



Blackwork Journey

Techniques

TQ0010

Couching



The Working Environment by Liz Almond

Couching

In embroidery, couching and laid work are techniques in which thread or other materials are laid across the surface of the ground fabric and fastened in place with small stitches of the same or a different thread. The couching threads may be either the same colour as the laid threads or a contrasting colour. When couching threads are a different colour from the laid threads, patterns may be worked in the couching stitches.

As a technique, it is both simple to execute and effective in appearance and can be used successfully with other embroidery techniques.

There are two ways of couching:

a. Surface couching

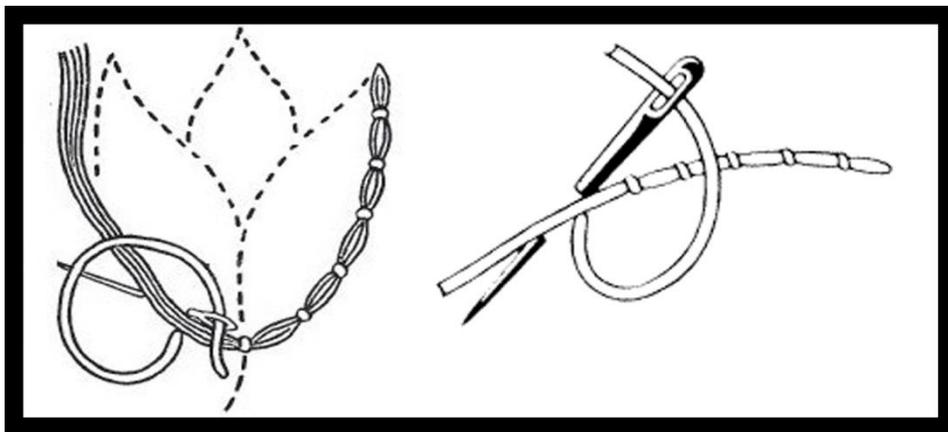


Fig.1 Surface couching stitches

With surface couching the thread is laid on the surface and caught down from the top to the back with a small stitch.



Fig.2 Surface couched threads on a mirror frame

b. Underside couching.

The thread is brought up from the back to the front of the work. A small stitch is made over the laid thread and the needle passed through to the back.



Fig.3 Seat frame and threads suitable for couching

Kreinik fine braids, DMC Light effects, coloured cord and threads used for goldwork are just some of the threads which can be used. The more flexible the thread, the easier it is to manipulate.

Needle

Use a sharp needle with a large enough eye to take the laid thread without fraying. Pull the tail of the laid thread through to the back of the work and leave without anchoring. This will be anchored and trimmed at a later stage.



Fig.4 if the braid is prone to fraying, knot the end after passing it through to the back of the work.

An example of couched work is the letter E as shown in Fig 3. Trace the design onto the fabric using one of the methods in Techniques 9 or 10.

Frame the fabric and fastening it drum tight. If possible, use a frame which allows both hands to be free to move above and below the work.



Fig.5 The fabric is mounted in a seat frame to allow easy access above and below the work

Once the design has been traced onto the fabric select an appropriate thread and lay it along the line of the design. Using a finer needle and matching or contrasting thread stitch over the laid thread with a small stitch. Keep the stitches an equal distance from each other. Bend the laid thread round the curves. Where threads overlap, stitch either side of the laid thread, but do not pull too tightly!



Fig.6 Even stitches approximately a quarter of an inch apart hold the surface braid firmly in place

When the laid threads have been couched down, turn the work over and catch the loose ends along the length of the small stitches so that the ends do not show on the right side of the work

When the embroidery has been completed release it from the frame. Check that all loose ends have been stitched down and place face down on a soft towel. Press lightly and if necessary, spray starch.

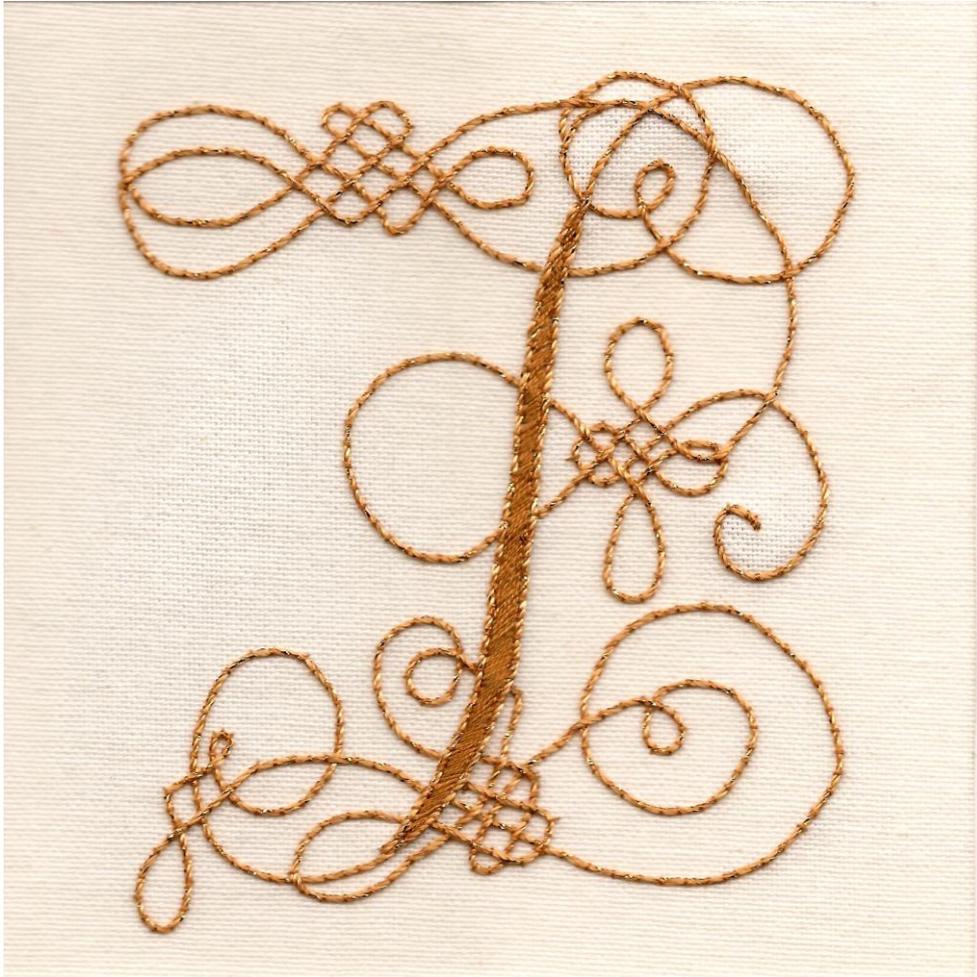


Fig. 7 Satin stitch worked along part of the design to add extra depth.



Fig.8 Mirror box in satin dupion embroidered with couched gold thread.



Fig.9 Corner frame of mirror box