

Canvas Customization *or*

Canvas Enhancement *or*

Developing a Stitch Guide

Supplies needed:

- A painted canvas or a line drawing
- Pencil
- Notebook or a Project Log (sample attached)
- Your favorite stitch books
- Post-it page markers
- Doodle canvas
- Fiber notebooks (if you have them)
- Thread manufacturers color charts (if you have them)

1. Select a design that is not too detailed.

Most patterned stitches need room to develop! It's hard to create effects when you only have small areas to work with.

Keep in mind that if you're doing a line drawing, you need to consider the color of canvas you want to use, the canvas size, and whether you need to color all or part of the canvas before you stitch.

2. Make one or two color photocopies plus at least one black and white photocopy on which you can take notes.

3. Think about how this piece will be used and finished.

- Is there a color scheme or design style that you need to match?
- Do the fibers need to be resistant to wear (a belt or chair)?
- Must there be complete coverage of the canvas?
- Are there finishing constraints that restrict the size and bulk of the stitches - for example, will it be under glass?

4. Study the canvas to determine the theme or mood of the design.

- Stitch and fiber selection should enhance the theme.
- If colors are dark and gloomy, stay true to that mood.
- Inappropriate choice of color and texture changes the mood and the resulting piece may not be recognizable as the design you liked.

5. Identify areas that would benefit from texture, those that need to recede, and those that need to come forward.

- Smaller stitches recede
- Duller finishes recede
- Clearer colors come forward
- Lighter colors come forward

6. Study contrasts in the design.

Think about ways to enhance these contrasts by choice of threads or stitches.

- dark vs light
- shiny vs dull
- rough vs smooth
- small vs large

Use the black and white photocopy as an aid in determining the value range to select appropriate threads. It's easy to ruin a good design by ignoring value when changing colors.

7. Look through your stitch books and use page markers to mark the location of possible stitches; think about appropriate fibers for each stitch.

- Is the design realistic or abstract?

For pictorial designs, stitch and thread selections that realistically interpret the design generally create a more pleasing effect.

For abstract or geometric designs, stick with one stitch family, keep the piece monochromatic, or use only one stitch and vary it with changes in color, direction, and size.

- Key element #1: direction flow.

Look at the direction flow of an area - is it vertical, horizontal, diagonal? Select stitches that reinforce the direction for a more realistic look. Examples:

- ∇ Square stitches would be inappropriate for curves or waves. Choose stitches that move in the direction of the curves or are rounded.
- ∇ If your piece has architectural elements - buildings, walkways, and walls - then square or rectangular stitches would be appropriate.

- Key element #2: design area shape & size

Match the stitch size to the area - small areas beg for small stitches

Match the stitch shape to the shape of an area - is it defined (square, round, diamond) OR neutral (no obvious shape)?

- Key element #3: Texture

Shiny, matte, soft, furry, metallic, or rough?

Example - hair can be done in any number of ways: furry fibers done in tent stitch and brushed; alternatively a smooth fiber done in turkey stitch.

Keep in mind that longer stitches reflect more light and appear shinier.

- Key element #4: Dimension

Consider dimensionality of stitches. Examples:

Amadeus - high loft, fits curved areas

Wrapped chain or back stitch - gives curves a continuous appearance

Highly dimensional stitches may not be appropriate for recessed areas.

Layered stitching is another way to create dimension - examples include outline stitches for facial details; Brazilian stitches for flowers

Create 3D effects by padding using string, cord, felt, Qtip ends, or fiber.

8. Commit your stitch guide to paper.

- On your black & white photocopy, assign a number to each area of the design.
- Enter this number and a description of the area on your project log.
- Keep one of your color photocopies and the project log with the project.
- The entire piece doesn't have to be planned before you start stitching.
- The project log is changeable if you find one or more choices that don't work.

9. Start stitching.

- Begin with the parts that are both deeply shaded and the most recessed (the furthest away from the viewer).
- Use your doodle canvas of the same mesh as the project to try out your fiber and stitch combinations to see if they work individually, and side-by-side with other fiber & stitch combinations
- Is the coverage by a particular fiber suitable for the stitch chosen?
- Pin short pieces of the fibers selected to each area to keep track of color balance.

10. Keep it simple - don't overdo it.

- A conglomeration of diverse stitches can be very confusing and difficult for the viewer.
- An abstract design can be lost with too many color or textured stitches.

11. Background.

- Be careful - a textured background stitch calls attention to negative space and can overwhelm the design.
- Color is important. A dark background brings the subject forward, a light background softens the effect. One approach is to start with hunks of Paternayan - lay the colors around your design to see which color looks the best. Once you have a color selected, you can focus on fiber choice.
- Choose stitches that enhance the movement of the design. Sometimes this means picking a non-directional stitch

12. Finishing touches.

- Consider a border or adding thematically appropriate elements (Amy Bunger - Wagnerian frog, added stage curtain). Tony Minieri's recent articles in Needlepoint Now have great examples.
- Found objects - beads, baubles, tassels, and other three-dimensional objects. Take care that they suit the mood of the piece
- Applique for additional dimension- consider stitching one or more design elements on a separate canvas and applique them, with padding, to the original