

FREE HAND SEWING TECHNIQUES FOR QUILTERS: Learn Hand Embroidery, Stitches, and Trapunto



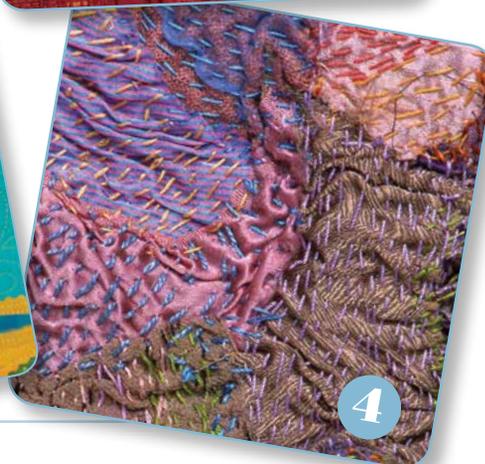
1



2



3



4

1 IN THE SPOTLIGHT
KATHY LOOMIS

2 UNDER THE SURFACE
EMBELLISHMENT
DIANE SAVONA

3 POWER TO THE HAND STITCHER
LAURA WASILOWSKI

4 THE RUNNING STITCH
JULIA CAPRARA

Quilting and hand sewing were made for each other. Even if you machine stitch your quilts, a little handwork here and there can make them pop and give your fiber art a handmade look.



There are so many hand embroidery stitches to choose from, and so many ways you can use even the simplest

hand sewing techniques to enhance your art.

In our eBook *Free Hand Sewing Techniques for Quilters: Learn Hand Embroidery, Stitches, and Trapunto*, you'll get four hand stitching tutorials with a variety of hand embroidery techniques.

In 2012, Kathy Loomis took on an art-every-day hand embroidery project. The experience changed her outlook on drawing as the stitched pictures looked like charming folk art. In her Spotlight article, she shares her approach to hand sewing and also demonstrates how to make a French knot and how to make the feather embroidery stitch.

Traditionally, trapunto quilting involves raising areas of fabric with batting and then stitching around the batting with a running stitch to create a design. In "Under the

Surface Embellishments," Deborah Savona offers a new take on trapunto, using flat objects in place of the batting to create a detailed, embellished effect.

Award-winning quilter Laura Wasilowski often adds hand stitching to her colorful and whimsical quilts. In "Power to the Hand Stitcher," Laura shows how to use a simple embroidery stitch like the French knot or the running stitch to create backgrounds, add interest, and bring quilting projects to life.

Finally, we include an article on the "Versatile Running Stitch" written by the late artist and writer Julia Caprara. How to do a running stitch is simple, but Julia shows you how you can use it in different ways to alter the surface, texture, and even the color of fabric for sophisticated effects.

Whether you want to fill your fabric with hand stitches or just add some hand work here and there, we know you will enjoy *Free Hand Sewing Techniques for Quilters: Learn Hand Embroidery, Stitches, and Trapunto*.

Warmly,

VIVIKA HANSEN DENEGRE
Editorial Director

Quilting Arts

MAGAZINE*

FREE HAND SEWING TECHNIQUES FOR QUILTERS: LEARN HAND EMBROIDERY, STITCHES, AND TRAPUNTO

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Vivika Hansen DeNegre

ONLINE EDITOR Cate Prato

CREATIVE SERVICES

DIVISION ART DIRECTOR Larissa Davis

PHOTOGRAPHER Larry Stein

Projects and information are for inspiration and personal use only. F+W Media, Inc. is not responsible for any liability arising from errors, omissions, or mistakes contained in this eBook, and readers should proceed cautiously, especially with respect to technical information. F+W Media grants permission to photocopy any patterns published in this issue for personal use only.



Take Quilting Daily on the go

with the FREE Mobile app for
your iPhone or iPod Touch.

With a swipe of your finger
you'll have access to:

- The latest posts, free patterns, and eBooks
- Over 100 how-to videos
- Tips and techniques from industry leading experts

Get your FREE Quilting Daily app at
www.QuiltingDaily.com/app

*Apple, iPad, iPhone, iPod touch, and iTunes are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Non-US residents: if the above link does not work for you, feel free to browse our selection of Apps from within the Apple App Store itself by searching for "Interweave".

ADAPTED FROM
 QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2013

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Kathy Loomis

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

“For more than a decade I have chosen a daily art project each year. Every day I have to make a little bit of art following whatever rules I choose. Past projects included taking photographs, making a quilt square, assembling a bundle of stuff, and sending a postcard every day to family members. For 2012 my daily project was hand stitching.

I love the structure of doing art every day. Each bit can be quite small, and doesn't have to be perfect or terribly well thought out, so you can have a little low-risk 'flight of fancy.' It reminds me, even on busy days with other preoccupations, that I'm an artist.

I cut a four-inch square of solid Kona® cotton (my favorite quilting fabric, which I already owned in dozens of colors) and made a little drawing or doodle with embroidery floss. Although I already owned bags of miscellaneous floss dating back many years, I splurged in honor of this project with three new packages of floss in a huge variety of colors.

But what to stitch after I'd threaded the needle?



Often I simply made doodles, practicing old familiar embroidery stitches. Spirals, circles, and grids showed up often. I also like feather stitches, and frequently turned them into plants with French knot flowers. For a while I carried an embroidery pattern book with me and tried out new stitches.

I don't know how to draw so it's challenging for me to make pictures. But one of the discoveries of this project was that I can do better than I had thought. I saw an exhibit by embroiderer Tom Lundberg and was struck by his tiny embroidered pictures, with motifs no larger than an inch across. A recurring motif in his work is the flip-flop sandal, and I came home and embroidered a tiny flip-flop too.

More little pictures started to come to mind. If you work really small it doesn't take long to do a picture, and there's no room to agonize over whether it looks right. When the pictures were tiny I often put frames around them to give them a little more stature.

One day I made a little picture and without really thinking about it, stitched a word next to it. That added a lot of pizzazz and I started labeling my pictures more frequently. (That's also a help if your drawing is less than great.)

I've always found that daily art projects morph as you progress. You set the rules at the beginning of the year and follow them, but what you end up doing at the end of the year has a different character than what you started with. Partway into 2012, I had already seen a big change in my work with the incorporation of little pictures and words.

I'm sure I avoided drawing in the past because my taste far outstripped my

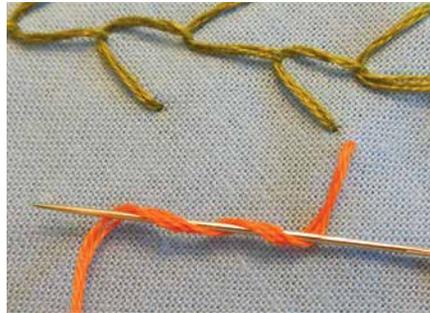


Figure 1



Figure 3



Figure 2



A French knot makes a perfect bud for this vine.

THE FRENCH KNOT

1. To make a French knot, bring your needle up and hold the thread taut. Wrap the thread around the needle twice so that the end coming out of the fabric will be on top when you tip the needle down for the stitch. (Figure 1)
2. Insert the point as close as you can to where it came out, without actually going back into the same hole. Hold the thread tight so it doesn't slip off the needle. After the point is firmly in the fabric, pull the thread to make a tight little coil. (Figure 2) Keep the thread

ability. But something about using embroidery floss instead of a pencil changed that mental outlook. Instead of looking like bad drawing, the stitched pictures looked like charming folk art. They're crude and primitive, not because I'm a lousy artist but because of the

taut while you pull the stitch tight. (I usually shift my grip halfway along from what you see in the photo to hold the coil with my thumbnail as I pull the stitch tight.) As you pull the stitch tight, the coil forms itself into a little donut, held down with a thread that comes up from the side and goes down through the donut hole. (Figure 3)

TIP: French knots are fatter if your thread is not tightly twisted, so separate the strands before you thread your needle, or roll the needle between your fingers to untwist. I usually stitch with three strands of cotton embroidery floss.

nature of the medium. That change in attitude made me fearless! I rarely even made a sketch, I just started stitching. If the picture didn't end up exactly in the center of the square, that was OK.

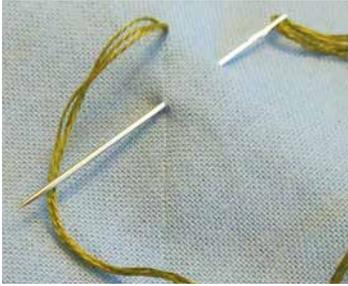


Figure 1



Figure 2

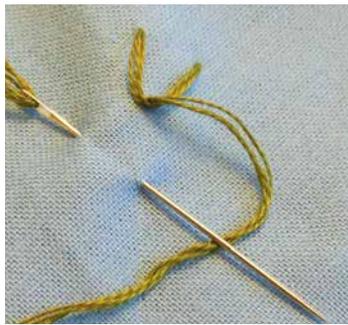


Figure 3



Figure 4

THE FEATHER STITCH

The feather stitch, like a feather, arranges itself along a central spine. You can work with an imaginary line or mark a line on your fabric. You can make a nice line or crease with your thumbnail or the end of your needle.

1. Bring the needle up at the end of the spine. Make a stitch that goes down away from the spine and comes up right on the spine. The thread loops around counterclockwise under the needle. (Figure 1)
2. Pull the thread through the stitch and tight enough to make a V, but not so tight that the fabric puckers. (Figure 2)
3. Your next stitch is just like the first, except this time you work on the other side of the spine and the thread loops around clockwise under the needle. (Figure 3)
4. Keep alternating right and left as you work down the spine. If you like, you can make the spine a curve instead of a straight line. (Figure 4)
5. For a fancier feather stitch, make your first little V, and then for your second stitch, shift toward the left. (Figure 5) For the third stitch, shift toward the left again. (Figure 6)
6. Then make three stitches in the opposite direction, shifting each one toward the right.



Figure 5



Figure 6

When I started the project I hadn't yet decided what to do with the squares. I knew I wanted to put them all together in a format that could be displayed, but hadn't decided how. After the first month I decided to sew them together with simple running stitches and no backing, leaving raw edges visible on top, knots and ends visible from the back. I ended up arranging them like a calendar—seven squares across, Sunday on the left through Saturday on the right, and each month I used a different color thread to stitch the squares together.

The task of finding something to depict every day is, of course, the challenge and the fun of such a project. Sometimes I would think of a picture that referred to something I saw or did that day. It's often hard to pare down an idea to depict it in a four-inch-square format, but that's work that develops your artistic muscles and improves your eye-brain coordination!

Sometimes the picture just came out of the air, triggered by a photo in the newspaper or a remark heard on the radio when I picked up my needle. Or I would choose a stitch and start sewing, not knowing what it would become.” ❖

kathleenloomis.com

ADAPTED FROM
 QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2012

UNDER THE surface EMBELLISHMENT

EMBEDDING OBJECTS IN YOUR QUILTS

BY DIANE SAVONA

The technique that I have developed is a variation of trapunto which captures a hard object between a base layer of thick felt and a top layer of fabric. My top layer is usually made of vintage damask napkins or tablecloths. I love using these textiles in my work, and have a large collection housed in my studio. Damask has superb bias flexibility, so it can be pulled tightly around each embedded object. Gathering these materials at garage sales means they have their own provenance, and they have wonderfully subtle patterns woven into the fibers. The bottom layer is made of heavy-bodied industrial wool. This inexpensive material is nearly ¼" thick

After interviewing Diane Savona for the artist profile for this issue of *Quilting Arts Magazine*, it became clear that her application of embellishment is absolutely unique. She approaches each piece with the eye of an archeologist who is interested in uncovering ancient artifacts and the fossilized remains of past cultures while leaving their history intact for the viewer to interpret. The quality of workmanship and attention to detail in all of Diane's work is exceptional, and we asked her to share her techniques with our readers.

M A T E R I A L S

- 100% cotton fabric
- Embroidery hoop
- Embroidery threads and flosses in a variety of colors
- Pencil
- Embroidery needles
- Sharp scissors
- Acid-free fabric glue
- Small flat bristle brush
- Acrylic paint (optional)



Figure 1

and will not sag even when heavy embellishments are sewn onto it.

Before I begin working on a piece, I soak all of the vintage cloth in



Figure 2

OxiClean and rinse the fabrics many times. I always place a screen over the drain to catch the lint from my vintage fabrics. After it has been washed, the old cloth drinks up dye.



Figure 3

to dye or TO NOT DYE

If you wish to dye your top layer fabric before you begin stitching, I recommend using Procion dyes. I use a very limited range of colors, mostly in the bronze family. I don't measure the dyes when I work. I crowd the cloth in a strong dye bath in a plastic tub, dyeing 15-20 pieces at one time, but not all together. I add one piece, then another, let them soak for a bit, and then throw in two more. By taking some out of the dye pot and then adding others in, I achieve different variations of the same color. After wringing, rinsing, and drying, I assess the results and usually take half back to a fresh dye bath. By the end of the day, I have a great stash of dyed cloth.

DIRECTIONS

1. I suggest starting with a small piece, no larger than 8" x 8", to get comfortable with the process.
2. Lay the wool on a flat surface and arrange the items you wish to embed on top, basting them in place. (Figure 1)
3. Thick embellishments, such as clothespins and plastic bobbins, must be sliced and made flat. Using a clamp and a fine handsaw, slice them in two. With a good deal of practice, and an acceptance that some things just break, you can even slice plastic refrigerator letters (dig out the magnets first) and the ends of empty plastic spoons.

Note: Cutting tools can be dangerous so if you aren't familiar with them, you may want to stick with found, flat items. Clamp before you cut, and always wear safety goggles.

4. Pin the top fabric over the basted embellishments. Starting on one side and working across, sew around the items. (Figure 2) You should be able to press down and find the shape of the objects with your fingers. Sew around each item with a stab stitch, pulling the cloth as tight as possible against the edge of the object. Stitch around the outer edges of each item first, and then stitch inside the edges. The top layer will shrink by as much as 50%.

TIP: Instead of embedding items into a whole quilt, add them to a small piece of wool, and use this as an element in a larger piece.

5. It is possible to remove items from your work to create the effect of a looted archeological site. To do this, cut through the top layer using a sharp razor blade and carefully remove the items that have been embedded underneath. This technique is most effective if you plan ahead and place a thin white layer of fabric between the embedded object and the top layer of fabric. (Figure 3)



“Sewing Strata” • 18" × 18"

- After the sewing is finished, carefully paint discharge paste on selected high points. When touched with a hot iron, the paste removes some of the color resulting in stunning highlights, or it ruins everything. After discharging, the piece must be washed again. Absorb some of the extra moisture with towels, and air-dry the piece overnight.

Frame your work

If you would like to present your embedded embellishment piece in a frame, consider this easy technique. Prepare a wooden frame or stretcher bars with a layer of wire fencing material (to help hold the heavy items from sagging) covered by thin wool. Wrap the entire frame with cloth and staple it securely in place on the back, just as if you were stretching a

canvas. Place the finished top on the prepared frame and carefully sew it in place, making sure to sew through the screening. Cover the back of the piece with cloth and add a hanging wire. ✨

dianesavonaart.com

ADAPTED FROM
 QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
 FEBRUARY/MARCH 2009

POWER TO THE hand STITCHER

BY LAURA WASILOWSKI

This I believe: a stitch by hand transforms a quilt. The simple stitches of hand embroidery can take a flat, uninteresting quilt top and bring the quilt surface to life. It's like going from a cocoon to a butterfly.

Hand stitches add color, texture, and pattern to the surface of small art quilts. They form detailed marks that cannot be made with fabric. The embroidered stitch also helps define fabric shapes, provides a focal point, and most importantly, draws the viewer closer.

Four Backgrounds for Stitching

There are four basic ways I use hand stitching to enhance quilt tops: place stitches on geometric pieced backgrounds; add them to a wholecloth quilt without any machine stitching; place them on a fused composition and add machine stitching later; or put hand stitches on a completed, machine-stitched quilt.

Geometric background shapes are ideal for practicing a variety of stitches (see "Random Acts of Piecing #12"). Choose a basic book of embroidery stitches, such as *ELEGANT STITCHES* by Judith Baker Montano, and follow the stitch directions page

Left: "Random Acts of Piecing #12"

• 10½" × 11½"

Below: "Random Acts of Piecing #4"

• 12" × 13"



MATERIALS

- A fused quilt top
- Fusible batting
- Variegated, cotton embroidery thread, size-8 or -12
- Long-eyed embroidery needle, size to correspond with thread size (In hand needles, the smaller the number size the larger the needle diameter. Use a size-3 with size-8 thread and a size-5 with size-12 thread.)

Optional

- Embroidery hoop
- Quilter's pencil
- Thimble

filled in, you are reminded of stitch names, variations, and their visual impact.

In "Blue Chair at the Window," the needle and thread work as drawing implements. The hand stitches do all the work in creating the room setting for the chair.



"Blue Chair at the Window" • 7" × 9½"

The chair shape (made with a hand-carved stamp) is stamped onto a plain background fabric. Stem stitches outline the chair, define the window frame, and delineate the division between wall and floor. Cross stitches pattern the floor and seed stitches texture the walls. The woven stitches found in the antimacassar add detail and draw the eye to the focal point, the chair.





The power of the stitch is best seen in “Joyful Heart #21” (above). A simple heart is fused onto a plain background fabric, and free-motion machine stitches form canals of thread, guiding

the placement of the embroidery stitches. This random hand stitching adds pattern, texture, and color, and converts a plain quilt top into a little gem.

“Joyful Heart #21” • 9" × 10"



Above: The backing of "Blue Chair at the Window" was added after the embroidery was complete. No stitches show through on the fused back.

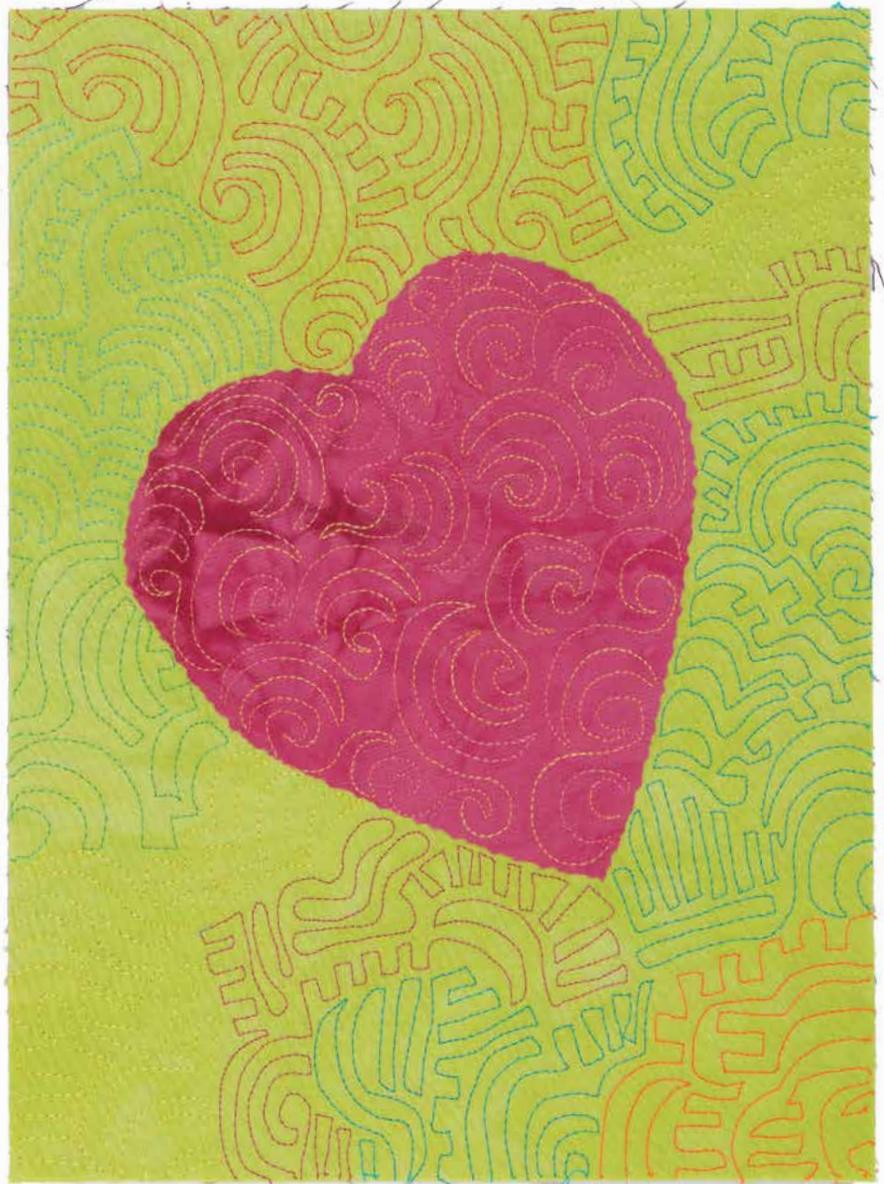
Random Acts of Stitching

Improvise embroidery is stitching without a plan, without a pattern or drawing to follow. Stitch choices and placement are designed as you go, with one stitch building on another. It's a heady, reckless feeling to stitch without a plan, but that's the thrill of handwork and why so many stitchers have a gleam in their eye, including me.

Note: The color of my hand-dyed variegated threads changes every 3" or less. This keeps the stitch color interesting without having to change threads for different colors.

DIRECTIONS

1. Steam set your fused quilt top to the non-scrim side of the batting before adding handwork (fusing to the scrim may ripple the quilt).



"Joyful Heart #22" • 8³/₄" × 11³/₄"

2. Knot or imbed a maximum 18" strand of thread in the back of the quilt and bring the needle and thread to the top of the quilt to begin stitching. Stitch only through the batting and quilt top layers. It is one less layer to stitch through and you can hide all your stitching mess when you add the backing (see the back of "Blue Chair at the Window," above left).

Note: For me, an embroidery hoop only hampers my freedom to stitch, but use one if you are comfortable using one. A thimble saves fingertips and also looks really cool!

3. Mark the areas to be stitched with a quilter's pencil, or stitch freely without following lines.

Placement of stitches is dictated by the shapes on your quilt top. Start with the easy stitches you know; use them

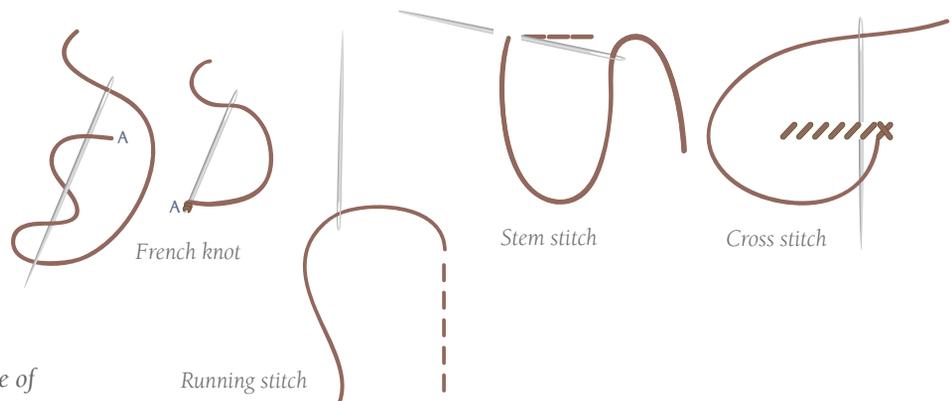
separately or in combination with other stitches. The running stitch leads the eye around the quilt top. Back stitches or stem stitches outline and define fabric shapes. Cross-stitches build pattern. French knots add dynamic hits of color and texture that attract the eye and are often mistaken for beads.

Tip: To gauge the length or the curve of a stitch line on an open field of fabric, draw that line with the tip of the needle and then follow the crease in the fabric.

‘New Life’ through Stitchery

Another benefit to adding hand stitching to a quilt top is that it can revive old work. Having documented the transformation of a piece from “before embroidery” to “after embroidery,” I can confirm there is a marked change in the vitality of the piece. Hand stitching adds vigor and spark, texture and pattern, to a quilt top and rescues it from obscurity. It also invites the observer to step closer to the work to share the beauty of the embroidered stitch. And, maybe, they too will be as captivated by the joy and the power of the hand stitch as I am. ♦

artfabrik.com



“Coleen’s Calling Birds #9” • 11³/₄” × 13¹/₄”

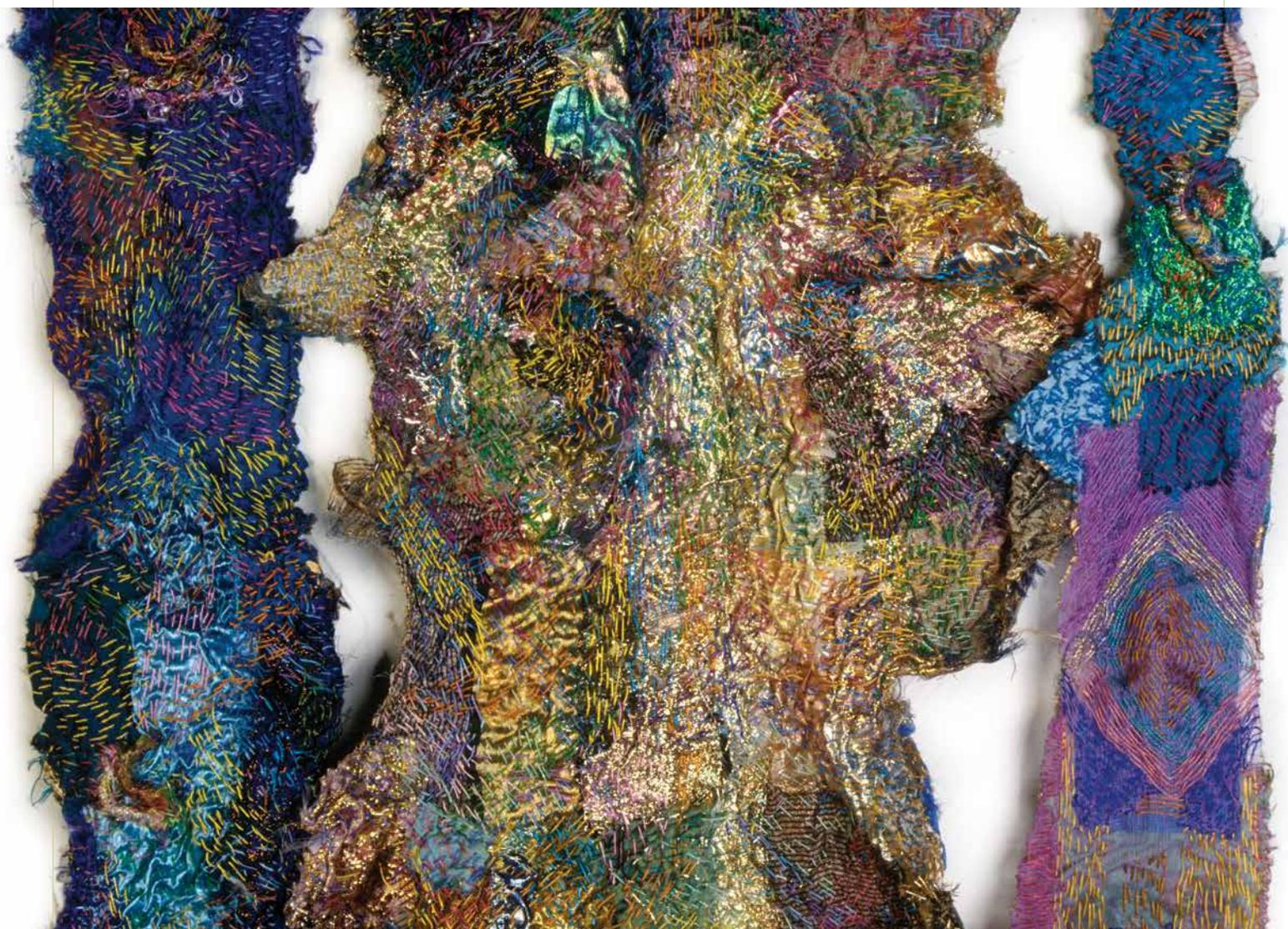
This fused quilt composition was steam set to batting. The stitching is just through the batting and top layer of the quilt; red French knots were added to the leaves for hits of color. The bird became the focal point with the addition of running stitches to pattern the wing, back stitches to outline the wing, and lazy daisy stitches and French knots to create his coronet. Once the handwork was done, the backing was put on the quilt; machine stitching fills in the background, adding subtle pattern and texture.

spectrum

THE RUNNING STITCH

ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
SUMMER 2005

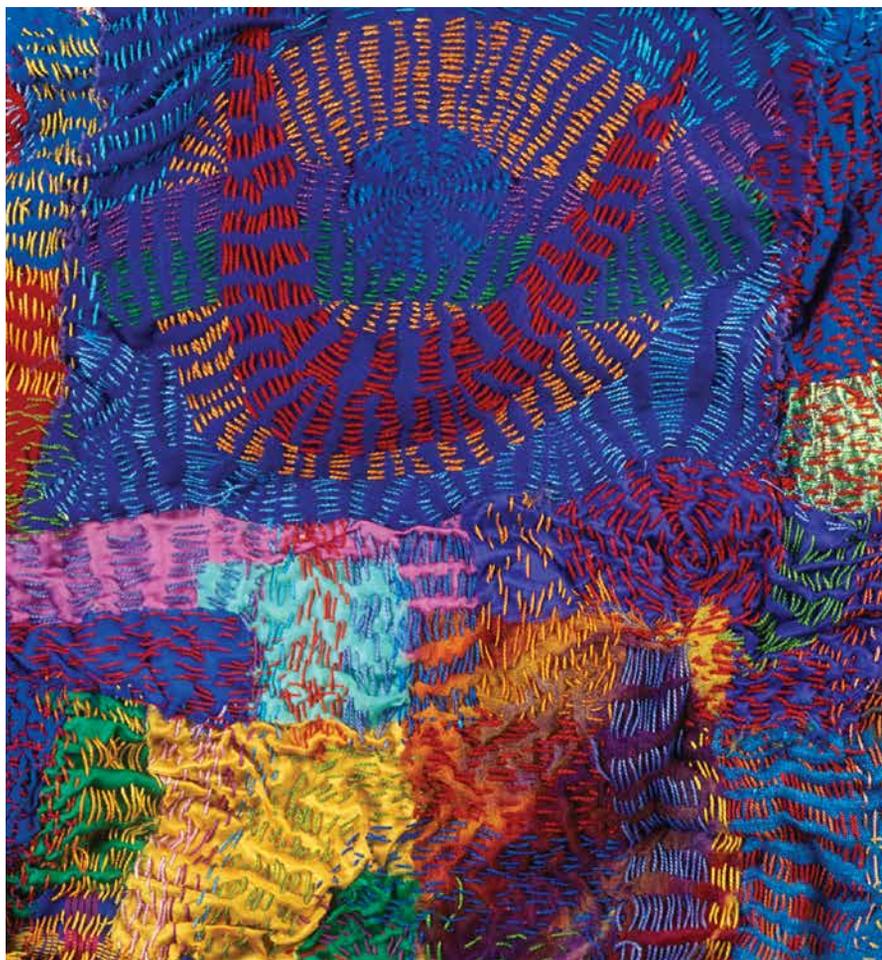
Quilters and embroiderers alike enjoy a passion for cloth, stitch, and invariably color. It is so often the luminosity of fabric surfaces and color that attract us all when confronted by an array of fabrics and threads. We hoard and cherish little bundles of brightly colored cloth, favorite ribbons, bright and shiny silks. But it is all too easy to hold onto these treasures, never to have the courage to use or work with them in case they are a Pandora's Box that will overtake us and get out of control!



BY JULIA CAPRARA

Open the lid of the Box of Delights and come with me! Explore the story of a glimpse into a world of color and stitch that offers such infinite possibilities and opportunities.

You will only need a sewing needle, lots of different colored fine threads such as cotton or silk twists, some brightly colored scraps of silk or fine cotton fabrics, a pair of embroidery scissors, an open mind, and an inquisitive eye.



Above: "Goddess Cloth - Aegean Goddess" — running stitches in brilliant colors leap through various cottons and silks.

Left: "Goddess Cloth - Triple Goddess" — Fabric pieces sewn with running stitches; displayed as three separate but united wall hangings. (See detail previous page.)

ON THE RUN

Let's take the running stitch, plus the world of color, and see where the adventure will take us.

The running stitch is exactly that, a stitch "on the run." Originally worked to darn runs in knitted and woven textiles, it rapidly became a way for creating decorative patterns and borders for clothing. Nowadays it is one of the most versatile and exciting stitches for embroiderers and quilters to work with.

One of the simplest stitches, the running stitch creates a rhythmic way for altering or changing cloth. It can gather or pleat fine fabrics when pulled or under tension. It can "draw" fast, creating outlines of forms and shapes. Worked on different weights of fabrics, a running stitch can make a delicate, fragile fabric such as chiffon or organza become even more ethereal. And when used on heavy, felted wool, this versatile stitch can create richly embellished and encrusted colored surfaces.



“Sun Over Water” — Stitches were worked in one direction and in varying lengths using wools, fabric strips, chiffons, and threads creating an almost painterly surface.

I first started on this extraordinary journey by giving myself permission to work with something I didn't know would work. I said to myself, What would happen if...I tried only working with a running stitch and the pure colors of the spectrum: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet? Or, what would happen if...I only worked with pale tints of color, or colors that belonged to the quieter tones of blues and mauves, but worked them on a bright colored background?

My first experiments were made on an open-weave linen and silk-weave fabric that enabled me to darn or run all kinds of threads, ribbons, and fabric strips through the background. I found that by working the stitches in only one direction, but varying the length of the stitch and the weight or thickness of the threads, it was possible to create an almost painterly surface.

The next challenge I set for myself was more difficult. What would happen if I tried working with the spectrum as my color palette, but only stitched with fine threads, such as cotton or a fine strand of silk, and I only stitched into fine silk or cotton fabrics as a background?

Try running lines of stitches, in different threads and colors across each other and you will be amazed and delighted with the color mixtures you obtain. Also try working it on

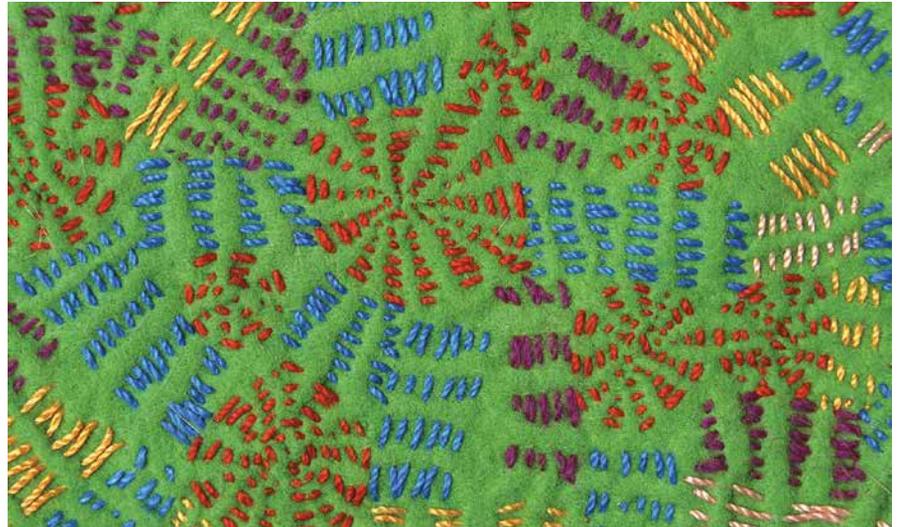
the slant, or move it in circles on the cloth. This expressive stitch can become your paintbrush, enabling you to grow the most unexpected and extraordinary colored textile surfaces.



This was a revelation! Until this point I had always worked on a whole cloth background and composed my ideas as I stitched, and until now had always regarded myself as an embroiderer. I challenged myself to alter a very small scrap of fabric with running stitches in multiple colors. As I worked the next small scrap, and the next, I found myself patching and piecing, growing a cloth in much the same way that my great-grandmother had patched and pieced precious scraps of cloth to make family quilts and coverlets many years ago. I found that my darning stitches could not only embellish and change the surface and patterns of the background cloth, but they would

Above: Detail of “Light Over Water” — On an open-weave fabric, stitches were worked in one direction using lighter shades of fabrics and threads.

Below: Red, yellow, blue, and purple stitches worked on green felt; circular and square designs maintain a rhythmic sequence.

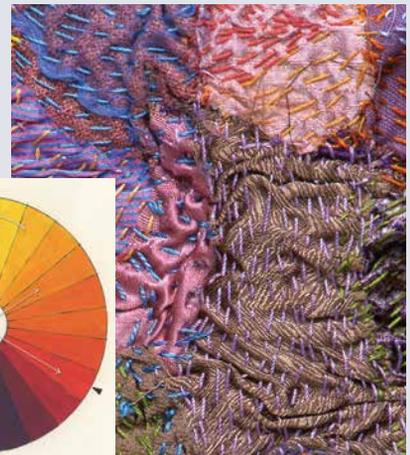
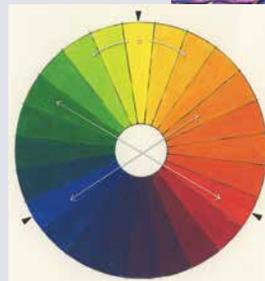


THE COLOR SPECTRUM

Getting to know the color spectrum is easy. Keep your rules simple and your materials straightforward.

Try:

- Exploring overlays of spectrum colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and indigo) in fine threads to create a different color mix when seen from a distance.
- Working with complementary colors (colors opposite each other on the color wheel). For example, stitch with yellow threads on a mauve or violet background.
- Working with soft muted tertiary colors—the color achieved with paint when opposite colors are mixed together, such as red and green, violet and yellow, or blue and orange.



also be wonderful stitches for darning and sewing these fragments together. I could add in all kinds of treasures, small rolls of cloth, nuggets of threads stitched in, even beads, twigs, and sticks. In other words, I could make a new cloth from scratch.

Now my treasure box was filled with very different materials from the palette of knitting yarns I had used before. I hunted in remnant shops for bright, colorful muslins, visited wonderful Asian emporia for brilliant turban cottons, sari silks, and scarves. My thread basket became filled with finer weight threads and silks, glistening jewel-like colors, plastic threads, and more unusual yarns such as colored nylon fishing line.

TRY THIS

- Use a bright yellow thread and make huge running stitches in parallel rows across a dark crimson silk organza.
- Use a fragment of an old blue silk sari and only work with shades of red threads.
- Use materials that are the colors of autumn, and stitch with autumn colors, blacks and greys, bronze and gold threads, and copper wires.

I found that my Pandora's magic box had become a whole new world of color, one that would always be full and overflowing with ideas.

To work creatively and expressively with color and stitch, you need to be prepared to explore, experiment, and try the unexpected. Come with me now and take the risk.



Above: "Poseidon's Wedding Carpet" — A wall hanging with pieced and patched fabrics, running stitches, and found objects from the seashore.

Right: Running stitches in yellow, red, and blue threads overlaid many times to create a rich mix of color.



N E V E R ...

...make your thread length longer than the distance between your hand and your elbow.

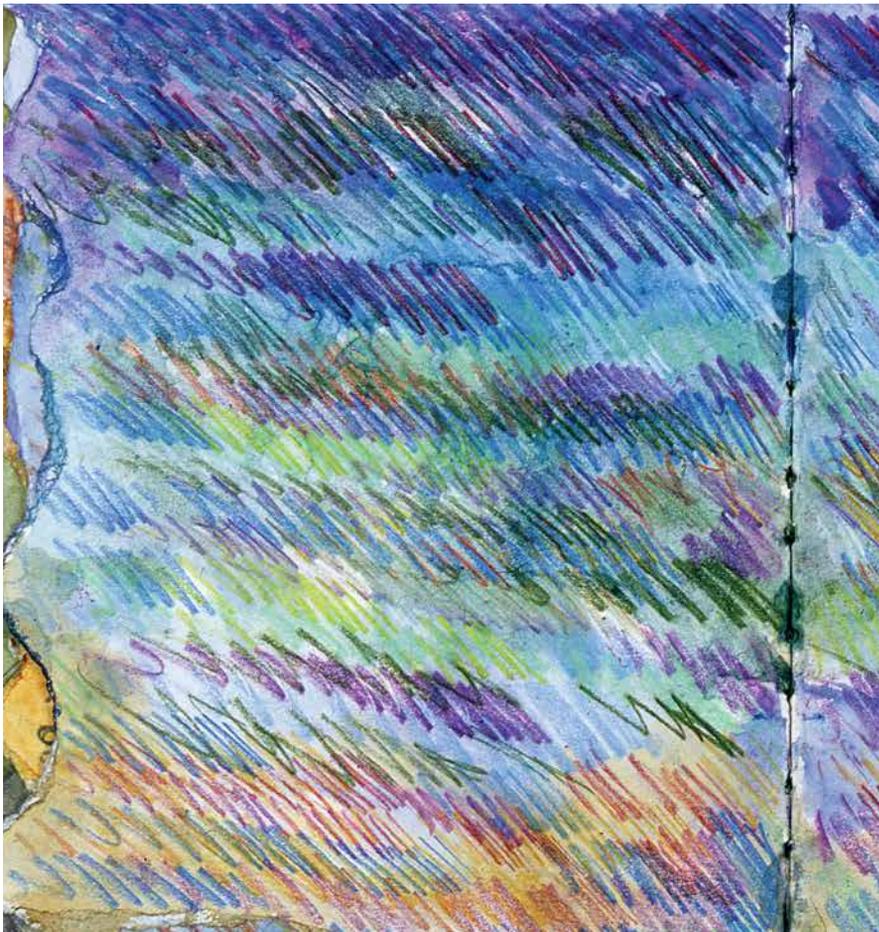
...work with the same colored thread twice running.

...take out a stitch or thread.

...be afraid of overlaying colors to the point that you have lost your first color.

...be afraid of trying something new or taking a risk. Just when you think that you have made chaos, you will be certain to find that chink of light, that one glimpse of something that is uniquely your own, and with it a method to repeat your results until you have turned it into your true voice.

Running stitch drawing using overlaid colored crayons.



GATHERING INSPIRATION

Try some experiments in a sketchbook with colored drawing pencils using lines that look like running stitches. When explored quickly in this way it is possible to mix an extraordinary range of colors.

Begin to look for your own color language wherever you go and collect them in a book, make your own drawings and/or attach scraps of paper, cloth, and thread to the pages. Observe how nature quite often uses primary and secondary colors together in plants, such as red berries and bright green leaves, or orange flowers with the softer blue-green stems and foliage. The French Impressionist artists all worked with a high-pitched

color palette, moving small blobs and marks of color across each other to create a sense of luminosity and light. Stitch will create this effect too, and by overlaying fine lines of spectrum hues across each other it is possible to create a radiant and vibrating sense of luminous light.

Try working systematically through the color palette of the spectrum.

WHY NOT...

...experiment to see what red, green, (etc.) do to a bright green fabric.

...use more or less of one color than another.

...leave more of the ground fabric showing.

...work your running stitches to cover more of the ground fabric.

Stitching will always change the top surface of your fabric, but overlay several different layers of more transparent-colored fabrics, and your palette of color will change even more.

Running stitches can be threaded through one another and with different threads, creating a weave-like effect. I invite you to take up your needle, gather some pieces of solid, brightly colored fine cotton or silk fabrics and a variety of different threads in spectrum hues, and begin to stitch. ◆

Julia Caprara was a teacher, author, and visionary known to many as the creator of cutting edge creative textiles characterized by vibrant color and an innovative use of materials. She passed away in 2008.