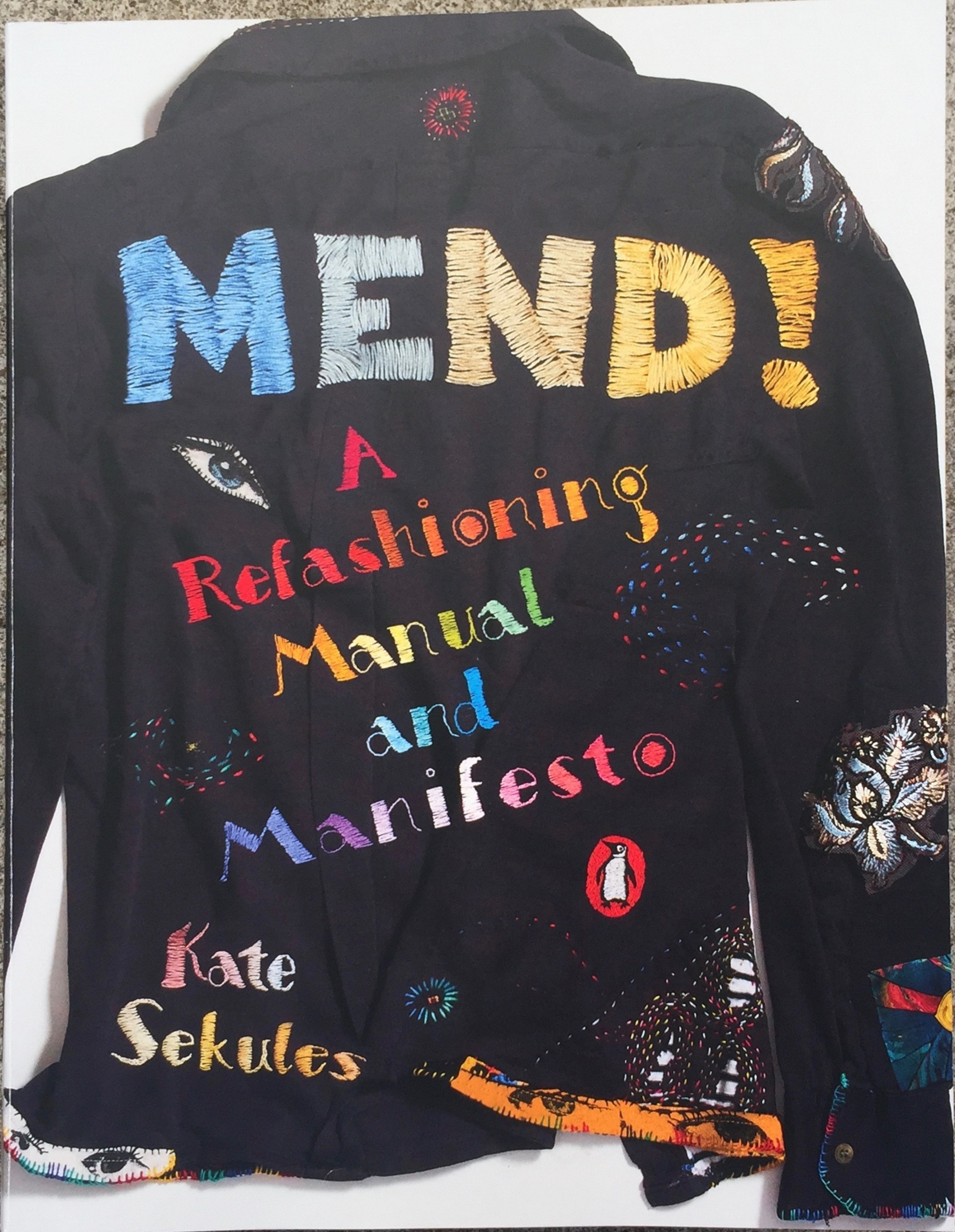


MEND!

A
Refashioning
Manual
and
Manifesto

Kate
Sekules





The 1981 Worlds End pant, bird-mended



"Drawn" with old chiffon scarves

"but one is moving the 'paper' rather than the 'pencil.'" She draws freely when stitching by hand also. "I like to try to use hand stitch in a gestural, uneven way," she says. Lately she's been drawn to darning, finding "the quirky, slightly eccentric addition of a woven lattice on top of a different weave simply wonderful." One of Karen's favorite possessions is an Edwardian work overall that's practically all darn, evoking the entire life story of a "fragile yet resilient young woman." A poem in stitch, she calls it. Which is coincidentally what I call Karen Nicol's mending.

Margreet Sweerts and Saskia van Drimmelen



Golden Joiners Margreet (left) and Saskia

Next we head to Amsterdam for a spot of Golden Joinery. Around 2013, theater director Margreet Sweerts and fashion designer Saskia van Drimmelen began a project that united their handwork-heavy, Big Fashion-disrupting line Painted Series with kintsugi, the ancient Japanese art of visibly mending porcelain with gold. It all started with a workshop. "It's playful and a bit performative," says Margreet. "We do musical chairs. Saskia and I are dressed like first aid doctors." Because it was impractical to perform all over the world, they decided the next best thing was to translate the gist of it into a parlor game to spread the word.

Now, I'd heard of the Golden Joinery game, but I wasn't prepared for how literal is the word *game*, nor how fun it is, till I played a round. It's a real board game created with



Playing clothes doctor at Droog Design, Amsterdam



The game in action



Result

the help of artist friends, complete with gorgeous cards, golden supplies, and rules. I won't spoil the surprises, but it does exactly what it says on the box, viz: "through playful interventions, this workshop will lead you out of your mind and into your hands." Eight of us, four fashion historians, a museum curator, two lecturers, and a designer, that is, blasé been-there-done-that types, were enchanted. "*Gold* refers to value, to treasure, to alchemical processes; engagement and care, not exploitation of the material world," says Margreet. "We think healing something in *togetherness* is the core of the experience. Therefore the game, with only winners!" I don't care if I sound like an advert, but now all my friends know what they're getting for their birthdays.

Ruth Katzenstein Souza

In America the mending scene has been unfolding in disparate pockets for decades, so it seems apt to visit first with LA artist Ruth Katzenstein Souza, a mending lifer dedicated to spreading the word through workshops and teachings under the umbrella Mending as Metaphor. Ruth learned from her grandmother, "laying out pretend landscapes with the scraps in the bottom drawer of her chiffonier" as a small child; marveling at her ability to fix everything with her mending kit, "a small plaid case she made, lined with felt"; learning "the sacredness of textiles."

Her mending circle was birthed in 2012, while resurrecting her granny's final quilt alongside "a very special young woman" she was mentoring—and the talking-sewing-talking wove the same magic it always has



Top: Ruth's embroidered faces; bottom: Ruth patching



Mending as Metaphor as reality: the LA mending circle in action

throughout history. Ruth wants this phenomenon back. "At one point, mending was part of the culture; clothing and linens were valued," she says. The metaphor of mending is, of course, about healing, individual to societal. "At every turn we are confronted with cracks in our world that are so deep that many of us despair. Where do we begin?" she wonders, answering with the route her own mending circles take, "Identify the crack near

you." Partnering with Textile Arts Los Angeles, Ruth designated 2019 A Year of Mindful Mending: "A laboratory for trying lots of different ways to think about meditative stitching," with Golden Joinery-ish games, plenty of conversation, and some silence. "I'm interested in people finding a personal voice with their mending," says Ruth. "It's about process, community, storytelling." And, above all, the wisdom of a lifetime's mending.

A hands-on manual and a history and celebration of clothes tending—and its remarkable resurgence as art form, political statement, and path to healing the planet

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mending was a deep craft that for too long had been a secret history. But now it's back, bigger and better than ever. In this book, Kate Sekules introduces the art of visible mending as part of an important movement to give fashion back its soul.

Part manifesto, part how-to, *MEND!* calls for bold new ways of keeping clothes and refreshing your style. Crammed with tips, fun facts, ravishing photography, and illustrated tutorials, *MEND!* tells you exactly how to rescue and renew your wardrobe with flair and aplomb—and save money along the way. Whether you've never owned a needle or are an aspiring

professional, *MEND!* gives you clear instruction and witty advice, with more than thirty techniques from classic darning and patching to cheeky new methods invented by Sekules, to help you turn every garment into a unique fashion statement. Including interviews with menders, shameful fashion industry facts, a ten-step closet mend, cheat sheets, stitch guides, moth elimination, museum conservator and vintage dealer tricks, and more, this is a book to inspire, delight, and galvanize. Sharp, funny, and incredibly timely, *MEND!* leads the slow-fashion revolution into its next phase, where getting dressed is a joyful, creative experience for all.

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Tom of Holland



Tom of Holland models the Six-Year Sweater



Aleatoric Fair Isle Swatch #1



Amazing Jumper, 2015. A wearable darning sampler

I call Tom van Deijnen, who lives in the southern English coastal bohemia of Brighton, the Godfather of VM, whether he likes it or not—and he doesn't really, because "it kind of makes it sound like I'm the first one to do visible mending." But Tom was indeed the first to capture the spirit, tag it, and send it out in his Visible Mending Programme (est. 2010).¹² And, in my book, he also earned the title by being generous—an exemplary mending mendsch, as I discovered when I stole his domain name. Well, to be fair, he didn't want visiblemending.com because it doesn't encompass all the kinds of work he does. "I feel making and repairing are all part of the same thing and I don't want to create a separation," he says.

Tom's making is knit based. He has a deep love of a yarn in every sense. He often uses wool from around the UK with a tale behind it (resisting Bo Peep pun), mines historical techniques from his library of vintage knitting books, and invents entire new genres, such as (with fellow knit-head Felicity Ford) Aleatoric Fair Isle, in

which the music of John Cage meets the traditional pattern knitting of the Shetland Isles meets a throw of the dice (full story on his blog; it's worth the read). It was knitting that begat mending, when Tom's proudly sported, first homemade socks ran to holes. "Wanting to repair these 'properly,'" he says, "started me off on the journey I still find myself on now." Visibility quickly followed, partly inspired by the multicolors in antique darning samplers (see pages 34–37). "I like how [VM] highlights the fact the item has been repaired, adding to the history of it. It allows you to be creative," he says.

All Tom of Holland mends get a serial number and are recorded in the Visible Mending Programme logbook, but none wins. "I have a fair few favorites, all for different reasons. It might be the background story, technique used, or simply because I was particularly happy with the end result." Here, his 2013 *Amazing Jumper* has to qualify: operated on with multiple patterns of fancy darning—several herringbone variations, a Prince of Wales–Sanquhar tweed pattern, a simple houndstooth. "A darning sampler gone slightly out of hand," he calls it. Another is the *Six-Year Sweater*, begun at the Mend*rs Symposium, finished in 2018, and one of his toughest challenges "because it felt never-ending." Tom has shared his formidable expertise in workshops from Australia to Finland, and is represented by the New Craftsmen, a gallery of elite British makers, but also volunteers at Brighton's monthly Repair Café, whose mission statement reads, "We bring people together to give the objects we share our world with a second lease of life and to chat

and have a cuppa whilst we're at it." Like I said, humble. "I have learnt so much about repairing textiles, and yet I feel I have only just scratched the surface of what is possible," Tom wrote about the Six Years of the Sweater, which, in retrospect, was the gestation period of visible mending itself. In 2012 mending felt fringe; now Tom sees growing awareness of the underlying issues, and says, "I'm just hoping that repair will become the norm again, just like it used to be in earlier times." If anyone can make that happen, it's the Godfather.

Bridget Harvey

The single most recognizable emblem of the VM movement is the *MEND MORE Jumper*. The backstory of this iconic piece is as political, thoughtful, and multilayered as you'd expect from its maker, Londoner Bridget Harvey, who is quite literally the Doctor of Mending, thanks to her doctoral dissertation, titled "Repair-Making: Craft, Narratives, Activism." But this dynamic activist-scholar-teacher-feminist-artist



Bridget Harvey's iconic MEND MORE jumper