

# CERTIFICATE

## BLACKWORK



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



**Blackwork was traditionally used as decoration on caps, collars and cuffs. It usually featured a repeated design of small floral motifs. Both sides of the embroidery were to be seen so it was worked in a double running stitch (also known as Holbein stitch), making the front and back identical. Originally thought to have been introduced to England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Blackwork designs have developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and frequently portray realism and form through differing densities of thread and pattern to create tonal shading.**

**AIM - To design and work Blackwork embroidery using a minimum of five counted stitches on linen with black thread of various thicknesses, and differing densities of stitches to create shading. Experimentation with the deconstruction of patterns will help develop tonal areas. Stitches should be chosen with care to replicate the texture of each area. Your work should demonstrate effective use of stitches and thread thickness to achieve the tonal values in the design. In at least one area of gradual transition between two or more similar stitches.**

**Please note: All preparatory work (e.g. outlines, drawings, stitch plans, original source material) MUST be handed in for assessment or the work will not be marked.**

### DESIGN

Try to come with some ideas for your design. The tutor will have source material for you to look at and will make suggestions and help you bring your ideas together to create your own image. Photographs are very good source material for blackwork, they must have a good balance of light and shadow and be very clear and crisp.

**Do be flexible in your approach, listen to your tutors' experienced advice and be prepared to alter your initial ideas if necessary.**

- Keep design within A4 measurements, 21cm x 30cm (approximately 8in x 12in)
- Faces, animals, landscapes and architecture can be very effective designs.
- Designs with a clear light source translate most effectively.
- At least 5 different counted stitches should be used, including a darning stitch if appropriate to the design.
- Varying the thickness of the thread and density of the stitch gives different shaded effects.
- At least one stitch should be subtly deconstructed to show a highlighted area.
- Choose stitches which suggest the texture or pattern of an area; your tutor will help you.
- Within at least one area two or more stitches should gradually transition into one another sympathetically (so that there is not an obvious change or join between the stitches).

**If you are using images from the Internet please be aware of any copyright restrictions and make sure the image is clear and crisp to use.**

### PREPARATION

- Once the linen is taut the design outline is traced onto tissue paper and tacked onto the linen through the tissue paper with a light coloured thread (usually blue).

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:** Please see *Project Evaluation* sheet for details

# CERTIFICATE

## BLACKWORK



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



### TIPS

- The emphasis is on **shading** and the appropriate use of stitches within your design, not on how many different stitches are used. Try to choose stitches that suggest the texture of what you are trying to achieve.
- Before you start to stitch, make a shaded pencil drawing of your design to gain understanding of the contrast of light and shade in your design. You can take a black and white photocopy to help you, and your tutors can help you get started. **This drawing must be handed in with your assessment, along with your original design source, stitch plan and any other working drawings.**
- 'Outline' stitches are only to be used where necessary, try to use blackwork stitches to create the outlines naturally. The outlines should enhance the embroidery not detract from it.
- A full tonal range is to be achieved including negative spaces for highlights - be aware that open and broken areas of stitch on white linen can create a harmony and balance within your composition. You should be mindful of over-stitching blackwork.
- Be careful where you bring up your needle as black dots can be left in the linen if the area is not worked over. It is better to 'park' your thread in an area you know will be covered with stitching.
- Threads that have been trailed, darned or travelled behind lightly stitched areas are easily visible from the front; try to avoid this by starting and finishing threads in the darker areas.
- Ophir thread may be used for highlights if it complements the design.
- Make sure all tacking lines are removed; it is best to remove them as you finish each area.
- Use Acid-free tissue paper while you work to keep the background clean at all times.
- Blackwork needs to be stitched with a firm tension, as it is very easy for the stitches to become loose, which can distort the patterns.
- It is important to mount on the grain. White, grey or black cotton is used to cover your mountboard. However, if you use black or grey cotton to disguise any trailing threads, this will dull down the whiteness of your linen.

### MATERIALS

- 36 TPI Edinburgh linen is usually used although 32 TPI Belfast linen can be used if necessary. The linen is an even-weave (the same number of threads going horizontally as vertically).
- Coton a broder no.16
- Anchor and DMC stranded cotton
- Machine thread no.50
- Silk gossamer
- Metallic threads are sometimes used to add a highlight, usually silver or gold Ophir
- Needles – Tapestry No. 24, No. 26.

*We stock all these at the RSN*

### BOOKS

- Becky Hogg "RSN Essential Stitch Guide: Blackwork" ISBN 978-1-84448-551-2
- "Royal School of Needlework Embroidery Techniques" ISBN: 0-71348817-4
- Elizabeth Geddes and Moyra McNeill, "Blackwork Embroidery" ISBN 978-0486232454
- Marion Scoular "Why call it Blackwork?"

### STOCKISTS

- The Royal School of Needlework 020 3166 6935

Royal School of Needlework, Apartment 12a, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey KT8 9AU, UK  
T: +44 (0)20 3166 6932, F: +44 (0)20 8943 4910, E: enquiries@royal-needlework.org.uk, W: www.royal-needlework.org.uk

A Company Limited by Shares and Registered in England No.12192C with Registered Office at above address.  
Registered with the Charity Commissioners No.312774, VAT No. GB238871626

**CERTIFICATE**

**BLACKWORK**



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



**PROJECT EVALUATION**

NAME.....

DATE.....

**As you work your embroidery, please think about and record how you achieved the various assessment criteria listed below, and record why you made various decisions affecting your embroidery. These questions ask you to reflect on your embroidery work, which helps you gain a deeper understanding of what you have learned in class.**

Please sign and date the form and hand it in with your work for assessment.

**Assessment Criteria:**

**1. First Impressions**

- The work is well presented and clean with no alien fibres.
- The thread retains its sheen and is not overworked or fluffy.
- No tacking lines are visible.
- No threads from the back are visible through to the front.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**2. Design**

- The design has been adapted well to this technique.
- The choice of stitches and thread thicknesses are appropriate to the design.
- An appropriate range of texture has been achieved throughout.
- Depth and dimension have been achieved throughout.
- The embroidery resembles the original design source.

.....

.....

.....

.....

CERTIFICATE

BLACKWORK



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



.....  
.....

**3. Appropriate Use of Stitch**

- There is careful choice and placement of stitches.
- Stitch size is appropriate.
- There is a minimum of four stitches and where appropriate to the design, more stitches can be used.
- The stitches enhance the depth and texture of the design.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**4. Tension and Accuracy of Stitches**

- There are no loose stitches.
- There are no over-tight stitches.
- Stitches are counted correctly.
- Where two stitches are blended, the count has been adapted sympathetically.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**5. Shading and Overall Effect**

CERTIFICATE

BLACKWORK



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



- The variation of stitch pattern creates contrast.
- A full tonal range has been achieved including highlights through negative space. If Ophir thread has been used it is appropriate to the design.
- A realistic and dimensional embroidery true to the original image has been achieved.
- Definition between areas has been achieved through choice of stitch and thread thickness. If outline stitches have been used they are appropriate and used sparingly.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**6. Mounting**

- The background fabric beneath the linen does not detract from the design.
- The board has been cut with 90° corners and straight edges.
- The design is placed straight on the board with a suitable area allowed at all edges; the fabric grain is straight to the edges of the board.
- The linen is pulled tautly across the board to remove creases, bubbles and puckering.
- No pinpricks are visible around the edges of the board.
- The corners of the linen have been folded neatly and are square and flat.
- The sateen is on the grain, taut and clean with square corners and an even rebate.
- The slip stitches are consistently of even size with no slip stitches or pinpricks visible.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2019-2020  
ACADEMIC YEAR

ROYAL SCHOOL OF NEEDLEWORK

CERTIFICATE

BLACKWORK



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



The following questions encourage you to reflect on your embroidery work and your experience at the RSN. They provide helpful feedback so that we may continuously improve what we do. In order to provide anonymity, the following page is separate. Please sign and date the bottom of this page and hand in with your work.

Embroidery

What did you enjoy most in stitching this piece? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

Did your decisions work well and are you satisfied with the results?

.....  
.....  
.....

What did you find most challenging in working this piece? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

What, if anything, would you do differently in the future?

.....  
.....  
.....

Did the design evolve over time and were you influenced by your tutor, fellow-students or other source to develop your original ideas?

.....  
.....  
.....

The next time you employ this technique, what aspects of the design and/or embroidery will do you differently?

.....  
.....  
.....

Signed.....Date.....

Royal School of Needlework, Apartment 12a, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey KT8 9AU, UK  
T: +44 (0)20 3166 6932, F: +44 (0)20 8943 4910, E: enquiries@royal-needlework.org.uk, W: www.royal-needlework.org.uk

A Company Limited by Shares and Registered in England No.12192C with Registered Office at above address.  
Registered with the Charity Commissioners No.312774, VAT No. GB238871626

CERTIFICATE

BLACKWORK



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



Teaching & Environment

Which aspects of the teaching were particularly helpful to you in working this piece?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Was any part of the teaching advice confusing or unhelpful in any way?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Is there any advice or instruction that would have been helpful to you if it had been given during your classes?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

What is your opinion of the materials provided by the RSN for this project?

.....  
.....  
.....

Do you know of any additional resources (books, textiles collections, websites etc.) that will help future students in this technique?

.....  
.....  
.....

Did you enjoy the learning environment at the RSN? Is there anything we could improve?

.....  
.....  
.....