



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

May 2018



*CREATIVITY!*



### Spring at last!



As I sit looking across the garden typing this blog in the middle of April, I can finally say that Spring has arrived although one month later than usual. It has been a long, wet and depressing winter. The hill farmers have had a dreadful winter with early lambing and trying to keep them alive in the water logged fields and all the plants and trees are late coming into bloom.



The tawny owls are nesting in the owl box at the front of our house and last night, a hedgehog snuffled its way across the garden having survived the winter. A spell of sunshine lifts the spirits and makes everyone happier.

As an aside to my comment about the tawny owls, the grey squirrel recently got too close to the owl nest and the tawny has just flown out and chased it off! She has been sitting in the tree just outside the bedroom window for the last two hours posing for us in the pouring rain! (See picture)

The weather is always a topic of conversation in England, but for me it was bought into sharp contrast with the dryness of Kenya and Abu Dhabi which we visited in February when I went out

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there to work with the ladies of the Nairobi Embroiderers Guild. We take water for granted and in our daily lives never think when we turn the tap on and pure, clean water flows out, so to see the slums where there is no regular water supply and limited sanitation really makes one stop and think.

However, in the midst of often very poor living conditions, crafts abound to a very high standard. I remember when we visited India walking across a rubbish dump to find two women sitting in the middle beading beautiful designs on cotton.

Using worn materials and recycling them is common in many parts of the world and in rural southern India. I have seen old Saris being stitched together with running stitches to make thin cushions and bedding. This form of embroidery is called Kantha and I remember seeing it at an exhibition years ago and being fascinated by its simplicity and practicality.

The traditional form of Kantha embroidery was done with soft dhotis and saris, with a simple running stitch along the edges. Depending on the use of the finished product they were known as Lepkantha or Sujni Kantha.



*The example shown in the pictures was bought into class by one of my ladies. Her mother had pieced the silk shawl together and stitched the lines. It is about seventy years old and is still as vibrant as when it was made*



The embroidered cloth has many uses including shawls, covers for mirrors, boxes and pillows. In some cases, the entire cloth is covered with running stitches, employing beautiful motifs of flowers, animals, birds and geometrical shapes, as well as themes from everyday activities. The stitching on the cloth gives it a slight wrinkled, wavy effect.

Contemporary Kantha is applied to a wider range of garments such as sarees, dupatta, shirts for men and women, bedding and other furnishing fabrics, mostly using cotton and silks.



**New publications:**

This month I am adding two new charts to Blackwork Journey.

**CH0374 Stitch Royal** is based on New Stitches with a floral border for the readers who have asked for a different border pattern

*CH0374 Stitch Royal*



The design was worked on 14 count Aida, but would work well on 25 count Lugana or Zweigart 28 count evenweave. To finish the embroidery as a table runner or hanger, I folded over the edges, tacked them and then worked two rows of back stitch round the edges. A cotton backing was added and a cloth sleeve to hang the piece if necessary.

When I stitched the floral border I was delighted when the final stitches met exactly where they were supposed to!

The second chart is **CH0375 Art Nouveau** designed to complement CH0372 Vintage Nouveau which was published in April. Both charts contain a combination of cross stitch, blackwork and pulled thread work stitches. It adds interest and texture to the designs. All instructions and photographs are there so if you are new to pulled thread work you can follow the design step by step.

*CH0372 Vintage Nouveau*





*CH0375 Art Nouveau*

### **Thai Guardian – Creating a project!**

At **'Inspirations'** in Blackwork Journey there are a selection of different topics about past projects. This month I have included **SP0010 Thai Guardian** which I started some months ago.

Architecture has always fascinated me, especially the temples of the Far East, including India and Thailand and I have long wanted to do a free style blackwork project incorporating some of the statues I have seen over the years. When I visited Thailand in 2015, I took a whole series of photographs of the Grand Palace in Bangkok and filed them thinking that one day I would create a piece based round some of the figures which decorated the Palace.

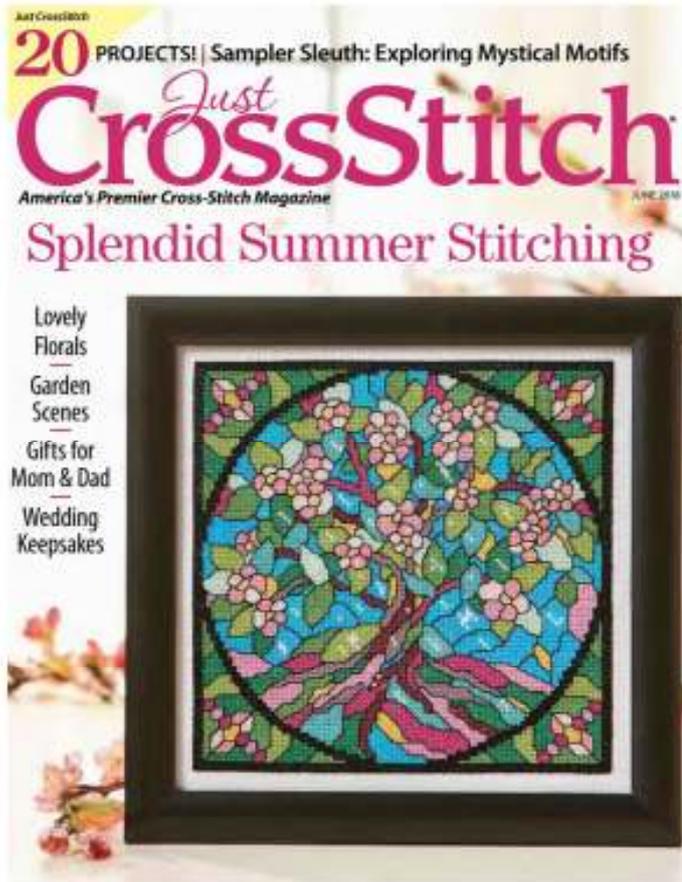


# ***Blackwork Journey Inspirations Thai Guardian***



If you want to follow my progress step by step all the details are included in **SP0010 Thai Guardian**

Just Cross Stitch June 2018  
Design: Summertime



### Creating your own unique heirloom

If you want to create your own heirloom and are not certain how to start, you can always talk it through with me first. Most things are possible if it is first thought through carefully.



*Matty's House*

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Matty in Wyoming lives in a Dutch Colonial style house and wanted to create a blackwork embroidery of her home. She sent me a photograph and I used it to draw an outline for her to use as the base for her design.

I made various suggestions about filler patterns, but suggested that she kept it simple by adding flowers, plants and grass in colour using textured coloured embroidery stitches.

Traditional embroidery stitches work well with blackwork, but in so many instances we have sometimes forgotten how to use these stitches to their best advantage. In “Thai Guardian” I thought through the effect that I wanted and stitched as I went along rather than planning it out in great detail like I usually do. I added, altered and embellished as I worked and this is fine if you have years of experience and a clear idea about how you want the finished design to look.

If you are new to creating your own design, random stitching is probably not the best way to progress.

Good planning is the key to success and careful thought beforehand saves a lot of unpicking later.

- a. First, think through what you want the design to be used for? It is going to be a hanging, a picture or...
- b. What kind of fabric do you want to work on? This is determined partly by what you want to use it for.
- c. What size design do you want to work with? Better to start small and finish it than be over ambitious and its ends up in the back of a cupboard.
- d. Think about the different threads and choose a colour scheme you are comfortable working with. If you are using metallic threads will they stand up to wear and tear if the article is to be used?
- e. Will it be washable? Not all threads are colourfast! Check them first if you have any doubts.
- f. Collect the drawing, photograph or idea, materials, threads and background fabric and lay them out. Leave them for a few days and then think whether they are still the materials you want to work with.
- g. Are the colours strong enough to stand out on the fabric, especially if you are using only one strand? Lay the threads out and if in doubt, choose something else.
- h. Don't be afraid to change your mind. If the idea doesn't work can it be altered?
- i. Look for unusual embellishments. Old jewellery can be used to add sparkle. The haberdashery shop has braids, buttons and beads galore.



Don't be afraid to experiment. It is your work, so you make the decisions.

Most of all have fun with your creation. I enjoyed every stitch of “Thai Guardian” and it will be a wonderful memory of a beautiful country for many years to come. Relish the challenge, stretch your boundaries and try something new. I am always here to help

### **Readers Photographs**

This month I have had some interesting photographs from readers showing how they have used Blackwork Journey designs. Some of the ideas are very unusual and interesting.

Peggy G has taken one of my sampler designs, changed the colours, added a border and made it her own!



Janet H has stitched CH0358 Sampler 8



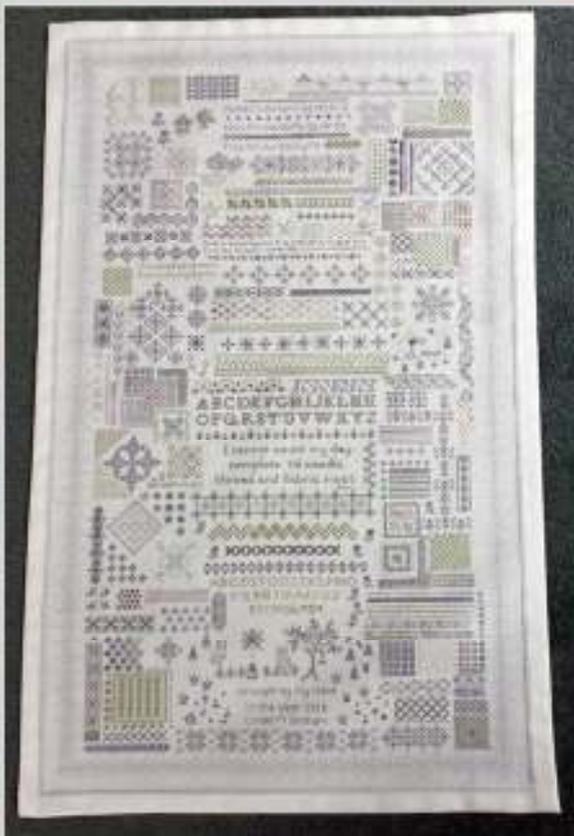
Bernarda V has used "Sublime Stitches" to create a wedding gift for her nephew with some details that are personal to the couple.

Adrienne A has stitched CH0099 Arabian Courtyard.



Jude has quilted book covers with Kogin insets.





‘Sublime Stitches’ from Anne L, Cristina, Linda G and Lisette – wonderful work!

Do you remember Gemma B's embroidered book? Well, as an entry into an Embroiderers' Guild competition she has used one of my designs to create a pair of gloves. You may think this is unusual, but in Elizabethan times to be given a pair of embroidered gloves was a prized possession.



*A very creative way of using a blackwork design Gemma!*

I have seen embroidered gloves in various museums, but the pair of gloves below from the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection, England is outstanding.  
Pair of gloves. Place of origin: England. Date: 1600-1625. Artist/Maker: Unknown Materials and Techniques: Leather, lined with silk, embroidered satin with silver and silver-gilt threads, metal strip purl and coloured silks, edged with silver-gilt bobbin lace and sequins. Bequeathed by Sir Frederick Richmond.



*Elizabethan Gloves 1600 - 1625*



Pair of leather and satin gloves embroidered with motifs of roses, birds and wheat sheaves in silks. With large gauntlets, each having six square tabs. The gauntlets are lined with pink silk and are covered on the outside with white satin and embroidered with silver and silver-gilt threads, metal strip purl and coloured silks in satin, long and short and outline stitches, French knots and couched work. Edged with silver-gilt bobbin lace and sequins. On the back and front of each gauntlet is a flower in an oval medallion, flanked by birds, flowers and wheat ears.

The motif of roses, birds and wheat sheaves cannot be identified with any specific association. Although a Tudor symbol, the rose was such a favoured flower in Elizabethan and Jacobean textile and decorative design that very little can be read into its appearance. While the objects were not heraldic, they may have acted as personal devices. The tradition of symbolic images chosen for tournaments, also known as *impresa*, during the Elizabethan era carried over to the decoration of articles of adornment such as sleeves, gloves, earrings and pendants. Scenting articles of dress was standard practice. Gloves along with other items of clothing including stockings, shifts and shoes were perfumed with fragrances derived from animal sources such as ambergris, civet and musk, floral oils extracted from orange, jasmine, lily and other blossoms, as well as spices like cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves.

<http://collections.varn.ac.uk/item084997/pair-of-gloves-unknown/>

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog. The final part of the *Chatelaine* will be in June's edition of the Blog.

Happy stitching! *Liz*