



Blackwork Journey Blog

November 2014

Blank spaces

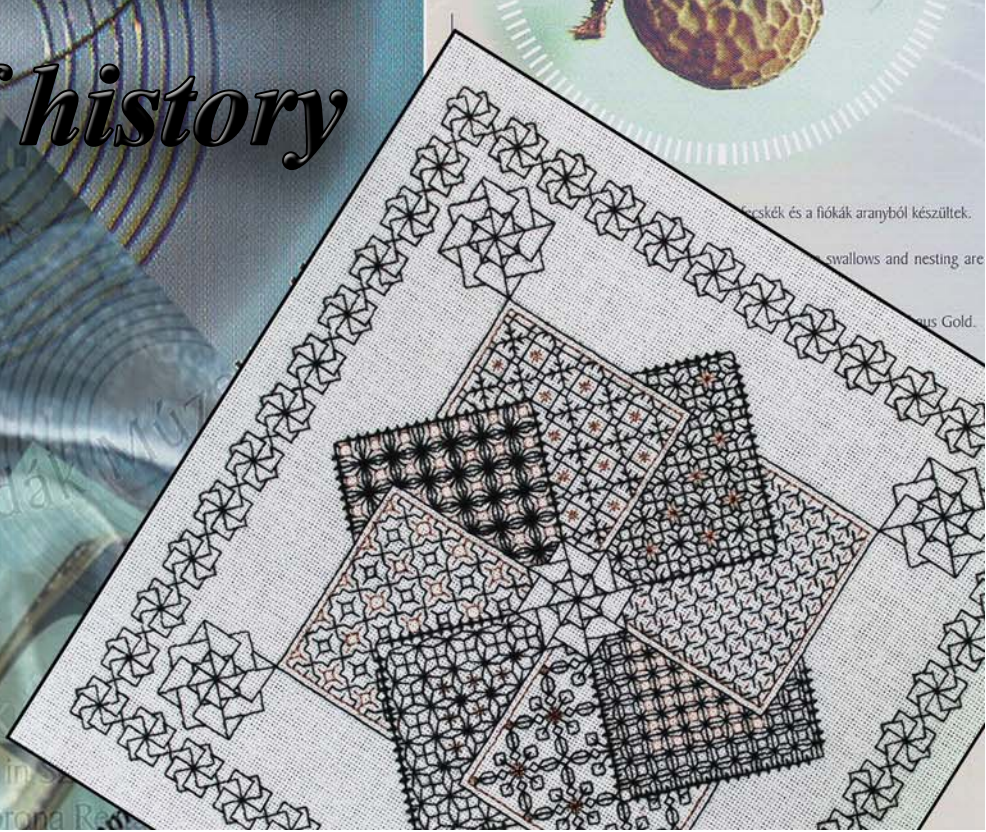
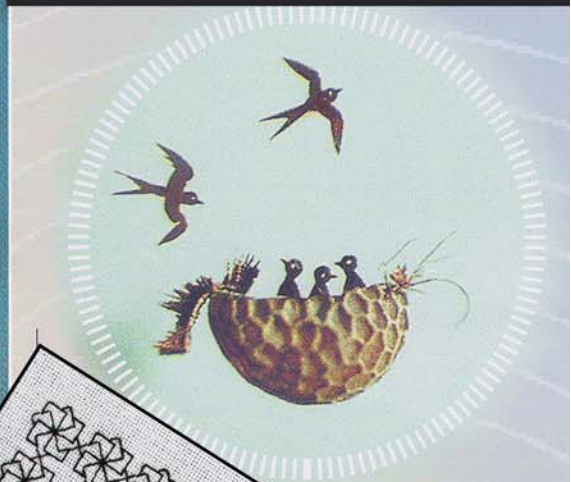
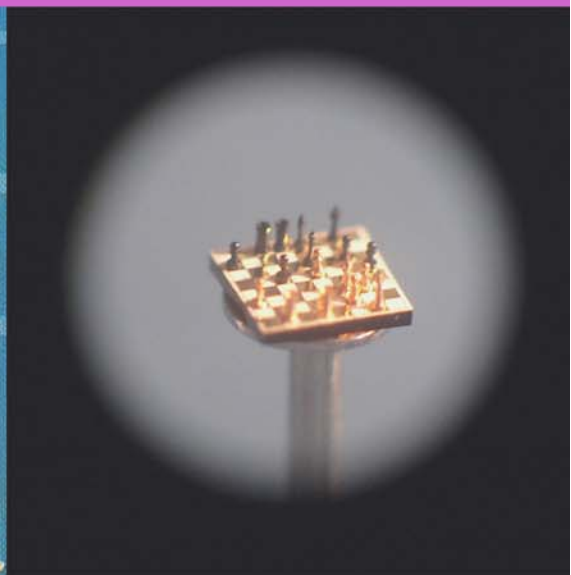
New 'Techniques'

Fabric count

Micro Art

'Save the Stitches'

A touch of history



Die kleinste Gold Kunstwerke
Platz am erste Stockwerk im Korona Res

Teaching in Canada!

The Blog for November is a little shorter than usual because I have spent the month of October travelling in the USA and teaching in Canada and didn't return to England until November 6th.

I have met many amazing embroiderers in my month away and visited a number of groups to talk, teach and share experiences. It has been a wonderful period and once I have time to sort through the numerous photographs and collect my thoughts I will share my adventures with you, but can I take this opportunity to thank all the special people who shared their homes with my husband and myself and made us so welcome wherever we went!

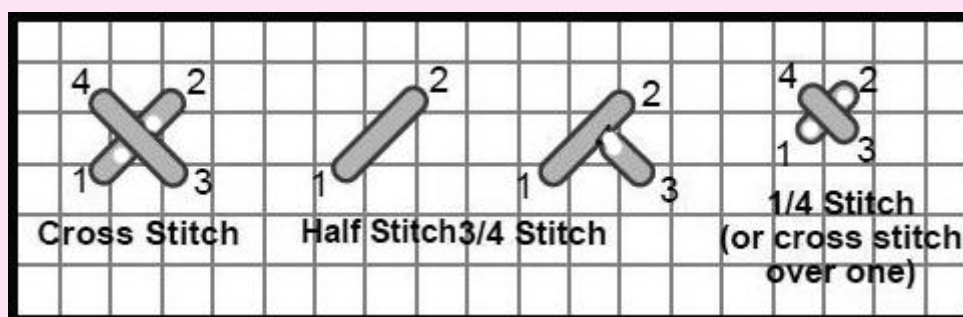
Thank you one and all!

How do I fill in the edges if there is blank space?

This question has arisen from the 'Save the Stitches' project and from the freestyle designs in Blackwork Journey and whilst this is a simple question to ask, it can be quite complicated to resolve. However, it involves using part stitches.

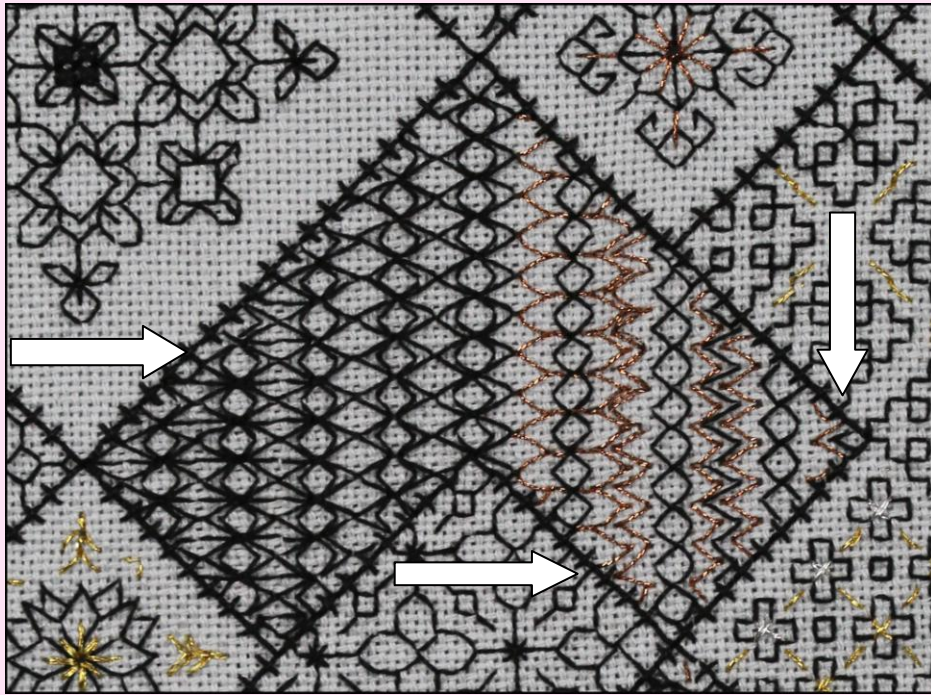
Plan of action

Firstly, look at the edges of the pattern involved. If it has cross stitch border as in 'Save the Stitches' take the filler pattern right up to the cross stitch. If there is a small gap which really needs to be filled, insert a half or quarter stitch following the direction of the pattern. Continuity is important!



Part stitches in cross stitch are worked in stages

In 'Save the Stitches' all the cross stitch frames interlock and there are no obvious gaps, but look closely at the arrows in the extract below from Block 19 and you can see where the part stitches have been added to complete the filler patterns which touch the cross stitch frame.



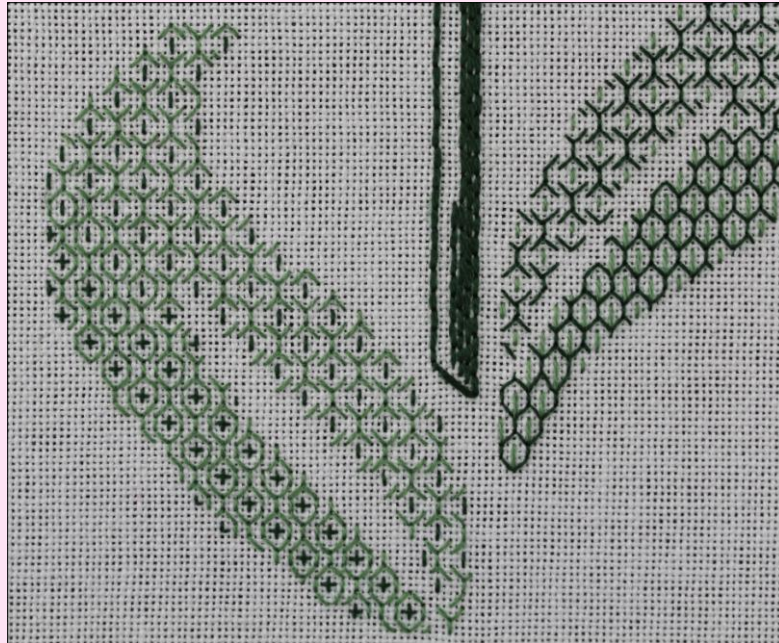
Extract from Block 19 showing where part stitches have been used

If the shape has a back stitch or double knotted edge, the same applies. Work the pattern as close to the outside line as possible and insert a half or quarter stitch to complete the design. No obvious gap should be visible because it will show up as an empty space when the pattern is completed.



Part stitches meet a back stitch border leaving no spaces but keeping the continuity of the pattern

However, when there is no defined outline, the positioning of stitches becomes more difficult. For example, in the embroidered leaves below there is no definite edge, therefore the stitches have to be taken as near to the drawn line as possible following the stitch direction and considering the pattern itself.



Extract from CH0325 'Duette'

The stitches must follow the shape exactly half stitches and even stitches over one thread to complete the outline as accurately as possible.

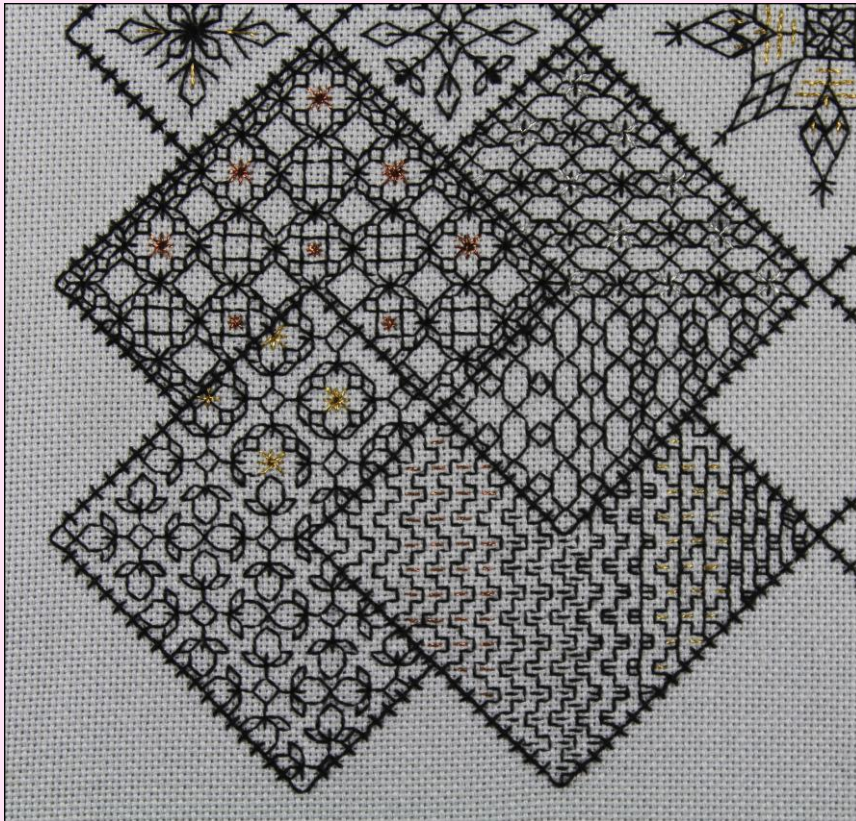
This is not easy to master, but by practice and looking closely at the design will show where the stitches should go and the direction in which they should lie. Take time to study the pattern and then follow it through and the blank spaces are soon filled.

'Save the Stitches' Blocks 20 and 21

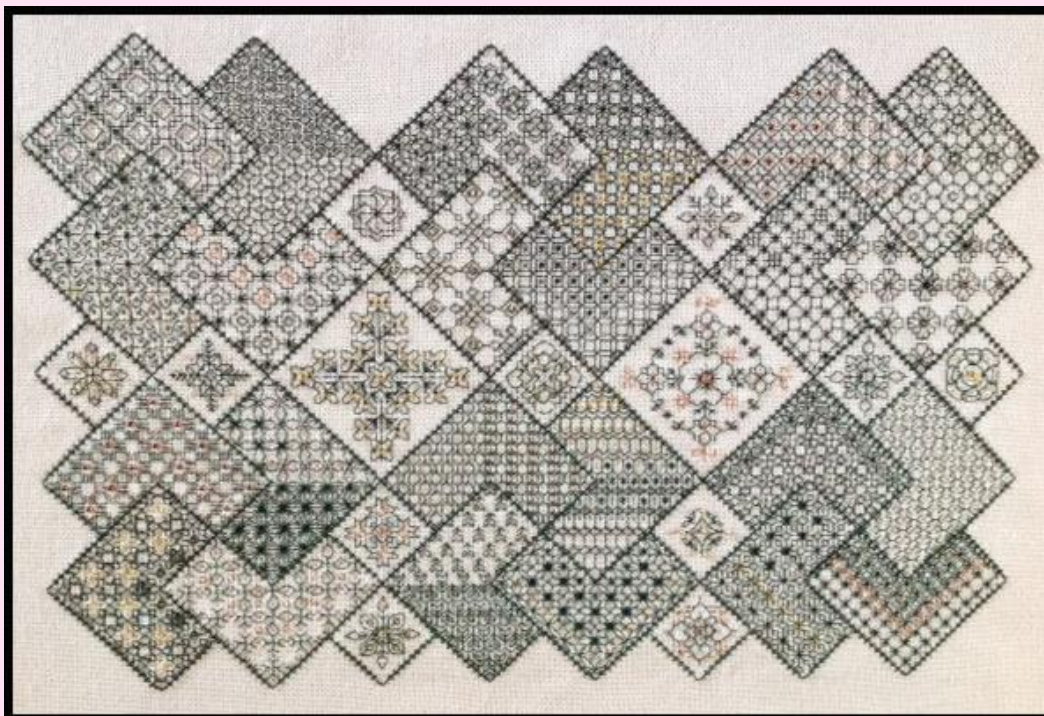
The end is in sight now with only three more blocks to embroider!



Block 20 goes the full width of the pattern. Select the motifs and use them for cards or gift tags.



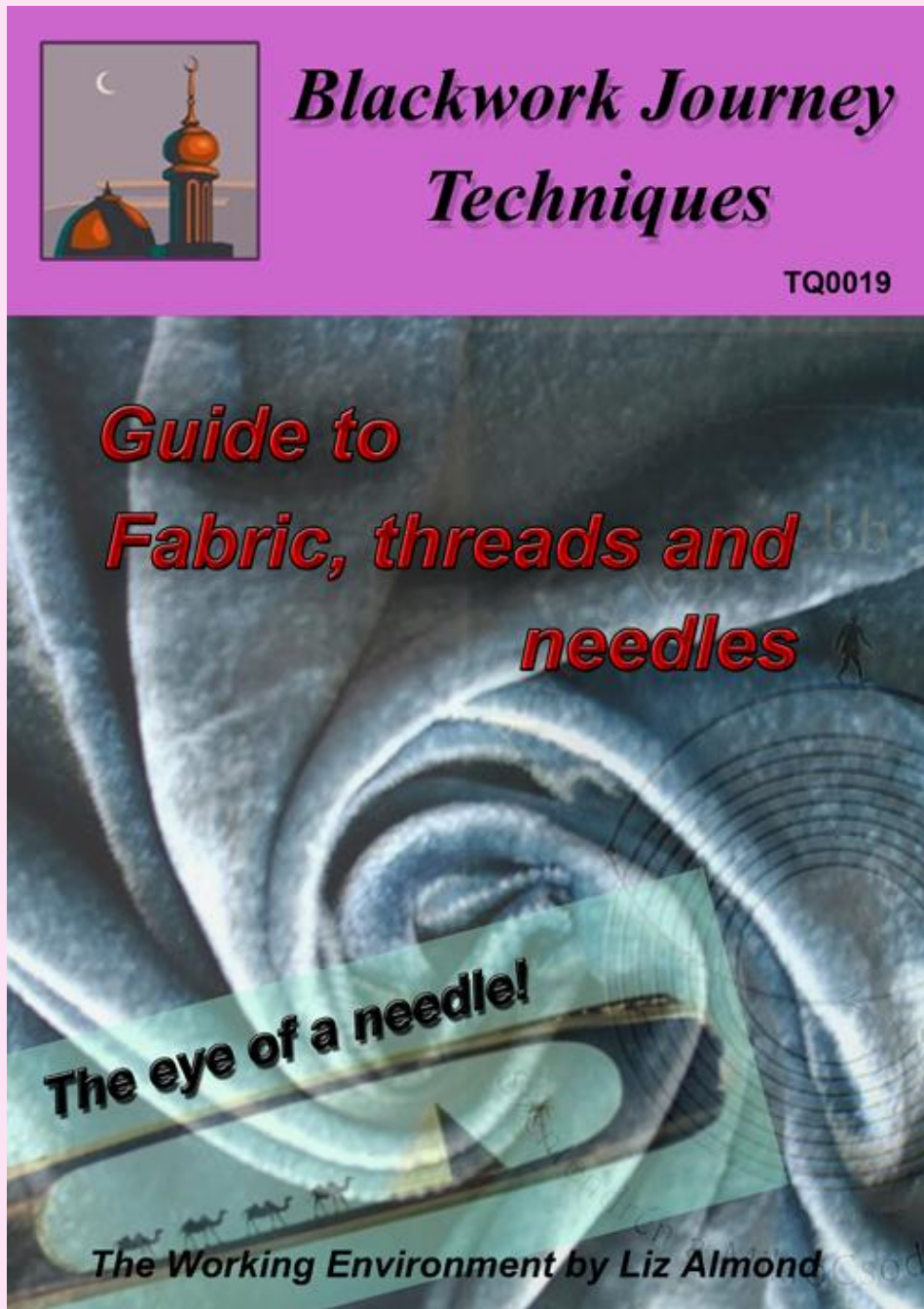
Block 21 contains some petite floral designs which can be used in many ways!



Gina from the Netherlands is making good progress on 'Save the Stitches'

TQ0019 Guide to fabric, threads and needles

One of the reasons why I have added another PDF to the Techniques section is that I am frequently asked about the Fabric Calculator and how I decide which count of fabric to use and how I work out what a fabric count is.



Choosing the right threads and needles for specific fabrics can be very confusing for someone new to needlework. I have attempted to simplify this process by listing the combinations I use most frequently.

I have also explained what the thread count of a fabric is and how to calculate the amount of material needed for a project by using a Fabric Calculator such as the one in Blackwork Journey.

A new 'Techniques' PDF has been added to enable you to make decisions about which fabric, threads and needles to use.

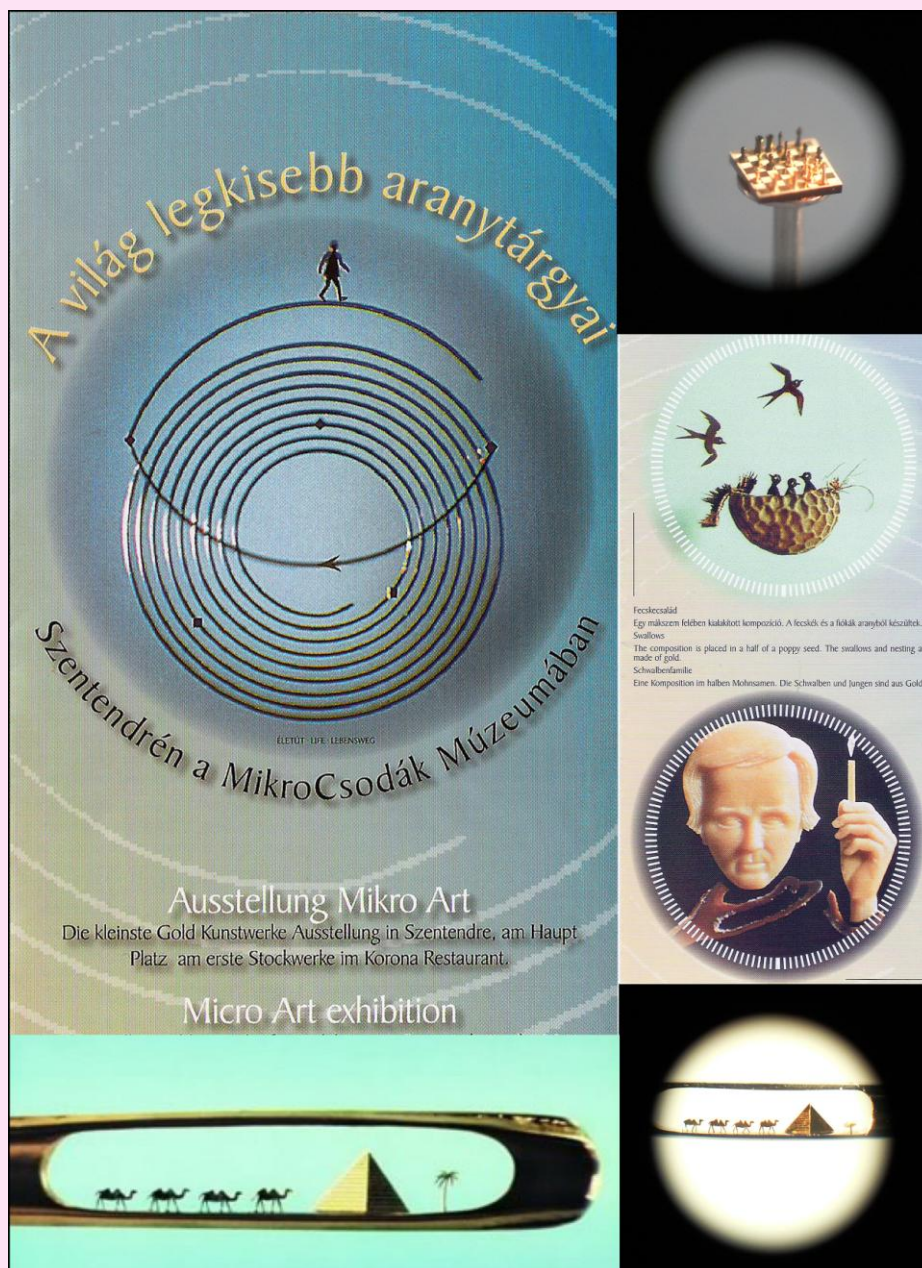
So what is the fabric count?

The fabric count is the number of threads within a specific area. If there are a lot of threads, holes or blocks of thread within a specific length, then the thread count will be high and the design worked on a higher count fabric will be smaller. If there are fewer thread counts in a specific length then the design will be larger.

Explore this topic further in the TQ0019 guide.

Whilst this PDF lists my personal comments, only by experience will you determine what tools and fabric you are most comfortable working with.

Micro Art Exhibition in Szentendere



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On my travels I have seen many wonderful things and visited many inspiring places, but the Micro Art Exhibition of Nikolai Syadrisky in the town of Szentendre, Pest, Hungary was particularly fascinating.

Most of the items on display had to be viewed through a microscope because of their extremely small size.

The gold chessboard was placed on the head of a pin. The swallows nest was placed in a half of a poppy seed and is made of gold, but for me the most fascinating item was the eye of the needle.

The picture of a needle's eye with camels walking towards a pyramid was taken through a microscope and gives a new meaning to the term 'through the eye of a needle' so when you complain that you can no longer see to thread a needle, give a thought to the work of Nikolai Syadrisky!

A touch of history!

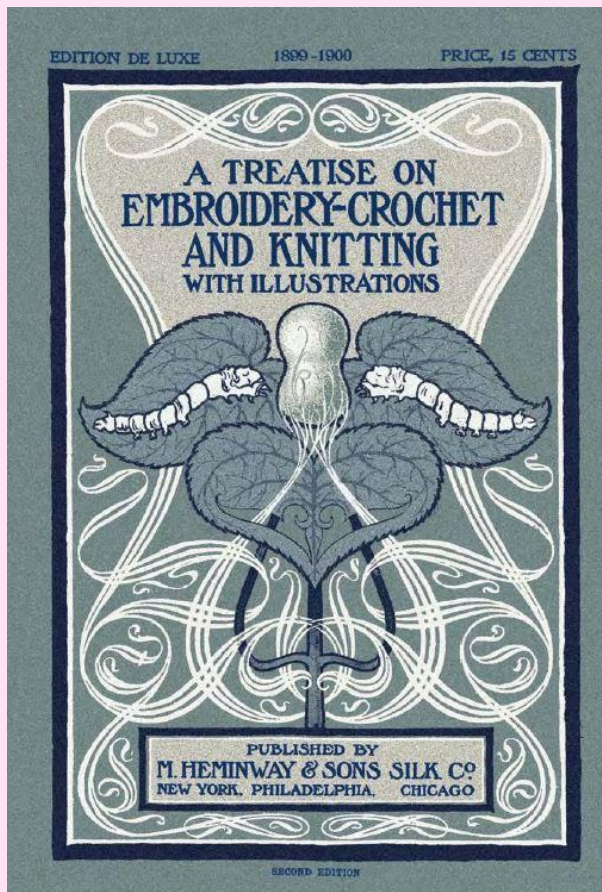
There are many interesting old needlework books and magazines to be found online which provide a valuable insight into the narrow world of gentlewomen in the 18th and 19th century and none more so than 'The Ladies Work-table Book' of 1844 and as a pattern designer for Blackwork Journey, I was especially interested in their views on pattern creators such as myself and their views on 'prick and pounce', a tried and trusted method of transferring designs to fabric.

**THE
LADIES'
WORK-TABLE BOOK;**
CONTAINING
CLEAR AND PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS
IN
PLAIN AND FANCY NEEDLEWORK,
EMBROIDERY, KNITTING, NETTING, AND CROCHET.
WITH NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS,
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE VARIOUS STITCHES IN THOSE USEFUL AND FASHIONABLE EMPLOYMENTS.
NEW-YORK:
J. WINCHESTER, 30 ANN-STREET

1844.

“PATTERNS.—This is a part of fancy needlework to which too much attention cannot be paid, but it is one much neglected. We want to see native genius developed and we are convinced that many a fair one could increase our stock of patterns, with new and surprising conceptions, if she could but be induced to make the trial. To draw patterns for embroidery or braid work, get a piece of cartridge paper, and having drawn out the design, trace it off upon tissue paper, or which is better, a tracing paper, properly prepared; after which you will find it easy to pierce it through with a piercer, taking care not to run one hole into another. Lay the paper so prepared upon the material which you intend to work, and dust it with a pounce bag, so that the powder may go through the holes; the paper must then be carefully removed, and if the material be dark, take a camel’s hair pencil, and paint the marks with a mixture of white lead and gum water; or if you prefer it, you can trace the marks left by the pounce, with a black-lead pencil, but the other methods are preferable. A little practice and perseverance will enable you to become tolerably proficient in this department, and confer upon you the further advantage of aiding you in acquiring those habits of untiring diligence, which are so essential to the attainment of any object. Ever recollect, that anything worth doing at all, is worth doing well.”

I use a computer to create many of my designs, but I still rough out the initial ideas on paper and play round with the shapes until I am satisfied before altering them using specialist designer software. The thought of spending hours with pencil and graph paper as I used to do when I first started designing fills me with horror, but there is real value in taking time to actually sketch out a design and think the development through before actually taking needle to fabric. Many errors can be avoided by being cautious in the planning stage of a project because as The Ladies’ work-table book stated;



“Ever recollect, that anything worth doing at all, is worth doing well.”

To read many more books and magazines visit:

<http://www.antiquepatternlibrary.org>

I hope you enjoy this month’s Blog.

Happy stitching!

Liz