

Royal School of Needlework
Canvas Shading - Diploma
Academic year 2025/26

Traditionally used for chair covers and cushions, canvas shading can also be used to create contemporary and abstract images. The technique is worked using Tent Stitch and Appleton's crewel wool on canvas by sophisticated mixing of colours in the needle.

Aim

To design, work and mount a piece of tent stitch canvas embroidery, demonstrating a high degree of technical skill through the use of colour and shading to create a naturalistic, three-dimensional work.

Materials and equipment

There is no starter kit for this module. "Antique" Canvas, Appleton's crewel wool and needles can be purchased from the RSN.

Fabric: Zweigart 18 threads per inch canvas. Use shade 'Antique' which is a light brown colour if obtainable.

Threads: Appletons crewel wool.

Needles: Tapestry 22.

Other: Waterproof pen(s) for drawing on the design, such as Staedtler Permanent Lumocolor.

Reasonable adjustments

If there is a reason you may have difficulty completing the module e.g. visual impairment, allergy to some materials, please discuss this with the tutor and the C and D team before starting. Adjustments are possible.

Essential requirements

Design area

- The final design should be no more than A5 in size, 21 x 15 cm (6 x 8 inches) or equivalent. It may be landscape or portrait in orientation.

Stitches

- For the subject, **Tent stitch only.**
- The background is often worked in a different counted stitch for interest.

Shading

- The chosen image must offer scope for subtle changes in shading. Shading can also be included in the background, for example the shadow of a still life, but should not be the focus of the design.

Border (optional)

- A small border may be stitched for a more uniform finish to the edges. Optional elements will not be assessed.

Mounting rebate

- The mounted work should have an equal rebate of open canvas around the embroidery with no thread ends visible.

Finishing

- The finished work will be mounted on card and backed with a suitable fabric.

Getting started – before class

It is not necessary to arrive at the first class with a finalised design, but you should come with some ideas. For examples of work by other C and D students look at the C and D gallery on the website. <https://royal-needlework.org.uk/courses/certificate-diploma/canddgallery/>.

Getting started – in class

Preparatory work

Preparation prior to stitching is an important part of the learning process. Your tutor will give guidance on how to prepare the following:

- An outline drawing. This will be photocopied several times and used to create:
- Colour studies help understand the placement of colours and transitional shading details.
- A black and white tonal drawing will help identify the shadows and the highlights.

The original outline drawing will be used to transfer the design to the canvas using a waterproof pen.

Initial plans can be amended as the embroidery progresses. If you choose to have your work formally assessed, you should submit the preparatory work listed above together with your source material. It will form part of the assessment.

Things to think about when planning the embroidery

- Inspiration can come from photographs, magazines, books and postcards.
- Still life subjects are common and successful choices e.g. flowers, fruit, vegetables, animals or man-made objects such as musical instruments, shoes or pottery. Abstracts, landscapes and dramatic skies also work. There are 324 stitches per square inch on the canvas, so small details and subtle shading can be captured.

- Traditional or contemporary designs can work provided they show shading, depth and perspective. Flat graphic designs will need additional work to create shading. Include areas large enough to allow the depiction of subtle changes in shading from light to dark.
- When stitching, avoid carrying light thread under dark areas and vice versa.
- When framing up, use long and short stitch to attach the canvas at the top and the bottom of your slate frame. This avoids creating a line of weakness in the canvas when it is put under tension.
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Intellectual property

The final design must be original to you. Use of your own visual media (photographs, drawings) is encouraged. Referencing and interpreting other visual media is acceptable. Copying is not. The intellectual property of others must be respected.

Additional information

Additional information can be downloaded from the website

- Resources - Websites, Books, Suppliers for C&D