

*How to choose*  
**THE RIGHT  
CRAFT FOR YOU**



*An introductory guide  
to **12 key crafts**  
that anyone can try!*



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*You need no prior experience or skills to start creating wonderful pieces of art or craft. All you need is enthusiasm, an interest in your chosen topic and some guidance.*

*Just take the plunge and do what appeals to you. And you will be surprised at what you can achieve, especially if you join a retreat or short break where a tutor will help you discover the tips and techniques that are relevant to your particular craft.*

*You will spend time with people who have common interests with you, exchanging ideas and gaining from their work as you develop your own art and craft. And in many cases you will take home examples of your own creativity with you.*

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***Welcome to the  
Wonderful World of Crafts***

### PREFACE

There is so much more to choosing the right craft for you than just picking a topic that appeals. What place will the hobby or craft take in your life? What do you expect to get out of it? And how many hours will you be able to give to your pastime?

For many years I have joined a wide variety of weekend residential craft and leisure courses on topics as diverse as patchwork, encaustic art, history and journalism. These short holidays are a real pleasure, not just for adding to my skills and knowledge, but also as a way of meeting other like-minded people with similar interests.

I have seen shy people arrive on a Friday, knowing no one and not sure whether they had done the right thing in booking on a weekend retreat or course, only to thoroughly enjoy themselves, leaving on the Sunday afternoon with their confidence boosted, their skills enhanced and taking home their own unique pieces of work that they had created.

Others, who already have some knowledge, have benefited from sharing their expertise and interacting with their fellow students while keeping their brains active and stimulated as they gained extra competence.

With the wish to bring such enjoyment to others, in 2013 I started running similar short breaks for several years. These courses and retreats gave people the opportunity to experience the fun, relaxation and expansion of skills that many have previously found.

This book is the result of years of experience in the world of craft courses along with collaboration from a wide range of tutors who specialise in running retreats and weekend courses for adults.



If you are interested in crafts or have a friend, partner, family member or colleagues with an interest in crafts, then read on. Here you will find a dozen of the most popular crafts reviewed in detail, giving a clear statement of what each craft is, a look at its background, what is involved and what can be achieved.

As you go through the chapters, you will gain information about the various crafts covered, how often they interact with one another or overlap, and whether they might be suitable for you.

And there is even a checklist where you can find out which crafts are likely to match what you are seeking.

So use this book to help you decide which craft is for you and what your next steps should be to achieve your goals in these creative fields.

### 1. APPLIQUÉ

#### WHAT IS APPLIQUÉ?

Appliqué is the term used for a decorative needlework technique where pieces of textile or other materials are placed on top of a base fabric to create a pattern or design. The pieces are sewn down, either by hand or machine or otherwise attached to the background fabric.

Often there are relatively few 'rules' for producing pieces. As such, it is a great way for beginners or more experienced sewers to develop their own unique pieces of textile art, whatever their level of skill.

In much appliqué, smaller pieces of fabric are attached to a larger piece of fabric to create a pattern, or perhaps a representation of a photo or scene, or an abstract design. Large needlework items such as church or commemorative banners are particularly suitable for appliqué.

#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The term originates from the Latin 'applicare' and subsequently from the French 'appliquer' - which means to 'apply' or 'join'.

Today, appliqué is used as a decorative form of creative art, but there are examples of appliqué on garments as far back as in Ancient Egypt.

During the Middle Ages appliqué was found on ecclesiastical banners and ceremonial clothing as a means of identifying the status, positioning and importance of a building or wearer.

Appliqué was also found as a decorative art on ancient tents used historically by nomadic people such as the Ottomans and Turkish tribes migrating across the Middle East. Appliqué patterns on the tents of noble people might have been reminiscent of wall tiles to convey the illusion that the tent was, in fact, a building.

Originally a more common use for appliqué is likely to have been as a method of repair, covering holes or tears, or strengthening fabric to lengthen the life of clothing and household items such as blankets. Today, it can still be used to cover up damage in a much-loved garment.

## TYPES OF APPLIQUÉ

As new needlework techniques are explored, appliqué, where layers are added, is perhaps one of the areas that best lends itself to this expansion. But some of these techniques may not strictly be classed as 'appliqué' in the conventional sense.

Traditionally, appliqué has a large piece of background fabric, on to which smaller pieces of fabric are sewn or adhered to form a picture or design.

Another version of this craft is called 'reverse appliqué'. Here several layers of fabric are sewn together, and then the pattern or picture is cut away, one layer at a time, to reveal the design. Stitches are then sewn around the edges of the design to seal them.

There are several techniques that straddle the borders of this type of needlecraft with other skills. Couching, for example, is a form of embroidery where thick threads, ribbons or other similar materials are laid on to the surface of a background fabric and then caught down at intervals with another thread to form an embroidery appliqué.

There are also broderie perse, (French for Persian embroidery) Baltimore and chintz appliqués. Here motifs are cut from printed fabrics such as chintz and then used to create a pleasing picture. Many of the resulting designs show a colourful range of flowers, possibly in a bowl or vase. This work is usually completed by hand. This style may have originated in India, and is delicate, time-consuming work, but can result in spectacular pieces of textile art.

## ADHERING THE LAYERS

In conventional appliqué, it is possible to pin the pattern pieces on to the background fabric and then sew around the edges, but it is much easier to use some form of adhesive to hold the pieces in place rather than pins.

For small pieces a simple glue stick can be used, but for larger pieces or more complicated patterns and designs, it is best to use a fusible web which has a thin layer of glue on one side. This is ironed on to the back of the pieces that are to be stuck down, and then the web is peeled off, leaving the glue. The appliqué pieces can then be ironed on to the background fabric and will stay in place while they are sewn together.

Baking parchment should be placed between the appliqué and the iron to prevent glue getting on the sole plate.

If you have an electronic sewing machine with a loose basting stitch, you may use this to hold pieces in place while they are sewn. The basting stitches can then be removed once the pieces are secured in position.

Pieces can be sewn down by hand, by an invisible needle turning stitch or with a simple buttonhole stitch.

Another method is to use bias tape around the edges of the pattern pieces to fix them to the base fabric. You can buy ready-made bias, some with glue on the back, which makes it easy to fix with an iron and helps hold it in place while you sew it down. Alternatively, you can make your own using bias bars to help you when preparing the fabric. Often these designs come under the general heading of a technique called 'Stained Glass Window'.

Alternatively, a satin stitch can be used on a sewing machine to go around the edges. Usually, it is necessary to go around two or three times to get the satin stitch to completely cover the edges. The Brass Rubbings are examples of both reverse appliqué and satin stitch.

Whether you decide to create conventional or reverse appliqué, ribbon couching or broderie perse, is a question of personal preference. Some people like hand stitching, while others choose to use a sewing machine.

And appliqué is commonly found in many patchwork designs such as Dresden plate. (See Chapter 9 for some examples of appliqué used in patchwork.)

### **WHAT RAW MATERIALS WILL YOU NEED?**

The main background fabric is likely to be a quality 100% cotton or similar. The pieces to be appliquéd on top can also be cotton, but a wide range of other fabrics may be used, such as satin or felt, ribbons, or even other materials such as sweet papers, foils, nets and so on. You can be highly creative here.

With reverse appliqué, rich fabrics such as silks and velvets can create stunning pieces. Reverse appliqué usually has a non-stretch base fabric at the back, and

old cotton sheeting is ideal here as it is soft but keeps its shape.

For hand sewing you will need threads, which may be the same colour as the appliqué pieces, or may be contrasting, as in the Bird of Paradise referred to above.

For reverse appliqué it is quite common to use black thread for the satin stitch (as in the brass rubbings, again referred to above) but you can always use other colours to highlight features if you wish.

### **WHAT ABOUT COLOUR CHOICES?**

Modern appliqué is often used for interior design or pictures, so you may wish to choose your colours in line with your décor.

The appropriate colour palette will depend on the design and the ultimate use for the item you are producing. If you are preparing broderie perse or Baltimore, you are likely to be using mainly reds, yellows, greens and golds.

If you are working with reverse appliqué, then some rich, deep colours can be very effective.

### **WHAT ABOUT TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT?**

When hand sewing, you will need some good quality hand needles and a general sewing kit. The best needles for appliqué are called straw needles. These have a narrow shank that will easily pass through several layers of fabric. There are also many appliqué needles you can use.

Whether hand or machine sewing, you will also need an embroidery hoop and suitable scissors.

When you buy a wooden embroidery hoop, bind the inner hoop with bias tape. This gives you a little extra friction to keep your fabric tighter and smoother. This thin layer of padding also protects your fabric.

You will need a good pair of small fabric scissors to cut out the shapes you are using. If you are not sure whether you are likely to continue with appliqué in the long term, buy a pair of fine cuticle scissors from a chemist.

These need only cost a few pounds and will be perfectly suitable to start with. If you decide to do more appliqué, you can always get quality fabric scissors later. Appliqué scissors are very useful.

They are often called duckbill scissors because one of the blades has an extra wide rounded edge. This wide blade allows you to cut and trim precisely around pieces of fabric very closely to the sewing lines or seams – this is an essential feature when mounting one piece of fabric close to or on top of another piece.

An extra added benefit of having a pair of these scissors is that they are very useful when dressmaking, for cutting bulky seams and curves such as around necklines and sleeves.

### **EXAMPLES OF SIMPLE DESIGNS**

You obviously need a design or pattern to work from. If you want a pictorial design, you may find something suitable in a child's drawing book where there may be simple drawings of, for example, animals or flowers.

The dragonflies, frog and acorns were originally re-drawn from children's colouring books.

When using patterns edged with bias strips, you do not need a seam allowance on the template pieces because the bias will cover the edges of the template.

### **COMPLETING YOUR PROJECT**

If you have produced a piece that is designed as a picture, you may choose to put it in a traditional photo or picture frame. Alternatively, a piece like the brass rubbings can be stretched over wooden canvas stretcher bars, which are available from your local art shop.

But your work may be destined to be part of a cushion, in which case you will incorporate it in the cushion cover. Or perhaps you have appliquéd a piece to go on the front of your iPad or iPhone cover.

Appliqué is a very versatile craft and one that is easy to start, even if you only have limited sewing skills. And there are so many applications for appliqué, at all skill levels, that you can let your imagination run wild.



## 2. TAKING THE BEADING ROUTE - BEADING AND JEWELLERY MAKING

Beads are small decorative items drilled or pierced with a hole for stringing or threading. Beading is a wonderful pastime that will give you hours of pleasure and results in spectacular pieces of artwork and jewellery.

Many people who take up this hobby become hooked by the satisfaction they gain from spending time creating beautiful items. Whether you are a beginner or a current beader, there is so much to this stimulating craft that is worth considering.

### BEADING TECHNIQUES

Because it is worked by hand, beading can be taken with you almost anywhere, or indeed, done while you are relaxing in front of your favourite television programme.

There are many different forms of beading. One of the most popular is bead needle weaving which is worked with just beads, a beading needle and thread. This creates flat, close work, for elegant beaded lace, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, ornamental pieces, bags, delicate fringes for lampshades and much more.

Other techniques you can try range from stringing beads, bead embroidery and beads in tapestry, as well as loom weaving with beads.

### WHAT ARE BEADS MADE OF?

Beads can be made from many materials including stone, shell, clay, bone, plastic, metal, wood, ceramics, glass and more. Some of the most magnificent beads are natural pearls. Pearls have been coveted by mankind for thousands of years for their rarity, lustre and translucence and as such can have a high value. Indeed, the word 'pearl' when used to describe a person, can mean someone who is precious to you.

Pearls are made by shelled molluscs such as oysters, clams or mussels. An irritant, most often a parasite, works its way into the oyster which, as a defence mechanism, forms a fluid coating around the irritant. Layer upon layer of this coating - called nacre or mother of pearl - is deposited until eventually a pearl is formed.

The most expensive natural pearls are perfectly spherical, but these are extremely rare. Many natural pearls can be uneven shapes. Called baroque pearls, these can nonetheless be very beautiful and are used in jewellery.

Large numbers of pearls are farmed. These are termed cultured pearls, and while not being naturally formed, are still valuable and of good quality. Pearls are threaded on silk, with individual pearls kept apart by a knot between beads, so that they do not rub against one another causing damage.

There are many artificial pearls, but there is a quick and easy way to tell them apart from real pearls. Hold the pearl carefully and gently rub it on one of your teeth. A natural pearl will feel slightly gritty because of the minor imperfections in the surface of the nacre, while the artificial pearl will have a smooth surface.

Coming in a wide selection of subtle colours, pearls range from white and cream through to black. Although their surface is slightly rough, it can reflect a rainbow of colours. While being wonderful gemstones, pearls are easily damaged by many substances such as perfume and should be treated with great care.

Today the vast majority of beads used for crafts are made of moulded glass. This is because glass is relatively strong, comes in numerous colours and is very versatile. It can also be cut and faceted to reflect light and produce interesting shapes.

Special effects can be produced, such as crackle beads, where the molten hot beads are immersed in cold water, causing the glass to crack. The beads are then re-heated to produce a delightful smooth surface. Crackle beads can be vibrant in colour.

Lampwork is where the surface of the glass is melted with a lamp or blowtorch and then extra pieces of glass are fused to the molten surface. Typical examples of lampwork are found in glass marbles and paperweights, but there are also lampwork beads.

Beads made from dichroic glass are a relatively new introduction to quality art beads. Here a thin film of metal is fused to the surface of the glass. This gives a finish that reflects a metallic sheen which changes colour when viewed from different angles.

Lead crystal glass beads are machine cut and polished, which gives them great sparkle, but they can be inherently fragile.

### **BEADS THROUGH THE AGES**

Historically beads date back many thousands of years and it is still possible to buy Ancient Egyptian terracotta and faience beads created about the time when Christ was born or earlier.

In the past, many village Africans beaded their cooking utensil handles with a pattern that belonged to their family and their loin cloths would be beaded with the same family design. They would also paint the pattern on their tents.

Native North American squaws would chew leather to make it soft and this would be sewn with beads, often using 'lazy squaw' stitch. They also made jewellery with bead needle weaving.

The spread of European 'Conquistadores' or conquerors across the globe saw the start of trading with glass beads which they took from Italy and used when bartering for goods with indigenous people in colonial cultures such as those found in Central and South America.

In Europe, the Czech Republic, Romania and the former Yugoslavia are just a few of the countries that have long traditions of manufacturing beads going back many centuries and then using these for bead needle weaving. However, the highest quality beads have always come from Japan.

More recently, the 15th century saw the development of Murano, Italy as a major centre for glass bead manufacture. Italians were the originators of the process called conterie - a method of seed bead manufacture. Using a blowpipe, a bubble was introduced into molten glass which was then pulled out into a long thin hollow tube. Originally this was done by two people moving quickly apart drawing the molten glass out into a thin column 100 feet or more long.

Once the drawn glass tube had cooled, it would be cut into small pieces. These were put in a hopper containing clay slurry, and then tumbled to smooth the bead edges.

While the Venetian glass industry was prominent, in subsequent years beads were also produced in France and Germany.

Although beading in various forms has been worked in England for many centuries, the Victorian era saw a great expansion of this skill. Victorians were very fond of beads in embroidery, stringing and bead needle weaving and many Victorian pieces of beadwork can be seen in museums today.

After the death of Prince Albert, when Queen Victoria went into mourning, jet, which is black, became very popular and much jet or mourning jewellery was worn.

Jet is a modest gemstone and is found in several European countries, but the very best quality has, for many centuries, always come from Whitby, Yorkshire. It is formed when decaying wood is subjected to extreme pressure over an extensive period of time. It is a hard, coal-like form of lignite, but due to its popularity in Victorian times, unscrupulous traders often sold black glass under the name of jet.

More recently, jet was popular in the Roaring Twenties. The Bright Young Things wore multiple strands of long jet necklaces stretching down to their waists over their flapper gowns. When threaded, these strands would be knotted to keep individual beads apart, rather like fine pearls.

As one of our home-grown gemstones, in addition to antique pieces, there is a wide range of modern jet jewellery, often set in silver, readily available. And you can always make your own unique pieces with jet beads.

### **WHICH BEADS ARE NOW MOST COMMONLY USED?**

Today beads are given a reference number according to their size, and different styles of bead have different names.

The size is calculated by the number of beads that can be strung together to measure one inch. Size 10 beads equates to 10 beads in an inch. However, there is some variation in size depending on the manufacturer. But what is consistent is that the smaller the reference number of the bead, the larger the actual size of the bead.

'Seed beads' is the generic term for small uniform beads. Many seed beads are plain round beads, frequently made of glass, although in the past they were sometimes metal, ceramic or other materials. Seed beads may simply be used for stringing, or in jewellery as spacers between other beads. The most commonly used are size 11, (which gives 11 beads to 1 inch) with occasionally size 8, but the small size 15 beads also play an important part in many designs.

Other commonly used beads are Bugle beads, which are long, thin, tubular-shaped beads, and cylinder beads, which include Delicia beads made by Mikyki. These are among the highest quality currently available. These beads are consistent in size and shape and have oversized holes, making them easy to use. They are also known for their light weight and thin walls.

There are many other types of beads for different uses. Of note are macramé beads - round beads which have a larger than normal hole so that they can accommodate the thicker cords used for macramé.

### **COATINGS AND FINISHES**

Beads will often receive a specialist coating or finish to create interesting appearances. Finishes can be translucent, iridescent or a pearl lustre.

Some beads are given a metallic-like finish, with copper, bronze and brass being common coatings. A silver coating will reflect light and an opaque finish will give a pearlised surface.

And some beads from the Czech Republic are ground to give them facets. They are then coated and are known as either fire-polished or faceted beads, and are available in different sizes starting from 3mm.

### **WHERE CAN YOU SOURCE BEADS?**

Virtually all beads for craft use come from overseas.

Japanese beads are regarded as the best quality available. They are more uniform and consistent in size than many others, but of course, more expensive.

Chinese and Indian beads are relatively cheap but have a long way to go in terms of quality, although they are slowly catching up.

Many moons ago, Czech beads were not very uniform and sometimes the holes were not large enough for a needle. But today they are now much more uniform, the colours are beautiful and the holes are fine.

Preciosa is a key supplier of Czech beads. Many beaders prefer Czech beads because they can have a type of cottage industry charm. They are also favoured for bead embroidery because they have slightly larger holes than Japanese beads, thus allowing the thread to be passed through more than once.

### **WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL YOU NEED?**

Most beading needs very little equipment. Bead needle weaving usually only requires just the beads, thread and a beading needle. A beading mat on which to lay out your beads can be very useful because it stops the beads rolling away from the needle when you go to pick them up.

Some people like to use a bead design board on which they can lay out their beads in a pattern before they start work, especially when making a necklace. The beads are placed in grooves to get a realistic impression and length of what the necklace or bracelet will look like when finished. These boards also allow easy manipulation of a pattern until you are satisfied with the layout before you start to thread the beads.

If working with wire you will need jewellery pliers. You can use side cutter or snub nosed pliers for cutting beading wire and copper wire. Flat nosed, bent nosed and long nosed serrated jaws are useful for opening and closing jump rings and ear wire loops. Then there are also long needle nosed pliers, round nosed for making loops and plastic jawed pliers for wirework.

Good lighting is also important, given that some of the beads are very small.

Patterns to make bead jewellery or other beaded items are clearly set out, with step-by-step written instructions and plain diagrams. Whether new designs or based on traditional patterns, you will find all are easy to follow. In addition, tutors often create and write up their own patterns as they develop their individual styles and techniques.



### **MIXING BEADING WITH OTHER CRAFTS**

The possibilities offered by combining the crafts of bead weaving, knitting and crochet together give the opportunity to create some spectacular pieces. Beads, wire and yarns, with the occasional piece of fabric, can be blended to produce some truly original jazzy jewellery such as wonderful cuffs.

Or you can knit with wire and beads along with fabric and a little bead weaving. Just use your imagination to make jewellery that is out of this world.

### **WHAT CAN YOU CREATE OVER A WEEKEND?**

Some beadwork is relatively quick to make. Even beginners, who usually start with simple designs, can often make a couple of necklaces or bracelets over a weekend.

Other patterns, usually chosen by experienced beaders, are more complex and take time to complete but are well worth the extra effort.

Look at a large range of samples of beading designs and identify the ones that appeal to you. Select your pattern and start work.

If you are new to the craft, you may well benefit from a tutor's help to explain how you read the patterns and start your chosen design. A good tutor will demonstrate how to create your selected design and then give you individual help when needed, ensuring you are confident as you master the pattern.

### 3. THE GENTLE ART OF BOBBIN LACE MAKING

Bobbin lace making is a good-natured hobby that results in spectacular pieces of dainty textile art. It is an ideal pastime if you are looking for a way to produce your very own pieces of work that have the potential to become heirlooms, and which you can then either give as treasured presents, or use yourself.

A lace bookmark, for example, is a great way to remind you of the pleasurable hours you spent making that piece every time you open your book.

And if you enjoy working with your hands to create items that are truly beautiful, then bobbin lace making may well be what you seek.

#### **WHAT IS BOBBIN LACE MAKING?**

Lace making is the process of creating a delicate, open web-like fabric with threads of cotton, linen, silk or similar. Ornamental lace is fine and often used as edgings or inserts to trim garments and household linens.

Bobbin lace making is also called pillow lace as you use a special pillow when pinning out your piece of work.

Your pattern (or 'pricking') is printed on a stiff piece of card marked with pinholes. The pattern is fastened to your lace pillow and then you can prick (or mark) out the design placing pins in the holes in your pattern.

Bobbin lace making involves braiding, weaving or twisting lengths of thread that are wound on bobbins. Each thread is wound on to a separate bobbin. The weaving is then held in place with pins put in the pattern on a lace pillow.

Delicate straightforward hand-made pieces, such as a lace edge to a handkerchief or table napkin, can easily be made by beginners. More complex designs take greater expertise and knowledge, but with help and guidance, you can complete these advanced patterns. Using threads and bobbins, and working with a pattern on a cushion, you will create true wonderful pieces.

#### **TYPES OF LACE**

Hand made lace falls into two main types: needle lace and bobbin lace. Needle lace is made with a needle and single thread; bobbin lace is created with bobbins and multiple threads. Occasionally lace is made by crochet.

Like many topics, bobbin lace making has its own specialist language or terms, so a brief look at these might help you find your way around this skill.

Bobbin lace includes designs based on a net or mesh, Guipure, part laces and tape laces.

### **MESH BOBBIN LACE**

Beginners often start with a mesh ground lace which is based on a net to which various patterns or motifs are added.

Torchon, Chantilly and Flanders - names you may have heard of - are common types of mesh ground laces.

Many people concentrate on Torchon lace in the early days as this is relatively easy to master. Torchon style lace introduces you to basic patterns such as the spider, rose ground and Scandinavian holes (also called honeycomb).

### **GUIPURE BOBBIN LACE**

Guipure lace connects motifs with bars or plaits rather than using a net or mesh as a base.

Cluny lace is a well-known type of Guipure, originally coming from France but now commonly found throughout Western Europe.

Genoese lace is a Guipure-style bobbin lace from Genoa, Italy. It is noted for patterns of small, tightly woven leaf-shaped wheatears.

### **PART LACES**

Honiton lace is an example of a 'part' lace: that is, made in parts that are then put together.

Originally from Honiton in Devon, its designs focus on scrolls, flowers and leaves. Complex patterns of plants, fruits leaves, and so on, are created separately and then incorporated into a base piece of net.

Historically it is believed that in the late 16th century Flemish lace makers such as James Rodge may have brought the secrets of Flanders' finer stitches along with their skills to Devon, and there is a tombstone in Honiton for Rodge 'bone lace seller' who died in 1617.

The Honiton lace market declined with the introduction of machine made net, but then Queen Victoria ordered a Honiton lace bridal dress, which saw a resurgence of this beautiful hand-made lace.

Bruges lace is another part lace, made in separate pieces and then joined together to form the final lace.

### **BOBBIN TAPE LACE**

Here the lace design is formed of one or more tapes curved to create an attractive pattern. The tapes are made at the same time as the rest of the lace, and are then joined to each other, often using a crochet hook. Milanese and Russian are examples of typical tape laces.

Other different styles and patterns of lace are often named after the place where they originated. Many countries and regions have their own traditional styles of lace. Belgium, English and German laces are all famous.

Maltese lace was introduced to the rest of Europe in the mid-19th century and quickly became popular throughout the continent. Maltese lace later inspired the English to develop Bedfordshire lace.

There is a Lace Guild based in Stourbridge, which has its own museum and library, and is well worth a visit when you are in the West Midlands.

### **HISTORY OF BOBBIN LACE MAKING**

It is not certain when lace was first made, although open woven fabrics and fine nets are seen in 15th century costumes. A book on bobbin lace patterns was printed in Zurich in 1561 that spoke of lace from Italy. What is clear is that Venice was probably the first European city to be associated with lace making.

It seems likely that woven lace-like pieces began to appear in the early 16th century, and by the latter part of that century there was a rapid expansion of both needle lace and bobbin lace. Some early lace-like pieces were, in fact, threads couched to a temporary base fabric which was then cut away.

By 1600 high-quality lace was being made across Europe in French Flanders, (today know as Nord-pas de Calais), and Bruges, the capital of West Flanders, Belgium.

International trade soon saw lace making in England, Spain and Portugal. Such lace appears on costumes in many paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries.

During the 18th century lace became increasingly delicate, and specialist forms of bobbin lace appeared. Lace was used to adorn gentlemen's cravats and sophisticated ladies' lappets (part of headdresses worn until the beginning of the 20th century) as a way of demonstrating the wearer's good taste and wish to dominate the fashion market.

Examples of specialist lace include Binche bobbin lace, from Belgium, which was made in one long piece, often about 5cms wide, and Valenciennes, which came from the Nord département of France, and is made on a lace pillow with a net-like ground. And if you happen to be visiting Brussels, do go to the Museum of Costume and Lace which has an excellent historical collection.

Bobbin lace may possibly have some links with the bright silk trimmings and braids used in furnishings and as dress decorations known as soutache.

### **WHAT EQUIPMENT DO YOU NEED?**

To start bobbin lace making you need a selection of bobbins, fine lace pins, thread, a lace pattern and a lace pillow.

### **BOBBINS**

Bobbins are spindles on which thread is wound to temporarily store it as it is used for lace making. Early bobbins were frequently made of bone or ivory. Wooden and bone bobbins may have been turned on a lathe, or hand carved.

Today there are many bone and wooden bobbins available, some of which are antique, along with plastic bobbins, which are cheap but fine for beginners.

Traditional bobbins were often decorated and usually 'spangled' by beads added to the end to provide weight. This helps to keep the threads in tension.

A hole is drilled near the bobbin base to allow glass beads or other small ornaments to be attached with wire. The lace maker can then use their own individual spangles as a means of self-expression, as well as a way to identify their bobbins.

### LACE PINS

Extra fine lace pins may be made from nickel plated brass or tempered stainless steel. With a fine stem usually less than half a millimetre in diameter or thickness, they are ideal for pricking out your pattern.

### THREAD

Bobbin lace is usually made with natural threads of cotton, linen or silk. Traditionally linen was the preferred thread as it was strong and could be smoothly and finely spun.

Most threads are spun with a twist to the right as this is better for use in sewing machines. But this is not good for lace making because it results in the lace curling in on itself. Thread for lace making should be gently spun to the left: this is termed an S-Twist.

Cotton was not used for lace making until the late 1800s, because its surface was not very smooth. But then a process called mercerisation was introduced. Long fibre cottons, such as Pima and Egyptian, are the best for mercerisation.

Here the cotton fibres are put under tension and then dipped in alkali caustic soda for about 10 minutes before being neutralised in an acid bath. This process causes the cotton fibres to swell and straighten out.

The cotton threads still have a fine coating of tiny fibres, and so to remove these, the yarn is heat treated to singe away this 'fuzz', resulting in a smooth, clean surface. Heat was originally provided by gas and you still see mercerised cotton referred to as 'gassed' thread.

Once mercerised, cotton has a more glass-like surface, reflecting light and improving the lustre. Mercerised cotton also absorbs dyestuffs much more effectively. If you are working in colour, mercerised cotton should be your choice for a brighter, more colour-fast finish.

If you select silk thread, do bear in mind that sunlight will destroy silk relatively quickly, even in our climate. Items made of silk thread are best kept in shady rooms.



### **LACE PATTERNS**

There are literally hundreds of lace making patterns, often graded in terms of complexity. If you are a beginner, then it is a good idea to choose Torchon patterns to start with as these will give you a basic grounding without being too complicated.

Experienced lace makers can select more complex and challenging patterns, but you may find that some external help and guidance will ensure your progress goes well so that you can achieve what you want.

### **LACE PILLOW**

A bobbin lace pillow is an essential piece of equipment. As a firm base, it provides structure and form for your work.

Traditionally lace pillows were filled with straw, but today they usually come full of polystyrene or foam for stability. There are several different shapes for pillows, from bolster, ring or block, to the very popular round or oval 'cookie' shaped pillow, which is flat underneath and domed on top. There are also 'roller' pillows which have two parts, a lower, flatter panel and then a roller at a slightly higher level.

Most pillows have a wooden base covered with foam and then finished with fabric. And although they are called pillows, they are not soft, but rather a firm, hard base into which you can pin your pattern.

### **HOW DO YOU START BOBBIN LACE MAKING?**

There are two basic movements - the cross and the twist - and by using these two movements in different combinations and placing pins on your pattern, you can create a range of different lace designs.

The cross and the twist are combined to form two basic stitches: the whole stitch - which is a cross, twist, cross, and the half stitch - a cross and twist. All stitches use two pairs of bobbins, that is four threads. As you make the stitches, they are held in place by pins pushed into the pin holes on your pattern card.

You can start making basic lace with just four bobbins, but you will very quickly progress to using six pairs of bobbins (12 in total).

Lace can be built with a mesh base of threads, and then you can add extra threads and bobbins to create motifs on the base mesh. Sometimes motifs are made independently and then added to the base mesh.

### **WHAT CAN YOU MAKE?**

Some pieces of lace have already been mentioned above. A bookmark is a great first piece for a beginner, and even people who have not done any lace making at all can complete a bookmark over a weekend.

But perhaps you have more adventurous aims. You can make edgings for table napkins or handkerchiefs, a collar for a dress, or inserts for table or bed linen. Or you can accept the ultimate challenge of that piece of heirloom lace for a wedding gown.

### **WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?**

There is a wide range of patterns and books on lace making, and also DVDs, including several that are available from the Lace Guild.

But if you prefer to be shown what to do and have one-to-one guidance, you may well find that a weekend course will provide what you need.

## 4. IS BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION FOR YOU?

### WHAT IS BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION?

Botanical illustration is the accurate portrayal of a plant, depicting all the details necessary for the plant to be identifiable. Some illustrations may be of a scientific nature, showing the whole life cycle of a plant: roots, buds, flowers, seeds, leaves and so on. These may need a whole year to complete. Or you can paint a pleasing picture to hang on the wall, showing just parts of the chosen plant. Paintings are usually life-sized, or may be scaled up if the plant is very tiny.

### HISTORY OF BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION

There are prehistoric depictions of plants on cave walls and the Ancient Egyptians painted recognisable plants on their temple and tomb walls.

Historically, monks would illustrate herbal plants with medicinal properties. It was very important to be able to identify a plant accurately in order to prevent poisonous and deadly consequences.

When travellers began exploring the world, many new plants were discovered. Painters joined these expeditions to quickly capture a detailed likeness since not all specimens survived the very long journey home.

Botanic gardens were set up to display these new plants and artists and scientists were able to study and draw them. Many rich people had Florilegiums painted, beautifully illustrated books of the plants in their own gardens.

### CHOOSING YOUR TECHNIQUE

A botanical illustration may be something as simple as a line drawing in pencil, but it is very easy to show all the details of plants in scientific diagrams, which are often drawn in black ink.

Coloured pencils may be used to good effect, although the most common medium used is watercolour. Watercolour allows an exact copy of a colour to be mixed and the artist can easily go from the palest hue to the deepest shadow.

Gouache (opaque, water-based pigments) may be chosen if the work is to be used as a book illustration as it is especially good for print reproduction. However, it does not have the delicate transparency of watercolour.

Some artists like to work in acrylics or oils, but these are not the conventional means of painting botanical illustrations.

### **RAW MATERIALS**

It is always best to have a live specimen of your plant in front of you. You can examine the fronts and backs of leaves, have a good look inside the flower and notice things like how flowers are attached to the stem.

Unfortunately, flowers have a habit of wilting, some much more quickly than others. Potted plants are often best as they will still have their roots and be growing and you may get a succession of flowers as buds develop.

Reference photos may be useful, but painting only from photographs does not give you the opportunity to get to know your plant or the depth perception. All you are doing is copying a flat image. It is also useful to make some quick sketches of relevant bits that you want to paint. You can make some notes about colour for use later. Photographs often alter the true colours.

### **WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL YOU NEED?**

You will need a number of items to start botanical illustrations. These include:

- cartridge paper for initial drawing
- HB pencil, propelling ones are good as they stay sharp (cheap, disposable ones are fine)
- white rubber – not a putty rubber
- tracing paper.
- waterproof drawing pens – a few different nib sizes
- hot pressed paper – this is very smooth and so good for details
- watercolours – a mixture of student and artist's quality Winsor & Newton paints works well here
- brushes with a fine point - number 8, 6 and 4, Series 99 from Rosemary & Co
- drawing board to support your painting
- magnifying glass to look at detail

If you join a course, you may well find that your tutor offers you a kit containing many of these items.

### **YOUR FIRST PROJECT**

For your first project, it is best to choose something fairly simple. Have a look at the overall shape, is it a disc, like a daisy, a cup shape as an anemone or a tube as in a foxglove?

On your cartridge paper, draw various views of your flower: top, underneath, towards you and back of the flower. Draw the leaves front, back, twisted and so on. Really get to know your subject. It doesn't matter if you make mistakes. These are practice drawings and nobody else needs to see them.

When you are happy with a drawing, trace off the outline and transfer this to your hot pressed paper. Next, paint a faint outline just inside your pencil lines using a suitable colour. When this is dry, gently rub out any remaining pencil. Carefully build up the layers, allowing each one to dry before adding the next. Concentrate on colour and tone (shadows) first. Keep details until last.

If you are unsure of painting techniques, you can outline your drawing in pen and draw in the details. Rub out your pencil guidelines and add a simple wash of water colour over the top.

### **COMPLETING YOUR PROJECT**

When you have finished your painting, it can be mounted and framed. A coloured mount may enhance your picture. Do you prefer a neutral modern frame or a darker traditional one? It may depend on the décor of your home.

If you have your work professionally framed, you'll probably be given advice on what looks best. You can buy ready-made frames and do it yourself. If you do, make sure you put a sealing tape all around the back. This is to stop tiny bugs crawling in and causing brown spots to appear on your work.

Do not hang your picture in full sun. All watercolours will fade over time and some colours disappear faster than others and can completely alter your painting.

### **FINALLY . . .**

Botanical illustration is a wonderful discipline. Time will fly by when you are concentrating on your work. It can also be frustrating if you don't feel that you are producing something perfect straight away. Do not despair – all artists have made many mistakes and remember they will only show people the best that they have achieved.

Do not throw away any of your early attempts. Any mistake is a learning opportunity, and in the future, you can look back on your first attempts and see how your skills have developed.

Everyone can be taught to draw and paint, even if you don't think of yourself as being artistic, or haven't drawn since school. So if you would like to have your own plant and flower drawings adorning your home, or as a gift for friends and family, perhaps you should start to create botanical illustrations. You will be amazed at what you can achieve.

## 5. CALLIGRAPHY

### WHAT IS CALLIGRAPHY?

The word calligraphy is derived from the Greek meaning 'beautiful writing'. It is created with ink, gouache or other suitable writing media, using either a broad-tipped or pointed pen, brush, or other writing instrument, and can be regarded as both an art and a craft.

Today calligraphy is used in designing lettering for a wide range of applications, including wedding stationery, event invitations, inscriptions and house name signs, maps and other landmark documents. It is also used in producing fine art pieces where intentionally the letters may not always be immediately legible. Calligraphy provides an excellent basis for lettering in stone, wood, glass, cloth and ceramics to name just a few applications. These days pen or brush calligraphy is usually created on paper, but historically it was produced on vellum or animal skin, and this is still sometimes used today.

If you are looking for an aesthetically pleasing pastime on which you can imprint your own style, and would like to create pieces that may even become heirlooms in due course, then calligraphy is well worth thinking about.

### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY

Man's enthusiasm for writing and drawing goes back many thousands of years, beginning with cave paintings. Picture symbols (pictograms) such as Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs were impressed in clay or carved in stone. Later there were written forms using reeds on papyrus. From Roman times, western manuscripts were written with quills and ink on animal skins.

The Doomsday Book, a manuscript record of the 'Great Survey' commissioned by William the Conqueror and originally published in 1086, demonstrates the use of calligraphy outside of a religious context, which was rare in early medieval times. A copy of this can be seen at The National Archives at Kew.

Before the invention by the German Johannes Gutenberg of the printing press with moveable type in 1455, all books were handwritten and decorated. Leather-bound tomes or volumes would have vellum or parchment pages, giving a beautiful texture, and a translucent, durable surface.

The text would first be written by a scribe and then an illuminator would take over to add gilded details to initial letters and other elaborations. Intricately decorated capitals and miniatures were written and painted using a variety of precious colours created from animal and vegetable extracts or ground minerals, and gilding was often used to illuminate initial letters.

The style of writing depended on the era and location. These wonderful manuscripts were, until the 12th century created by religious monks, and monasteries would have a 'scriptorium' where texts were painstakingly produced by hand.

In past centuries the vast majority of people were illiterate, and it was only those who had been educated such as monks and noblemen who were able to read and write. Literacy rates in the United Kingdom only started to improve with the 1870 and subsequent Education Acts, the first pieces of legislation that established 'school boards', making school attendance compulsory for children aged five to ten.

However, even then the level of literacy, and thus the ability to write for many children from poor families, was relatively low, and specialist crafts such as calligraphy were outside the realm of most people's experience. Nonetheless, calligraphy survived, often through ecclesiastical works.

### **TRADITIONAL WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY**

Our current alphabet, derived via the Greek alphabet, was developed around 2,000 years ago into the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet we still use today.

Uncial is a form of capital letter and was commonly used from the 4th to 8th centuries AD. Other Roman scripts such as half uncial, were followed in the Medieval period by Carolingian roundhand in the 9th and 10th centuries.

The 10th century 'roundhand' was favoured by Edward Johnston as a basis for learning calligraphy during the craft's revival that he brought about in England in the early 20th century.

The Gothic period, with its narrow, angular letters, reflects the architectural style of Gothic cathedrals, and various gothic scripts were used throughout Medieval Europe for bibles.



Elegant Italic handwriting emerged in Italy in the Renaissance as a status symbol of the educated generations of master scribes. With its forward slope and cursive quality, it has numerous variations and remains one of the most popular scripts today.

With the introduction of engraving on copper plates in the 17th century, Copperplate writing with a pointed quill in an elaborate and flourishing style developed.

### **MODERN CALLIGRAPHY**

Contemporary calligraphy, dating from the early 20th century revival, became a very creative art form throughout that century for a wide range of applications from functional inscriptions to fine art pieces.

### **PLANNING YOUR CALLIGRAPHY PROJECTS**

When creating a piece of calligraphy, first ensure the script is of a good standard. Consider what it will be used for and then choose a suitable writing style and size which will be appropriate for the size and nature of the piece of work. Small projects such as a greetings card or short text are good to begin with.

### **WHAT ABOUT COLOUR CHOICES?**

Calligraphy can be written in black or coloured inks or gouache. It just depends on the nature of your project, and personal preferences. Apart from the classic Sumi ink, and designer's gouache, there is a range of Winsor & Newton coloured calligraphy inks that will open up a rainbow world.

### **WHAT ABOUT MATERIALS, TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT?**

You need very little equipment to start calligraphy. And it is best to build up your own equipment rather than buy a pre-prepared beginners' kit so you acquire what is best for you.

You will need:

- ◆ pen holder
- ◆ selection of different size square-cut dip nibs, eg Mitchell's (left oblique for left-handers) (pointed nib for copperplate)
- ◆ Sumi ink, or for practice and ephemera Pelikan 4001 black ink
- ◆ ruler, HB pencil and soft rubber
- ◆ slip-on reservoir
- ◆ drawing board or piece of plywood half Imperial size (15 x 22 inches)
- ◆ a smooth paper eg Winsor & Newton A3 cartridge 90, 100 or 150gsm (60, 70 or 100lbs weight)

### **METHODS OF WORKING**

Rest the board on a table; prop the board up on a few books so that it slopes slightly. You will also need good light. If you are right-handed, have the light coming from the left, or from the right if you are left-handed.

Using a dip pen is a skill that takes time to perfect. When you dip your pen in the ink, only do so to just above the top of the vent (the hole in the nib). As you take it out of the ink, give the nib a little shake to remove excess ink before using.

### **SO IS CALLIGRAPHY FOR YOU?**

Calligraphy is a craft that requires practice and patience to develop your expertise. But with some time and guidance you can produce beautiful pieces of work with many different uses, from individual personalised greetings cards and your own invitations to creative artistic works, Thank You notes and much more.

## 6. THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF CROCHET

Crochet is a handicraft where yarn is made into a textured fabric by means of a hooked needle. In order to crochet, you don't need much - no table, nor a whole lot of space. You can do it pretty much anywhere, and it doesn't make any noise!

So as crafts go, it's quite straightforward and inexpensive to begin. In addition, you can get a real sense of achievement not long after you start learning, yet conversely, it will continue to cheer you up, calm you down, surprise you, challenge you and work up those creative juices over an entire lifetime.

It seems impossible to find someone who has learned to crochet and wished they hadn't.

### WHO CROCHETS AND WHY?

Many people crochet - from all walks of life, all ages and dispositions; each taking from it, and bringing to it, something different. There are those whose satisfaction is completed through an unending production of 'granny squares'. And let's face it, with the colossal choice of yarn colours, weights and textures currently on the market, the variety of potential outcomes just in those narrow parameters can be utterly overwhelming.

Yet others, of course, wend their way through great swathes of differing stitch techniques and projects, learning something new all the while.

But crochet isn't just a means to a physical end. For some, the finished work is effectively a by-product. These people are 'process driven'. For them, the business of crocheting - the action of doing it, following a pattern, working the yarn and hook, coming to understand the structure, the texture, the rhythm of a newly encountered challenge, can be a positive life-enhancer.

Those working with older people or in the mental health professions often cite crafts as being very therapeutic, and crochet is no exception. It's a way of narrowing down your field, focusing on one, single, unthreatening activity, to the exclusion of all else, and it becomes a respite from the relentless clamour, providing order in the chaos, peace and calm in a safe little bubble.

### WHERE DOES CROCHET COME FROM?

That's not an easy question to answer. It's an artisanal craft, and as such, the skills involved have been passed down from relative to relative in families, with little or no ceremony or record. It's impossible to pinpoint any starting place or time. There is, for example, a very rare little linen cap in the V&A that was clearly worked in tiny treble crochet stitches and is more than 250 years old. This may be the world's oldest surviving crocheted artefact - nobody knows for sure - but crochet will have been around long before that.

There are recognisable crochet patterns published in magazines in France and Holland in the 1840s, though not many actual samples from this time survive. And this is the inherent problem - peasant garments and household linens would rarely have been treasured, just used until they fell apart, and then reintegrated thriftily into domestic life until disappearing entirely.

The art of crochet as faux lace did, however, come into its own in Ireland in Victorian times when, during the horrific famine that saw so many families up-stakes and head for the colonies in search of food, some Irish women discovered they could keep the wolf from the door by turning out 'lace' collars, cuffs, shawls, caps and kerchiefs at a fraction of the price charged by lace makers. This is partly because crochet is quicker to produce than handmade lace.

Thus, a style of open work crochet evolved that furnished middle class households for decades and raised the profile and sophistication of the craft to new heights.

Throughout the last century there was a gradual rise in interest in the skills and products of crochet, together with a growing mass capability. Crochet designs moved on from doilies, tray covers and antimacassars in linen and cotton, to wearable accessories and garments in fine wools and silks.

The 1930s and 1940s were healthy decades for the output of crochet patterns, consolidating how instructions are presented in the standard form recognised today. Fashion items reached a peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the granny square became an icon for the age. Many will remember multi-coloured ponchos from those decades.

Thereafter, interest in the skills and the products waned somewhat until much closer to current times.

Now, a whole new era of austerity and a wish to create something individual has prompted a return to a 'make do and mend' attitude, along with a growing collective interest and confidence in crafting in general, and crochet in particular. This has seen many more young people fulfilling their creativity through crochet.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Like knitting, a stretchy fabric is produced by pulling loops of thread or yarn through more loops. There are, of course, a couple of hand skills you'll need to master, but since those 'wrist actions' are at the centre of all crochet stitching and are consequently repeated a zillion times, you'll find them quickly embedding themselves in your 'muscle memory' bank. The hand skills are related to using the tool (the crochet hook) and what to do with the wool (or cotton, or linen or silk) - that's really all there is to it.

First you learn to make a chain, and then there are three or four basic stitches, each making use of the skills learned to work the chain, and building upon each other. Beginners' crochet can be taught in various formats, but to give you a sense of it, learners generally have picked up all four key stitches and techniques by the end of a weekend's course and made themselves a little scarf.

The fun really begins when you start to mix and match the basic stitches with interesting textures and open work emerges from your very own hands. So, as you get to grips with the mechanics of each stitch, you are also, necessarily and subconsciously memorising their names, their abbreviated forms as seen in pattern instructions and sometimes even their symbols for chart reading. Once you've got those, it's the full kit. You can make anything you want.

### CHOOSING HOOKS AND YARNS

Hooks and yarns come in different thicknesses, and although ultimately you can use any hook with any thickness of yarn, there is a certain 'rule of thumb' for an optimum result.

Yarn weight	Hook size
Lace weight	1.5-2.5mm
Sock weight	2-3mm
4-ply	2.5- 3.5mm
Double Knit (DK)	4mm
Aran weight	5mm
Chunky	6mm
Super chunky	7mm

But find the yarn you like and you may well discover that on the label a hook or needle size will be suggested (knitting needle sizes correspond exactly with crochet hook sizes).

### LET'S TALK ABOUT YARN

'Yarn' is a collective term for any type of thread used in crocheting and knitting. It's thickness (or weight) ranges from exquisitely fine, through to ridiculously fat; and it might be made from a large range of natural or synthetic materials.

Wool, as well as cotton, linen and silk, are the main natural fibres spun together to make yarns. Synthetic yarns include acrylic and nylon, but there are many more. Rayon, although manufactured, is not synthetic as it is made from wood pulp, a naturally occurring cellulose-based raw material.

Each of these fibres offers different properties, such as tensile strength, absorption, weight, bulk etc. Often fibres are mixed together in order to enhance features or mitigate less positive properties. Different spinning methods and mixes of fibres will also produce different textures and appearances.

In short, the market choice is seemingly endless. You really do need to get to a few yarn shops to see and feel the balls and skeins, and preferably some samples of yarns already worked into a product, in order to have any idea of what to buy. And even then some of your experiments will yield success, some may not. It's all part of the fun.

### LEARNING TO CROCHET

Many beginners arriving at a workshop may be concerned or apprehensive at approaching something new. It is daunting starting an unfamiliar craft right in front of a group of strangers who may well 'get it' while perhaps you don't. But a good tutor will always be quick to allay anxieties as soon as possible. For example, there are lots of ways of achieving crochet and none are wrong, or in some way not 'proper'.

You can hold your hook like this, or like that, or whatever, but just as long as you can wrap the 'working yarn' around it and pull a new loop through the one on the hook, that's really fine.

Some beginners pick up the hook and the yarn, follow the instructions and run with it from the outset; others take a little longer, need more support, guidance, cups of tea, that kind of thing, but they get there too, and fly.

If you are a complete beginner, you'll need some help on how you might best hold the hook in order to achieve your desired crochet outcomes, but really, it doesn't matter that much if the crocheted fabric is the end result, and you are enjoying making it. And, while giving help, your tutor will normally only intervene if you are struggling.

Essentially, you begin (and end) all crochet with one loop on the hook and you make a chain. It's a simple enough manoeuvre, but the skills of manipulating the yarn around the hook and pulling up a new loop are at the heart of all the stitches. So once you've settled into what may well be a completely new use of your fingers and thumbs, the rest will come quite quickly.

### **THE CROCHET CHAIN**

The chain is the mainstay of all crocheting. It forms the foundation row, from which your fabric will grow. It is also used to make a ring to form a centre from which circular or square motifs are worked. In open work, chains create the gaps in filigree patterns and you'll find that any crochet stitch you pick has a chain at its top, into which the next row will be worked.

After that, you'll learn a short stitch (double crochet), a middle height stitch (half treble) and a tall stitch (treble). Your 'lexicon of basics' will be completed by adding an extra tall stitch called a double treble.

There are a few hints and tips associated with working these, either repeatedly on their own, or in combination with other stitches, and this is where a good instructor comes in. Different learners work in different ways, and you won't know how you will get on until you start.

### **TENSION**

One of the most common concerns revolves around 'tension'. Quite often beginners find their starting chains are too tight. Better to err on the side of too loose.

But again, let's just quash this one before going further. Just 'let the hook decide the size of the loops'. Unlike knitting, you really don't need to hold any tension in your working yarn at all, simply lay it over the hook and lift the existing loop off and over it.

Then (and this is crucial) do not tug on the working yarn at all. Simply and gently slide your new loop back along the shaft and let it be the size it is according to the girth of the shaft. All this will make sense once you have a go.

Don't worry if you are left-handed. It works just as well using a mirror image, with the crochet hook in your left hand. BUT: you should know, I am left-handed and I still hold the hook in my right hand.

I just find that I'm able to manipulate the working yarn with a lot more dexterity, and rather than twirling the hook into the yarn, I twirl the yarn around the hook. It makes little difference. Crocheting needs both hands.

### **CROCHET VARIATIONS**

Once you have spent about a year or more, happily exploring Traditional Crochet, with all its bobbles, bumps, stripes and laces, you might want to branch out and take a look at something called Broomstick crochet, a delightful little trick using an enormous great knitting needle to create outsized loops, which you then crochet together in groups to make an entirely new type of fabric.

Or Hairpin crochet, which has a very similar premise, but uses a special tool that looks like a large hairpin, and yields wide 'braids' of huge loops crocheted in a spine down the centre, which you then crochet together in a variety of clusters.

And if you continue to crave the new after all that, you still have Tunisian Crochet, which you'll find amazingly easy to learn now that you're a confident crocheter, and which will at least double your stitch pattern potential over night.

This hybrid between knitting and crochet is really fun. The Victorians used the most basic stitch to make background canvases for their cross-stitch work, but there are lots of interesting and easy Tunisian stitches to have a go at that take it far beyond that narrow ambition, producing all manner of textures, colour work, cables and lace.



Lately there has been a resurgence of interest in this very enjoyable variation on crochet, with Tunisian patterns turning up in all the crochet magazines and the latest pattern books, with further new and creative applications for it appearing all the time.

Nobody knows why it's called Tunisian Crochet - and sometimes it's known as Afghan Crochet - but if you ask the Tunisians or Afghans about it, they just shrug their shoulders and look as mystified as everyone else. (It has also, rather unkindly, been called 'Idiot Crochet' - which perhaps should not be mentioned, but does indicate just how easy it is.)

Suffice to say that its origins are as shrouded in uncertainty as conventional crochet but may be traced back just as far if not further. Its pedigree is undisputed, yet there is a sense that its true potential is really only just emerging.

To crochet is to be creative, productive, busy, purposeful, engaged. The things that you make will bring you joy on multiple levels, as you find your self-confidence growing. And those around you will be full of admiration at your ability to learn and master a new skill, and also gratitude when you make something just for them.

You may even find a whole new friendship circle opening up as you begin to associate with like-minded crafters at knit and natter groups and crochet clubs near and far.

It's a link with history, with our mothers and grandmothers and their grandmothers down through time, but with a clear eye on the future.

### 7. EMBROIDERY AND CREATIVE STITCH

#### WHAT ARE EMBROIDERY AND CREATIVE STITCH?

Embroidery is the craft of using thread or yarn and a needle to decorate and sew into fabric, creating patterns and designs. Apart from threads and yarns, it may also involve the addition of beads, pearls, sequins and other embellishments.

Although for many centuries embroidery was done by hand, more recently this craft has also been achieved and developed using a sewing machine, taking it to new levels of creativity. Like many textile crafts, you now have the option to work by hand or machine to produce your work.

Some embroidery, like the work produced by students at the Royal School of Needlework, is exquisite, and can include the use of gold thread and gems as found in ecclesiastical robes. But most embroidery now is well within the reach of anyone who can sew. And many of us will have done at least some basic embroidery as a child.

Creative stitch is a branch of embroidery which encompasses the design and creation of a wide variety of textile art for both hand and machine work. It often covers techniques such as free machine embroidery, cording, collage, appliqué, painting with threads, sometimes working in a hoop and much more.

Drawing inspiration from such sources as landscapes, flora and architecture, or using abstract themes, creative stitch can result in magnificent pictures and works of textile art.

#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Remnants of fine linens and needles, along with designs on pottery showing linen, have been found in Egyptian tombs from 3400 BC. Examples of ancient embroidery have also been unearthed in China dating from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BC. Clearly, embroidery has been with us for millennia.

A myth credits the Greek goddess Athena with passing down the art of embroidery along with weaving. Whether or not that is true, there was certainly much embroidery and embellishment on the clothes worn by the nobility in Ancient Greece.

Since the time of Christ, embroidery has been found on religious objects and clothing, including elaborate ecclesiastical robes and church banners.

Some of the very earliest techniques or stitches are in the form of chain stitch, running stitch, buttonhole or blanket stitch, although creative stitchers have always pushed the boundaries and devised their own stitches.

One of the best known early embroideries (although it is incorrectly called a tapestry) is the Bayeux Tapestry. Nearly 70 metres long and 50 centimetres high, it is likely that it was made in England, (not France) in the 1070s. It tells the story of events leading up to the Norman conquest of England, the death of Harold and the establishment of William the Conqueror as King of England in 1066.

Stitch has long been important, and Medieval England saw the foundation of guilds such as the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers /Mercers' Company in 1394, that was originally responsible for the regulation of silk and velvet merchants.

While the clothes of the masses were for many centuries of simple design, more practical than exotic, an occasional addition of embroidery (delete or embellishment) was regarded as folk art. But throughout the ages, the designs of clothes and furnishings of the wealthy, and their embellishment became increasingly elaborate, with embroidery and creative stitch both playing key parts.

From the Tudor period, through Stuart and Georgian to Victorian times, clothes and furnishings at Court became ever more sumptuously adorned and sometimes impractical (just think of crinolines and bustles).

In contrast, many a daughter of a wealthy Victorian family marked her transition from childhood to adulthood by creating an embroidered sampler giving details of her name, date of birth and other landmarks in her life. Occasionally such treasures can be found on sale at auction.

Then in 1906, the British Embroiderers' Guild was founded by 16 ex-students of the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) with the aim of focussing on embroidery and maintaining high standards of work and design.

Although initially only ex-RSN students were allowed to become members, it soon opened up its doors to others. Today it aims to promote and encourage the art of embroidery and related crafts, and anyone with an interest in such creative stitch can join the Guild and their local embroiderers' group.

### **TYPES OF EMBROIDERY AND CREATIVE STITCH**

If the definition of embroidery is sewing into fabric with thread to create a pattern or design, then perhaps this craft covers one of the largest varieties of options for the sewer.

Traditional embroidery relating to hand or machine stitching only covers a small part of this pastime. In addition to the hundreds of different embroidery stitches now available to use, there are 'side shoots' such as smocking, cross stitch and gold work that can also come under the term embroidery. And what about Blackwork, drawn thread work and Mountmellick? The field really is endless, offering huge scope for beginners and experienced embroiderers alike.

Many types of embroidery emanated originally from specific parts of the world, but may today have become more universally known. Here are a few examples.

**BASIC EMBROIDERY** - (Hand work) You may have worked with an embroidery kit in the past, where the pattern is printed on to fabric and you embroidered over the pattern. Such patterns will usually include fundamental looped stitches such as chain, lazy daisy and blanket stitch. There may well also be some knotted stitches such as French knots or the more complicated bullion stitch. This is a great way for beginners to build their confidence and start on their embroidery journey.

**CROSS STITCH** - (Hand work) Cross stitch is a very popular technique. There are numerous kits available with pre-printed patterns from very simple outlines for beginners, to highly complex designs that are best left to those with more experience.

**MONOGRAMS** - (Hand work) Once you have mastered the basics of cross stitch, you can think about adding monograms or lettering to personal items and household linens. Young children, in particular, love having clothes with their name on.

**NEEDLEPOINT** - (Hand work) Needlepoint is like a half cross stitch, worked on canvas with the diagonal stitch covering the entire surface and often following a pre-printed pattern on the fabric.

**COUCHING** - (Hand work) (See Chapter 1 on Appliqué) Basic couching is a means of holding down one thread by catching it intermittently with another thread to the background fabric. There is a range of couching embroidery stitches that you can develop here.

**DRAWN THREAD WORK** - (Hand work) Many a young girl in the past was given a drawn thread work project such as a tray cloth to complete at school. Here a coarse, open-weave fabric was used as the base. Some of the warp and weft threads would be carefully teased out and the remaining threads in these areas pulled together and embroidered with floss to form open patterns.

**SMOCKING** - (Hand work) In the second half of the 20th century babies and young girls would often have a smocked 'best dress'. Here the fabric is gathered together in very small pleats and the top folds of the pleats are embroidered to hold them together. Somewhat out of fashion these days, it can still make an attractive panel in another piece of work.

**ZARDOZI** - (Hand work) Zardozi is a type of metal embroidery that historically was used to embellish the attire of kings and royals in Ancient Persia and other Middle Eastern countries, and later introduced to India. It was found in wall hangings to adorn the royal tents, as well as the paraphernalia for regal horses and elephants. Originally using gold and silver threads, today Zardozi is achieved with copper wire covered in a golden or silver polish.

**CHIKAN** - (Hand work) Chikan work is a delicate and artful form of hand embroidery on a variety of fine textile fabrics like silk, muslin, organza and chiffon. White thread is embroidered on cool, pastel shades of light muslin and cotton garments.

**MOUNTMELICK** - (Hand work) Mountmellick embroidery uses sturdy white threads on robust white fabric, and is often found decorating household linens such as tablecloths, napkins and counterpanes. Originally from the small town of Mountmellick in Ireland, the designs are usually based on nature or flowers. The embroidery thread is relatively matte, with smooth satin stitches contrasting to knotted and padded stitches, while the fabric provides a background with sheen.

**PLASTIC CANVAS** - (Hand work) Plastic canvas acts as the base for a form of hand sewn creative stitch to make covers for note pads, cheque books, smart phones and other similar items. These covers are usually worked with viscose ribbons and Starmist decorative threads to produce highly attractive pieces. Although they take time to complete, they are easy for a beginner to do and thus a satisfying way of achieving a dramatic statement in hand work.

**ABSTRACT ART IN COLLAGE AND STITCH** - (Hand and machine technique) This technique enables you to express your emotions, moods, sentiments and even your innermost feelings in purely abstract terms through a combination of fabric collage using both hand and machine embroidery. You not only use traditional sewing materials, but can also incorporate other items such as sweet papers, metals and hand-made papers. In fact, this technique will give you carte blanche to use many items that others regard as ephemera or even rubbish, converting them into wonderful textile art.

**FREE MACHINE EMBROIDERY** - (Machine technique) Free machine embroidery is a technique using the machine with the feed dogs down so they do not engage with the fabric. This allows the free movement of the fabric under the needle, so the sewer will control the direction and speed that the material passes through the machine. This technique does require guidance and practice, but can produce some spectacular results.

**DRAWING WITH A SEWING MACHINE NEEDLE** - (Machine technique) Using simple straight stitch and dropping the feed dogs, you can produce amazing pictures with your sewing machine. You are effectively drawing with the thread in the sewing machine needle.

### **PLANNING YOUR EMBROIDERY AND CREATIVE STITCH PROJECTS**

If this field is new to you, it is worth doing a little homework to find out what appeals. There are numerous books on embroidery and creative stitch which can be a starting point. And don't forget YouTube.

If you have the opportunity, do visit exhibitions such as the Knitting and Stitching Show, held in London, Harrogate and Dublin, or other smaller similar shows that are held across the country. There you will see a very wide range of examples of both embroidery and creative stitch.

Look at as many embroidery and creative stitch projects as you can and you are sure to find that some appeal, while others may leave you cold. Don't worry about the complexity of some work. Many apparently intricate techniques are easy to achieve once you know how.

### **WHAT RAW MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT WILL YOU NEED?**

To create embroidery you need fabric, threads, needles and a basic sewing kit.

### **FABRIC**

There are many even-weave fabrics suitable for embroidery, from basic linens, through counted-thread (such as Aida - used for cross stitch) to cottons and rayons. Much embroidery is worked on plain fabrics, but you can use patterned or checked material, depending on your design.

It is a good idea to wash your fabric first, and then iron it, possibly using spray starch to get a good smooth finish before you start to embroider.

### **THREADS**

Choose from a selection of embroidery threads depending on your project and the desired outcome. The most common is 6-stranded thread or floss. This comes in a huge range of colours, and you can use anything from one to six strands as you sew.

Perlé cotton is a strong, twisted, non-divisible thread with a high sheen. It is available in various thicknesses and wide variety of colours. This mercerised thread is very accommodating and easy to use.

Coton à broder is a single twisted thread made from mercerised cotton. Again this is available in many colours but is somewhat limited in varied thicknesses.

Matte embroidery cotton is a soft, thick, tightly twisted thread.

Silk thread - lovely to work with, but do remember that sunlight can destroy silk quite quickly.

These are just some of the main threads, but new ones are always appearing in the marketplace, so it is worth experimenting.

### NEEDLES

There are almost as many types of hand sewing needle as there are threads, but you are likely to find one type that works particularly well for you.

Crewel or embroidery needles are most commonly used. They have a large eye and sharp point.

Chenille needles are favoured by some because of their thick stem. They work particularly well with heavier threads on a coarse background fabric.

Tapestry needles have a blunt point and a long eye and are great for cross stitch and Aida fabric.

Betweenes or Quilting needles are small, fine and ideal for couching down thick threads, yarns and ribbon with a fine thread.

Beading needles will be helpful if you are attaching tiny beads and fine embellishments but they can be difficult to thread because they are so fine.

### FRAMES AND HOOPS

For many embroidery projects, be they hand or machine sewn, you will need a hoop to hold the fabric taught as you sew.

Usually made of wood, a standard, simple hoop comprises two parts: an inner complete ring, and an outer ring that is split and will have a screw so it can be opened or closed. Your fabric is held taught between the two rings.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, bind the inner hoop with bias tape to give you a little extra friction and so keep your fabric tighter and smoother.

Embroidery can also be sewn using a 'slate' frame: this is square, two of the sides of which are rollers to which tape is attached. The piece of embroidery can then be tacked to this tape and the rollers turned to create an even tension throughout the fabric.

A seat frame is a further option. Here a double ring hoop has an upright support attached, along with a panel that can be sat on, giving you the advantage of having both hands free when stitching.



There are also larger floor-standing frames for the enthusiastic embroiderer.

### **GENERAL SEWING KIT**

You will need good fabric scissors, both small and large, and a general sewing kit, including a thimble (if you use one) screwdriver to tighten your frames and hoops, silk pins, tape measure - and good lighting.

### **WHAT ABOUT COLOUR CHOICES?**

The colours you work with will often be determined by the subject of your pattern. If it is a nature theme, such as flowers or a landscape, you may well stick with natural colours, but if it is abstract, you can go for any palette you choose.

If you work with a colour wheel, choose a selection of colours close to one another and then liven them up with a small amount of one or two colours from the opposite side of the colour wheel to produce a pleasing result.

### **EXAMPLES OF SIMPLE DESIGNS**

When you are new to embroidery and creative stitch, start with a simple project, and then as you gain skills and confidence you can tackle some of the more complex designs, creating fantastic pieces of textile art.

### **COMPLETING YOUR PROJECT**

Your first pieces of embroidery are likely to be small and so may well be used in greetings cards or to adorn your iPhone case. As you develop your skills, and produce larger pieces, you may well create pictures or wall hangings, some of which can be framed. If you are new to sewing, embroidery and creative stitch really do offer you a world of opportunities, and if you are experienced, then experimental projects can truly stretch your imagination and add to your expertise.

### 8. THE MAGIC OF PAINTING ON SILK

Painting on silk is the application of paints or dyes on to silk fabric to create a dramatic variation of textile art. It is part of an ancient tradition that has continued to evolve through the centuries. In this craft you do not need to be a painter or even a good artist to produce spectacular results.

Natural silk is still largely extracted from the cocoon of the mulberry moth, so called because of their controlled diet of mulberry leaves. Their cocoons produce the largest quantity and best quality of silk fibre, the longest and most stable of natural fibres. Approximately 3,000 cocoons are harvested to produce enough silk for one dress.

#### **BRIEF HISTORY OF SILK**

The rearing of silkworms to produce silk can be traced back to Ancient China as early as 3,000 BC. There was a death penalty for anyone betraying the closely guarded secrets of silk production. This meant that China maintained a monopoly for nearly 2,000 years.

Then in the mid-6th century AD, two monks successfully smuggled some silkworm eggs into the Byzantine Empire, leading to that becoming the first source of silk production in Europe.

Eventually, knowledge of how to produce silk reached Western Europe via the Silk Route, and Germany, France, Switzerland and Britain became important centres for silk production.

Today most silk fibre comes from the Far East, but for many years in the 20th century, there was a silk farm at Lullingstone, Kent producing home-grown silk fibre.

England had a number of places famous for weaving silk. In the last four centuries, Macclesfield in Cheshire became a powerhouse for silk production, and there are still many old weavers' cottages and the remnants of numerous mills dotting the landscape of this northern city.

At the end of the 17th century, with the persecution of the Protestant Huguenots in France, there was a mass exodus, with large numbers coming to Spitalfields in London where they established a silk industry in the capital.

But frequent industrial disputes led to a move to country areas such as Haverhill, Glemsford and Sudbury in Suffolk where there were skilled textile workers.

During the Second World War the silk weavers of Sudbury were responsible for making many an airman's parachute and there are still a few silk weavers in this Suffolk town. Then after the disastrous fire at Windsor Castle in 1992, the fabric for the restoration of the King's Drawing Room was produced by Humphries Weaving of Sudbury.

In more recent times commercial silk manufacturing has returned to China. Japan, Korea and India are also prominent sources of this most sumptuous of fabrics.

### **PAINTING ON SILK**

Today, like many subjects, painting on fabric crosses the divide between art and craft. For many it is part of the craft tradition of making clothes, functional items (purses and bags), soft furnishings (cushions) fashion accessories (ties, scarves, hats) and so on. The list is long. For other practitioners, the principles of art and design lead to the exploration and creation of individual pieces of textile art. Whatever direction painting on silk takes you, the results will be magical.

In this chapter the silk paints referred to are water-based, iron-fixed paints. The colour is a paint and not a dye, meaning that during the painting process pigments are held on the surface of the silk fibres as they are not water soluble. The vibrant pigments and translucent quality of the paints allow for wondrous colour effects. Iron-fixed paints are easy to use with water colour brushes. Other methods, such as steam-fixed dyes, are not discussed here.

Painting on silk is an immediate and thrilling experience. The combination of enticing colours together with the unique drapery and natural sheen of the silk is unsurpassed. However, it is not an exact science, nor should it be approached in that manner. It is a relaxing pastime that produces a unique result each time you paint. Free expression is possible even when precise results are required.

Painting on silk is exciting. The silk used is usually a prewashed medium weight Habotai which is an ideal surface for silk paints that have a flowing consistency. The fine plain woven quality allows for blending and mixing of colours across the smooth silk surface. Within minutes you will achieve amazing results.

A limited palette is a good starting point, particularly when first exploring the mixing quality of these paints. Choosing a red, blue and yellow colour will be sufficient to begin with. These do not necessarily have to be the pure primary colours as a combination of any three on the colour spectrum will produce interesting results.

When using iron-fixed paints for painting on silk, there are several key techniques to take into account:

### **WATER COLOUR EFFECTS**

Consideration must be given to the role of water within the process – the “wet/dry” ratio. This will make a crucial difference to your intended result. Furthermore, whether the silk is wet or dry, the paints are diluted or concentrated and brushes are wet or damp, will all have an impact on the outcomes as you are painting. Even the temperature of the room or the weather conditions will affect what you achieve on the day. It is difficult to recreate these factors exactly and therefore each paint session will achieve different results.

### **SALT EFFECTS**

The use of salt when painting on silk is popular and creates a distinctive effect. Often thought of as a “hit and miss” technique, with practice it is possible to achieve a fair amount of control. The wet/dry ratio is again a crucial factor as salt will only react on a damp, painted surface. Different salts produce different results varying from an all over texture to individual grains used to give a highlight effect.

### **GUTTA**

Gutta is the outliner that is applied to the silk to contain areas of paint. It is a water based product and is usually applied to unpainted silk to isolate areas of design. The silk first needs to be evenly stretched on a frame to achieve the best results.

Originally made from natural gum, today gutta is a synthetic product. It is available in a clear or coloured finish. Clear gutta washes away to reveal the silk below whereas coloured gutta remains, thereby creating a right and wrong side to the silk. Applying gutta requires a fair amount of practice and an appreciation of the numerous factors involved in painting on silk.

### **SHIBORI**

Shibori is the Japanese term for tie-dye. When reviewing the range of techniques available for painting on silk, Shibori is a useful means of creating textures and marks on the fabric. The silk is prepared "off the frame" producing a different result to when the silk is stretched taut.

Many types of Shibori exist, but each one acts as a resist method thus creating a variety of patterns and textures. This is a useful way to explore textures and colours rather than rigid design effects. It also offers the opportunity to work "off the frame" without the restriction of a specific size.

### **SURFACE DECORATION**

Surface decoration can be an exciting addition to the effects achieved when painting on silk. Coloured painted fabrics provide a vibrant background to print, stencil and stamps, and add surface embellishment using a variety of mixed media materials. The end results are multi-layered and therefore can be as detailed as required. These can then be incorporated within finished pieces and items such as scarves, soft furnishings etc.

Painting on silk is a very 'user-friendly' art form, particularly when working with iron-fixed paints. Everything described in this chapter can be achieved at the kitchen table. However, some investment in purpose-specific equipment is required.

And, despite silk fibre being extremely strong, it can easily be damaged by sunlight. Finished items should not be displayed in direct sunlight.

### **WHAT WILL YOU NEED?**

A pre-washed plain weave silk fabric is needed for most of the techniques discussed here. A medium weight Habotai silk is best suited for an even paint surface. A Pongee silk (lighter weight) can also be used in some instances, particularly for Shibori effects. Chiffon silk – woven with very fine threads, is ideal for making "off the frame" scarves.

Unless working "off the frame", silk needs to be evenly and securely taut on a stretcher frame to achieve the best paint results. Soft wood frames are ideal for stretching silk. Ultimately, a variety of different sized frames will be required to accommodate various projects. However, a 12 inch (30cm) square frame is a recommended size to begin with.

Three-pronged “Assa” pins are readily available from art suppliers and these are easy to use to hold the silk securely on the frame and will not damage the silk edges.

As the paints being used are water-based, “like for like” brands can be intermixed. The colour is set by ironing in line with the manufacturers’ guidelines. Care needs to be taken as spilt paints can stain clothes and soft furnishings even if the silk has not been ironed.

Gutta (the outliner) comes in easy to use tubes with an applicator nib attached. A variety of colours as well as clear, gold and silver are available. Coloured gutta adds a 3-D effect to a painted surface. When planning your designs, the choice of gutta, whether coloured or clear, can be a striking feature.

Watercolour paint brushes are suitable and it is desirable to have a range of sizes and shapes. A broad-based pointed brush for painting within gutta delineated areas is required. Using the correct size brush for the purpose is important as it is the brush that holds the reservoir of paint. Too much and the silk is flooded; not enough will cause harsh dry marks. Better quality brushes will allow better paint control.

If you enjoy working with textiles and would like to explore further with colour on fabric, painting on silk offers a perfect combination. This is a wide subject area encompassing many varied styles of work. Representational images to abstract designs or dazzling lengths of painted fabric are all possible.

Painting on silk can be a stand-alone technique used to create panels and hangings, a wide range of accessories and soft furnishings. However, painted silk fabrics may only be the beginning of a process.

Painted fabrics are suitable for print and decoration and provide excellent surfaces for patchwork, appliqué, quilting, machine embroidery and so much more. The possibilities are endless.

### **WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED ON A BEGINNER'S PAINTING ON SILK COURSE?**

A beginner's one-day course will introduce the key areas of painting on silk. Participants will have an opportunity to experience first-hand the subtle, blended mixing of colours directly on to silk fabrics. Structured exercises are designed to provide a sound grasp of how to prepare designs and create vibrant coloured fabrics, and so avoiding a "muddy" palette. Salt effects will also be explored and incorporated into early experiments.

Gutta is a technique that requires some practice and perseverance. A one-day course offers the opportunity to examine traditional means of using gutta, and in addition, explore a more creative approach. This includes preparing designs using patterns, shapes and pictorial imagery suitable for gutta practice.

Working "off the frame" gives the chance to explore the flow and blend of colours on the silk fabric in a free manner. Without the restriction of a frame, you can develop the wondrous textures possible when silk dries unhindered by the stretching process.

Painting on silk produces unique and exciting results from the minute you begin to experiment with colour and fabric. Even your early experimental pieces will be suitable for use in projects and finished items. Cards, purses, boxes and bags are just a few of the possibilities that can be considered.

### 9. KEY STEPS TO BEAUTIFUL PATCHWORK AND QUILTING

Love the look of patchwork and quilting, but feel it might be too difficult or time consuming for you? Well, here are the key quick ways you can begin this most rewarding and creative craft. And you will soon be producing wonderful pieces of your own original textile art.

Patchwork is a form of needlework that involves sewing or joining pieces of fabric together to form a larger design. This design may be based on a regular or fixed pattern, or it may be random as found in 'Crazy Patchwork' or 'Patchwork without Measuring'.

Piecing is the term used for joining cut pieces of your fabric together and can be done by hand or by machine.

Quilting relates to a multi-layered piece of textile work. Traditionally, it has three layers:

- ◆ a top - often comprising various pieces of fabric joined together, but it can be one simple piece of fabric
- ◆ a middle layer of wadding or batting which provides warmth and bulk, and
- ◆ a back layer, which may be a simple plain fabric.

#### CHOOSING YOUR TECHNIQUE

A good first step to choosing the right technique for you is to take a look at a wide variety of patchwork quilts to see which appeal. There are several large shows throughout the year where patchwork quilts will be displayed, most of which offer workshops, talks and demonstrations on all aspects of this craft. The largest is the Festival of Quilts, held annually in August at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. At the last Festival there were more than 700 quilts on show.

Don't forget the prestigious museums such as the Victoria and Albert in London. Unfortunately the Quilt Museum and Gallery in St Anthony's Hall, York, run by the Quilters' Guild, closed in 2015. But if you are near to Bath, the American Museum (just outside that city) has a wonderful collection of over 250 quilts from the 18th to mid-20th century. Some 50 quilts are always on view in their Textile Room and throughout the Museum. And there is also the Welsh Quilt Centre at Lampeter, South West Wales, which runs a series of exhibitions.



There are numerous small but nonetheless interesting exhibitions and shows, often run by local craft groups, and held in village halls or art galleries across the country.

If this craft is a new area to you, a visit to a few of these magnificent displays can be very enlightening, and you may well be surprised just how diverse the world of patchwork and quilting can be, along with some of the terms used.

Sometimes people become fearful that they will always have to cut and sew fabrics perfectly accurately, and as such are put off trying patchwork, but this is not true. Yes, there are some patterns in both hand and machined patchwork that are based on accurate measuring and cutting of fabrics, but there are many designs and techniques that do not require such precision or perfection and yet produce fantastic outcomes.

Originally patchwork was sewn by hand as this craft pre-dates sewing machines. This can result in spectacular heirloom articles, but can be rather time consuming. Machined work is much quicker and usually stronger, but may not have a traditional feel.

There are many modern patchwork piecing techniques that look complex but are in reality easy, such as 'Patchwork with Bias Tape' and 'Patchwork with Appliqué' - both of which can be stitched by hand or machine, producing highly creative pieces.

Designs requiring accurate cutting are usually made up of 'blocks' of patterns - squares, or occasionally rectangles, that are then joined together in a formula to produce a larger piece. These start with a chart or diagram indicating the size and shape the pieces of fabric should be cut in order to achieve the desired finished blocks. Sometimes the blocks are repeated, but they can all be different.

There are hundreds of different block patterns, from traditional historical designs, through to avant-garde, experimental or ultra futuristic motifs. Many books on patchwork will also contain templates that can be photocopied and then used when cutting out your fabrics. Some designs are created by stitching fabrics together first, then re-cutting to form more complex designs - it is imperative to stitch these designs by machine.

Other designs can be built up of strips or irregular pieces of fabric joined together. Here they may not need to be measured at all, but can result in some spectacular work.

So decide what you want to achieve and whether you are drawn towards hand or machine work.

### **BACKGROUND TO PATCHWORK QUILTS**

Historically, patchwork is one of the original recycling techniques. Good pieces of fabric were cut from worn items and joined together to make quilts or 'new' clothes, but today stitchers mainly use new fabrics.

The earliest examples of piecing small bits of fabric together have been unearthed in excavations in China dating from 5,000 years ago, and similar work has also been found in Egyptian tombs.

In the Middle Ages, the climate in Europe became colder and bed quilts started to appear in households. It wasn't long before some creative sewers began embellishing their quilts and developing specific patterns and designs. The tradition of making quilts was taken to America by the Pilgrim Fathers in the 17th century where it has since flourished.

Today patchwork and quilt making is a very popular craft, not least because there is a useable end product. However, the work can be more adventurous and can be viewed as an Art Quilt with Fine Art Gallery status.

### **PLANNING YOUR PATCHWORK**

When planning your first piece, think what you are going to use it for. As a beginner, you probably won't want to be overwhelmed with tackling a full bed quilt at first. Rather choose something smaller, such as a table runner, cushion cover, a panel for a bag or a small wall hanging.

There are many reference books on traditional patchwork with numerous photos. Look through a selection of patchwork pattern books to see what types of design appeal to you. Some books will indicate the level of expertise required for different projects, so you can choose a pattern that is suitable for beginners.

Alternatively, go for a contemporary technique that does not require accurate measuring. One of the easiest here is 'Patchwork without measuring'. There are many examples of what you can achieve using this method.

Similarly, starting with small squares all the same size and joining these together is a good first step as it will help build up your expertise and confidence. A pack of all different patterned, pre-cut squares, called a Charm Pack, can help here and will save many hours of preparation.

By selecting a design that is relatively simple to start with, you can complete your early pieces quickly while you are learning techniques.

### **WHAT FABRIC WILL YOU NEED?**

The easiest fabric to work with, and the most commonly used for patchwork, is 100% cotton. This does not fray that much and maintains its integrity or shape after washing.

There are numerous designs of patchwork fabric to choose from, and many online suppliers as well as retail outlets. Often selections of fabrics come in themes or 'families' where perhaps 4-6 related colour ways or patterns that will tone together are sold as a bundle.

It is a good idea to intersperse a simple plain coloured fabric between the obvious patterns or complex fabric designs, especially when working with blocks. Sewing strips of plainer fabric between blocks is called sashing. This sashing forms a frame for the complex patterned fabrics. If you only use dramatically designed fabrics, their impact can be overwhelming, or just lost in the 'noise' of pattern.

Plainish, but not completely plain fabrics, sometimes called 'blenders', work well as sashing, as do many simple batiks.

It is best to stick to 100% cotton, at least in the early stages when learning about patchwork. Later, as you progress, you can work with other fabrics such as silk or velvet, but these are not recommended for beginners.

### BUYING PATCHWORK FABRIC

Almost all measurements for patchwork designs, patterns and cutting instructions are in inches, rather than centimetres. But somewhat confusingly, fabric is sold by the metre, (at least in the UK) rather than the yard.

You often only need a small amount of a number of different fabrics, but cutting a quarter of a metre across the full width of the fabric is not ideal. You end up with a long, narrow piece around 44 inches by 10 inches (112cms x 25cms), called a 'long quarter' or 'skinny quarter'. This is usually not the most convenient when it comes to cutting out your patchwork templates.

Small pieces, called 'fat quarters' are frequently far more useful. Here a half a metre, or 50cms, is cut from the bolt or roll of fabric lengthwise, and then this piece is cut in half widthwise, giving two fat quarters, each approximately 22 inches by 20 inches (55cms x 50cms). It is amazing how much you can do with a few fat quarters.

Fat quarters are available from almost all suppliers of patchwork fabrics. Many shops will sell packs of several fat quarters that have been selected to work well together, helping you with your colour choices.

There are also a number of other pre-cut fabrics. One of the best known is the Jelly Roll® marketed by the fabric company Moda. Here two and a half-inch wide strips are cut across the full width of the fabric, usually around 44 inches long. Many Jelly Rolls® comprise 40 fabric strips, often all different but from the same collections or colour ranges. And there are numerous patchwork patterns that can be made up using these two and a half-inch strips of fabric.

Jelly Rolls® are great for beginners because, not only are they pre-cut, but they also remove the difficulties of selecting a diverse range of fabric colours and designs that will blend well together.

Other pre-cut fabrics come in various formats. Charm Packs, for example, may well include a selection of 5 inch squares. There are also several other 'tasty' pre-cut fabrics such as Layer Cakes - which are 10 inch squares of different fabrics, often 42 pieces, Turnovers - which are half-square triangles, and Junior Jelly Rolls® - usually with 20 pieces two and a half inches wide and width of fabric long.

### **WHAT ABOUT COLOUR?**

You may have a favourite colour you would like to work with. Or perhaps you want to make a piece that will tone with a room décor. A good place to start is to choose one or two principal colours and add one completely different colour, sometimes referred to as a 'zinger'.

Take a look at a standard colour wheel, and choose your principal colours – two or three perhaps, from the same side or related area. Pick several shades that are near one another on the colour wheel. Then select your 'zinger' colour from the opposite side of the wheel. You only need a small amount of the 'zinger'.

For example, you could choose a main colour range of blues or mauves with a yellow zinger, or oranges with a blue zinger. And a few neutral colours like beiges, greys and creams, can be peppered throughout your main colours.

An easy aid to see if you like the colours you have chosen together is to lay them out overlapping and then view them through the lens of an old fashioned 35mm or digital camera. Not sure why this technique works, but it will help you see if a particular fabric harmonises, or does not blend well with the others - as through the lens your eye can more easily identify any glaring mismatch.

### **WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL YOU NEED?**

Like all crafts, patchwork has its own distinct equipment, although you need very little to start with.

If you piece by hand, apart from your chosen fabrics, you need little more than good fabric scissors, needles and threads. If you are piecing blocks, you may well use home-made cardboard templates, or you can buy plastic or metal templates.

Never use your fabric scissors for anything other than fabric. A pair of paper scissors is useful, as is a thimble if you like using one, rulers, pencils, a seam ripper and other general sewing kit items.

If machine piecing, you will need a sewing machine, but it does not have to be a complicated model. (See the requirements for key features below under YOUR SEWING MACHINE.)

You may have heard patchworkers talk about cutting mats, rotary cutters and rulers. Well, please do NOT use these without first getting advice and guidance from someone qualified to show you how, like a reputable tutor.

**WARNING:** Rotary cutters are extremely sharp, and if not used correctly, can cause serious injury.

That said, when used properly, cutting mats, rotary cutters and patchwork rulers are the best way to cut pieces of fabric accurately and quickly, and once you master the technique, you will find they are easy to use and extremely helpful aids.

### **HAND AND MACHINE PIECING**

Hand piecing can be very relaxing, producing exquisite work, but it takes time. For example, if you choose to make a heritage piece of hexagon patchwork, this is best pieced by hand. But you do need to ensure that the hexagons are cut accurately, because if not, they will never fit together correctly.

Traditionally, hexagon templates were cut in paper and then pieces of fabric were sewn over the templates. The edges of the hexagons were then joined together. Occasionally you can find an old piece of patchwork that still has the paper templates in place on the back. Today you can buy pre-cut paper hexagons.

However, an easier way to create hexagon patchwork pieces which have extra strength is to use a fusible or iron-on fabric like fine Vilene for the templates, which you cut by hand before cutting your fabrics.

To ensure that your Vilene hexagons are cut accurately, use a Perspex or metal template that you can draw around with a sharp pencil. You can then cut the Vilene along the pattern lines, using paper scissors.

Cut your patchwork fabric 1/4 inch (6mm) larger than the Vilene templates all round, making sure you allow a generous 1/4 inch seam allowance on all sides. Iron the Vilene template on to the centre of the back of your patchwork fabric pieces. Keep a sheet of baking parchment between the Vilene and your iron so that it does not leave any glue residue on the iron sole plate.

Fold over and press the hem all around the Vilene, and then hand sew the hem to the Vilene to produce perfectly equal hexagons. The edges of the hexagons can then be sewn together to create the pattern of your choice.

Machine piecing is quick and the results strong. Many patchwork designs can be achieved just using straight stitch. And it is possible to produce a completed machined piece of patchwork over a weekend.

### **YOUR SEWING MACHINE**

If you want to sew by machine, but do not currently have a sewing machine, you do not need an all singing, all dancing model. The key features you should look for are:

- ◆ Straight stitch and zigzag stitch
- ◆ Variable stitch speed - usually adjusted by a slider control
- ◆ Variable stitch length and width
- ◆ Auto stop with needle up or needle down – extremely useful
- ◆ Ability to 'drop the feed dogs' or at least cover them

Apart from the standard feet that come with your machine, a small selection of feet worth having include an open toed foot, a quarter inch foot, and a darning/free machining foot.

There are numerous 'fancy feet' available for sewing machines, but in reality, only a few key feet are used most of the time.

The feed dogs are the cogs under the machine foot which move as you sew, drawing the fabric forward. For normal patchwork, you need the feed dogs to work.

But while you are buying a machine, future proof it and get one where you can drop the feed dogs for when you decide to venture into free machine embroidery. For this technique you need to drop the feed dogs so they no longer engage with the fabric. You then control the movement of the fabric through the machine as you sew.

If you plan to machine quilt, then an even-feed or walking foot, which moves the top layer of the quilt as the feed dogs move the bottom layer, helps to prevent puckers and tucks occurring. But these can be quite expensive and so can always be added to your equipment at a later stage.

A small number of fancy stitches can be helpful. For example, a machine sewn fly stitch can be very useful for machine appliqué.

And do make sure you have a good supply of bobbins, spool holders, a selection of needles for different uses and the ubiquitous machine screwdriver.

### **QUILTING**

When you have completed your piece of patchwork, you may well want to make it into a quilt. Even small items, such as a cushion panel, can benefit from being quilted.

Quilting is the process of sewing layers (usually three) together to form a thicker structure. This may be done for warmth, as in a bed quilt, or may be to give the item more stability and integrity, such as the table centrepiece.

A 'quilt sandwich' will be formed from the pieced patchwork top, an inner layer of batting or wadding, and a backing fabric. As with piecing, quilting can be achieved either by hand or machine.

When the top layer of a quilt is just one piece of fabric, it is known as a 'wholecloth' quilt. The design is created through stitch only.

Alternatively the top may be formed from many fabrics joined together. This can be in a series of regular shapes to create a repeated pattern, or may be an irregular or random design. Often the pieces of fabric are based on geometric themes, which can help to make them easier to join together. This style can involve accurate cutting and measuring.

Whether you hand or machine quilt, you will first need to pin or tack the quilt top, batting and backing fabric together, starting from the centre and working outwards. Special curved safety pins are available to help here.



Hand quilting is a gentle art using hand sewing needles and thread to bring the layers together. The quilt sandwich is joined with a running stitch going through all three layers. Either a stab stitch or a rocking stitch is commonly used for this process.

As with all crafts, there are certain techniques that are well worth learning. For example, the type of thread to use, the way to form a knot at the end of the thread, a method for burying the knot in the wadding, and much more.

Machine quilting will be quicker than hand quilting, but the end result will give quite a different texture. And this is where the walking foot comes into its own, evenly coaxing the quilt sandwich through the machine.

Quilting can be in straight lines, sometimes parallel, or highly complex patterns designed to create their own pattern.

And if you are feeling adventurous, you can discover how to drop the feed dogs and then engage in free-motion machine quilting. This is a bit like doodling with the sewing machine needle, and almost any design can be achieved, but this does need both patience and practice. Best to try out on a small sample quilt sandwich first until you feel comfortable with this advanced technique.

To complete your quilt, you will need to bind the raw edges with a strip of suitable fabric. The edges of quilts are likely to receive the most wear, so need to be durable. Rather than a single layer of fabric, a double-fold binding where a long strip of fabric is folded lengthwise will give that extra strength. Binding is machine sewn to the front of the quilt, with a 1/2 inch (12mm) seam allowance. The remaining fabric is folded over to the back of the quilt and hand stitched to the back of the quilt covering the previous machine stitching.

### 10. SOFT PASTELS AND WATERCOLOUR

We will all have started painting and drawing as small children, often with naive but charming results, but as we grow up, many people feel that they may not have the creative ability to produce worthy pieces. This is not true.

When given guidance, almost all of us can produce quality work. And painting and drawing can be very rich sources of satisfaction as well as rewarding pastimes.

#### **WHAT ARE SOFT PASTELS AND WATERCOLOURS?**

Both soft pastels and watercolours are very versatile and flexible media for painting and drawing, and they work well together.

Soft pastels are a dry medium, usually in a stick form, with a high portion of pigment and limited binder, giving bright colours. They can produce gentle, subdued tones or vibrant, rich hues.

You will find when using soft pastels they can readily be smudged and blended. But be aware: they can create substantial fine dust. Take care not to breathe it in.

Pastels can combine very well with watercolour to result in truly original pieces of work.

Watercolour is a medium for painting with pigments that are suspended in a water-based solution, usually with a binder such as gum arabic. Many of us will have painted with watercolours on paper as a child, partly because they are readily available and cheap, but they should not be dismissed as childish.

Watercolours are transparent, allowing for luminosity and a freshness in washes. This transparency is the difference between watercolour and other painting media. Usually, the pigment is diluted with water, but occasionally dramatic effects can be achieved by using the pigment straight from the tube and undiluted.

Sometimes watercolour can be thought of as a tricky medium to master, but with practice and some guidance, you will create beautiful pieces of art.

But which medium should you choose? By opting for both soft pastels and watercolours, you will have the opportunity to meld these two media and yet still experience the characteristics of each on their own.

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Watercolour is an art form that dates back many thousands of years, with some prehistoric cave drawings created with water based pigments. The Ancient Egyptians also used watercolour in their funerary paintings.

In western Medieval times, watercolours were applied by monks and scribes as they illuminated vellum manuscripts.

With the Renaissance, Raphael used watercolour for many of the cartoons and working drawings that he gave to the manufacturers of his rich tapestries.

By the 18th century watercolours were being commercially manufactured.

William Reeves set up shop in 1766 selling the first water soluble dry cake watercolours. But they wanted to make the paint pliable, so in 1780 a small amount of honey, a natural humectant, attracting and retaining moisture, was added. The first hard, but brush-soluble cakes of paint were embossed with the Reeves' crest. By the mid to late 1830s the public could buy inexpensive painting sets with little porcelain pans of moist watercolours.

Winsor & Newton introduced their glycerine-softened formula moist cakes in 1835, and launched semi-liquid pigments in metal tubes in 1846, making quality watercolours available to all.

The English romantic painter William Turner (1775-1851) is perhaps one of the most famous landscape watercolourists.

Today tins of watercolours are readily available from toy shops to inspire budding young artists to experiment; then adults can graduate to art shops where the selection of watercolours is vast.

### WHAT RAW MATERIALS WILL YOU NEED?

#### WATERCOLOUR

As children, many of us were given a tin of watercolours containing small tablets of a rainbow of colours, and we may well remember some of the exotic names such as burnt umber, raw sienna and rose madder. These colours will still form part of your palette as an adult artist.

Watercolours require a relatively minor investment, so this is a good way to sample this hobby. You will need a selection of paints, brushes, a palette and a surface on which to create your work.

#### PAINTS

You can dip your toe in the water with student grade paints, but once you decide this medium is for you, the professional watercolour paints are well worth buying as they contain a higher percentage of pure pigment, allowing you to create more dramatic pieces.

Start with the primary colours such as aureolin (a true yellow), alizarin crimson and cobalt blue, and add some neutrals such as Payne's grey, and possibly white and black. With these you can mix a wide range of colours.

#### BRUSHES

You may choose brushes made of sable, which is a natural fibre. These will be more expensive than synthetic brushes but will have the ability to carry large amounts of paint and water.

However, if you are a beginner and not sure whether watercolours are for you long term, a more appropriate choice would be synthetic brushes, which are less expensive. And there are also brushes that are a combination of two fibres - natural and artificial.

You need to be comfortable with your materials and tools, and in time you will find a make of brushes that you love.

Brushes are given numbers to indicate their size. Liner No 1 will be for very fine lines. Then you need some rounds such as Nos 2, 4, 6, and 8 for general painting.

Rounds must come to a good point and hold the point while you work. You will also need a 1 inch flat for dampening the paper and applying washes.

Take good care of your brushes and they will last for years. Rinse them thoroughly throughout your painting session and when you finish. Never leave them sitting in water.

At the end of each session give all your brushes a good cleaning, rinsing them well in warm water and mild soap if needed until there is no more pigment left in the brushes. Reshape them and dry with kitchen towel. Store them in a container with their tips up for protection.

### **PALETTE**

You will need a palette for mixing colours. Traditionally palettes were made of wood, but today most palettes are made of durable, solvent-resistant plastic, some with a selection of round or slanted wells for mixing different colours.

### **PAPER**

The thickness of paper is measured by weight - how much does a square metre of paper weigh (its grams per square metre or gsm)? 300gsm (or 200lbs) is commonly used for watercolour. The heavier the paper, the less likely you'll have to deal with damp paper warping as you paint.

There are many watercolour pads, blocks, or sheets of loose paper to choose from. You can go for a beginner's watercolour pad in the early days.

Try different surface textures to find your favourite. If you create paintings you want to keep, then opt for acid free paper, so that it won't yellow with age.

### **SOFT PASTELS**

Soft pastels, the purest form of artist colour, are the most popular and widely used form of pastels. It is amazing just what a diverse range of effects and tonal values can be achieved. Soft pastels typically have brighter colours than oil or semi-hard pastels because more pigment is visible since the formula uses less of the binder medium.

There are many beginners' soft pastels boxes offering a good range of colours as a starting point. Available in a non-toxic formula, from soft velvety sticks to firmer, richly pigmented sticks, many boxes have a selection of 24 or 48 colours.

### WHAT ABOUT COLOUR CHOICES?

Colour palette is very much a personal choice. You may have a preference for specific colours and tones, and be naturally drawn to painting subjects that fall within your chosen colour range. Or you might consciously go for colours that you would not normally select just to stretch your skills.

Much has been written about colour theory, but some basic knowledge here may help in your work with pastels and watercolour.

There are three primary colours - red, blue and yellow. All other colours can be made from these three colours. Secondary colours are made from a combination of two primary colours (red and blue make purple, yellow and blue make green and red and yellow make orange.) Tertiary colours result from further mixing.

A colour wheel shows how the rainbow of colours blend from one to the next. There are hues, tones, tints, shades and values.

Hue refers to the colour itself, such as yellow, blue or red.

Tones are created by adding white and black, and sometimes grey to the hue. Tones can result in a colour that is lighter or darker than the original hue and might reveal subtle complexities and qualities.

Tint is when you add white to a hue, removing some of the intensity and calming it down, producing a gentler colour.

Shades are created when only black is added to a hue, giving rich, intense colours.

Value relates to the lightness or darkness of a colour.

## WHAT ABOUT TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT?

### WATERCOLOUR

For watercolours, apart from your brushes, paints, palette and paper, you will also need a few extras:

- ◆ pencils - a range of softness HB, 2B, 4B
- ◆ tracing paper
- ◆ ruler, scissors
- ◆ pots for water (old yoghurt or margarine pots)
- ◆ kitchen towel or toilet roll
- ◆ cotton swabs
- ◆ soap (to clean brushes)
- ◆ erasers/rubbers - extra soft white, kneaded and art gum
- ◆ craft knife
- ◆ small natural sponge (for a mottled look)
- ◆ old toothbrush (for flicking or speckling paint)
- ◆ doilies (to create a lacy finish)
- ◆ salt - sea or large grain
- ◆ cotton buds
- ◆ hair dryer (to speed up drying)

### SOFT PASTELS

For soft pastels you will need a selection of pastel sticks and a variety of papers to work on. Papers should have a grain or surface that the pigment can adhere to.

A sandpaper block works well to sharpen the pastel sticks. You may also use a soft rag or foam brush for blending.

A tortillion or blending stick is useful. You can make your own blending stick by tightly rolling a sheet of paper diagonally to produce a pencil-like shape.

### WATERCOLOUR TECHNIQUES

Watercolour offers a whole range of techniques from wet on wet, wet on dry, dry on wet, flat, graduated and variegated washes and more.

Then, using a number of household items such as table salt, rubber cement (such as Copydex®) surgical spirit (rubbing alcohol) a drinking straw, needle, kitchen towel, leaves, and other items, you can create a whole gamut of textures and effects, for clouds, bark, wood surfaces and much more.

### **SOFT PASTEL TECHNIQUES**

When starting with soft pastels, the grip you adopt will greatly affect the outcome. You can use the point, end or side of the pastel stick for different results.

Some of the strokes you can produce depend on how you use the pastel stick, such as firm or gentle, varied pressure, feathering and more. Then you can blend colours with a rag, your fingers or a brush.

There are many other techniques that you can achieve with soft pastels, and when combined with watercolour, the range becomes vast.

### **COMPLETING YOUR PROJECT**

Once you are satisfied with your soft pastels piece, you may use a fixative or spray-on sealer to set your work and prevent it smearing.

And both watercolours and soft pastels can be framed and then adorn your wall for everyone to enjoy.

### **TIPS AND ADVICE**

Soft pastels can become very dirty so you almost can't tell one from another. Put them in a box of uncooked rice or sawdust and shake to clean them.

You can make a 'gutter' under your soft pastels board with a piece of aluminium foil to catch the dust. Take care not to blow on the surface or inhale the dust. Work outside when the weather is good.

When you are not happy with your piece, whether watercolour or soft pastels, turn it upside-down, or look at it in a mirror or through an old fashioned 35mm camera lens - a different perspective may help you to determining what to change.

Remember that a failing watercolour can often be rescued with the addition of soft pastels.



### **ARE SOFT PASTELS AND WATERCOLOUR FOR YOU?**

If you want to draw or paint, but not sure where to begin, then both soft pastels and watercolour would be great ways to start.

You can work with a wide range of subjects, from nature, such as flowers, plants and landscapes, through animals, both pets and wildlife, to portraits. Let your imagination run free and develop your own style.

### 11. TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING

#### WHAT IS TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING?

Tailoring is the art and craft of designing, cutting, making, mending or altering clothes, especially suits, coats and other structured outer garments.

Dressmaking covers the cutting and making of clothes such as dresses, blouses, trousers, evening and wedding gowns and even, in some cases, underwear.

#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Perhaps the first true tailors were those who fitted padded linen undergarments to protect soldiers from their chain mail and metal armour many centuries ago. The Guild of Taylors and Linen Armorers became a Company in 1408 and was incorporated by royal charter into the Company of Merchant Taylors in 1503.

The word tailor originally comes from the French *tailleur*, to cut, and appears in the English language during the 14th century. By the 16th and 17th centuries, tailors were making a variety of outer garments such as coats, capes, cloaks, doublets, and breeches.

Although for many centuries the clothes worn by the majority of people were unshaped, the nobility displayed their status and wealth by sporting elaborate costumes, and from Tudor times onwards tailors developed their craft as designers of fashion.

Working with coarse, stiff linen and canvas for interlining, horsehair cloth and sometimes even cardboard, tailors shaped garments to fit the three-dimensional body shapes. Women's fashions also included whalebone in stays and corsets until the 19th century.

Over time tailors added the design and making of trousers, fancy waistcoats, and sporting clothing to their range of skills. They were particularly adept at working with woollen fabrics, which they shaped and sculpted using steam and heavy irons.

Because tailoring was taught by traditional apprenticeships, skills were passed on from master to apprentice without the need for written manuals. The earliest known tailoring manuals are Spanish, dating from 1589.

Paper patterns became widespread and commercially available in the 19th century. The modern tape measure was introduced about 1800, soon to be joined by a pair of compasses, ruler, and tracing paper.

Today the heart of British tailoring is found in London's West End, centred around Savile Row, Bond Street and St James's Street. And there has long been a tradition of immigrants and outworkers supporting the garment industry from the factories in the East End.

Dressmaking has a less formal history, although many a wealthy lady would have had a seamstress and several ladies' maids to sew and maintain her wardrobe.

During and after the Second World War, with rationing and a 'make do and mend' culture, many women learned how to sew, make and repair their own clothes, and girls were usually taught some sewing at school.

But towards the end of the 20th century and in the 21st century ready-made clothes, mainly from overseas, became cheap to buy. Not many people make their own garments now, and there are few dressmakers, except for special items such as wedding dresses.

So, why would you want to learn tailoring and dressmaking? To create your very own haute couture outfits at a small fraction of the cost of buying such garments. To own and wear something that fits perfectly, that no one else has and that is just what you want.

### **TYPES OF TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING**

The term bespoke describes custom tailored garments made to measure for a specific individual, rather than made on speculation.

Tailors have always had the difficult task of creating three-dimensional garments for asymmetrical and highly varied body shapes. Garments also must give the wearer freedom of movement.

Systems of measurement have changed during the history of tailoring, becoming ever more sophisticated. Taking accurate body measurements is vital to ensuring a good fit.

### **PLANNING YOUR TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING PROJECTS**

First, think about the garment you would like to create. Do you have a specific design in mind? Will it be a complex tailored garment such as a jacket or coat? Or will it be a simpler item like a straightforward blouse or skirt?

Trawling fashion magazines and cutting out photos that appeal can help you to select what you like. Once you have a clear idea of what you want, you need to look for a pattern and some fabric.

As with many fields, there is a wide range of terms and techniques that may mean little to outsiders, seeming almost like a different language. If you are new to tailoring and dressmaking, you are also likely to benefit from guidance from a specialist in the field.

### **WHAT RAW MATERIALS WILL YOU NEED?**

Tailoring or dressmaking require a number of different raw materials.

### **PATTERNS**

You will need a paper pattern to use as the basis for your garment. There are several major companies that produce paper patterns along with instructions on how to sew individual items. Spend some time going through the pattern books in your local haberdashery or fabric store to see what catches your eye.

Most patterns are graded in the level of skill required, so if you are a beginner, choose simple designs to start with while you are building up your skills. Patterns will also tell you how much fabric you should buy and any notions (the extras such as buttons, a zip etc) that you will need to complete your item.

### **FABRIC**

The type of fabric you need will depend on the garment you are making, but again the paper pattern will list the kinds of fabric that are suitable for that individual pattern. It is best to be guided by their suggestions.

Today we do not have the range of large fabric departments of yesteryear, but we do have access to fabrics online, and many suppliers will send you a small sample if you are not sure what you want.

In addition, if you are visiting London there is a wonderful street called Goldhawk Road in Shepherd's Bush where you will find a vast range of fabrics, many of an exotic nature, in the 20+ shops and stalls. Well worth a visit.

### **THREADS**

Buy the best threads you can. There are many cheap threads sold on the internet, but steer clear. If you are working with fine fabrics such as a soft wool or silk, a cheap polyester thread can damage your fabric.

If you are not sure which colour of thread to choose, go for one that is slightly darker than your fabric as this will blend better than a lighter shade.

### **INTERLININGS**

Interlinings, sometimes called interfacing, are used in tailoring to give strength, body and support to your top fabric, and help prevent creasing. This is particularly important for areas such as a collar or the front edges of a jacket. The interlining is placed on the wrong side of your top fabric.

Some interfacing is fusible - that means it has a thin layer of glue on one side and can be ironed on to the back of your fabric where it will stay in place without stitching.

Although this involves extra work, the difference an interlining makes to a tailored garment is immense.

Similarly, when adding sleeves to a tailored jacket, you should not only use shoulder pads, but also a strip of bump (or curtain interlining) over the shoulder which will give that professional finish to the set of your sleeves.

### **WHAT ABOUT COLOUR CHOICES?**

You may have fixed ideas on what colours you want to work with. Perhaps you are matching or toning with an existing item. Or you may have an open mind, in which case this might be the time to go for something that you would not normally select in a ready-made garment.

But do choose a colour that you like because you will be building your personality into the garment as you sew.

### WHAT ABOUT TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT?

Apart from the fabrics, pattern and thread, you will need a selection of tools and equipment, including:

- ◆ cutting or fabric scissors (never use them for anything other than fabric)
- ◆ paper/utility scissors
- ◆ small scissors with sharp points (can be manicure scissors)
- ◆ appliqué or duckbill scissors - useful for trimming seams, but not essential
- ◆ general sewing kit - you are likely to accumulate your own sewing kit over time, but you may include pins (fine silk pins are best, but some people like glass headed pins), hooks and eyes, poppers, bees' wax (for use on threads such as when sewing on buttons), needle threader, pin cushion, safety pins, tape measure, thimble, tailor's chalk, seam ripper, screw driver for sewing machine.
- ◆ steam iron
- ◆ iron sole plate cleaner
- ◆ ironing cloth (piece of silk organza, or an old piece of sheeting)
- ◆ baking parchment
- ◆ sewing machine (with needles, bobbins and a selection of feet) (see Chapter 9 for more information on machines)
- ◆ a cutting surface - a robust kitchen table works well here

You are also likely over time to build up a box of threads and yarns in varying colours and thickness for different uses along with a variety of haberdashery notions.

### GETTING AN ACCURATE FIT

Getting a perfect fit is probably the most common problem for people who make their own clothes. No matter how good you are at sewing, if a garment doesn't fit, you will not be happy with the outcome.

Here are the three basic stages to go through for well fitting clothes:

1. Choose a pattern in the most appropriate size for you. Take key measurements on your body, or get a friend to help here, and do not pull the tape measure tight - remember that you will want to move in your new garment. If you are between sizes, go for a larger size - you can always adjust it to a smaller version.

2. Make basic adjustments to the paper pattern. This involves measuring your body for key areas such as bust, waist, neck to waist, shoulder to tip of bust, and so on. Check how these measurements compare with the paper pattern and add paper or remove pieces of the pattern so that the revised paper pattern matches your measurements (always discounting the seam allowances).
3. Make a toile in muslin, old sheeting or similar. Check it fits and fine-tune where necessary to fit perfectly and then use that as a pattern to cut your fabric. This is quick to make and will have a major impact on how well your garment fits you as opposed to a 'standard' body. (We are all different.)

### **MAKING DARTS**

Darts help to create a three-dimensional shape from a piece of two-dimensional fabric. There is a range of different darts, mainly named after the part of the body they relate to, such as bust, waist and elbow.

### **PUTTING IN ZIPS**

Zips are a common form of closure in many garments. They can be visible, or invisible, metal or plastic, and are sewn with different techniques and machine feet. Make sure you buy the right zip for your garment.

### **LININGS**

Some clothes need lining. Linings make clothes hang better and allow for easier movement. Linings are common in jackets and coats, and are usually found in garments made of heavier weight fabrics.

A lining will usually be somewhat larger than the outer layer, but will have an open pleat, possibly at the back, to facilitate movement.

### **STRETCH FABRICS**

Knitted and stretch fabrics are so versatile that sewing with them is a very popular craft. But some people are apprehensive if they are not sure how to work with these fabrics.

### **THE IRON**

A good quality steam iron is an essential tool for your tailoring and dressmaking. It is as important as your sewing machine.

Well-pressed fabric makes the end product look much more professional. It makes sense to have a good hot steam iron; it will really make a difference. It is also worth stopping to press every seam before you sew the next one as you can't go back and press a seam once you've sewn across it.

Ironing relates to applying the iron to your fabric and moving it across to take out any creases. Iron fabric before cutting it out to make sure the grain is straight, unless you are working with jersey fabric as that can be stretched out of shape.

If you are not sure how your fabric will react to a steam iron or whether it is truly colour fast, iron a small off-cut at a high temperature with a piece of damp old sheeting between the fabric and the iron. If any dye ends up on the sheeting, you may have a problem with loose colour in the fabric.

Pressing relates to holding the iron in one place on or over the fabric without rubbing it from side to side. This can be done either using steam from the iron, or a damp cloth. A wooden clapper will improve the quality of your pressing.

In most cases, it is best to press from the back of the fabric. Placing a pressing cloth (either silk organza or old sheeting) between the fabric and the iron will help to prevent shine and protect the fabric. Sleeve rolls or hams are helpful when pressing sleeves and shoulders.

### **TIPS AND ADVICE**

Here are a few tips for when you are dressmaking or tailoring:

Measure twice, cut once! It may be an old carpenter's motto, but it also applies to tailoring and dressmaking.

Use the correct hand or machine needle and the right machine foot for the task: the wrong needle might well damage the fabric, and the wrong machine foot can cause needles to break.

Insert pins at right angles to the seam line: they will then be easier to remove as you sew on the machine.



Press seams as you go, but put a piece of cardboard under the seam from the back first so that there is no obvious seam allowance line showing from the right side.

When turning a corner on the machine, keep the needle down and pivot the fabric to keep the corner precise.

If attaching Velcro®, cover the loops and hooks with masking tape while sewing so that threads do not get caught. This can be removed once the sewing is completed.

When ironing on fusible web, always put a sheet of baking parchment between the web and the iron to prevent glue getting on the sole plate.

An extendable magnet is very helpful when you drop pins or needles.

Don't skimp on thread: quality fabric deserves quality thread.

Never use your fabric scissors for anything other than fabric. Paper and other materials will quickly blunt them.

If you unpick stitches and the holes are obvious, waggle the fabric around and the fibres will normally knit back together.

### **SO IS TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING FOR YOU?**

If you would like to have some beautifully made clothes which are unique to you, fit well and of which you can feel justifiably proud, then tailoring and dressmaking could be for you.

And even if you are new to sewing, and feel initially that the skills needed may be out of your reach, with careful and quality tuition, you will soon learn how to achieve the results you want and create your very own haute couture fashions.

### 12. THE ANCIENT CRAFT OF TAPESTRY WEAVING

Tapestry weaving is a method of using warp and weft yarns to make a picture. Warp threads are wound tightly on to a vertical frame, then the weaver will weave the weft yarns from right to left and back again, packing the weft down to completely cover the warp yarn. Selecting coloured weft and weaving in this way can make a picture.

#### **WARP AND WEFT**

This covering of the warp with the weft is the difference between tapestry weaving and cloth weaving. Also, tapestry weaving uses a 'discontinuous weft', which means that one colour does not go all the way over from right to left but will stop halfway and come back again, in order to create shapes.

#### **WHAT TAPESTRY IS AND IS NOT**

Tapestry should not be confused with needlepoint, which is where a picture is made by stitching into a canvas that usually has a design painted on to it.

And while we are clarifying things, the Bayeux Tapestry is not a tapestry. It is an embroidery.

Also the tapestries exhibited by Grayson Perry are not tapestries in the true sense. They are made by a 'Jaquard' machine after which they are named. They are not weft faced and have a completely different surface.

Perry's large, ambitious Walthamstow Tapestry represents, via the seven ages of man, the journey through life. Although called a tapestry, this was woven by a computer-controlled industrial loom in Ghent, and there was no 'hand of the maker' present, and therefore no interaction by the weaver in the translation of the image to a tapestry.

#### **TRADITIONAL TAPESTRY**

Traditional tapestry weaving cannot be replicated by a machine but can only be done by hand. It is a gentle, time-consuming and meditative process, as are many craft skills.

Some of the earliest tapestry weaving was, in fact, found on clothes woven in Egypt in the early Christian era. People of that time would weave cloth for their tunics and in certain areas create a design in weft faced fabric, often small roundels with an animal inside, or a border with an intricate key design.

This weft faced method was then taken up in Europe in the 14th century and it was during this time that a lot of large tapestries were made, some of which can still be seen today in old houses, especially National Trust properties and museums.

### **TUDOR TRAVELLING TAPESTRIES**

During the Tudor period owning a tapestry was a sign of great wealth. They were prized above paintings and were found in churches and noblemen's houses. When Henry VIII went on his Great Progress around the country, he took his tapestries with him. These tapestries were propaganda; the images on them recounted religious tales or moral myths. In an age when most people were illiterate, the pictures they saw on the tapestries in church told the story of the gospels. They were a reminder of how to live your life and who was in charge of your country.

### **DECLINE OF TAPESTRIES**

Paintings started to take the place of tapestries in the 17th century, and the Industrial Revolution in the UK finally saw this craft die out as there were no longer sufficient funds available to buy tapestries.

The church was not as wealthy as it once had been, and the 'new money' was being made by businessmen, people like the Cadbury family and other Quakers, who decided they would be philanthropists in a different way and build towns for their workers in order to give them a better standard of living. Art was not a priority at the time, although many of these foundations still exist and, as well as continuing to encourage social enterprise, they also support arts funding today.

Since the time of the Quaker benefactors, houses have become smaller, and now few of us have a wall large enough to show a three metre wide tapestry.

### **REVIVAL BY WILLIAM MORRIS**

In the late 19th century, with the coming of the Arts and Crafts Movement, tapestry weaving was revived by William Morris, and he and the other Pre-Raphaelites jointly designed many tapestries, the Holy Grail sequence being amongst the most well known. Up until this time weavers had been given images to weave. Although he taught himself to weave, even William Morris gave 'cartoons' of his designed pieces to the weavers to make the final tapestry.

With the dawn of the 20th century, artists re-discovered these techniques, and ever since the early 1900s they have created their own cartoons and then gone on to weave the tapestries themselves.

### **TAPESTRY TODAY**

In the 21st century you do not need a big loom to weave a tapestry. A frame, like a large picture frame but stouter (because the warp does put the frame under a lot of tension) will do the job. It will need to be the width of your proposed tapestry plus one third as much again, and similarly the height plus one third.

Having said this about size, tapestry at its heart is mural size. It is monumental, and at this scale will always have that certain something. It has texture, warmth and a sculptural quality that a huge painting cannot replicate.

The woven image can be anything from a traditional design, such as still life, to an abstract image. It is also possible to weave three-dimensional structures and shaped tapestries.

### **STARTING TAPESTRY**

A beginner will usually start by weaving a flat sample around the size of a bookmark, and this will involve all the techniques necessary to go on to weave a larger tapestry. This would include stripes (both vertical and horizontal), curves and blending of colours. One technique which is particularly difficult due to the linear nature of tapestry weaving is the creation of circles, but these are quite possible with a little patience and practice.

### **YARNS**

Warp yarn is usually cotton, but linen and wool can be used. In fact, anything that does not stretch too much and cannot be broken with your hands, is fine. Equally anything can be used in the weft. Traditionally, it was worsted wool, but any yarn, paper, feathers and even sweet wrappers can be used.

Knitting wool is not a good weft to start with as it is too 'springy' so can be difficult to control until you are more experienced. Good sources of a wide range of colours of worsted wool are tricky to get hold of, but a knowledgeable tutor will introduce you to their favoured suppliers.

### **NEW USE FOR A DINNER FORK**

Beyond the weaving frame, there is not much needed in the way of special tools; usually, just a dining table fork, which is used to beat down the weft as it goes in. This is to make sure it covers the warp. It is possible to buy lovely wooden beaters and bobbins and other paraphernalia, but these are not necessary.

### **MOUNTING AND FRAMING**

Traditionally tapestry is hung from a wooden bar, which in turn is screwed or nailed to the wall. However, today many weavers produce smaller tapestries and the work will not have the weight to hang correctly. Consequently, weavers may prefer to frame their tapestries, some behind glass and others not.

### **FUTURISTIC TAPESTRIES**

While conventionally the weft yarn would always cover the warp yarn, artists are for ever trying new things, so today it is not unusual for a weaver to deliberately leave warp yarns exposed.

There are certain knots which are now used in weaving that you would be unlikely to find in a medieval tapestry. This is a living tradition, expanding as it develops, and as such, these new ideas should be embraced. As a way of creating your own pictures and designs with yarn, tapestry is well worth considering when you decide which craft is for you.

### 13. HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT CRAFT FOR YOU

The dozen different crafts set out here encompass a wide range of skills and techniques, from calligraphy and drawing, through fine work in lace making and beading, and a selection of sewing, including patchwork and quilting, tailoring, creative stitch and much more.

Having looked at these, you may already have a clear idea of which craft you would like to try. Perhaps it is the actual process of a particular craft that appeals, or maybe it is the end product that you will produce.

But if you are still uncertain, here are some pointers that may help you choose the right craft for you.

#### **WHAT ATTRACTS YOU ABOUT CRAFTS?**

As a first step, it is worth looking at what made you interested in crafts in the first place. Maybe the idea of making something yourself caught your attention. Or perhaps you want to have something that is truly yours, that you have created, and is different from anything you could buy in a shop.

Are you drawn towards pieces of art or craft that are unique and individual by being handmade?

You could have a dislike for things that are mass produced, preferring instead to plough your own furrow. Although you might start with a set of guidelines, you may wish to develop your own ideas and patterns, doing your own thing.

If you have been on a previous craft workshop, did you follow the course to the letter, or did you prefer to branch out, experimenting and exploring different techniques?

You may be just bursting with ideas that you want to try out, developing a variety of skills and adding your own input into any workshop or course that you go on.

If this sounds like you, many crafts will be ideal for you. You are obviously a creative person who enjoys trying new things. Experimental projects such as those found in creative stitch, mixed media or art quilts will stretch your imagination.

But you may want to try something you have not done before that will have great end results. In which case, what about patchwork and quilting, or tailoring and dressmaking?

### **LEARNING NEW SKILLS**

Many crafts may initially look highly complicated, but as with most skills, it is often just a question of learning how. If you drive or use a computer, think back to when you were learning and how complicated it all seemed, but today you are likely to drive almost on autopilot or access the internet without stopping to think what you need to do.

Exactly the same is true with crafts. Whether you are drawn to lettering, watercolours, quilting or beading, there will be simple techniques and methods to produce the results you seek. Once you know how, you will be able to create just what you want.

You might be a little apprehensive about going away on your own for a couple of days. People on leisure courses and retreats are very welcoming and you will quickly make friends and feel at home. Some people may be diffident when they arrive, but by the time they leave they will have added confidence and new skills. So, take the plunge and do what you really want to do.

And beginners are always welcome. Crafters are generous with their knowledge and will help you along the road. And when you join a group with a tutor, their role will be to ensure that you gain the knowledge you need to help you progress at the right rate for you, building on your understanding and expertise in a planned manner.

### **CREATIVITY - v - ENTHUSIASM**

Some people are highly creative and will find most crafts offer them something. Others feel they would like to make things but are not sure where to begin and what will appeal to them.

Think about any crafts you may have done in the past. Have you perhaps bought a craft kit and used that as a starting point? Or did you see some craft work that you really liked and then joined a workshop with the aim of discovering how you could make something similar?

Here are some guidelines that may help you choose:

### **LIKE TO DRAW OR PAINT?**

Then you could try:

Painting on silk  
Botanical illustration  
Soft pastels  
Watercolours  
Drawing with a sewing machine needle

### **WANT TO STRETCH YOUR CREATIVE IDEAS?**

Enjoy trying new things and using your creative approach? Then how about:

Creative stitch  
Art quilts  
Mixed media  
Collage  
Tunisian crochet  
Beading  
Patchwork and quilting

### **FANCY CREATING AN HEIRLOOM?**

Items you make from these crafts can become heirlooms:

Tapestry weaving  
Lace making  
Calligraphy  
Mixed media  
Patchwork quilts

### **WANT TO MAKE OR REPAIR YOUR OWN CLOTHES**

Then you should consider:

Tailoring  
Dressmaking  
Appliqué



### **LIKE LEARNING NEW SKILLS?**

Want to try something you have not done before, such as:

- Crochet
- Botanical illustrations
- Jewellery making
- Embroidery
- Painting on silk
- Calligraphy

### **ARE YOU AN ENTHUSIASTIC NOVICE?**

If you are interested in many crafts but are not sure about your skills, and feel you are an enthusiastic beginner, then look at:

- Beading
- Jewellery making
- Appliqué
- Patchwork without measuring
- Crochet
- Painting on silk

### **WANT SOMETHING ORIGINAL THAT NO ONE ELSE HAS?**

For something that is truly yours alone, you can try:

- Tailoring
- Dressmaking
- Creative stitch
- Mixed media
- Tapestry weaving
- Watercolour
- Appliqué

### **DRAWN TO CRAFTS THAT SAVE MONEY OR COST LITTLE?**

If you would like to make or look after your own clothes or make items that are usually expensive to buy, take a look at:

Appliqué  
Jewellery making  
Dressmaking  
Painting on silk  
Tailoring

### **LIKE METHODOICAL APPROACHES AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL?**

If you like a methodical approach and attention to detail, then perhaps you should try:

Calligraphy  
Lace making  
Tailoring  
Traditional patchwork  
Hand quilting  
Dressmaking

### **ATTRACTED BY CRAFTS THAT REFLECT NATURE?**

Would you like to create a likeness of a child or pet, or plants and flowers?  
Then look at:

Botanical illustrations  
Watercolour  
Soft pastels  
Drawing with a sewing machine needle  
Embroidery  
Tapestry weaving

**HAPPY TO TAKE THINGS SLOWLY AND FOLLOW A PATTERN TO PRODUCE  
WHAT YOU WANT?**

Then how about:

Tapestry weaving

Tailoring

Calligraphy

Lace making

Beading

**WANT TO MAKE GIFTS TO GIVE AWAY?**

Here are some ideas for you:

Crochet

Embroidery

Creative stitch

Painting on silk

Soft pastels

Beading

Botanical illustration

Whichever you choose, I do hope that you enjoy your new skills and hobby.

### 14. YOUR NEXT STEPS

Whatever craft you decide to try, there are various options you can now take depending on how you prefer to learn. Often people like to acquire their knowledge from a number of different sources.

Many books are available with instructions for beginners. DVDs are chosen by some, and of course, there is the ubiquitous YouTube where you will find a variety of people demonstrating an assortment of crafts. But don't forget that anyone can put a video up on YouTube - the information it contains doesn't have to be correct or reliable.

You can join a local group that focuses on your selected craft that meets regularly, perhaps once a week or month. Some of these groups have tutors, while others are less formal, with individual members helping one another to develop their skills.

If you want to learn quickly and have the benefit of a renowned tutor on hand while exchanging ideas with other like-minded people, then one of the best methods is to join a weekend residential course or retreat that concentrates on your chosen topic. In two days you can discover a whole range of tips and techniques, see what others with similar interests are doing, and go home with a selection of experiences along with expanded skills to take you to the next level. And you may well take home an original piece of work that you have created.

But be warned - many crafts can become addictive. Once hooked, you may find that you delight in generating your own designs, gaining inspiration from numerous sources, from architecture and patterns in nature to your own photos, as your passion to create something truly original and wholly yours develops.

## 15. USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

Here are some links and resources that you might find helpful.

The American Museum in Britain

Claverton Manor

Claverton

Bath

BA2 7BD

Tel: 01225 460503

Email: [enquiries@americanmuseum.org](mailto:enquiries@americanmuseum.org)

Web: <https://americanmuseum.org/>

The American Museum takes you on a journey through the history of America, from its early settlers to the 20th century. It is a remarkable collection of folk and decorative arts, displayed in original period rooms from the US, all set within a fine Georgian manor house with outstanding views, situated on the edge of Bath.

This museum has a collection of over 250 quilts from the 18th century to mid-20th century, 50 of which are always on show in the Textile Room and throughout the Museum.

The Beadworkers' Guild

4 Honor Oak Road

London

SE23 3SF

Tel: 07837 649712

Email: [enquiries@beadworkersguild.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@beadworkersguild.org.uk)

Web: [www.beadworkersguild.org.uk](http://www.beadworkersguild.org.uk)

The Society of Botanical Artists  
1 Knapp Cottages  
Wyke  
Gillingham  
Dorset  
SP8 4NQ  
Tel: 01747 825718  
Email: [info@soc-botanical-artists.org](mailto:info@soc-botanical-artists.org)  
Web: [www.soc-botanical-artists.org](http://www.soc-botanical-artists.org)

The Society of Botanical Artists has an international Distance Learning Diploma details of which can be found at <http://www.soc-botanical-artists.org/education/distance-learning-diploma-course>

The Calligraphy and Lettering Arts Society  
CLAS Administrator  
10 Atheling Road  
Hythe  
Southampton  
SO45 6BR  
Email: [administrator@clas.co.uk](mailto:administrator@clas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.clas.co.uk/](http://www.clas.co.uk/)

The Knitting & Crochet Guild  
Unit 4 Lee Mills Industrial Estate  
St Georges Road  
Scholes  
Holmfirth  
West Yorkshire  
HD9 1RT  
Email: [enquiries@kcguild.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@kcguild.org.uk)  
Web: [www.kcguild.org.uk](http://www.kcguild.org.uk)

The Knitting & Crochet Guild is a national charity dedicated to UK domestic knitting and crochet, run by volunteers and supported by subscriptions and donations. Through their website, quarterly journal Slipknot and their network of branches, they want to showcase their historic collection of knitted and crocheted items, patterns and artifacts and help knitters and crocheters everywhere learn more about the techniques and traditions of the crafts so enabling them to develop their skills.

The Embroiderers' Guild at Bucks County Museum  
Church Street  
Aylesbury  
Bucks  
HP20 2QP  
Email: [administrator@embroiderersguild.com](mailto:administrator@embroiderersguild.com)  
Web: [www.embroiderersguild.com](http://www.embroiderersguild.com)

The Embroiderers' Guild is an educational charity dedicated to extending the skills of embroidery and textile art to new generations, nurturing current skills and inspiring all concerned to produce high quality work that breaks the boundaries of creativity. The Guild welcomes people of all ages including those who may be starting out and those wanting to explore their options for development and personal achievement.

The Lace Guild  
The Hollies  
53 Audnam  
Stourbridge  
West Midlands  
DY8 4AE  
Tel: 01384 390739  
Email: [office@laceguild.org](mailto:office@laceguild.org)  
Web: [www.laceguild.org/](http://www.laceguild.org/)

The Lace Guild has an exhibition room that is worth visiting, but do phone to check opening hours as it is not open every day. It also have a library where members can borrow books.

The Quilters' Guild  
St Anthony's Hall  
Peasholme Green  
York  
YO1 7PW  
Tel: 01904 613242  
Email: [admin@quiltersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@quiltersguild.org.uk)  
Web: [www.quiltersguild.org.uk/](http://www.quiltersguild.org.uk/)

The Quilters' Guild is the national organisation for people involved in patchwork and quilting, whether you are a beginner, an experienced quilter or someone interested in the history and development of patchwork and quilting.

As an educational charity, the Guild preserves the heritage of quilting and works to ensure a vibrant future for the craft. They bring together quilters in a spirit of friendship and learning and promote quilt-making in all its forms across the UK.

The Quilters' Guild has a collection of over 800 pieces dating back to the 17th century and pieces go out on loan to museum exhibitions and events all over the UK and sometimes overseas. The Guild also offers four small exhibitions in York each year through their Friends of the Collection initiative.



The Guild of Silk Painters  
Chairman: Anethia Sellars  
Email: [anethiasellars@gmail.com](mailto:anethiasellars@gmail.com)  
Tel: 07905 501712  
Membership secretary: Elitta Fell  
Tel: 01959 564060  
Email: [elittaf@gmail.com](mailto:elittaf@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.silkpainters-guild.co.uk](http://www.silkpainters-guild.co.uk)

The Guild of Silk Painters is a non-profit organisation run by volunteers, with the sole aim of promoting and highlighting both the art and the craft of silk painting. They have branches throughout the country where anyone can go along for the enjoyment of painting, dyeing and manipulating silk, along with like-minded people. More information on locations and contacts can be obtained from the membership secretary, Elitta Fell,

The Textile Society  
[www.textilesociety.org.uk](http://www.textilesociety.org.uk)

The Welsh Quilt Centre  
The Town Hall  
Lampeter  
Ceredigion  
SA48 7BB  
Tel: 01570 422088/480610  
Email: [quilts@jen-jones.com](mailto:quilts@jen-jones.com)  
Web: [www.welshquilts.com/](http://www.welshquilts.com/)

The idea to open a centre to celebrate and promote a wider understanding of the Welsh Quilt came from Jen Jones whose obsession with collecting Welsh Quilts, Blankets and textiles has spanned over forty years. Annual exhibitions (March-October) showcase historic Welsh Quilts from different eras alongside the contemporary work of featured artists. World famous textile artist Kaffe Fassett exhibited his wonderful quilts here in 2013 and past exhibitions include A Quilted Bridge (Amish-Welsh Connection), geometric flannel Welsh Quilts with stunning antique Amish Quilts. The Welsh Quilt Centre is a truly exceptional venue with three galleries and gallery shop.

## 16. SUPPORTING PHOTOS



1. Appliqué dragonflies



2. Appliqué frog on lily pad



3. Embroidery hoop with bias tape



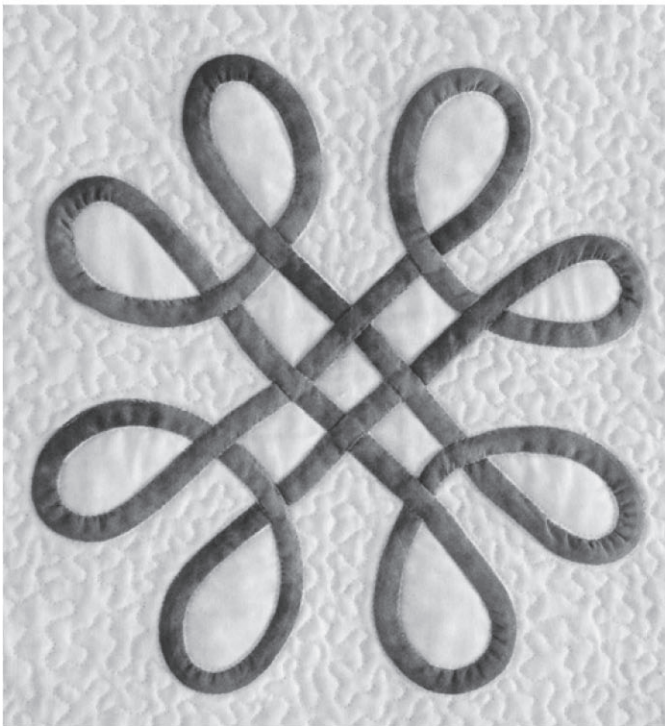
4. Appliqué needles



5. Appliqué scissors (duckbill scissors)



6. Appliqué acorns

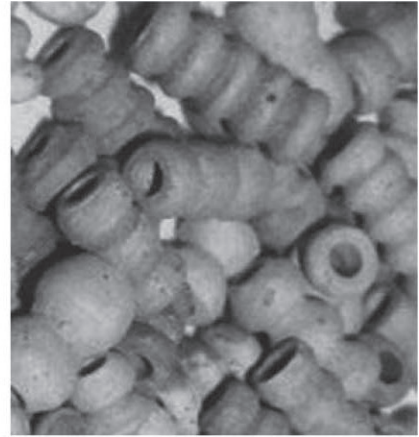


7. Celtic design created with bias tape





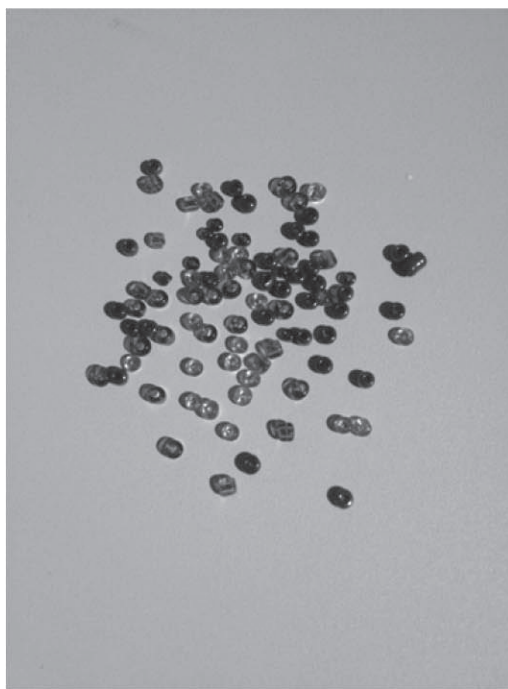
8. Cultured pearls



9. Egyptian terracotta beads



10. Bugle beads



11. Seed beads



12. Findings used in jewellery making



13. Bead bracelet



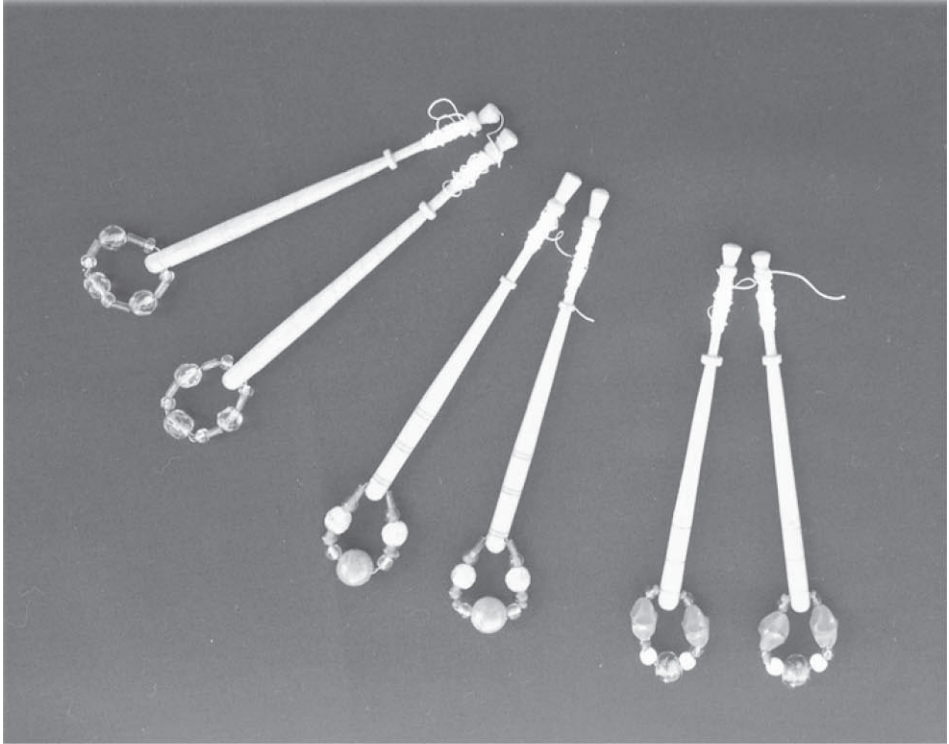


14. Jewellery pliers:  
top - flat nosed  
middle - bent nosed  
bottom - long nosed serrated jaws





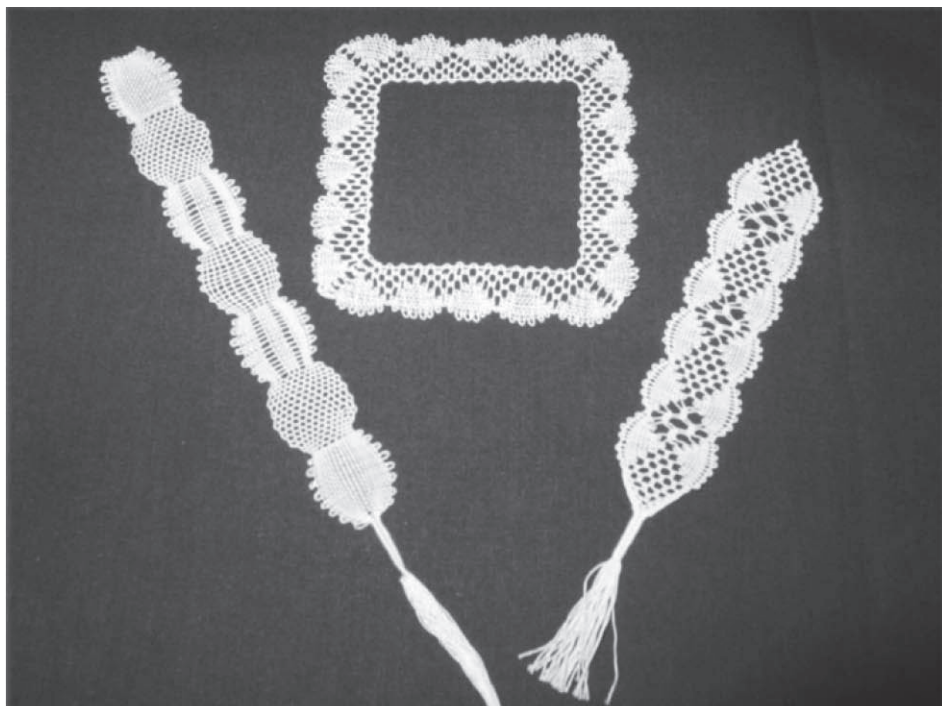
15. Jewellery pliers:  
top - side cutter  
middle - long/needle nosed  
bottom - snub nosed



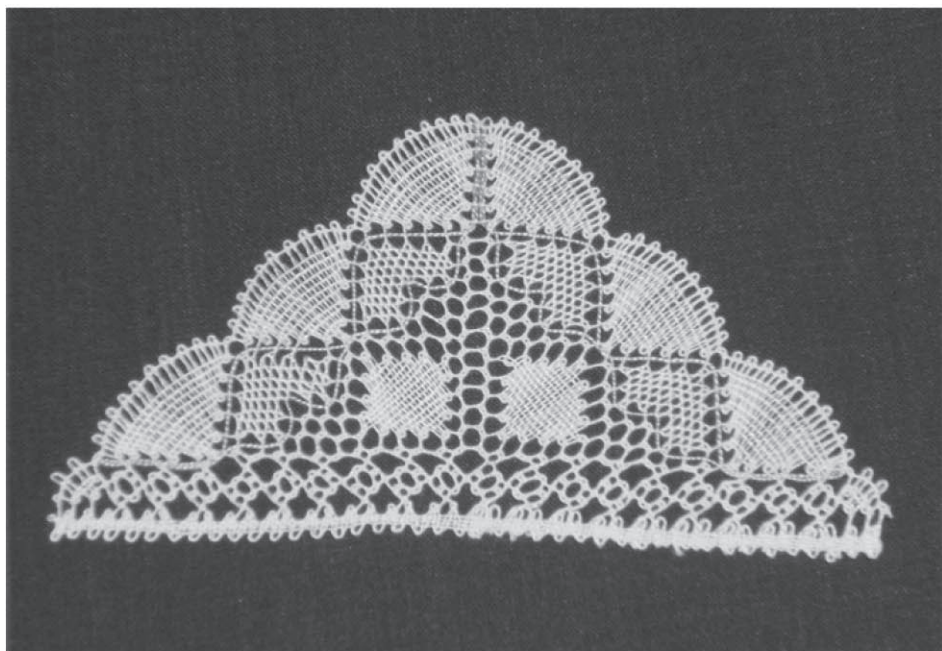
16. Bobbins with spangles



17. Lace lappet (part of headdress worn until beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century)



18. Beginners lace – Torchon lace

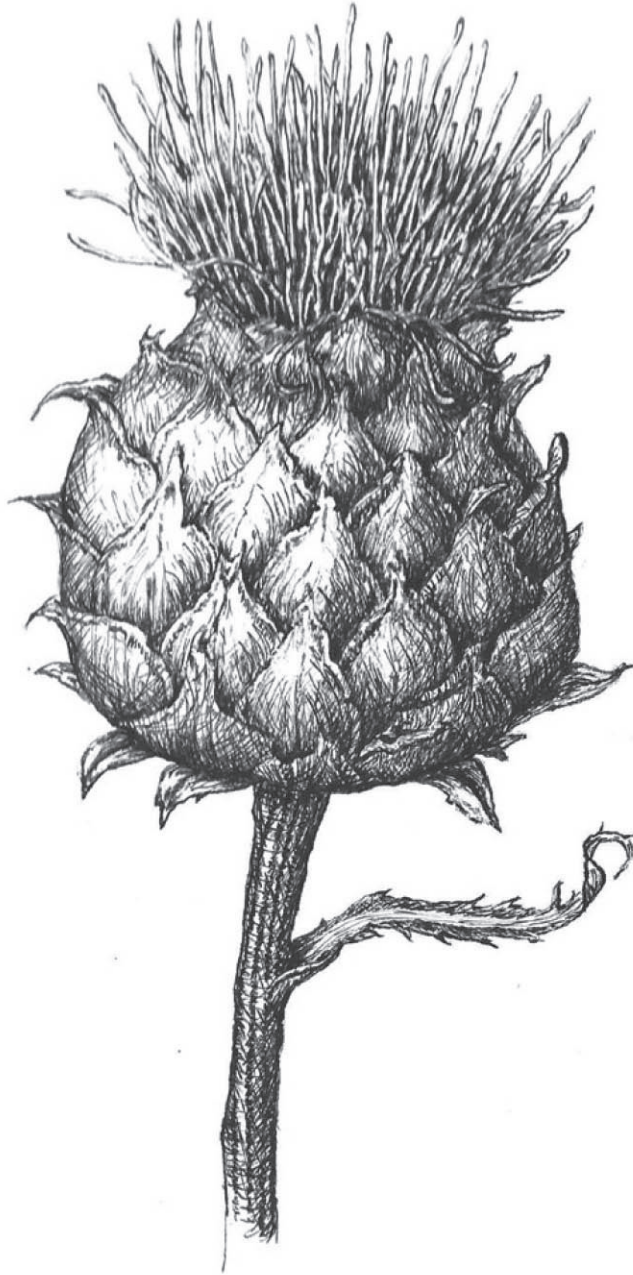


19. Lace handkerchief corner





20. Bobbin Lace student

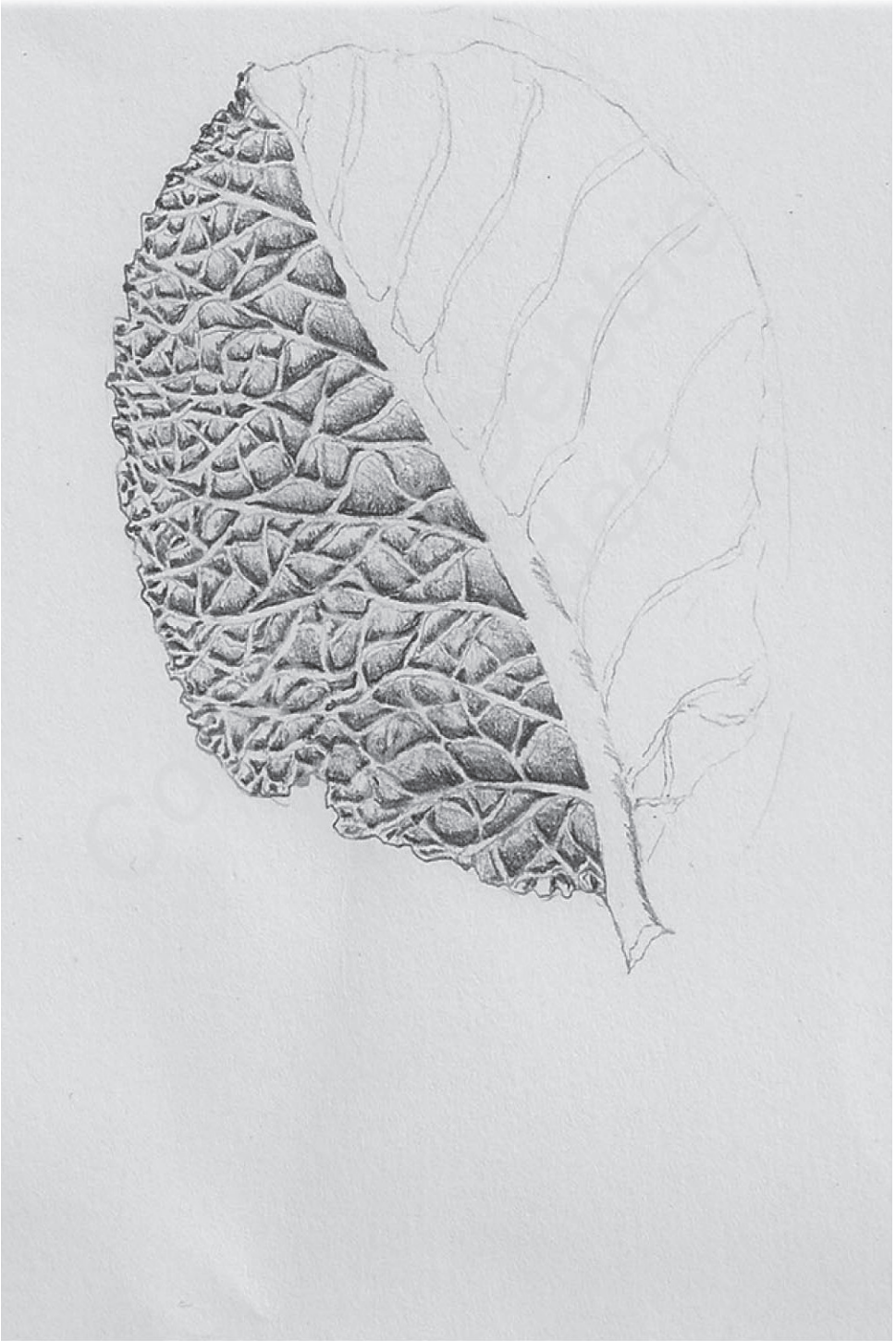


21. Ink Cardoon - lesser known relative of the artichoke - stems are edible  
(drawing courtesy Debbie Devauden)

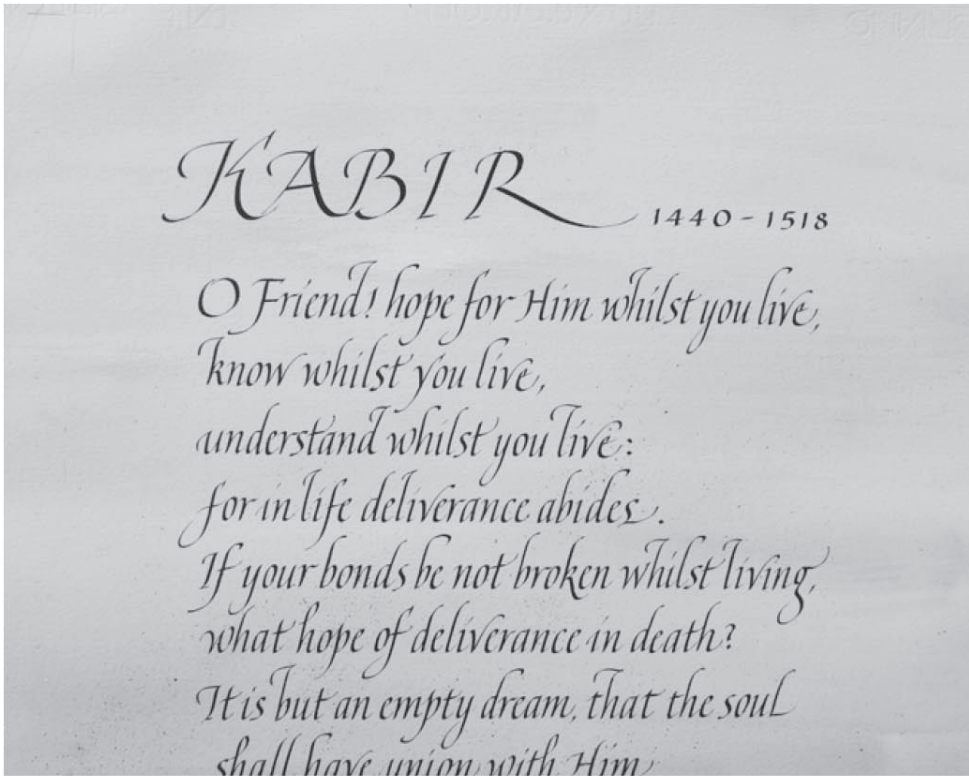


22. Magnolia seed - resembles exotic-looking cones  
(drawing courtesy Debbie Devauden)





23. Cabbage leaf (drawing courtesy Debbie Devauden)

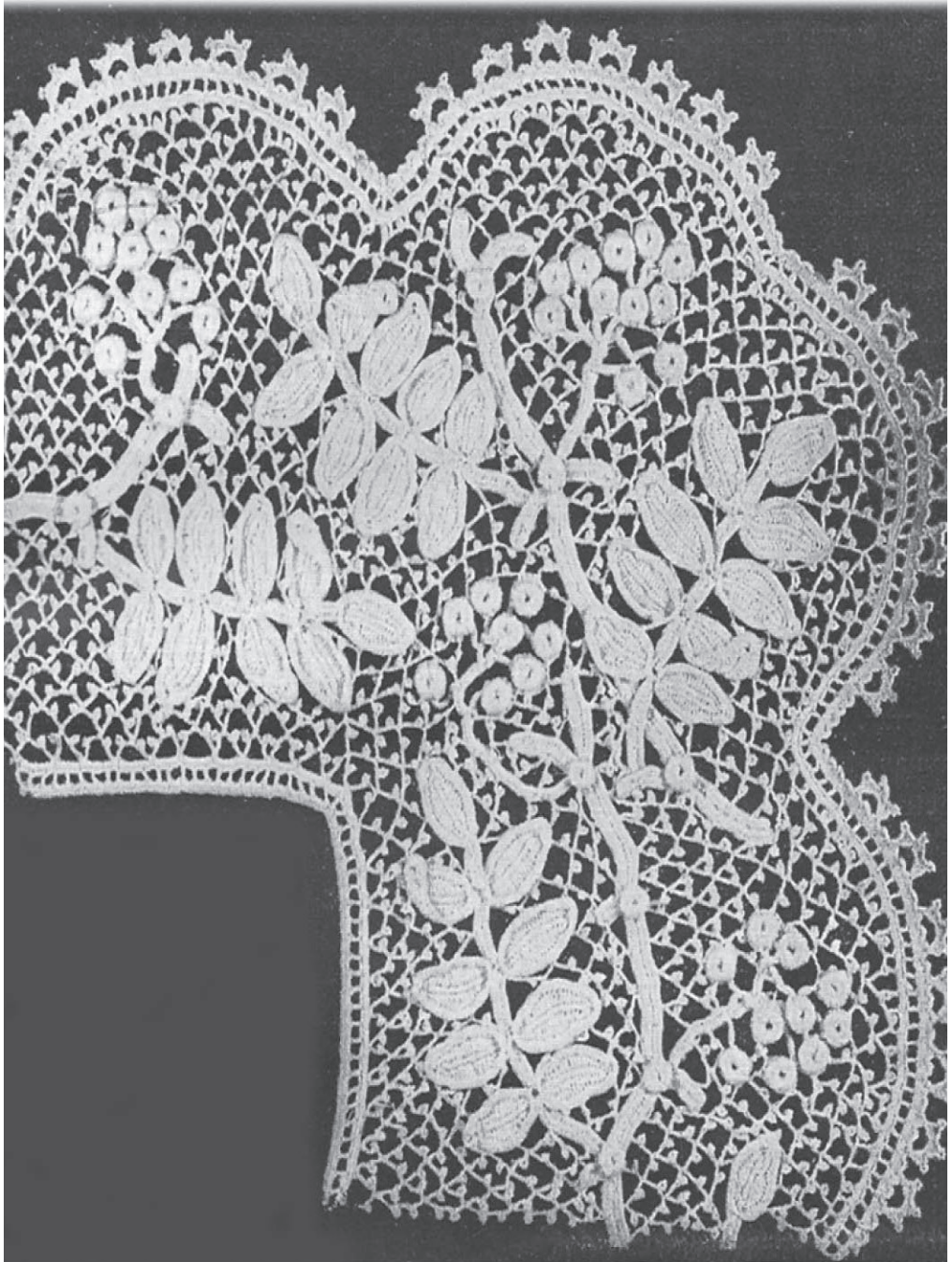


24. Calligraphy - Italic  
(photo courtesy Gaynor Goffe)

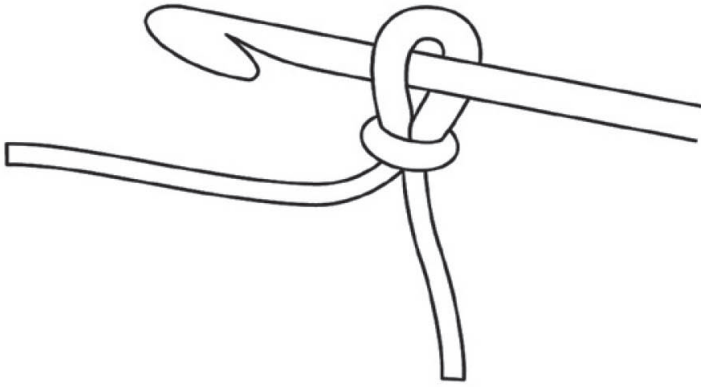


25. Example of Modern Calligraphy  
(photo courtesy Gaynor Goffe)

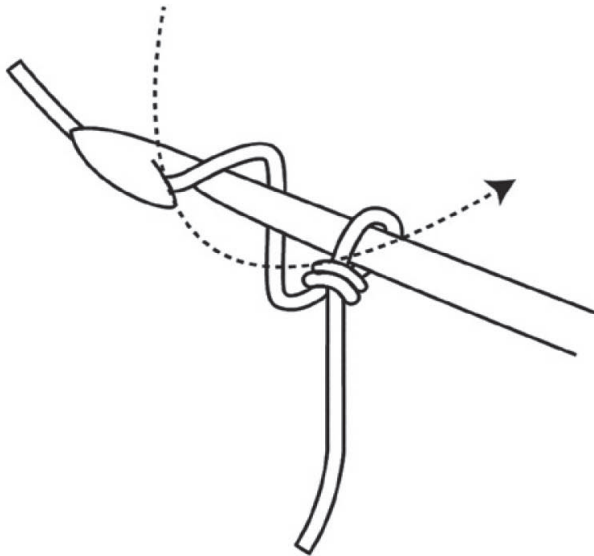




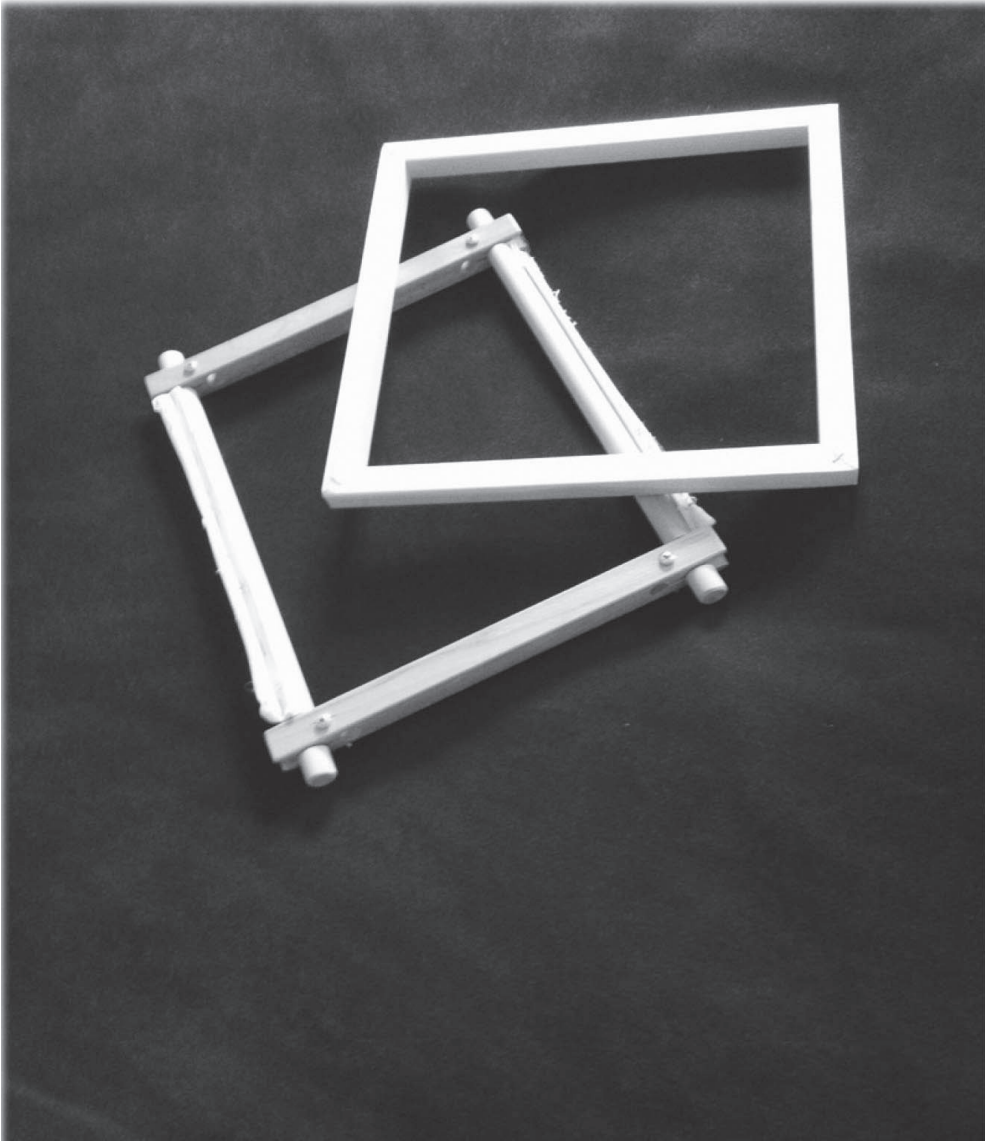
26. Antique Irish Crochet  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



27. Crochet begins and ends with a single loop on the hook.  
The first loop is created using a slip knot.



28. Making a crochet chain. Bring the working yarn over the hook, bringing it up from behind and towards you over the top, catch the yarn under the 'chin' of the hook and then pull the existing loop off over the head of the hook, leaving the 'yarn over' as a new loop.

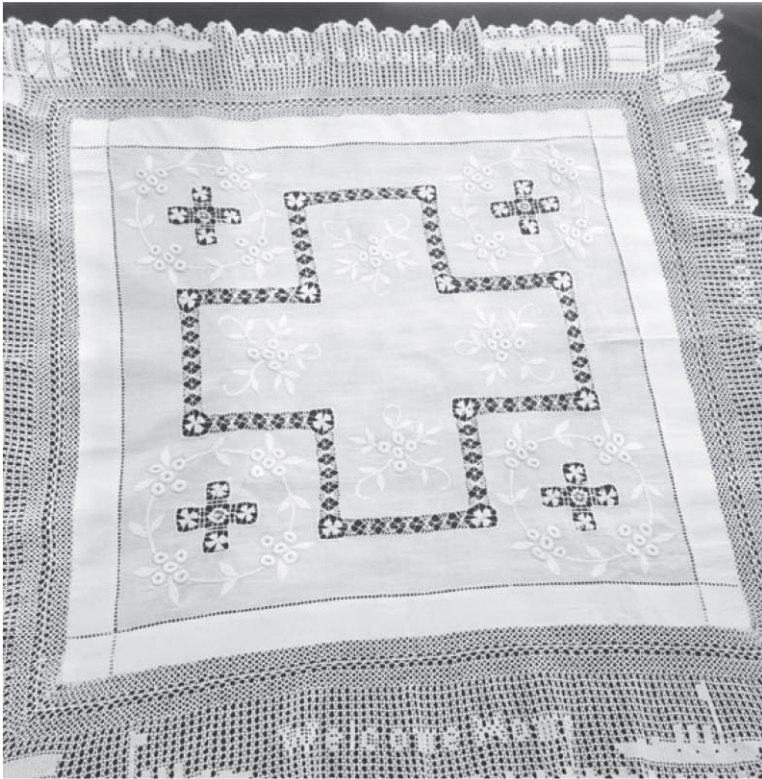


29. Slate frame with tape for attaching the piece of embroidery before stretching on the rollers, and on right a simple square embroidery frame

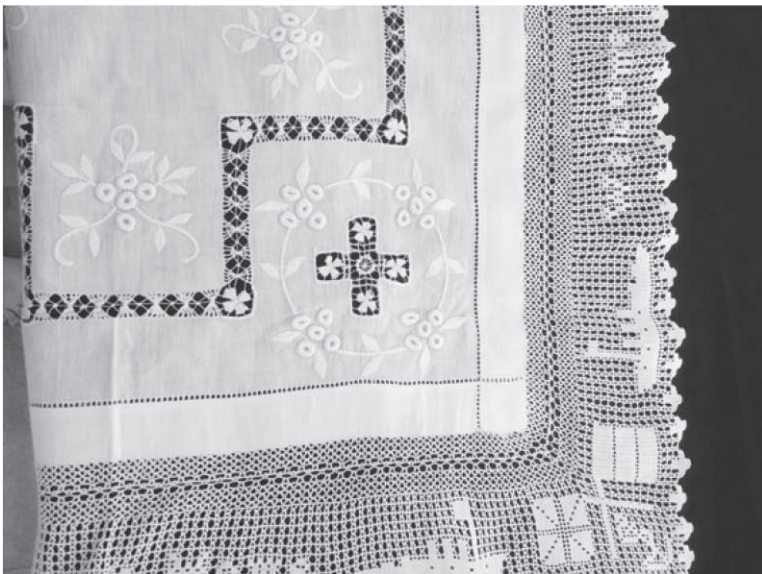




30. Hare - created with straight stitch on a sewing machine  
(photo courtesy Richard Box)

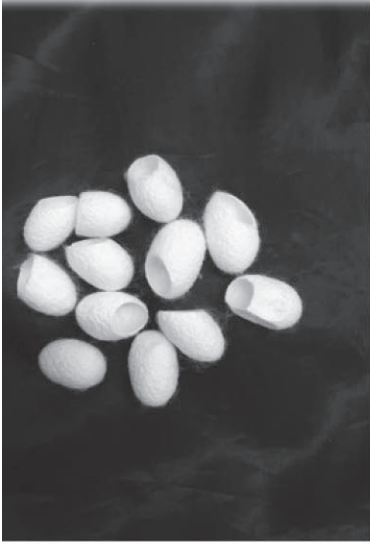


31. A piece of Mountmellick



32. Close-up of Mountmellick corner





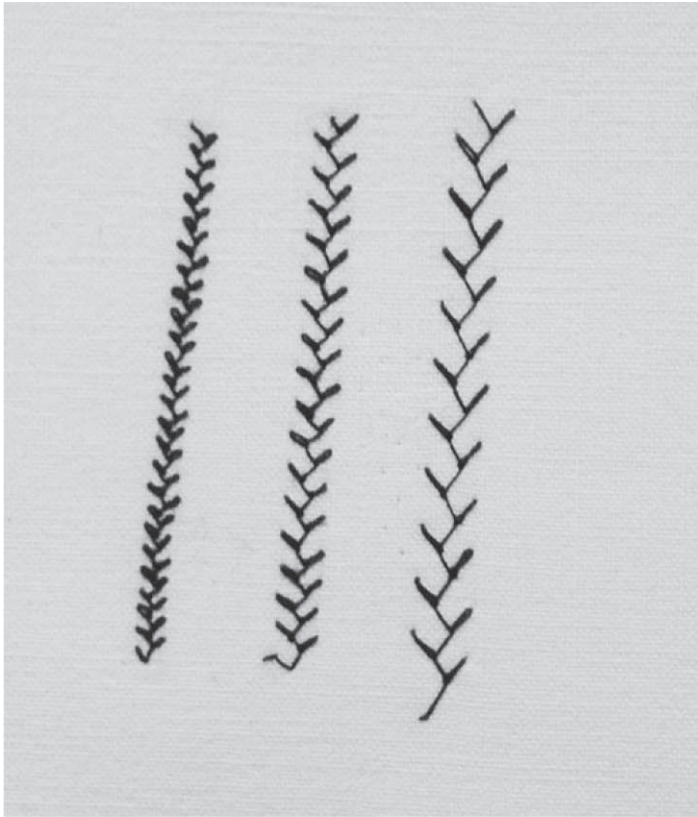
33. Silk cocoons



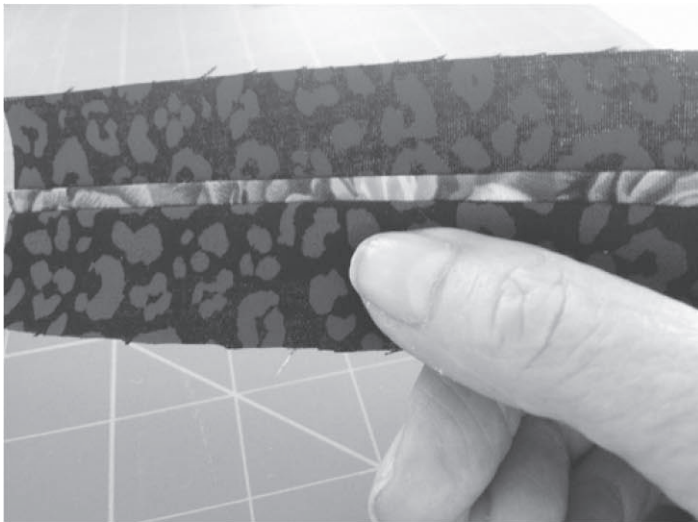
34. Assa pins



35. Silk painting brushes  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



36. Fly stitch

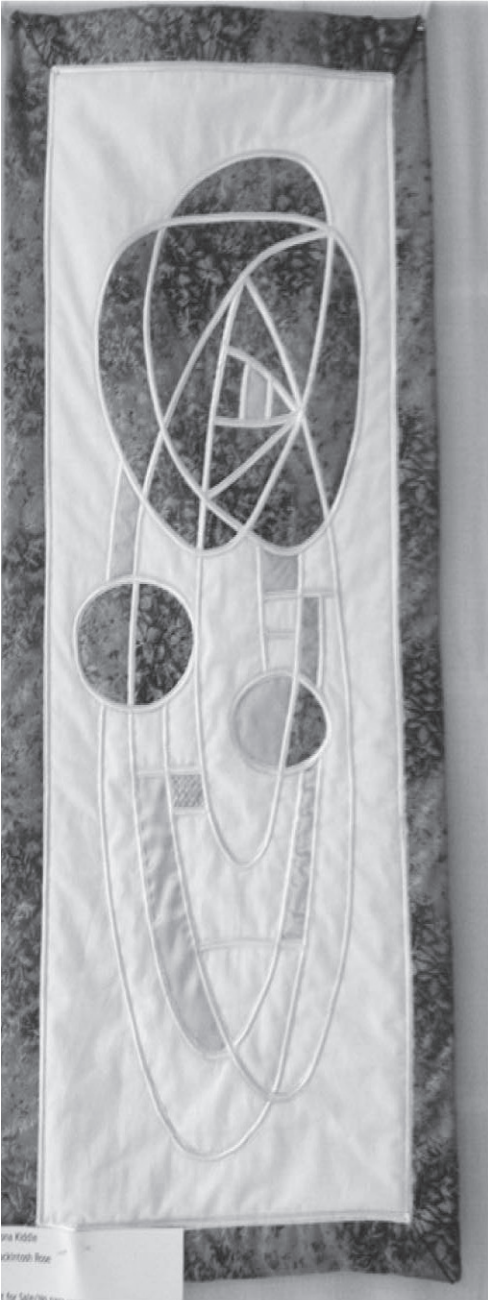


37. Very narrow border

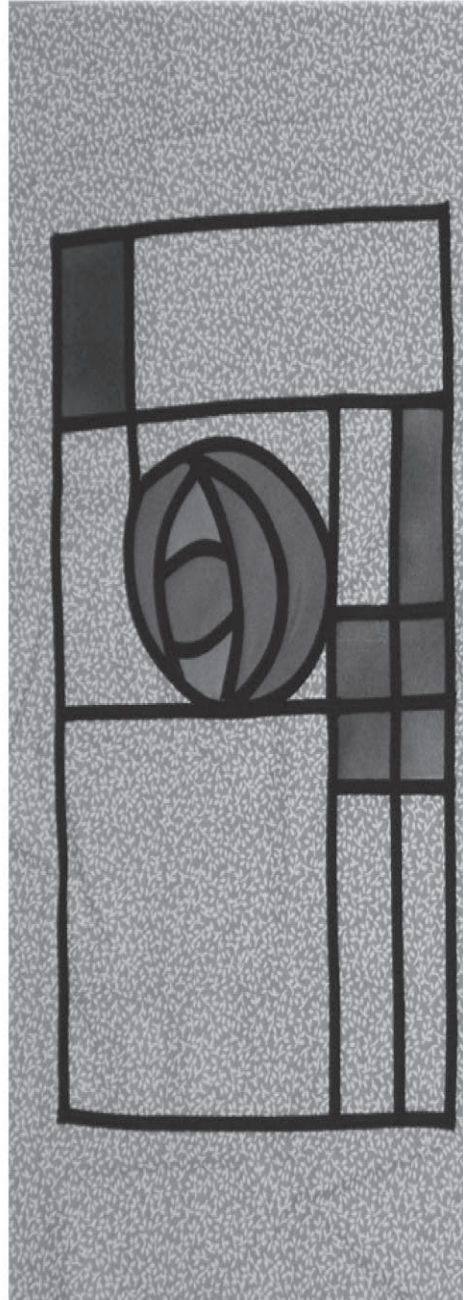


38. Rotary cutter





39. Stained glass window after Macintosh



40. Simple stained glass window

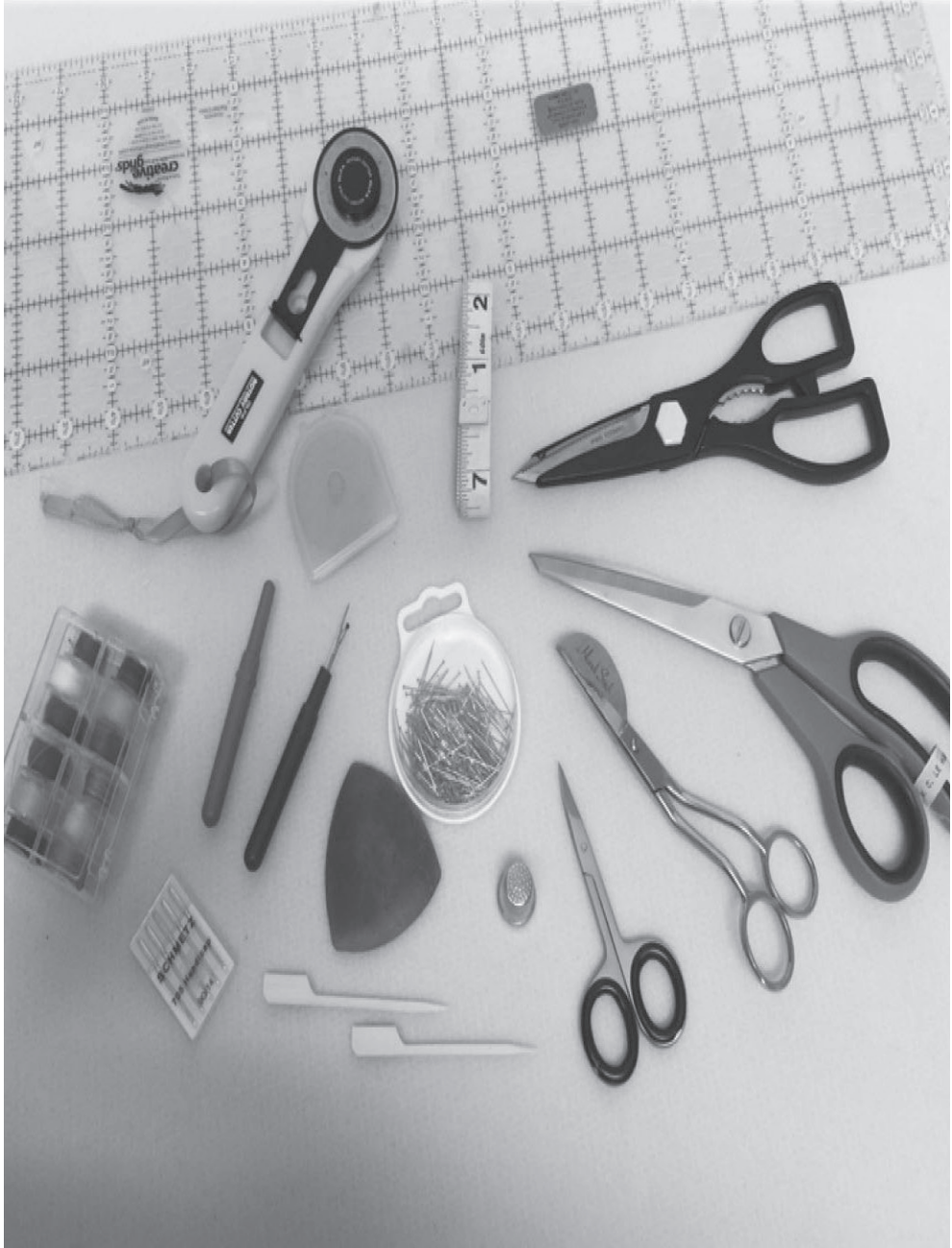


41. Watercolour tools



42. Sula Rubens in charcoal  
(photo courtesy Sula Rubens)





43. Sewing tools



44. Adding a shoulder pad



45. Setting sleeve





46. Margaret at loom  
(photo courtesy Margaret Jones)



I Colour wheel

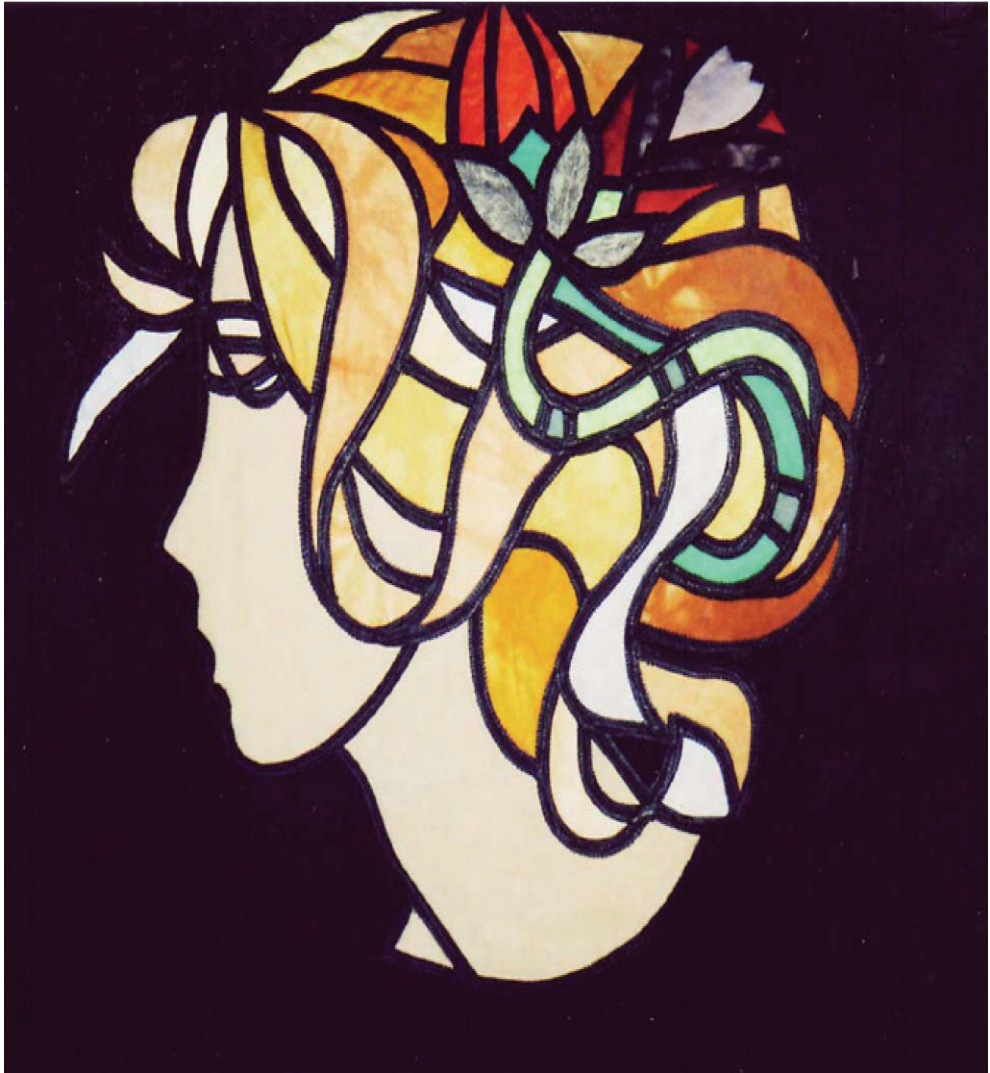


II Appliqué with needle turning





III Appliqué with buttonhole stitch



IV Profile - appliqué with bias tape



V Brass rubbing - reverse appliqué



VI Brass rubbing - reverse appliqué





VII Dichroic glass brooches



VIII Murano beads  
(photo courtesy Murano Glass Bead Company, Italy)



IX Victorian jet mourning jewellery jet earrings and pendant with porcelain cabochons. (Photo courtesy Simpsons Jet [www.whitbyjetjewellery.net](http://www.whitbyjetjewellery.net))



X Necklace of found objects (photo courtesy Sara Withers jewellery tutor)



XI Bead design board





XII Red beaded cuff (photo courtesy Sally Boehme)



XIII Green beaded cuff (photo courtesy Sally Boehme)

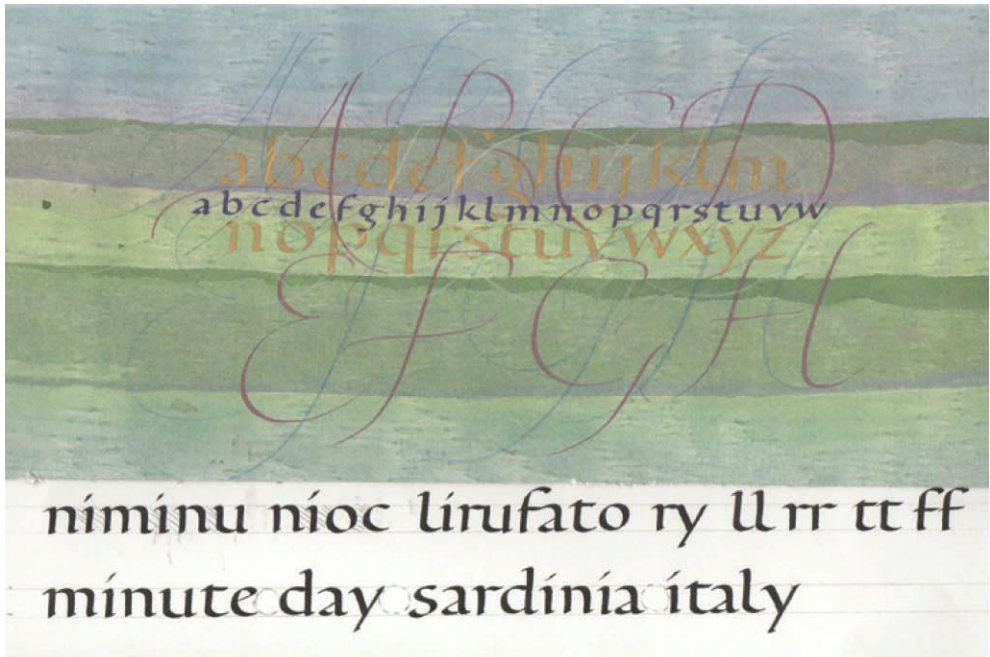


XIV Foxglove (photo courtesy Debbie Devauden)

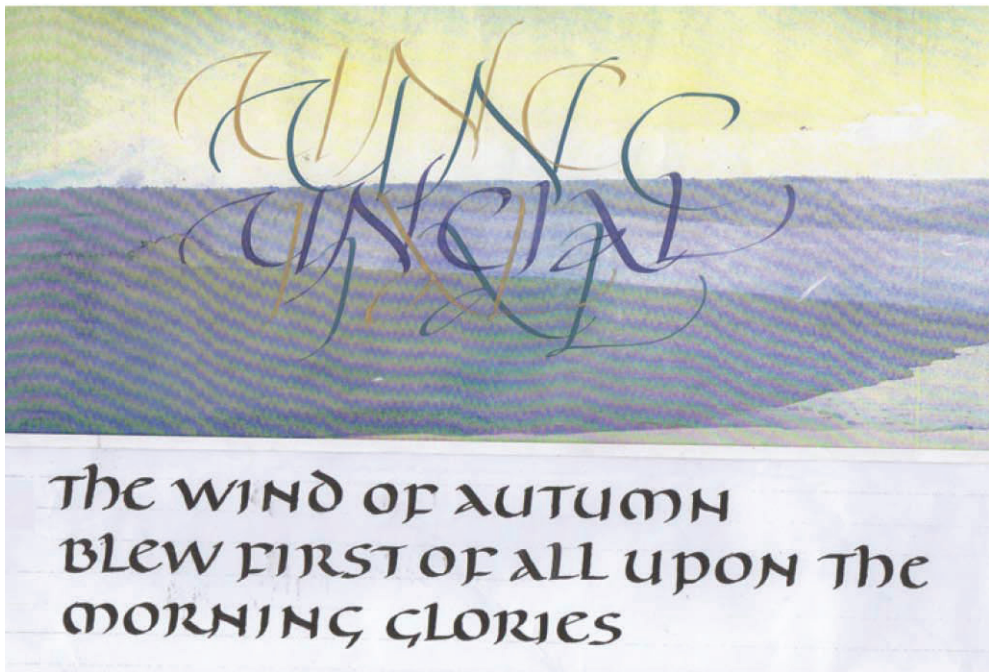


XV Poppy heads (photo courtesy Debbie Devauden)





XVI Calligraphy - Foundation Hand (photo courtesy Gaynor Goffe)



XVII Calligraphy - Uncial (photo courtesy Gaynor Goffe)



XVIII Simple Mandalas  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



XIX Basic crochet stitches  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



XX Puffs (photo courtesy  
Lindy Zubairy)



XXI Puffs & Trebles & Chevrons  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)





XXII Flowerpots  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



XXIII Working bobbles  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



XXV Tunisian texture  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



XXIV Crochet sunflower  
(photo courtesy Lindy Zubairy)



XXVI Cat drawn with a sewing machine needle -  
(Photo courtesy Richard Box)





XXVII Selecting fabrics



XXVIII Sewing creative stitch



XXIX Creative stitch green squares



XXXII Plastic canvas



XXX Creative stitch bird nest



XXXI Creative stitch pink flowers





XXXIII Ribbon couching



XXXIV Syrian edging on table centre





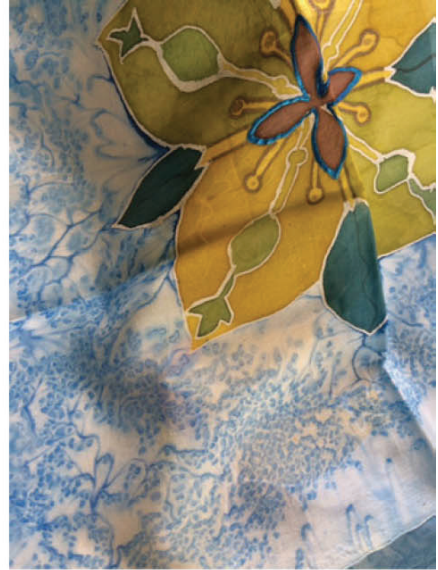
XXXV Bobbins in case



XXXVI Lace student



XXXVII Watercolour effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XXXVIII Salt effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XXXIX Salt effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XL Gutta effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)





XL I Gutta effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



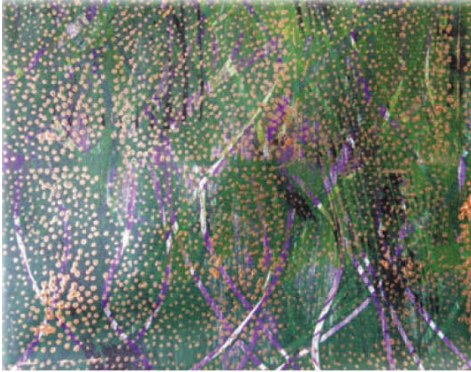
XLII Gutta effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XLIII Shibori effects on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XLIV Surface decoration on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XV Surface decoration on silk  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



XLVI 'Off the frame" scarf  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)

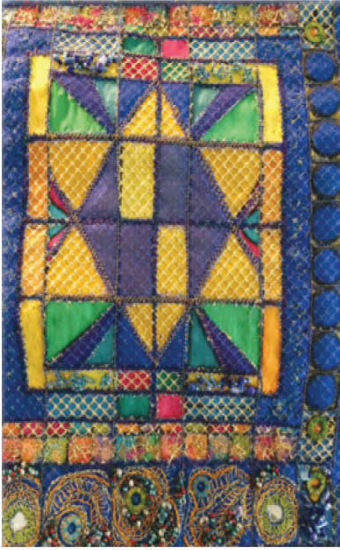


XLVIII Painted dress length of fabric  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)

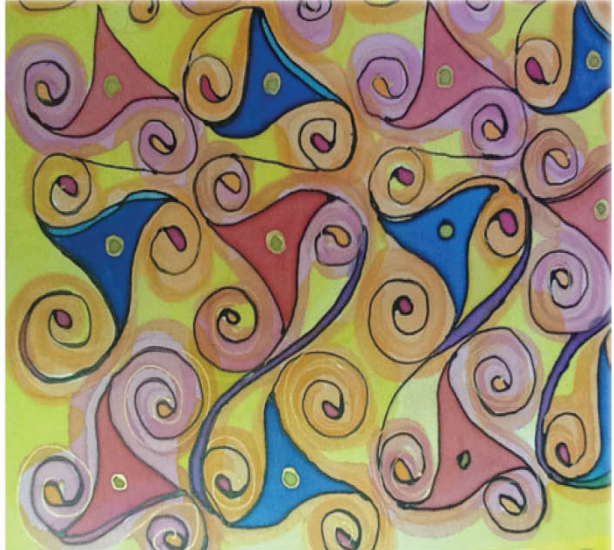


XLVII 'Off the frame' scarf  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)





XLIX Painted silk  
(photo courtesy  
Melinda Berkovitz)



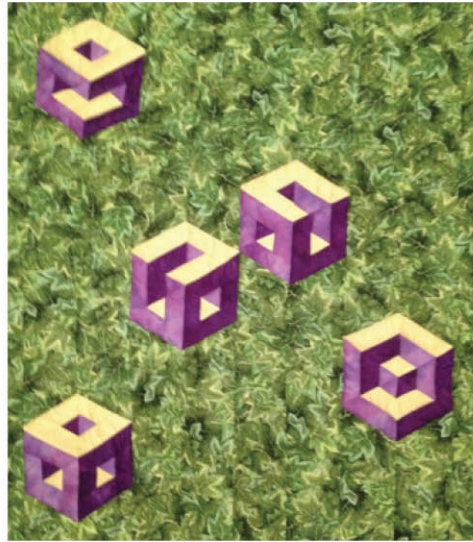
L Creative approach with gutta  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



LI Silk ideal for card making  
(photo courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



LII Silk saddle bag (photo  
courtesy Melinda Berkovitz)



LIII 3-D illusion with patchwork



LIV Patchwork made with pre-cut fabrics





LV Multi-pocketed bag finished with bias tape



LVII Blue table centre piece with bias tape



LVI Selection of patchwork, quilted, chenille and ribbon bags



LVIII Traditional log cabin patchwork



LIX Patchwork can be created without measuring

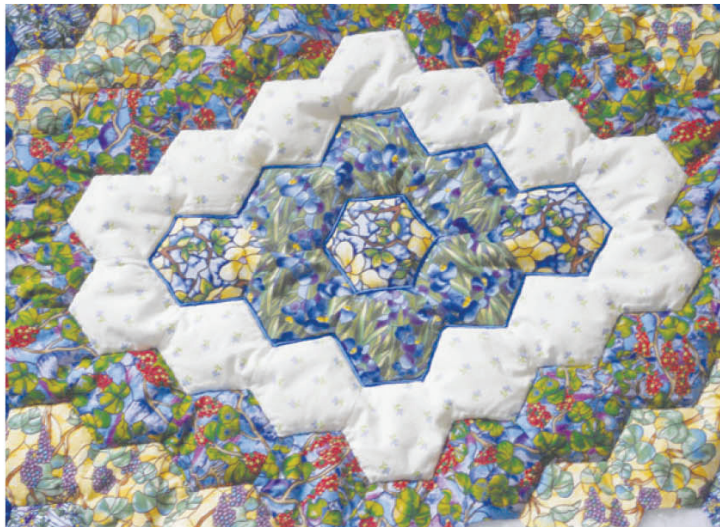




LXI Quilt made from pre-cut fabrics



LX An optical illusion with tumbling blocks - laid out ready for sewing



LXII Traditional hand pieced hexagon patchwork



LXIII Variety of hand quilting (photo courtesy Sylvia Critcher)



LXIV Hand quilted table centre piece

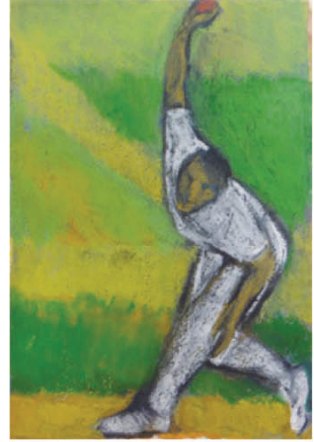




LXV Soft pastels



LXVI Pastels drawing of pianist  
(photo courtesy Sula Rubens)



LXVII Pastels drawing of cricketer  
(photo courtesy Sula Rubens)



LXVIII Drawing with pastels (photo courtesy Sula Rubens)





LXIX 'Chanel' style jacket in silk, fabric from Goldhawk Road



LXX Jacket sleeve with plaited embellishment



LXXI Bias cut strip 12" long 2" wide of bump, fleece or other fabric with a loft, slightly stretched as stitched over the shoulder to ease setting in the sleeve



LXXII Jacket in silk and fine wool fabric heavily embellished with beads, pearls and sequins. Similar fabric but without embellishment used for facings (Goldhawk Road fabric)





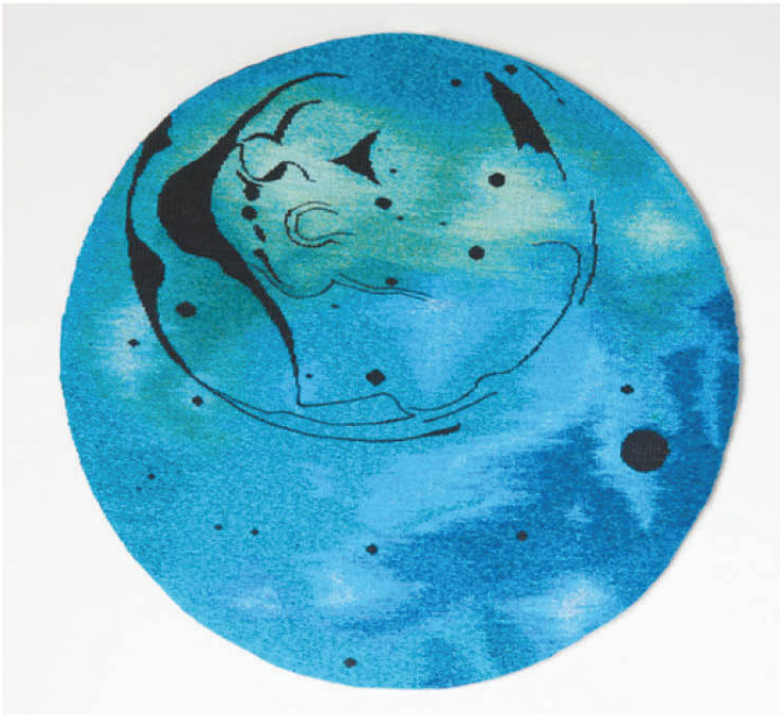
LXXIII Tapestry Weaving  
(photo courtesy Margaret Jones)



LXXIV Water Pod Tapestry  
(photo courtesy Margaret Jones)



LXXV Tapestry Weaving (photo courtesy Margaret Jones)



LXXVI Blue Tapestry (photo courtesy Margaret Jones)



LXXVII Tapestry Weaving (photo courtesy Margaret Jones)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although I have been involved with a wide variety of crafts for over 20 years, and organised weekend retreats and day workshops for some five years, there are still many crafts that I have not yet tried. But, when considering taking the craft route, many people ask me a whole range of questions. It soon became clear that there was no single book that brought together a dozen key crafts, giving guidelines as to what each would bring, and which might be the best choice for each individual.

So, the gem of an idea to produce this book was born.

While I have knowledge of some crafts, there are many others that I wanted to include, but about which I knew little. So, I am very grateful to a number of tutors and other people who generously gave both their time and knowledge, and often photos for many of the chapters. These include:

Melinda Berkovitz, painting on silk tutor  
Sally Boehme, beading and jewellery making tutor  
Richard Box, artist and creative stitch tutor  
Sylvia Critcher, patchwork and quilting tutor  
Janice Croft, tailoring and dressmaking tutor  
Debbie Devauden, botanical illustration tutor  
Gaynor Goffe, calligraphy tutor  
Margaret Jones, tapestry weaving tutor  
Sula Rubens, painting and drawing tutor  
Sara Withers, jewellery making tutor  
Lindy Zubairy, crochet tutor

I also want to thank my proof reader, Sylvia Worth, and my in-house team, Pam, and Kirsty.





# HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT CRAFT FOR YOU

Thinking about taking up a craft or expanding your skills? Here is an insider's view of what it is like to do:

Appliqué	Beading
Bobbin lace making	Botanical illustration
Calligraphy	Charcoal Drawing
Couching	Creative stitch
Crochet	Drawing
Dress making	Embroidery
Jewellery making	Painting on silk
Patchwork	Quilting
Soft pastels	Tailoring
Tapestry weaving	Watercolour painting

You will also find many great tips and guidelines from a range of leading tutors who run short leisure and craft courses to help you decide what appeals to you.

Whichever crafts catch your eye, this book lets you sort out the right route to take and what your next steps should be to enjoy a great craft experience.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



This guide has been written by craft courses insider, Liza Jones. Originally a secondary school science teacher, Liza has been a needlewoman since a small child, and has over 20 years' experience of patchwork, quilting and other creative crafts. She has produced a number of videos introducing people to crafts - see YouTube - '9 Steps to begin Beautiful Patchwork and Quilting', and 'Discover the Amazing World of Appliqué'. For her day job, she helps problem solve for companies that have reached crossroads, and business owners seeking a merger or acquisition, or who want to sell their businesses to an ethical, caring investor.

Liza also gives lively, entertaining and informative talks on a diverse range of topics to raise funds for the local Air Ambulance.

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