



Blackwork Journey

Techniques

TQ0008

Transferring a Design Part 1



FABRIC ERASER

The Working Environment by Liz Almond

Transferring a Design to Fabric

Transferring a design to fabric can often cause difficulties for an inexperienced needlewoman and so in this article I will be examining a number of different methods that can be used to help anyone wishing to undertake this task.

Setting up the design

Preparation is the key to success, whatever method you choose. However, start by identifying and marking the centre point of the fabric you intend to use and then tack lines in a pale thread from this point at right angles to the edge of the fabric. (See Fig. 1)

Then locate and mark the centre point of the paper design so that it can be positioned for tracing exactly over the corresponding centre point of the fabric. Masking tape or tacking the layers together can then be used to hold the design and fabric in place and stop any movement.



Fig.1 Tacked lines on fabric and similar lines on the paper design

How to draw

Having lined up your design with the fabric, draw with continuous lines, rather than short strokes to create an unbroken line. You will find that your confidence grows with practice.

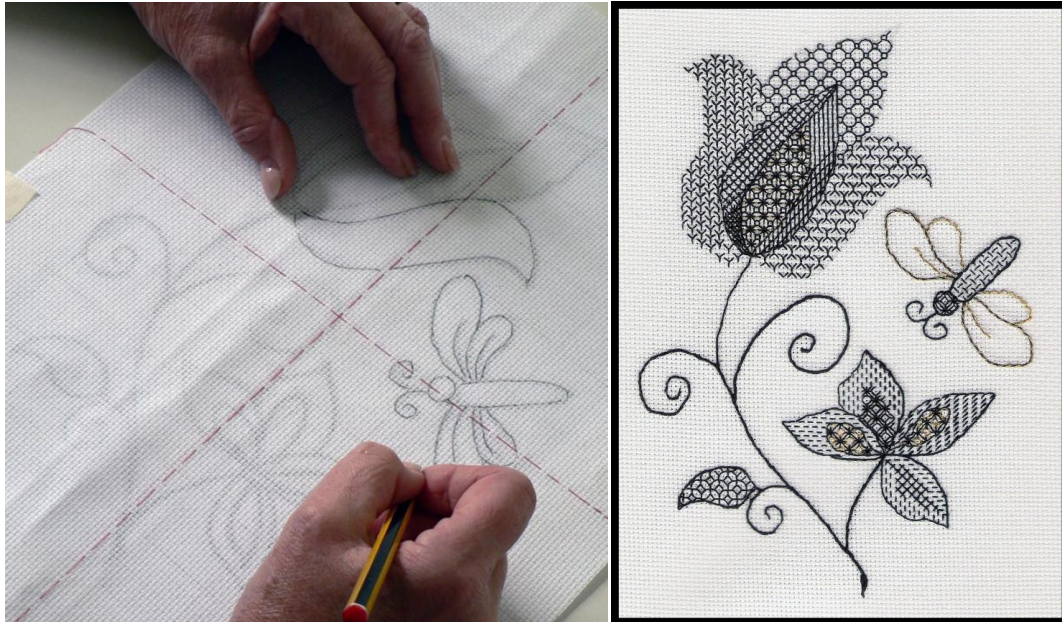


Fig. 2 Jacobean flower design is traced directly onto the fabric. The finished embroidery is worked on 18 count Aida covering all the pencil lines with two strands of DMC cotton.

If you trace designs on a regular basis, it may be worth investing in a light box which consists of a plastic, or perspex box containing a fluorescent light under a transparent working surface. These boxes can vary in size, but the A4 size is one of the more popular.

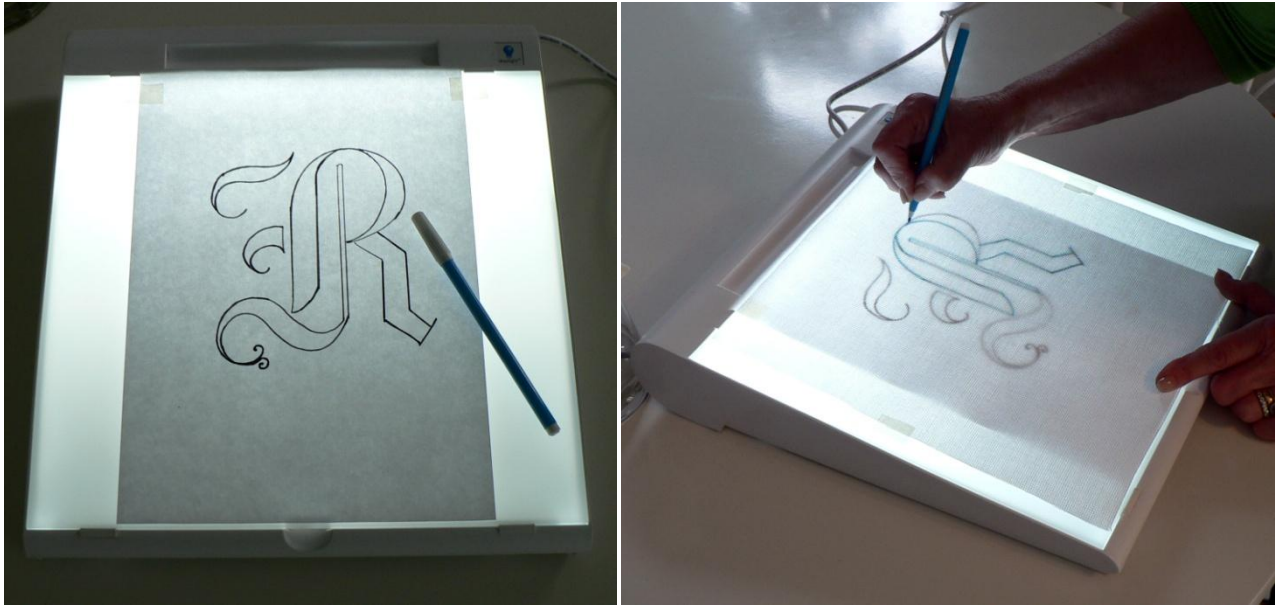


Fig.3 Light box with the design and fabric taped together

The design is taped on to the transparent working surface with masking tape with the fabric fixed over the design.

If tracing is only undertaken occasionally, an alternative to a light box can be to fix the design and fabric to a window, or a sheet of perspex balanced between two chairs with a light placed beneath.

Tracing markers

The medium you should use to trace the design will depend on the type of fabric being used, as textures can react differently with different types of markers. However, whichever medium you use, ALWAYS test it out first on a piece of spare material to see how it will react, as not every medium will wash out and can leave traces behind.

Tracing or transfer markers come in several categories: erasable, semi permanent, permanent, stitched transfer and ink-jet printer methods.

- *Erasable markers* including water soluble pens, air soluble markers, fabric pencils, chalk pencils, quilting and HB pencils
- *Semi permanent markers* including transfer pencils and dressmaker's carbon
- *Permanent markers* including hot iron transfer pencils and iron-on commercial transfers

- *Tacking stitches and tissue paper*
- *Prick and pounce*
- *Tacking from the back of the work*
- *Ink-jet printing*

The first three of these are examined in this article and the remainder will be explained in next month's article.

Erasable markers

Water soluble markers for both light and dark fabrics with different sized tips are readily available. They often come with a blue ink that disappears when the fabric is wetted.



Fig.4 A combination of marker and erase in one unit can be very useful

A white marking pen is available for use on dark fabrics where the ink becomes visible as the ink dries. Again, the lines are easy to remove by spraying them with water.



Fig. 5 White marking pen

However, whilst I use water-soluble pens and pencils, I always test them first to see whether the colour does disappear completely, as a slight watermark may remain on certain silks and fabrics.

Once it has been established that the ink from the marker can be removed satisfactorily and the finished embroidery has been completed, spray or dip it in cold water to remove the tracing before ironing, otherwise the marks could be “set” and be very difficult to remove without damaging the fabric.

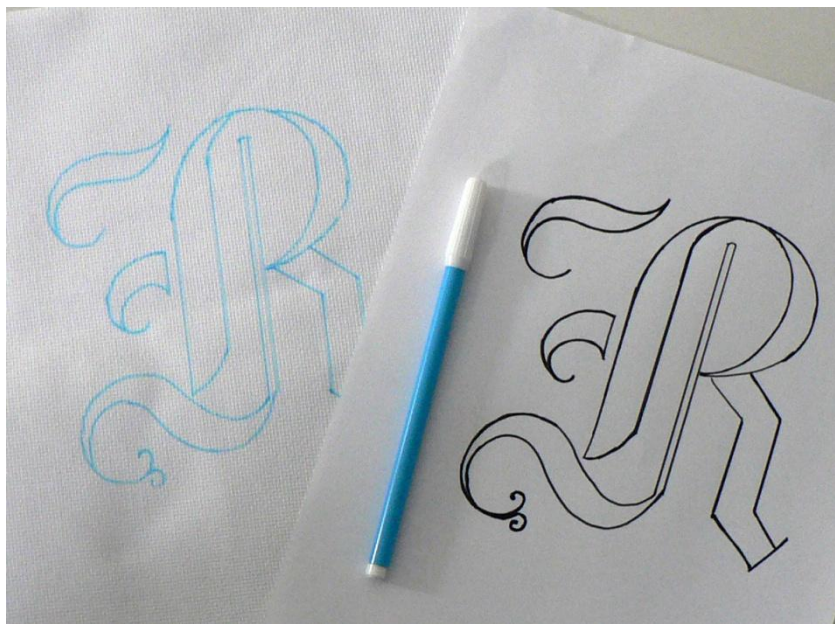


Fig. 6 Water soluble pens provide a clear outline

Personally, I prefer to use good quality water soluble pens with ultra fine 0.3mm points as they are easy to use, water based and quick drying.

However, a word of caution! If a water soluble pen is to be used, iron the fabric before applying the design, or it could disappear in a puff of steam.

Air soluble fabric markers produce a bright, thin purple mark which disappears within 24 to 48 hours, although I can seldom complete a piece of embroidery within that time frame!



Fig. 7 Air soluble pen with eraser

Fabric pencils are amongst my favourites, especially quilting pencils. I generally use light grey, but also have red, yellow, green and blue pencils.

Most quilting pencils claim they can be erased with a fabric eraser, although I am wary of rubbing a fabric with any eraser, however good and prefer to embroider over the line.



Fig. 8 Iron on transfer pencil and erasable quilting pencils

Dressmakers chalk pencils in white and pink are good on dark fabrics, but do tend to smudge and rub off.

Ordinary pencils also make very good markers and I have very seldom experienced a problem removing the lines they make or smudging them. I suggest an HB with a 0.7mm lead for a fine line, although yellow and red pencils can be used to mark darker fabrics. Remember to always try your pencil out on a piece of the intended fabric before working the main design.

Tracing the design directly onto the fabric using a pencil, or one of the markers designed for the purpose is the simplest method, but is not always suitable for some fabrics. I find velvet, corduroy and heavily texture fabrics respond better to a stitched technique which will be discussed fully next month.

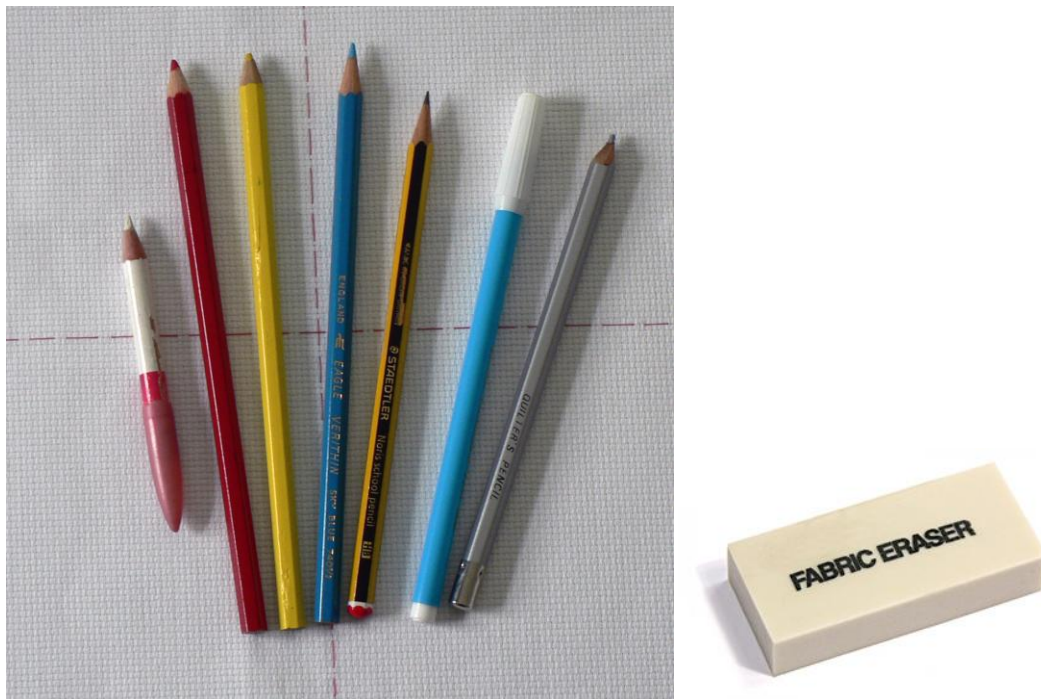


Fig. 9 Chalk pencil, pencil crayons, HB pencil, water soluble pen and a quilting pencil – all of which can be used to mark fabrics without leaving a permanent outline

Semi-permanent markers

Dressmaker's carbon usually comes in packets of five sheets, 28 x 23 cm in size in white, blue, red and yellow. Start by taping the fabric face down on a piece of board, then tape the carbon face down on the fabric followed by the design on the carbon - a layer of three.

Since the lines will be on the BACK of the work, check that it will face in the correct direction before drawing the design on with an embossing tool or a blunt crochet hook.



Fig.10 Dressmaker's carbon paper comes in a variety of colours

When using the carbon paper, iron a test drawing onto a scrap of the fabric first to see whether the lines “set” and that they will wash out.

Always test any “removable” marking tool on a spare piece of fabric before use. Whilst these methods should remove easily from most fabrics, always follow the manufacturer’s instructions as occasionally the fabric will have been treated and will not react well with a particular marker.

Permanent markers

These include hot-iron transfer pencils, making your own iron-on transfers and purchased iron on transfers.

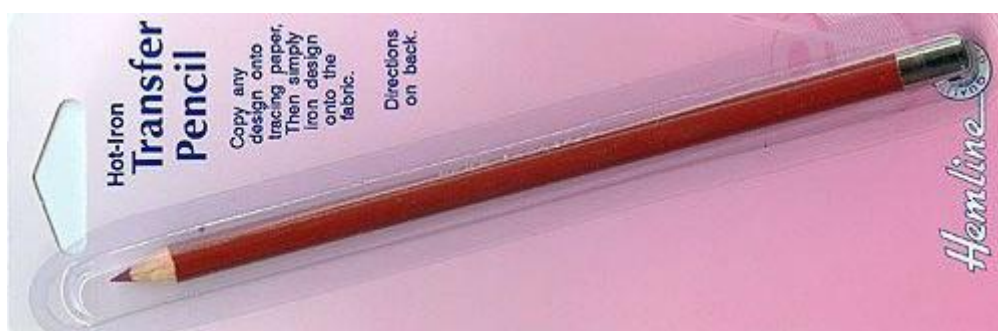


Fig.11 Hot-Iron transfer pencil leaves a permanent impression.

Hot iron transfer pencils are usually red. Start by tracing the design onto paper using the finely sharpened transfer pencil, then turn it over and iron the design

onto the fabric, taking care not to allow it to move. The marks are permanent, so the design must be completely covered by the stitches.

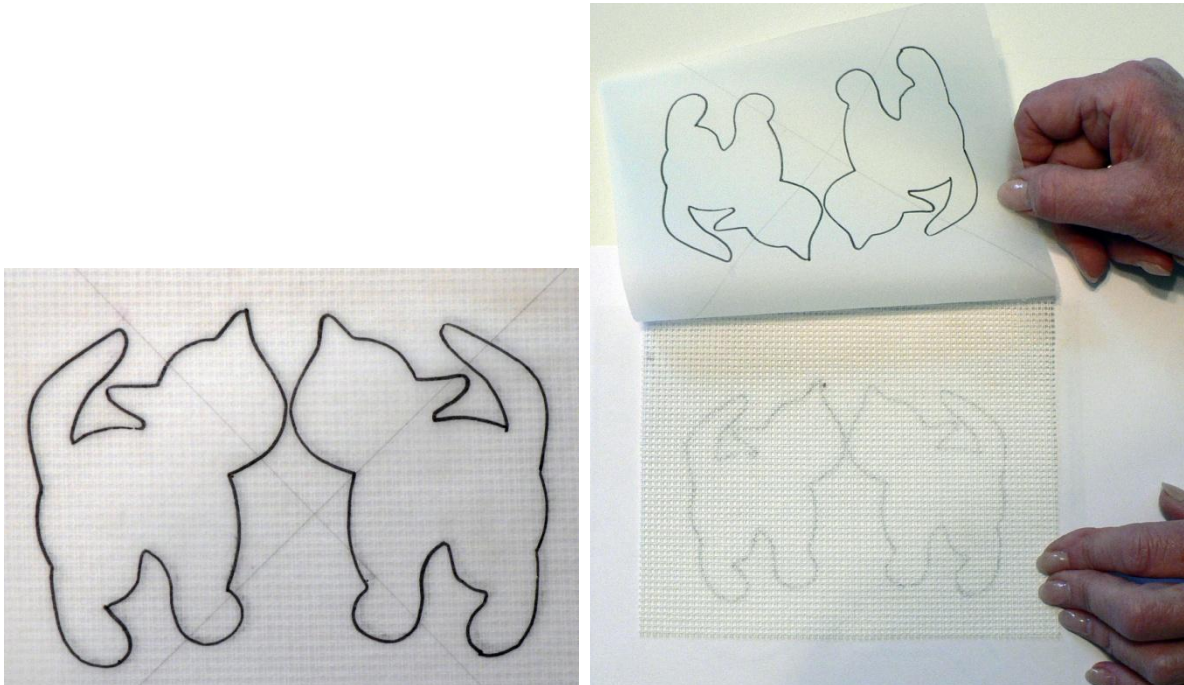


Fig.12 Hot iron transfer on canvas creates a pale, but effective outline

When making your own iron-on transfers, first select the subject you wish to trace and then draw it onto tracing paper. Press firmly so that the transfer marks are clear and bold. Then turn the traced design pencil side down on the fabric and press it on using a warm iron without steam. The traced design will then transfer to the fabric.



Fig.13 Reverse transfer method – design, reverse and trace with transfer pencil, iron the design onto fabric.

Remember the transfer will be a mirror image of the original, but if this is not the case, as you may find for example with a monogram, a slightly different procedure needs to be adopted. In these circumstances, once you have traced the design, turn it over and trace the design on the reverse side with a transfer pencil so that the finished tracing will be facing the right way round ready for ironing.

Purchased iron-on transfers are one of the earliest methods of transferring a design onto fabric. I have a wonderful collection of embroideries made by this method ranging from Crinoline ladies to Celtic crosses and whilst they are simple to transfer, they are permanent and will not wash out or fade, so if the embroidery does not cover the lines adequately, the blue or silver outline will be visible for all to see. It is therefore important to take care when positioning the transfer before transferring the design to the fabric.



Fig.14 Blue and silver iron on transfers cover a wide range of subjects

To use a permanent silver transfer, iron the fabric and place the transfer printed side down, in the correct position. Use a hot iron and press firmly over the fabric lifting part of the transfer carefully as you iron to check that it has transferred the pattern to the fabric.

An alternative way of using permanent transfers if you do not want a permanent pattern on your fabric, is to photocopy the original, then trace the design onto the fabric using a light box or similar. This works if the fabric is thin enough to see through. If the material is thick or dark, a stitched method may be preferable.

When ironing the transfer onto the fabric, press rather using the usual backward and forward movements, otherwise the transfer may move and the image blur.

Part 2 will examine the four other methods of transferring designs –

- *Tacking stitches and tissue paper*
- *Prick and pounce*
- *Tacking from the back of the work*
- *Using a computer – ink jet printing*

Happy stitching!

Liz