



Blackwork Journey

Techniques

TQ0001

Lights and Lenses



The Working Environment by Liz Almond

THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Comfortable Seating

Comfortable seating and the correct sitting position are as important as the equipment you use. Long periods of sitting in an unsuitable chair, with poor general posture, often results in neck and shoulder pain. The most suitable chair for long term use should be well padded with soft arm rests and provide adequate lumbar support so that the lower back region is adequately supported. The cushion of the chair needs to be wider than your hips and deep enough to support the front part of your thighs. If the chair is too big your back will not be fully supported. The height of the chair should allow both feet to be placed flat on the floor. Try not to cross your legs and relax!

Make sure you have all your materials and equipment near at hand so you don't have to stretch out for them.



Fig.1 These chairs provides all the features listed above allowing me to work in comfort for long periods of time both in the lounge and working at the computer.

Lighting and Lenses

Once you are sitting comfortably, let's consider your eyesight and lighting. Eyesight is the most fundamental issue to address, so start asking yourself when you last had your eyesight checked? If you cannot see to thread a needle or stitch without discomfort, then the time may have come to consider glasses and

consider the many items of equipment on the market which could make a real difference.

Obviously you need the best possible lighting. If working in daylight, sit near a window with the natural light on your work. Never work in your own shadow, either when using natural light or a lamp.

If it is necessary to use an artificial light, it is worth investing in a good quality one.



Fig.2 Liz with clip light and lens

There are many types around but I have found the ones with a daylight simulation bulb especially helpful as they are particularly suitable for organising thread colours as well as reducing eyestrain and glare. These bulbs can be obtained from most good craft stores or via the Internet <http://daylightcompany.com> is a site worth examining to see the wide variety of products available:

- Floor lamps
- Table lamps
- Portable lamps
- Magnifying lamps
- Stitching stands
- Easel & studio lamps
- UV lamps & heat lamps
- LED Magnifiers
- Magnifiers
- Accessories
- Bulbs & tubes



Fig.3 Light round the lens



Fig.5 LED MicroMax Light



Fig.4 Daylight simulation bulb

Magnifying Lamps

A magnifying lamp is worth considering. This combines a light and a lens together in the same unit. There is a whole range available on the market and whether it is a floor stand or a desk lamp, the combination of light and suitable lenses can make sewing far less stressful. My personal preference is for a desktop combination but a floor lamplight/lens may suit your situation better but there are a number of points to consider before purchasing quite an expensive piece of equipment:

There are different levels of magnification and some of the lenses also incorporate a small area of much higher magnification, which is useful for threading needles or examining stitches in detail. Consider a number of different options before making your choice, to determine what strength of lens is needed and in what combination. If the natural light where you usually work is particularly good, simple lenses without lights are available which can be clipped to a table or an embroidery frame. These can be more useful and often more flexible than a light which has to be connected to an electricity supply.



Fig.6 A collection of lights and lenses with different feet enable a choice to be made as to which one is the most suitable for the task in mind. The large one has a battery container as well as an electric connection enabling it to be used clipped to an embroidery hoop or sitting on a table with the power connected.



Fig.7

- a. Clip on mains /battery light Clip on Mains/Battery Lamp: Clip on Battery lamp designed specifically for needlework and crafts.*
- b. Halogen light*
- c. Floor stand*

d. Ultimate desk top equipment

The flexible head of the clip on battery light is designed to put the light precisely where you need it. This clips to almost anything from hoops and frames to books and charts. Mains or battery operated for work anywhere convenient.

Clip on Halogen light allows you to focus light exactly where it is required but has no lens attached.

The floor stand has all the features required but is less mobile.

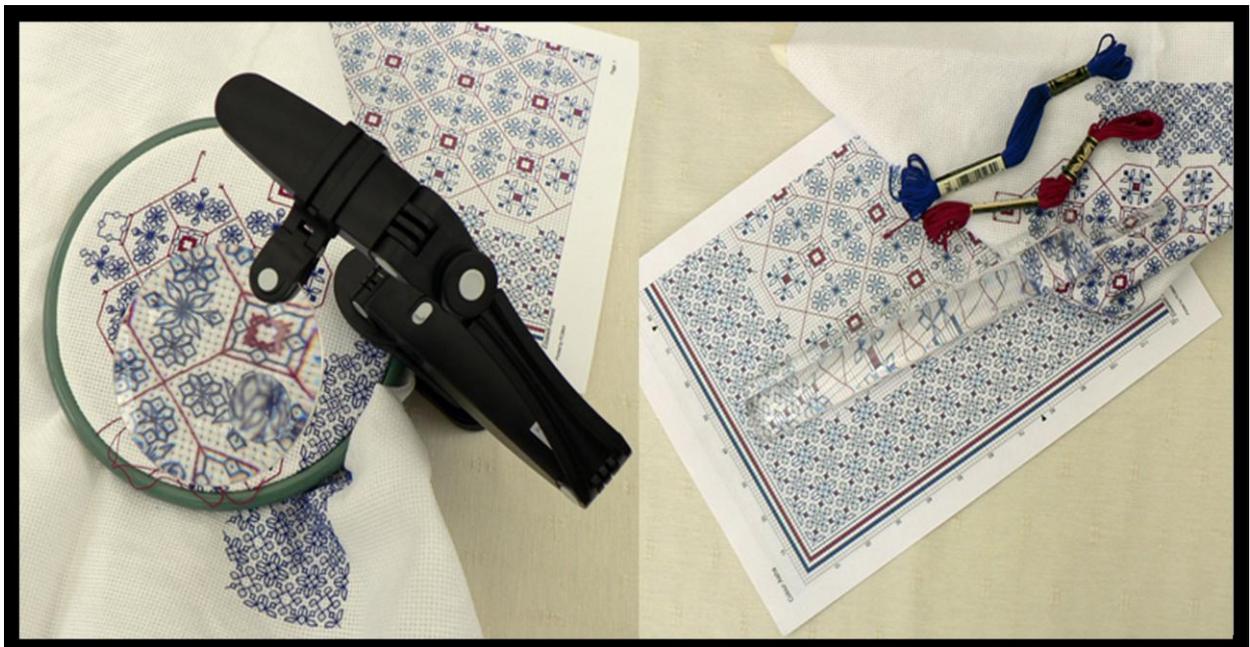


Fig.8 Magnification using a lens and a magnifying bar reduces eyestrain

I have included photographs of a number of lights and lenses that I often use. The light or lens needs to be positioned correctly in relation to your stitching so that a wide area of work is illuminated. If the lens is too close to your needlework, the needle will hit the glass. The clip on lens and the magnifying bar combined with my other lights ensure that I always have the correct lighting and magnification for the project I am working on.

There are also magnifiers which hang round the neck, or can be attached to your glasses or fit on your head, but personally I find these difficult to work with and my choice would always be a desktop magnifying lamp, a floor light or an ordinary desk lamp fitted with a daylight simulation bulb.



Fig.9 Embroidered lens cover

Just a word of caution, remember to cover your magnifying lens when you have finished working, especially if it is near a window as I know of a case where an uncovered lens with the sun reflecting through actually started a fire.

Happy stitching,

Liz