

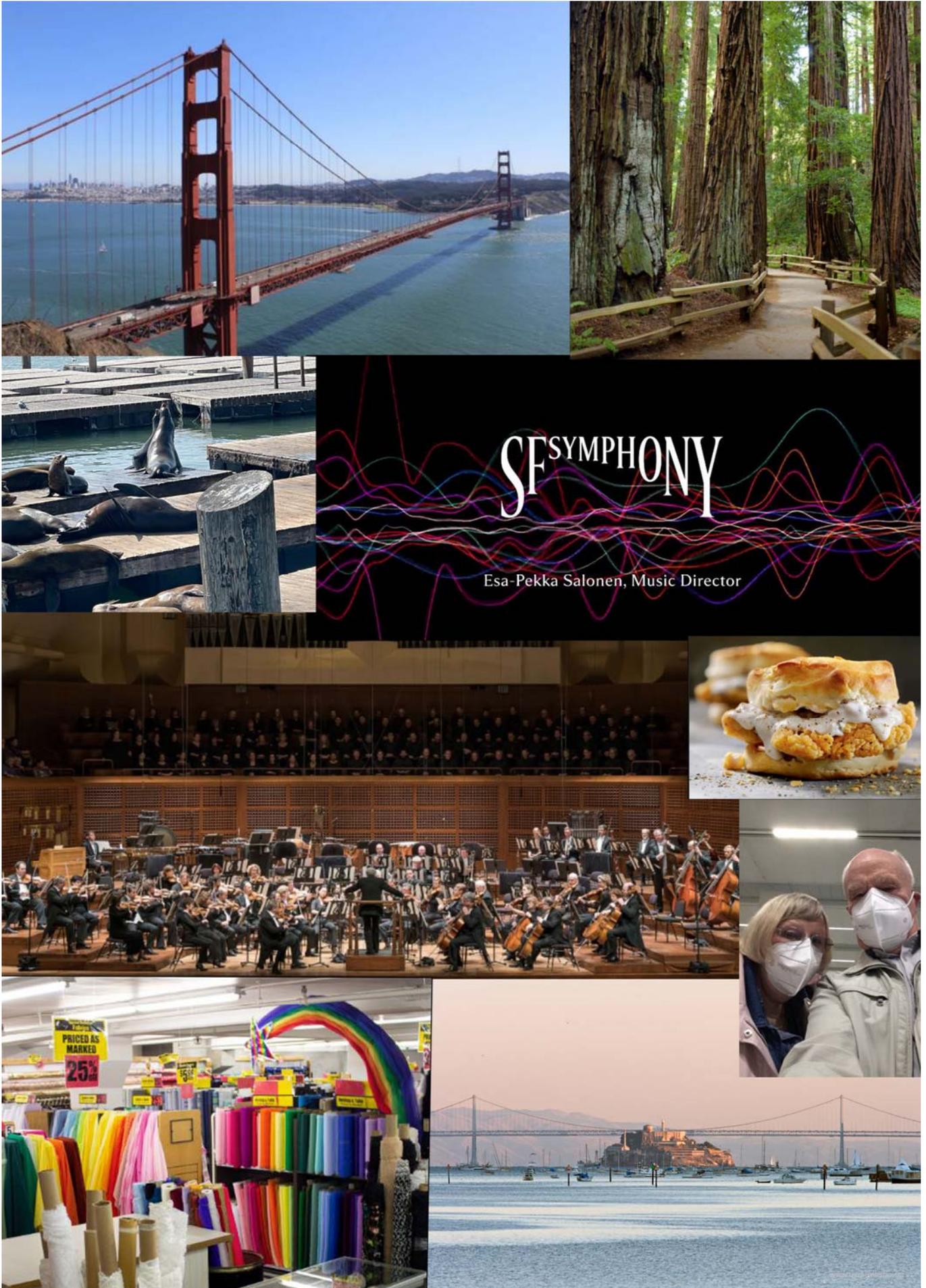


Blackwork Journey Blog

May 2022



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Taking a break

In April I travelled with my husband to see our family in San Francisco. This was the first time in nearly three years that we had been able to see them and this time I left my computer at home and decided to have a real break and recharge my batteries. The last minute preparation, Covid 19 passports, Fit to Fly certificates, disruption at airports all made this the most complicated flight we have ever undertaken.

The cases were full of delayed Christmas presents and Cadbury's chocolate, Yorkshire tea and Nescafe coffee that our family like although I forgot the liquorice allsorts and Double Decker bars!

However, I was able to visit some art galleries, museums and fabric and bookshops. We also did some of the tourist things again such as visit the sea lions on Pier 39 and rode the ferry across the Bay to Sausalito, past the notorious Alcatraz Island, but unfortunately I did not manage to visit the "Needle In A Haystack" shop at Alameda because it was by appointment only. However, I hope to do so on my next visit.

In Japantown there is a bookshop that sells design books that I am unable to buy in the UK so I purchased a number and will include some of the ideas they contain into my website over the coming months.

We also went to a concert at The Davies Symphony Hall to listen to a concert by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra of which our son is a member. This was a real treat because live music was one of the first areas to suffer in the Covid lockdown and is only now opening up again. Watching concerts on Zoom does not have the same impact as watching a live performance.

Source of inspiration - Muir Woods

Another place that always inspires me is Muir Woods National Monument which is managed by the US National Park Service, named after naturalist John Muir. It is located on Mount Tamalpais near the Pacific coast, in southwestern Marin County, California.



It is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and is 12 miles north of San Francisco. It covers 554 acres of which 240 acres are old growth coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) forest. The redwoods are awe inspiring, not just for their amazing height and scale, but for the texture of the bark.

It is very quiet as you walk through the forest with the occasional bird heard in the canopy and the quiet murmur of the streams and a few flowers in the areas where the sunlight breaks through making it an altogether delightful experience.

Potential textured embroidery?



New for month

Because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the inability to travel far from home over the past few years, I was in the right frame of mind for new adventures and to take a fresh look at the embroidery I am creating. It is so easy to get stuck a rut and much harder to reach out and explore something new. I am working on two new e-books at the moment so I decided not to add any new charts to Blackwork Journey this month, but to do a small project within the Blog to encourage members who are new to blackwork embroidery.

Starting a new technique for the first time can be daunting, but “Sew Simple” takes creating an embroidery step by step.

If you are an experienced embroiderer this project could be the starting point for something much harder and more complicated. Change the colours, add embellishments, enlarge the design or use the patterns to create other projects.

Sew Simple

Building up a pattern from a single motif is a good way of practising stitches and improving your confidence. Reduce the number of colours used and concentrate on how the pattern is put together and how the stitches sit on the fabric – not too tight, not too loose! Open spaces are as important as the areas that are filled. The more you stitch the more confident you will become so start small, keep it simple and watch the pattern grow.

Threads:

Choose two colours of your choice. I used DMC stranded floss emerald green and royal blue. Metallic threads and beads could be used to add sparkle and texture.

Legend:

■ [2] DMC-909 ANC-230 DLE- emerald green - vy dk

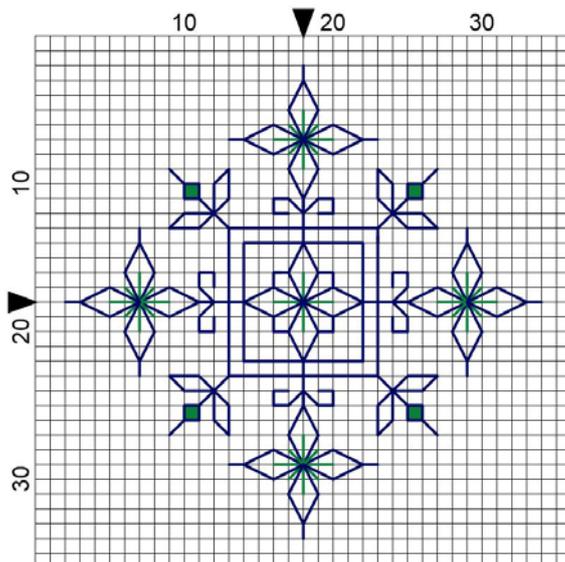
Backstitch Lines:

— DMC-820 royal blue - vy dk

— DMC-909 emerald green - vy dk

Tapestry needle No.24

Small embroidery ring or frame.



Sew Simple single motif - suitable for a gift tag or card:

2.29 x 2.29 inches, 32 x 32 stitches

Fabric: Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 4 x 4 inches

Sew Simple four motifs – suitable for a large card or box top. An initial can be added to the centre to personalise the design.

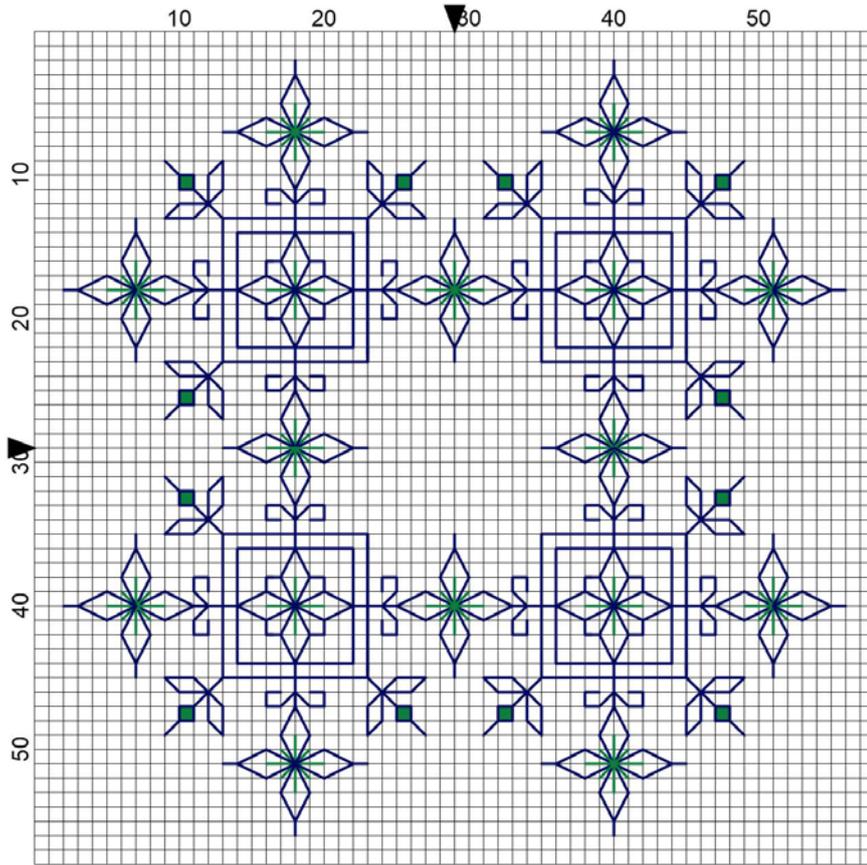
3.86 x 3.86 inches, 54 x 54 stitches

Fabric: Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 8 x 8 inches

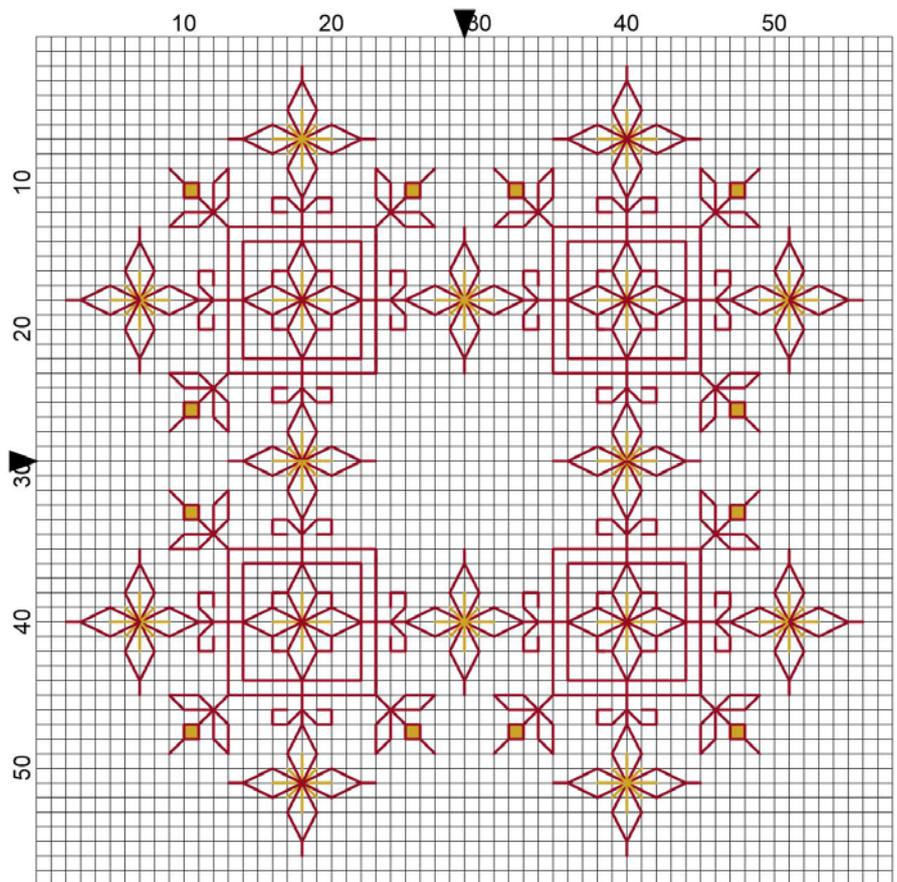
Stitches used:

Back stitch, one strand

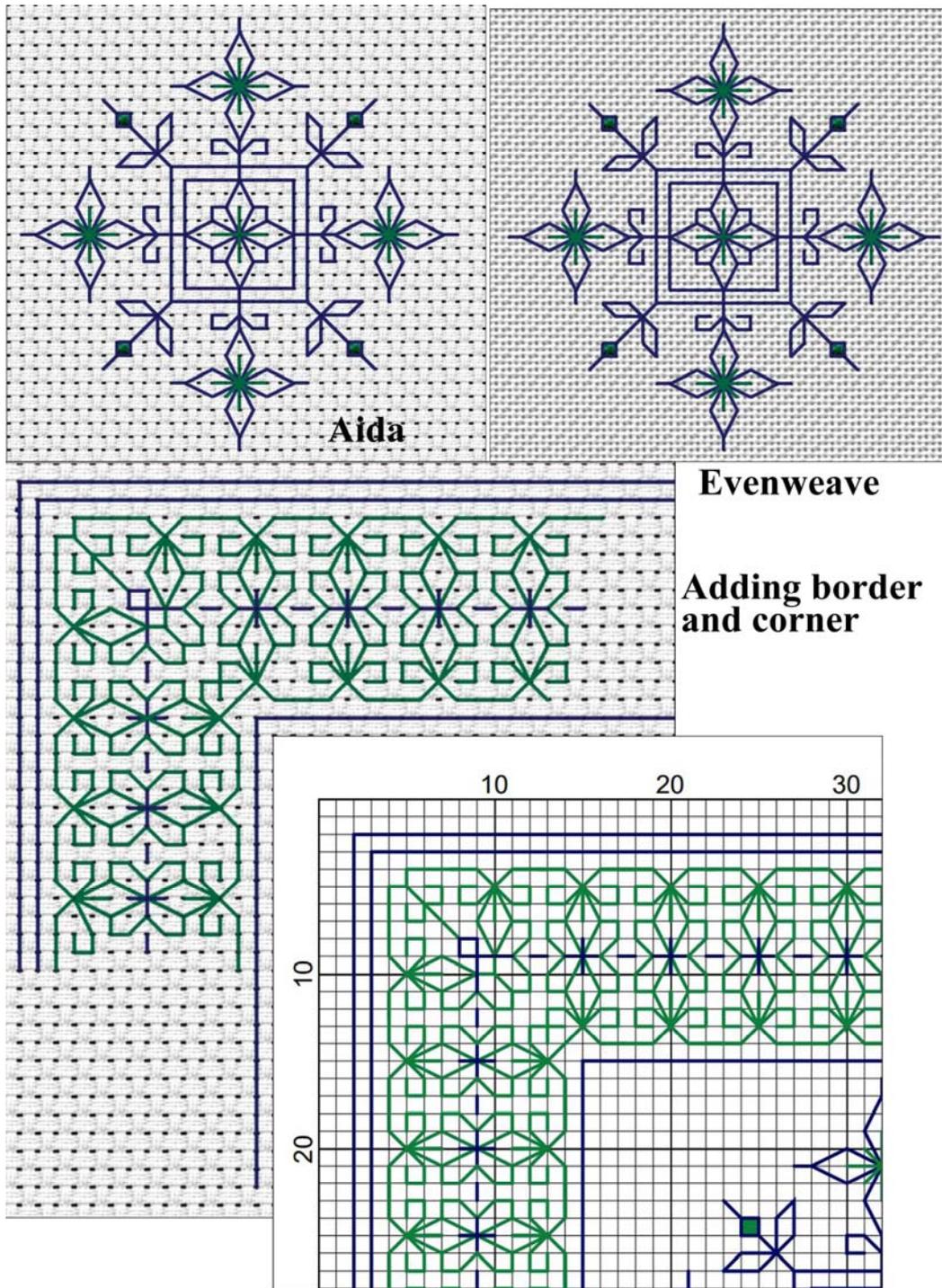
Cross stitch, two strands



Change the colours from blue and green to garnet and gold and it changes the dynamics of the pattern.



Two of the motifs have been worked on Aida and evenweave fabrics. Which fabric do you prefer?



Create a larger design by extending the design and adding a border.

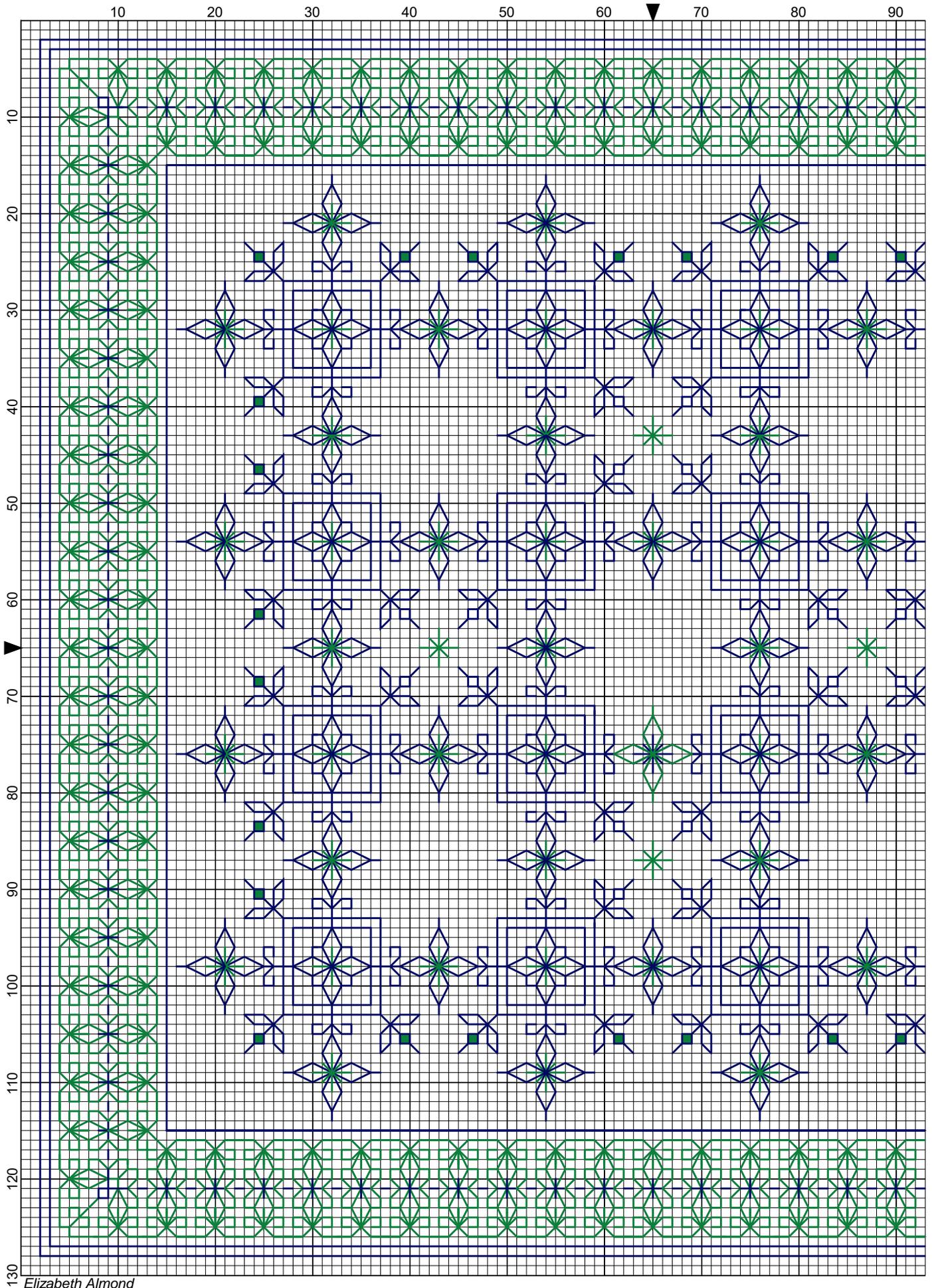
Sew Simple - Large design:

9.00 x 9.00 inches, 126 x 126 stitches

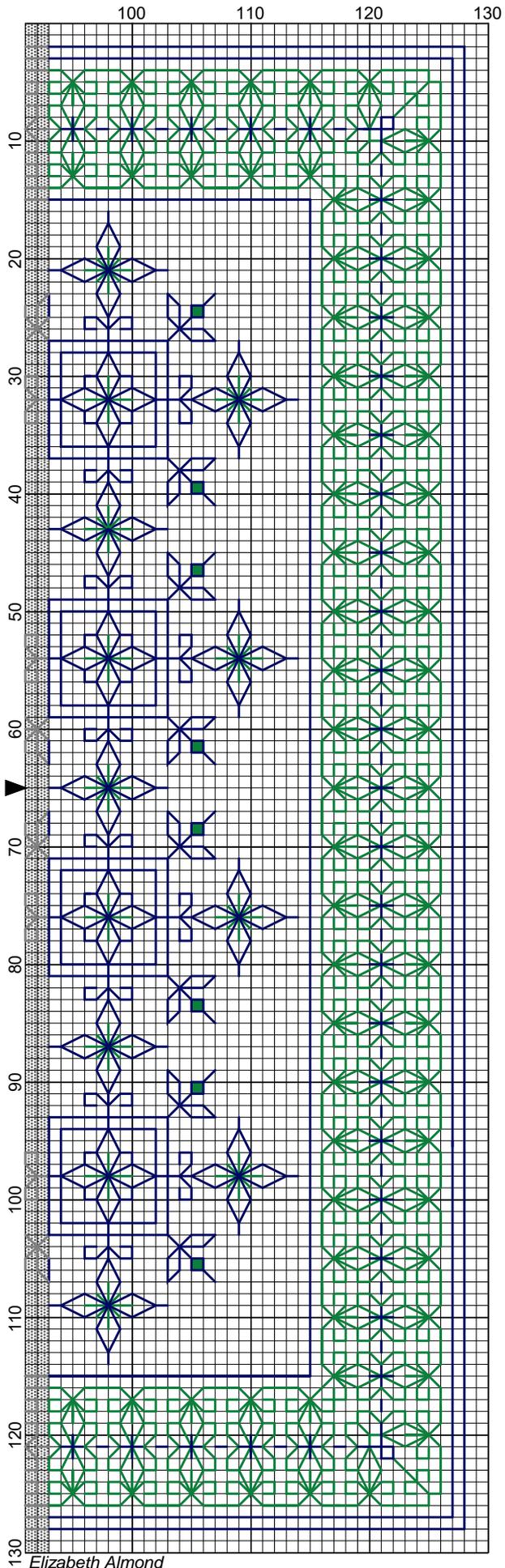
Fabric: Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 12 x 12 inches

DMC stranded floss – one skein of each colour.

Method: Fold the fabric into quarters to find the centre point. Work from the centre outwards completing the motifs in turn before adding the border. Place the finished embroidery face down on a soft towel and press lightly.



Sew Simple



- Legend:
■ DMC-909
Backstitches:
— DMC-820
— DMC-909

Alphabet Projects – e-book, work in progress

I have always been interested in the different alphabets I have seen in many parts of the world. Islamic calligraphy has always been considered one of the most important forms of art. There was a belief that the Koran was first scribed in Arabic and for Muslims this holds a spiritual importance because it did not have any visual images that could be worshipped.

<https://www.bl.uk/history-of-writing/articles/the-evolution-of-the-alphabet>

Calligraphy is a highly valued practice in both China and Japan. Calligraphy in Japan is called *shodō*, "way of writing" and is a way of life, a path or pursuit, like *bushidō*, the path of the warrior, *sadō*, the cult of tea, or *Shintō*, the way of the gods. In the Nara period (710–784 c) priests began the practice of *shakyō*, the copying over and over of sūtras, the Buddha's teachings and commentaries thereon, a custom that continues to this day.



I enjoy working with different styles of lettering and when I can combine more than one technique within a project I relish the challenge. However, to use all 26 letters and include fillers patterns as well to complete the rectangle has taken some thought.

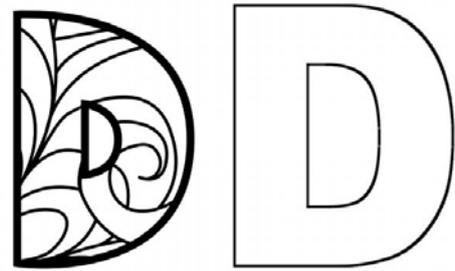
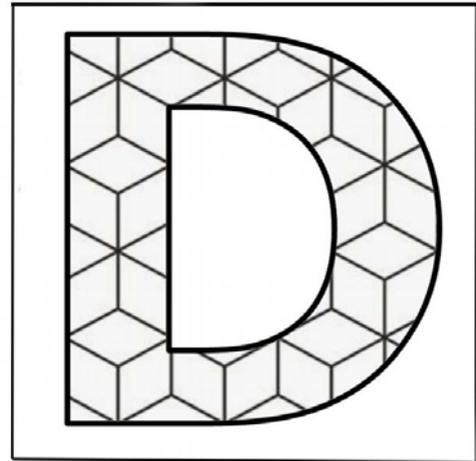
How can I use the alphabets?

The patterns can be embroidered, quilted or used as Japanese Sashiko designs. They can be used for free style embroidery and stitched on cotton or calico using free style embroidery stitches, or traced on to Zweigart 28 count evenweave fabric and filled with blackwork patterns.

An Embroidery Stitch Dictionary will be included.

Three different sizes have been included for each letter. Plus there will be additional projects included as well and some alphabet samplers.

The large letters have been worked in Sashiko fully charted and photographed as individual projects.



Three different sizes and styles. All of these letters can be resized using a photocopier. The outlines are traced onto the chosen fabric using a water-soluble pen or an HP pencil.

Each letter and pattern is different with a history behind many of the patterns. Whilst I am enjoying the research and the embroidery it is taking more time than I anticipated.

However, I have been promoting the idea of slow stitching and mindfulness so I am taking heed of my own needs and working steadily and thoughtfully at my own pace and I am enjoying every stitch!

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.
Stay safe and happy stitching!

Liz

'J' is for Jenny Just for fun I have also included some counted thread samplers with different embroidery stitches.

