

Royal School of Needlework  
**Creative Metal Thread - Diploma**  
Academic year 2025/26

**Contemporary metal thread embroidery uses a variety of textural and light-reflective metallic materials and threads in non-traditional ways.**

**Aim**

To design and work a piece of metal thread embroidery which demonstrates creative use of the chosen threads and an advanced level of technical skill. This module should only be undertaken after completing the Diploma Goldwork module. The focus of the module is on sampling, creativity and experimentation together with the use traditional technical skills.

Discuss ideas for this module with the tutor at an early stage. RSN tutors have considerable experience in working this technique and in teaching it. Please listen to their advice.

**Materials and equipment**

There is no starter kit for this module. Gilt threads, metallic kid leather, paper covered wires and needles can be purchased from the RSN.

Fabric: Any appropriate fabric for the design. Medium weight calico if a backing is required.

Threads: Any metallics appropriate to the design, including coloured threads. Gutermann sewing thread.

Needles: Embroidery 10 and 12. Others as necessary.

Other: This list is not exhaustive. Many other items can be used: Paper covered wires, beads, spangles, sequins, washers, watch components, metallic kid, metallic organza, metallic tissue, mesh, millary wires etc.  
Mellor, beeswax. See the Resources list for suppliers.

**Reasonable adjustments**

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

**Essential requirements**

Design area

- The finished design should be no larger than A5 15 x 21 cm (6 x 8 inches) or equivalent. The work may also be three dimensional.

## Techniques

A minimum of six different techniques. These may include but are not limited to:

- Couching, puffing, layering, looping, Or Nué - using laid threads such as Japanese, passing, plate, rococo, twist etc.
- Wired edges, twisted, curled, coiled, looped, threaded through, wrapped, cut and sewn - using various sizes of Pearl Purl.
- Couched, raised, looped, massed, three dimensional, distressed purls e.g. Smooth, Rough, Bright and Wire/dull check. Self-made purls.

## Colour

- Gold, silver, copper, coloured or a combination suitable to the design may be used.

## Sampling

- A wide variety of techniques must be sampled at the outset. This helps to identify techniques to include in the final piece. Allow up to two days of the module for the sampling element and do not settle on a final design before sampling and experimenting. The samples, well-presented, must be included when submitting work for assessment.

## Technical skill

- Though the threads are being used in non-traditional ways the basic rules still apply. Materials should be in good condition unless a deliberate choice to distress or use tarnished materials has been made. Methods of application should use the technical skills learned on previous goldwork modules. Stitch tension should be good. Padding should be secure and covered.

## Finishing

- The finished piece may be mounted on card and backed with a suitable fabric or presented in another way e.g. three dimensional.

## **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:

- A line drawing on tracing paper. The tracing will be photocopied several times and used to create:

- A stitch plan which will be informed by the sampling and will ensure that the required number of techniques is included.
- An order of work.
- The original tracing will be used as a pricking and/or template.
- Well-presented samples

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. All this paperwork will form part of the assessment.

#### Things to think about when planning the embroidery.

- Undertake the required sampling before finalising your design decisions.
- The design should offer scope for lots of creativity.
- Consider ways in which the wide range of threads available can be used to suggest textures, scale, surfaces etc. in the design.
- Consider ways in which the metallic threads can be applied to encourage the play of light on them.
- Aim for a mix of textures, and open and solid areas.
- Consider what is the most suitable background fabric to use.
- Decide whether it is to be two or three dimensional or a mix.

#### **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