

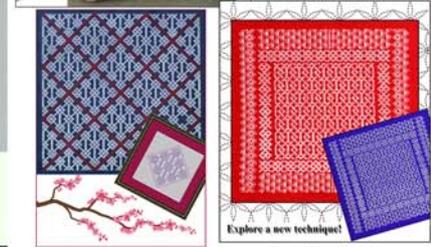


Blackwork Journey Blog

July 2022



Working with textured stitches



CH0412 Kusawa Kogin

CH0403 Kogin Adventure

Short and sweet!

This month's Blog will be shorter than usual as for most of June I have been recovering from Covid19. After avoiding it for the last two years I finally succumbed to the virus and whilst I have recovered it has left me feeling very tired, so I am taking it steady.

Textured embroidery stitches - PR0074 Perception



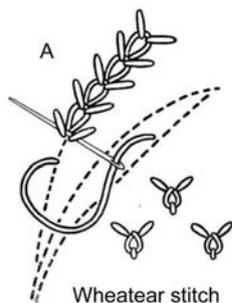
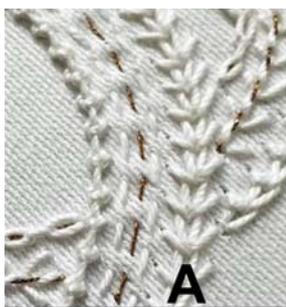
Whilst I have read a lot and done quite a bit of research over the past month for some magazine designs, I have also done some counted thread stitching and found that working with thicker threads on calico or cotton was something I really enjoyed.

Adding textured stitches to your stitch repertoire opens up a whole world of possibilities which are demonstrated in this pair of embroideries based on three interlocking circles.

By carefully choosing the different threads and the way they can be used can produce some excellent effects, so it is worth taking time to consider how the threads and stitches can best combine to produce the desired outcome.

Eight different textured stitches were used in the two designs and I was pleased with the finished embroideries. Since I have several day schools coming up in the near future on textured stitches these will be used as stitch samplers.

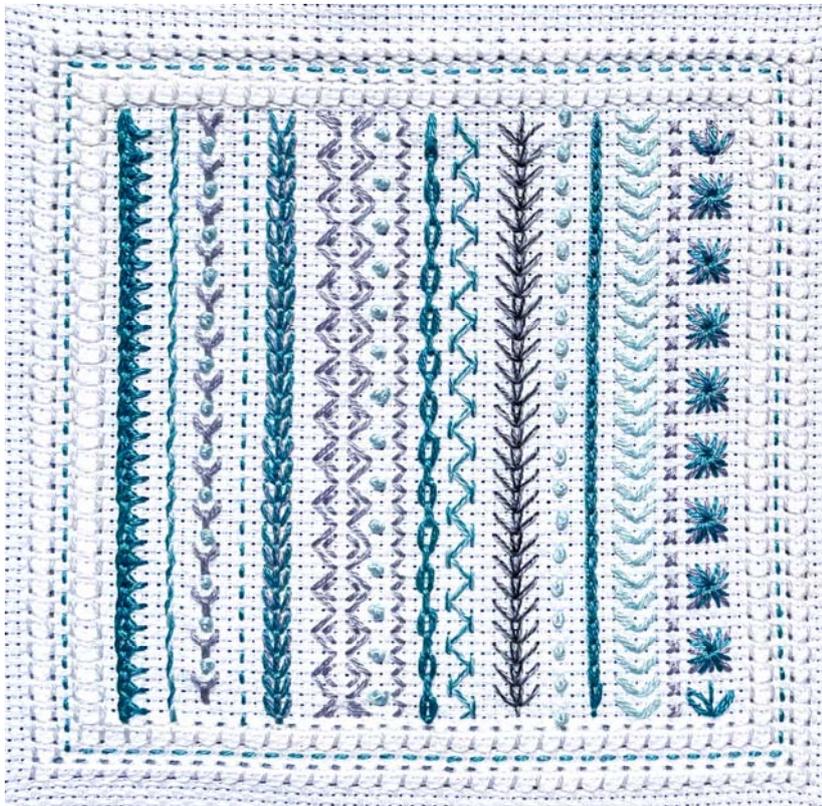
However, if you want to try your hand at these designs and the Stitch Sampler I have added it to 'Projects' on the Blackwork Journey website.



One of my favourite free style stitches is wheatear stitch. It works well in whitework embroidery where the shadows and the way the light catches the stitches plays an important part in the overall appearance of the design.

I used three strands of floss or a thick matt crochet cotton to give a raised effect.

Within the same project I took the textured stitches and added a few more embroidery stitches to make a small counted Stitch Sampler. This can be worked on Zweigart 14 count Aida or 28 count evenweave. Most of the textured embroidery stitches can be worked as counted thread stitches and if you are doing these stitches for the first time, counting them out and spacing them evenly can be helpful in understanding how the stitches are constructed.



A double four-sided stitch border was worked round the pattern and the same border was worked on another piece of Aida fabric.

The two pieces will be joined together by beaded slip stitch and the small pillow will be stuffed with lavender and wadding and used as a brooch pillow.

Slip stitch the two sides together adding a bead at each stitch. Work the beading round the openings in the same way.



Slip stitch

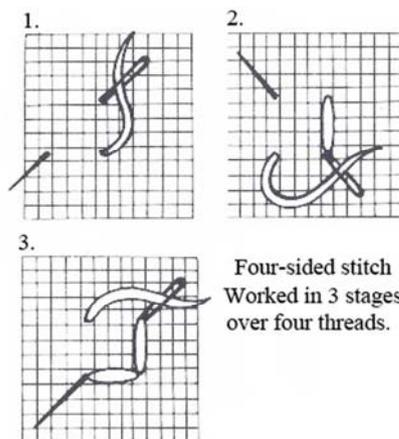
Four-sided stitch:

This consists of 3 straight stitches, to form the end, the middle and the top of the 'square'.

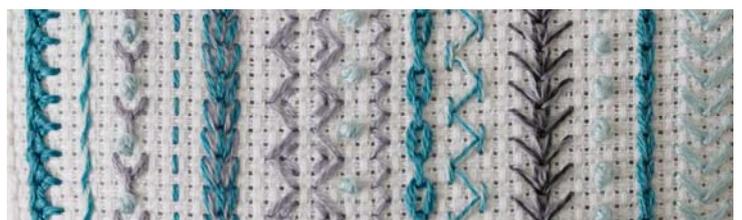
Work from right to left over 4 threads or two blocks. Always put the needle in at one corner and come out at the opposite one.

Follow diagrams 1-3. Turn the work and work the next part of the border. Pull tight to create the holes. If the stitch has been worked correctly there will be a row of cross stitches on the back of the fabric.

Mix and match the threads to make different combinations!



Four-sided stitch
Worked in 3 stages
over four threads.



Colonial knots v French knots

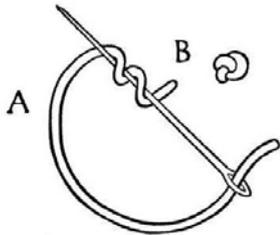
In both the free style embroideries and the small Stitch Sampler I have included a lot of knots. The question arises which knots have I used and why – French knots or Colonial knots?

I frequently use knots in embroidery to add texture and interest. Each knot should look the same and sit neatly on the surface of the fabric and whilst French knots are easier to make they don't sit as well on the fabric as a Colonial knot does and they look less uniform.

Try both knots in different threads and see which one you prefer.

French knot

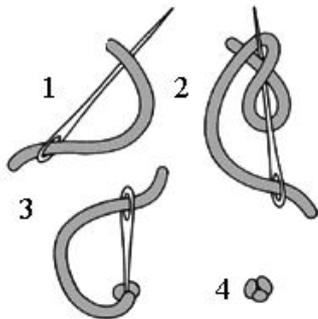
A French knot is easier to make but not as stable! Use two strands of floss minimum.



1. Wrap once or twice round the needle.
2. Holding the thread firmly, push the needle through the fabric from front to back at almost the same point of entry.

Colonial knot

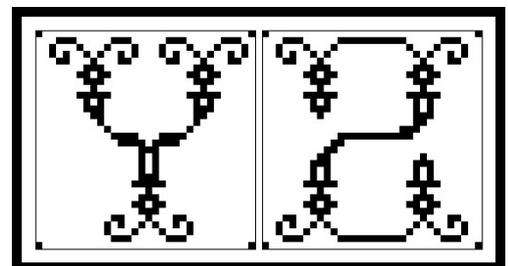
A Colonial Knot is worked in three stages:



1. Bring the needle up through the fabric as you would a French knot.
2. Push the thread away from you towards the RIGHT. Wrap the thread round the needle in a figure of eight. Use your thumb to control the thread.
3. Keep the needle as upright as possible and push the needle downwards into almost the same spot as you came up.
4. Pull the thread gently and you will have a perfect Colonial knot every time!



Decorate the back of the brooch cushion with a letter from 'Freebies' on the website. There are several alphabets to choose from.



'Y' and 'Z' from 'Alphabet Soup'



Phil's Kogin embroidery based on EB0011 Koginesque

It gives me enormous pleasure when I can work with a member of a local stitching group on a piece of embroidery for a special celebration.

Phil has been working on this as a wedding gift for his daughter in San Francisco. Covid19 lockdown delayed the wedding and the flight, so Phil is no longer able to attend in person, but his gift will become a family heirloom stitched with love.

Congratulations Phil for a really beautiful piece of work!



One pattern, two different fabrics!

Kogin embroidery is a heavy form of 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. Cotton fabric and threads were expensive, so local indigo dyed hemp cloth was often used for these garments. The Kogin 'stab' stitch is a very old technique with the earliest records of it dating from the 1600's. Kogin stitches were worked in hemp threads to reinforce the garments and join layers together for warmth. It was its history and humble roots as embroidery of the working people that appealed to me as a modern embroiderer.

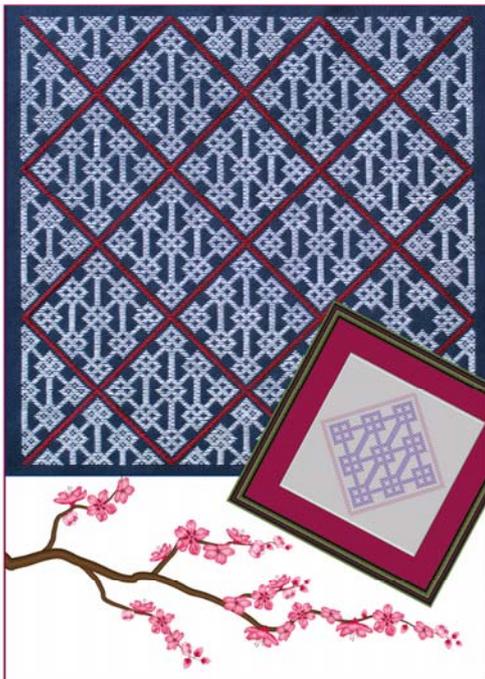
There are many examples of Kogin embroidery to explore in 'Charts' and 'Projects' on the website. It is an exciting and challenging technique, but grows quickly and can be worked on a variety of fabrics to suit the individual.



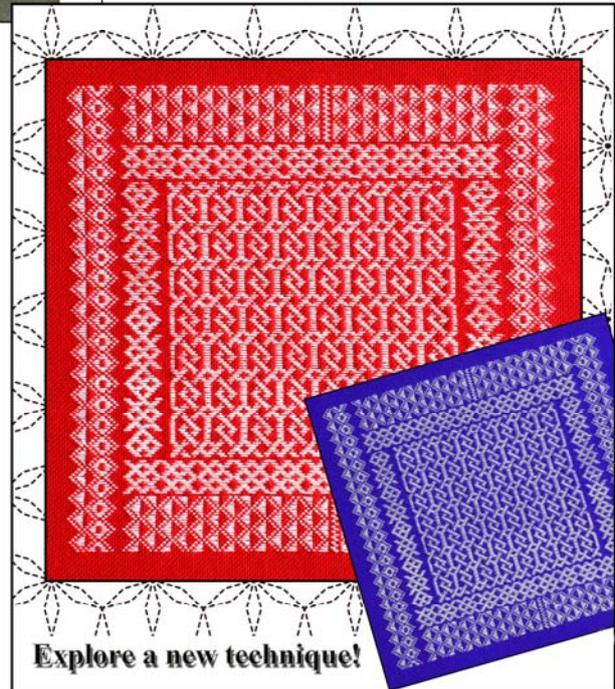
CH0379 Hishizashi



CH0378 Kogin Band Sampler



CH0412 Kutsawa Kogin



CH0403 Kogin Adventure

These are just a few examples of the Kogin designs on the website!

Stitching for relaxation

With the constant pressures of modern family life I don't always want to work on a complicated piece of embroidery and this is where Japanese sashiko stitching can be very restful. Once the design has been drawn or traced onto the fabric and the threads selected I can sit back and relax.

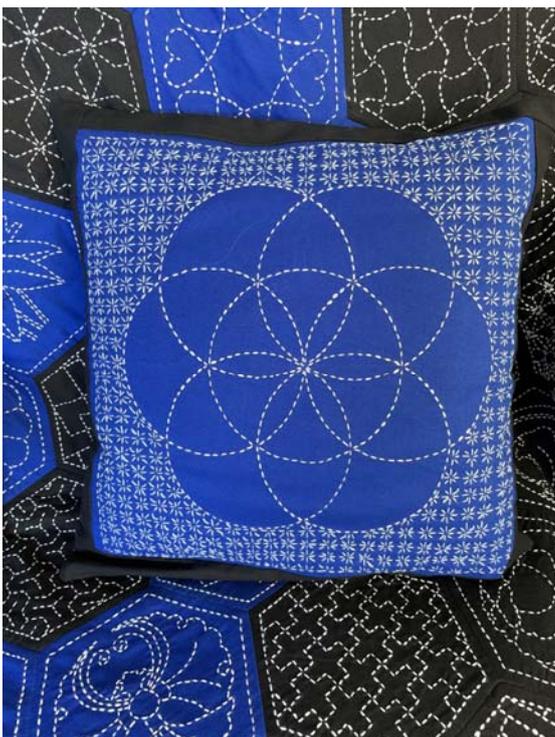
Sashiko stitching is simple running stitch using traditional Japanese geometric patterns and motifs. The designs can be simple or complex and it is becoming very popular in clothing especially on denim. The idea of reusing fabric is not new, but follows the tradition of *mottanai*, the Japanese philosophy of not wasting anything. We all have fabrics and clothing that we haven't used so the idea of making something that costs very little is appealing especially in the current financial climate.

There are five generic kinds of sashiko embroidery:

Moyozashi uses running stitches to create linear designs. In **Hitomezashi** the patterns emerge from the alignment of many single stitches on a grid. **Kogin**, which means 'small cloth' is a type of pattern darning. **Shonai** sashiko comes from the Shonai region of Yamagata prefecture and has straight lines that cross each other. If indigo-dyed threads are used it is called **Kakurezashi**.



Each style is different and presents its own challenges but exploring new techniques and adapting them to your personal needs is part of the fun of embroidery!



The rhythm of the stitching and constant practice ensures that the stitches are even.

One of the most popular designs is asanoha hemp leaf design which is drawn on to the indigo fabric with a ruler and tailors chalk and worked in white cotton sashiko thread.



Just Cross Stitch August 2022

The new 'Just Cross Stitch' magazine for August 2022 is available at booksellers now!

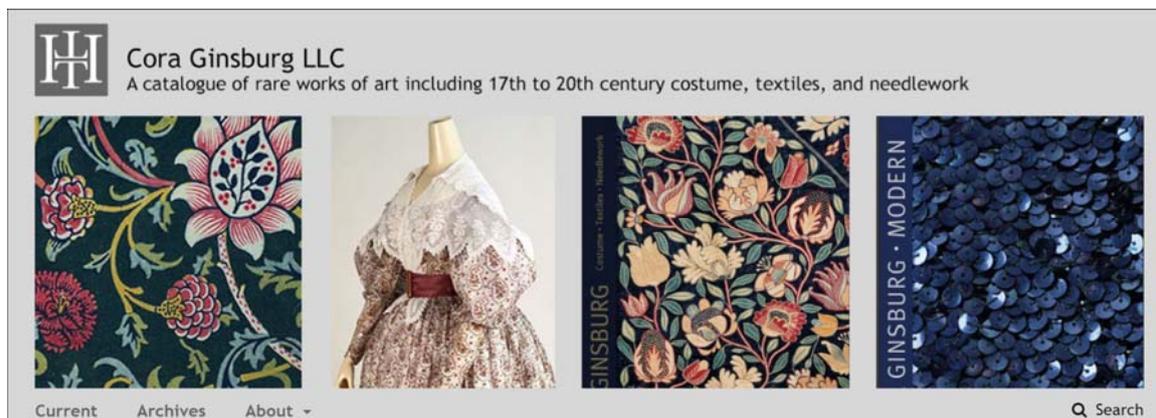
It is always a thrill to see my patterns in print and I especially enjoyed designing and stitching 'Summer Celebration'.



Exploring the Internet

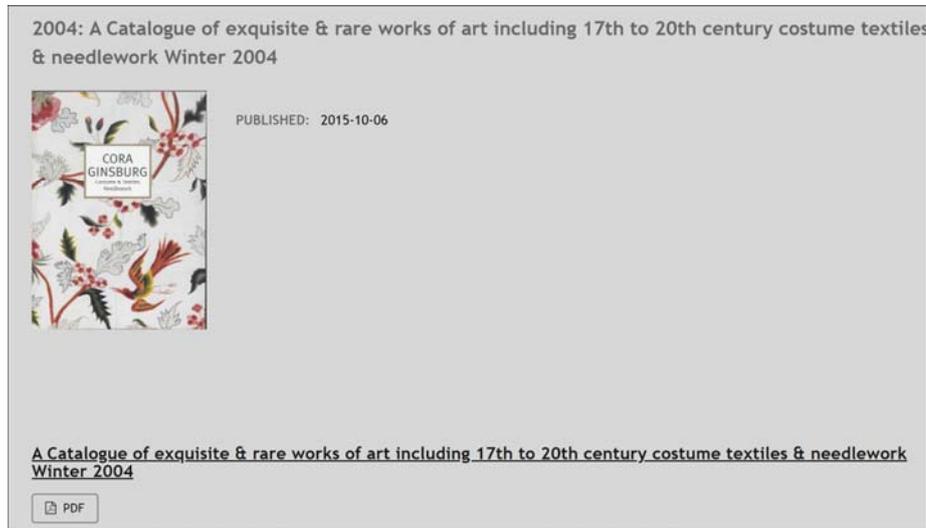
One of the joys of researching the internet is the number of sites which offer access to antique embroidery books, museum collections and information about unfamiliar embroidery techniques. Following up on a reference I came across 'The Cora Ginsburg Archive of 17th – 20th Century Treasures'.

The University of Heidelberg has published the archive online. As a collector and dealer, the name Cora Ginsburg has been associated with fine and rare costume and antique textiles since the 1940s.



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Founded in 1971, the company specialises in museum quality antique costume of the 18th and 19th centuries and in European embroideries, silks, and printed textiles of the 17th - 20th centuries. Owner and director Titi Halle has been with the gallery since 1981.



To open the PDF for each catalogue just click on the PDF box underneath the catalogue and it will open up a world of embroidery from the past which is a delight to explore.

One of my favourite articles from all the Archives is about the Ackworth School Samplers in the 2004 Catalogue.

I have worked with needlework groups in Ackworth, West Yorkshire and I have known about the school and the Quaker samplers for many years.

Reading about the history of the area from its mention in the Domesday Book of 1086, the Black Death bubonic plague in 1349 and again in 1705, the battles fought in the area in the Wars of the Roses conveys a deeper understanding of the trials and tribulations of life in a rural community over the centuries.

<http://www.ackworthlife.com/history/>

ACKWORTH SCHOOL SAMPLERS WORKED BY HANNAH HICKS AND HER DAUGHTER RACHEL WILSON

English, dated 1790 and 1818

Samplers made by young girls at the Ackworth School, a Quaker institution in Yorkshire, England, form a distinctive group of samplers worked from the late eighteenth century when the school was founded through the middle of the following century. Hannah Hicks and her daughter, Rachel Wilson, were Ackworth pupils twenty-eight years apart. In their needlework are embroidered motifs that were taught at Ackworth for many decades and that have come to characterise samplers produced at this austere Quaker learning establishment.

The rarity of surviving needlework made by a mother and daughter, combined with the excellence and beauty of the stitching and the known history of the makers, distinguish these two samplers as exceptional works of schoolgirl embroidery.

Founded in 1779 by John Fothergill, the Ackworth School was intended for children of less affluent Quaker families. Hannah Hicks, born October 22, 1774 at Old Saling, Essex, was admitted on April 4, 1789 and remained an Ackworth student until 1791. She married Thomas Wilson, a fellow Quaker, and their daughter, Rachel, born at Houghton, near Cambridge, on October 13, 1804, was a pupil at Ackworth from 1817 to 1818.

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As stated in the *Rules for the Government of Ackworth School*, written in 1790, one of the schoolmaster's responsibilities was to teach the female pupils writing and arithmetic. A requirement of the schoolmistress was to instruct the girls reading, sewing, knitting, and spinning. While the samplers worked by Hannah and Rachel exhibit the decorative medallions, birds and floral motifs that identify one type of sampler worked at the school, alphabet and darning samplers were also taught at Ackworth. These didactic sewing exercises provided the girls with basic needlework skills required for marking and repairing linens. According to the rules at Ackworth, it was the female students' responsibilities to "...make and mend their own apparel, the boys' linen, and the house linen; and do such needle work, as may be sent to be executed in the house...." Sewing was taught to the girls not only as a feminine talent, but also as a marketable skill for possible future employment as domestic workers.



The earliest medallion sampler in the archives of the Ackworth School was made by Mary Wigham in 1790. Hannah Hicks, whose sampler is also dated 1790, would have been a classmate of Mary's and their needlework, as expected, bears many similarities. (In addition, each of the two girls' samplers includes the initials of the other.) Working with polychrome silk threads and using cross stitch throughout, Hannah Hicks embroidered half-medallions as a framing device for the central rectangular field. This unusual design, combined with the motifs within the field that occur on many samplers from the school, is a defining feature of Ackworth embroideries. The similarity of the medallions to motifs on German and northern European samplers has been noted but it is unknown how these geometric, snowflake-like patterns came to be taught by schoolmistresses as part of an eighteenth-century Quaker education in England.

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The half-medallion border and many of the motifs seen on Hannah Hicks's work reappear in her daughter's sampler. Rachel Wilson embroidered her sampler in 1818 with more open ground using only black silk thread. Both pieces contain initials throughout to indicate classmates and in each, as well as in all surviving Ackworth medallion samplers, the delicate intricacies of the patterns and the attention to decoration belie the strict tenets of plainness central to a Quaker education. Surviving samplers from the Westtown School, a Quaker institution modeled after Ackworth that opened in Chester County, Pennsylvania in 1799, illustrate the flow of needlework education from one Quaker community to another—similar design structures and identical motifs appear on samplers from both schools.

Hannah Hicks's and Rachel Wilson's samplers express through their words and imagery a strong sense of friendship and affection, a desired result of domestic needlework produced not for practical function but as "a token of love."

Hannah Hicks sampler: 14.5" H x 12.5" W

Rachel Wilson sampler: 12.5" H x 12.75" W

<https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/ginsburg/issue/archive>



If you want to stitch a Quaker sampler of your own there are many charts and kits available on the Internet.

However, it is not difficult to design your own Quaker medallion. Just design your own border using graph paper and add a letter from 'Freebies' on the Blackwork Journey website.



I hope you have enjoyed reading this month's Blog. There is a very special project to look forward to in August so watch this space! If you have any queries please contact:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching,

Liz