



Blackwork Journey Inspirations Thailand



Blackwork Journey – Inspirations

THAILAND

Thailand, officially the Kingdom of Thailand is a country in Southeast Asia with coasts on the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. It borders Myanmar (Burma) to the northwest, Laos to the northeast, Cambodia to the southeast and Malaysia to the south.

With a tropical climate, fascinating culture, majestic mountains and beaches, Thailand is a magnet for travellers across the world.

Having travelled from from the bustling, frantic capital of Bangkok to Ayutthaya — a historical city, UNESCO World Heritage site and old capital of Siam and on to Chaing Mai, the heart of Lanna culture and on to Chiang Rai, the gateway to the Golden Triangle, I found it all a great source of inspiration.

Decoration everywhere in every medium from paintings to broken pottery on temples and fish in a market!



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Buddhas in all shapes and sizes provide inspiration for the future!



I wanted to create a lasting memory of my visit this country in my embroideries and initially, I looked at all the different statues sited both inside and outside the temples. Some of the buddhas were standing, others reclining, but all were different.

The faces ranged from serene to stern, their figures from slender to fat and whilst I appreciated their appeal and sketched a number, it was not until I

saw Wat Ratchanaddaram that I found my true inspiration!

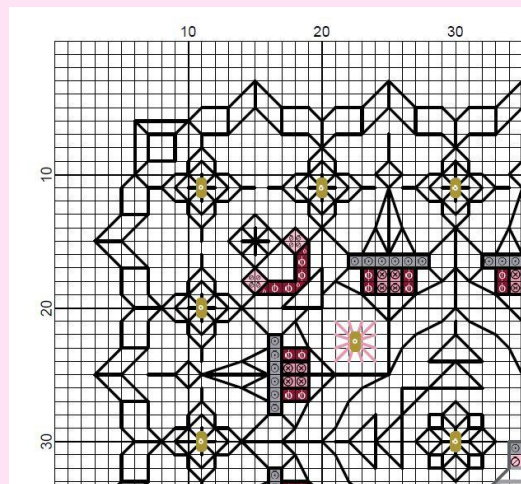
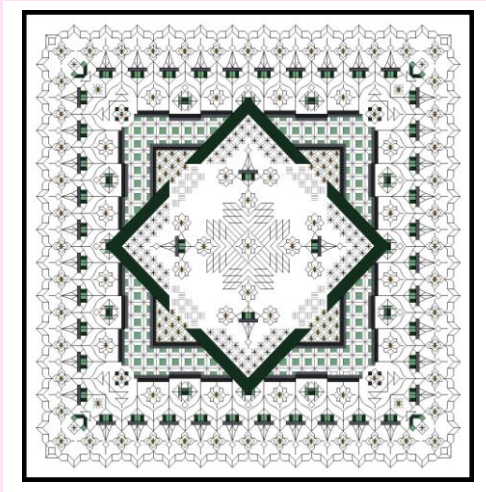
There are more than 400 wats (or temples) around Bangkok and whilst everyone rushes to three most famous ones: Wat Pra Kaew, Wat Arun and Wat Pho, my favourite was the “Metal Temple” Wat Ratchanaddaram.

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The main structure is made of iron in the style of former temples in India and Sri Lanka and is claimed to be the only remaining such structure. The numerous spires and the ornate decoration around them led to the centre point of my Red Thai Mandala design. The borders were added after the centre was designed and the outer border imitates the spires on the temple roof.



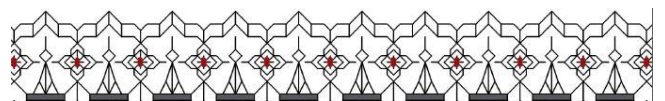
CH0220 Red Thai Mandala CH0221 Green Thai Mandala



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The design was published in 'The Gift of Stitching' March 2011. The chart can be found in the Charts section of Blackwork Journey.



From Inspiration to Design by Elizabeth Almond from Blackwork Journey

Creating a new design can be a challenge, but sometimes an idea just presents itself from which a design can develop naturally. This happened during my journey to Thailand in 2010, when I became fascinated by the country's amazing architecture.

The Wat or temple is the main religious building in Thailand and is often found in the centre of a compound surrounded by other buildings.

Two particular sites in Bangkok captured my imagination. Firstly, the Wat Ratchanaddaram Worawihan which is constructed in a traditional Thai style with the central spire some 36 metres above ground level. It is the only metal roofed Buddhist temple remaining in the world and is surrounded by 37 smaller spires, representing the number of chapters of Dharma in Buddhism.

The second site was the Phra Si Rattana Chedi at the Grand Palace. It is a high domed edifice under which a relic of Buddha is buried.

It was the fascinating silhouettes of these two magnificent structures that provided me with the inspiration for my Thai Mandala design.

I started by experimenting with two groups of colours (green and reds) and worked charts in both, but decided that the red was more representative of the colours found in many of the temples.



The centre was worked first to check the proportions of the designs and then the wide border was added.

Symbolism plays an important part in this embroidery. The border represents the black metal decoration on the Wat Ratchanadda Worawihan, whilst the lotus flowers chart the progress of the soul from the mud in which they grow through to enlightenment. The triangular centre of the mandala with its white lotus is the focal point of the mandala.

I hope you enjoy working my interpretation of Thai Mandala as much as I have enjoyed designing it.



Wat Ratchanadda Worawihan, Bangkok



Phra Si Rattana Chedi, Grand Palace, Bangkok

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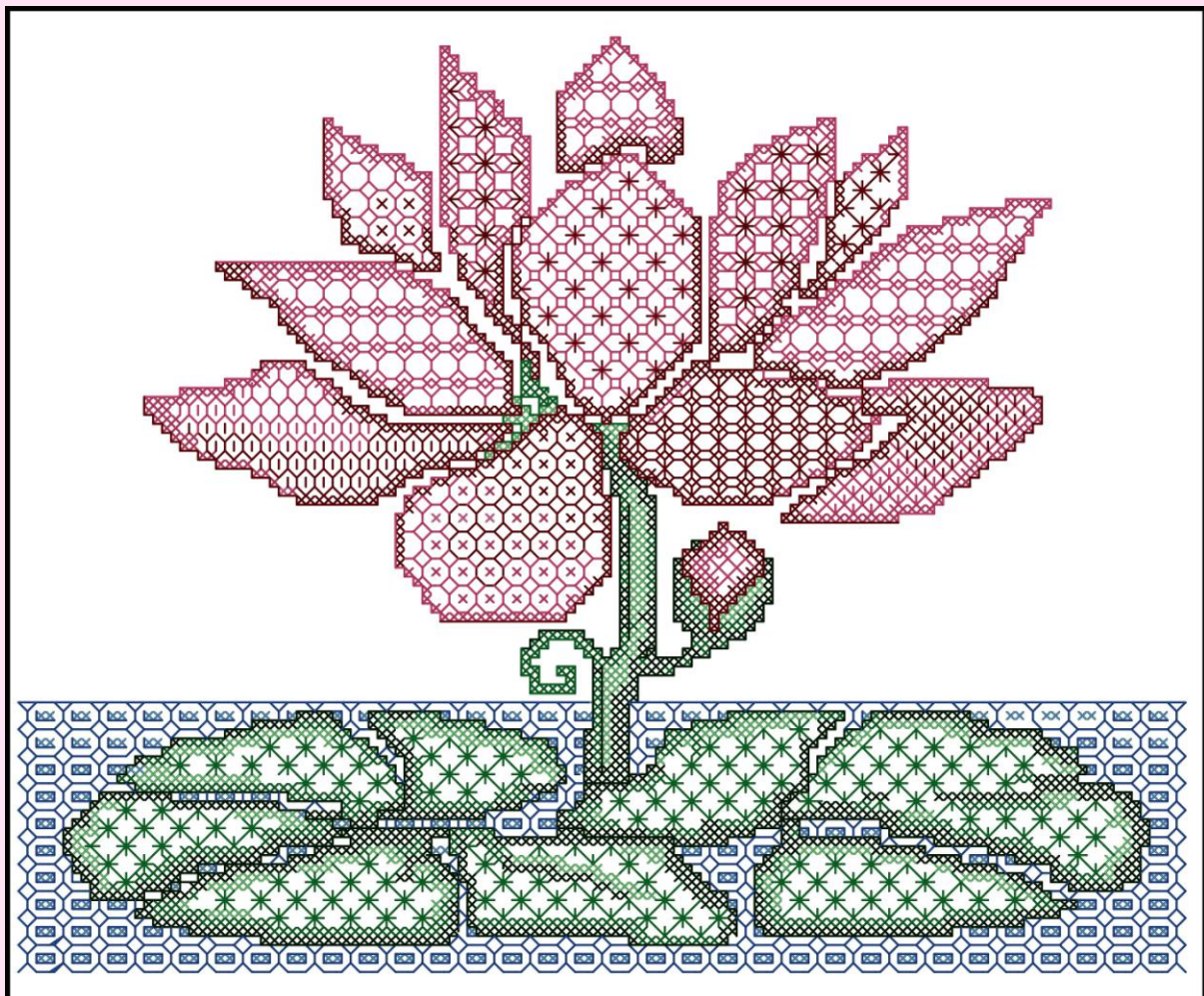
“Metal Temple” Wat Ratchanaddara

Tropical flowers, vivid colours and striking architecture assailed the senses along with the unique smells and tastes, from pineapples picked fresh from the fields, to incense burning in the wats (temples).

In the lakes and ponds, water lilies bloomed in profusion and ‘Thai Lotus’ was designed.

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The lotus has been a symbol of purity since before the time of the Buddha and it blooms profusely in Buddhist art and literature. Its roots are in muddy water, but the lotus flower rises above the mud to bloom, clean and fragrant.



CH0187 Thai Lotus

My overwhelming impression was of the beauty of the country, the gentleness of the people and the significance of religion in their daily lives and I have tried to reflect this in my designs and embroideries.

Liz