



indulge.

Over the last decade or so, the embroidered photograph has attracted much attention in contemporary art internationally. In the UK, one of the best-known practitioners is Julie Cockburn. Trained as a sculptor, she uses found photographs as her principal medium to explore uncanny aspects of identity. Many others work in similar styles but examine different ideas. Joana Choumali from Cote d'Ivoire photographed scenes on her iPhone in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the town of Grand-Bassam in 2016 and printed them onto canvas. Choumali's meditative sewn additions helped her reconcile conflicted feelings about a place she once associated with weekend leisure, that became tainted by violence.

I have been watching the emergence of hybrid textile-photography forms for some years with a vested interest. As a collector and researcher of popular visual culture, I have been struck by the powerful visual similarities that exist between embroidered photographs in contemporary art and embroidered postcards sold cheaply and widely across Europe from the first decade of the twentieth century, continuing until at least the 1980s.

By the start of the 20th century, picture postcards were established as a major, novel form of fast and cheap communication media

with a vast array of visual subject matter and styles. Postcards were frequently embellished by hand-colouring and decorative finishing, especially in photographic portraiture, where feathers and human hair enhanced the mostly female sitters' charms. Machine embroidery was used as a decorative effect to enhance clothes depicted, especially florals and lace.

Although embellished cards were widespread and popular, they were not always warmly received. In 1902, *The Picture Postcard: A Magazine of Travel, Philately, Art* reported that 'all cards having beads, glass dust and such-like ornamentation are...forbidden by the British Post Office'. They added, 'We are very glad this is so'. Its detractors felt "the root idea of such appliqué ornamentation is barbaric in conception, and most inartistic in execution'.

While there are abundant examples of embellished postcards produced in Britain, France and Germany, Spanish embroidered postcards especially focused on the mantillas, traje de luces and shawls of ceremonial, performance and traditional dress. Perhaps the most enduring manifestation of this genre is the embellished flamenco postcards made popular by the boom in European package tourism to southern Spain in the 1960s. These kinds of objects, too, have often been dismissed as mass-produced kitsch.