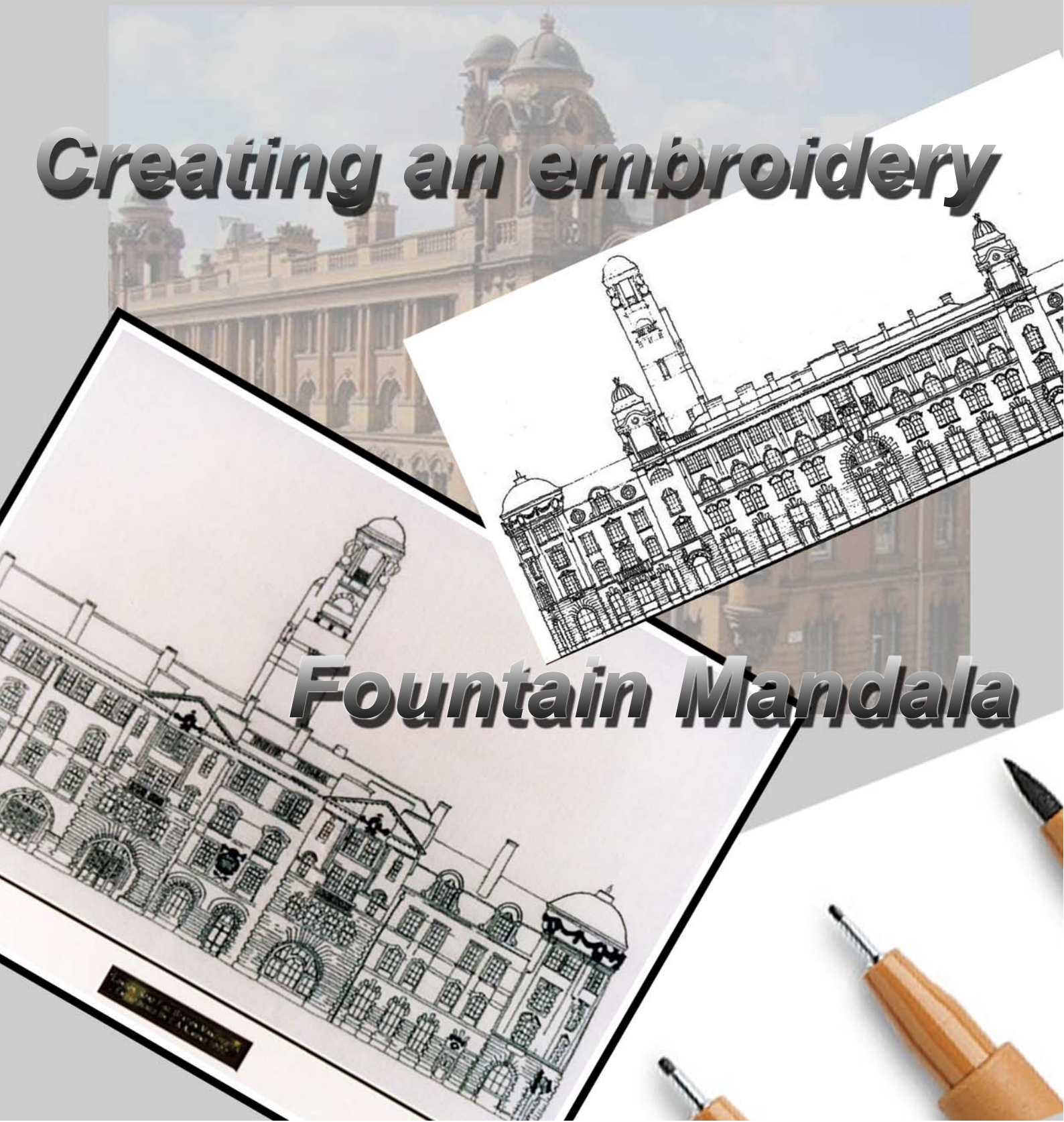




Blackwork Journey Blog

February 2011

Creating an embroidery



Fountain Mandala

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This year has started badly for some of my readers, with extensive swine flu in the UK and serious flooding in Southern Australia and so my thoughts go out to all those affected.

As many of you know, I stitch and dispatch embroideries worldwide for various magazines and last year, the publication of some of them was held up by the ash cloud which hung over Europe for weeks and this year, it was the potential effects of the flooding in Australia and I had visions of one of my embroideries floating down a river being chased by a crocodile and so I was greatly relieved when it arrived safely, if very overdue!

This month, I want to talk about interpreting black work sketches into embroidery.

A fellow embroiderer named Helen, e-mailed me to ask how she could embroider some black and white sketches. She had been concerned about the lack of contemporary blackwork designs, but found an amazing slide show of blackwork sketches which she downloaded to a file on her computer.

<http://www.nytimes.com/>

Sketch into blackwork embroidery

This question reminded me of a piece of embroidery that I completed in 1992 using just such a technique when I embroidered the old Edwardian Fire Station in Manchester, UK and later presented it to them at their new station as a reminder of their heritage.

I did a lot of research on the old building before deciding what approach I would take.



London Road Fire Station, Manchester, England



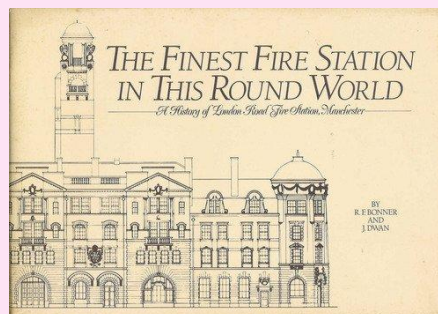
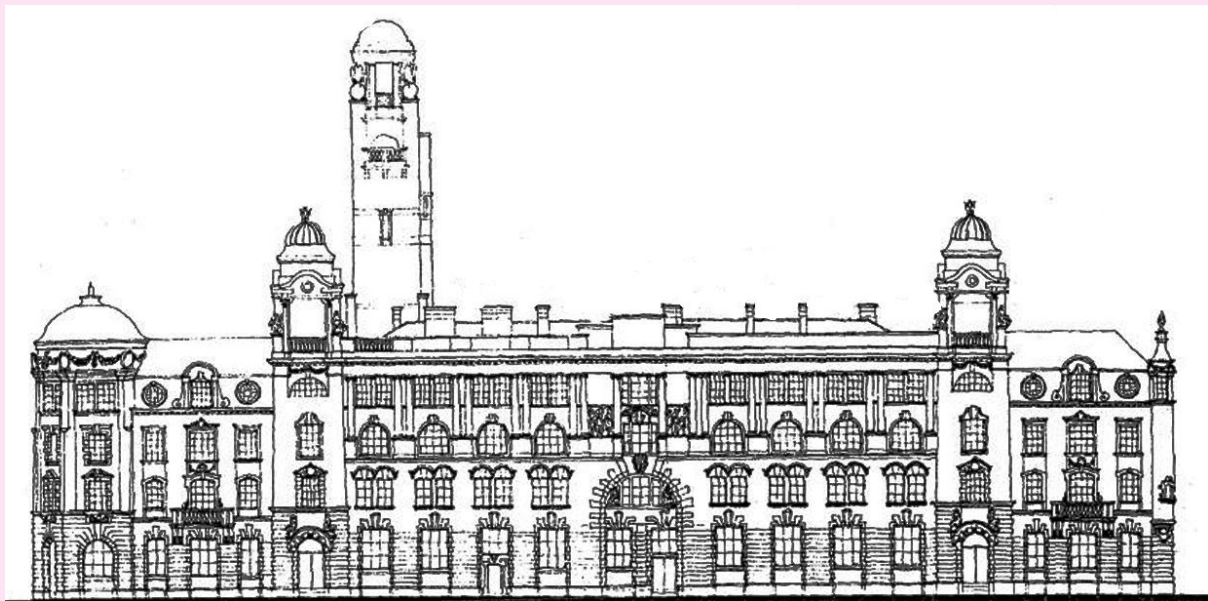
Crest – pen and ink sketch



This is how I went about creating it...

I started by finding a drawing of the building and enlarging it to a suitable size by the use of a photocopier.

I then identified the main lines and drew them to form the basic outline of the building using a pencil (sharp HB) or water soluble pen.



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I then traced the remainder of the design onto the fine evenweave linen.

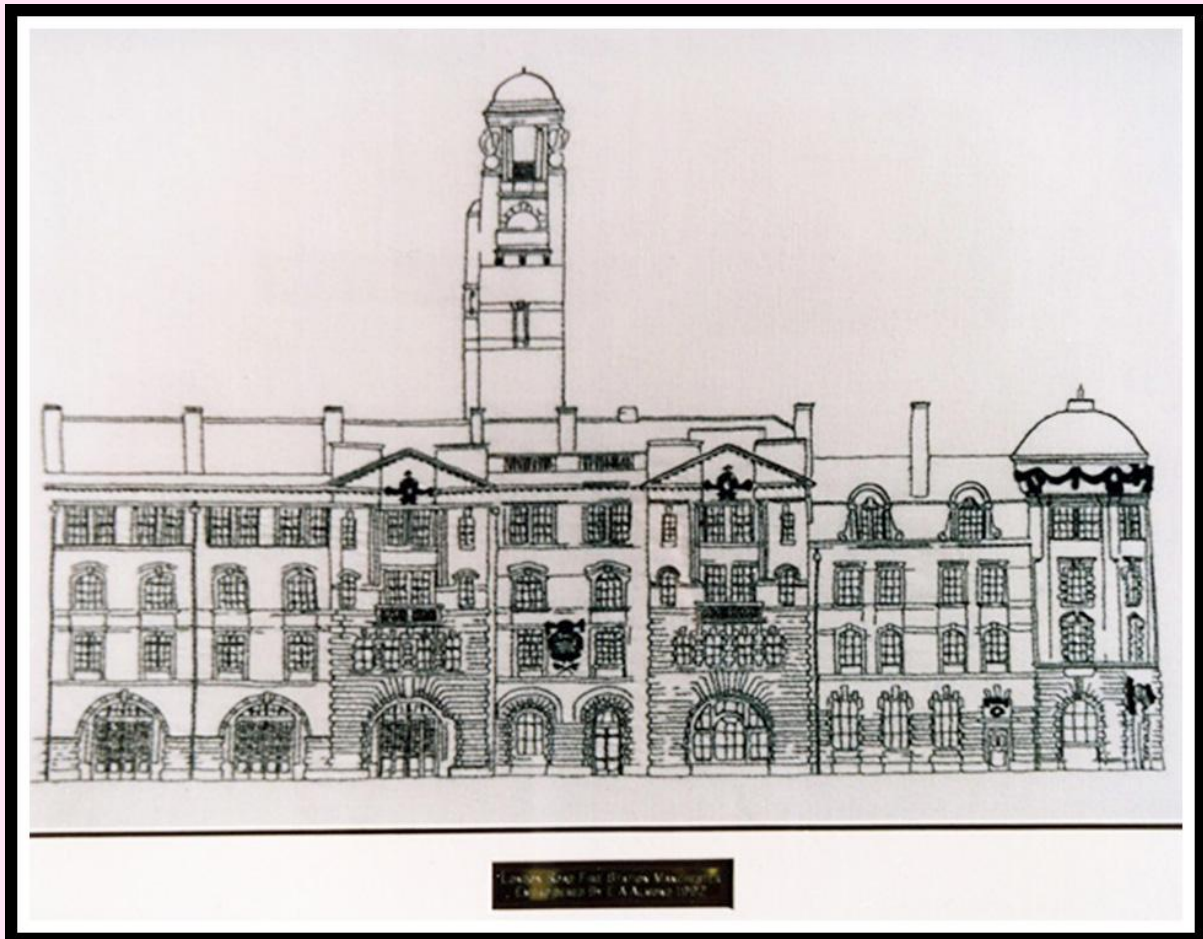
If you want to work your design on a counted thread fabric, I suggest 28 count evenweave. Remember, this is a freehand design. What you see is what you stitch!

I used a lightbox to help me trace my designs. This is helpful, especially if you want to work on a thicker material to make certain that you can see through it clearly. Try to avoid textured fabrics, as they detract from the stitching and are difficult to stitch evenly.

Make certain you can see all the main details before you remove the material from the lightbox.

Back stitch and back stitch whipped were the main stitches of my choice, but stem stitch was also useful for stronger design outlines.

I used one strand of DMC 310 and backstitch to outline the main features. If you want a heavier effect, whip the back stitch or use two strands of cotton.



Finished embroidery was mounted in a polished wood frame with a brass plaque!

Once the main details were done, I filled in all the minor details using one strand for a lighter effect. Sewing cotton is even finer for delicate details.

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French knots, embroidery stitches or beads were then added, as appropriate. These were ideal for this technique as they created texture.

Remember, that the closer the stitches, the denser will be the appearance of the design.

Not: this is an embroidery, not a counted thread technique

If you have difficulty seeing pencil, use a blue water-soluble pen, BUT test it first on a scrap of the material to make sure the blue comes out. If you don't have a proper lightbox, then I suggest a sheet of Perspex placed between two chairs with an angle poise lamp pointing upwards from below. It works and is cheaper than purchasing a proper light box.

Little did I know that I would be using this embroidery in my own website ten years on! My photography has improved somewhat since I did the embroidery. If I was recreating the embroidery now I would have taken photographs at all the different stages. I did name and date the piece which is important for future reference.

Creating your own embroidery

If you find a drawing that you like, just follow the same method that I have outlined above. Children's colouring books are a very good source of simple outline sketches, but newspapers often provide good black and white images or, use your own photographs. The more you look for black and white images, the more you will see. It is great fun to embroider and involves very little counting. Send me a jpg of your finished embroidery and I will be pleased to put it into the "Readers Gallery".



CH0207 Fountain Mandala by Carole

Fountain Mandala by Elizabeth Almond



This month we present part two of this wonderful mandala project. This includes the central portion of the design inclosed by the dark green and black border.

Please see Issue 53 for general stitching instructions.

Stitches Used: Cross stitch, backstitch and Algerian Eyelets. See the last page of this issue for stitch diagrams.

1. Diamond and Square Fram

- a) Work backstitches with one ply of DMC 310.
- b) Complete the Algerian Eyelets inside the square frame with PB01. Attach a gold bead at each end of these eyelets rows.
- c) Work the four large square Algerian Eyelets with two plies of DMC 3755.

2. Corner Flowers

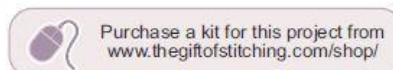
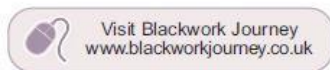
- a) Backstitch the flower stems with one ply of DMC 163.
- b) Attach a gold bead in the centre of each flower (four to a group).

3. The Jali

The delicate screen around the fountain is called a Jali. Work this in backstitch with one ply of DMC 614. Pull the stitches slightly to create a slight pulled thread affect.

4. Fountain

- a) Backstitch the water with PB 04 (silver).
- b) Backstitch the fountain and the surrounding base with one ply of DMC 310.



Seeing designs that other people have stitched is a real pleasure for me, especially when they alter the colour schemes, or add little extras. My charts are only a starting point for you to interpret in your own way. Altering and adding, removing or adjusting can make a design unique to you. It takes a little skill and some confidence to move from charted designs to creating your own work, but can be really satisfying.

Finally, congratulations to Carole for embroidering my "Fountain Mandala" design which is in my "What's New" section this month. The design was also published in The Gift of Stitching magazine. Carole's interpretation is delightful and is also in "Readers Gallery".

Happy stitching,

Liz