



SILK SHADING



Natural Silk Shading using Long and Short Stitch. Traditionally worked on a silk or linen fabric, using silk thread to create a life-like image. Now more often worked in a blend of stranded cottons to give an impression of 'painting with thread'.

AIM - To design and work silk shading embroidery on silk dupion or linen, depicting a simple but realistic flower, or appropriate fruit or vegetable using a single strand of stranded cotton. To demonstrate an understanding of long and short stitch, blending colours and the use of light and shade for a realistic three-dimensional effect.

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 a design and bring along some photographs; these could be from a book, seed catalogue, magazine or greetings card, or a photograph you have taken yourself. The photograph must be printed a similar size to the embroidery size otherwise it is very difficult to work.

It is essential to work from a crisp, clear, well-focused photograph where you can see the individual colours and changes from dark to light. Illustrations can sometimes be harder to follow, and you should be wary of images from the Internet, which are often poor quality and may not print sufficiently well. However there are many places online from which you can purchase high quality images.

The tutor will be able to make suggestions and help you bring your ideas together. **Do be flexible in your approach, listen to your tutor's experienced advice and be prepared to alter your initial ideas if necessary.**

- The stitched area should cover no more than 8x8 centimetres (3in x 3in). Your embroidery once mounted should fit comfortably within A5 measurements, 15cm x 21cm (6in x 8in) though the proportions may be different if appropriate.
- It is possible to use more than one source image, but take care to unify the direction of the light source when bringing elements together from different sources.
- Your design must include a leaf or leaves, a turnover and a stem, along with the main flower, fruit or vegetable. Please note the turnover can be on the main subject or the leaf.
- Recent examples include a pansy, a fuchsia, a lily, a tulip, an artichoke and autumn leaves. These have worked well because they include some large areas.
- **Please be realistic about your choice of design as this will be your first piece of natural silk shading.** Be careful not to make the design too complex as the emphasis of this technique is on natural shading - too many colours and awkward angles cause confusion.

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

Prior to starting silk shading it is a good idea to have framed up a piece of calico (40x60cm) so that you can apply silk on the first day. Ask your tutors for advice on this.

On the first day you will be working on your design and some stitch exercises. You will not be stitching your main piece until the second day.

- Before you start to stitch, make a shaded pencil drawing of your design. This helps you to define the original light source within the design and to consider structure and where the shadows and highlights fall. You can take a black and white photocopy to help you (this does not replace your pencil drawing), and your tutors can help you get started. **This drawing must be handed in for assessment.**
- Along with the black and white version, make a coloured drawing of your design with pencils or paints. Completing this task will inform your colour choice when silk shading. Your tutors will be able to help you get started. **This drawing must be handed in for assessment.**
- Work through the stitch exercises as instructed by your tutor. These allow you to practice blending your colours and improve stitch accuracy.

STITCHES

Long-and-short stitch is used throughout Silk Shading, but other stitches may be used for detail – for example, French or bullion knots for stamens.

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

TIPS

- Make sure you frame up correctly and that the applied silk/linen background is taut to avoid puckering while you work. Stab stitching within the design is essential to help to avoid this.
- Keep tightening your frame as you work this project to prevent wrinkles.
- Use acid-free tissue paper while you work to keep the background clean at all times.
- Use short lengths of thread at all times as you are stitching through two layers of fabric and this can cause the thread to lose its sheen.
- Ensure that stitches are close together to avoid the background fabric showing through the long and short stitch.
- Choose a clear and crisp image to work from that has a consistent light source



TIPS ON SELECTING THE RIGHT IMAGE

What to look for:

- Large open petals
- Consistent light source
- A good sized turnover
- One entire image, try to avoid composite images (it is unavoidable at times)
- Gradual shading



What to avoid:

- Large complex flowers
- Small petals
- Ruffled petals (iris)
- Protruding elements (orchids)
- White flowers, these often look dirty once finished.
- Dramatic or hard shadows
- Dramatic angle changes
- Spotty flowers



MATERIALS

- Calico mounted onto a slate frame 50cm (approx 20ins) square
- Closely woven silk or linen measuring 30cm (approx 12ins) square. If in doubt of design size and layout buy a slightly larger size of fabric and discuss with your tutor. For more choice of fabric colour, students can purchase their own silk/linen (see supplier list).
- Anchor or DMC stranded cottons (not silk threads).
- Needles – Embroidery No.10, No.11, No.12.
- Gütermann thread to match your background fabric.

We have a wide range of Anchor and DMC stranded cottons at the RSN.

2019-2020
ACADEMIC YEAR

ROYAL SCHOOL OF NEEDLEWORK

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BOOKS

- Sarah Homfray “The Royal School of Needlework Essential Stitch Guide – Silk Shading” ISBN: 978-1-84448-585-7
- “Royal School of Needlework Embroidery Techniques” ISBN: 0-71348817-4
- Thomasina Beck “The Embroiderer’s Flowers” ISBN: 0-7153-9901-2

There may be other books available, but be aware that often long & short stitch is not described in the same way that we teach it at the RSN; if in doubt check with your tutors.

STOCKISTS

- Royal School of Needlework 020 3166 6935 www.royal-needlework.org.uk
- The Silk Route (Silk dupion) 01252 835781 www.thesilkroute.co.uk
- MacCulloch & Wallis (Silks, fabrics, threads) Dering St, (Nr Oxford St) London 020 7629 0311 www.macculloch-wallis.co.uk

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

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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 silk is clean and there are no alien fibres on the surface or trapped in the embroidery.
- The paint lines and stab stitches are not visible.
- The thread has maintained its sheen and is in good condition.

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2. Design

- The background fabric is appropriate to the design.
- The thread shades chosen are appropriate to the design.
- A sense of realism is achieved.

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3. Stitch Technique

- The size of the stitches is appropriate to the design.
- The stitch direction is at the correct angle in all areas of the design.
- The stitches on the turnover are worked at the correct angle.
- The rows of long & short blend naturally into one another without appearing as blocked rows of stitches or with obvious angle changes.
- The stitches have an even and consistent tension.
- The density of stitching is sufficient to cover all the silk within each area.
- There are no open gaps showing fabric between overlapping areas.
- The long & short stitch is smooth without overworked areas

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4. Edges

- The edges are smooth and defined.
- The split stitch is not visible (and the correct colour thread has been used).
- There are no long & short stitches overlapping each other at the edges.
- The edges of the long & short stitch are defined against the colour of the chosen silk.

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5. Shading

- The colours are appropriately blended throughout.
- The light source is consistent within the design.
- The shading has been explored to achieve a three dimensional perspective.

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6. Mounting

- The board has been cut with 90 degree 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 silk 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 silk have been folded neatly and are square and flat.
- The sateen is on the grain, taut and clean with square corners and even rebate.
- The slip stitches are consistently of even size with no slip stitches or pinpricks visible.

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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?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Teaching & Environment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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