

DECORATIVE WALL HANGINGS: SELECTED TECHNIQUES
FOR APPLIED FABRIC DESIGNS

By

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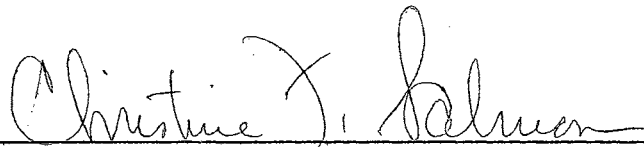
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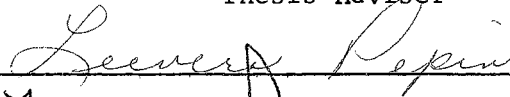
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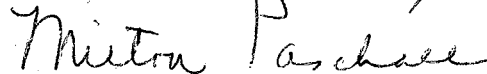
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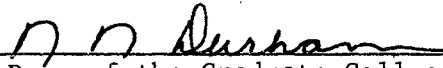
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the earliest periods in the development of man's craftsmanship, samples have been discovered and preserved which indicate that man has woven designs and motifs into his fabrics. Applied textile design is perhaps as ancient in origin as weaving. Early designers discovered many methods of treating the surface of their woven fabrics to enhance their appearance. These methods include embroidery, applique, block printing, stenciling, painting, tie dyeing, and batik.¹ Applied design does not alter the basic structure of the material; it simply gives further richness to the surface of the fabric.

The designing of utilitarian and decorative fabrics has been a concern of man for thousands of years. He discovered long ago that textile design offered a means of aesthetic expression that could be used to enhance the appearance of dress fabrics. In fact, "there is no craft area that has not been considered at one time or by some culture as a medium suitable for expressing the highest and most complex art values."² Today, the textile design industry is an important one and designs are often applied to fabrics by mechanical processes; however,

¹ Spencer, Moseley; Pauline Johnson and Hazel Koenig, Crafts Design: An Illustrated Guide (Belmont, California, 1962), p. 210.

² Ibid., preface.

man still decorates many of his fabrics by hand. Hence, the arts never really die.³

Of the various techniques other than weaving used to decorate fabrics by hand, only a few will be stressed in this paper. Thus, an extensive examination and explanation of these craft forms and their technical process will be discussed. These techniques include printing methods, such as brayer, linoleum block, and silk screen; batik and tie dyeing, both are resist-dyeing processes whereby areas of the design not to be colored are saturated with wax in the former or tied with string in the latter; and needlework consisting of diverse forms ranging from hooking and applique to many kinds of embroidery stitches, or "stitchery". These several techniques are often used by themselves to form a design motif. However, they may be combined in a number of ways to form an entirely different design concept. For example, various stitches may be applied to silk screen design giving a three-dimensional effect. If different processes are involved, quality and texture of dye or yarn as well as shapes and motifs must be considered very carefully or loss of harmony may result.⁴ "Becoming thoroughly acquainted with the medium of a craft is as important as using colors well and arranging forms successfully: it is the key to creative work."⁵

The method used for reproduction should be in harmony with the type of fabric which is to be decorated and with the intended service

³Frances J. Kafka, The Hand Decoration of Fabrics (Bloomington, Illinois, 1959), p. 7.

⁴Nora Proud, Textile Printing and Dyeing (New York, 1965), p. 81.

⁵Ibid., p. 17.

for the fabric.⁶ This thesis pertains to those fabrics which do not hang in folds but are intended to fill a space decoratively, such as ornamental hangings. Since these hangings are usually hung against a wall, the term "wall hanging" has generally been applied to this type of textile decoration. "Wall hangings are among the most rewarding products of the artful use of fabrics."⁷

The present renaissance of crafts in this country has placed the wall hanging, in general, into a more respected artistic expression in which it functions as a beautiful and useful solution for today's decorative problem.⁸ There are comparatively few books and articles concerning this medium on the market today, in spite of the many artist-craftsman who are creatively involved in the production of wall hangings.⁹ Unfortunately this information is widely scattered, and it makes it extremely difficult for either the laymen, professional artist or the interior designer to obtain an overall picture of what is taking place. Described herein are various techniques that may be used to produce wall hangings as well as sources of information pertaining to the hand decoration of such fabrics. It is hoped that awareness will be increased and an appreciation developed for the contribution that wall hangings give to the decorative arts world.

Since the materials and techniques the craftsman uses generally

⁶Verla Birrell, The Textile Arts (New York, 1959), p. 8.

⁷David B. Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric (New York, 1962), front flap of cover.

⁸"Wall Hangings: Part Two," Interiors, CXX No. 11 (June, 1961), p. 120.

⁹Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. vii.

influence the forms he makes, it is impossible to discuss textile design without stressing design quality as a fundamental part of good craftsmanship.¹⁰ The designer must remember that the aim is to produce a pleasing design on fabric and that the composition must serve the intended purpose. "Losing sight of the practical purpose need not necessarily be a loss, for the impractical result may turn out to be - art."¹¹ The requirements of good design and good workmanship obligate the artist to become familiar with the fiber and weave of his material and to explore its limitations and possibilities. He must have a thorough knowledge of the basic qualities of textile design, for success depends upon clever handling of such elements as line, shape, color, proportion, and texture. Also, balance, scale, center of interest, repetition, rhythm, and contrast should be an integral part of a well organized textile design. The lines should never be still, jerky or boxlike; they should exert continuity, variation in width and length and should possess "character." Shapes should be correlated, treated freely and have interesting contours. Color affects the appearance of a design; thus, there should be good transition between areas of color in a fabric.¹² The pattern or design unit in a textile may be arranged in panels, rows, borders, isolated areas and/or in all-over pattern. Also, the pattern may be arranged in horizontal, vertical or diagonal columns. Negative and positive shapes should be considered as an integral part of the design. Furthermore, "in a good textile design it should never be

¹⁰ Mosley, Johnson and Koenig, p. 4.

¹¹ Anni Albers, On Designing (Middleton, Connecticut, 1961), p. 9.

¹² Birrell, p. 6.

obvious where the repeat occurs unless it is an obvious motif."¹³

Since textile designs are limited by their media of expression, there is a correlation between the tools and the methods employed and the type of design that can be created.

Fabrics, upon which designs are printed, dyed, or stitched, have "personality." Some are basically ornamental; others are chiefly functional. Some are fine and beautiful; others are crude and coarse. Some are artistic achievements, resulting from the work of man; others are the products of nature and are used in their raw or natural state.¹⁴

However, the exact chemical construction of cloth is rarely of interest to the textile designer because his interest, in most cases, lies in the suitability of various yarns for the eventual use of the fabric. Thus, the choice of background materials for constructing wall hangings is limited only by the artists ingenuity and imagination.

The following chapters are planned to give a description of the art of designing wall hangings by discussion of selected techniques.

¹³Terance Conran, Printed Textile Design (London, 1957), p. 67.

¹⁴Birrell, p. 2.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origin of wall hangings stems from civilized man's need to ornament the walls of his home beyond utilitarian needs. In many ways its development is closely associated with the development of civilization itself. Although, only a few of the textile accomplishments of the past are directly related to wall hanging design, many of the textile arts that were practiced by primitive man have contributed techniques that are the basis for all contemporary expression by today's artist-craftsman.¹ For example, primitive man, from the cave dweller of southern France to the American Indian of the southwest, felt the need to carve or paint directly on the surface of the walls that surrounded him. Also, reliefs in the Kurdistan mountains at Tak-i-Bustan, near Kermanshah, illustrate scenes cut in shallow relief that look like tapestries, except for the lack of color.² Thus, from these first creative endeavors the decoration of walls has developed into many varied channels of expression.

Actual examples of early painted textiles are found in both the Old and New Worlds. A fabric wall hanging found near Thebes, Egypt, dated approximately 1594 B.C. is an example of an early attempt to paint a

¹Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 5.

²Adele Coulin Weibel, Two Thousand Years of Textiles (New York, 1952), p. 38.

pattern on fabric.³ Coptic hangings from the fourth to the seventh century (figures 1 and 2) were mostly woven tapestry. However, some of the small designs in these tapestries were undoubtedly worked in with a needle directly on the warp threads.⁴ It is important to note here that many ancient writers did not distinguish the difference between woven and embroidered work, but called both tapestries.⁵ Also, rich silks were often embroidered and used as hangings for churches, coverings for altars and vestments for priests. When the Arabs conquered Egypt in 641, they furnished their homes almost entirely with hangings, cushions, and rugs.⁶

Tapestries were used in Greece to ornament the walls of the temples during the time of Homer. Some fragments of Greek tapestries have survived and one of these shows traces of printing on the woven linen.⁷ Also, during the days of Charlemagne, Byzantine silks and tapestries (figure 3) were hung on the walls and doorways of castles.

Although the actual techniques of true tapestry weaving will not be presented in this thesis, they hold such an important position in the development of wall decoration that they should not be passed without mention.

³Birrell, p. 419.

⁴Violetta Thurstan, A Short History of Decorative Textiles and Tapestries, p. 15.

⁵Ibid., p. 9.

⁶Weibel, p. 44.

⁷Thurstan, p. 12.



TAPESTRY ROUNDEL WITH RIDER-SAINT
EGYPT, COPTIC, VI-VII CENTURY
THE COOPER UNION MUSEUM

Figure 1



Figure 2. Roundel Tapestry Woven in Wool, Coptic, 6th Century
A. D.



Figure 3. Detail of a Byzantine Tapestry Hanging Made in Heraklea, Thrace. Reconstructed From Fragments Found in Egypt. 9' 1½" long by 6' 1" wide. 5th to 7th Century.

In tapestry, the design is woven into the fabric itself by a process of winding the weft or woof, the name given the horizontal threads, around the warp or vertical ones, the work all being executed by hand and the stitches pressed tightly against each other so that the warp is entirely covered by the woof.⁸

The earliest record of tapestry weaving started before the ninth century, but it rose to its height in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries under two of the most important factories producing tapestries: the Gobelin and Aubusson in France.

An outstanding example in the development of wall hangings is the Bayeux "Tapestry." "It is known as a tapestry not because of its technique [it is embroidered with vari-colored wool yarns on linen] but because it was designed to hang on a wall."⁹ The word tapestry is frequently misused to mean any wall hanging regardless of technique. The Bayeux Tapestry was completed in the latter part of the twelfth century and it portrays the Norman conquest of England by William the Conqueror. This embroidered work of art is only nineteen inches high, but its overall length exceeds two thousand feet.

In England during Anglo-Saxon times, the walls of houses were adorned with coarse canvas enriched with thick worsted wool embroidery. During the reign of Henry VIII painted cloths and tapestries were often hung in the rooms of state for decorative purposes. Hangings were used at window openings to keep out flies and spiders; they were also used as room dividers. Crewel work became popular during the reign of James I, when it was the custom to embroider linen hangings. Many

⁸ Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 10.

⁹ Moseley, Johnson and Koenig, p. 210.

tapestries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were covered with applique. Embroidered wall hangings were also popular in Germany and Italy during the Middle Ages.

In Flanders, tapestries were used in the decoration of churches. However, in the fourteenth century the use of tapestries was generalized. Tapestries were used to adorn the walls in many public buildings and homes.¹⁰ Fifteenth century tapestries in Flanders were of extremely fine quality. In the sixteenth century, a law was passed that all Brussels tapestries should be signed with the distinguishing mark of the town as well as the weaver. "The Brussels mark was a red shield with a large B on either side."¹¹ Figure 4 illustrates a wool and silk tapestry woven at Brussels presumably by Hendrick Mattens in the first third of the seventeenth century. It depicts the battle of Zama from the history of Scipio. However, the most famous of all the tapestries woven in Brussels was the set of the Acts of the Apostles designed by Raphael for Pope Leo X. They were woven in gold, silver, silk and with the finest workmanship. They are among the most important textile designs known.¹²

France, too, has played an important role in the development of wall hanging design. For example, some of the early textiles from Reims were adorned with embroidery, or the designs were printed in black and

¹⁰Garnet Warren in collaboration with Horace B. Cheney, The Romance of Design (New York, 1926), p. 87.

¹¹Thurstan, p. 60.

¹²Ibid.



Figure 4. Wool and Silk Tapestry Woven at Brussels Presumably by Hendrick Mattens in the First Third of the 17th Century. The Battle of Zama, from the series illustrating the history of Scipio, executed after the designs of Giulio Romano, Border of garlands, and putti, besides virtues and vices.

red.¹³ The opening of the Savonnerie Factory in Paris promoted the arts of carpet and tapestry weaving. Also, both the Gobelin and Aubusson factories played a major role in Medieval and Renaissance tapestry design. Many tapestries and hangings were used to ornament and embellish the interiors of Napoleon's palaces. In the twentieth century a revival of tapestry weaving has taken place and some fine modern work is being done.¹⁴

From the fourteenth century onwards, figured wall hangings had a prominent place among the textile arts of Switzerland. The art of creating tapestry and embroidery hangings was mainly carried on in the burgher's homes by their wives and daughters, and perhaps their servants.¹⁵ These hangings were used in the church as well as the home. One of the oldest surviving hangings is a woven medallion piece dating from the first half of the fourteenth century and originally used to adorn the high altar of Thun parish church.¹⁶ In fact, numerous hangings have survived from the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Many of these display the art of exceptionally fine needlework.

Decorative wall hangings were not unique to Europe for many fine fragmentary pieces of ancient tapestry and painted silk have survived from China, India, Persia and other Asiatic countries. For example, the use of wood blocks for printing textiles is generally credited to

¹³Weibel, p. 61.

¹⁴"Tapestry Weaving, Revival of an Ancient Art Form," American Fabrics, LII (Spring, 1961), p. 67.

¹⁵Robert L. Wyss, "Mediaeval and Renaissance Tapestries and Wall Hangings in Switzerland," Connoisseur, CLII (January, 1963), p. 23.

¹⁶Ibid.

the Chinese. Painting on silk was practiced in ancient China. The beautiful landscapes of the Ming Dynasty are considered among the world's finest art.¹⁷ Many beautiful and delicate embroidered hangings were produced during the days of the Chinese dynasties. This needlework became so meticulous that it was later outlawed in fear of blindness involved in its execution. In India, textile design has flourished for thousands of years. Many techniques were developed that continue to influence today's artist-craftsman (figure 5). The textiles of India include weaving, embroidery, applique, tie dyeing, block printing, resist printing and many other methods of work.

In South America, too, the natives excelled in creative textile design and many types of techniques were utilized. The tapestry work of ancient Peru was rich in color and texture. Sometimes designs characteristic of the period were embroidered on the finished tapestry. Many textiles used for clothing also illustrate exciting textile design techniques (figure 6). This figure illustrates feathers that have been appliqued in overlapping rows onto a plain cotton cloth backing.

The Cuna Indians of the San Blas Islands, off the coast of Panama, are noted for their primitive, delicate, meticulous yet bold applique work (figure 7). This fresh, imaginative needlework is created primarily to adorn the molas (blouses), of the women. This technique, reverse applique, has fascinated many contemporary artists. Tourists returning from these islands have brought back pieces of these appliqued fabrics and have used them as decorative wall hangings.

In this brief historical background the heritage of many textile

¹⁷Birrell, p. 419.



Figure 5. Resist-dyed Cotton From India, 12th-13th Century.

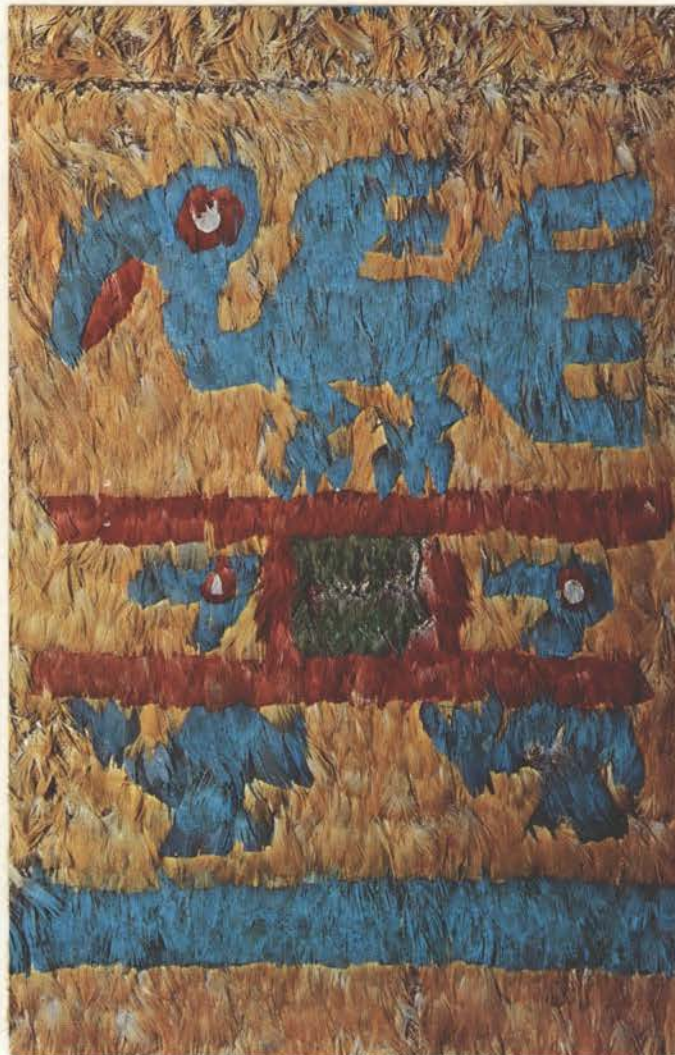


Figure 6. Detail of a Feather Applique.
The motif represents a large bird being
carried on a litter by smaller birds.
The feathers are sewn through the quill
in overlapping rows onto a plain cotton
cloth backing. Central coast of Peru
1200-1500 A.D.



Figure 7. This Meticulous Applique Fabric was Made by the Cuna Indians of Panama's San Blas Islands; it is in the Collection of Charlou A. Prettyman.

design techniques has been presented. Reference has been made to some textiles that have been used to decorate walls of dwellings through the centuries. The succeeding chapters describe some of these techniques for creating decorative wall hangings.

CHAPTER III

STITCHERY

Embroidery design is an age old craft that can be a most enjoyable medium for creating designs on wall hangings (figure 8). There are over three hundred named stitches available to the person interested in developing his stitch vocabulary. Many original stitches can be created and used; therefore, one is not limited to using only these known stitches. A few basic stitches will be covered in this chapter in order to give the reader a clear and concise description of how to make and use these stitches.

Needlework, traditionally called embroidery, includes an infinite number of techniques.

Embroidery and stitchery transmit basically the same meaning to the reader - that is, to arrange and combine various stitches to form a design or pattern in yarns, threads, and colors on a textile background. However, the term embroidery seems to convey the feeling of a more traditional art, such as crewelwork on cross-stitch, while stitchery gives a more contemporary and avant-garde impression. Actually it makes little difference what one calls this art...¹

Traditional approaches and the continuance of pure techniques such as needlepoint, petti-point, crewel, count-thread work and many folk styles pertain to a more purely defined form of stitchery and will not be included. Instead, a more versatile approach to the art of stitchery will be explored.

¹Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 25.

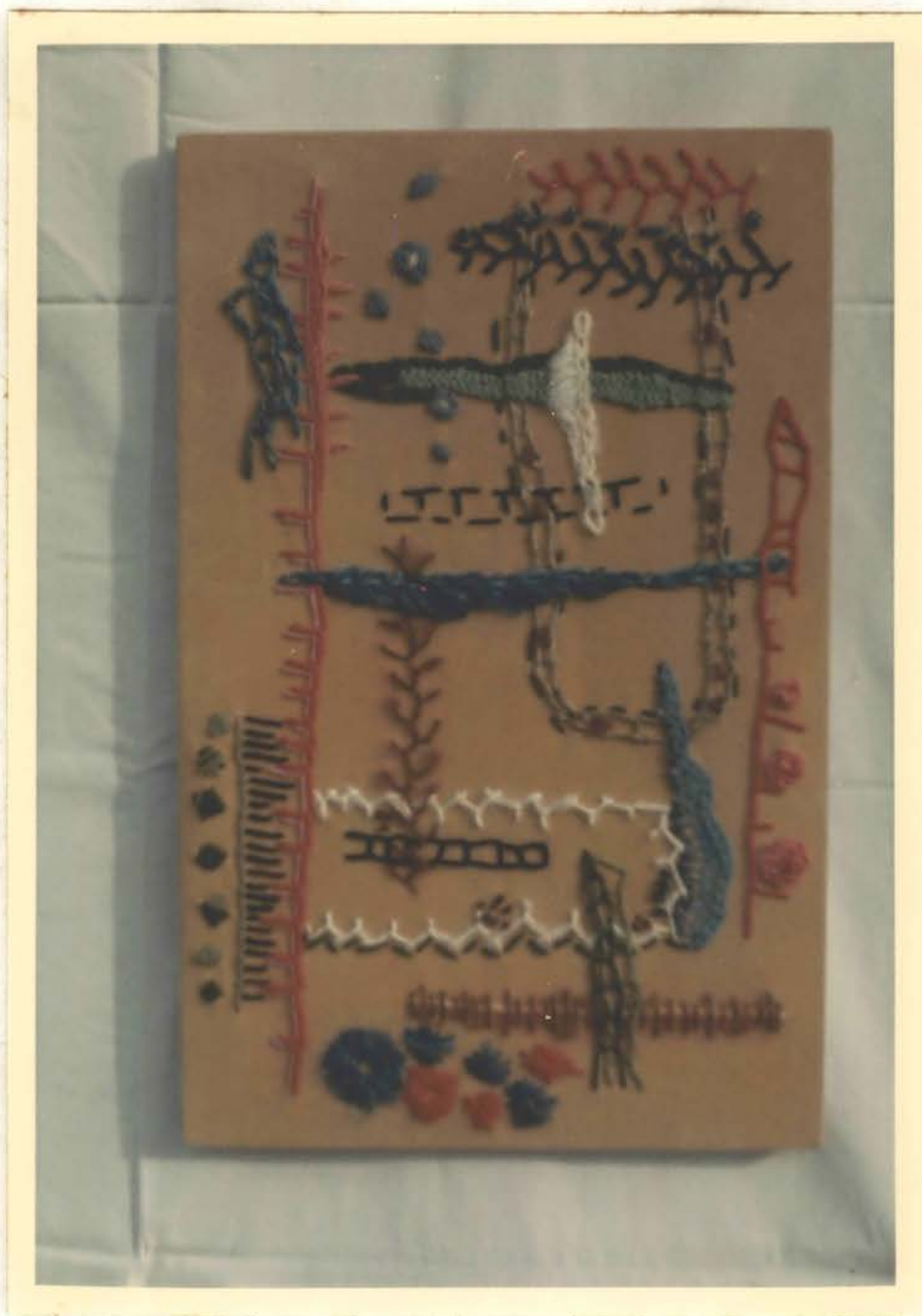


Figure 8. Stitchery Wall Hanging by Charlou A. Prettyman. A variety of stitches were used--chain, square chain, blanket, satin, feather, flat, cretan-catch, couching and French knot.

Fabrics and stitchery threads have recently undergone considerable metamorphosis due to developments in available materials as well as attitudes of the artist and the growing public interest in arts and crafts.² For example, Mariska Karasz, stitchery artist, has written several books on sewing and designing as well as serving as guest needlework editor of House Beautiful magazine says,

At first I embroidered in the traditional manner, but as I increased my vocabulary of stitches and selected new types of backgrounds and threads hitherto unused for this purpose, the medium took on a new light. I began to see stitches in their structural forms - the wrong side sometimes as beautiful as the right! I tried working on both sides of transparent fabrics, experimented with fresh materials, and achieved new textural effects. This changed the character of the work, making it more exciting, less pictorial, and not so time consuming - more in keeping with today's tempo.³

A "successful stitchery [figure 9] is accomplished when a relationship is established between the design and the stitching process."⁴ An infinite number of designs can be created through variation in placement and size of stitch, weight and color of thread or yarn, weave and texture of the base material, and thoughtful use of spacing. Also, designs can be created by combining stitchery with applique (figures 10 and 11) or other techniques. The beginner, as well as the artist-craftsman, should experiment with these variations and let his development grow from his own individual interests, needs, and creative imagination.

Stitchery is a perfect means for exercising a person's creativity because it is flexible and can easily be adapted to all kinds of

² Nik Krevitsky, Stitchery: Art and Craft, (New York, 1966), p. 18.

³ Mariska Karasz, Adventures in Stitches and More Adventures - Fewer Stitches (New York, 1959), p. 128.

⁴ Moseley, Johnson and Koenig, p. 230.



Figure 9. Stitchery Design Created with the Satin Stitch, Made in Nygeria, Africa.



Figure 10. Skirt Section Used as a Wall Hanging. Stitchery with mirror applique from the Sind Region in Pakistan.



Figure 11. Satin Stitch Design with Mirror Applique from the Sind Region in Pakistan.

materials, designs, and purposes. It can be used to enrich various kinds of background fabrics, from the tough and sturdy to the most sheer. However, to create with stitchery, one must learn to think in terms of fabrics, threads, and stitches. Learning to do the stitches is the easiest part of creative embroidery.

The process of learning a stitch usually consists of three stages. The first stage is to learn the mechanics of how a stitch is made. One should note that it is not the precision with which a stitch is made, but the total effect that counts. In the second stage, the stitch is practiced until the mechanics are forgotten and the needleworker begins to feel the rhythm of making the stitch. The third state consists of experimenting with the many different effects that can be created with the stitch.⁵ Thus, to inspire the beginner as well as the experienced practitioner, instructions and illustrations are given below in how to make and to recognize different kinds of stitches.

To begin learning the mechanics of a stitch, it is best to select a plain, coarse, basketweave fabric, such as burlap, so that the weave of the material will automatically guide the stitch. Any type of fabric background may be used. An assortment of needles is essential when working with yarn or thread of various thicknesses. For most stitchery, a size 17 tapestry needle with a very large eye and blunt point is preferable. To work the following stitches, the background fabric may be left loose or it may be stretched tightly on a frame.

The basic flat stitch is one of the most important. An endless

⁵"House Beautiful's Famous Creative Stitchery Series," House Beautiful, CIII (October, 1961), p. 208.

number of variations is possible with this stitch. The running stitch, back stitch, outline stitch, and satin stitch are all worked with the basic flat stitch. Also, the flat stitch may be used as a foundation upon which other stitches, such as the raised stem stitch, can be worked. The flat stitch can cover the background quickly, and it does not need to be precise or uniform. To work this stitch (figure 12), in the form of a cross, bring needle out in the center of an imaginary square. Insert needle at upper right corner of square and pass thread under material to upper left corner of square. From upper left corner, slant needle back to center and insert. Then pass needle under material to emerge at lower left corner. Bring needle back to center, to emerge next time at lower right corner. Carry thread on surface back to center and insert.⁶ These four stitches now have the appearance of two crossed stitches and the motif is complete. These stitches may be repeated to form a diamond shaped lattice.

The running stitch (figure 13) is worked from right to left and consists simply of running the needle in and out through the fabric at fairly regular intervals; however, this stitch may be used in any length desired. This stitch is used primarily to draw a line or outline a shape, but it may also be used as a filler stitch. When worked in rows, it will create a texture because it produces a half-and-half mixture of fabric and stitching thread. If fabric and thread are in contrasting colors, this stitch also tends to create a new color by the same

⁶"See How Creative Embroidery Can Tie Your Furnishings Together," House Beautiful, CIV (March, 1962), p. 89.

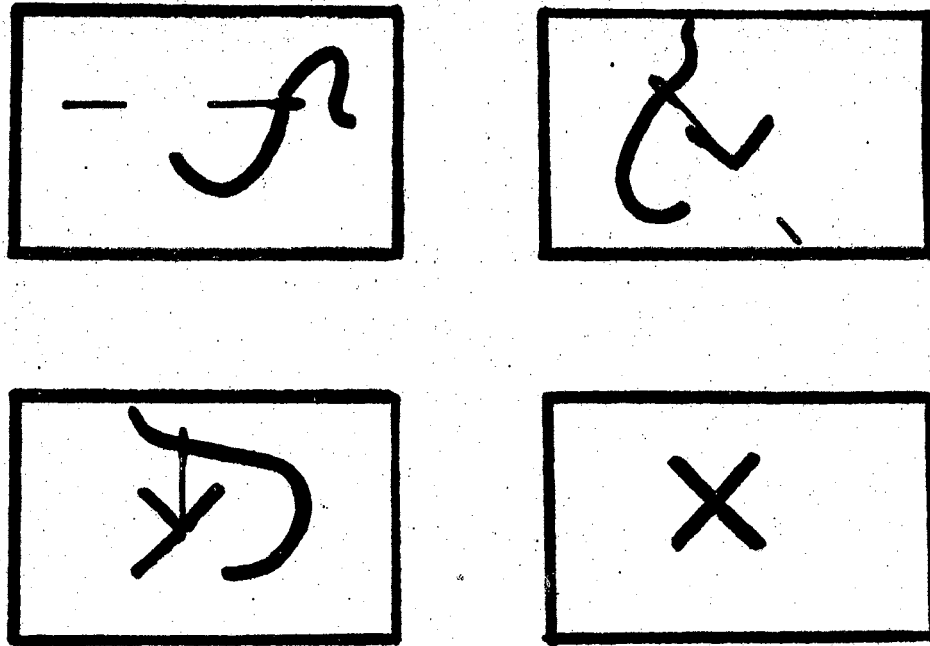


Figure 12. Flat Stitch.

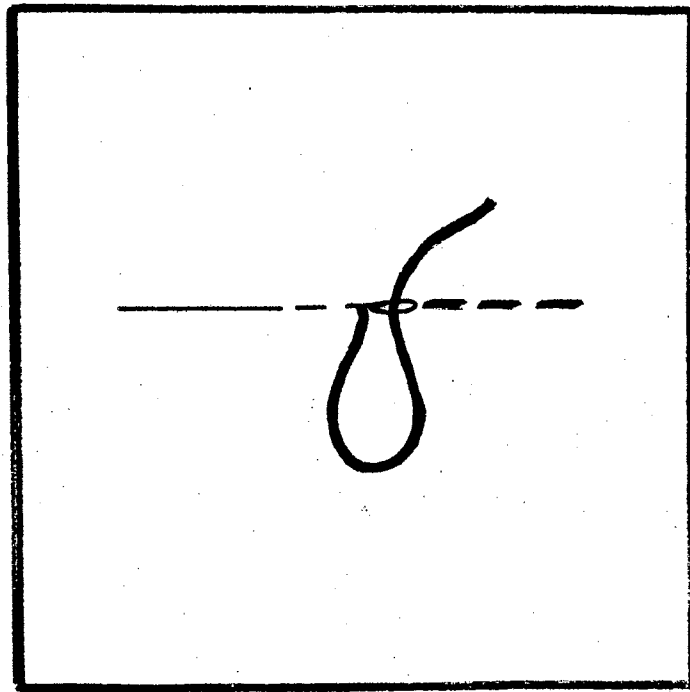


Figure 13. Running Stitch.

half-and-half mixture.⁷

The stem stitch, also called the outline stitch, is one of the earliest known stitches. "Examples of a similar stitch have been found in pictures of Coptic embroideries of the 4th century."⁸ This stitch (figure 14) is worked from right to left. The needle is inserted to the right across the fabric and it is brought back to the left under the fabric, with each stitch overlapping the previous one. If the needle is slanted slightly as it passes under the fabric and the overlap is only a small amount, the result will be a thin sharp outline. If the slant is considerable and the overlap is more than half way, the result will be the same as that which is commonly called the satin stitch.⁹ It does not matter whether the thread is held above or below the needle, but once a line is started, it should always be held to the same side. The stem stitch may be used to draw any kind of line, straight or curved; it may also be used for a filler.

The raised stem stitch is a surface stitch which is anchored to other stitches rather than to the fabric itself. The foundation for this stitch may consist of a series of straight parallel stitches evenly spaced, a series of spokes which meet at the center, or a series of buttonhole stitches.¹⁰ The raised stem stitch is an excellent way of filling in large areas. It may also be used to create a rosette

⁷"House Beautiful's Famous Creative Stitchery Series," p. 211.

⁸Erica Wilson, "A Primer of Crewel Embroidery," Woman's Day (January, 1964), p. 53.

⁹"House Beautiful's Famous Creative Stitchery Series," p. 211.

¹⁰"Borrow Design Ideas From Your Furnishings," House Beautiful, CIV (February, 1962), p. 141.

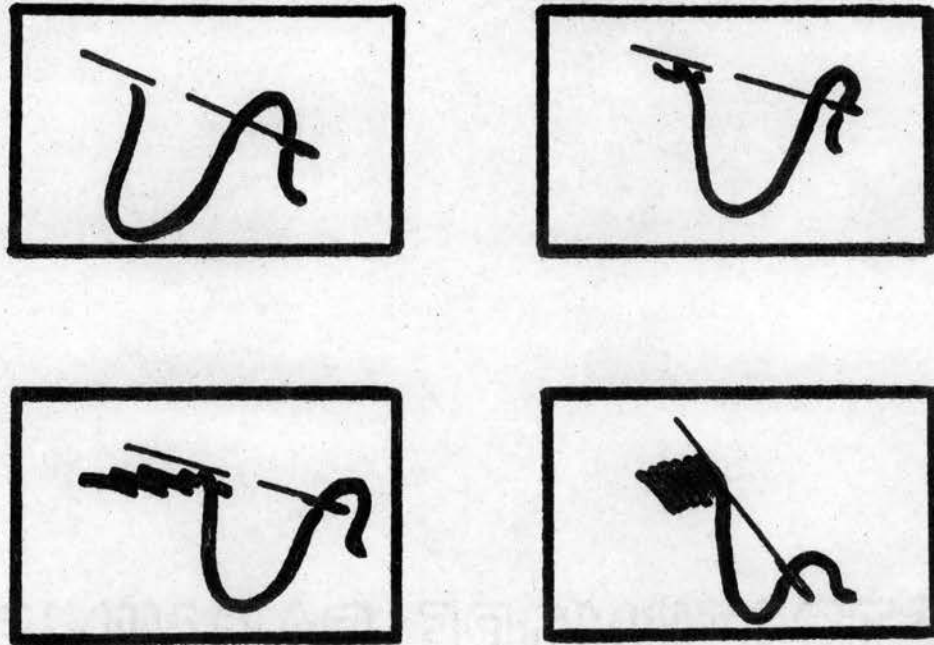


Figure 14. Outline Stitch or Stem Stitch.

as in the circular raised stem, or a border if the buttonhole stitch foundation is used. Regardless of the foundation used, the raised effect is produced in the same manner. To start the plain raised stem stitch (figure 15), make a series of straight parallel stitches evenly spaced to serve as a foundation. The length of these stitches and the width they are set apart depends upon the thickness of the yarn used and the area to be filled. A minimum of three stitches is needed to produce the effect. After the foundation has been completed, pass the needle under the fabric and pull it out at the upper left corner of the first stitch in the series. Carry the thread across the first foundation stitch and pass the needle from right to left under the second stitch without taking up any fabric. Pull it through. Continue this process to the end of the row. To complete the last stitch in the series, carry the thread over the foundation stitch and insert the needle into the fabric back toward the left. Bring the needle out just below the original starting point. Make as many rows as are needed to cover the foundation stitches. It does not matter whether the needle is brought out above or below the stitch as long as it is done the same way every time.

The catch stitch, or herringbone stitch, and its many variations may be used as a textural embellishment in borders or as a filler. Also, it may be used as a decorative method for catching down other stitches or appliqueing bits of fabric.¹¹ The catch stitch (figure 16) is worked between two imaginary horizontal lines. Starting on the lower line,

¹¹"A Quick Creative Needle," House Beautiful, CIV (April, 1962), p. 166.

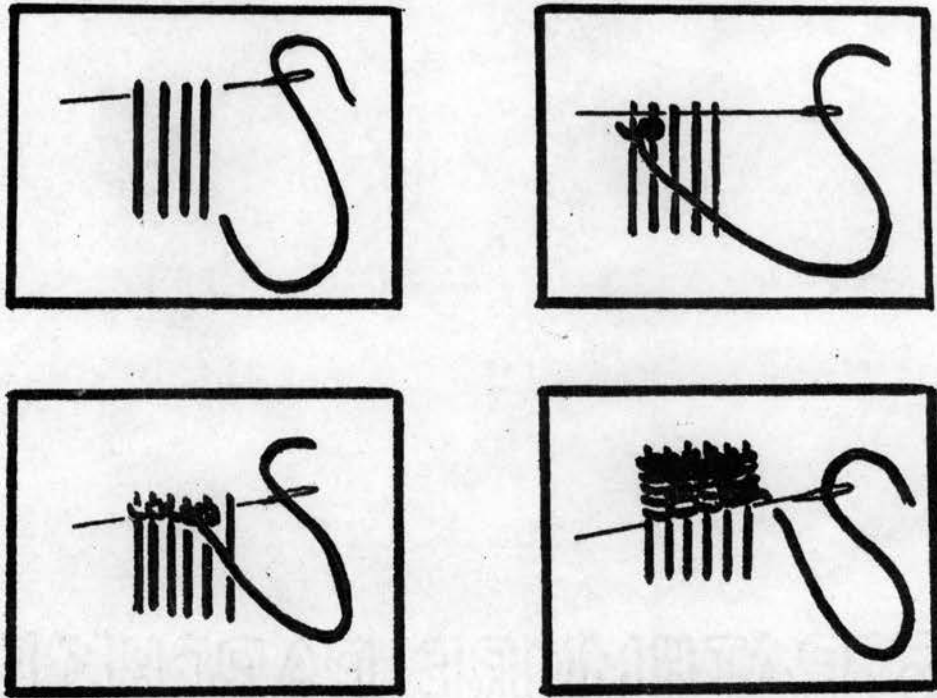


Figure 15. Raised Stem Stitch.

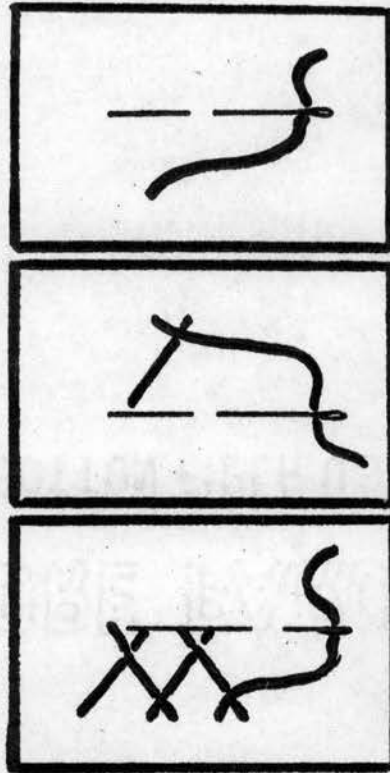


Figure 16. Catch or
Herringbone Stitch.

pull thread through and make a 45° stitch to upper line. Point needle to left and take a horizontal stitch catching up several strands of fabric. Next, point needle to right and take another 45° stitch to lower line. Backstitch so that needle will emerge to left directly below start of catch stitch on upper row. Pull thread through and repeat these steps. The resulting surface stitches of the simple catch stitch will slant and cross at the top and bottom.

The cretan catch stitch (figure 17) is a variation of the simple catch stitch; however, this time the catch stitch on the upper line is worked vertically, not horizontally. Thus, the resulting surface stitch appears as a single vertical at top and a horizontal cross at bottom. This difference in textural effect lends itself well to any curved design.

Of the many stitches available to the needleworker, the basic chain stitch may be utilized for numerous purposes. It is a good outline stitch as well as a filler stitch. To work this stitch (figure 18), bring the needle and thread completely through the background, return the needle to starting point, and make a short running stitch under the fabric. After the needle emerges from the fabric, loop the thread under the needle, and pull through all slack thread. Make second stitch in same manner inserting needle inside previous loop at point where thread emerges from fabric.

The chain stitch has many variations, some of them form motifs or patterns of their own. One of these, the square chain stitch, forms a series of squares instead of a looped chain. It is an excellent filler. Begin as for regular chain, but insert the needle to the right of the first thread hole slanting it back to left so that it emerges a short

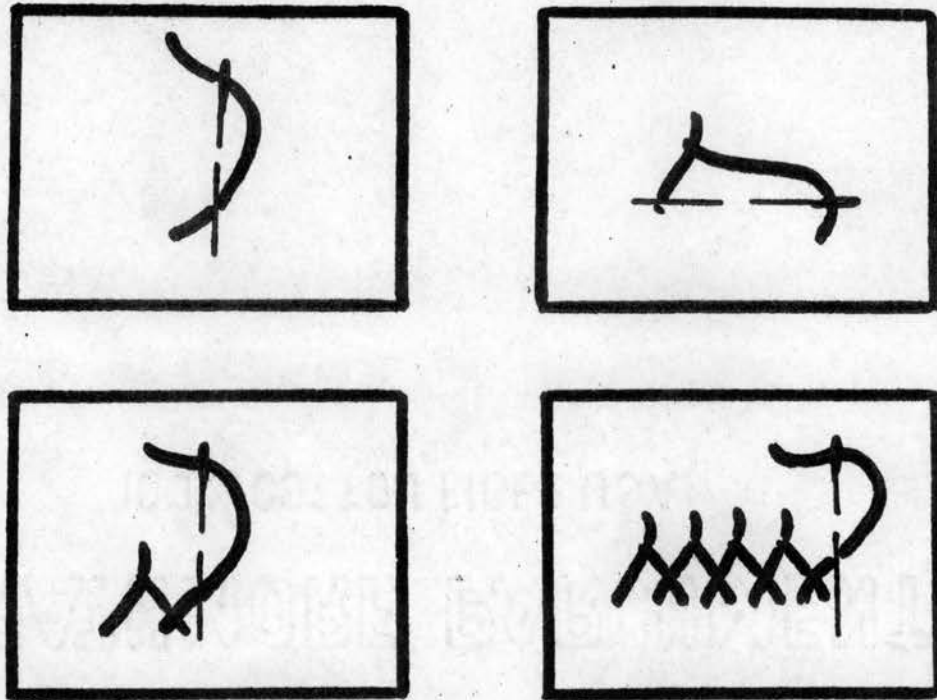


Figure 17. Cretan Catch Stitch.

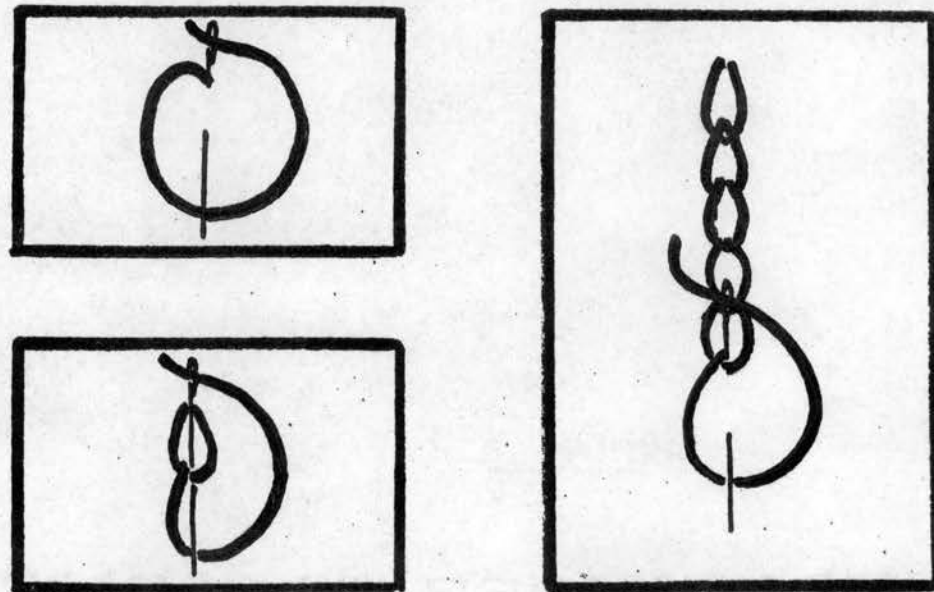


Figure 18. Chain Stitch.

distance below starting point (figure 19). Loop thread around needle and draw the needle through fabric. Keep stitches loose or difficulty will be experienced in forming the square. When making the second stitch, insert the needle inside previous loop to the right of last stitch, and directly below the point where it was started before. Both the chain and the square chain can be varied in many ways, such as length or angle, but it is important to keep the tension uniform.

The blanket or buttonhole stitch is an excellent stitch with which to build pattern or texture. It may also be used to embellish a border, catch other yarns, or in appliqueing bits of fabric. To begin the blanket stitch (figure 20), bring needle up on lower line of design. Draw thread around to right to form a loop and insert needle one-half to one inch to the right of starting point so that it points into loop. Draw needle through over loop of thread and continue process. Various effects may be created by regulating the length and width of each stitch in the series.

The feather stitch is similar to the blanket stitch. It is one of the most versatile of stitches because it can be used to outline a form, fill a form, or it can be used as a form itself.¹² This stitch may be worked from top to bottom or from left to right. It is similar to the blanket stitch in execution; however, instead of running the stitch under the fabric in a perpendicular fashion, it is slanted. To begin this stitch (figure 21), it helps to imagine that it is being worked along two parallel, horizontal lines. Pull the needle and thread through

¹²"How to Create With One Stitch," House Beautiful, CIII (November, 1961), p. 208.

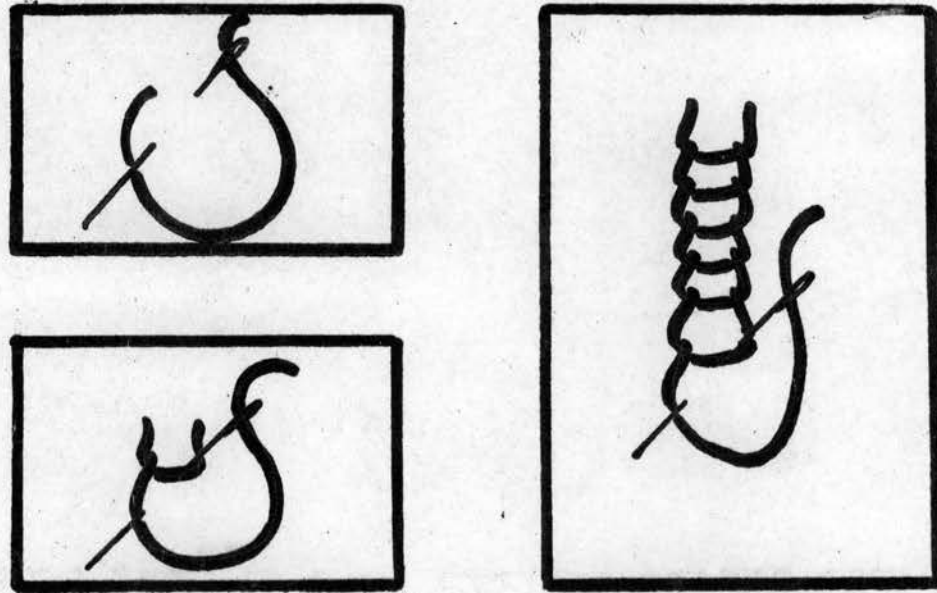


Figure 19. Square Chain Stitch

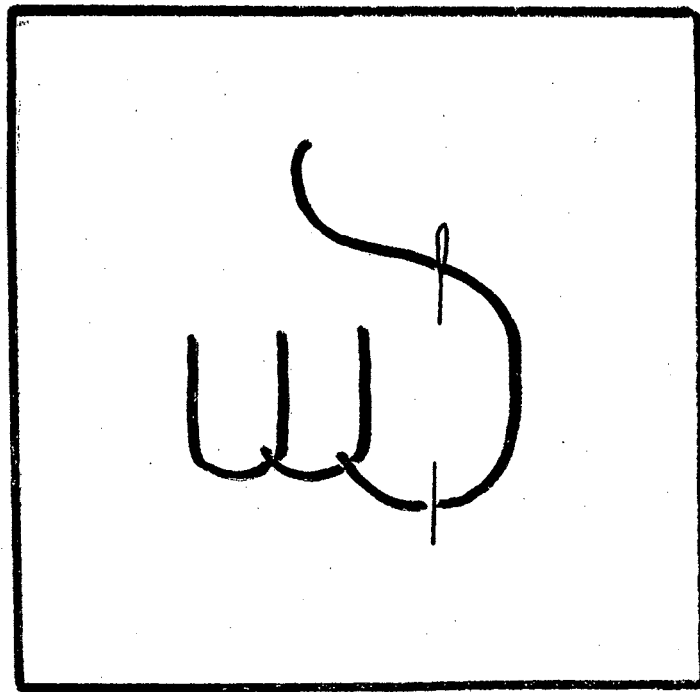


Figure 20. Blanket or Buttonhole Stitch.



Figure 21. Feather
Stitch.

the fabric at a point near the right end of the lower line. The first stitch will be along the upper line, somewhat to the left of the starting point. Before inserting needle, draw thread around clockwise to make a loop, insert needle and take a short stitch through fabric crossing over loop just made. The second stitch will be along the lower line somewhat to the left of the stitch above. Make this stitch by drawing the thread around in a counter-clockwise direction, and then proceed as for the first stitch. Continue working in same manner by alternating from lower row to upper row. When working this stitch, be sure that the slack thread is pulled through each time and that the needle crosses over the loop stitch each time it emerges from the fabric.

The French knot is an excellent stitch for the embroiderer to have in his stitch vocabulary. Like all the other stitches described, it may be used in numerous ways to enhance the design of a fabric. Since this stitch forms a dot, it can be used alone, or it can be combined with other stitches when unusual effects are desired. For example, it could be used in the center of a curved chain stitch or as an accent stitch at the tip end of a radiating spoke design. Also, this stitch may be utilized when filling in areas or outlining. To form this stitch (figure 22), bring needle up at point where knot is to be made. Wind thread around needle several times and return the needle through the fabric as close as possible to the spot where thread emerged. The size of the knot can be varied depending on the number of times the thread is wound around the needle.

These basic stitches are not difficult to master, but like any skill, they take practice to perfect. One should remember that it is not the precision with which a stitch is made, but the total effect

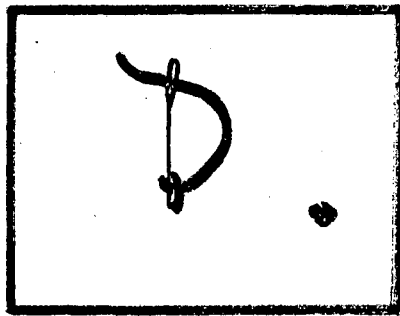


Figure 22. French Knot.

that counts. Thus, one should always investigate and experiment with the effect of a stitch and its many variations by changing the weight and coarseness of the threads and materials used. After becoming thoroughly acquainted with needlework, yarns, and fabrics, the beginner as well as the artist-craftsman is prepared to design a wall hanging.

The actual process used to work out a fabric design for a wall hanging varies with the individual. A person may use such methods as cut paper, line drawings, or free charcoal sketches to suggest skillful combinations of texture, colors and shapes for a design. Designs may also be created through the use of needle and thread. Thus, "there is no rule of where to begin or where not to begin a design in embroidery."¹³

¹³Anna N. Ballarian, "Embroidery Design," School Arts, LX (April, 1961), p. 21.

CHAPTER IV

APPLIQUE

Although stitchery may be utilized to create a valid and profound "painting in yarns," it is only one of many methods of constructing and creating a decorative wall hanging.¹ Applique, the process of fastening pieces of fabric, straw, raffia, leather, metallics, beads, feathers, or other materials to fabric, is another means of producing interesting results in creative textile design. In fact, many fibers and threads which are too fragile for traditional needlework may be included in an applique design (figure 23). This is because they may be incorporated in ways which strengthen them, such as veilings of net or sheer fabric, or variations of couching and other stitchery techniques; or they may be assembled in other ways to add durability to them and to the structure of the work.² Other methods of securing materials to a fabric background include glueing, wiring, tying and pinning; however, these are seldom used in a "finished" wall hanging. Thus, technically, applique almost always involves stitchery as a means of applying decoration or ornamentation to a piece of material.

¹Van Dommelen, *Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric*, p. 43.

²Mariska Karasz, "Abstract Stitches," *Craft Horizons*, XIII No. 2 (March-April, 1953), p. 11.



Figure 23. Stitchery and Applique Wall Hanging Displayed in an Arts and Crafts Shop in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Although applique might appear to be a limited area in which to work, this is not true. An artist's only limitation is the extent of his or her imagination and creative stimulus. Once one begins to have a vocabulary of stitches, applique becomes a thousand times more interesting and intriguing. There are many combinations of interesting textiles and yarns (or threads) that can be used.³

The technique of applique can be approached in many different ways depending on the end result desired by the artist. For example, large areas of fabrics can be applied to a base simply and relatively quickly without concern for turning under the edges. This is entirely possible in the production of wall hangings because they are nonutilitarian objects, and there would be no danger of fraying edges from abrasive wear.⁴ Also, the method of turning under the edges and making fine and determined hems may be used (figure 24). However, one must face the task of a long and tedious job because small, tiny stitches are incorporated in this part of the work. The end result will be a product with clearly defined forms.

With applique, it is possible to achieve graphic effects not attainable through other methods.⁵ For instance, a three-dimensional effect can be produced by transparent fabrics laid over heavier ones, and by sewing one kind of stitch over another.⁶ Also, color mutations may be created by overlapping or juxtaposing various pieces of colored transparent cloth. Still other design effects and color combinations may be

³Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 43.

⁴Ibid., p. 65.

⁵"Nik Krevitsky: On Stitchery," Craft Horizons, XXIII No. 6 (November-December, 1963), p. 18.

⁶Ballarian, p. 19.

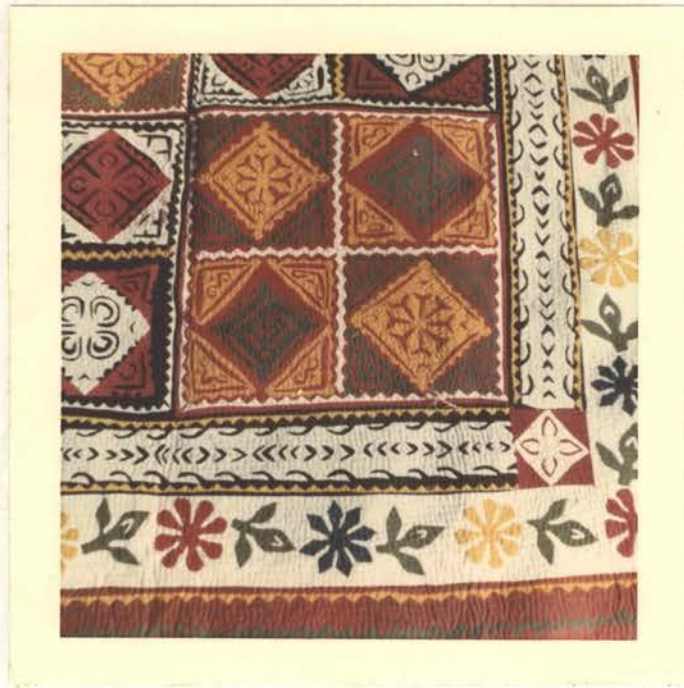


Figure 24. Applique Quilt From the Sind Region in Pakistan.

created by cutting spaces through the background and placing colored cloth behind these openings (figure 25). This particular process is usually termed reverse applique.

The meticulous technique of reverse applique is generally credited to the Cuna Indians of Panama's San Blas Islands.⁷ This creative needlework, product of a comparatively primitive culture, is made into blouses, called molas.

What is particularly intriguing is the transformation common and familiar motifs undergo in the hands of these Indian women, into mystic, unique and elegant pictures of amazing esthetic vigor and visual power. In predominant reds, oranges, greens and blues that vibrate in close juxtaposition, their designs - primitive and gay, narrative and symbolic - represent forms and figures from daily life on the island and from the outside world. . . .⁸

Obviously the mola is not meant by the local Indians to be used as a wall hanging, but tourists returning from these islands have often brought pieces of these appliqued fabrics back with them to be used as decorative hangings or pillows in their homes (figure 26).

To create a reverse applique design, several layers of colored fabric are basted together, then small areas from each layer are cut away. In general, the largest pieces are cut from the top layer, and smaller ones are cut from the underlying layers. The color of the top layer will dominate. The colors that show through the openings will depend upon the number of layers cut through in a particular place. Care should be exercised in the cutting process to provide enough seam allowance to turn under between the cut-out shapes. Turn

⁷"Reverse Applique," Woman's Day, (May, 1966), p. 33.

⁸"The Appliques of The San Blas," Craft Horizons, XX No. 1 (January-February, 1960), p. 24.

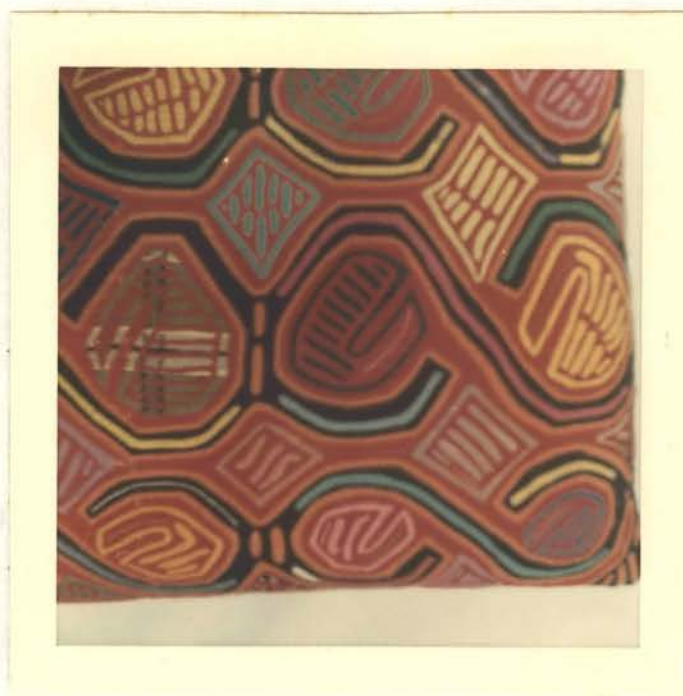


Figure 25. This Meticulous Applique was Executed by the Cuna Indians of Panama's San Blas Islands; it is in the Collection of Charlou A. Prettyman.



Figure 26. These Meticulous Applique Designs were Executed by the Cuna Indians of Panama's San Blas Islands. These pieces are in the collection of Charlou A. Prettyman.

under the edges of the cut-out areas and sew them in place with invisible stitches. No matter how many layers are used, the stitches go through all the layers so they appear on the back. The purpose of this is to hold the underlying layers of fabric in place.⁹ The result of a reverse applique is a design with a richly textured, multi-colored surface that seems almost to be carved (figure 25 and 26). Thus, for anyone who enjoys needlework, this meticulous process offers a fascinating range of possibilities.

With the applique technique, numerous types of materials may be combined to create a wall hanging. There are no rules established concerning the combinations of various materials; however, it is best to keep the design simple, and work for harmonious relationships of shapes, textures and colors. While the hand method of applique has been stressed in this chapter, the possibility of using the sewing machine to applique yarns as well as other materials to a background should not be forgotten. In fact, some of the most interesting textural combinations are achieved when a flat machine-applied piece of fabric is nested close to a piece of fabric appliqued by hand.¹⁰ The technique of applique does not have to be restricted to its "pure form", for it may be combined with other techniques in the creation of a decorative wall hanging.

⁹"Reverse Applique," p. 3.

¹⁰Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 55.

CHAPTER V

HOOKING

The process of hooking is simple but rather time consuming, as is the case with most hand processes. There are several different needles or machines that can be employed in this craft. A simple crochet hook, punch needle, or one of the new automatic hooking needles may be used. Most craftsmen today, however, prefer the crochet hook or punch needle, because these two methods generally allow the designer more freedom in executing his designs.¹ The automatic hooking needle has its advantages because it speeds the process. However, it does not provide for variation in the length or depth of pile because the length of the loop is pre-set automatically. Whatever process is used for creating a hooked hanging, the result is a number of small loops that are pulled or pushed through the background fabric at desired lengths and depth of pile to correspond with the desired design.

Today the rug seems to have taken its place on the vertical surfaces of our homes. It has become more painting than rug, and many people have found that the rug is as valid on the wall as it is on the floor...Regardless of one's philosophy on this subject, it should be mentioned that hooking can and is being utilized as a wall hanging medium.²

In working with the crochet hook, the craftsman works from the

¹Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 100.

²Ibid., p. 99.

front of the background fabric and pulls the loops toward him; this method permits the designer to view the face of the "in process" hanging. To work with the automatic hooker or the punch needle, the artist works from the reverse side (back) of the fabric and pushes the loops away from him. The type of tool used to create a hooked hanging depends on the individual and his approach to the immediate problem. There is no one right way to make a hooked wall hanging, and there is no single right hook. "Often several tools can give the same final result just as one tool may do several different jobs."³

Hooking is generally done upon a base of heavy cloth in which the fibers are not tightly woven so that the hook can penetrate the cloth with yarn to form the pile. One can safely assume that any fabric will be satisfactory as a backing if it gives stability to the structure of the work and if it allows the hook to pierce the fabric without difficulty. Since the background fabric must be stretched across a frame during the hooking process to enable the hooking tool to punch through the fabric effectively, it should not be seamed. If the fabric is seamed, the pressure applied to the wide punch needle during the hooking process is apt to cause the fabric background to ravel at the seam and release the hooked stitches.⁴ The frame may be made from a variety of materials; however, it is usually made with four strips of pine, mitered at the corners and nailed together. Regardless of the material used, a frame must be firmly constructed because the background fabric is

³George J. Wells, "A Rug Hooker Rebels," Craft Horizons, XIII No. 3 (May-June, 1953), p. 25.

⁴Interior Art and Decoration (Menlo Park, California, 1963), p. 73.

stretched on it with considerable tension. The fabric is usually tacked to the edges of the frame allowing a two-or-three inch margin left around the entire piece for hemming. These edges are hemmed after the craftsman has finished the hooking.

In hooking a wall hanging the designer or craftsman usually makes a preliminary sketch or plan of the "finished" design. A full size sketch of the design, including identifying marks for specific areas, colors, and textures is then transferred onto the backing to serve as a guide for the hooking process.⁵ It is helpful when working on such a project to hook in all areas of one color before proceeding to the next color. In this way the craftsman can see how the total design is developing and can change or alter the original plan if needed. Because of the decorative value of the material used, a design is not actually complete until the wall hanging is finished.⁶

Since most any tool purchased for the purpose of hooking will have explicit instructions, including illustrations, on how to use that particular tool correctly, this chapter will not discuss this phase of the hooking process. However, a few basic hooking techniques will be given. Regardless of the tool used in the hooking process, the heel or palm of the craftsman's hand should be in constant contact with the backing fabric. By working in this way, the hooker will be able to keep the looped pile at a regulated length. Also, the tip of the punch or automatic hooker should not be lifted off the surface of the fabric between

⁵Wells, p. 26.

⁶Ibid., p. 23.

stitches for this will pull the stitches out.⁷ The number of threads skipped between stitches and between rows of hooking will depend on the weight of the yarns used and on the length or depth of the pile. There should be plenty of slack in the yarn during the hooking process. Work can be done either in rows or by following the contours of the design. When the work for each area or color is finished, the yarn should be cut on the right side to correspond with the length of the looped pile. The finished hanging may be sized to hold the yarns securely in place. This is not a necessity for a wall hanging because it is not subject to hard wear. However, for cleaning purposes it would be advisable to have the yarns securely held in place.

The technique of hooking can be used by itself to create a decorative wall hanging, or it can be combined with other techniques, such as knotting, applique, and stitchery. It should be noted that this is by no means a complete list of the techniques that can be combined with hooking. Hooking can be combined with a variety of techniques to form a textile design. To use the hooking technique by itself, the designer can cover the background completely with small loops to form a pile (figure 27). Also, hooking can be used to embellish the basic shapes of a design by leaving the background unhooked as a part of the composition. This results in a three-dimensional effect created from the contrast of hooking against the background. Stitchery can also be successfully combined with hooking as figure 28 illustrates.

In "Wheat Field". . . the major portion is hooking, closely placed and with deep pile. The chain stitch and the cretan

⁷Interior Art and Design, p. 73.

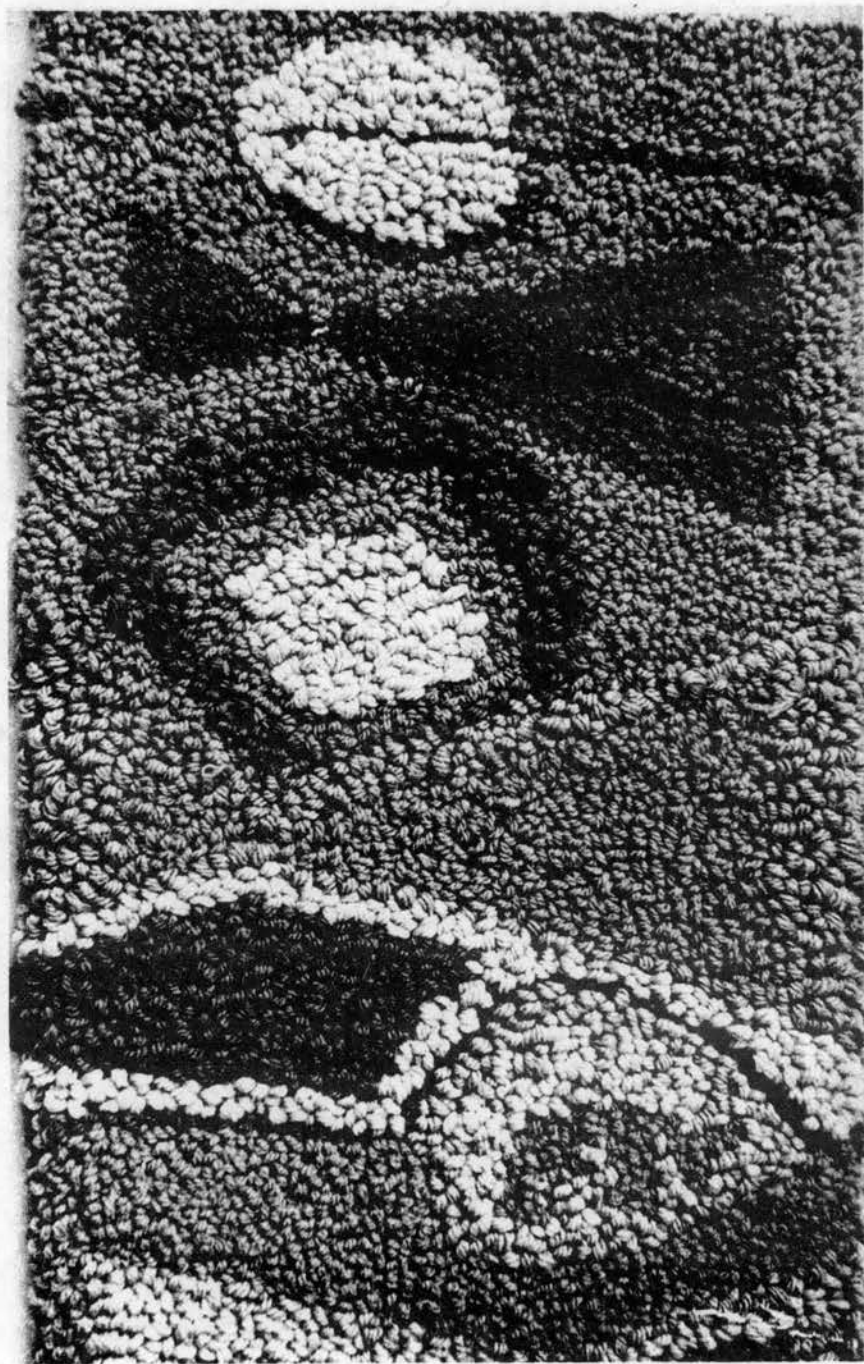


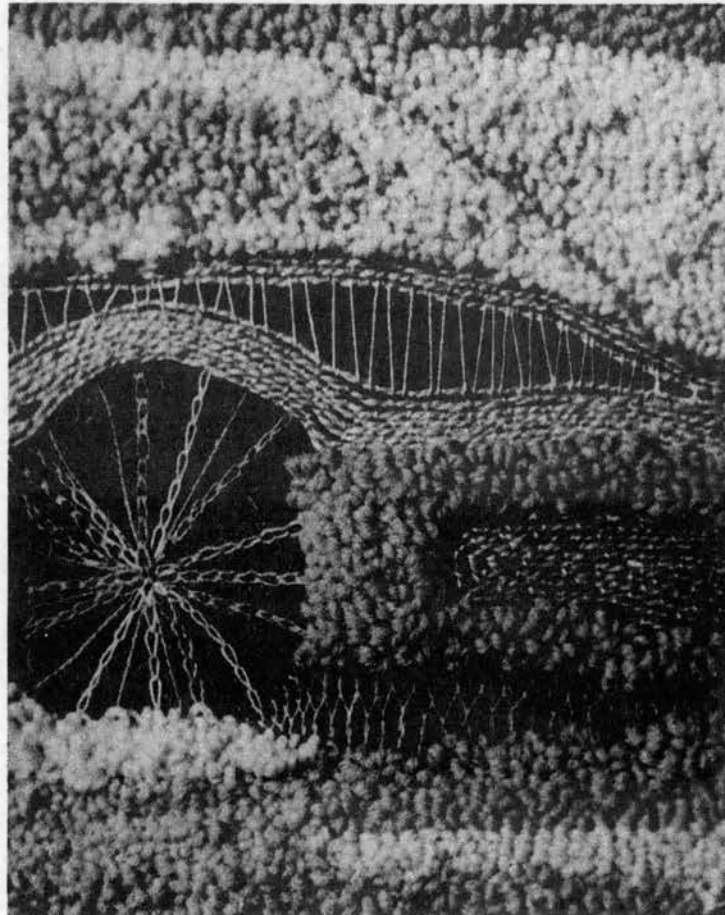
Figure 27. Detail of a Hooked Wall Hanging
by David B. Van Dommelen.

A



Figure 28. "Wheat Field" by David B. Van Dommelen. In this wall hanging stitchery and hooking have been combined to give rich textural effects. A shows the full hanging; B shows a detailed section.

B



stitch are the main stitches that have been utilized in this hooked hanging on a dark gray burlap background.⁸

As for the type of surface materials to use in a hooked hanging, there is no reason not to include anything and everything that will enhance the total design. Use rags, yarn, a piece of fabric, or fur. "The end, not the means, is what matters."⁹ In fact, many fibers and fabrics can be adapted to the process of hooking if one only realizes the infinite variation possible through the free use of tools, textures, and materials. This was pointed out by the designer, George J. Wells, when he said

Textures are multiple; in every fabric there is a basic fiber plus weave, then there is also the loop, narrow or wide, high or low, as well as the spacing and grouping of these loops. Add the endless possibilities of color to the intricate combinations of rags, yarns, knots and loops and a craftsman can get any number of effects from the same material.¹⁰

⁸Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 101.

⁹Wells, p. 23.

¹⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

TIE AND DYE

The technique of dyeing can be used to create decorative designs on wall hangings. It may also be combined with other techniques, such as stitchery or applique, to add a small dyed portion to the design. That many dye processes are extremely complicated usually requiring a detailed knowledge of dye sources, mordants, and chemical compositions presented herewith are some elementary methods of dyeing which can easily be understood and used by the beginner as well as the artist-craftsman.

One technique of dyeing is called tie and dye. In this method of dyeing, the design is usually drawn on the fabric or marked by means of dots, running stitches, or pins. The portions of the fabric which are to remain white, or the color of the original fabric, are picked up with the fingertips and wound and tied very tightly with a string or waxed thread. The fabric is then dyed. After drying, the second tying process will cover only those areas that the artist wishes to remain the color of the first dye. This process of tie and dye is repeated until the desired design is finished (figure 29). Although most artists use a sketch for this type of work, very unusual effects can be obtained by designing directly on the material.

The designing possibilities of the tie-dye technique are unlimited. Various patterns or forms can be accomplished with this technique,



Figure 29. Tie and Dye Fabric Illustrating Numerous Dye Baths and Tie Techniques.

depending upon how the fabric itself is tied. If the fabric is folded lengthwise or crosswise in pleats and various sections are tied tightly, the result will be long streaky stripes of color. If the material is folded both lengthwise and crosswise and then tied, the result will be irregular checked marks.¹ To create a round "clear" circle or ring effect, the craftsman should pick up a portion of the fabric and begin tying the cloth by evenly distributing the fabric in folds.

Also, unusual effects can be obtained by using masking tape to cover up the portion of the fabric that is not to be dyed. Objects, such as seeds or buttons, can be tied or sewn into the fabric to form certain designs. This variation of tie-dyeing is known as object-resist.² Another method of tie and dye work, known as tuft-tie, is executed on a metal plate marked by small steel pins. In this process, the steel pins form the points on the fabric (fabric is laid on top of the pin plate) that are to be tied in accordance with the design. Very intricate designs result from this technique (figure 30). Still another technique that can be used to "tie" a fabric consists of outlining a design with small running stitches of waxed thread. (After the design is outlined, the thread is drawn up tightly to hold the gathers in place. The dyed fabric will have a slightly irregular outline. These methods of tying a fabric may be used alone, or they may be combined with other fabric design techniques to create an attractive wall hanging. These are by no means all the techniques which can be used to tie-dye fabric.

For this process, any background fabric may be used, but a thin,

¹Lotti Lauterburg, Fabric Printing (New York, 1959), p. 8.

²Birrell, p. 413.



Figure 30. Tie and Dye Fabric. Design was probably executed by tuft tying fabric on metal plate.

light-weight fabric is best. Silks are particularly fine when tie-dyed because they attain a higher degree of brilliancy than do most other fibers. The fabric should always be washed to remove sizing and ironed to remove wrinkles before tieing. After tieing fabric, it should be thoroughly "wet out" before dipping it into the dye. After this process is completed, the fabric is submerged in warm, not hot, dye and agitated so that the fabric will dye evenly. The dye pan must be large enough for the fabric to be completely covered by the dye; the dye must be thoroughly dissolved, strained, and evenly distributed in the dye bath.³ The fabric is removed from the dye bath as soon as it reaches a shade darker than the desired tint. The fabric will always appear a shade darker when wet.

The type of dye used for this process as well as the batik process can vary, but it must be used cold because the method used to tie the fabric or wax it would be harmed if the fabric were boiled during the dyeing process. Thus, the type of dye used will depend on the designer and his approach to the problem.

Most of the dyes used in this country today are artificial dyes, and are available in ten-cent stores and grocery stores. These are the dyes which are used by housewives for dyeing various household items. The directions which come with the dye are very easy to follow. Of course, the craftsman who wishes to make his own dyes from natural materials can do so. There are many good sources available in libraries covering many different ways to make dyes.⁴

After the fabric has been dyed it should be rinsed and treated with a mordant to "set" or "fix" the cold dyes. Several methods can be

³Ibid., p. 415.

⁴Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 130.

used to set the dye, but the following mordating processes are highly recommended. In the first process, the material is removed from the dye bath and it is put in a 5% solution of tannic acid for 30 minutes. After being removed from the first solution, it is put in a 5% solution of tartar emetic for 15 minutes, then rinsed thoroughly and pressed.⁵ In the second process, the mordant can be pressed into the fabric. The fabric is covered with a damp cloth wrung out of a dilute solution of white vinegar (4 tablespoons of vinegar to 1 cup of water) then pressed with a warm iron to set colors.⁶ Also, a little soap or alum may be used in the dye bath to help stabilize the colors. Following the mordating process, the piece is allowed to dry. After being pressed with an iron, it is finished except for being mounted and hung as a wall hanging.

⁵ Birrell, p. 401.

⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

BATIK

Batik is another form of dyeing that can be used by the craftsman to produce sparkling colors in wall hangings. Batik is similar to tie-dye because it is a resist dye technique; however, in the batik process, the resist is formed by painting wax on certain areas of the fabric before dyeing it.

When the wax is removed, an intriguing pattern of color and design is revealed, the result of an interplay between the dye and the blocked-out areas. The cloth can then be rewaxed and redyed any number of times to make the pattern even more intricate and more subtle in its colors. The pliant and unpredictable quality of the wax itself creates the effect for which batik is famous: the unique shadings and mellow colors that appear when one transparent dye overlaps another; the delicate tones and textures that turn up, sometimes as surprises, when dye seeps through fine cracks in the wax coating.¹

Thus, vast designing possibilities are available to the designer with the batik process. The batik process can be used by itself or it can be combined with other fabric design techniques to create a decorative wall hanging.

"True" batik is a well-known medium that has been used for centuries in the Far East. The batik work from Java and the surrounding islands is intricate and delicate. When batik was introduced into the United States in the early 1900's, the technique was modified somewhat

¹"Batik," Woman's Day, (April, 1966), p. 50.

because the Javanese methods were laborious and slow and did not lend themselves to modern uses.² Thus, the "western" version of batiking will be stressed in this chapter, but two Javanese methods of batiking will be mentioned, for the designer may wish to incorporate these with the modern version.

In the finest examples of Javanese batik work the designs are drawn on the fabric with a "tjanting tool." If the design consists of many small detailed areas, it may take thirty to fifty days to produce two yards of fabric with the tjanting tool.³ The tjanting tool is a little, cup-shaped tool with a handle set at right angles to the base on one side. On the other side, is a fine sprout arrangement that tapers toward the point.⁴ This tool is used to apply the molten wax. The second method of batiking is known as "tjap." In this process, the design is stamped on the material with a metal tool that has been immersed in hot wax.⁵ This method of applying wax is similar to block printing a design on fabric. Regardless of the differences in applying wax, the chief difference in the "modern" way of batiking and the Javanese way is the order in which the colors are dyed. In the modern method, the artist starts dyeing with the lightest color and dyes tone over tone. In the Javanese batik process, the artist dyes the darkest color first and removes the wax each time a lighter shade is needed.⁶

²Van Dommelen, Decorative Wall Hangings: Art With Fabric, p. 130.

³Nik Krevitsky, Batik Art and Craft, (New York, 1964), p. 8.

⁴Pieter Mijer, Batiks and How To Make Them, (New York, 1928), p. 32.

⁵Krevitsky, Batik Art and Craft, p. 8.

⁶Mijer, p. 2.

The modern western approach to batik is quite different from the traditional Javanese method. It tends to be freer, bolder, more direct and spontaneous in concept and in actual production (figure 31). Although designs of this type often seem casual, uncontrolled, and sometimes quite accidental; the artist's skill, discernment, ingenuity, and knowledge of the wax-resist process are truly evident. Batik printing requires a great amount of skill and knowledge of design, as well as a knowledge of color: design and color form the foundation of a good batik design (figure 32). Even though it may be more difficult to work out a truly "beautiful" design with the batik process, the beginner as well as the artist craftsman will find the batik process very rewarding.

In starting a batik, first remove all sizing by thoroughly washing the fabric. If an extremely thin fabric is used, the designer may wish to apply a thin solution of starch to the fabric. This starching will permit a smooth application of wax and prevent edges of the wax from bleeding during the waxing process.⁷ The fabric should then be ironed and stretched on a wooden frame for the waxing process. Allow enough border for the design to be free of the frame on which the material is tacked so that the wax can penetrate all portions of the design evenly.⁸ The melted wax (paraffin or beeswax or a combination of both) is brushed onto the fabric in those areas which are to remain white or the color of the original fabric. The fabric is dyed, and the dye adheres to the exposed or unwaxed portion of the fabric. After drying, the second application of wax covers those areas that the artist wishes

⁷Krevitsky, Batik Art and Craft, p. 23.

⁸Mildred Haw, "Make a Batik," The Missouri Farmer, (November, 1966), p. 28.



Figure 31. "St. George," Batik Wall Hanging on Cotton by J. Don Wood.

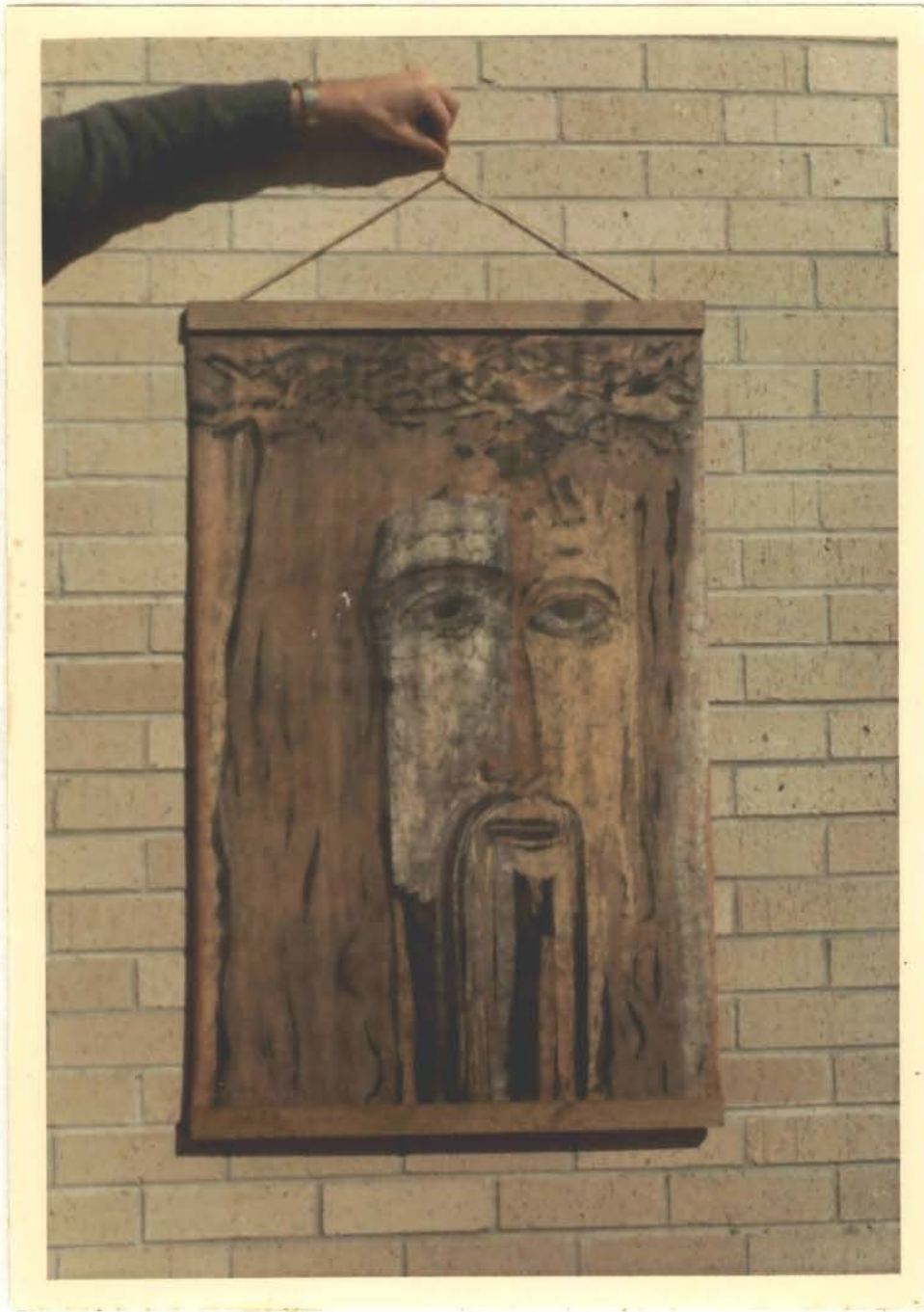


Figure 32. "Crowned Victor," Batik Wall Hanging on Silk by J. Don Wood.

to retain in the color of the first dye. This process of waxing and dyeing is continued until the design is completed.

Since colors added during the dyeing - for example, blue dyed over yellow forms green - care must be taken to build up good colors. Avoid dyeing colors over their complements - for example, blue over orange turns an ugly brown. [this is also true of tie-dye work]⁹

To remove the wax from the finished design, place the fabric between clean sheets of plain absorbent paper laid upon a thick pad of newspaper and press with a hot iron. Repeat the process, changing papers as necessary, until the wax is removed. If any wax remains, clean the fabric carefully with gasoline or any dry cleaning solution. Extreme care must be taken in this process because the dye has not been "set." The type of dye that should be used and the process for "setting" such dye is the same as described in Chapter VI on tie-dye techniques.

The designing possibilities available to the craftsman through the use of batik are unlimited. "Batik, meaning painting in wax,"¹⁰ consists of numerous processes for creating designs on fabrics. Various patterns, forms and colors can be accomplished with this technique, depending on how the fabric is waxed and dyed. For example, selected areas of the fabric can be blocked out by brushing melted wax over them. After the wax is dry, the fabric can be dyed by brushing dye or waterproof ink over it or by dipping it into a dye bath. If the entire fabric is dipped into the dye bath each time it is dyed, the result will be a build up of color upon color. However, if the dye or ink is painted on, pure colors may be juxtaposed allowing for a brilliance or

⁹Birrell, p. 416.

¹⁰Helen Sprackling, "Decorative Panels and Hangings," House Beautiful, LXII (December, 1928), p. 704.

vibration that superimposition of colors commonly used in the dip-dye process might violate.¹¹ Another advantage of painting on dye is that several colors may be applied in separate wax-free islands. Also, colors may be blended within any one open space.¹² Thus, with this process, color may be built up or changed in certain areas as the design develops. Although the concept of the batik process is to form a design on fabric by blocking out area after area with melted wax and dyeing in a series of dye baths, various textural effects can be formed within these waxed areas. For example, various lines and textures can be made within a waxed area by scratching through the hardened wax before dyeing. Also, a "crackel" effect can be achieved within selected areas or over the entire design by crushing the piece of fabric into a ball, then dyeing. Also, the crackel effect can be aided by mixing one part paraffin to five parts beeswax because this mixture is very brittle and it tends to crack.¹³ Although most batik designs start from a sketch, the artist usually alters and adapts the original idea as the work progresses.

New motifs are added spontaneously, making the process continuously creative. A distinctly personal quality is achieved - and, although unity exists within each textile, to have seen one repeat is not to have seen the whole.¹⁴

Another wax resist process that can be used to create wall hanging designs is called crayon batik. This process is one of the least

¹¹Krevitsky, Batik Art and Craft, p. 34.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Mijer, p. 37.

¹⁴Ed Rossbach, "Contemporary Batiks," Craft Horizons, XIII No. 6 (November-December, 1953), p. 21.

complicated because no dyes are used. Instead, the coloring is done with crayons on a fabric background. Almost any type of background fabric can be used; however, a light weight fabric is best.

Very effective wall hangings can be made with wax crayons¹⁵ used in a manner to suggest form in the positive pattern leaving the background white or the natural color of the fabric.¹⁵

In this process, the cloth must be perfectly pressed with no creases, and stretched over a bed of newspapers to serve as a base for the drawing and coloring process. A plain, unprinted piece of newsprint should be placed next to the fabric to keep newsprint from coming off on the design.¹⁶ A design can be traced on material, or the artist can design directly on the material with the crayons. Even though some degree of gradation and color blending can be obtained with this process, it is best suited for flat pattern designs of pure color with not too many overlapping parts.¹⁷ The finest results are obtained by respecting the quality of the cloth and allowing the fibers to show slightly through or between the colored strokes.¹⁸ After the last color has been added, the design is "set" by gently ironing the fabric on the wrong side.

It has been stated that batik work can be done on all kinds of woven materials; however, there are a few important points that should be taken into consideration when selecting a fabric. For example, closely woven, thin fabrics such as silk are excellent for batik; but

¹⁵Hazel Willis, "Wall Hangings on Muslin," Design, XLVI (November, 1944), p. 27.

¹⁶Haw, p. 29.

¹⁷Willis, p. 27.

¹⁸Ann V. Horton, "The Story of a Wall Hanging," School Arts XXVI (April, 1927), p. 458.

heavier materials can be used successfully if they are waxed on both sides. It should be noted that it is rather difficult to get satisfactory results on cotton material because to attain any degree of brilliancy the fabric has to be boiled in the dye (batik dyes are cold).¹⁹

Very heavy silks and velvets are magnificent when batiked, but they should be sent to the professional finishers to be treated when the piece is completed as it takes a great deal of effort and considerable skill on the part of the amateur to finish a large heavy silk panel or to raise the flatted pile of velvet.²⁰

By using the batik process, the craftsman can produce sparkling colors and many unusual and fascinating designs. He may use the techniques by themselves; he may combine them with stitchery, block printing, or various other techniques to form a wall hanging design.

¹⁹Mijer, p. 42.

²⁰Ibid., p. 43.

CHAPTER VIII

BRAYER PRINTING

Brayer printing, the process of rolling a rubber roller "brayer" covered with oil base printers ink over raised objects placed underneath a fabric background, is another means of producing interesting designs for wall hangings (figure 33). There are many variations to the brayer printing technique.

This type of printing gives the artist extreme freedom in creating designs because he can use a variety of objects, placement of objects, colors, and various brayer techniques to achieve innumerable decorative effects (figures 34 and 35). To work with this method of printing the artist should not make a detailed sketch of his design. Instead, several proof or experimental prints should be made on paper before the final design is printed on a fabric background. Almost any type of fabric can be used as a background, but the texture and weave of the material will influence the design. The artist, by making experimental prints, can view the actual lines, forms, shapes, and textures that result when various objects are brayer printed on different types of fabrics (see figures 34, 35 and 36).

Numerous decorative effects can be achieved by placing three-dimensional objects underneath a fabric background and rolling an inked brayer over the surface of this fabric. Solid shapes, textures, and other characteristics of the objects will be "picked up" from underneath



Figure 33. Brayer Printed Wall Hanging on Cotton by Charlou A. Prettyman.

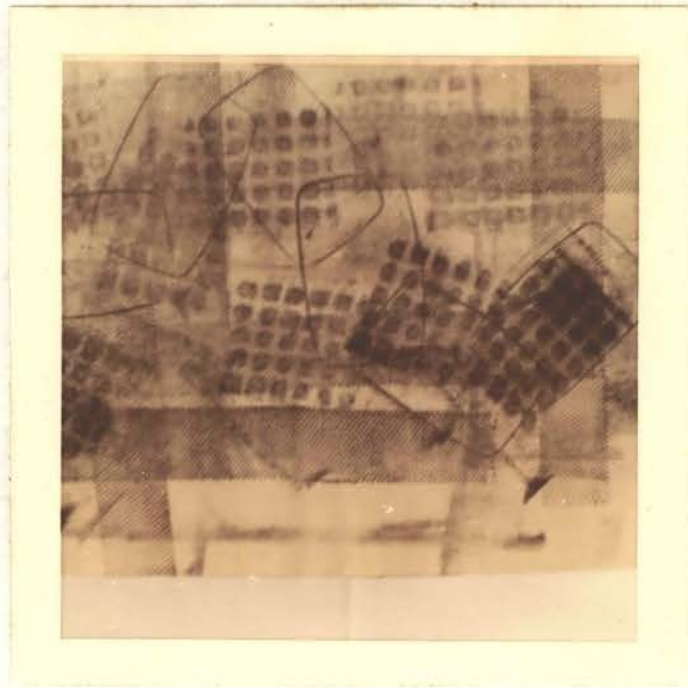


Figure 34. Brayer Print Design Using a Tin Can, Wire Screening and Waffle Textured Rubber Padding, by C. A. Prettyman.

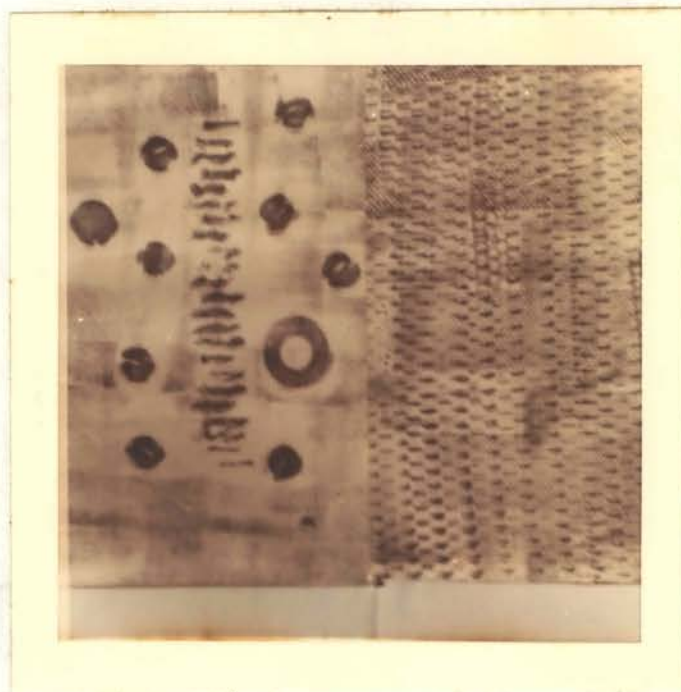


Figure 35. Various Textural Effects
Created by Brayer Printing Over Corrugated Wires, Metal Discs and Washers,
by C. A. Prettyman.

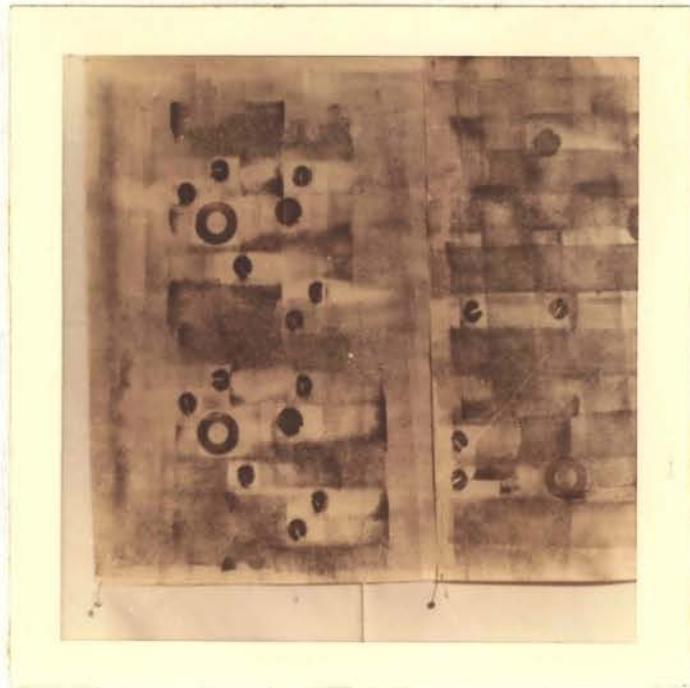


Figure 36. Brayer Print Design Using Wire Screening, Folded Papers, Metal Discs and Washers, by C. A. Prettyman.

the fabric to form a design on the surface. Any object with a definite and strong texture such as wire, string, tin can lids, tin cans, and metal discs may be used to make a design. Other decorative effects may be achieved by using a stencil design with the brayer printing process. For example, interesting shapes may be cut out of heavy stiff paper to form a stencil. Then, this stencil may be placed on top of the fabric and an inked brayer run over it to form the printed design. Also, designs may be created by pinning solid shapes to the fabric and rolling the inked brayer around the outside edge of the shape to form a design.¹ Various patterns can be created by the manner in which the inked brayer is rolled over or around the design (figure 37).

To print a design, the brayer should be inked before each impression is made. The artist may want to introduce some variety into his design by lightly inking some parts and heavily inking other parts. The prints are made with oil base printer's ink. The ink to be applied to the brayer should be spread out on a plate glass palette. A reservoir of paint should be placed nearby on the palette so that the paint may be added as needed. The portion of paint in use should be spread out smoothly and evenly on the palette so as to assure an equal coating of paint upon the brayer. After the brayer is inked, it is rolled across the material to form the print. Prints can be made in many colors. Fabrics printed with oil base printer's ink will surface dry in two to three days, but they should be allowed to air dry for at least five days to assure complete dryness of the ink.² Then, the fabric should be

¹Janet Erickson, Block Printing on Textiles: A Complete Guide, (New York, 1961), p. 80.

²Ibid., p. 86.

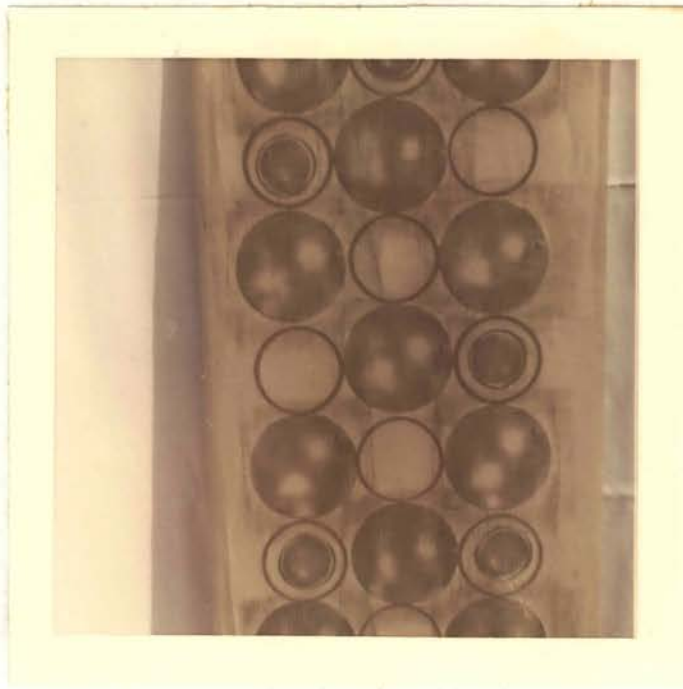


Figure 37. Detail of Figure 33 Illustrating Underlayment. Objects used to create this wall hanging design were a dented metal disc, a jar lid, and a cardboard ring.

pressed on the reverse side with a hot iron to permanently set the ink into the fabric.

By using the brayer printing process, the beginner as well as the artist-craftsman can produce many unusual and fascinating as well as beautiful designs. The brayer printing technique can be used by itself to create a decorative wall hanging, or it can be combined with other techniques such as stitchery, applique, and block printing. Stitchery and/or applique can be used to accent a brayer printed design. Brayer printed designs may also make interesting backgrounds upon which a distinct pattern can be block printed. These are a few of the vast designing possibilities available to the artist using the brayer printing process.

CHAPTER IX

BLOCK PRINTING

Block printing is another form of printing that may be used by the beginner or the artist-craftsman to create effective designs for wall hangings. By exerting varying degrees of ingenuity, hard work, and imagination, the designer can block print with such different materials as rubber tile, plastic screening, plasticene, soft pine blocks, cork flooring, art gum erasers, styrofoam, potatoes and sponges.¹ This chapter will pertain to the linoleum block printing process.

Linoleum, because of its composition, is more durable and can be cleaned and used repeatedly. Also, it is more easily carved than wood. Linoleum may be bought mounted on a wooden block, but the craftsman should avoid mounted linoleum blocks with a white surface for they are hard and brittle, thus almost impossible to cut.² The craftsman may buy a good quality linoleum such as "counter-top", "desk top" or "borderstrip", and mount it himself by glueing the linoleum to a plywood base.³ The advantage of making a block is that it can be made in any size the artist desires, while the ready-made blocks come in standard sizes.

¹ Erickson, p. 15.

² Ibid., p. 16.

³ Ibid.

In planning a design, the artist should be aware of the limitations of his material. Very fine lines would be extremely difficult to cut out of a linoleum block, and even more difficult to print because these lines would soon crumble under the pressure applied during printing. The designer should work in broad masses and suggest, rather than precisely portray, various design motifs. All superfluous details should be suppressed, and individual shapes should be conventionalized according to the designer's individual conception of the object.⁴ It should be noted that intermediary tones or half tones of light and dark are beyond the range of this material. Patterns often look very interesting in line and form; but when the color is applied, they look flat and uninteresting.⁵ The most interesting one-color designs are nearly always composed of a pattern which is made up of some shapes of solid color, some shapes of plain background, and some shapes of pattern. This gives various tones to the solid color pattern (figure 38).

Other colors and designs may be added to an existing block print design by using different blocks and colors to make the additional prints (figure 38). One block may be used to apply various colors, however both block and brayer must be cleaned thoroughly of one color before the second color is applied to the block and printed. Many types of designs are possible with this medium if the designer considers his material and works out his design according to the best potential of the material.

In planning a design for a block print wall hanging, the artist

⁴Desire Kauffmann, Graphic Arts Crafts, (New York, 1948), p. 3.

⁵Thomas J. Corbin, Hand Block Printing on Fabrics, (London, 1937), p. 32.

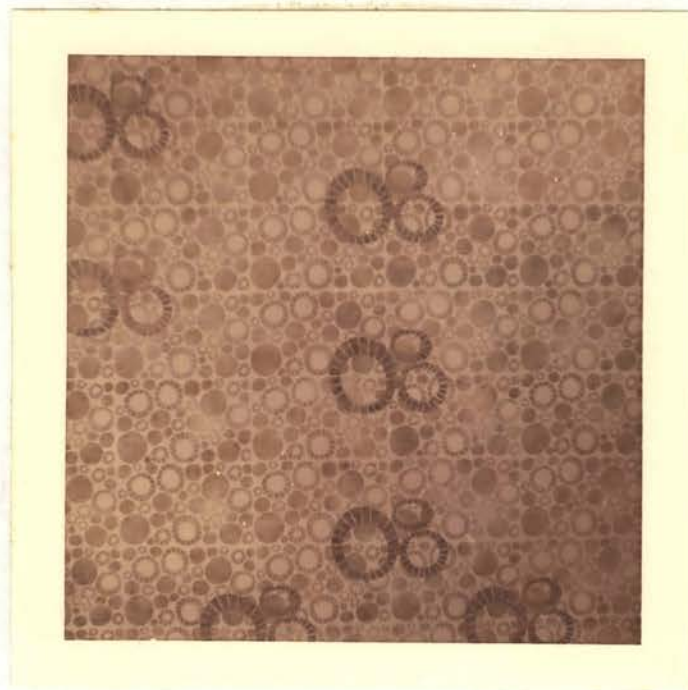


Figure 38. Block Print Drapery Yardage
Designed and Printed by Charlou A.
Prettyman. Two blocks and two colors
were used. This design could be used
for a wall hanging, but an unprinted
margin should be left at the top,
bottom and sides of the fabric to set
off the design.

should try to visualize, as far as possible, not merely how the design looks on paper, but how it will look when actually printed on the fabric. Any type of fabric background may be used as long as its texture and color will complement the printed design. To visualize how the design will look, the craftsman should make a detailed drawing on paper the exact size of the print. Also, he should ink or shade in the portions of the design that are to be printed. By developing a design in this manner, the craftsman will be able to view the contrasting effects of his design (figure 39). A complete drawing is especially needed for a design that is to be printed in numerous colors (figure 40). The completed drawing is then transferred to the surface of the linoleum block in "reverse" by means of carbon paper or graphite. It is done in this manner because the block is turned over to make the print. The print will appear as designed by the artist. The portion of the design that is to be at the top should be so marked on the back of the block to insure the proper placement of the block on the material for the printing process.

The design is cut out of the linoleum by means of a "graver" and/or a knife. Graver is the name used to designate a V-shaped, or a U-shaped, cutting tool used to gouge out the unwanted portion of the linoleum.⁶ The V-shaped gravers give a fine line; the U-shaped gravers give a broad line. In cutting out a design for a block print, the artist may either cut away the design and leave the background standing or cut away the background and leave the pattern standing. A combination of

⁶Kauffmann, p. 13.

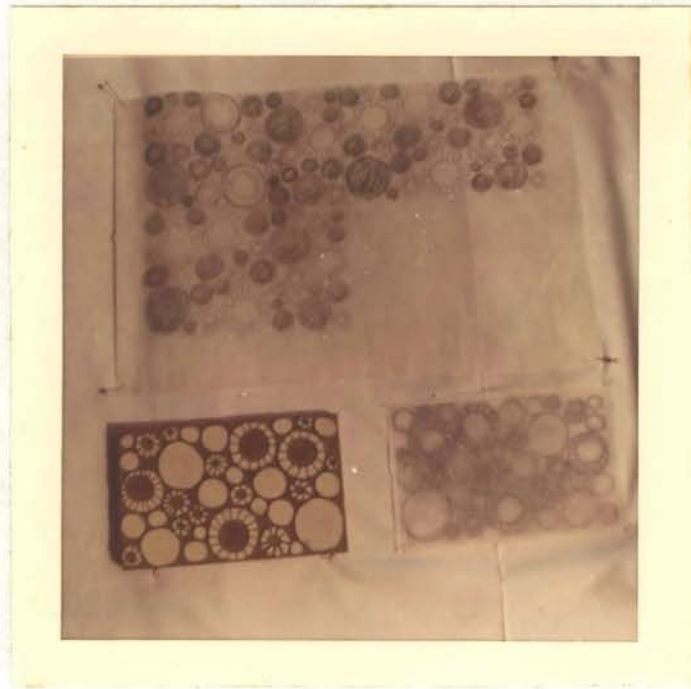


Figure 39. This Detailed Drawing Illustrates how the Designer Developed a Repeat Pattern on Paper for a Block Print. Note that the block was carved out in "reverse." This block was used to print the drapery yardage in figure 38.

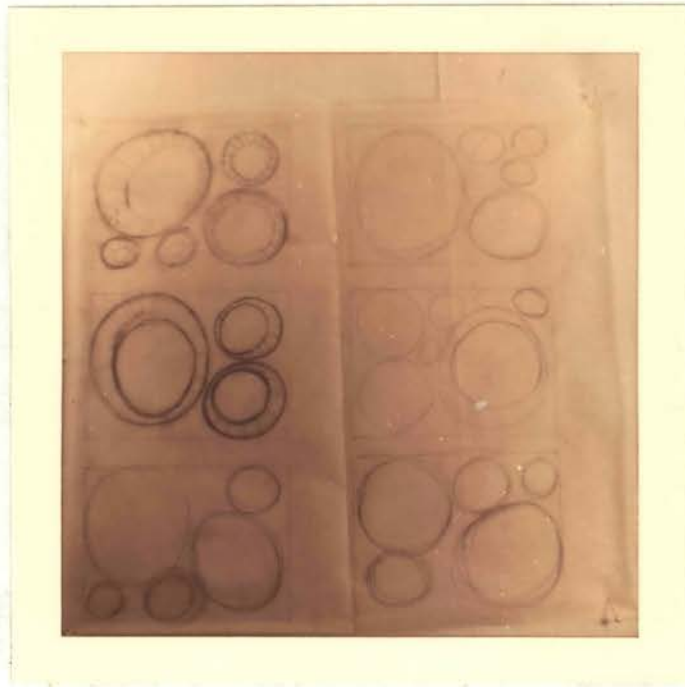


Figure 40. Preliminary Drawings for the Block Used to Overprint Design in figure 38.

these two methods may also be used.⁷ Any cutting method that results in clean-cut, sharp lines is legitimate, although each tool leaves its characteristic mark.⁸ In cutting out the design, the craftsman should gouge out an outline around the area that is to remain for printing. This safeguards smearing the traced design and it clearly marks off the areas that are not to be cut away. During the cutting process, the block should be rotated while the tool is held firmly in hand. This insures a smoothly cut pattern. The side walls of the pattern should be cut at a 45° angle to give ample support to the design during printing.⁹

To print a wall hanging, the fabric must be ironed, stretched smoothly, and pinned to a padded base. A padded base with a smooth surface and texture is a necessity in block printing because a rough surface or one that is rigid and unyielding would cause the prints to become smudgy, distorted, and irregular.¹⁰ After the fabric has been pinned to the printing base, it is advisable to construct a registration system by means of pins and thread to guide the craftsman in placing his block on the material. This insures a good pattern with no gaps or overprints.

There are two processes generally used to apply color to the block. The first method consists of applying oil base printer's ink to a brayer which is then rolled over the surface of the linoleum block. In the second process, dye is used to color the block for printing. To make

⁷Corbin, p. 13.

⁸Kauffmann, p. 16.

⁹Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰A. Franken, "Forerunners and Beginnings of Screen Printing," Ciba Review, IX No. 107 (December, 1954), p. 3843.

the printing surface more absorbent, it is covered with powdered felt, flock, so that the surface will take up enough dye to penetrate evenly into the fabric to be printed.¹¹ In this method the fabric is always block printed wet.¹²

After the material for the wall hanging has been printed, the design should be permanently set into the fibers of the cloth. If oil base printer's ink has been used, the design may be set by ironing the fabric on the reverse side with an extremely hot iron. If dye has been used, it may be set by dipping the fabric into a weak solution of white vinegar and water and allowed to drip dry until it reaches the proper degree of dryness for ironing. The fabric is then pressed on the reverse side with a hot iron.¹³

The block printing technique can be used by itself very successfully, but different techniques can be combined with it to form a wall hanging.

¹¹Corbin, p. 13.

¹²Ibid., p. 51.

¹³Erickson, p. 86.

CHAPTER X

SILK SCREEN PRINTING

The silk screen technique, a perfection of stencil printing, will be discussed in this chapter. It is more subtle and more versatile than the traditional stencil. The silk screen technique may be used wherever design and color are desired, and on most any type of fabric background. One can produce many more designs with the silk screen technique than are possible with a stencil. For instance, the centers, and loose parts of a stencil design necessitate the use of ties to hold these parts to the stencil paper; otherwise, many unsightly gaps result when the design is printed. The silk screen process eliminates the need for ties because the design is applied and secured to a silk fabric which has been stretched over a wooden frame.

Briefly, the process consists of forcing special paint through the open meshes of a framed screen, part of which is filled in solid so that the paint can only pass through those areas of the screen that have been left open in accordance with the design to be reproduced.¹

The mesh or fibers of the silk in no way interfere with the complete penetration of the printing medium.

Stenciling with its many forms lends itself to interesting and beautiful results in wall hanging design if one is willing to discard

¹Bert Zahn, Screen Process Methods of Reproduction, (Willmette, Illinois, 1950), p. 13.

preconceived notions of the old-fashioned stencil and start afresh with the potential character of the technique itself.² The versatility and adaptability of silk screen printing affords the artist great design possibilities because it has certain inherent characteristics which give it an advantage over other forms of printing. One of the most important factors is that designs of small details or large areas may be printed on any type of fabric background with few motions. Also, silk screening allows for subtle gradation of line; dry brush, stippled effects, wash-work in flat tones, and clear edges of the masses are possible with this process.³ Almost any printed or hand painted effect can be produced.

Silk screen printing is noted for real depth of color that no other printing process can achieve. Since printing is done through silk fabric covered with a design "plate", a thicker coat of ink may be deposited and greater brilliance and durability can be produced. There are special types of inks, paints, dyes, enamels, and lacquers suitable for screen printing on silk, cotton, linen, wool, and synthetic materials.⁴ Since much depends on the color medium that is used in the production of quality screen printing, the designer should consider the type of stencil as well as the type of fabric that is to be used when

²Emmy Zweybruck, "Creative Potential of Stencil and Silk Screen," Craft Horizons, XIV No. 1 (January-February, 1954), p. 38.

³H. Down, "Scope in Silkscreen," Art and Industry, LXII (May, 1957), p. 172.

⁴Ibid., p. 173.

selecting a printing medium.⁵

The screen printer may use a number of colors to print a wall hanging design; however, each color that is printed must have a separate screening. The screen printer may also make use of transparent colors. This allows the designer to limit the number of separate screenings when creating a multi-color design, for one color printed over another will create a third color. Gold and silver paints may also be used to good effect. It should be noted that the printed color may be used as a binder coat for flocking; however, it must be as close to the color of the flock as possible.

Applied decoration involving color is generally a direct surface application of pigments and dyes, but also includes other materials which can add to the attractiveness of the decorated object. Such materials as gold and silver leaf, brilliant bronze powders, flitters, diamond dust, tinsel, glow beads, smalt, wood flour and flocks can all make a contribution to total effects.⁶

There are certain inherent limitations to silk screen printing as there are with every fabric design process. The purpose of the stencil is to achieve a flat uniform application of color through gauze; therefore, it is difficult to reproduce extremely fine lines and register colored shapes exactly. This makes tonal gradations or subtle tones of color difficult to print except by means of many stencils. Large areas of design are also difficult to print successfully because the depth of the color will vary; however, in a hand printed design this may enhance the design and make it unique. Another limitation is that the design

⁵ Harry Leroy Hiatt and H. K. Middleton, Silk Screen Process Production, (London, 1960), p. 14.

⁶ Ibid., p. 175.

is applied to the cloth in sections; thus, accurate printing of continuous vertical or horizontal stripes is difficult. As in all techniques, it is a necessity for the beginner as well as the experienced artist to design for the process and to understand the scope, flexibility, and limitation when the production of a quality product is concerned.

In view of the extended versatility of the process, therefore, there is probably a great deal more scope in screen printing than is generally appreciated and it is to be hoped its potentialities will be exploited by designers with imagination and technical understanding.⁷

The silk screen process is based on the fundamental principal of the stencil. If a colored medium is painted or rubbed through a stencil, it will readily penetrate those areas that have been left open in accordance with the design to be reproduced. It will not pass through the unmasked portions. In silk screen printing, the stencil is affixed to a piece of silk that is stretched tightly on a wooden frame. The frame performs two functions: it acts as a stretcher for the silk and as a basin for a quantity of paint. Frames are usually rectangular, and dimensions are governed by the size of the print to be made. The inside length of the screen should be at least six inches longer than the largest stencil used to provide an adequate reservoir space for the paint at both ends. Sides should be at least 1 1/2 inches high.⁸ The frame should be constructed of well-seasoned wood; and it must be rigid, for a poorly constructed frame will twist or distort the stencil, and make proper registration of the design impossible. The frame should be finished with a coat of shellack to protect the raw wood; thus,

⁷Downs, p. 174.

⁸Kauffmann, p. 123.

prevent its warping. The protective coat further acts as sizing to keep the printing medium from penetrating into the wood.

There are a limited number of fabrics that can be used for the screen. Silk bolting cloth and organdy serve very well. Silk bolting cloths are more regular than other types of material for their construction is more uniform and the meshes more open. This type of construction prevents the material from shifting or stretching during printing, or cleaning.⁹ Bolting cloth is classified according to the mesh, ranging from 000 to 25. The higher the number, the finer the mesh; the finer the mesh, the sharper the print. The number 12 silk mesh is medium fine and is generally used for all around work. Organdy may be used for a screen, but it lacks the elasticity of silk and since it becomes flabby with use it tends to blur the printed design.

To prepare the screen, the silk is stretched and tacked into place on the wooden frame. The tacks should then be covered with paper tape. The inside edges of the frame should also be sealed by pasting the paper tape half on the silk and half on the wood. This "lining" will help to hold the silk and it will also prevent the paint from oozing through the frame during printing. The tape should be shellacked to make it waterproof and durable. After preparing the screen, the artist will find that he has a wide choice of stencil techniques from which to choose. His choice will depend upon the design and the effect he wishes to create.

⁹Jacob Israel Biegeleisen and Max Arthur Cohn, Silk Screen Techniques, (New York, 1942), p. 27.

. . . there are five distinct ways of preparing a stencil. There are the paper, the block-out, the tusche, the film and the photographic methods.¹⁰

However, in this chapter only the block-out and the tusche stencil techniques will be discussed. These are fairly simple methods with which to work and they afford the artist vast designing possibilities.

There are several block-out mediums that may be used to mask out portions of the silk screen that are not to be printed, but only the glue technique will be described (figure 41). The glue technique has the advantage of drying hard in a short time; yet, when the stencil is no longer needed, it can be dissolved easily in water. In making a block-out stencil with glue, the glue may be used just as it is or may be thinned with water to a consistency compatible with easy brushing. If the designer finds it difficult to work with a colorless glue, a staining solution such as water color or ink may be used to tint the glue and thus form a contrast with the white screen.¹¹ The glue is brushed on with an artist's or lettering brush in those areas that are to stop out the paint. The areas left untouched will form the open stencil through which the paint will flow.

It must be remembered that the work on the silk represents a negative plate of the print. In other words, you paint around the design, leaving the design itself open.¹²

When the completed stencil is dry, it should be checked for pinholes. Pinholes are areas that have not been stopped out completely. It may be necessary to retouch these "leaks" with glue. However, the designer

¹⁰Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹Ibid., p. 54.

¹²Ibid., p. 58.



Figure 41. Silk Screen Design Created
by Charlou A. Prettyman Using the Glue
Technique.

may wish to leave the pinholes to add to the pattern of his design. Other effects such as stippling or dry brush can be created with the block-out stencil. With block-out stencils, the artist may work from a completed drawing that has been traced onto the silk to serve as a guide for the brush work, or he may create a design by painting directly on the silk with the glue.

The tusche stencil method is the one most favored for fine-art printing because it has unlimited possibilities. However, it is by no means limited to fine-art prints. This technique allows for shading and textural effects that are not possible with other stencil making procedures.¹³

The tusche stencil works on the principle of the chemical resistance of a greasy substance, such as lithographic tusche, to glue, which is water soluble. When an area of the screen is painted with tusche, and the whole screen is then coated with glue, the tused-in area will act as a stopping out medium for the glue. When the tusche is later dissolved, the glue that covers it scales off and breaks away, leaving an unobstructed area on the silk. This is the open area of the screen, ready to receive the paint.¹⁴

Tusche, a greasy substance made from waxes, oils, and soap, is made in solid crayon form or in liquid form to be applied with a brush or pen. In the glue technique, the artist has to get accustomed to working around his design. In the tusche technique, he works directly with the design by filling in the design area with tusche. This method affords the artist, in effect, a preview of the print.

Tusche stencils may be prepared either on the raw silk or on a sized screen. It is characteristic of prints made with this stencil to

¹³Kauffmann, p. 139.

¹⁴Biegeleisen and Cohn, p. 67.

have a slightly rough texture around the edges. This serrated edge may be reduced if the screen upon which the tusche is applied is first sized with a dilute solution of cornstarch. Sizing the screen is especially desirable for fine lines, for crosshatching, and for intricate details. A sized stencil will be somewhat sharper and more crisp than those made with the unsized stencil, but the artist will have to decide for himself what type of effect he wishes to create.

To design for the tusche process, the artist may work from a completed drawing that has been traced onto the silk to serve as a guide for the tusche work, or he may create a design by painting or drawing directly on the silk with the tusche. To use liquid tusche (figure 42) no special type of brush is necessary. The tusche should be of a consistency that will flow evenly from the brush without running or spreading. If the tusche is too thin, the bottle may be left uncorked until the right consistency; if too stiff, water may be added.¹⁵ Liquid tusche may be used to create special design effects such as spatter or dry-brush. Other design effects such as shading or soft sketchy lines can be created by using a grease pencil or crayon. The crayon tusche technique can be used in combination with liquid tusche. These two techniques may also be used by themselves to create a stencil on the silk.

After the tusche design has dried, pour some dye along the bank of the screen. Use a stiff, sharp-edged cardboard to scrape the glue across the entire screen including the tusched design. To insure a smooth even coating of glue, a second coat may be given after the first coat has had time to set. After the glue has dried, the tusche may be

¹⁵Kauffmann, p. 140.



Figure 42. Silk Screen Design Created by
Charlou A. Prettyman Using the Tusche
Technique.

dissolved by rubbing both sides of the silk thoroughly with a kerosene or turpentine soaked rag. "As the tusche that served as a foundation for the glue comes off, the glue directly on top of it will also scale off and float away."¹⁶ The screen should then be checked to see that all tused areas are washed out and that no undesirable pinholes are present. Corrections can be made before the stencil is used for printing.

One of the most important steps in preparing a top-quality product is preparing the base. Therefore, before printing a wall hanging with the above mentioned technique, the background fabric must be ironed, stretched smoothly, and pinned to a padded base. A padded base with a smooth surface and texture is a necessity in quality silk screening because a rough surface or one that is rigid and unyielding would cause the prints to become smudgy, distorted, and irregular.¹⁷ After the fabric has been pinned to the printing base, it is necessary to construct a registration system by means of pins and threads to guide the craftsman in placing the screen on the material. This will insure a good pattern with no gaps or overprints. It is also necessary to hold the screen firmly in printing position so that it will not move and distort or ruin the print. To hold the screen in place, a system of guide rails and clamps may be used. For example, a rail or bar of wood may be used. Using this method, the bar of wood may be clamped securely onto the printing table. One end of the screen should then be brought into position against the rail, for this rail or bar will hold one end of the screen

¹⁶Biegeleisen and Cohn, p. 73.

¹⁷Franken, p. 3843.

firmly in printing position. The other end of the screen should be held firmly in position by the printer. Another and still easier method is to have an assistant hold the screen firmly in place while the artist does the printing. Regardless of the method used, the screen must be held so that it does not move during printing.

The actual printing is done by placing the screen face down, basin side up, on the fabric. A quantity of free flowing paint of a creamy consistency is then poured into the basin along one of the side banks. Starting at one end of the screen, the paint is scraped across the silk to the opposite side with a rubber edged tool called a squeegee. Each scrape from one side of the screen to another results in an impression. Thus, the amount of paint deposited upon a single impression may vary from light to heavy depending upon the number of times the squeegee is used. Also, the pressure applied to the squeegee will determine, to a certain extent, the amount of paint deposited upon a single print. When using the squeegee, it should be pulled over the screen at a 60 degree angle. A squeegee is a grooved wooden holder with a rubber blade inserted. The rubber blade should be firm, but flexible enough for convenient resiliency, and it should be cut and ground square at the bottom to insure sharp clear prints.

After printing, the design should be permanently set into the fibers of the cloth by ironing the fabric on the reverse side with an extremely hot iron. Care should be exercised so as not to scorch the fabric or the printing medium.

The beginner as well as the artist-craftsman who uses the silk screen technique will find that it is a very creative medium of expression, susceptible to infinite variations, and producing many different

values. As with the other fabric design techniques described, the silk screen technique may be used alone, or it may be combined with a variety of techniques to form a wall hanging.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has been constructed to describe various techniques that may be used to produce wall hangings as well as sources of information pertaining to the hand decoration of such fabrics. It is hoped that an awareness and appreciation will be developed for the important place wall hangings have in the decorative arts world today.

Wall hangings are fabrics which do not hang in folds but are intended to fill a space decoratively. Since these ornamental hangings are usually hung against a wall, the term wall hanging has generally been applied to this type of textile decoration.

There are numerous hand methods for applying designs to fabrics, but only a few selected techniques have been presented in this paper. An applied design does not alter the basic structure of a material; it simply gives further richness to the surface of the fabric.

Only a few of the textile accomplishments of the past are directly related to wall hanging design; however, many textile arts practiced by primitive man have contributed important techniques for applying designs onto a fabric background. In fact, the origin, development, and use of the wall hanging is closely associated with the development of civilization itself. The actual techniques of the art of tapestry weaving are not presented in this study, however, tapestries hold such an important position in the development of wall decoration that they have been

mentioned in the study though not emphasized.

Stitchery, traditionally termed embroidery, is an age-old needlework technique. This technique may be used to arrange and combine various stitches to form a design in yarns, threads, and colors on a textile background. Stitchery is a flexible medium that can easily be adapted to all kinds of materials, designs, and purposes. The beginner as well as the artist-craftsman can create an infinite number of wall hanging designs through variations in placement and size of stitch, weight and color of thread, and the yarn, weave and texture of the base material. To create with stitchery, one must learn to think in terms of fabrics, threads, and stitches. Learning to do the stitch is the easiest part of creative embroidery. Thus, to inspire the beginner as well as the experienced practitioner, descriptions and illustrations are presented. The artist should remember that there is no rule for the beginning nor the termination of a stitching design.

Applique, the process of fastening pieces of fabric, straw, raffia, leather, metallics or other materials to a fabric background, is another means of producing an interesting wall hanging design. Applique almost always involves stitchery as a means of applying decoration or ornamentation to a piece of material. Applique can be approached in many different ways depending upon the end result desired by the artist. Large shapes of fabric may be applied to a base material. A three-dimensional effect can be produced by either laying transparent fabrics over heavier ones or by sewing one kind of stitch over another. Still other design effects and color combinations may be created by cutting spaces through the background and placing colored cloth behind these openings. This process is termed reverse applique because the design

is created by cutting through the top layer of fabric. With the applique technique, numerous types of materials may be combined in a variety of ways to create a wall hanging. The hand method of applique has been stressed, but the possibility of using the sewing machine creatively to applique yarns or other materials to a fabric background should not be overlooked.

Hooking, the process of pushing or pulling loops through a background fabric to form a pile, may be used to create a very effective wall hanging. It is an extremely flexible medium because many fibers and fabrics can be adapted to the process of hooking. Infinite variation is possible through the free use of tools, textures, and materials. "Add the endless possibilities of color to the intricate combinations of rags, yarns, knots, and loops, and a craftsman can get any number of effects from the same material." The designer can use the hooking technique to cover the background completely with small loops, or he can use it to embellish basic shapes of a design by leaving the background unhooked as a part of the composition.

The technique of dyeing may be used to create decorative designs on wall hangings. One of these techniques is a resist dye process termed tie and dye. In this method of dyeing, the portion of the fabric that is not to receive the dye is tied with string to resist the dye. The designing possibilities of the tie-dye technique are unlimited because various patterns or forms can be accomplished by tying the fabric in different ways. Also, unusual designs may be formed by tying or sewing objects such as seeds or buttons into the fabric. To dye the fabric, most any type of dye may be used, but it must be used cold because the method used to tie the fabric would be harmed if the

fabric were boiled during the dyeing process. After the fabric has been dyed, it should be rinsed and treated with a mordant to "set" or "fix" the dye permanently into the fabric. Several methods of mordanting are explained.

Batik is another form of resist dyeing that may be used by the craftsman to produce sparkling colors in wall hangings. Batik is similar to tie-dye; however, in the batik process the resist is formed by painting hot wax or paraffin on certain areas of the fabric before it is dyed. The wax may be applied to the fabric in several ways: brushed on; stamped on with a tjap tool; painted on with a tjanting tool. Textural effects can be created by "scratching" or by "crushing" the hardened wax before the fabric is dyed. The cloth can be waxed and dyed an infinite number of times to make the color pattern more intricate and more subtle. The pliability of the wax itself creates the effect for which batik is famous, such as the unique shadings and mellow colors that appear when one transparent dye overlaps another. The delicate tones and textures result sometimes as surprises when dye seeps through fine cracks in the wax coating. Thus, the designing possibilities available to the craftsman through the use of batik are unlimited. To remove the wax, the fabric should be placed between clean sheets of plain absorbent paper and pressed with a hot iron. The papers should be changed as necessary until the wax is removed. If any wax remains, the fabric may be cleaned carefully with a dry cleaning solution. When the wax has been removed, the dye should be "set" permanently into the fabric with one of the mordanting processes.

Brayer printing is another process that may be used to create interesting designs for wall hangings. In this method of printing a

rubber roller, "brayer," is used to apply an oil base printers ink. The design is created by placing raised objects underneath a fabric background and rolling an inked brayer over the surface of the fabric. Thus, solid shapes, textures, and other characteristics of the objects are transferred from underneath forming a design upon the surface of the fabric. Other decorative effects may be achieved by placing a stencil on top of the fabric and rolling an inked brayer over it to form the design. Thus, brayer printing provides extreme freedom in creating designs because of the great variety with objects, placement of objects, colors, and brayer techniques. After the fabric has been printed, it should air dry for several days before the ink is permanently set into the fibers of the cloth. To set the ink, the fabric is pressed on the reverse side with a hot iron.

Block printing is a process that may be used by the craftsman to create effective designs for wall hanging. The linoleum block printing process is described because linoleum is comparatively easy to carve and it can be cleaned and used repeatedly. Interesting designs can be created with this process, but the artist must be aware of the limitations of the material. Designs should be worked out in broad areas. Fine lines on a linoleum block are difficult to carve out and even more difficult to print. In designing for this process, the artist should make a detailed drawing the size of the finished print. A drawing of this type is especially needed for a design that is to be printed in various colors. After the design has been transferred to the block, the design is carved out. Any cutting method that will result in clean-cut sharp lines is acceptable, although, each tool leaves its characteristic mark. Two methods for applying color to the

block are described. Procedures for printing the design and permanently setting the design into the fibers of the cloth are also described.

The silk screen technique, a perfection of stencil printing, may be used for designs or color for almost any fabric. It is an excellent process for creating designs on wall hangings because its versatility affords the artist innumerable possible designs. Silk screening has certain inherent characteristics which give it advantages over other forms of printing. One of the most important factors is that designs of small details or large areas may be printed on any type of fabric background. Silk screening allows for subtle gradation of line. Dry brush, stippled effects, washwork in flat tones, are possible with this process. Almost any printed or hand painted effect can be produced; however, there are certain inherent limitations to silk screen printing. The silk screen technique is a flat, uniform application of color through the open meshes of a framed screen; therefore, tonal gradations or subtleties of color are difficult to print. Another limitation is that the design is applied to the cloth in sections; thus, accurate printing of continuous, vertical, or horizontal designs is difficult. The artist must design for this process and understand the scope, flexibility, and limitations of the silk screen technique.

Several distinct methods have been described for applying designs on fabrics to be used as wall hangings. Suggestions are included to indicate the best procedure to use when designing for a particular process, but it is also stressed that it is the responsibility of the designer to use his own skill and imagination to produce an effective and attractive wall hanging. It is stressed that the designer may use each technique by itself. He may also combine several techniques in a

wall hanging design.

This thesis describes and illustrates selected techniques that may be used to apply decorative designs to fabrics that are to be used as wall hangings. It is hoped that it will increase interest and awareness in these handcrafts and appreciation for wall hangings as an art form.

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