

Anna Lucia
Oefenstof

Opening: April 08, 2025, 18:00 – 21:00
Exhibition: April 09 – April 19, 2025
Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin
Collaborator: Art Blocks and Objekt

Embroidery is one of the oldest decorative crafts, practiced since the invention of the needle and thread. At some point, embroiderers realized they needed a way to record and reference different designs. The solution was the creation of the sampler, a piece of cloth decorated with different motifs. In *Oefenstof**, Anna Lucia examines the patterns and representations found in embroidery samplers, the act of recording embroidery work, and the transformation of traditional patterns through algorithmic processes.

Samplers often featured scattered motifs, bands of geometric and decorative borders, animals, floral motifs, and alphabets. Although found across diverse cultures and timelines, similarities can be found across different samplers, often executed in the binary form of a cross-stitch. This duality, stitch or no stitch, resonates with the binary logic of computation. Anna Lucia explores this intersection by reinterpreting traditional embroidery motifs using computer algorithms.

Anna Lucia has built her own library of embroidery samplers using custom code and an embroidery machine. Historically, embroidery samplers were not only tools for record-keeping but also served educational purposes and functioned as aptitude tests for young girls learning the craft. By automating both the pattern-making and execution of the embroidery, the process questions the role and value of craft in an era of rapid technological acceleration and growing intimacy with our machines as collaborators.

In her experimentation, Anna Lucia applies well-known algorithms such as cellular automata and XOR patterns. Yet, their typical digital aesthetics are obscured by the constraints of the embroidery machine and the unpredictable dialogue between artist and computer, aided by randomness. These limitations give rise to new, labyrinth-like abstractions that emerge beneath the binary surface of the original patterns.

The digital artwork *Thread* makes the underlying patterns visible again. It is based on the same algorithm as the embroidery work, but it uses the capabilities of its medium, the browser, resulting in a constantly evolving animation.

**oefenstof translates from Dutch to “practice fabric” or “practice material” and is borrowed from the book Oefenstof by Joke Visser, a history of embroidery samplers from The Netherlands.*

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Artist:

Anna Lucia is an interdisciplinary artist exploring the intersection of craft and computation. Her practice involves writing custom software that generates abstract compositions and creating textile works using an embroidery machine, translating traditional craft techniques into algorithmic systems. By integrating randomness in her algorithms, Anna Lucia establishes a mediumistic dialogue between the artist and the computer; and accelerates the exploration of her self-designed systems. Her work includes generative systems on the blockchain, browser-based animations, machine-assisted textile works, and tattoos, each medium revealing its inherent aesthetics. She collaborated with the Gee's Bend Quilters to produce a heritage algorithm of their quilts and she was invited to be part of The First 15 artists to contribute to the MoMa Postcard project. Anna Lucia's work has been exhibited internationally in various shows, including Human + Machines (Art Basel Miami 2021), Artists Who Code (Vellum LA, 2022), Bright Moments (Mexico, 2022), Cure³ (Bonhams London, 2023), Dimensionality (Untitled Art Fair, 2023), Dimensions of Digitization (CCAM Yale, 2024).