55. Every project in this book can be done with three simple stitches – straight stitch, running stitch and whipstitch. One of the characteristics of Katrina's projects is that she gives strength to the area that is torn or worn by adding many, many stitches. It makes the item look truly cared for. Mostly she uses Sashiko thread. Sashiko is a form of Japanese embroidery that uses a running stitch to make a geometric pattern. Sashiko thread is thicker than a lot of other threads so you can see the detail of the stitching and it's very strong too. When Katrina is mending lighter-weight items made from silk or linen, she uses lighter threads. Sashiko thread is also very soft which is nice against the skin.

The most common areas that require mending in pants or trousers for example are the knees, the crotch and the pockets. Katrina shows how to use a patch to mend a tear – whether you put the patch under the fabric where it will be slightly less visible, or on top of the fabric where it will be very visible. She doesn't buy iron-on patches, but makes patches from the same fabric as the torn item. I have used Katrina's methods many time especially to fix the crotch of my favorite work-out pants and shorts. Her emphasis on denim creative reuse has inspired me to make four denim-based quilts this year.

The next book I want about visible mending is called *Visible Mending: A Modern Guide to Darning, Stitching and Patching the Clothes You Love* by Arounna Khounnoraj [<https://www.instagram.com/bookhou/>]. This book comes out in November 2020. Arounna has been sharing videos on Instagram showing mending techniques. She shows how to mend or darn knitted items like socks or the elbows or cuffs of sweaters [<https://www.instagram.com/p/CGhyndJX8P/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CFwv8bhjp1h/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEf5Pd8j7-2/>]. Arounna's husband John Booth is a furniture designer, and he has been making wooden darning mushrooms to sell. You put one of these in a sock for example, and then do the stitches over the mushroom to stretch the sock in a way so you can see everything while you mend. Arounna is such a great teacher, and has fueled multiple craft trends with her enthusiasm and aesthetic, so I look forward to this book.

KZ Stevens teaches many mending workshops where you go all weekend and just mend items. [<https://www.kzstevens.com/>]. She helps her students to incorporate sentimental bits of fabric or stitching into their visible mending projects. These workshops have titles such as Patch and Play or Narrative Mending. She has a pattern for a komebukuro or a Japanese rice bag that I have been dreaming of sewing for two years, made from fabric scraps.

Gina Niederhumer made a video in 2018 called Sew Many Days where she talks about the benefits of stitching and mending [<https://youtu.be/EITLA0fvx0I>]. Most of this video is about a project where she sewed a postcard-sized picture every day in 2016. She talks about how cathartic it is to stitch, so you are mending not only an object but also your heart. Whether you are sewing a little quilt that describes your mood that day, or darning a sock, the rhythm of sewing can be very healing.

Amy Meissner is an artist who creatively reuses lots of fabrics – I mentioned her work in the episode about vintage fabrics, which was episode 90 [<https://www.amymeissner.com/>]. She is offering a mending workshop virtually through the Anchorage Museum on October 21, 2020 [<https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/visit/calendar/details/?id=60729>]. During the pandemic, she has been working on a project called Mother Thought of Everything where she makes protective suits for her children from vintage quilts [<https://www.amymeissner.com/mother-thought-of-everything.html>]. Her work is going to be featured in the book *Resilient Stitch: Wellbeing and Connection in Textile Art* which is coming out in April 2021.

I always enjoy the work of Lindzeanne which is inspired by both sashiko, which I already mentioned, and boro, which is another Japanese stitching technique using denim scraps [<https://www.instagram.com/lindzeanne>]. Lindzeanne takes the concept of many stitches to the next level. The surfaces of her pieces are just covered with stitches. Her work makes me want to stitch and stitch and stitch. Some people who sew call this “burying the thread,” meaning putting a lot of thread into a single piece of textile art.

Susanne Watson-Bongard finds Converse sneakers at thrift stores or op shops that are in great condition, then sews designs on them to make them more like art pieces [<https://www.facebook.com/rtsygirl/>]. She goes by Rsty Girl on social media. Her day job is working as a therapist and she makes many items from recycled materials, including earrings and coasters from wood scraps, as a side business.

## **Thank you!**

Thank you for listening! I hope you enjoyed that short tour into the world of visible mending, and you consider giving it a try the next time your jeans rip open. Please let me know if you have ever done visible mending at [trashmagination@gmail.com](mailto:trashmagination@gmail.com). Until next time, may you see visible mending as a source of art in your life!