



Blackwork Journey Blog

November 2020



Blackwork Journey Blog, November 2020

November – the end of autumn and the beginning of the winter months with yet more uncertainty and worry in a very troubled world, or should we take a different slant on this most unusual of years?

For the first time I can remember life has not followed a normal pattern. I have spent more time than usual at home to contemplate the world around me and to reevaluate things I have taken for granted. Needlework has been my salvation. I have had time to reflect on my current projects, developed more patience through stitching, read books and completed some research. I have stitched and designed for hours on end when I have not been acting as proof reader, typist, Photoshop “Tweaker” for a husband who is working on a technical publication which is challenging both of us!

Like most people, the most important thing in my life is my family and the impact that Covid-19 has made on us. Normally, we go out to San Francisco to see my son and his family every year, but this year he is researching COVID-19 as a post-doctoral research scholar at UCSF rather than playing in the San Francisco Symphony orchestra! Little did we think when he moved out to the US in 2016 that medicine would feature so largely in his life again!

In the UK life for my daughter and her family has been a roller coaster. She teaches in a rural school where Covid-19 has been a constant worry with new changes and restrictions coming in every day. My grandchildren are in and out of school depending on who has contracted the virus and who they have been in contact with, but having said all this, there have been some positives.

Molly is now the proud owner of a new sewing machine and at 16 is becoming very proficient at sewing, unlike her mum who hates every aspect of needlework. Via Facetime, I have had the pleasure of watching Molly figure out the joys of making her first garment and knowing that at least one member of the family wants to explore embroidery! They have also had some real quality family time together which I am sure they will all appreciate in years to come.

We have missed seeing all of them and giving them a hug, but the wonders of the internet have brought us all together in a different way. I have missed my classes, but enjoyed teaching and seeing friends by Zoom and like so many, I look forward to next year when hopefully, life will start to become a little more normal.

November comes

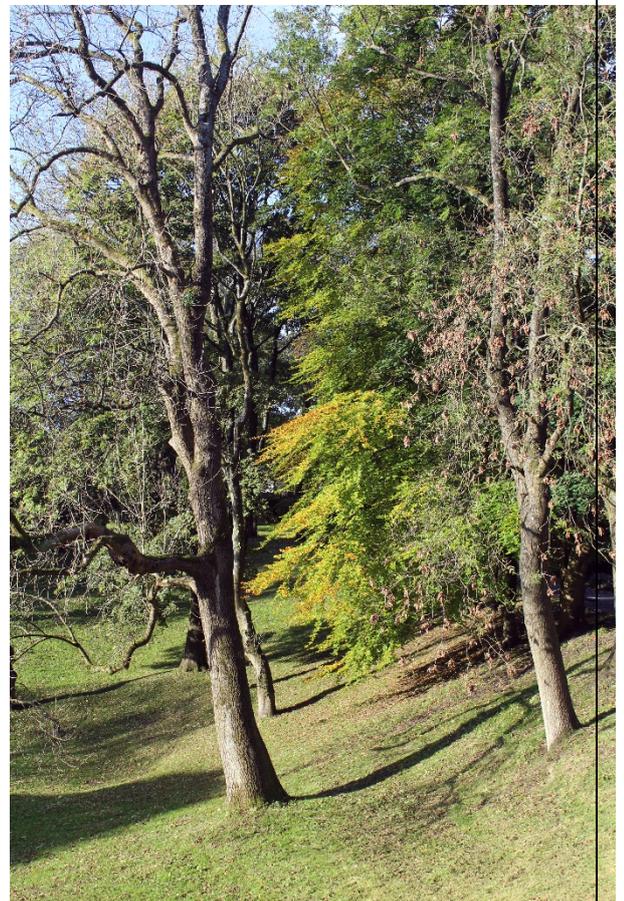
And November goes,
With the last red berries
And the first white snows.

With night coming early,
And dawn coming late,
And ice in the bucket
And frost by the gate.

The fires burn

And the kettles sing,
And earth sinks to rest
Until next spring.

~Elizabeth Coatsworth (1893–1986)



Finding a chart on the Blackwork Journey website:

Rather than scrolling through all the pages to find a design, if you go to the Home page of Blackwork Journey you will find a “Contents” label in the left hand column. That will bring up a thumbnail of every chart on the site.

Blackwork Journey
Embroidery Designs by Elizabeth Almond

Contents...

Here is an alphabetical list of all the charts and other items available on this site.
Scroll to the item you are looking for and then click the thumbnail image or the page number to the right to be taken to the page where that item exists.

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What's new for November?

Many people start their Christmas stitching in November or earlier and are always looking for new designs.

There are two new designs this month:

CH0404 'Kogin Christmas' and CH0405 'The Fall.'

CH0404 'Kogin Christmas'

Fabric and threads: Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 16 count Aida, 9 x 11 inches

14 count Aida - use 3 strands of floss, DMC Cotton Perlé No.8 or Anchor Pearl Cotton No.8

32 count evenweave, or 16 count Aida - use Cotton Perlé No 8 or 12 or two strands of floss.

What is Kogin Embroidery?

Kogin embroidery is a form of counted pattern darning, which originated in the Aomori Prefecture of Northern Japan. This area is rural, with snow covered mountains, thick forests and rice paddies.

Protective clothing for the farmers and fishermen was essential, so the fabrics were joined together by stitching and made into clothing for warmth and stability.

The patterns in Kogin embroidery are very intricate and many of the garments were very old and had been patched and re-stitched constantly with thick white cotton threads. Cotton fabric and threads were expensive, so local indigo dyed hemp cloth was often used for these garments.

The designs were usually geometric, often diamond shaped and the running stitches, which varied in length, were only worked in rows, along the weft of the fabric. It was worked in the hand without using a frame and with a number of stitches on the needle at any one time, making it faster to stitch.



Working in the hand rather than on a frame requires a different approach and practice if you are to achieve the results which came so naturally to the local Japanese craftsmen.

These are some of the Christmas designs on the website, but many of the free designs and ones in 'Box of Delights' and 'Pandora's Box' can be adapted for Christmas decorations.

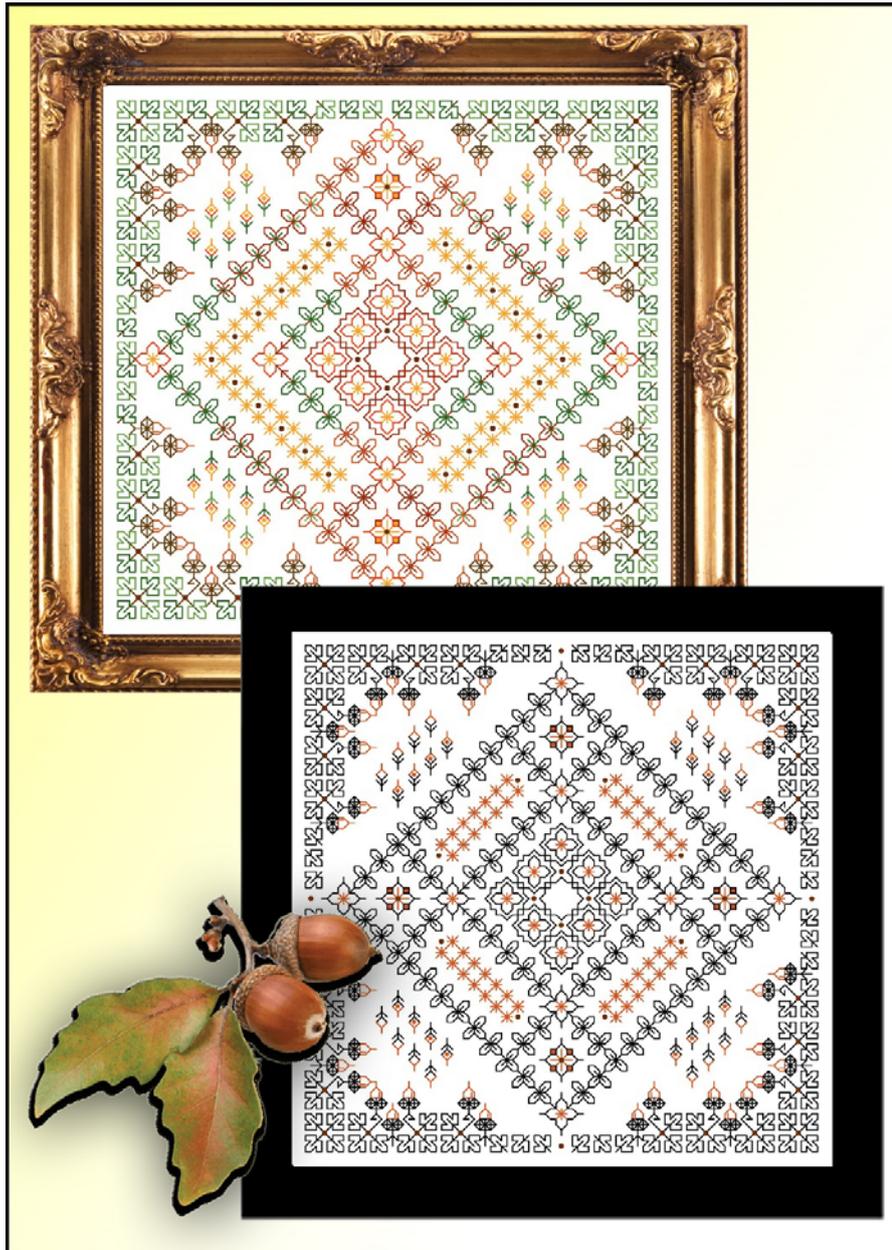
- CH0108 Mini Motifs
- CH0110 Celtic Christmas has been redone for 2020
- CH0292 Blackwork Noel
- XH0297 Christmas Ornament
- CH0346 Elegance
- CH04304 Petite Treasures
- CH0335 Christmas Ornaments
- CH0382 Silver and Gold
- PR0033 Japanese Christmas



The second chart this month is:
CH0405 'The Fall'

Two different variations have been included in this design pack. One is a colour design and the other design is a black and copper blackwork sampler. Although the designs are very similar when it is stitched in black and copper, the pattern is very vibrant!

Work in progress. The threads were matched to leaves from the garden.



CH0405 'The Fall'

It is always fun to see Blackwork Journey designs in print and I always enjoy contributing to 'Just Cross Stitch' and their Christmas Ornaments feature. However, when you are working almost a year in advance it can be quite challenging. I have just completed magazine designs for Valentine's Day, summer, Halloween and Christmas 2021!

A free design 'Hands, Face, Space' has been added at the end of the Blog for you to enjoy



FR0186 Hands, Face, Space

Covid-19 is still running riot round the world and many governments are putting out messages to remind people to stay safe. The latest message in the UK is 'Hands, Face, Space' which is easy to remember. I thought the message would make a very simple sampler as a reminder of 2020 which has been a most unusual year!

An alphabet has been included to add your initials.

To bead or not to bead? That is the question.

I frequently get asked about the use of beads. How do I know where to put them? What size do I use and could I use knots in place of beads? When would I add them and what beads would I recommend and why?

History: Beads are thought to be one of the earliest forms of trade between members of the human race. It is thought that bead trading helped humans developed language. The oldest beads that have been found to date were at Blombos Cave, making them about 72,000 years old and at Ksar Aki in Lebanon, about 40,000 years old, so using beads in embroidery is nothing new!



Without beads and knots and with!

However, choosing the right bead for the job is as difficult now as it was then. Modern beads are made from a variety of materials from glass and ceramics to wood, but the type of bead used on a piece of embroidery and their durability has to be considered.

Do they complement the embroidery or will they detract from the finished piece of work. What size beads should I use? Too large and they will dominate, the wrong colour and they undermine the threads. Over bright beads or sequins are a distraction and stick on beads and sequins have a habit of falling off!

Cheap beads may be made of plastic in which case they melt, or the casing, especially on pearls, will peel off leaving a white bead underneath. If the beads are washed frequently or well-handled they need to be of a good quality such as Mill Hill beads or Japanese Miyuki beads. Over the years and through experience I have found it wiser to invest in reputable manufacturers of both beads and threads.

There is an interesting article on the manufacture of Miyuki beads on the Miyuki website. I was not aware of all the processes that are involved in making something I had taken for granted for so many years;

<https://www.miyuki-beads.co.jp/>

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For most of my designs I use Mill Hill beads Size 15 petite seed: 1.5mm diameter and Size 11 seed: 2.2mm diameter which are available worldwide. However, there are many different types of beads which may be used and they are listed below. There is also a DMC to Glass Bead Conversion PDF online at:

<https://www.wichelt.com/>

I add the beads after I have completed my embroidery. I may decide when the embroidery has been completed that it does not need as many beads or the colours may need to be adjusted. It is a matter of personal taste. Some people will use them at every opportunity and other will seldom bead.



Beads can add texture and sparkle

Mill Hill beads - descriptions:

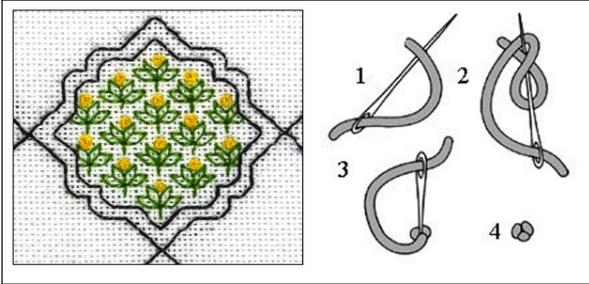
Seed beads: Seed beads are small beads that are almost round in shape. Mill Hill seed beads range in size 15/0 (Mill Hill Petite glass beads) to size 11/0 (Mill Hill Glass seed beads, Mill Hill Antique Glass seed beads, Mill Hill Frosted Glass seed beads and Mill Hill Crayon beads).

Magnifica Beads: Magnifica beads are cylindrical beads with large holes and thin walls. They are very uniform in size and shape. Most commonly used in bead weaving.

Bugle Beads: Bugle beads are cut glass cane in a variety of colours and finishes. The diameter of the bugle beads is 2.5 mm and equivalent to a size 11/0 seed bead.

Pebble Beads: Pebble beads are large beads, almost round in shape. They are 5.5 mm in size, equivalent to a size 3/0 bead.

Pony Beads: Pony beads include size 6/0 and 8/0 beads. They are mostly used for knitting and crocheting.



Colonial knots can be used in place of beads, especially if there are only a few beads in the chart. Colonial knots sit better on the fabric than French knots and I tend to use them rather than French knots. A minimum of two strands of floss is needed. The more strands of floss the bigger the knot. Crochet threads, cotton Perlé, knitting cottons and wool can also be used.

Japanese Kamon Crest and Sashiko hanging – just completed!

Designed and stitched to remind me in a positive way of 2020! Every design has been hand drawn and resized to fit in a hexagon,



Liz's Kamon crest and Sashiko wall hanging



There are hundreds of hours of work involved in the creation of this piece, but I enjoyed every part of the process from thinking about the designs I would use to the research into Kamon crests and the embroidery.

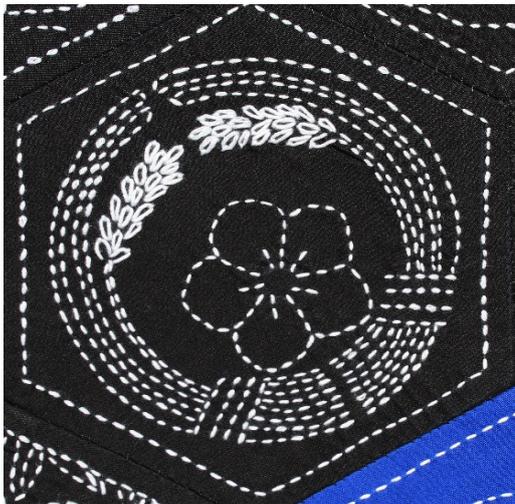
The term "Kamon" refers to a crest used in Japan to indicate one's origins, that is, one's family lineage, blood line, ancestry and status from ancient times. Kamon is often referred to as Family Crests. European heraldic coats of arms are similar to the Kamon crests, but their origins and meanings differ. Unlike Europe, Kamon use is widespread in Japan and can be seen in many place from temples and

shrines to shops. Originally the preserve of the nobility, the Shogun and samuri subsequently became popular with ordinary people.

There are more than 2,500 types of Kamon. The most frequently used motifs are plants such as paulownia, ivy, plum blossom, wisteria and chrysanthemum. Wells are also common as they are essential to everyday life, fish, animals and birds.



Drawing the designs onto the blue and black fabrics was a challenge. There are 105 different patterns to be drawn and resized to fit a 6 inch

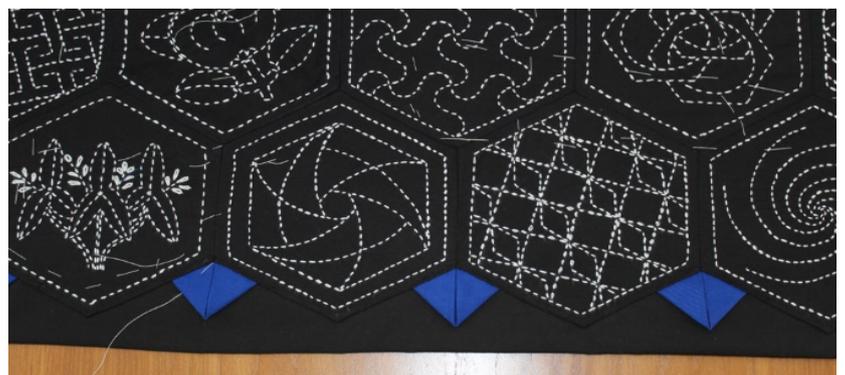


hexagon. I tried dressmaker's carbon, transfer pencils and many other transfer methods before deciding on Saral white transfer paper. It is a wax free copying paper that can be washed out of fabric and a hot iron will not set the lines. The same sheet can be used over and over again. 12" wide, 12' roll.

The motifs and sashiko patterns were stitched in sashiko medium weight thread in white on royal blue and black. Some embroidery stitches were added such as chain stitch and Colonial knots. Somerset patchwork was used to add texture to the borders top and bottom.

I posted a photograph on the Facebooks groups and had a very positive reaction, so at some point over the coming winter I will put together an e-book of the designs.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog?
If you have any queries please contact:
lizalmond@blckworkjourney.co.uk



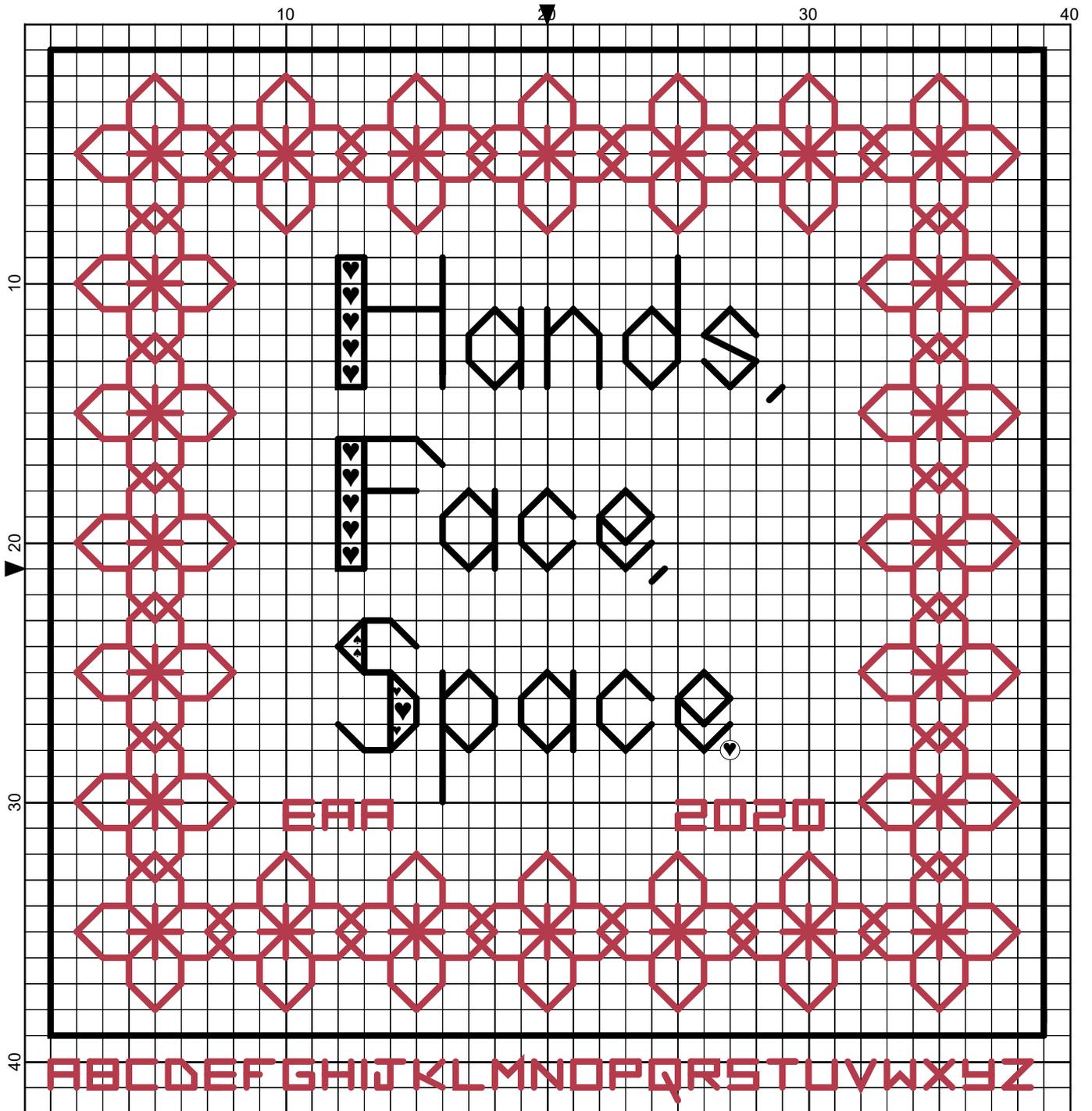
'HANDS, FACE, SPACE'

Mini Sampler for 2020

Blackwork Journey - Designs by Elizabeth Almond



Stay Safe!
Happy Stitching,
Liz



Elizabeth Almond

Legend:

♠ DMC-321 ♥ DMC-326

Backstitches:

— DMC-310 — DMC-326

French Knots:

⦿ DMC-326

Hands, Face, Space

Author: Elizabeth Almond
Copyright: Elizabeth Almond
Grid Size: 40W x 42H
Design Area: 2.71" x 2.93" (38 x 41 stitches)

Legend:

 [2] DMC-321 ANC-47 christmas red

 [2] DMC-326 ANC-1025 rose - vy dp

Backstitch Lines:

————— DMC-310 black

————— DMC-326 rose - vy dp

French Knots:

♥ DMC-326 rose - vy dp

Mini Sampler - 'Hands, Face, Space'

Covid-19 is still running riot round the world and many governments are putting out messages to remind people to stay safe. The latest message in the UK is 'Hands, Face, Space' which is easy to remember. I thought it would make a very simple mini blackwork sampler just as a reminder of 2020 which has been a most unusual year!

An alphabet has been included to add your initials.

Material:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida

DMC floss - two shades

Tapestry needle No 24

Stitches:

Back stitch, one strand

Cross stitch, two strands

Method:

Fold the fabric into quarters to find the centre point.

Work the word 'Face' in one strand of floss. Complete the word weave the ends in before working the next two words. Do not jump from line to line but complete each one in turn.

Work the border using one strand of floss. Complete the embroidery by working a row of back stitch round the design.

Happy stitching and stay safe,

Liz

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