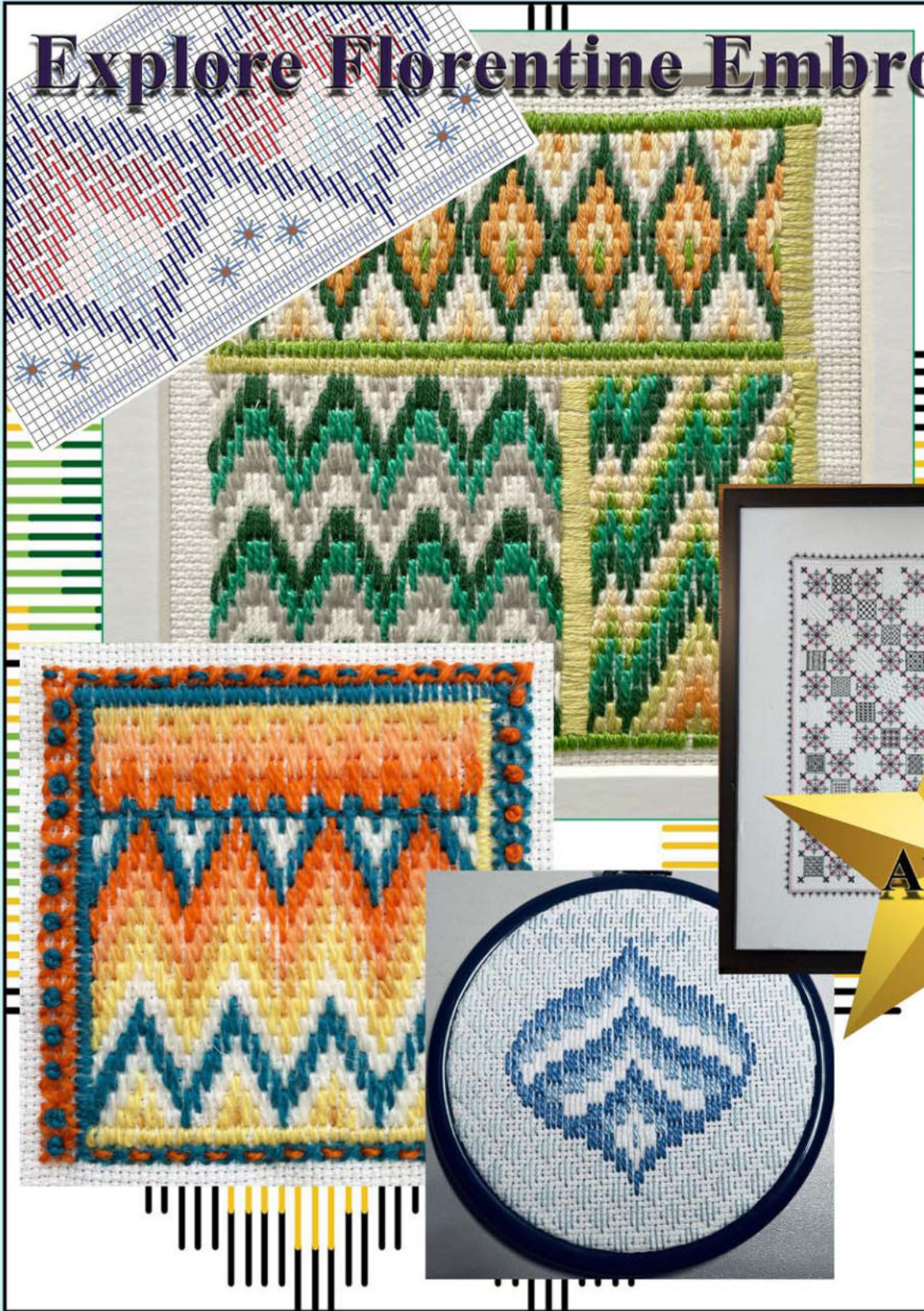




Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2024

Explore Florentine Embroidery



Looking forward to Autumn!

August did not turn out to be quite the month I had envisaged. The weather was very varied with more rain than anticipated and family situations threw planning into chaos, but such is life! We did get to see our son and grandson on a flying visit from America which was great fun to be all together as a family if only for a short time. It does reinforce the value of the internet and Facetime where contact is immediate and crosses the world instantly! When I was a child with a father in the Royal Navy, a highlight was when a letter arrived from his posting abroad which often took weeks to arrive!

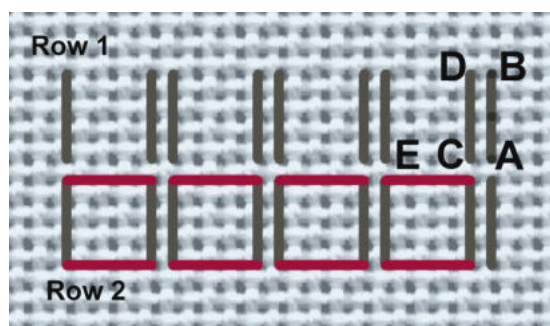
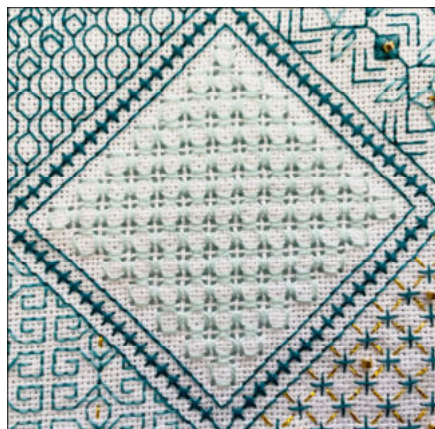
I have been asked whether I will print and send charts abroad and whilst I will do so if requested, the cost of posting and the delay involved before the chart is received can make it difficult. All my charts and instructions are PDF downloads which I send out personally and I also offer any help that may be required by supplying my contact details. Sometimes, there is delay between a person placing an order with PayPal and PayPal sending me an invoice with the order contents. However, once I receive the e-mail from PayPal, I can send the charts straight away unless I am away teaching or it is the middle of the night, in which case I wait until the morning when I have had a coffee!



Lifelong learning!

I usually use the summer months to catch up on unfinished projects and to decide what I am going to teach in the coming months for the workshops. Deciding on new projects and providing working examples can be challenging because every student is unique and has different needs. If students are older, their eyesight may be more of a challenge or their hands may be stiffer, joints less mobile and hearing less sharp. Changing fabrics, needle size, thicker threads can all help to make stitching easier. My oldest student is 100 and I have several members who are in their nineties! There are often ways round most difficulties, and it is usually a case of just working out the best way to solve the problem and the correct equipment to use.

This is certainly a consideration when teaching techniques such as pulled thread work and whitework which can place specific demands on a student. I have several workshops coming up on both subjects in the next year, so I have gone back to these techniques and looked at them again through the eyes of a complete beginner and thinking about the likely problems and questions students are likely to ask me!



Cobbler Stitch - extract from PR0072 Latitude

This is a pulled thread work stitch where threads are 'pulled' together and not cut!

Method:

Work the vertical rows first over 4 threads in pairs leaving one thread between each stitch.

Row 1 Vertical: A - B, C - C, C - D, D - E etc.

Row 2 Horizontal: Turn your work to complete the pairs completing the box.

New Project for Autumn!

I enjoy working on canvas with wool as an alternative to my usual embroidery fabrics and when I was asked to run a workshop on Florentine Embroidery recently, I decided to create a pdf and share it with you.

Florentine canvas work has a long history and is a very satisfying technique. The materials are readily available and there are a wide variety of stitches and projects that can be used. Whilst it is a counted thread work technique, the canvas is easy to count and the stitches interesting.

The following is a small extract from the PDF for you to enjoy.

PR00 81 Explore Florentine Embroidery



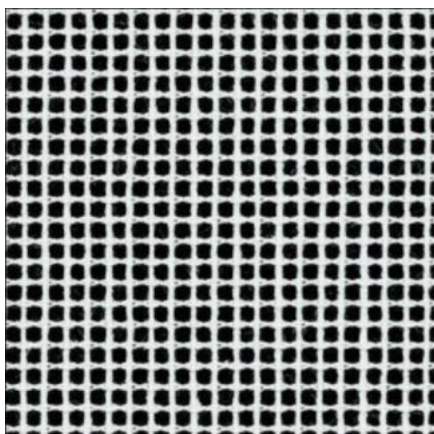
Florentine embroidery is a vertical straight stitch (normally across four threads) which is used in different colours to form one of a small number of geometric patterns. The most common is the flame or wave pattern shown here, where the colours rise and fall; others are the oval and stepped patterns. Collectively, these patterns are known as Florentine work or Bargello work also known as Irish stitch, Cushion stitch, Hungarian stitch and Berlin stitch.

The name Bargello work originates from the Bargello Palace in Florence (Italy), where there are a series of seventeenth century chairs upholstered with canvas embroidery in this technique. However, the origins of the technique are obscure – it has been suggested that it came from 15th century Florentine migrants to Hungary.

The technique spread to many different cultures, including 17th century ecclesiastical Icelandic pieces. In England it was popular on samplers from the early to mid-17th century when it went out of fashion, only to regain popularity at the start of the 18th century. It also featured on 18th century Chinese Mandarin squares. In the 20th century, the technique is used by the Banjara people of central Italy and it was popular in

western Europe/north America in the 1960's.

Whilst traditionally this is a canvas work technique, plastic canvas is popular. Experiment with different canvases and threads to find ones that you enjoy working with.



Zweigart interlocking single canvas 10 holes to the inch is suitable for starting canvas work for the first time. Finer canvas is also available in 12, 14 and 18 holes to the inch.

You will need: Zweigart mono canvas, or plastic canvas.

Tapestry wool, Paterna stranded wool, embroidery floss, Cotton Pêrle No's 5 and 8

Tapestry needle, size 22 or 24

Instructions for all patterns:

Starting in the centre of the canvas, work the first row, following the chart. Leave a short length of yarn at the back of the work, trapping it under the first few stitches to secure it. Once the first row is complete, work from the centre of the design outwards. Use a contrasting colour to complete the next row, continuing like this and changing shade on each, or working two rows using the same colour to add variety to the pattern.

Experiment

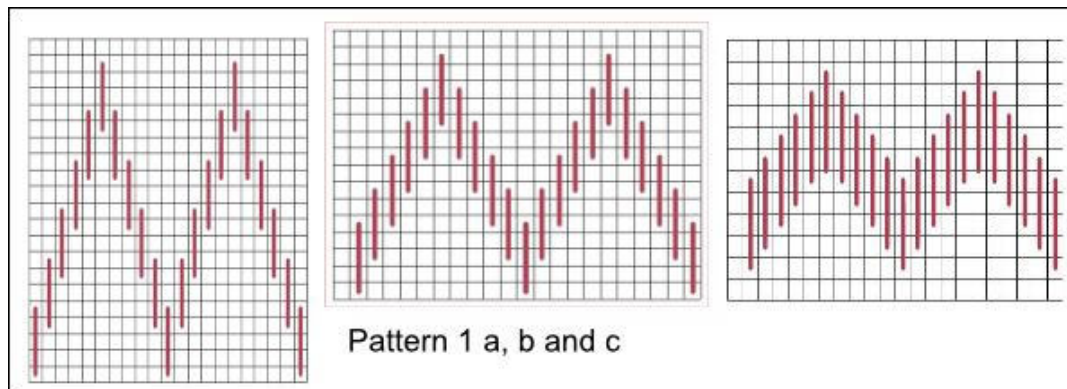
Once you have worked samples of the different patterns, combine more than one pattern to make a small tapestry sampler using different threads. Incorporate different techniques such as pulled work and textured embroidery stitches for interest. Try using Congress cloth or an evenweave fabric!

Simple stitch foundation patterns worked over four threads.

Pattern 1

- Work the basic step pattern for a steep flame.
- A less steep flame would be to work the stitches two threads up.
- One thread up to give a gentler wave.

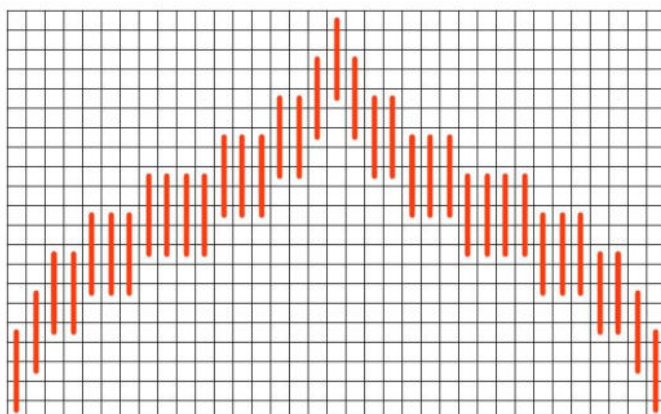
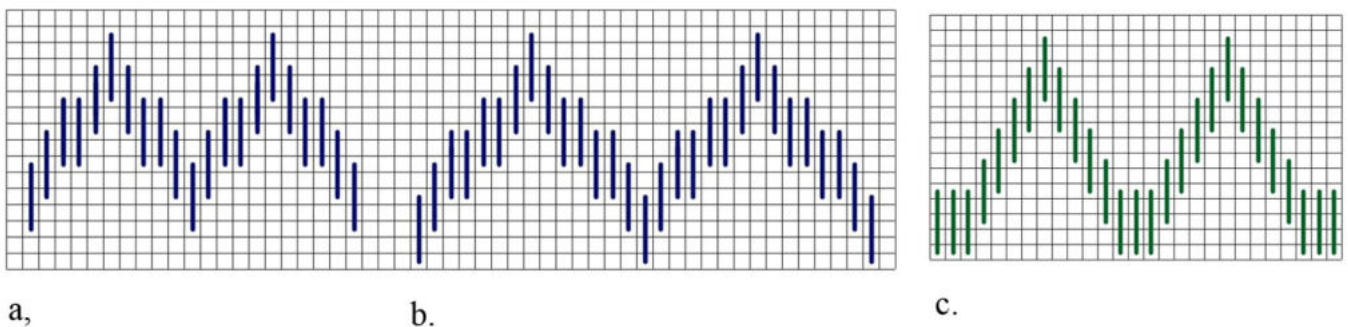
Which one do you prefer?



Take it further and create more patterns.

Introducing steps changes the shape of the flame. (a, b). Stitched over four threads, add pairs of stitches. (c).

Pattern 2 a, b and c



d. The curve develops as extra stitches are added. Also making the stitches longer (over 6 threads) changes the pattern.

Threads:

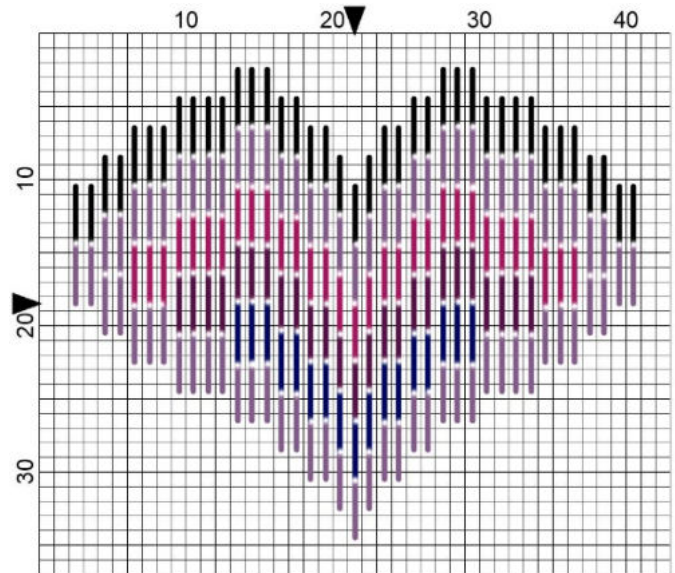
Appleton's and Paterna wool is stranded – 2 to 3 strands may be sufficient to cover the canvas. The more open the canvas the thicker the threads will be. Always use a tapestry needle large enough to go through the canvas easily.

Tapestry wool - use as it comes from the hank.

Blackwork Journey Blog, September 2024

DMC Embroidery floss - 3 to 6 strands depending on the fabric used.

Plastic canvas - use tapestry wool.



Simple heart worked on plastic canvas using six strands of embroidery floss.

Talented Readers - Amy Crum

I am always delighted to see readers enter their embroideries into exhibitions and country shows and Amy has been successful yet again with two entries in this year's Evergreen State Fair in Monroe, Washington USA. She won First Place for Blackwork Journey designs FR0187 Flying Geese and EB0023 Diagonal Dance and a rosette for 'Outstanding Exhibitor'. Well done and congratulations Ami!!



I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

If you have any queries, please contact me at: lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching, Liz