

P O R T R A I T

Shay Pendray

CATHERINE AMOROSO LESLIE

Shay Pendray is a teacher, lecturer, designer, host of the PBS television series *Needle Arts Studio*, and owner of a retail needlework shop, a production company, and a company that manufactures and distributes needlework products. She is the author of four books, including *Shay Pendray's Inventive Needlework: Techniques and Inspiration for Gold Work, Painted Canvas, and Shading* (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause, 2004) and *The Needleworker's Companion* (Loveland, Colorado: Interweave Press, 2002).



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Kiju Fukuda, a National Living Treasure of Japanese embroidery. Pendray was the driving force in bringing Japanese embroidery to the United States. She has taught the technique to thousands of students from around the world.

Pendray has received the Excellence in Needlework Award from the National NeedleArts Association, a Life Achievement Award from the National Academy of Needlearts, DMC Teacher of the Year, and the American Needlepoint Guild's Literary Award. In 2000, the National Association of

Pendray has studied Japanese embroidery for more than eighteen years. Her four *sensei* (teachers) in Japan include

Women Business Owners named Pendray one of the top ten businesswomen in the state of Michigan.

Catherine Leslie: What is your idea of perfect needlework happiness?

Shay Pendray: Perfect needlework happiness is sitting at my floor frame working on my Japanese embroidery surrounded by two or three other people who love it as much as I do.

CL: What is your greatest fear when doing needlework?

SP: I don't have fears; I always enjoy needlework, and if I make a mistake, I just call it a "creative happening."

CL: Which historical needleworker do you most identify with?

SP: The late Muriel Baker was my mentor. She took me under her wing and gave me great advice. She once told me that I would some day stop teaching at small gatherings and write

a book to reach more students.

CL: What is your greatest extravagance in needlework?

SP: Hundreds of tubes of flat silk and many more threads than I will ever use in my lifetime.

CL: Which needlework talent would you most like to have?

SP: Some of my students are faster than I am (and technically some are better stitchers than I, but I am always thrilled at how good they are), and I would like to be faster.

CL: What do you consider your greatest achievement in your needlework?

SP: My current PBS show—we are reaching 72 million households a week.

CL: What is your favorite part of your work?

SP: Teaching people to do needlework.

CL: What is your needlework motto?

SP: "Stitching toward perfection."

CL: What is your favorite needlework technique?

SP: Japanese embroidery.

CL: What is it that you most dislike about your needlework?

SP: I love my needlework, mistakes and all.

CL: How would you like to be remembered?

SP: As someone who passed needlework on to a new generation.

CL: What is your favorite needlework journey?

SP: Traveling to Japan to study.

CL: What is the most marked characteristic of your needlework?

SP: Most of my pieces combine needlepoint, embroidery, and Japanese

embroidery in the same piece. They are a blend of all the things I have learned over the years.

CL: If you could choose any needlework project, what would it be?

SP: I would finish the 3-by-5-foot (1-by-1.5 m) rug my late husband Don and I started several years ago.

CL: When and where have you been happiest doing needlework?

SP: Stitching in the evening while Don watched television.

CL: What is the greatest love of your needlework life?

SP: Seeing my grandchildren stitching with me.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.

Catherine Amoroso Leslie is an assistant professor in the School of Fashion Design and Merchandising at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.