

Blackwork Journey Blog, May 2021

May marks the return to warmer days and the promise of better times ahead in the UK, but in many parts of the world where so many of our Blackwork Journey family live, there is still uncertainty and distress caused by the Covid 19 pandemic.

Our thoughts and love are with all our 'family' as we work our way towards a calmer and more normal future.

Staying positive

Events happen that change our perceptions, alter priorities and aspirations, but very often we are harder on ourselves than we need to be. We worry about things that may never happen, but often the things that throw us off balance are the ones that we never envisaged in the first place.

I have a motto on my computer which I will share with you. I read it and remind myself to be less hard on myself and to look forward rather than backwards, to look for the little things in every day that make me smile and at the end of the day, try to look for all the positive and good things that have happened, whether it was an e-mail from a friend, a phone call or time spent stitching.

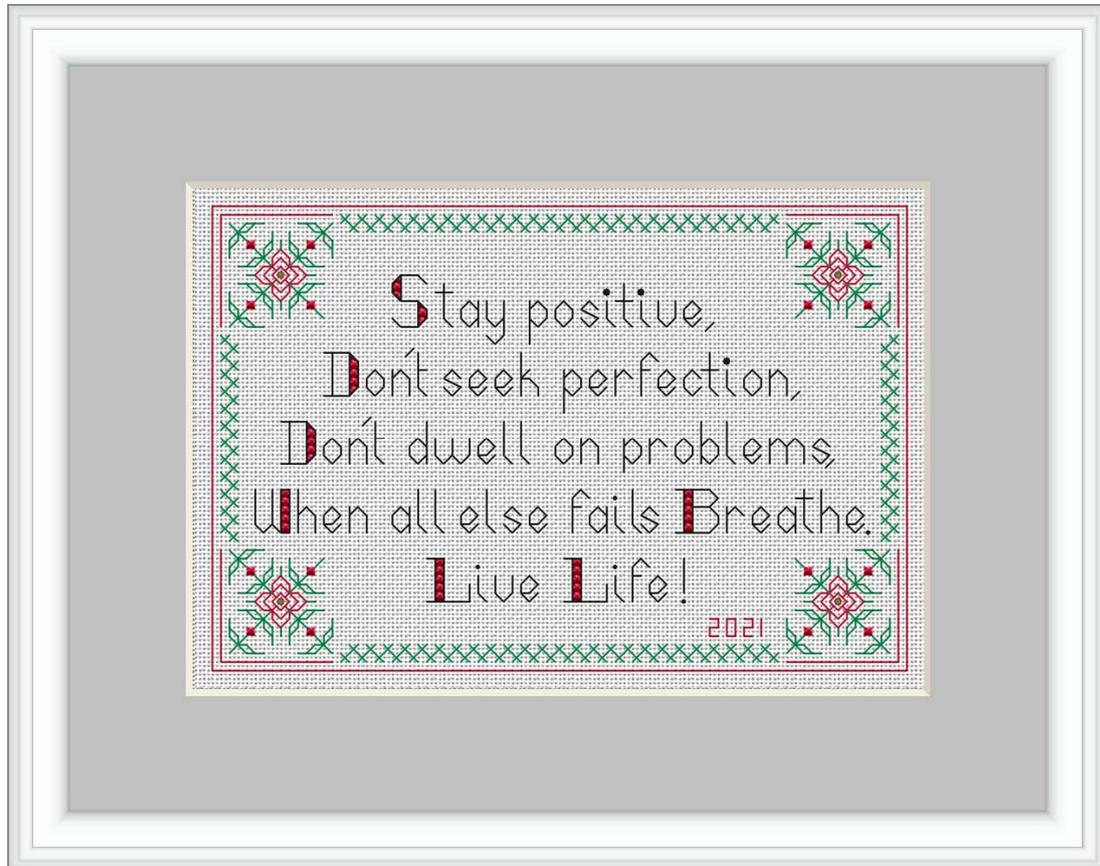
Stay Positive

Don't Seek Perfection

Don't Dwell on Problems

When All Else Fails, Breathe

Live Life!



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Perhaps changing how we live our lives, stepping back and taking a moment to just pause, breathe, look around and relax, if only for a few minutes, will make all the difference. You may wish to stitch this small sampler and find a place for it to remind yourself that we need to live life!

Design area: 3.86 x 5.71 inches, 54 x 80 stitches

Material:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 8 x 10 inches

Key

Legend:	■ [2] DMC-310 ANC-403 DLE- black	■ [2] DMC-326 ANC-1025 DLE- rose - vy dp	
Backstitch Lines:	— DMC-310 black	— DMC-326 rose - vy dp	— DMC-910 emerald green - dk
French Knots:	● DMC-310 black		
Beads:	● MHG-557 Mill Hill Glass Beads-Gold		

Threads:

Colours of your choice or

DMC stranded floss:

DMC 910 Emerald green, one skein

DMC 310 Black, one skein

DMC 326 Rose, one skein

Mill Hill glass beads MGH 557 Gold, 4 beads (optional)

Tapestry needle No 24 Beading needle

Small embroidery frame

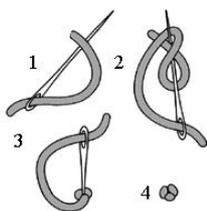
Stitches used:

Back stitch, one strand

Cross stitch, two strands

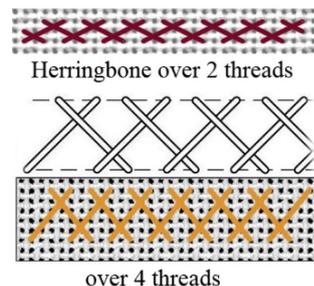
Colonial or French knots, two strands

Herringbone stitch



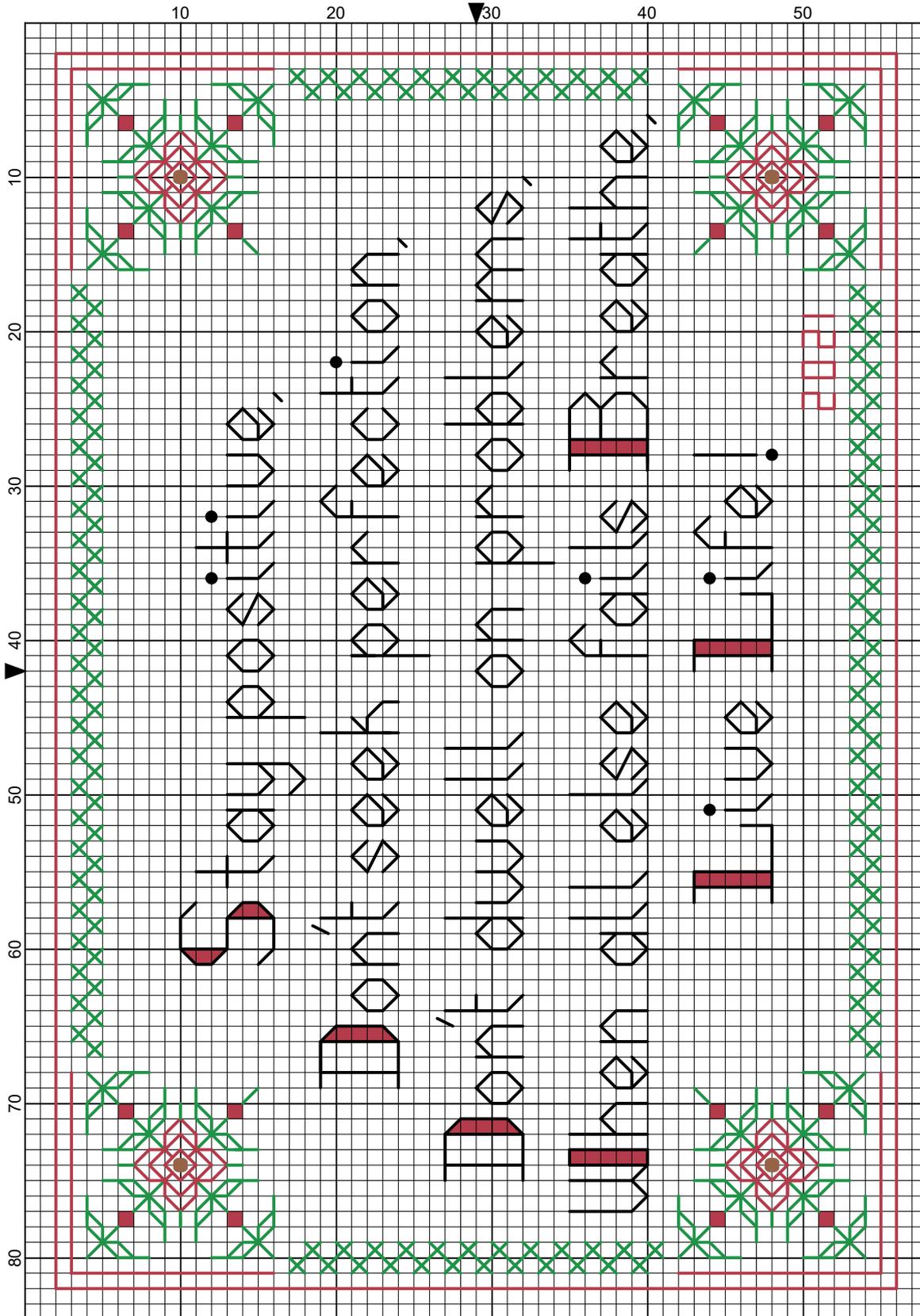
Colonial knot

Herringbone stitch



Method:

1. Fold the fabric into quarters and find the centre point. Work from the centre outwards using two strands of floss for the cross stitch and one strand for the back stitch.
2. Work the back stitch round the letters in one strand after the cross stitch has been completed.
3. Complete each word and line before moving on to the next one. Do not take threads between lines as they will show through on the front of the work.
4. Work the four motifs and the herringbone band using one strand of floss.
5. Work the back stitch border in one strand of floss.



Elizabeth Almond

Legend:

■ DMC-326

Backstitches:

— DMC-310

— DMC-326

— DMC-910

French Knots:

● DMC-310

Beads:

● MHG-557

6. Place the finished embroidery face down on a soft towel and press

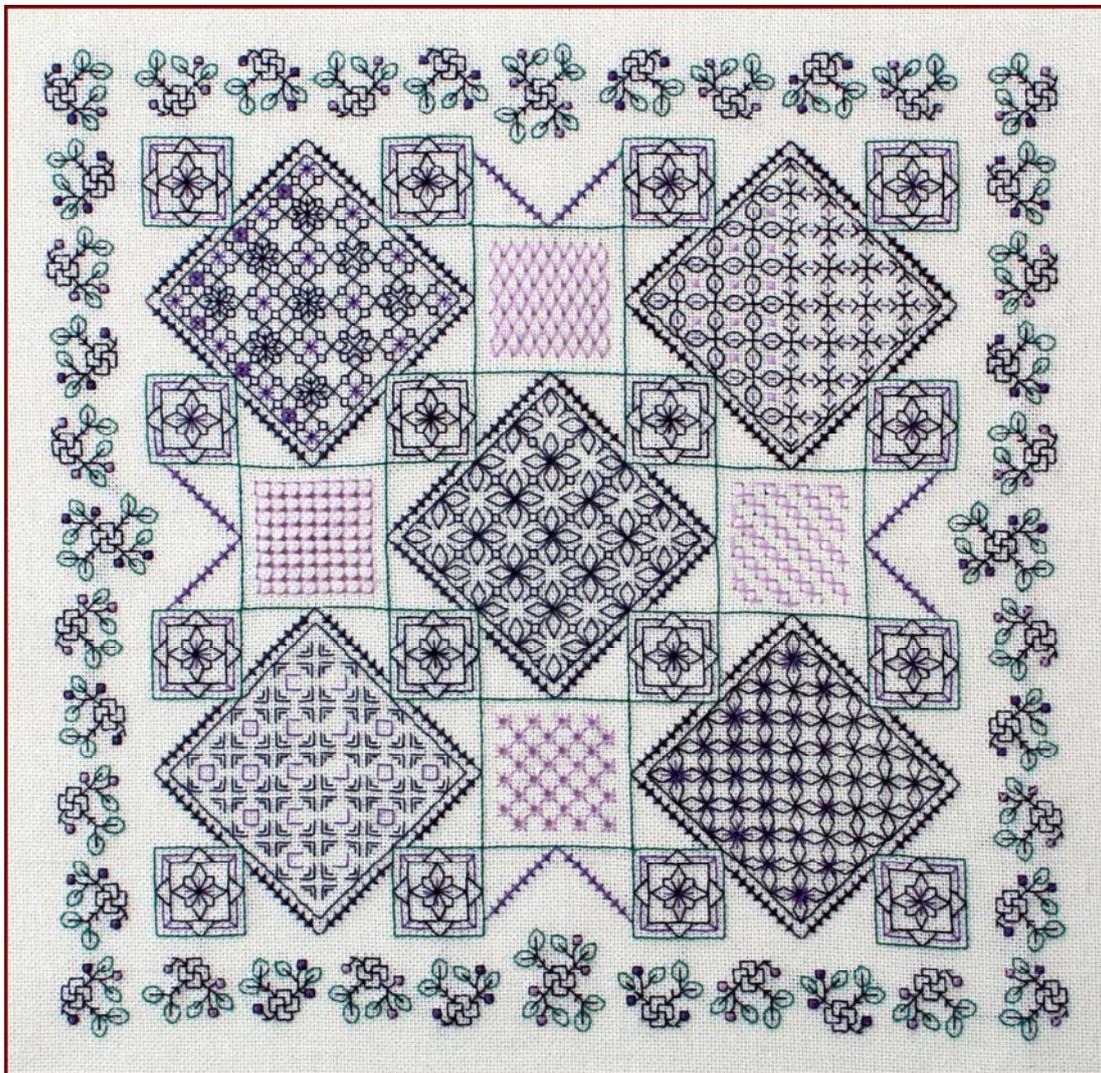
I hope you enjoy working this design.

New designs for May:

CH0411 Lilac Time

Two different techniques blackwork and pulled threadwork are combined in this design. Four different colours are used and these can be changed or variegated threads used to create a different effect. The four pulled thread work patterns should be worked in Cotton P rle No 12 white, one ball or a pastel shade of floss using two strands.

*The smell of moist earth and lilacs
hung in the air like wisps of the past
and hints of the future.
Margaret Millar*



CH0411 Lilac Time

Design Area: 9.57 x 9.57 inches

134 x 134 stitches **Material:** Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 14 x 14 inches

CH0412 Kutsawa Kogin.

Kogin is a traditional form of Japanese embroidery where the design is stitched across the horizontal holes in evenweave fabric.

The design for this cushion is based on a traditional pattern called Kutsuwa based on a family (kamon) crest depicting a horse's bit. The kutsuwa kamon was used by the Samurai in battle. Kutsuwa Tsunagi means 'repeated kutsuwa' design.

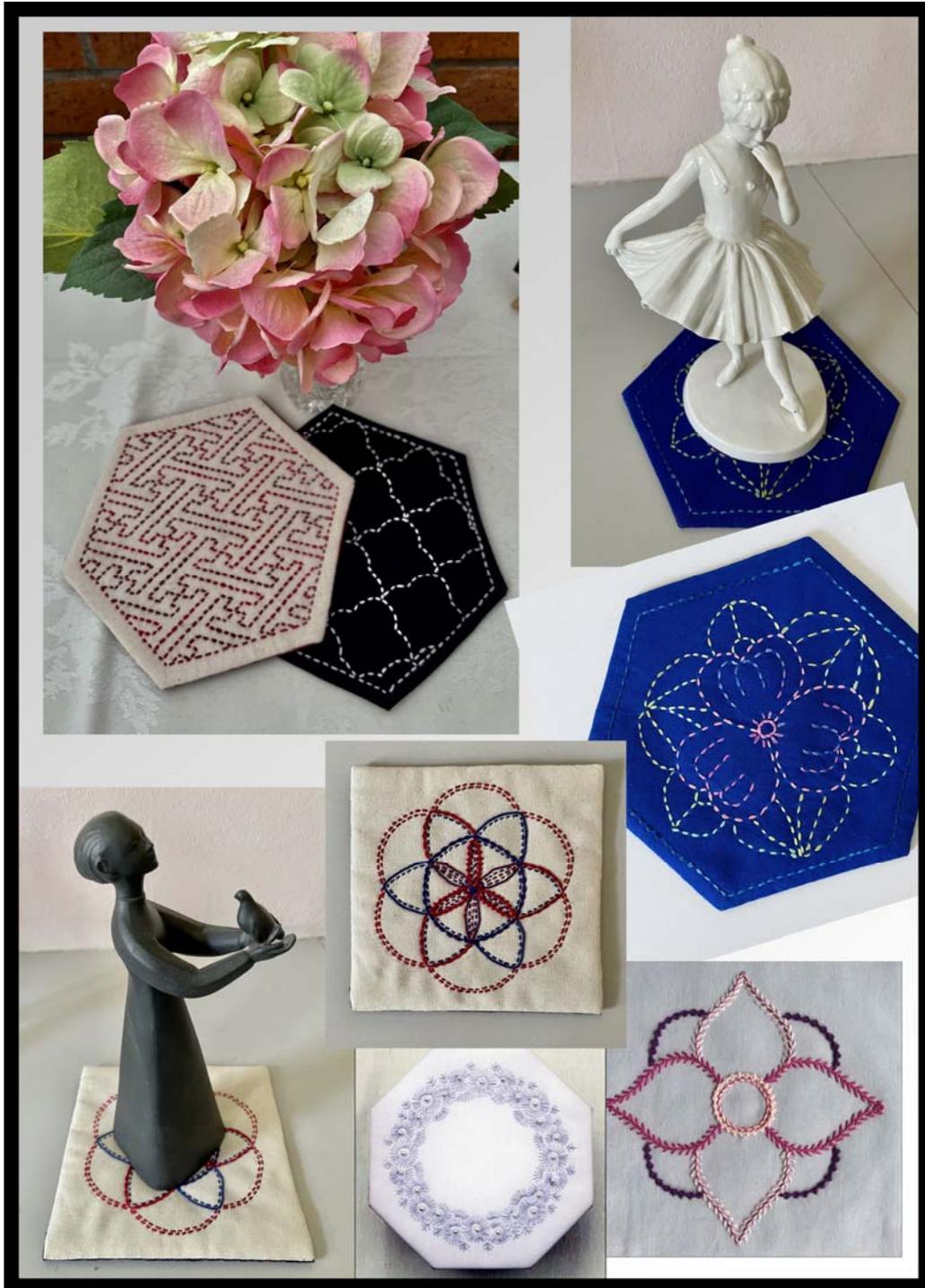
Two designs have been included.



CH0412 Kutsawa Kogin.

PR0066 Modern Mats and Coasters

We all have scraps of fabric in our stash that are too good to throw away, but how can they be used? This leaflet consists of a series of small mats and coasters in different techniques, shapes and sizes. The templates and instructions for making up the designs are included.



PR0066 Modern Mats and Coasters

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Exploring different techniques is very satisfying and makes very personal gifts and cards. Add your own colours and change the designs to suit your own requirements. As a designer I provide basic ideas, but never be afraid to change the chart, add stitches or name and date the piece.

Kevin worked 'Pink Perfection' and added his own twist!

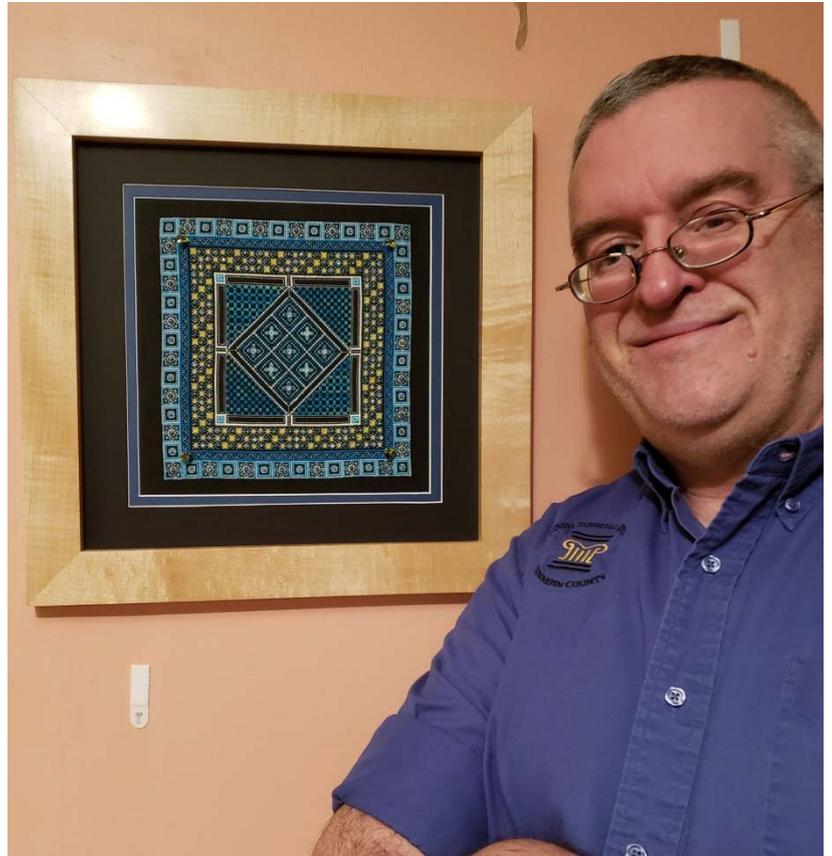
"My name is Kevin. I took a few liberties with your design. I hope that you don't mind?"

Kevin I am delighted! Half the fun of embroidery is making a piece your own.

The members of Bordados con el Alma who are working with me on EB0009 Sublime Stitches Evenweave and EB0010 Sublime Stitches Aida as a year-long project are all interpreting the pattern in a different way and it is wonderful to see all the variations being posted monthly in both the Bordados con el Alma Facebook group and my Facebook group:

Sublime Stitches - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1695785137378480/#>



Changing patterns, adding beads or not or changing the colour to traditional black and gold makes patterns look totally different.



One of the patterns worked in red and gold

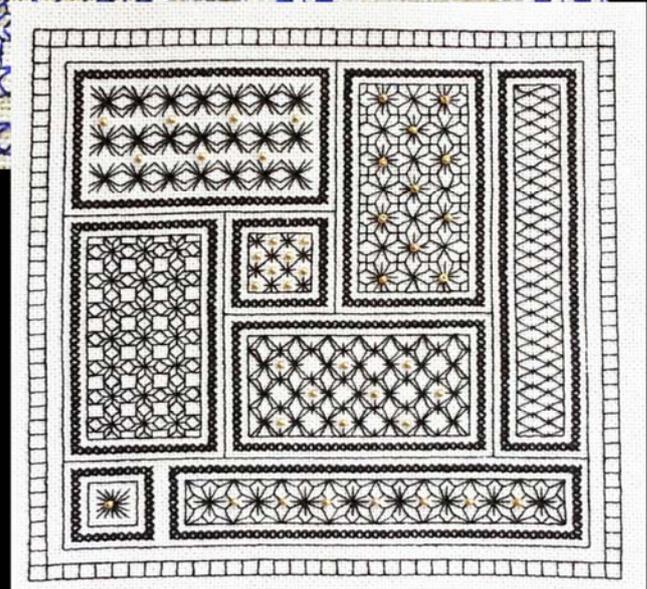
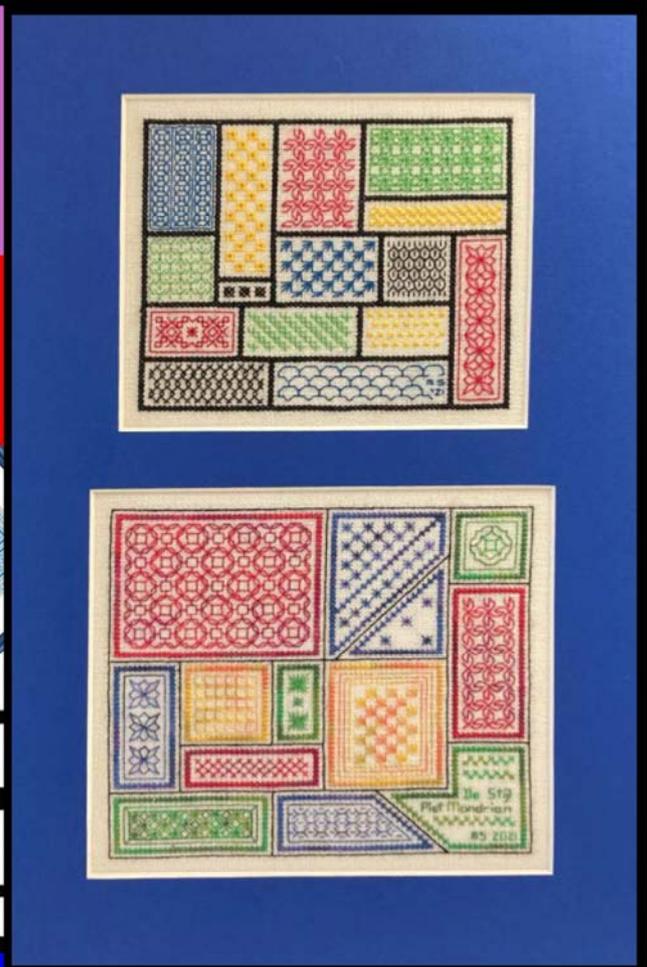
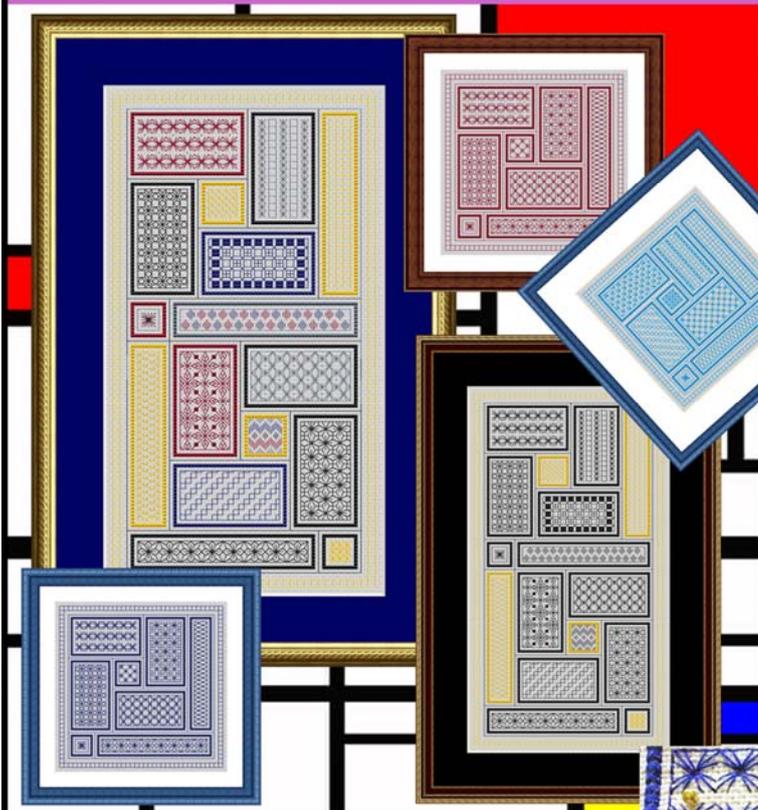
EB0018 'Mondrian Medley' is a good example. Maureen had taken two of the designs from the e-book, added some of her own patterns and mounted two pieces as one.

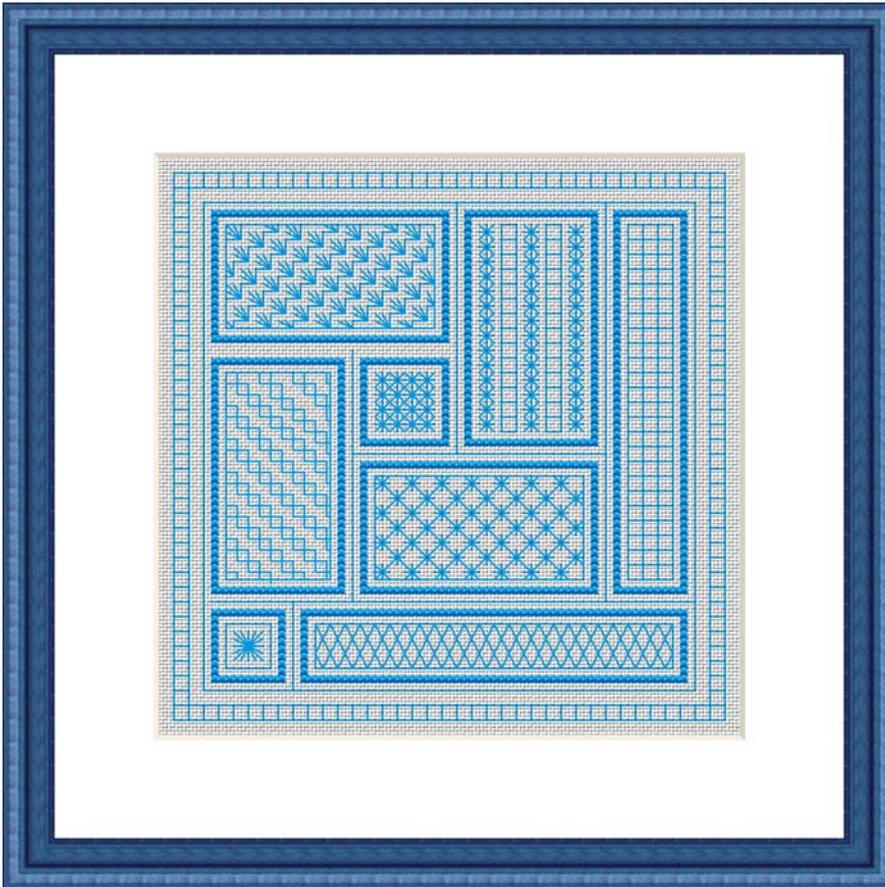
Rachel has never added beads to a piece before and needed advice how to stitch beads onto her finished piece. They have worked really well and all the beads lie in the same direction and are correctly placed on the fabric. Well done Rachel!

Sue has taken the same design, but worked it in black and gold as a traditional piece of blackwork rather than using the vibrant colours that Mondrian used in his paintings.



Blackwork Journey
Mondrain Medley
E-Book 18





Always think carefully about the mount and frame you will use for your finished embroidery. It can enhance your embroidery. Would a coloured frame bring out the embroidery? Do you need a plain mount? How wide would the mount need to be? Do you need non reflective glass or would the embroidery be better left without glass?

When you have pressed your embroidery and pulled it into shape ask yourself these questions before you have your precious piece framed.

Worked as a pulled thread/fabric design with a white mount and blue frame enhances the embroidery, whereas changing the colour of the fabric to dark blue and working the embroidery in white creates a very dramatic effect.



Working on dark fabric is much harder on the eyes and not for the faint hearted. Aida would be easier to count.

Carefully choose a mount and frame that enhances the design.

A matching set – cushion and quilt

Last month I posted a lotus design, but decided to make a cushion to match the quilt. I added some ‘water’ round the lotus and a Sashiko border to match the quilt. Both designs were worked on calico so they are washable.



Once the design is drawn onto the fabric it is very satisfying to stitch and it grows quickly. I use a mixture of threads depending on how heavy I want the stitching to look. Sashiko matt cotton thread is available in different weights, but generally I use the light and medium weight Olympus Sashiko thread.

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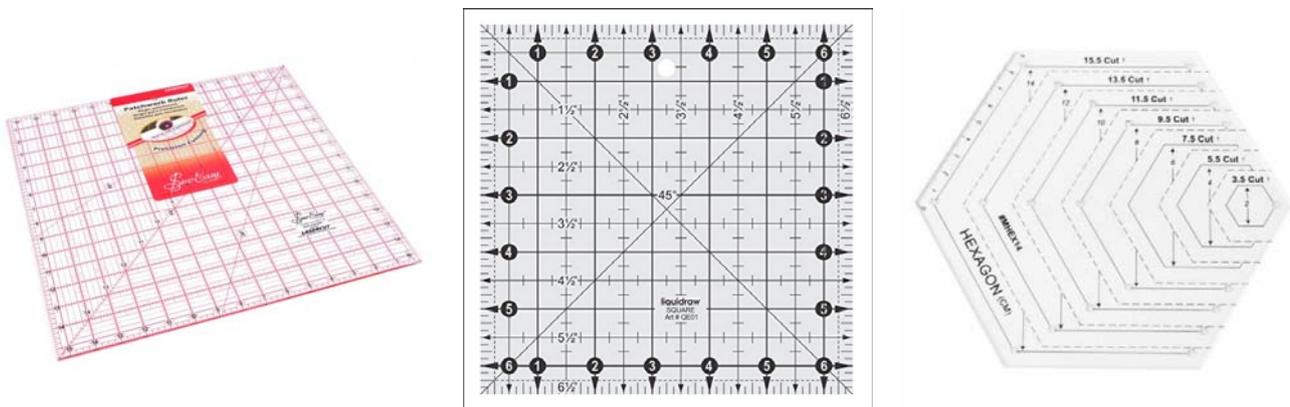
DMC floss can also be used in a combination of strands from four to six or DMC Cotton P rle No 8 or 5. This has a lustre and sheen which gives a different appearance to the work and whilst not a traditional Sashiko thread it can be very attractive. Matt crochet cotton and knotting cotton can also be used if the correct threads are not available. Experiment with the threads in your stash until you find threads that you enjoy working with.

The most important tools in my needlework studio!

There are so many acrylic quilting rulers, blocks and templates on the market to help you achieve straight lines and cut blocks accurately, but why do I need them as an embroiderer? The size of fabric needed for any project needs to be accurate. Just using a ruler alone is not enough, so having the correct tools makes my life easier, especially when I am cutting fabrics for kits for teaching.

Whilst I have collected a number of tools over the years I cannot do without my Creative Grids 6½ inch x 24½ inch rectangle measure and my square acrylic quilting blocks. I also have triangles, hexagons and octagon templates in different sizes. Whilst templates can be downloaded from the internet, the size of the paper used in some countries differs and they may not be accurate. If the project involves repeating the template many times the whole project can be affected if the initial template is inaccurate.

I have a set of four square templates – 4.5in, 6in, 9.5in, 12.5in and these cover most common quilt block sizes. They allow me to cut my fabric accurately and to check the warp and weft of the fabric to see whether it is distorted and that the grain of the fabric is accurate. Some of the templates are marked in yellow although I prefer the ones marked in black or red as I find them less distracting to use.



Money well spent – good quality templates

These blocks are especially useful when cutting Aida fabric which may not be as straight as it could be. A grid enables me to check whether the fabric needs to be pulled into shape before I start to work on it.

Cheaper fabrics are less likely to be accurate or woven without twisting, so I usually buy good quality fabrics that I trust. However, when I see an unusual piece of fabric on a market somewhere in the world that I just cannot resist then using the squares does help.

If I am making quilts such as the three Sashiko and embroidery quilts made during lockdown using the square templates mean that the blocks are accurate. I mark the squares on the calico first and then add the patterns or I use the squares to draw and cut the blocks to work on. It takes the guesswork out of designing a large project if you know that an 8 inch block is accurate!



There is no room for error when designing a large project. Having the correct measuring and drawing tools certainly makes life easier.



Small mats

Looking ahead – are you interested!

There are a number of plans in the pipeline for Blackwork Journey including a SAL on the Blackwork Journey Facebook site later in the year and I hope they will encourage more readers to explore traditional embroidery stitches.

I am thinking of adding an embroidery block every week featuring a different embroidery stitch in every block. Some blocks will contain more than one stitch. Every stitch will be explained by diagrams and photographs. The fabric used would be cotton, calico or fabric from your stash. The files would be uploaded into the Facebook group every week so the readers can work at their own pace. Access to the files would be through the Closed Facebook group set up for project:

Blackwork Journey - Elizabeth Almond Designs
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackworkjourneydesigns/>

You would need to make a 6 inch and an 8 inch template out of card or use acrylic templates for accuracy. The squares can be made up into a lap quilt and the project could all be put together by hand if a sewing machine is not available. The designs have already been drawn and some of the easier ones have already been stitched. Once you have worked a block then you would post the design on to the Facebook page for everyone to admire and to learn from. Seeing how other people approach a design, the colours and fabric they use is really interesting and you can learn a lot by sharing information and ideas through the group which is very helpful if you are new to embroidery.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

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

Stay safe and happy stitching!

Liz