

VENUS

MANHATTAN | LOS ANGELES

Young, Allison, Medalla's *A Stitch in Time* in New York, *Wallpaper**,
July 27, 2016.

Wallpaper*

Sewn up: visitors are invited to embellish David Medalla's *A Stitch in Time* in New York



Standing on the elegant spiral staircase of London's Apsley House, former home of the first Duke of Wellington, artist David Medalla is photographed holding a swathe of tattered yellow fabric. He faces Antonio Canova's sculptural rendering of *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker*, a heroic statue at almost 4m high, and a commissioned gift from Italian artist to French emperor until it moved across the channel following England's victory at Waterloo. Medalla's offering, modest by comparison, has likewise traveled through many hands: entitled *A Stitch in Time*, the textile work is adorned with messages, keepsakes and detritus sewn on by numerous collaborators. Pictured likewise

before Big Ben, Piccadilly Circus and beyond, the piece is a kind of travelogue through history and geography, both within and outside itself.

Medalla, a Manila-born artist, world-traveller and pioneer of kinetic art, conceived of *A Stitch in Time* in the 1960s when he gave handkerchiefs to two ex-lovers in Heathrow airport, with instructions to embroider whatever they pleased; he encountered one of the cloths years later, carried by a backpacker from Bali to Amsterdam.

The ensuing series explores themes of time, circulation and chance encounters, and it continues at New York's Venus Over Manhattan, where a new iteration is currently in production (alongside an earlier 2013 version). Spools of coloured thread dangle over the nearly 8m-long cloth, so that visitors may add words, pictures or small items like receipts and candy wrappers. In this paranoid year of border restrictions and global distrust, Medalla's utopian vision is a welcome homage to serendipity and interconnectedness.

- Allison Young

