



Blackwork *Journey Blog*

April 2021



Blackwork Journey Blog, April 2021

Spring is finally coming to the north of England and the daffodils are coming into bloom!

It has been a long, wet winter made more difficult by the lockdown measures that have been in place on and off for most of the last year, so more than ever the signs of birds nesting, spring flowers and buds swelling have been most welcome and I can sit and think of new designs and ideas for Blackwork Journey with renewed enthusiasm.



My quiet working space

It is important to me to have a quiet place, where I can sit and think new ideas through with my books and materials to hand, the internet, music and coffee!

Covid 19 has turned all our lives upside down and made us rethink what we value most and how we will look forward in the years to come. The members of the Blackwork Journey Facebook groups wrote down the words that summed up the past year and the word 'Peace' was important to so many. I put together a series of small samplers based on their thought and words and this month, I have added another mini sampler called 'Peace' to the Facebook groups and to the Freebies site.

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Inner peace can often be hard to find, but to be at peace with oneself to be still and quiet, to find joy in the little things and to know that we are all valued and loved is essential to all of us. I hope you enjoy working the design and looking forward to the future.



Freebies:

FR0187 New Beginning 'Hope' 2021

FR0188 Time 2020

FR0189 Family and Friends

FR0190 Peace

Charts:

CH0408 Hopes and Dreams



FR0190 Peace

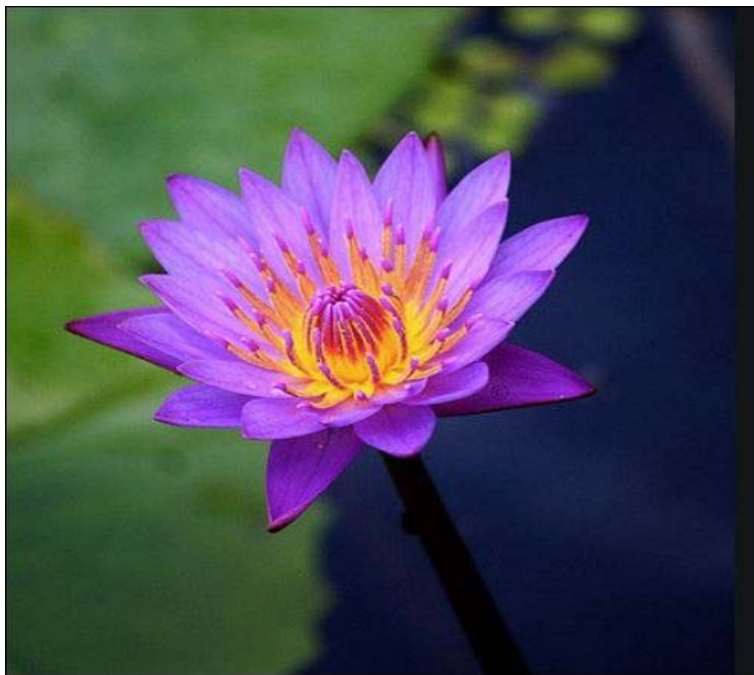
This design is suitable for both evenweave and Aida fabric and is a good introduction to blackwork.

It is important that each word is completed before moving on the next one as threads taken across open spaces will show through on the front of the work when it is framed. Where letters have back stitch worked round the cross stitch, work the cross stitch first to create a neater outline.

To make a diamond ornament, work the diamond, but omit the flower patterns. Mount the embroidery over a square of card. Cover a second square of card with fabric. Add a ribbon hanger and slip stitch the two pieces together.



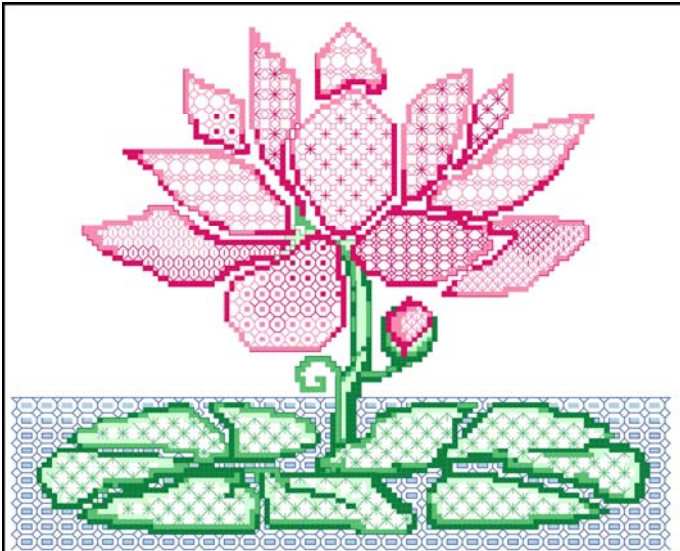
Slip stitch



CH0410 Sri Lanka Lotus – two designs are included.

I have added another new chart this month which was designed for Vicky's group in Sri Lanka. With her expert help, the group have been working on some blackwork designs and wanted to stitch a lotus flower.

The Bluewater water lily is the state flower of Sri Lanka. Uniquely, it is a beautiful aquatic flowering plant found in tanks, wetland and slow moving streams in tropical areas. It is often presented at Buddhist temples as an offering. The lily blooms in the daytime and flowers almost all year round. It is usually violet-blue in colour with reddish edges.



I have spent time in many Middle and Far Eastern countries and have found that the lotus flower has always been significant, whether it is a temple offering or food! To see a woman making an offering of lotus buds at the beginning of her working day, or gathering them from the muddy rivers and seeing their beauty as they emerge from the dirty water is memorable.

According to Buddhist legends, this flower was one of the 108 auspicious signs found on Prince Siddhartha's footprint. It is said that when Lord Buddha died, lotus flowers blossomed everywhere that he had walked in his lifetime.

CH0187 Thai Lotus – counted thread embroidery can be found in 'Charts'

Planning the designs:

Half the fun of designing an embroidery is the research behind it. CH0187 Thai Lotus is a counted thread embroidery already in 'Charts' on the website so I wanted to design two simple patterns in different techniques.



The Lotus Flower Temple:
Wat Pa Dong Rai, Thailand

First of all what is the difference between a water lily and a lotus?

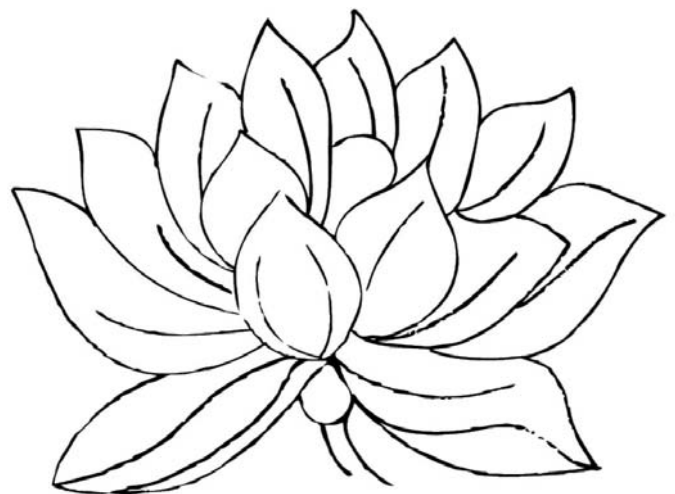
The biggest difference is that water lilies (*Nymphaea* species) leaves and flowers both float on the surface of water, while lotus (*Nelumbo* species) leaves and flowers rise above the surface. There is one exception; tropical water lilies leaves float on the surface just like hardy lilies, but their flowers rise above the surface of the water about 6-8 inches.

The designs: One would be a sashiko design suitable for a picture, cushion or bag and the other would be a free style embroidery design. Both designs would be worked on medium weight pre-washed calico.

First design: Sashiko Lotus



Sashiko line drawing of lotus flower



Medium weight pre-washed calico should be smooth and free from imperfections.



Lotus Tower, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sashiko lotus worked in running stitch. The stitches should be the same size and evenly spaced.

Working the Sashiko design:

Both designs were drawn onto the calico using a water-soluble pen.

Sashiko literally means ‘little stabs’ or ‘little pierce’ and is a form of decorative embroidery from Japan that began out of necessity during the Edo era (1615-1868). Originally, it was used to reinforce or repair worn areas or tears with patches to make the garment stronger and warmer.

Nowadays, this running stitch technique with its geometric patterns in straight or curved lines is used mainly for decorative purposes. The white cotton thread on the traditional indigo blue cloth gives sashiko its distinctive appearance. Modern embroiderers often use a variety of threads and colours. It is better known than Japanese kogin embroidery which also uses running stitch and is worked in the hand so no frame is required.

Material:

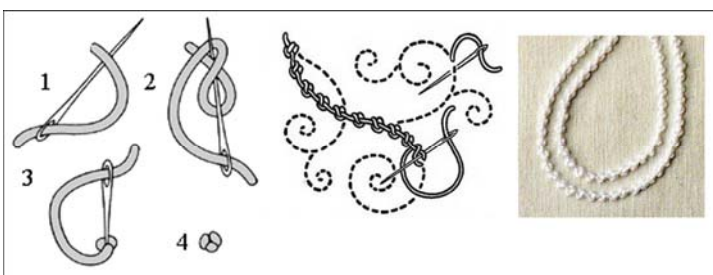
Medium weight cotton or pre-washed calico, 13 x 13 inches minimum

Threads: Sashiko medium thread 20 metres, one skein, or DMC cotton P erle No 8 or DMC stranded floss, Four strands. Use one colour thread or a variety of threads. Sashiko, or crewel needle.

Second design: Free style embroidered Sri Lanka Lotus

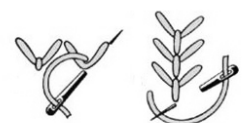
This design included specialist textured stitches to add weight and interest to the embroidery.

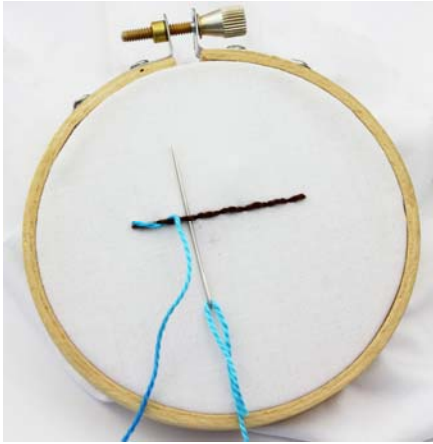
The outlines were worked in back stitch whipped to create a cord effect.



Double knot stitch creates a beaded effect whereas fly stitch is flatter.

Fly stitch
Whipping the fly stitch with a different colour adds depth.





Back stitch whipped with a different colour.

Wheatear stitch in a crochet cotton was used for the rings and the cuffs.



Work the basic outline first and then build up by adding more lines of stitching. Experiment with different threads and different thicknesses to achieve a heavier design.

Try practicing any new stitches first on your 'doodle' cloth until you are comfortable with them.



Sri Lanka Lotus



Girl sitting amongst the lotus flowers.

This was a silk embroidery I found in a gallery in Suzhou, China which specialises in hand stitched embroideries. Many of the embroiderers were very highly skilled young girls starting their apprenticeships, something I have also come across in Cambodia.

Traditional Thai painting of a lotus flower, Bangkok, Thailand

*Travel makes one modest, you see what a tiny place
you occupy in the world.
Gustave Flaubert*



Using sashiko for clothing.

Sashiko was originally used to strengthen and reinforce clothing as a practical means of extending the life of a garment and whilst this is still an important factor, it is being used more and more for its decorative effect.

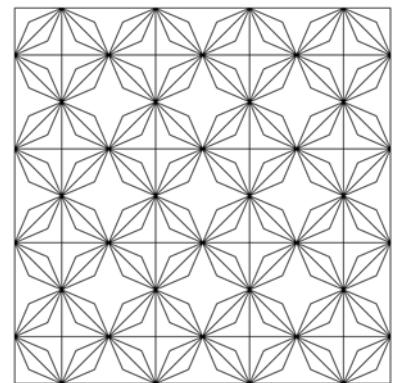
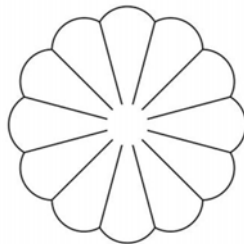
Decorating a plain blouse with sashiko can be a practical way of updating a garment. The double yoke on this denim shirt meant that the stitching could be worked through the top layer only. The pocket was worked in situ and not removed from the garment.



The pattern on the yoke is Ganzezashi (Sea urchin) stitch.

It is an easy stitch to draw.

The motif on the pocket is a kamon crest called Kiku or chrysanthemum.



Inspirational interpretations:

Photographs of work in progress and work completed are added to the Facebook groups every day and it is really encouraging to see how many different interpretations there can be of a single project.

EB0009 'Sublime Stitches' Evenweave and EB0010 'Sublime Stitches' Aida are being worked by a large number of Spanish speaking members worldwide from Cuba to Brazil as a yearlong project. They have just completed their third month working on the design.

If you would like to see what they are doing please go to the Facebook group:

[Sublime Stitches - Elizabeth Almond Designs](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1695785137378480/#)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1695785137378480/#>

If you would like to join in and work your own project, remember I am always here to help!



Extracts from 'Sublime Stitches' by Yadira, Manuela, Monica and Carmen.

Thank you ladies for sharing your excellent work.



Betty has finished and framed her design.



Jenny Johnson, Sue Gregory
and Maureen Spira have been working on
EB0019 Memories

Following on from last month's charts a number of readers have started their 'Memories' design. Jenny has completed the outline first and is now adding the filler patterns. Sue and Maureen have completed the smaller design and it is interesting to see how different threads change the appearance. Traditional black and gold versus variegated threads!

Because the framework is cross stitch it is easy to count and there is less chance of making a mistake. If the framework on a project is worked in back stitch is it better to work part of the outline rather than the full outline.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog. If you have any queries please contact: lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching, *Liz*

