

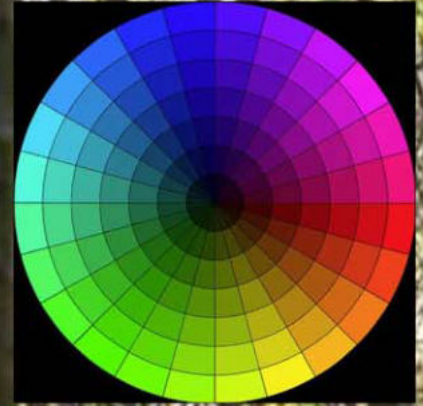


Blackwork Journey Blog

April 2023

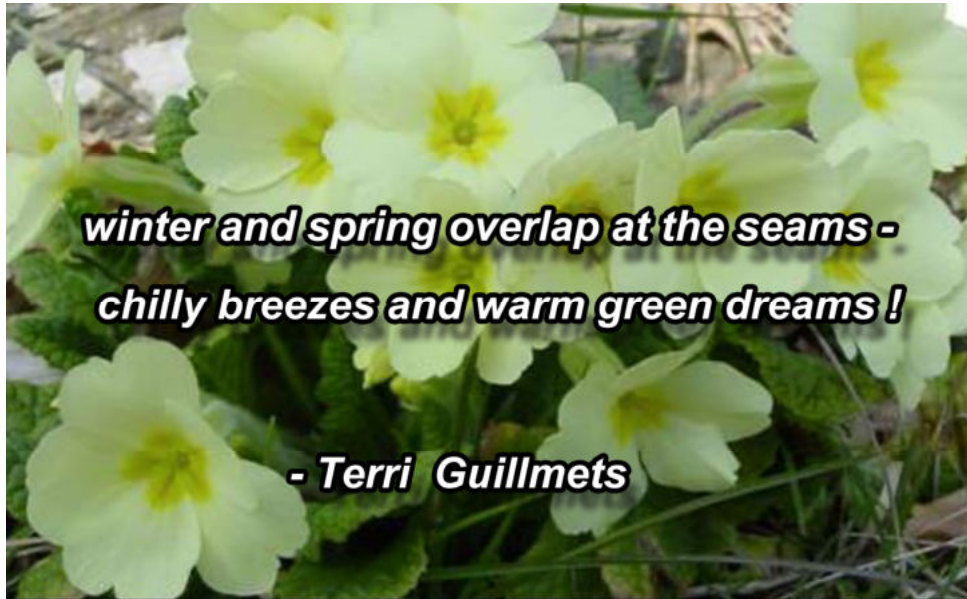


Blackwork Journey Cool Cream E - Book EB0027



6 Free style designs to explore!





April – a month of hope and inspiration and changing tastes!

In England, the winter has been slow to lose its grip with late snow, high winds and rainy days so any signs of Spring have been welcome. The tawny owls are nesting in the owl house and have two eggs, the daffodils are just beginning to bloom and clumps of bluebells and primroses can be seen in gardens and woodlands.

Talks and workshops are occupying my mind and packing kits has helped to pass the days when venturing out in the cold and wind does not appeal. This is the time when I have time to think through new projects and ideas for Blackwork Journey and plan new projects for classes. Blackwork Journey is now over 15 years old and I still have more ideas than I will ever have time to stitch!

It is interesting to look back over the past 45 years of teaching embroidery to see how ideas and tastes have changed. I only have to look back through my own work to see how my ideas have developed. Patterns that I would have worked joyfully 40 years ago would not interest me now. There are new threads, techniques and materials to explore which were just not available in the past and the internet did not impact on my life at all.

Now I could not exist without the internet and the ability to reach out to readers worldwide, to dispatch charts anywhere in the world at the click of a button and “talk” to readers through Zoom and Teams. Contact with family far away in California is made so much easier, unlike my childhood when we waited for letters from my father serving far away in the Royal Navy. His letters and postcards opened up a world I never thought I would see. Sir David Attenborough was my idol and I watched his programmes avidly.

Over the years I have travelled and taught in many countries, explored new situations and made many friends. We all share different experiences, but the common thread has been a love of embroidery. This is reflected in the patterns stitched and shared, prizes won in county shows from the UK, to the USA and Canada and Australia.

Basic needs!

Techniques come into prominence and then decline as new ideas take hold, but there is always a fundamental need for a basic knowledge of practical stitches. It is very easy to be carried away by printing and dying, cutting and shredding and all the other mixed media that is now part of our lives, but without the basics the final result may be disappointing.

Textile students passing through our colleges and universities should, in my opinion, have an understanding of basic needlework skills, how patterns are constructed and the stitches used to create the final piece whether it is a hanging for a show or a garment for the catwalk. I also think this applies to us as embroiderers.

Learning a few different stitches opens up new horizons. For example, looking at techniques such as quilting, slow stitching and Japanese boro and applying them to our own lives is enjoyable and cost effective. Reuse and recycle has never been more popular and it reduces landfill and waste.

Modern youngsters are very innovative and adapt more easily to change than perhaps we do. A cheap tee shirt from an outlet store can be personalised, printed and stitched on the make something unique at minimum cost. Being more flexible with the threads we use and not being frightened to explore how we use them led to a new e-book, EB0027 “Cool Cream” which will be added to the site on April 1st.

I designed a piece recently for a “Calico Gardens” workshop in Liverpool where I wanted the emphasis to be on textured stitches. I looked through my stash of threads and selected all the beige and cream ones ranging from crochet cottons to floss cotton a broder and cotton p rle. Different size needles are needed to accommodate the different thicknesses of threads.

I drew a simple outline onto pre-washed calico, selected a thread and stitched whatever came into my head just letting the pattern develop. Once the basic lines were stitched I looked at the layout and added more and more until I was satisfied.

However, I got rather carried away and there are six designs in the e-book to explore.

I found it very restful to stitch and not have to count stitches but I would recommend that all new stitches are tried out first on a spare piece of fabric. I was introduced to the idea of a doodle cloth by Maureen in Canada and I now encourage everyone to have their own ‘doodle cloth’.

EB0027 “Cool Cream” – Explore six freestyle embroideries

Trace the designs, select the stitches and threads and enjoy!





One idea often leads to another!



Brenda's Suffolk puff patchwork quilt gave me the idea of taking the patchwork technique into the calico embroideries.

Suffolk puffs have been used very successfully in EB0027 "Cool Cream".



Extract from Design 2 "Calico Cream" showing some of the threads and stitches used.

Using colour and a colour wheel

Understanding how colours work together is an art. We all have colours that we enjoy working with and other colour combinations which are a challenge.

Working in a limited colour palette is more difficult especially when the colours are pale as in “Cool Cream”. A touch of pink or yellow can lift the design, but the emphasis should be on the texture and the lights and shades created by the stitches.

Using a colour wheel with actual samples of thread can help when choosing which threads to use. Thread charts can also be downloaded from the internet, but they are not always quite as accurate as having the actual floss.

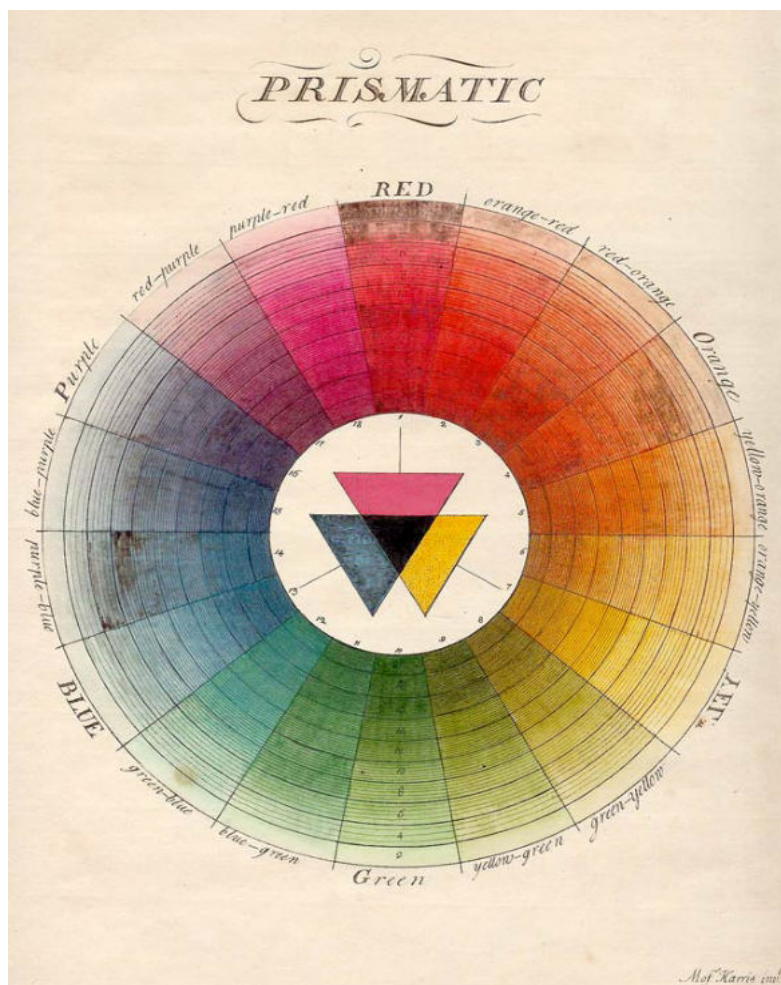
What is a colour wheel?

A colour wheel is a circular chart, which features the primary colours (red, blue and yellow) on three axes. In between these are secondary and tertiary colours.

Colour wheel templates are used to demonstrate the relationships between different colours, highlight how colours develop and show how colours can be manipulated.

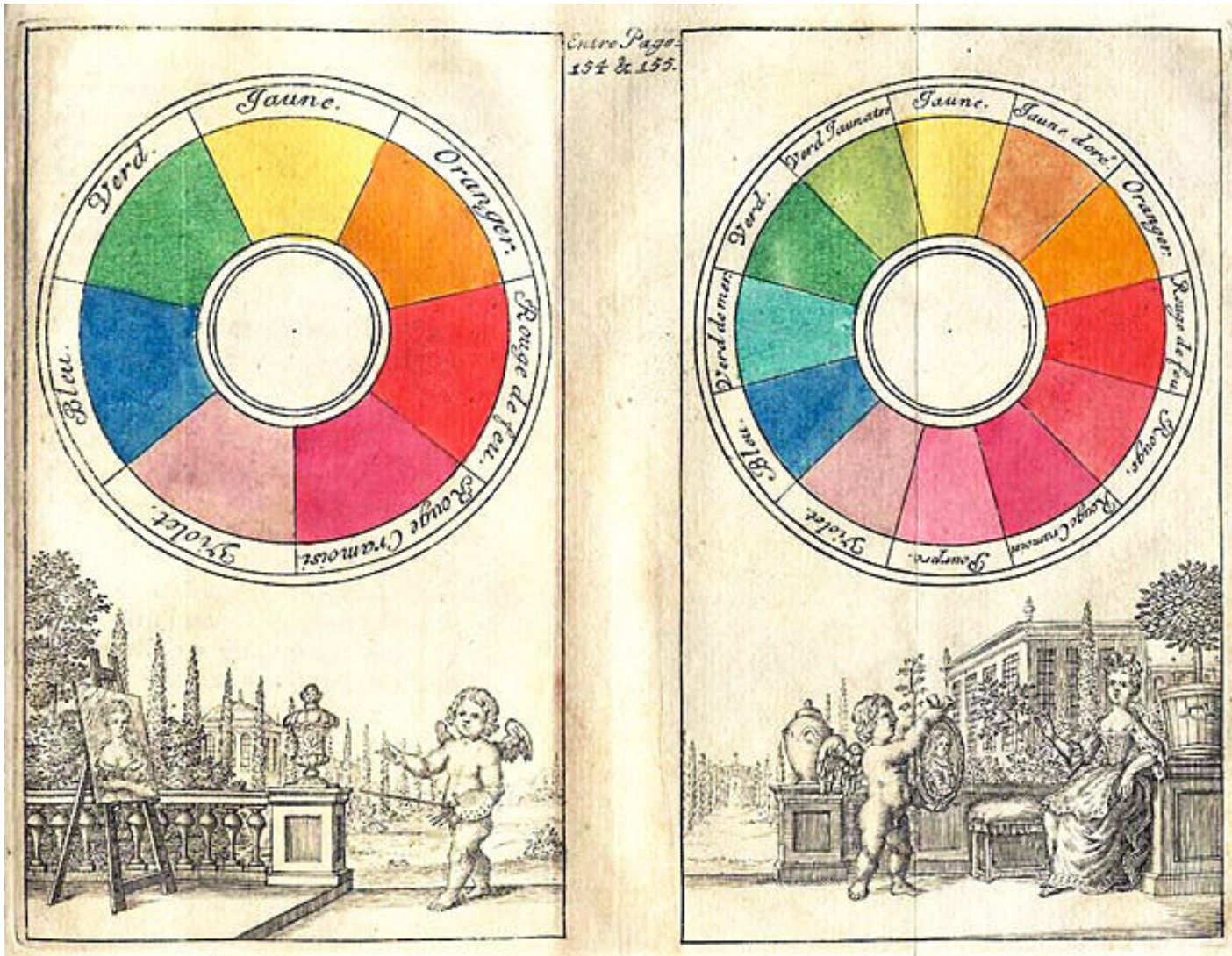
The colour wheel was invented in 1666 by Sir Isaac Newton, who mapped the colour spectrum onto a circle. The colour wheel is the basis of colour theory, because it shows the relationship between colours.

Newton’s colour wheel has 12 colours. Over the years, scientists and artists have made improvements to make the colour wheel look like it does today.



I have two favourite old colour wheels, the first by Moses Harris, “The Natural System of Colours” (1776) and the second by Claude Boutet's 7-colour and 12-colour colour circles 1708 (Source: *Traité de la peinture en miniature* (The Hague, 1708), reproduced in *The Creation of Colour in Eighteenth-Century Europe*).

Moses Harris, The Natural System of Colours (1776)



Claude Boutet's colour wheel with its cherubs is delightful.

However, a modern colour wheel is an asset to anyone who may struggle when choosing threads. It helps to see which colours mix well with others and which ones do not.

Colours send a message – cool colours, blue, grey, green and purple are restful. Brighter colours such as reds, oranges and yellows convey warmth, whereas blacks and brown are more sombre and elegant. What colours appeal to one person may not appeal to another but an understanding of how they relate is helpful.

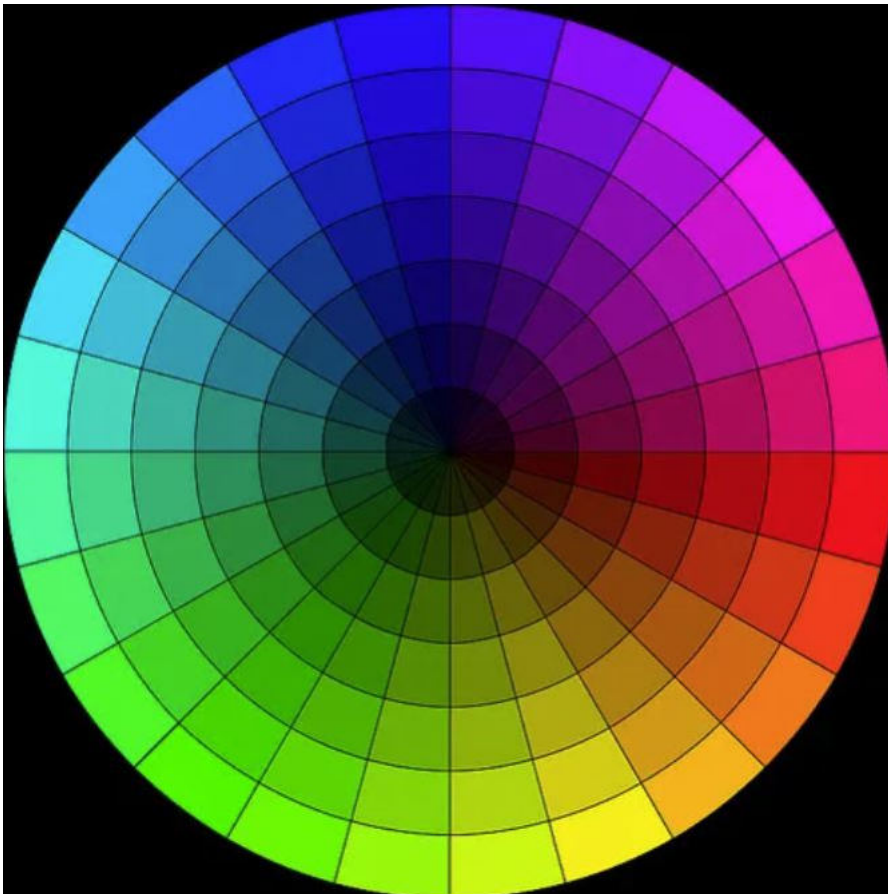
Primary colours

There are three primary colours: red, blue and yellow. They cannot be made by mixing other colours and are known as the basic colours because they are the base for other colours.

On the colour wheel the secondary colours are located between the two primary colours. These are the building blocks for all the other colours on the colour wheel.

Secondary colours

These colours are made by mixing the primary colours. The three secondary colours are green, orange and purple. Green is made by mixing blue and yellow. Orange is made by mixing red and yellow and purple is created by mixing red and blue.



Tertiary colours

Yellow – orange, red - orange, red – purple, blue – purple, blue – green and yellow – green are the tertiary colours. These colours are created by mixing a primary colour with a secondary colour.

Tertiary colours are also called intermediate colours and on the colour wheel they are located between the primary and the secondary colours.

Compare the DMC floss chart to the colour wheel and you begin to see how they relate.



More new designs for April

Japanese Kogin embroidery is gaining in popularity and there have been number of requests for small Kogin samplers both from people who are new to the technique and from experienced embroiderers who want to use it for gifts.



CH0432 “Applefest” which was published in February has been used to raise money for several different charities and is also being used with some children’s groups in Canada. Each apple is suitable for a card



Cards stitched by Karen Roy for her women’s charity in Montreal, Canada.



Congratulations Karen!

There are a number of charts already online in “Charts” and “Projects” but small samplers are always useful,

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so this month I have included **PR0075 “Kogin Mini Samplers”** in “Projects” featuring three different samplers.



PR0075 “Kogin Mini Samplers”

I hope you have enjoyed this month’s Blog. If you have any queries please contact:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching!

Liz