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Fashion Forward

Stitch, Bitch! It's Craft Corner Deathmatch

Hipsters break out the BeDazzler on the Style Network's new TV show

by Corina Zappia
March 21st, 2005 6:21 PM

We'll admit, we were expecting more with Style Network's new half-hour contest menacingly titled *Craft Corner Deathmatch*. Just upon hearing the name, our minds reeled with sordid crafting scenarios. Would there be savage Donna Reeds thirsting for carnage and embroidery? Torture with knitting needles in a ring of fire? Death by BeDazzler? Crocheting as blood sport?



Unfortunately, the title is somewhat disingenuous. While contestants do go up against the Craft Lady of Steel, a humorless, dommed-up stylist from *Martha Stewart Living*, that's about as good as it gets. Instead, prepare yourself for a ham-fisted host you'd like to reach into the TV and smack down yourself, hipsters making trivets, and a set in dire need of gladiator-style embellishments (if the most crap '80s metal bands can spring for pyrotechnics, so can Style Network).

This Stepford Wives stomping ground was bound to be reborn as ironic statement sooner or later, as evidenced by the subway knitting craze and those ubiquitous refashioned rock tees and duct-tape goth roses. The trend is typified by a growing number of websites and books like Leah Kramer's *Craftster.org* that declares, "no tea cozies without irony," and Jean Railla's book *Hip Home Ec*, billed as "part memoir, part punk-rock craft guide."

While it's great that tatted-up twentysomethings build floppy-disk wind chimes, does that minimize the artistry that goes into a painstakingly stitched quilt? Says Deathmatch judge and owner of L.E.S. trimmings boutique **Bocage** Stephanie Kheder, "You'll see that current craft trends still reference home economics, which says this is about a typecast, not an art . . . now it's hip with a new generation, but is it a lasting hip?"

Kheder sees an ideal middle ground in the superb work of fellow panelist Jenny Hart, whose **Sublime Stitching** embroidery patterns include electric guitars and skulls-and-crossbones. "It melds the two worlds because she's marketed these patterns to a trend, but she's done it in a way that has versatile appeal . . . they can be applied anywhere to anything in whatever color you want. How far you can take something is a frame of mind and many current craft trends don't explore that."

Arguably, this fascination takes its most delicious turn not as a one-note indie trend but when it humorously revels in extremes like our lady-on-house-arrest who reintroduced craft to the masses, Martha Stewart, or a show that can ask, "Do you dare to decoupage?" and "Is pain on your palette?" Despite the cheeseball host, we're tuning in for this week's episode: "The Snack-Cake Wedding Cake Cage Match."

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