



Blackwork Journey Blog

January 2017

'Sublime Stitches' Part 1 - Evenweave



India

'Sublime Stitches' Part 1 - Aida



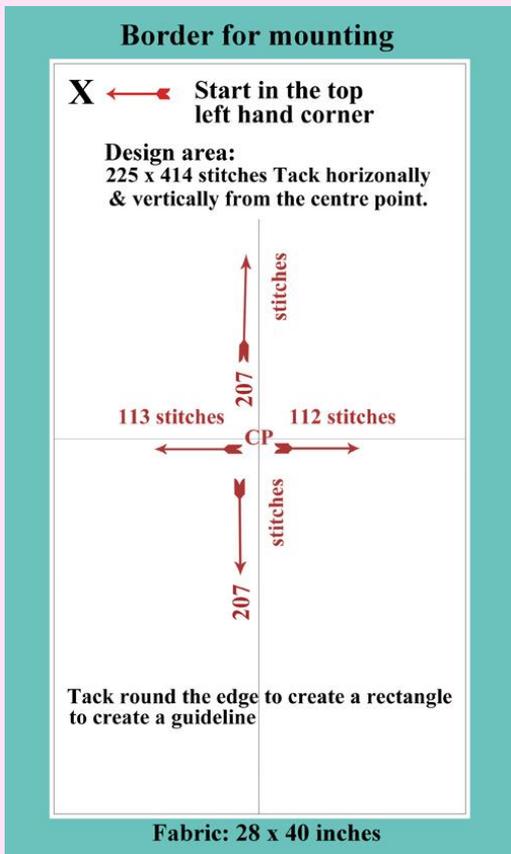
New designs



'Sublime Stitches' Part 1 Evenweave and Aida

The first charts for 'Sublime Stitches' have been added in Freebies this month. The Facebook groups are all raring to get started and I know that a lot of other readers are watching it with great interest. Please read December's Introduction to the project very carefully and consider which version you would like to stitch.

If you are planning to do the full version of 'Sublime Stitches', I cannot stress enough how important it is that you prepare your fabric first before you stitch!



Page 1	Page 2	Page 3
Work across from 1 - 3		
Page 4	Page 5	Page 6
Work across from 4 - 6		
Page 7	Page 8	Page 9
Work across from 7 - 9		
Page 10	Page 11	Page 12
Work across from 10 - 12		

Fabric layout and Pages. Part 1 is included in Freebies this month for both FR0130 Evenweave and FR0131 Aida

This design has been worked on two different fabrics, evenweave and Aida. Whilst the charts are similar they are NOT identical. Work with the instructions for the chosen fabric using the embroidery extracts and position the patterns correctly.

PAGES 3.6.9 and 12 are narrower than the rest of the pages because of the way the software prints to charts so it is **ESSENTIAL** that you follow the chart by folding your material into quarters and counting out from the centre to make a tacked rectangle. You will start on **Page 1 at the TOP LEFT HAND CORNER**.

Fabric and Fabric Sizes:

Evenweave Sampler

Zweigart 28 count Evenweave Sampler or Zweigart 14 count Aida Sampler, not including border 225 x 414 stitches.

THE EXACT AREA OF EMBROIDERY, NO BORDER IS: 16.07 x 29.57 inches

Recommended Fabric size - **28 x 40 inches** to allow for embroidery, possible border and mounting
LUGANA Evenweave Sampler

Zweigart 25 count Lugana, white or cream. THE EXACT AREA OF EMBROIDERY, NO BORDER IS:
17.50 x 31.50 INCHES, 225 x 414 stitches

Recommended Fabric size - **28 x 40 inches** to allow for embroidery, possible border and mounting

Decide whether it is to be worked as a wall hanging in which case it would be placed lower on the fabric with more at the top.

The evenweave sampler was worked on Zweigart 25 count Lugana

Over dyed or space dyed fabrics may detract from the design - select carefully!

Aida Sampler

Zweigart 14 count Aida, white, antique white or cream

THE EXACT AREA OF EMBROIDERY, NO BORDER IS 16.07 x 29.57 inches, 225 x 414 stitches.

Recommended fabric size - **28 x 40 inches** to allow for embroidery, possible border and mounting

The Aida sampler was worked on Zweigart 14 count Aida



For those of you who like the idea of working smaller versions of 'Sublime Stitches' there will be a number of samplers based on different pages from the main chart. The first one has been added to 'Charts' in Blackwork Journey this month.

CH0347 Sampler 1

The design area is 10 x 10 inches, so the fabric required will be 14 x 14 inches. The design can be worked on evenweave or Aida, but does involve some half stitches.

A number of readers are considering doing the smaller charts and experimenting with different fabrics and thread counts. It will be interesting to see the results!

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Thoughts for 2017

It was really encouraging to read the following information about the state of the UK craft market. If this is echoed round the world then we can look forward to the future with some optimism.

The UK's craft market is booming. We've become a nation of crafters, where stitching bloggers attract millions of YouTube views and amateur sewers can be prime time television on the BBC.

Industry magazine 'Craft Business' reported that there are more than 18 million women in the UK doing some kind of craft.

In 2014, the Craft Council estimated the value of craft skills to the British economy at £3.4bn each year. Hobbycraft - the UK's only multiple arts and crafts retailer, reported a boost in sales and profits in 2015, including an 11% rise in the sales of sewing machines.

Online retailer, Sewandso.co.uk sell 63,000 different products, including a huge range of haberdashery accessories from bobbins to bra straps. They say there has been a "revival" in the market, with 20% of all their sales coming from haberdashery.

James Woollam, Managing Director, said: "Craft has been having a long term revival for a good few years now. As a business, we've enjoyed a period of sustained growth and more people are doing crafts, it's now part of the fabric of our communities."

The site's Content Director, Ame Burso, says part of this rise is down to social media channels. She said: "Craft is so much more mainstream now. Things like Pinterest and You tube have helped that."

Ame added that while 2015 was the year for crochet, next year will be all about Macramé.
Hint - you may get yourself tied up in knots!

If this trend was echoed worldwide, then the future of needlework and associated craft skills is more secure. However, as embroiderers we have a responsibility to pass our knowledge on to the next generation so that the skills we have learned over many years will continue to flourish.

Recent Publications

It is with great regret that the magazine "Cross Stitch and Needlework" ceased publication at the end of 2016. Craft magazines have an important role to play in promoting new and traditional skills and encouraging the participation of new readers. The way in which we receive information is changing rapidly and they too must adapt to meet changing circumstances. It has been a pleasure working with the Editor and staff for a number of years and I wish them well in the future.

Whilst many publications are available as digital downloads, there is still something special about a hard copy of a magazine, especially when it includes an article or design which you have created.

In "Just Cross Stitch" February 2017, "Diamond Ice," a pattern darning design was featured along with a Question and Answer session about Blackwork Journey and how it developed.

In 2008, when I first started Blackwork Journey, I never imagined working with publishers on a regular basis or producing so many different charts, teaching overseas and throughout the UK, or meeting so many wonderful readers, both in the flesh and through the groups. Examining my objectives made me take a fresh look at what I have achieved through the site and the Facebook groups and what my plans are for the future. "Sublime Stitches" 2017 developed from that soul searching and I hope you enjoy the project!

Just **23** COLD-WEATHER, WARM-HEARTED DESIGNS
CrossStitch
 America's Premier Cross-Stitch Magazine FEBRUARY 2017

Cozy Up To Winter Designs

New! COLOR Charts Inside!



Winter on the Farm page 12

Find Us
 Just-CrossStitch.com

Diamond Ice



This sparkling design incorporates pattern darning, eyelets, backstitches and beads. Shades of blue and metallic threads make this design shine; you may also choose your own color scheme to complement your decor. This versatile design can be used for borders, coasters, trays or framed wall art.

Designer Q&A Liz Almond



Q. What is it like to teach needlework?

A. I take great pleasure in encouraging people to engage in needlework while finding out for themselves the joy that can be found in blackwork and asking for more.

Q. Where have your travels taken you?

A. I love the Middle and Far East—especially Thailand, Malaysia and China—and will be returning to India later in the year to explore Kerala in South India. When on the road, I not only teach needlework techniques, but also study architecture, art and patterns that are unique to particular regions. I find inspiration in these designs, often incorporating them in a variety of projects.

Q. As a geography teacher, how did you prepare for your needlework career?

A. I returned to college to learn more about Web design and photography, both useful skills in reaching out to students across the globe. My three Facebook groups have more than 2,500 followers. I use this platform to answer questions and teach techniques to people who may find it difficult to access needlework groups due to health issues or remote locations.

Q. How do you use the internet to reach out to students?

A. My international business, Blackwork Journey, helps keep the craft alive. The online Blackwork Journey challenge, "Save the Stitches," reaches needleworkers interested in exploring the technique.

Q. What are some other far-reaching projects?

A. I designed a box of 36 needlework chocolates—each one being an individual pattern in "Box of Delights." As part of this project, I arranged for a chocolatier in Manchester, U.K., to produce a hand-painted box of chocolates to match the embroidery. My next online stitch-along was "Pandora's Box." This one incorporated a number of different techniques including pulled-thread work, Assisi, pattern darning and more. Best of all, each of these projects is free and accessible through the "Freebies" section of my Blackwork Journey website.

Q. Do you have any hobbies or future plans?

A. When not traveling or stitching, I enjoy spending time with my three wonderful grandchildren. I know that I won't be going anywhere without my needle and threads, and of course, a pencil and pad to jot down ideas.

Q. Where can we learn more?

A. Please visit my website anytime at www.blackworkjourney.co.uk.

Inspiration strikes in strange places.....



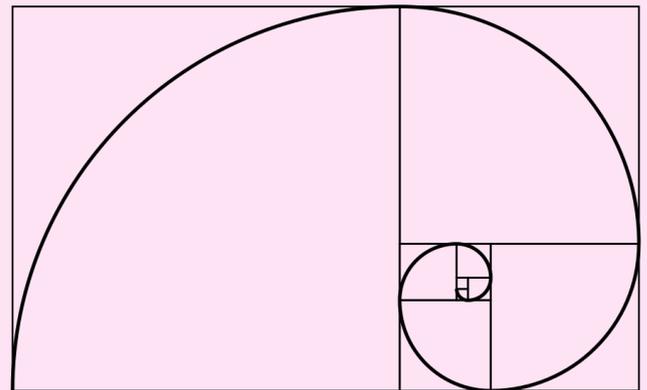
Just before Christmas, I came upon an object on a market stall that I had never seen before. Large, green, edible and an intriguing shape, I took my i-phone out and photographed it intending to find out just what it was and also if it be used for embroidery in some way?

The vegetable is Romanesco broccoli and whilst it looks weird, it is a cousin of the cauliflower. It is frequently steamed, boiled and cooked until tender and is high in vitamin C, fibre and carotenoids with a crunchy, nutty taste. It has been grown in Italy since the 16th century.

“Romanesco can be served raw, lightly cooked, or cooked through,” said Mario Batali in a column for the *Seattle Times* last fall. “I usually sauté it slowly with garlic and lemon zest and punctuate it with red pepper flakes for zing.” It’s also delicious steamed and lightly seasoned with olive oil and red wine vinegar.



So having found out what it was and being very intrigued by the shape, I took a closer look because I have been working on a shell design which is based on a spiral which actually has a mathematical basis called the The Fibonacci spiral.



The Fibonacci spiral



I won't bore you with the mathematical details, but the rotation is seen many times in nature especially in shells. The same kind of rotation found in the broccoli reminds me of a whelk shell and a nautilus shell design which I have been working on for some time.



When I was a little girl, I was given a section of a nautilus shell and was always fascinated by the rotation and when I went to Boston in the USA in 2014, I found above the entrance to the Cathedral Church of St Paul a sculpture of a nautilus shell which I photographed intending to use in an embroidery.

The entrance to the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston USA.

It was only later that I found out exactly how famous the sculpture is. It was designed by artist Donald Lipski and hung in the pediment above the entrance to the Cathedral Church in 2013.



The Cathedral Church of St. Paul unveiled new pediment art in a nautilus motif.

By Joseph P. Kahn Globe Staff May 04, 2013

"A crane lifted the large piece of sculpture and placed it within the empty pediment of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, high above Tremont Street, on a recent sunny morning. A four-man crew fixed the piece in place, attaching it to a bright blue backdrop that will be lit at night when the new look for a very old church is formally celebrated on Wednesday."



The Cathedral Church at night

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As a result of finding the broccoli, I have returned to my original designs and am working on a series of shell and spiral designs, one of which I have already used to decorate a canvas bag. I will reveal all later in the year.

Travels in Southern India

Most of November 2016 was spent travelling around Southern India from Bangalore with its frenetic traffic to the impressive mountains of the Western and Eastern Ghats which are eroded and cut through by the four major rivers known as the Godavari, Mahanadi, Krishna, and Kaveri, creating sheer sided river gorges and narrow valleys, extreme hairpin bends and terrifying drops!

Southern India is very rural and many of its people living outside the cities are employed in agriculture. From rice fields to a brick factory, a tea plantation to a spice plantation, from the sleepy backwaters of Alleppey and fishermen of Cochin, to the flat and dry areas of the Deccan Plateau and the tiger reserves in the mountains we experienced many things in a space of three weeks. We stayed in colonial buildings, bungalows deep in the jungle and hotels in the cities. Every destination was different and gave an insight on everyday life and the economy of the country.

India is a cash based society and many people do not use banks and credit cards, but rely on cash transactions, so imagine our concern on the day we left for India, to learn that the Indian government had withdrawn the 500 and 1,000 rupee notes from circulation. These are the most commonly used denominations. Apparently, they took these steps to reduce the amount of counterfeit money circulating within the country, but in doing so they failed to send new notes out to the banks and ATM's across India. When we entered the country we were allowed to change £132 into rupees. These were in large denomination notes which no-one could change because they didn't have any money. The money we had taken out from England was worthless and the banks and ATM's were often empty! Long lines formed outside the banks or cash machines that did have money, but it was very difficult working from day to day.

Especially in the rural areas there was not even money for some of the basics of life and the mill I visited was typical of many small industries that were unable to pay their workers. Since weekly income is small, this caused additional pressure and trouble in some areas. Fresh fruit and vegetables are plentiful and varied and the country is self sufficient in many way, but this was an aspect of our visit which we did not expect and led to some interesting situations which tourists would not normally encounter.

Driving in India is not for the faint hearted, a close encounter with a school bus on a mountain road with a sheer drop and no crash barriers left everyone with white knuckles. Careering round the streets of Madurai in a tuptup for three hours in search of some textile mills in the back streets and visiting a village of silk weavers, all to collect ideas for Blackwork Journey was challenging, bone shaking and fun!

Motor cycles and mopeds, often carrying two adults and one or more child, weave their way through the streets at a frantic pace, never stopping or looking! Crossing the road is a challenge as cars, bicycles, motor cycles and mopeds converge from every direction. Add in the occasional camel, many cows, sheep and goats and life in India is an adventure!

All the senses are involved from the bright colours, exotic smells of spices, less desirable smells of the back streets and the constant noise of the cities. Temple life is noisy, colourful and a joyful part of daily life. Contrast that with the tranquillity of the mountains where the singing of the birds and the calls of the monkeys echo through the jungle. It is a country that creates strong emotions and it appeals to me on every level. I am aware of the many problems that exist, but the kindness and beauty of the people shines through in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

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Using whatever resources are at hand to generate income leads to great ingenuity. A lady working by the roadside was making plates from banana leaves by 'stitching' the leaves together with tiny slivers of bamboo. She sold these to a local restaurant where we ate meals off banana leaves. Not only was there no washing up, but they were eco friendly being returned to the soil after use.



Just checking the back!

PR0037 Love India

Whenever I travel my embroidery is the first thing I pack and I have stitched in many countries and India was no exception.

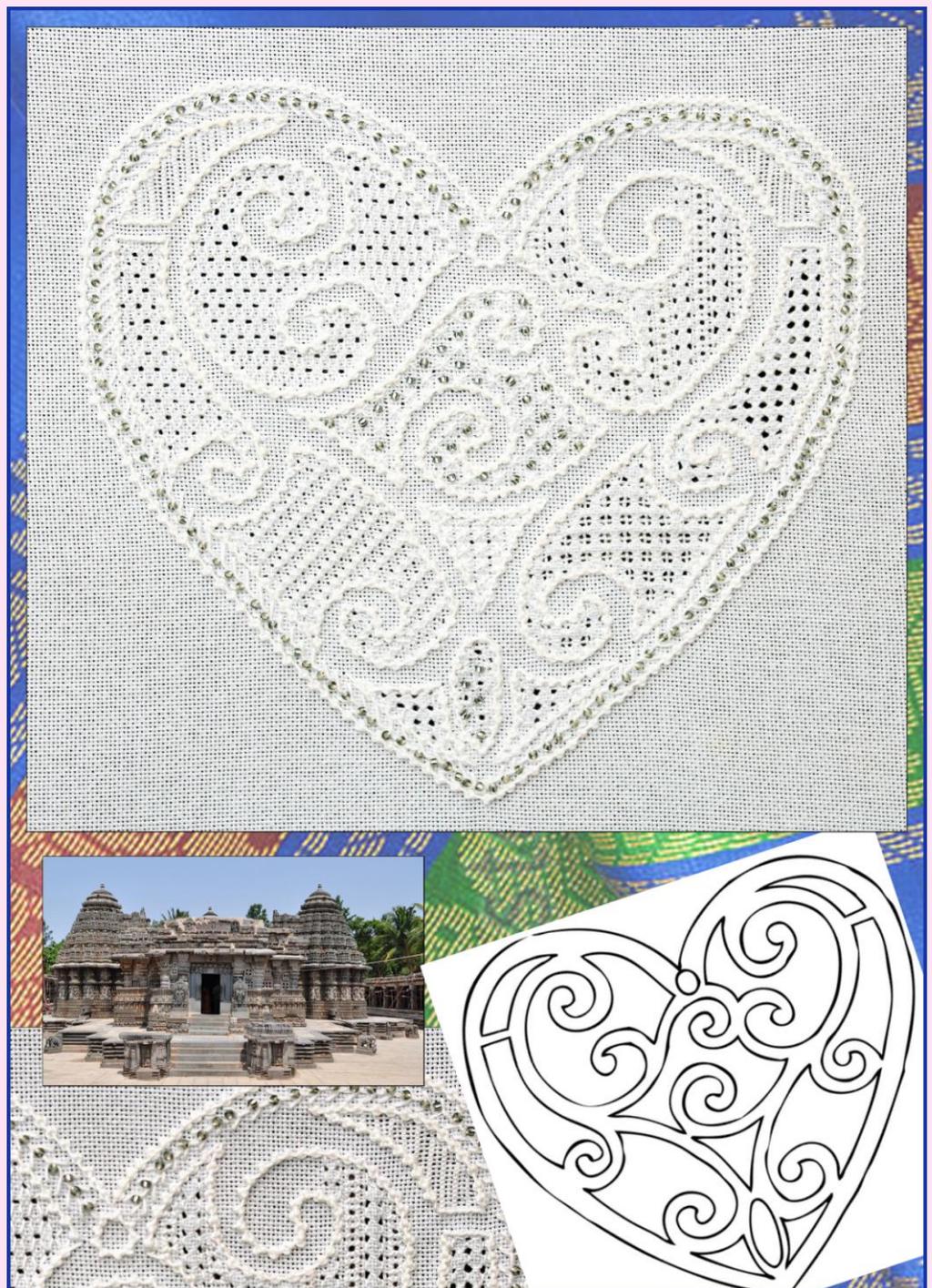
'Love India' is a whitework and pulled thread embroidery sampler designed and stitched in Southern India in November 2016. In the midst of the ancient Keshava Temple, in Somanathapur amongst all the carvings and ornate decoration deep inside the temple was a simple heart carved in the stonework and the inspiration for this design was born. Surrounded by vibrant colours, intense heat and noise 'Love India' was created using pale grey Lugana fabric and cool white threads - a calm oasis in the midst of chaos!

What is pulled thread embroidery?

Pulled thread work is a counted embroidery technique, worked on a loosely woven evenweave fabric.

Stitches are worked around groups of threads in the fabric and pulled, using the tension of the stitches to form gaps, creating lacy, open fillings, bands, border and hems. It is usually worked in white thread on white fabric, but can also be worked with coloured threads on pastel fabric.

The design was drawn onto 25 count grey Lugana and stitched with DMC stranded cotton White and DMC Cotton P rle No.12.





There are two embroidery stitches and nine pulled thread patterns worked in the design. If the embroidery was worked on white fabric it would make an ideal wedding gift. There are a number of suitable designs for weddings included in 'Projects' in Blackwork Journey.



PR0036 Whitework Ring Pillows and PR0020 Hearts

What makes a good needlewoman?

I have been asked this question many times during the course of my career and I can sum it up in one word, CONFIDENCE!

What do I mean by using that particular word? To me, it means having an understanding of the tools of my trade and a knowledge of the different threads and fabrics that I use on a daily basis. How do they feel to work with and what are their limitations?

Having used many different fabrics over the years I know which ones are most suited to me. When I first started designing and selling embroidery charts I used 16 and 14 count Aida. It is a good fabric for a beginner and very easy to count and I still recommend it for someone new to blackwork. Mistakes are easily spotted and corrected. I now design for either 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida because readers need to make choices as to which type of fabric suits them. This understanding will come from using the different fabrics.

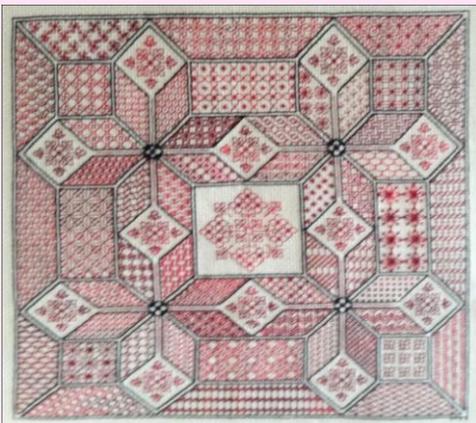
Linen for example, is not an easy fabric to work with. It creases badly, may be uneven in weave, too soft or too stiff, but once you understand the materials limitations, then you adjust your stitching to the requirements of the fabric. Cashel linen is ideal for pulled thread work, but I dislike using linen for most of my needs. Other readers will use nothing but linen!

My personal favourite is Zweigart 25 and 28 count evenweave. Whilst it is not the most expensive of fabrics, I like the way it handles and the effects that I can achieve on it. Plus it is easy for me to see the holes and has an even, smooth texture. I know that it is not the most effective fabric for pulled thread work, but it is perfect for my designs.

Finding out what fabric and threads you are comfortable with comes from experience and with experience, confidence grows. Don't be afraid to try something new. You may surprise yourself!

Experimenting with different threads and textures encourages you to make your own decisions.. Don't just accept what the designer says or the instructions on the chart. Think what the designer is telling you and then consider whether you could make changes which would suit you better. Question what you are stitching and ask if that is the effect that you really want. If necessary, change the colour palette to suit your requirements.

I am delighted when people put their own interpretation on my designs. It shows an understanding of what they want to achieve. By all means follow the charts and the designer's lead, but ask questions as you work. Does the fabric work for me? Could I use different threads or colours? Do I need to add texture? Are beads essential? Once you start asking these questions your confidence will grow.



I recently worked with a delightful lady called Estelle. She started embroidering some of the free designs on 14 count Aida and had difficulty in reading the patterns and counting. She kept saying "I really cannot do this!" and my reaction was the opposite "Oh yes you can, once you begin to see how the pattern builds up and you see how the design is constructed, then you will stitch it with ease." I have posted her picture of CHO334 Shooting Star, this from a lady who says she could not stitch. Her confidence has grown and she will now tackle her work with growing confidence. The next move for Estelle will be to move to an evenweave fabric and see if it works for her.

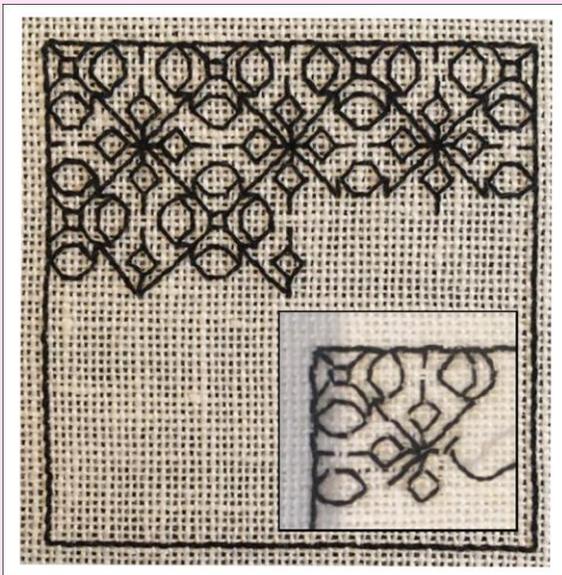
Estelle's embroidery CH0334 Shooting Star

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Take advantage of good lights and magnifying lenses. There are many inexpensive ones on the market and they make a real difference. Never work in poor light. We have moved on from the days of stitching by the fire, using candles for illumination!

If you have problems with your hands, again adjust your fabric, threads and needles. Look at alternative fabrics even congress cloth and canvas. Do you need a frame or are you more comfortable with a small embroidery hoop. I always use an 8 inch plastic flexi frame even for the largest projects because I know I am comfortable with it. Again, knowing what is right for you comes from experience and your confidence will continue to grow.

However, the most important point I would like to make is to know your limitations and work within them. If you have eyesight issues working on an unsuitable fabric will cause real frustration and poor work. Use a needle you can see to thread and threads that you can handle. Understanding your limitations is key to developing confidence, but asking for help or advice is also important and through the associated Facebook groups it is possible for members to ask questions and get positive feedback. The internet enables me to do this easily, for example;



Elizabeth SM posted a picture of her embroidery earlier in the week with a query. She was not comfortable with her stitching and asked how she could improve it?

Elizabeth SM

Why does this look so odd? Is my tension too tight? Is it just a function of stitching on linen?

It's on 28ct from Lakeside Linens. I did do the border in Holbein, and I think that's part of the problem. Also I was working in very poor light and I think I just need to frog it all and restart.

Elizabeth Almond

Be very careful that you don't split the linen thread. One or two of the stitches have gone into the thread of the linen, not the hole. Always use back stitch, not running stitch. Use a

good light to work in. The linen is an even one so that is not the problem. I also think your material tension is too loose. You might find it easier to work in a ring where you have more control. My advice don't unpick it but carry on. Once the other blocks are done, I think you will find it will all blend in, so don't get discouraged, learn from it and carry on stitching.

Elizabeth SM

I restarted on a new piece of the same linen in better light with my q snap a little tighter. Much happier with the results.

Elizabeth Almond

It is the simple changes that can often make all the difference plus linen has characteristics of its own and working with it is different from other fabrics. You should be fine from now on!

Readers Gallery

Readers Gallery is comprised of some of the pictures sent in during the month. Many of them have a story attached. Miche'le A lives in the area of New Zealand that has recently been affected by a serious

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earthquake. You may remember the photographs of the cows stranded on a small area of grassland surrounded by faults?

Knowing that I had members in the area, I contacted them to find out if they were alright? Miche'le posted her reply on the 'Pandora's Box' Facebook group.

"Just over three months ago I had to pack up my stitching as we moved to Marlborough at the top of the South Island of New Zealand. Just the other day I downloaded block 8 and today finally finished the stitching on my version of 'Pandora's Box'. It has been great therapy as for the last almost 24 hours we have had a number of large earthquakes and the concentration needed on this has helped me ignore the shakes (well sort of). I have outlined each block with silver Diamant thread. The background is a grey/blue colour."



*Pandora's Box by Miche'le
stitched during the aftermath of an earthquake!*

I hope you have enjoyed the first Blog of 2017 and the first charts from 'Sublime Stitches.'

If you have any
queries please contact:
lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching!

Liz

'Pandora's Box' by Diane SS

