

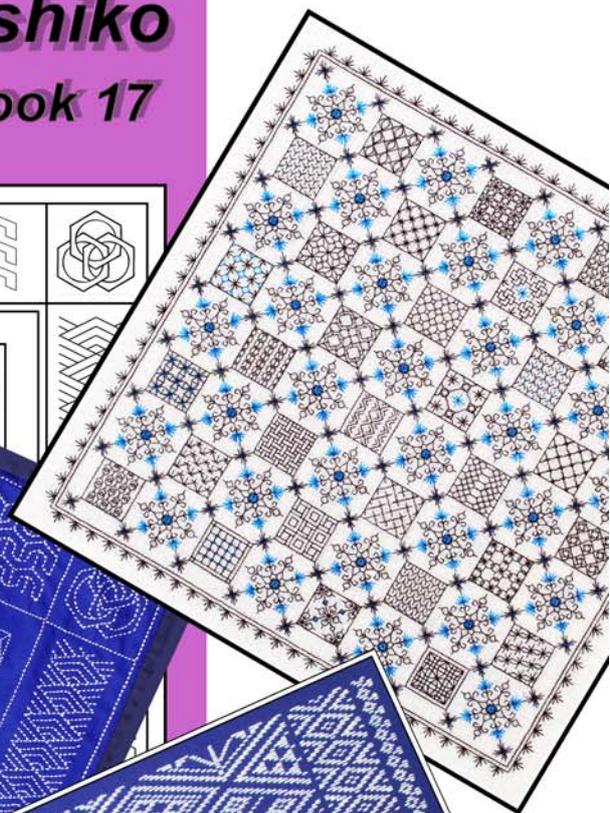
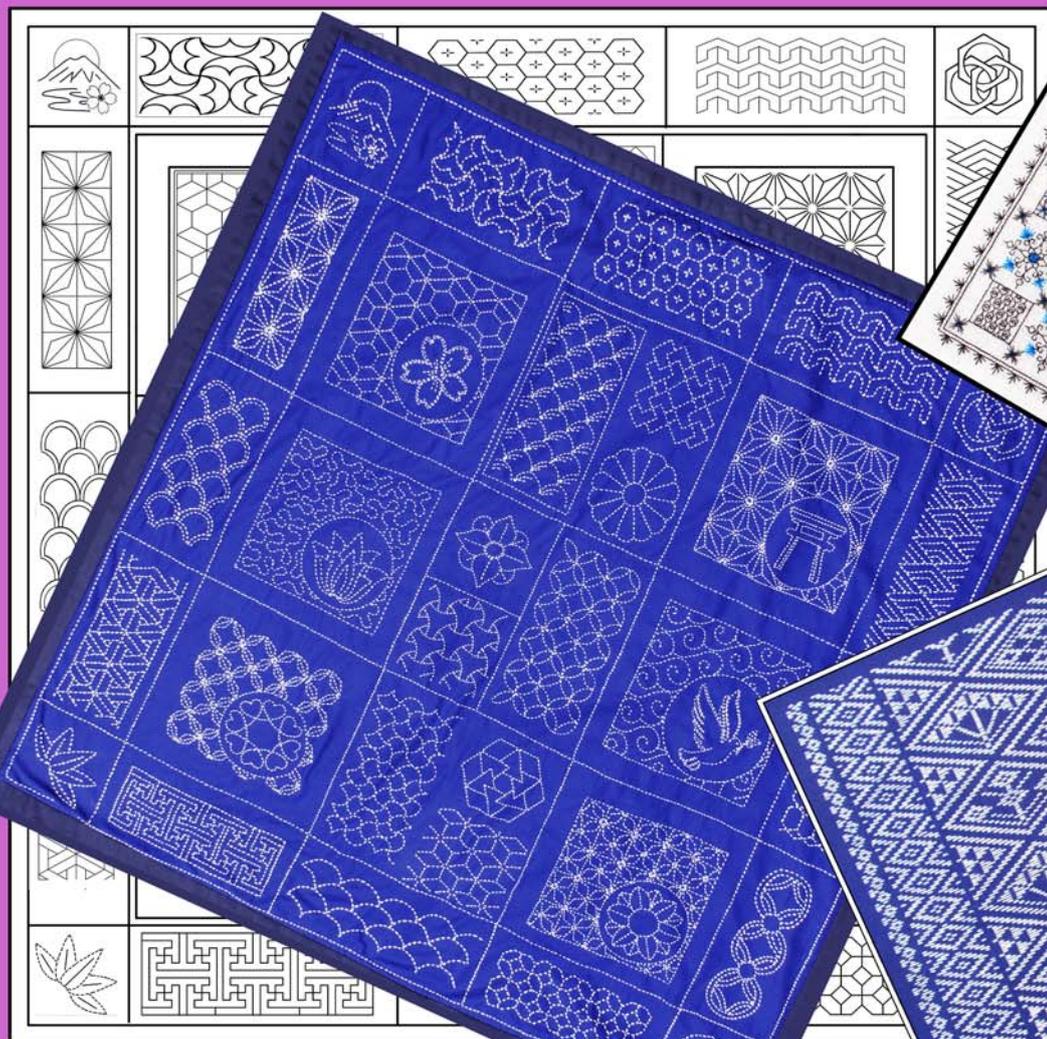


Blackwork Journey Blog

June 2020



Blackwork Journey Little Book of Sashiko E - Book 17



31 Sashiko Patterns

The passing of time

By settling into a new routine as the lockdown continues in the UK due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the days seem to have passed by very quickly and suddenly June has crept up on me! Apart from my weekly outing to do the food shopping, the remainder of my time has been spent designing charts and stitching, along with gardening, housework and numerous calls to family and friends which have been very important as has the input from my Facebook groups which have now grown to over 9,000 members.

It is difficult for everyone when the freedoms we take so much for granted are curtailed, but needlework has been a support and pleasure for so many people during this period. I receive e-mails every day from all parts of the world from the Blackwork Journey family and whilst some people are unsettled by it all, the majority have been very positive and are looking forward to the time when normal life resumes.

During this period, I have added a number of projects to the Facebook groups to encourage members to try new techniques and explore small projects which can be made from the materials most of us have tucked away. I wanted this period to be a positive one and set out to design an e-book to remember this unusual time in our lives. It has been nick-named 'Liz's Covid-19 Quilt', but in fact it is a...

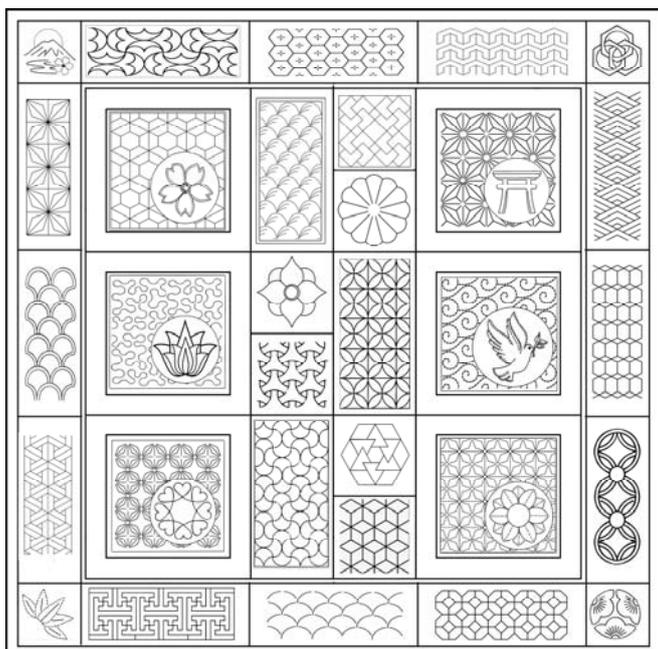
New for June! EB0017 'Little Book of Sashiko'

This sashiko sampler quilt consists of 9 ten inch squares and 16 border blocks drawn directly onto a 54 x 54 inch square of fabric. The total width of the quilt is 44 x 44 inches. The block designs can also be worked on 10 inch blocks and then pieced together to make a smaller lap quilt. The book contains 52 pages of photographs, charts along with information about Japan and sashiko.

Each square contains one or more sashiko patterns, some of which are traditional and others that have been designed especially for this project. The quilt is 'in the style of' rather than a completely traditional interpretation. Information about materials, threads, instructions, blocks and borders are all included. All the patterns are full size ready to trace directly onto the fabric.

The e-book is divided into three sections:

Part 1 Blocks 1 – 15 and Part 2 Borders A – P finished with a log cabin border. Part 3 Blocks and Borders Full size patterns



EB0017 Little Book of Sashiko

I have also added two more designs to 'Charts' this month



CH0398 'Explosion of Kogin'

Design Area: 14.71 x 14.57 inches, 206 x 204 stitches

Material size: 18 x 18 inches minimum.

The model was worked on navy 14 count Aida using four strands of DMC white floss.

Alternative colour scheme: white fabric, blue floss.

Note: If eyesight is a problem work dark coloured threads on light fabric.

Suitable fabrics for pattern darning design should be easy to count with a smooth texture. The pattern can be worked on Zweigart 14 or 16 count Aida, 28 count evenweave, or 20 count Lugaga.

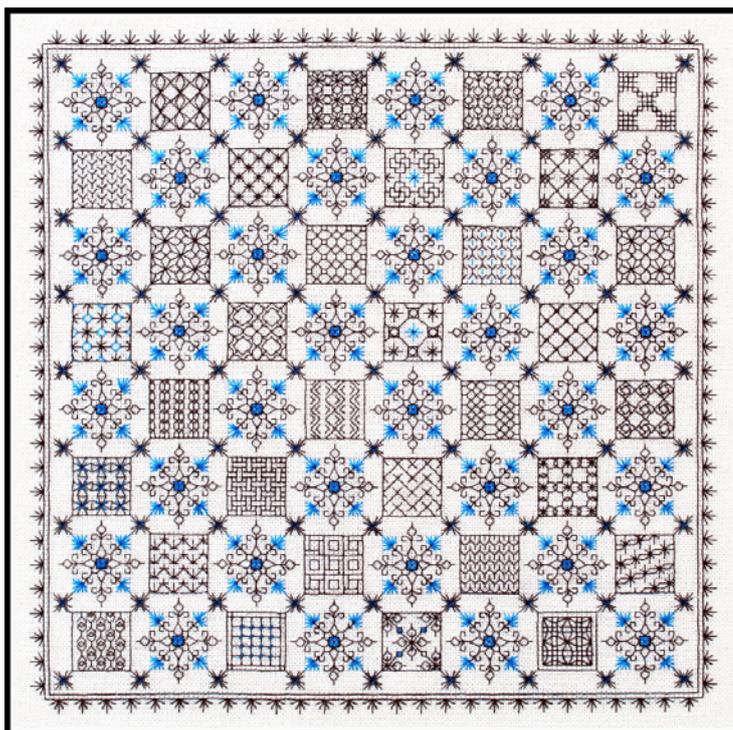
Depending on the fabric chosen, the size and appearance of the design will differ slightly. Aida - One block would be left between each row of stitches.

28 count evenweave, two threads would be left between each row.

20 count evenweave, one thread would be left

between each row as in traditional Japanese kogin embroidery.

Adjust the thickness of the thread to suit the fabric chosen. Experiment with different threads to find one you enjoy working with. Crochet cottons and knitting cottons can also be used.



CH0399 'Which Stitch'

Design Area: 10.14 x 10.14 inches, 142 x 142 stitches

Material size:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 14 x 14 inches minimum

This consist of 32 different blackwork patterns and 32 blackwork motifs which link the different patterns. The design can be worked in any colour combination, as a block, diagonal or horizontal bands.

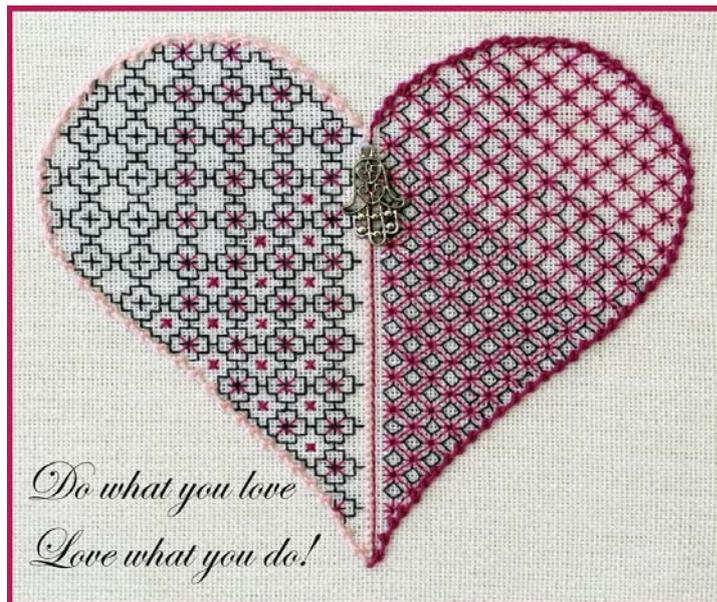
Two designs have also been added this month to the 'Freebies' section.

FR0180 Simplicity in a Classroom



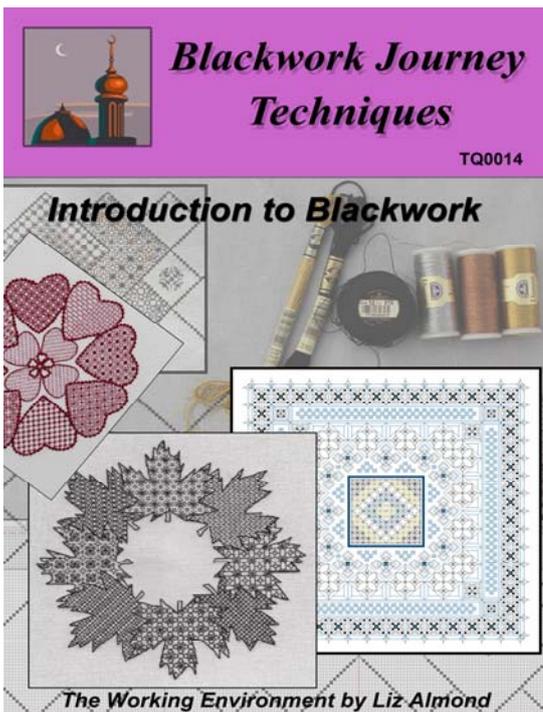
Learn how to work diagonal stitches and build up patterns using the charts and instructions. The samples can be made into small gifts.

FR0181 Do what you love



Draw the heart onto the fabric using the template provided and fill the two halves with different blackwork filler patterns. Learn how to do simple shading by adding or removing stitches.

In July I have added another free design of a heart with pulled thread filler patterns. This is where the embroidery stitches pull the threads of the fabric together to create the pattern, unlike drawn thread work where the fabric is cut and threads removed.



All embroidery takes practise to achieve the right tension and appearance. Working through some of the free designs gives the needlewoman the opportunity to try new techniques before starting on larger projects. If the designs include stitches that are unfamiliar have a spare piece of fabric, a 'doodle' cloth to try them out first. This can save a lot of unpicking on the main design. Maureen, a friend in Montreal, introduced me to this idea a long time ago and I have recommended it ever since!

If you are new to blackwork embroidery there are some PDFs in 'Techniques' on the site to help you.



Exhibition Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London is one of the world's most influential museums and their current exhibition is on a subject I find really interesting and would love to have visited. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic the exhibition has been closed.

However, on YouTube there are five video tours of the exhibition. Having watched the videos several times, I have thoroughly enjoyed them. There are wonderful examples of modern kimonos which will certainly challenge your perceptions of this ancient garment.

'The ultimate symbol of Japan, the kimono is often perceived as traditional, timeless and unchanging. Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk, the UK's first major exhibition on kimono, counters this conception, presenting the garment as a dynamic and constantly evolving icon of fashion.'



<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/inside-the-kimono-kyoto-to-catwalk-exhibition>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEf0iFNTVGw&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2TqnUwtRelh-ED5EwldGBmbYQVjkY2viTB-xQY74HIvkbTahNxOlg7frY>

'Antique kimono are displayed for the first time on bespoke mannequins, showing off the rich fashion history of the garment in all its three-dimensional glory' The Guardian

'Sex and secrecy, politics and power, fashion and film, anxiety and influence: all can be traced through the kimono' The Telegraph

Don't throw anything away!

I have been using lockdown to clear out my studio and have a general sort through of all the fabrics I have accumulated over the years. I placed a pile of scraps in the bin and then had second thoughts. Some of the scraps were very pretty and the colours blended, so I took a piece of fabric I had marbled some time ago and started to lay the scraps onto a background square of calico. I tacked the pieces into position and drew a vertical and horizontal grid across the fabric using a water-soluble pen.

The stitching was done in a matt cotton crochet cotton using a sashiko needle. Sashiko needles are longer, stronger and less inclined to bend than a normal needle and it passed through the layers quite easily. I thought about using the square to make a cushion, but lurking on a shelf was a pair of thick navy curtains. I washed one to see whether the colour would run and to allow for shrinkage.



I used the hem for the top of the bag, the side seams to make the handles and picked a blue cotton for the lining.



Before I made the bag up I took a second look at the back and thought it was rather plain! How could I do something in keeping with the Japanese style front? Should I applique some more fabric onto the back or should I just draw a sashiko pattern and pick up on some of the colours from the front?

I decided to stitch an interlocking grid pattern and a kiku (chrysanthemum) and asanoha (hemp) motif in a circle. I used two strands of Cotton Perlé No 5 and was pleased with the end result. I made the bag up and lined it.

Literally, something from nothing!

My thinking behind e-books and charts in answer to Sue's questions

On the Facebook group I asked the question whether you, as readers would be interested if I combined all the sashiko style stitching that I have been working on during the Covid-19 pandemic into two e-books.

I would never set myself up as an 'expert' in any of the work that I produce for Blackwork Journey. I stitch and teach what I enjoy and have done so for fifty years. Many of you like the work that I produce, but Sue raised a number of questions, so I will outline my thinking.

Sue Pusey

I am very interested in your e-books, my questions to you are:

- 1. What would you prefer to do with regard to the amount of work involved?*
- 2. What do you think your customers would buy - you know your customers best; and*
- 3. What is the cost? As you know already, cost and affordability is always key to your customers and you for a successful outcome.*

I know cost will not stop me buying if I like what I see, but I am also aware this is not always the case with others.

As always flexibility is key.

Elizabeth, maybe I have thrown up more questions than answers - my apologies.'

My answers

The two potential e-books are 'A Little Book of Sashiko' and 'Pink Sashiko' (final title to be decided!) The designs are 'in the style' of because I have created a number of my own patterns and motifs, rather than adhering to established sashiko patterns. I am very mindful of the history and traditions behind Japanese sashiko and have linked what I have designed to what I have experienced whilst in Japan and have researched since.

An e-book for me is a journey. I take an idea, or a subject then explore and expand it by adding charts, diagrams, photographs and information to create an experience. There is always a story behind what I do and if I can share the thinking behind the story it puts the work into context and makes it enjoyable for both the writer and the reader. The time spent on putting one together is substantial, but for me it is part of the way I encourage other people to enjoy embroidery as much as I do.

Cost is always a factor and something that I have always borne in mind with my Blackwork Journey designs. I want people to be able to enjoy embroidery and to try new techniques. When you take into account the cost of fabrics and threads it can add up to a substantial amount and may be more than many people can afford. My e-books are priced at £8.00 - £8.50 and that will remain the same regardless of the size of the e-book or the work involved. The charts vary from £3.50 - £6.50, but there is a very large 'Freebies' section for readers who want to try a new technique, or are unable to buy charts.

I listen to what my readers tell me, through the website and from the Facebook groups and through e-mails directly to me. As readers you have a choice whether to buy charts or not, to read the Blogs on the website, investigate the charts, projects and e-books.

I like the opportunity of working directly with readers through the Facebooks groups and being able to offer help and encouragement if it is needed. Buying the charts and the e-books helps to run the website and pay my webmaster it does not pay for the hours I spend designing or stitching and I think any designer would say we are not in this to make a fortune but for the love of what we do.

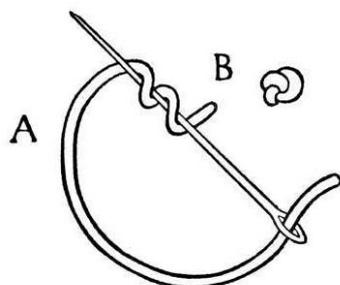
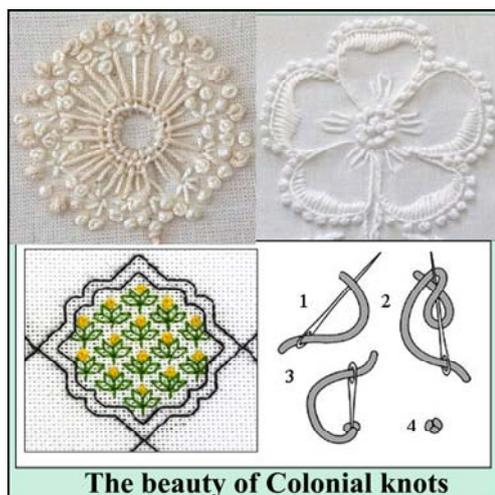
Sue, I hope I have answered your questions.

We are all part of a needlework community doing something that we love and in this very difficult time I don't think we have ever needed the encouragement and support of each other more. Sometimes I wonder why I am doing what I do and then I see the work that comes in and comments and support and I know it is all well worthwhile!

Using Colonial knots

Many people are frightened of working knots on their embroidery whether they are French or Colonial knots. Some people avoid them altogether by using beads. They are not difficult to do but both require practice.

Personally I prefer Colonial knots. They are easy to stitch and always look the same on the fabric. They are neat, can be worked in a variety of threads adding texture and interest to the embroidery.



which one you prefer.

The thread is wrapped twice round the needle when making a French knot whereas the thread is wrapped in a figure-of-eight round the needle when making a Colonial knot. Try both stitches in a variety of threads to see

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog and the new designs that have been added. If you have any queries please contact:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching and stay safe!

Liz