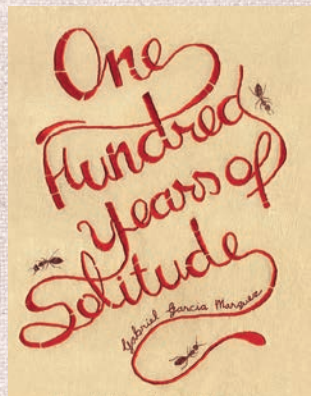


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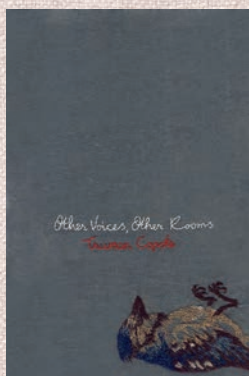
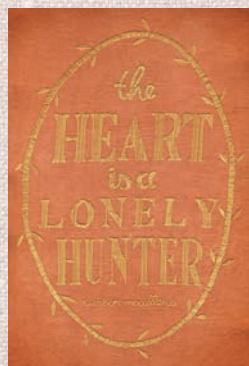
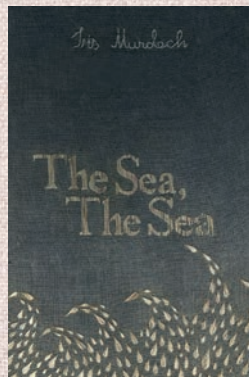
CHLOE GIORDANO

Reading and sewing have a lot in common. Both represent escapism, they're solo pursuits and they spell relaxation and contemplation. On the practical side of things, they both require good lighting, comfortable seating and a focused frame of mind. No wonder so many of us love to indulge ourselves in these activities - it's just a shame they can't be done simultaneously. Or can they? Chloe Giordano, an artist living in Oxford, England, has found a way of uniting the two so she combines her love of sewing and reading. She creates book covers from textiles and thread.

Using a fertile imagination and a high degree of stitching skills, Chloe embroiders famous book covers, making artworks of famous titles. Her first embroidered book covers were made as her final project for her illustration degree at the University of the West of England, which included her entry for the 2011 Penguin Design Award (her book cover design for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Gabriel García Márquez, was Highly Commended).

"I'm a big reader and always wanted to somehow involve my work in the publishing industry, so these pieces were my starting point," says Chloe. She continued this line of work after university and has

made several covers in total. She's currently working on a few professional projects and says she enjoys collaborating with publishing companies. "I've worked with Penguin a couple of times since [entering for the award], and it's always interesting work



that makes me push my abilities further."

Chloe's motivation to sew came in her college years, when she watched Michel Gondry's 'dreamy' film *The Science of Sleep*, which featured the work of textile artist Lauri Faggioni. "I remember being taken with her immense creativity and free way of working - I sat down to try and make some of the pieces myself, and it took off from there," she says. That was the match to the imagination's flame, but Chloe still had no technical skills to kick-start her crafting endeavours. She had to call on a friend to teach her the basics - like how to thread a needle and tie it off. Since then, she's been self-taught - through books!

Chloe's work demonstrates what can be achieved with a few basic sewing supplies and a simple embroidery stitch. "I use a basic straight stitch for all my work; it's a simple technique but very labour-intensive." She works on calico, which she hand dyes and stitches with sewing thread. Yes, sewing thread; she used to work with embroidery floss, but switched to sewing thread because it allowed her to pack more detail into a small area. Add sewing needles and a hoop to the list, and that's all she needs.

Just as with regular book-cover designers, Chloe reads the book before developing an embroidery concept. "I normally collect reference, from photos and passages in the book itself, then work up a few thumbnail ideas to pick from. Once the final design has been chosen, I work in a fairly methodical way through each element of the design. I photograph, rather than scan, the finished piece, to stop the texture getting flattened.

"For me, it's a case of balancing detail with something that will catch someone's eye, picking an overarching theme that will bring the design together and give the theme of the book without bogging it down with references," Chloe says.

Now, having seen how nimbly Chloe Giordano translates the beauty of a book into another fabulous art form, it's time to decide: Is the statement "You can't tell a book by its cover" really a truism? Or should we file it under 'false-ism'?

For more of Chloe's unique vision, visit her website (www.chloegiordano.com) or follow her blog (www.karenin.tumblr.com) or Facebook page (www.facebook.com/chloegiordanoillustration).

- Janai Velez

