

# HYPERALLERGIC

## The Artists Who Found Inspiration in Isolation

In the age of “social distancing,” reflecting on works by a number of artists who found themselves isolated, detained, or bed-ridden for various reasons.

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Ray Materson, *Til Death Due Us Part*, (courtesy of Ray Materson)

Sentenced to 15 years in a state penitentiary after committing a series of robberies, Ray Materson taught himself to embroider in prison. He used the threads of unraveled socks and a sewing needle borrowed from a guard to stitch tiny tapestries — most measured two and a half by three inches and contained around 1,200 stitches per square inch. While many of them imagined life outside bars, others depicted the harsh realities of his drug addiction. “I had to remind myself of the prison, so to speak, that got me literally locked up. That was my addiction to drugs,” he told Hyperallergic.

The Midwestern artist’s story is among the most astonishing and hope-inspiring examples of creativity flourishing under improbable circumstances.