

# DISCOVER

Science, Technology, and The Future



***“...Splan swathes scientific observation in elegance. Splan’s creations demand a double take—a second look that reveals the scholarly rigor behind the pretty surface ... embroidery is begotten by blood-borne disease...”***

## Discover Magazine

Art: *Of Doilies and Disease*

Review by Stephen Ornes

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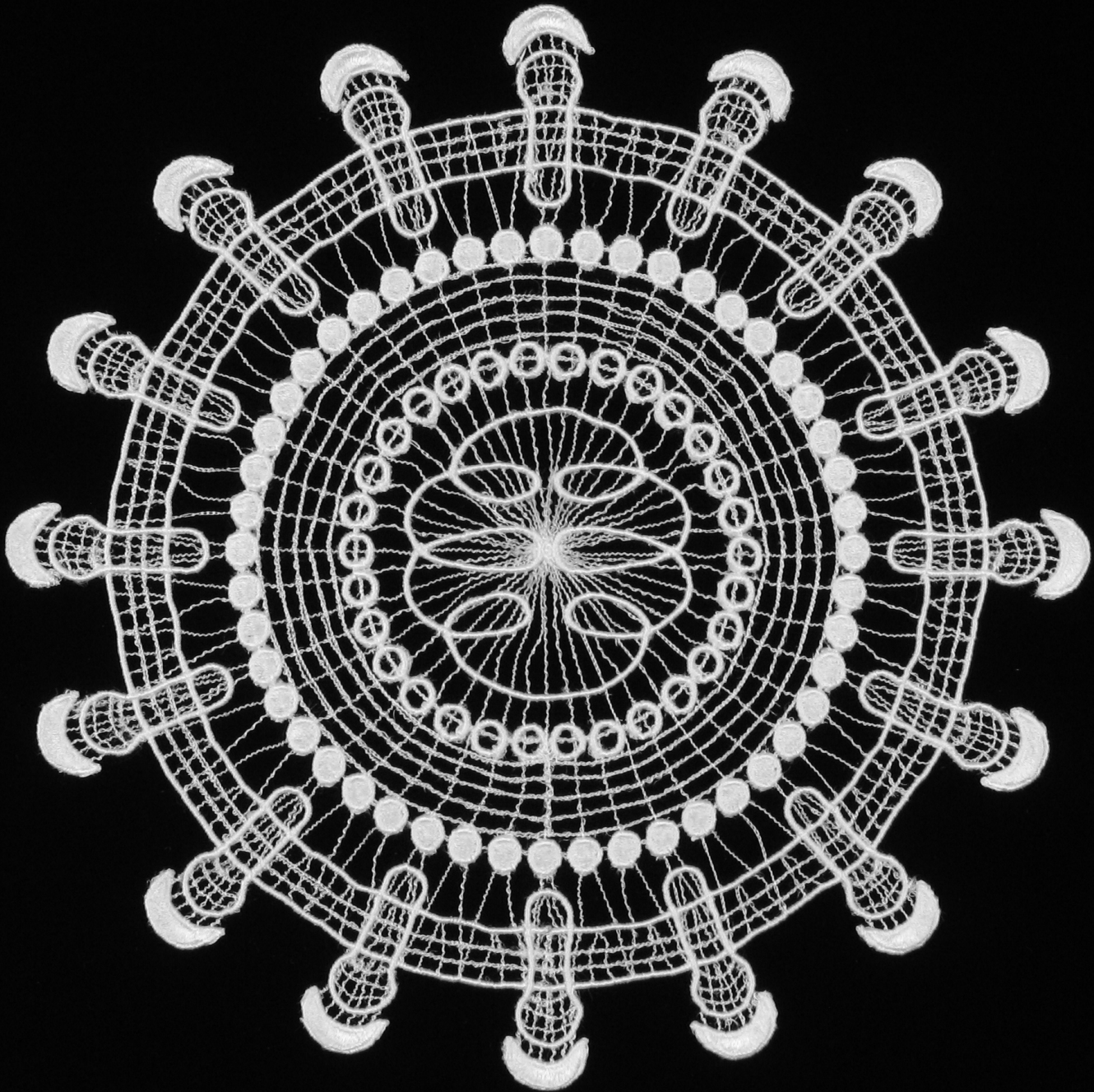
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### ART Of Doilies and Disease

“Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it,” said Confucius. Two sculptors are uncovering beauty in unexpected places: one by forging the formulas of mathematics into metal constructions (above), one by weaving the structure of deadly viruses into delicate lace (opposite).

The steel-bronze works of Bathsheba Grossman ([www.bathsheba.com](http://www.bathsheba.com)), a math-

ematical sculptor from Santa Cruz, California, often depict a “minimal surface,” which is the smallest possible area that can occupy a given boundary. A triply periodic shape, like the gyroid above, divides three-dimensional space into equal but tangled halves. Its intricate patterns are common in the microscopic world, from the matrices of liquid crystal molecules



(like those in laptop displays) to the intracellular compartments of living organisms.

Brooklyn-based artist Laura Splan ([www.laurasplan.com](http://www.laurasplan.com)) also swathes scientific observation in elegance. Inspired by microbiology, Splan has crafted what are perhaps the world's creepiest doilies. Layers of stitches form delicate portraits of pathogens: HIV (depicted above), herpes, SARS, influenza,

and hepadnavirus, which causes hepatitis B. The genetic material of the virus is depicted in the doily's center, and viral surface proteins appear as protuberances around the edge. The discs retain the dainty grace of an antique armrest cover. Splan says she aims to inspire "beauty and horror, comfort and discomfort." In previous projects, she has made pillowcases that look like skin

and has painted delicate patterns of neurons with her own blood.

Grossman's sculptures and Splan's creations demand a double take—a second look that reveals the scholarly rigor behind the pretty surface. Solid metal contortions emerge from equations; embroidery is begotten by blood-borne disease.

**Stephen Ornes**