

Royal School of Needlework

Stumpwork - Diploma

Academic year 2025/26

Stumpwork is a Victorian term for Raised Work embroidery, which became very popular in the mid-17th century. It combined a variety of techniques and materials to create pictures with depth and dimension. Used on caskets and mirrors; traditional subjects were often biblical or historical. Needlelace features in many preserved pieces. Contemporary raised work can combine both traditional and modern materials and methods to create multi-dimensional embroideries.

Aim

To design, work and mount an embroidered stumpwork figure demonstrating an advanced level of technical skill while exploring a variety of stumpwork techniques. The focus of the module is on the creation of a figure, which can be human, fictional, mythological etc through an appropriate choice of materials and methods. Use of a variety of raised work techniques is also important.

Materials and equipment

There is no starter kit for this module. Calico, needles, stranded cottons, felt, stuffing and paper covered wires can be purchased from the RSN.

Fabric: Medium weight calico or cotton as a base fabric. Other fabrics for the background and elements of the design might include, but are not limited to, cotton, linen, leather and silk etc... Fabrics may also be painted.

Threads: A range of threads can be used such as stranded cottons, silks, coton a broder and perlé. Gutermann sewing thread.

Needles: 10 and 12. Others as necessary.

Other: Padding materials such as felt, and polyester stuffing. Paper covered wire will be used for the hands and may be needed for other areas of the design.

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 finished embroidery must be no larger than A4 30 x 21 cm (12 x 8 inches).

The figure

- The figure should measure approximately 10 to 12 cm (4 to 5 inches). It must have:
 - A padded body
 - A face with stitched features
 - Worked hand or hands

Slips (items made separately and then applied)

- There must be a minimum of **four** slips in total.
- **Two** of the slips must be made needlelace.
- The slips may be part of the figure or the background.

Other stumpwork techniques

- At least **two** more stumpwork techniques should be included. They can, but need not, come from the suggestions below. Other techniques such as appliqué (to a limited extent) and surface stitches may also be used.
 - Embroidered slips
 - Wired shapes
 - Wrapped beads
 - Wrapped wires
 - Woven Picots

Background/context

- The scale of the figure may be realistic or exaggerated. The background should offer a sense of scale or visual context.

Embellishments

- Try to avoid using found or bought accessories. More credit will be given for made embellishments.

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:

- A line drawing on tracing paper. The tracing will be photocopied several times and used to create:
- Piece templates
- A padding plan to outline the choice and positioning of padding.
- A stitch plan which will help to ensure the mandatory elements are included.
- An order of work to help plan the application sequence.

- The original tracing will be turned into a pricking and used to transfer the design to the fabric.

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

- The focus of the design should be the figure,.
- You may wish to include some background to create a scene or context. The background can offer the chance to explore techniques beyond those included in the figure.
- When creating a design for stumpwork proportions should usually be realistic. Otherwise, they should be deliberately out of proportion (e.g. large figure next to a tiny castle, which is quite traditional).
- Bare shoulders and wrists are best avoided. It is hard to disguise the joins.
- Props and accessories should be carefully considered as, ideally, you need to be able to make them rather than buy them.
- Aim to match the different techniques to the areas of design in a way that works naturally, particularly the needlelace elements.

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