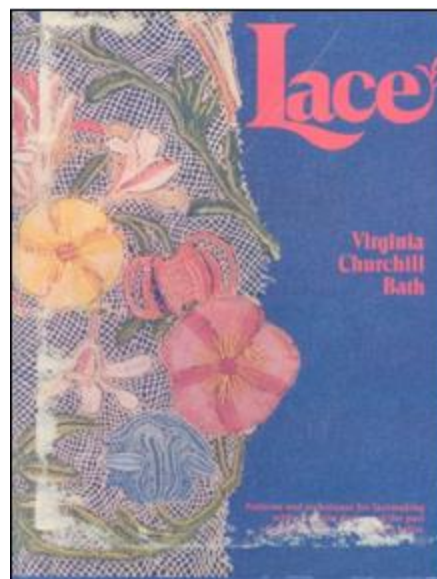


Lace

Virginia Churchill Bath

How influential was Virginia Churchill Bath? When her **Lace** book was first published there was very little available from American authors on the subject of lace. This makes the fact it was even published quite wonderful.

Bath served on the staff of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1952 to 1971 as a lecturer for museum education and as conservator and assistant curator of the Textile Department. She resigned in 1971 to devote more time to writing, exhibiting, and teaching. A painter, needleworker, designer, teacher, and lecturer - her first book **Embroidery Masterworks: Designs and Techniques for Contemporary Application**, was published in 1972 by Henry Regnery (L.C. 72-183818). The Table of Contents lists 37 items from the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (the 2nd largest art museum in the United States). Text for the 37 antique items suggests contemporary adaptations. This includes drawings and instructions, plus museum photographs of the original items.



Bath's second book is the subject of this review. It was **Lace - Patterns & techniques for lacemaking with exquisite designs of the past adapted for the contemporary artist**, originally published by Henry Regnery in 1974 in hardback (ISBN: 0-8092-8926-1). In 1979, **Lace** was republished by Penguin Books (ISBN 0-14-046-378 X) with a soft cover. **Lace** is the size of an art book, and contains 320 pages.

This book has diagrams and instructions for lace making in 4 categories: net works, needle laces, bobbin laces, and mixed laces. History is scattered throughout, being the leading information given when each new lace subject is introduced: from simple netting of the earliest human societies through the sumptuous laces of the Renaissance to the exquisite 18th and 19th C. products. The works of some of the best modern lace artists of the mid-20th century are also represented, including several by the author. These artists were discovering the complexity and potential of lace. Photos of their works document that lace making offers artists as much freedom of personal expression as painting or drawing.

This book was published long before the clarity of digital photography became available. Nevertheless, there are many black and white photographs and some in color, an Acknowledgements page listing familiar lace experts (Santina Levey being one), and a long list of references in the Bibliography. The Suppliers page is completely out-of-date. A lot of book for your investment and very inexpensive. If you search the internet for a used copy, it will cost less than many magazines.

In 1979, Bath wrote **Needlework in America: History, Designs and Techniques**, published by Viking (ISBN 0-670-50575-7). This book contains a 24-page chapter, starting on page 300: "White Embroidery and Lace".

Those who bought these books in the 1970's considered them quite a valuable resource. Many lace and embroidery books have been written since that time. It will be up to you to decide how valuable Bath's books are 40+ years after original publication.

Jeri Ames