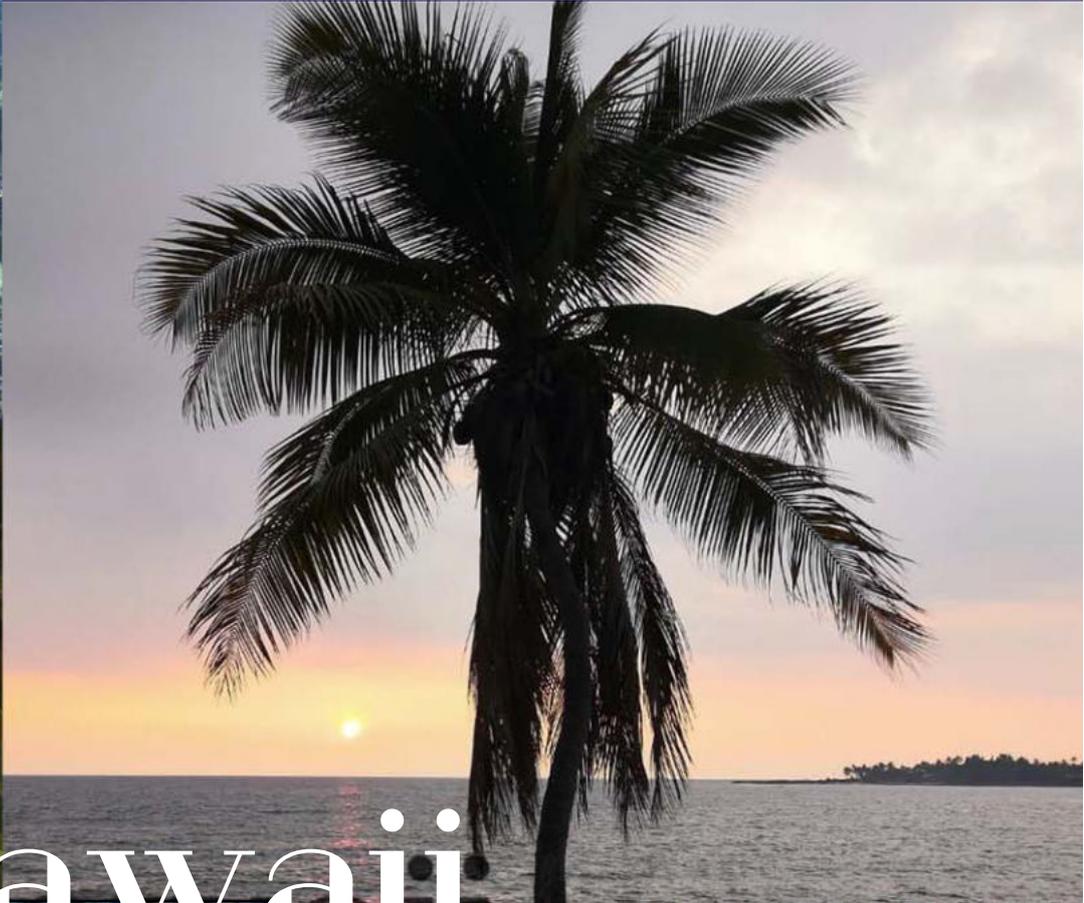




Blackwork Journey Blog

November 2023



Hawaii



Back to reality!

Having spent most of September on holiday overseas, October and November have been occupied packing kits for upcoming workshops and talks and preparing Christmas activities for my local craft groups.

Preparing workshops and tailoring them to specific groups takes a considerable amount of planning as the days are long gone when students could be asked to go the nearest fabric shop and buy some threads, pre-washed materials or suitable cottons and so it often comes down to the tutor to provide everything that a student needs for the day.

If the tutor has to purchase fabric from the internet account has to be taken of postal delays, insufficient supplies at the warehouse etc. “Out of stock”, “unable to give a delivery date” seems to be the common message, whether it is printing inks or general supplies and whilst buying from the internet is useful, there are times when you need to see and feel the fabric concerned and check the actual thread colours.

“Quilt Passions” in Kaila Kona, Hawaii – a needleworker’s treasure! www.quiltpassions.net



Before visiting Hawaii on holiday, I had researched needlework and quilt shops, location and opening times.

“Quilt Passions” in Kaila Kona, Hawaii ticked all the boxes, but would it live up to my expectations?

I want to do some Hawaiian quilting, but was having difficulty in finding the right fabrics with the vibrant traditional patterns and colours. To see some completed quilts would be a bonus.



We set off for the shop with great expectations slightly daunted by the road sign!

The shop was large, bright and welcoming with very friendly and helpful staff. Hawaiian-themed quilts and patterns created by local designers, who capture the culture and history of the islands were on display. My husband was able to take photographs whilst I browsed the shelves choosing fabric, threads and books.

I have a passion for owls and fell in love with this owl quilt!



Why is Hawaiian quilting different?

Hawaiian quilting is a distinctive style that uses large, symmetric applique patterns. Stylised motifs, often flowers, trees and animals such as whales and turtles are worked in bold colours on a white background.

It is made from a single cut on folded fabric. Quilting stitches normally follow the contours of the applique design.

The history of Hawaiian quilting is very interesting and I saw many examples across the islands. Hawaiian quilting derives from the kapa moe, an indigenous bed cover textile. Kapa was constructed from the inner bark of local trees. Traditional kapa was beaten and felted, then dyed in geometric patterns.



I have seen and worked with many unusual fabrics, but the history and use of the kappa cloth in traditional quilts made me appreciate how much we take for granted when we buy a length of fabric!





Kapa cloth was soft and flexible for weaving and dying for clothing but was not suitable for quilting

A nearly lost art rediscovered

Kapa making nearly became a lost art. After western contact, woven cloth became readily available, eliminating in the need for this labour intensive process.

In fact, kapa making disappeared altogether within a century after Captain James Cook and his crew first encountered what are now known as the Hawaiian Islands.

Quilting may have begun in the Hawaiian Islands with the arrival of missionaries and western fabrics in the 1820's. The climate of Hawaii is unsuitable for cotton cultivation, so all Hawaiian quilts are constructed from imported material. Trees, ferns, fruits, flowers - nature provided endless inspiration for their designs, which were based on the "snowflake" paper cutting they had learned from the missionaries. The appliques were quilted on material of a complementary hue with tiny stitches (six to twelve per inch) through a cloth backing and a padding made from wool, cotton, domestic animal hair or soft pulu (tree fern fibres). Rows of stitching about a half-inch apart followed the curves of the pattern, creating an "echo" effect much like the ripple of waves along the shore.

Making kapa cloth

Ancient Hawaiian women were masters at creating cloth from the bark of the wauke (paper mulberry) tree. Called kapa in Hawaiian, this type of cloth is known as tapa in other parts of Polynesia. Making kapa was a laborious, time-consuming process. It began with the cultivation of wauke, which was planted in rows approximately two feet apart and nurtured to grow straight and tall for at least a year. When the stalks were one to two inches in diameter, they were harvested and stripped with the bony plate of a turtle or a sharp shell. Bark strips were coiled, then soaked in water for about a week to soften them. For the first pounding, the strips were laid across a stone anvil and beaten with a round beater (called a hohoa), which made the strips long and thin. These strips (called mo'omo'o) were then laid out in the sun to bleach and ferment.

Soak and beat again

After another soaking, the mo'omo'o were overlapped and beaten again, but this time on a wooden anvil with a four-sided beater (called a i'e kuku) until the desired size, shape, and seamlessness was achieved. One side of the i'e kuku had deep grooves to break down the bark; two other sides contained finer grooves which imprinted a sort of "watermark" on the cloth, which was unique to Hawaiian kapa. Finishing touches were made with the fourth, smooth side of the i'e kuku, then the cloth was again laid out in the sun to dry.

Next came the dyeing process. Hawaiian women used leaves, bark, berries and roots of native plants and coloured earth to make dyes for decorating kapa. In fact, the Hawaiian colour palette was so extensive, the resulting kapa was considered among the finest in the world. Dye was applied in several ways, including immersion

Hawaiians were particularly renowned for their complex geometric patterned kapa. After dyeing, kapa was

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often scented by fragrant plants like maile, mokihana berries, and 'iliahi (sandalwood) to mask the fermentation odor.

Finished kapa was fashioned into malo (men's loincloths), women's pa 'u skirts and kihei (rectangular capes tied in a knot on one shoulder) worn by both men and women. Several layers were sewn together to make kapa moe (sleeping blankets). Other uses for kapa depended on caste and a person's place in ancient Hawaiian society.

In the 1970's, a resurgence of interest and pride in Hawaiian culture prompted artisans, like Big Island's Puanani Van Dorpe (now deceased) to research the bygone techniques and attempt to revive the art of kapa making. Since there were no living role models, Van Dorpe consulted with scientists and scholars and gathered information from books, legends, chants and museum examples. She conducted more than 1,000 experiments in the production of kapa and another 300 experiments in the use of natural dyes.

Today, there are a handful of kapa makers on each island. Together, they've successfully revived a nearly lost art that begins with the life force of the land which, when combined with the spirit of the artisan, is passed on to the wearer.



The information about kapa was displayed in the Kona Hawaiian Quilt Museum which is located next to and maintained by the "Quilt Passions" shop. The museum contains examples of both historic and modern quilts to view and purchase.

Create a Hawaiian applique design

Equipment and materials:

Square of cotton backing fabric 12 x 12 inches. Fabric for applique 10 x 10 inches.

Fine wadding 12 x 12 inches. Muslin backing 12 x 12 inches.

Reel of matching quilting thread.

HB pencil or water-soluble pen, pins, quilting needle, tacking cotton.

Step 1 To make a paper template, fold a square of paper into half and half again to make a small square. The square will have two cut edges and two folded edges. Bring the two folded edges together to form a triangle and press. All the cut edges will be on one side of the triangle. This is like cutting paper snowflakes out when I was a little girl!

Step 2 Trace your pattern onto the folded paper and cut out carefully. This will be your template. Open up the paper template and pin it to the square of fabric. Draw round the template using a water-soluble pen or an HB pencil.

Step 3 Cut the applique pattern out carefully using small sharp scissors. Place the applique shape on the background fabric and tack into position 0.25 inches away from the raw edges.



Step 4 Using small stitches, turn the raw edge of the applique inwards and slip stitch into position using a quilting needle and matching cotton. Press lightly and then draw quilting lines around the applique on the backing cotton approx. 0.50 inches apart.

Step 5 Tack the top layer, wadding and muslin together to make a “sandwich”. Using matching thread, quilt carefully through all layers using an even running stitch. Once all the lines have been stitched remove tacking threads, press lightly and make up into mat, cushion centre or picture.

*An alternative method is to iron a double sided “Bondaweb” onto the square of applique fabric. Trace the pattern onto the fabric, cut it out, remove the paper backing and iron it on to the backing fabric. There are many brands available worldwide.

*3X Bondaweb 329 - Fusible, Iron On,
Double Sided Sheet - White - 1m x 45cm -
Per Metre*



Hawaiian quilting is more than just a stitch, more than just a tuck and more than just an applique.

Hawaiian quilting is love.

*It is our deepest, sincerest feelings coming forth from your heart
through your hands.*

Poakalani

Two traditional embroidery designs were added to this site in September to support the many people of Hawaii in the wake of the disasterous fire on the island of Maui earlier in the year.



CH0436 Blackwork Hibiscus

“Blackwork Hibiscus” is worked on Zweigart 28 count evenweave, Zweigart 25 count Lugana or 14 count Aida to create a textured free style and counted thread embroidery.



CH0437 Whitework Hibiscus

Unlike CH0436 Blackwork Hibiscus which combines free style and counted embroidery techniques this is a freestyle embroidery design using specialist embroidery stitches.

New charts for November

Two new designs have been added this month to challenge the embroiderer. **PR0079 Floral Wreath** and **PR0080 Drawn Thread Circle**

PR0079 is a freestyle embroidery where the pattern is traced onto the fabric and different embroidery stitches are used to create the design and PR0080 Drawn Thread Circle explores a different counted thread technique.



PR0079 Floral Wreath

Creating a floral wreath using textured stitches is both interesting and challenging. Use new stitches from the “Stitch Dictionary” and familiar ones to produce a unique design.

Fabric: Medium weight pre-washed calico, cotton twill, cotton sateen or fine denim, 11 x 11 inches to allow for framing.

Explore the threads you have in your stash. Experiment with different thicknesses and types of thread.

Frame: 8 inch flexi-ring or frame 8 x 8 inches
Needles: Crewel needles - sharp point large eyes, sewing needle
Embroidery frame or ring.

PR0079 Floral Wreath can be found in 'Projects' on the Blackwork Journey website

If you enjoy freestyle embroidery and need small Christmas gifts, may I remind you of **EB0024 Christmas in September!** where there are twelve different ideas to explore.

Handmade gifts are always appreciated and many readers often start Christmas projects in September. The designs are simple to create using card circles of different sizes, textured embroidery stitches, oddments of thread in different thicknesses and small pieces of fabric. They can also be used for cards or framed as small gifts. There are 8 freestyle designs and four counted thread patterns worked on Aida or evenweave fabric. Templates have been included, but it is easy to draw round a glass, use a compass or a CD to create the perfect circle. The six freestyle designs list the textured stitches and instructions for each stitch. Stranded floss, matt crochet cotton. Cotton P rle No’s 8 and 5 have all been used to create the designs.



PR0080 Drawn Thread Circle

I was asked to design a small piece of embroidery with drawn thread work and textured stitches for a workshop in 2024 and thought that the design would be a suitable addition to the site for readers wanting to practice a new technique.

What is drawn thread work?

Drawn thread work is a form of counted thread embroidery based on removing threads from the warp and/or the weft of a piece of even-weave fabric. The remaining threads are grouped or bundled together into a variety of patterns. Whilst this is not as simple as pulled thread work where no threads are removed from the design, it is very satisfying to do.



White thread on white fabric can be difficult so consider using pastel or variegated threads! Careful preparation is the key!

2024 Future project

I am currently working on a major new project for 2024 along the lines of “Save the Stitches” which many readers enjoyed. It is taking longer than I anticipated to design, chart and stitch, but it will have several hundred blackwork patterns included and many ways in which the designs can be worked from a single motif to different layouts. I hope to announce more details shortly.

I hope you have enjoyed this month’s Blog. If you have any queries please contact me at:
lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching,

Liz