

Royal School of Needlework
Whitework: Pulled and Drawn - Diploma
Academic year 2025/26

Pulled thread and drawn thread are traditional techniques. In pulled thread work, stitched patterns distort the threads of even weave linen to create lace-like effects. Drawn thread work involves the removal of threads of the evenweave linen. The open areas are stabilised, before decorative stitches are used to create patterns. For both techniques there are a wide variety of stitch patterns from which to choose.

Aim

To design and work a piece of pulled and drawn embroidery, demonstrating an advanced level of technical skill and varied stitch selection appropriate to the design. Variation can include scale, density – a wide tonal range – texture. Additional skill is involved in combining pulled work and drawn work in one design.

Materials and equipment

There is no starter kit for this module. Zweigart fabric, coton a broder, stranded cotton, perlé and needles can be purchased from the RSN.

Fabric: Zweigart white evenweave linen Edinburgh 36 count.

Threads: Coton a broder sizes 16, 20 and 30. No 12 Perlé. Stranded cotton. Keep to the same brand and shade number for these threads (e.g. DMC B5200 or Anchor No 1) to maintain consistency of tone throughout. Matching machine thread for creating boundaries for pulled work pattern edges as necessary.

Needles: Embroidery 10. Tapestry 24, 26, 28

Other: Depending on method of design transfer – tissue, blue water-soluble pen, sharp blue pencil.

Optional: Beads and ribbons for embellishment.

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 30 x 30 cm (12 x 12 inches) or equivalent.

Stitches

Pulled work must include:

- A minimum of five patterns to show a variety of texture, scale, density, highlight and shadow etc. which represent different areas of the design.
- At least one outline worked in a suitable surface stitch e.g. Stem, Chain, Whipped Chain, Whipped Back Stitch.

Drawn work must include:

- Stabilising stitches – buttonhole and/or satin
- At least one hem stitch e.g. Overcast hem stitch, Diagonal hem stitch, Ladder hem stitch
- At least one knotted variation
- At least one twisted variation
- Needle weaving
- Corner decoration

Drawn thread hem

- The work should be finished with a drawn thread hem around the edge. This will have 2 threads withdrawn and be worked in an antique hem stitch where stitches are concealed.
- The hem will have mitred corners.
Discuss the drawn thread hem with the tutor before starting. There is a downloadable leaflet on Drawn Thread Hem.

Finishing

- The piece should be presented on card; 2 or 3 corners should be attached to the card so that the back of the work can be viewed.

Extra surface stitches may be added to enhance the design e.g. French knots, Bullions, Satin Stitch, Counted stitches. Optional elements will not be assessed.

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 for the pulled work element. The drawing will be photocopied several times and used to create:
- A plan of the size and placement of the drawn thread borders.
- A tonal shaded drawing - shades of one colour, light to dark, can be used to represent the tones in the design.

- An overall stitch plan will ensure a good range of stitches and inclusion of the mandatory ones.
- An order of work
- The line drawing will be traced onto tissue and used to transfer the pulled work 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, whichAll this paperwork will form part of the assessment.

Things to think about when planning the embroidery

- Sampling stitches at the outset will help inform design decisions.
- Art Deco and Art Nouveau designs can work well. Bold shapes can work well.
- Include areas large enough to achieve an effective amount of each of the chosen patterns.
- Irregular shapes and overlaps help to create a sense of depth and dimension.
- Consider the overall balance of the piece when planning the size and position of the drawn thread borders and corners.
- If using a water-soluble pen test it on a sample first. Will it wash out without leaving a mark? Does it react to the heat of working lights?
- When choosing card for the background note that the colour blue enhances whiteness.

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
- Drawn Thread Hem