



Town Clock Stitchers

Stitching Techniques

Gold Work

Metal thread embroidery, whether using actual gold metal or present day synthetic metallic threads is a beautiful form of embroidery and has been for centuries. Gold has always had a special meaning for people. An early fabric sample was found dating from the 4th century BC. Gold work was found in Europe, Ancient Egypt and the Orient. Ecclesiastical embroidery has often incorporated gold work and reached its pinnacle in the 13th and 14th centuries in England. Royalty in the 17th century included real gold and precious stones in their garments. Pieces were often cut out of these garments by passersby. The synthetic metallic threads of today, whether used alone or incorporated in the embroidery, enhance the piece.

Hardanger

Hardanger embroidery is a Norwegian embroidery, taking its name from the Hardanger region of south west Norway. It is counted thread embroidery resulting in geometric patterns and open work and can have a very lacy effect.

Traditionally, it was stitched with white thread on a fine white linen fabric. The most common fabric used today is Hardanger fabric – an even weave, 12 count fabric. Other fine linen weaves can be used. Perle cotton is the thread of choice in sizes #5 and #8 or #8 and #12 for finer linen. The fabrics and threads now come in many colors and types.

Black Work

Black Work embroidery originated with the Moors of North Africa. Their architecture, when they ruled Spain, influenced Spanish embroidery. Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife is credited with making Black Work popular in England. The embroidery consisted of black silk thread on white linen, hence the name Black Work. Red, gold and silver were also used. This is a form of counted thread embroidery forming geometric patterns as well as free form designs. The common stitch used is the double running stitch, often resulting in reversible embroidery.

The beauty of Black Work lies in the contrast between the density of the black embroidery on the white background. Hans Holbein, the Younger was a court painter during Henry VIII's reign. His portraits showed Black Work in such detail that the double running stitch is also known as the Holbein stitch. Wearing lace was prohibited at the time for anyone below the rank of knight. Black Work's lace like this allowed people to be more noble than they actually were, hence its popularity.



Town Clock Stitchers

Stitching Techniques

Stump Work

Stump Work is raised embroidery dating from the 17th century. It was taught to young girls in wealthy Stuart households. The raised motifs were often padded and consisted of flowers, fruit, insects, animals and people. Some pieces were embroidered separately and attached to the design. Embellishment was often added in the form of beads, feathers and found objects. There was no regard for size or perspective. Stump Work has had a recent revival, but instead of copying old designs; new interpretations of designs and techniques have been developed. Stump Work has also found its way into other forms of needlework from Brazilian embroidery, patchwork and even needle lace.

Cross Stitch

Cross stitch is almost as old as the pyramids. In the intervening centuries since 500 BC, cross stitch has been mainstay, a foundation stitch, and from time to time the object of widespread popularity. The recorded history of cross stitch is sparse until the 16th century in England. Locally made cloth, thread, dyes, local flora, fauna and customs, all combined to produce an ethnic look unique to a particular area. By the 14-15 century linens were considered part of the wealth of a household. Becoming an accomplished needle worker was a necessary part of a woman's education as needlework was used extensively as decoration on clothing, window hangings, cushions and household linens.

This is one of the most popular forms of needlework and can vary from the simple to the complex. The beauty of Cross Stitch is that it can be worked on canvas, block weave fabric; the most common being Aida, and even weave fabrics, such as linen and lugana.

Cross Stitch patterns and their shading can be very detailed and beautiful due to the wide range of sizes and colors of fabric and the huge range of colors in floss and specialty threads. There are different types of Cross Stitch and one technique even results in reversible Cross Stitch.

Petit Point

This is a diminutive form of needlepoint usually worked with floss on silk canvas or 25 count congress cloth. Petit Point worked on silk canvas tends to leave the canvas exposed around the embroidered piece. The background is covered when congress cloth is used.

The stitch used is the continental stitch and is a slanting stitch worked from right to left using two holes and covering one row of canvas.



Town Clock Stitchers

Stitching Techniques

Silk Ribbon Embroidery

This is a three dimensional embroidery that is soft and tactile. Ribbons can be silk or synthetic and come in many different colors and widths.

Silk ribbon embroidery became popular in France during the 1700's. The dress at court was very elaborate and only royalty and its court were allowed to wear this embroidery. Britain wasn't far behind and from the 18th century until just prior to World War I this embroidery was seen on everything from clothing, to crazy quilts to samplers, etc.

In recent years there has been a revival, much of the interest coming from the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Crewel Embroidery

Crewel Embroidery is defined as a variety of surface stitches, usually worked with fine wool on closely woven fabric. It can also be worked with floss and silk. These are not counted stitches. The design is usually traced onto the fabric.

The word "Crewel" as quoted in "The Complete Guide to Needlework" is believed to have come from the Anglo-Saxon word "cleow" meaning a ball of thread.

Embroidery using wool thread goes back thousands of years and throughout the world. The Bayeux tapestry is a famous example of Crewel. Crewel was very popular during the Jacobean period and its embroidery of stylized flowers, plants, trees and animals became known as Jacobean embroidery. This form of embroidery was often taught to young girls and many fine examples of these samples exist today.

Pulled Thread

Pulled thread embroidery is, like it says, a technique where the embroidered thread is pulled tightly. This distorts the threads of the fabric, creating holes between the stitches. It makes a nice, light, lacey effect. Pulled thread embroidery has a long and colorful history, from being worn by Cleopatra circa 50 B.C. to adorning altar cloths in Germany in the 1200s. In the 1800s, it was made to imitate lace and was esteemed enough to have been included with lace in the practices of taxation and smuggling. It has been worn by the aristocracy and the peasantry alike. The earliest documentation of the practice of pulled thread was in India, 320-340 A.D. Records indicated that pulled thread was done on filmy muslin and executed with silk threads. Evidence also indicated that around 1200 pulled thread was done on natural linen with colored silk and metal threads in Egypt, the Middle East, and Peru.