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WINTER 1975/76
CH III - 2



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Embroiderers' Association of Canada

90 East Gate, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2C3 Telephone (204) 774-0217

THE EMBROIDERERS' ASSOCIATION OF CANADA is a non-profit organization, founded in September 1973. Its purpose is to encourage and promote the practice and knowledge of the art of embroidery in all its forms; to have a fellowship of persons who enjoy needlework and wish to learn and share their knowledge and thereby work towards maintaining higher standards of design, color and workmanship - in all forms of embroidery and canvas work.

- * To function as the Headquarters for: Chapters, Guilds, Individuals
- * To serve as an informational source for individual needlewomen throughout Canada. (Memberships extend beyond our boundaries)

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** Workshops

** Seminars

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**** WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL, PLEASE INDICATE ON ENVELOPE TO WHOM YOU WISH IT DIRECTED,
e.g. President; Membership; Quarterly; Treasurer, etc.

This will assist in speedier handling.

CHAPTERS:

WINNIPEG CHAPTER - Meets 4th Thursday of each month at First Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 7:30 p.m. Contact Membership Chairman: Mrs. Eunice Cormode - 605 River Ave.; Tel. 452-4584

TORONTO GUILD OF STITCHERY: Meets 1st Thursday of each month at Rosedale United Church at 9:30 a.m. Contact Membership Chairman: Mrs. Cody Murphy, 52 Babypoint Crescent OR Mrs. Mary O'Donnell, 145 Lawrence Avenue; E.

There is also a Night Group meeting the same evening.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

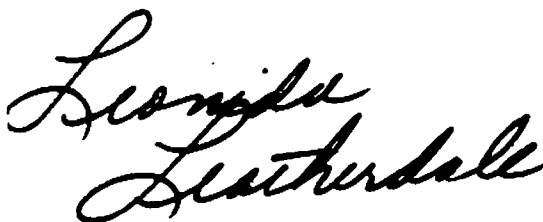
It is with a great deal of pleasure that we welcome the TORONTO GUILD OF STITCHERY as a Chapter of the Embroiderers' Association of Canada. Charter Member Barbara LeSueur is their President. We look Forward to a long and growing association together.

Anyone in the Toronto Proper area wishing to enjoy their monthly meetings and interesting programs, may share this experience either in a morning meeting or an evening meeting. Please note the persons to contact on the inside cover of the QUARTERLY.

Seminar plans are exciting! Much more has been planned for your educational enjoyment. Be sure to send your Workshop Registration in as soon as possible in order not to miss out on the class of your choice.

See you in May!

Sincerely



We hope the following six articles, from the Teachers who will be conducting Workshops at the SEMINAR, will help you to get to know them.

LETTERING & EMBROIDERY by Pat Russell

Lettering and letterforms can be an endless source of ideas for the embroiderer and have a fascination all of their own. Sometimes it can be used in a straightforward way to convey information or instruction but, if it is used in a decorative way, it can form the basis of exciting abstract designs, which have the added advantage of actually saying something in words, as well as making interesting patterns.

But most craftsmen, when they attempt to use lettering, run into difficulties. Because in these days we are surrounded by lettering of all descriptions all of the time, and much of our life is guided by it, we have formed the habit of giving our attention mostly to what it has to say and very little to how it looks, i.e. to the shape and presentation of the letters themselves. When we are faced with the problem of using these familiar letters in an unfamiliar way, of using them decoratively and of making them with unfamiliar tools, we realize that a completely new approach is necessary.

Consider all letters as abstract forms. A capital "A" is a simple geometric design using three straight lines to form a recognizable symbol. There is no such thing as an "A" unless it has been drawn or written or otherwise made by somebody with some sort of tool. It is much easier to appreciate Greek or Chinese letters as pattern because we do not 'read' them but simply 'look' at them. If we can train ourselves to 'look' at our own familiar letters in this way, simply as patterns made up of a series of straight and curved lines and of the spaces in between them, we shall have gone a long way towards our objective of using lettering satisfactorily as design.

When lettering is used in connection with designing for a craft, another very important factor to be considered is the tools and materials that are to be used. The beauty and strength of the calligrapher's letter comes from the honest and direct use of his pen. The letter cutter's chisel and the sign writer's brush likewise influence the form of their lettering. In embroidery, we have fabrics, needles and thread, scissors and, sometimes, a sewing machine. We have to consider what form our letters should take to be appropriate to these. Nor must we forget the purpose of our embroidery, and the environment in which it is to be used.

Lettering, used with other elements in a design, must be given equal importance and be incorporated in the composition right from the start. Don't try to fit the letters into any odd space you have left over -- this never works! Decide how prominent a feature the lettering is to be and make sure that it is in character with the rest of the work. The main problem is that of fitting a certain number and sequence of letters, together with the other motifs, into a given space and organizing them to make a harmonious whole. Try to let your design arise from the lettering itself. One of the fascinating features of using lettering is that every 'text' has different potential for design. The length and distribution of the words; the emphasis required; the sequence of curved, horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines in the letters making the words -- all will play their part and should determine the form that the final design will take. There is so much in-built design in lettering if we can only search it out.

-- Pat Russell - December 1975

WHAT IS "CANVAS"? by Anne Dyer

Back in the Middle Ages and before, amateurs and apprentices learned to sew by the counted thread to get an even stitch before they did the free stitchery. In those days, the whole fabric was usually covered with stitches, which hid the dull linen cloth. But when the Black Death made a major shortage of workers, embroidery was done to show the ground fabric, which was usually velvet or silk or heavy wool, nicer to look at than the linen. But this wore out quickly if used for anything getting much rubbing, so the old, "covered-all-over" work was kept for such things. They also found that the short crossing stitches were better than the long "free" stitches, and so canvas work was born. As time went on, the fabric became more evenly woven and finally stiff, as we know it today. A special fabric for a special job.

But it isn't special at all; it is just fabric. The Renaissance workers often did satin stitch so tight that it moved the threads, giving openwork between the blocks of stitches and the Victorians left the background unworked, stretched over satin, for their daintier pieces. So why shouldn't we also treat canvas as material? Leave it bare? Dye it evenly or unevenly to tone with the stitches, either before or after working, letting the dye go into the stitches too? Put shiny cooking foil behind it, or back it with fabric and quilt it? If you damp areas, the threads become pliable and you can do pulled stitches or drawn thread bands to decorate it, allowing the eye to penetrate through the canvas to layers behind.

Exploit the way some stitches are higher than others, by padding some of them up even more, and keeping the flatter ones to the unimportant areas. Then bare canvas, plain or fancified, gives you an even flatter area to put the design onto. And think of all the hours you save not working the background!

****WHY NEEDLE LACE?**** by Jill Nordfors - Author of "NEEDLE LACE AND NEEDLEWEAVING"
Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1974

In early 1971 I was approached by Jacqueline Enthoven, dear friend, author and accomplished stitcher, to write a book on needle lace. "Needle Lace"? I queried, with thoughts of doilies rushing through my mind. "Yes, Needle Lace".

Dutifully, I went through the motions of checking out library books and examining antique lace collections. Slowly, I became more and more intrigued with these delicate, white, sometimes microscopic stitches. Why not take traditional techniques but try a contemporary approach, using a larger scale and lots of color?

Traditional lace makers worked flat. They outlined their design by couching fine white threads to sturdy cloth. The open areas were then filled in with rows of lace stitches, each row building on the previous row, with the needle never entering the background cloth. The finished piece was then removed from the backing.

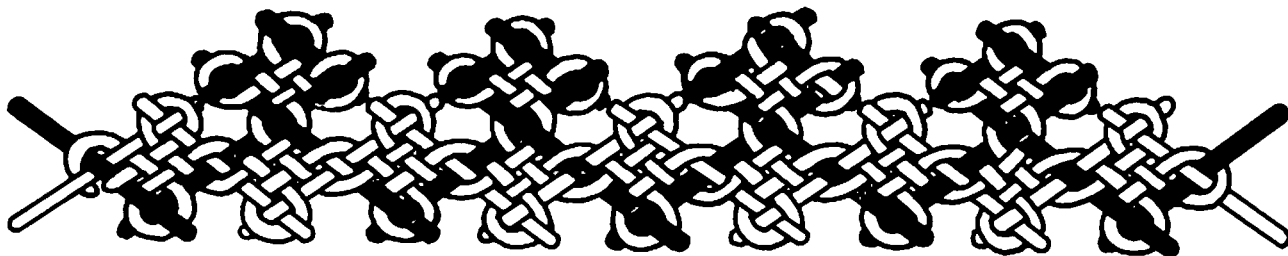
And why use needle lace just by itself? My first love is applique. Imagine the solid colors of the cloth intermingling with the airiness of the lace stitches!

I was amazed at the versatility of the simple buttonhole stitch in traditional laces, a detached version of what we all learn in our first basic surface stitchery class. It could be used singly or in groups, to make patterns as in knitting; close together, far apart; to make nets or cups for holding found objects; stacked or layered for deep textures.

I was hooked! Three years later my book "NEEDLE LACE AND NEEDLEWEAVING" became a reality. One of the frustrations of book writing is the self-discipline of keeping your mind (and your needle) on the work at hand. Every time I uncovered a new stitch, I wanted to use it, to make something out of it. The idea was there but, no, I must make a sampler, a drawing, then continue on with the next stitch.

One of the joys of having a book completed is the privilege of learning a lot about a subject that you might never have explored, then communicating that experience through teaching and your own creative work.

As a native Canadian, it will be even more meaningful to be with you all in Winnipeg for "SEMINAR '76".



The great always introduce us to facts; small men introduce us always to themselves.

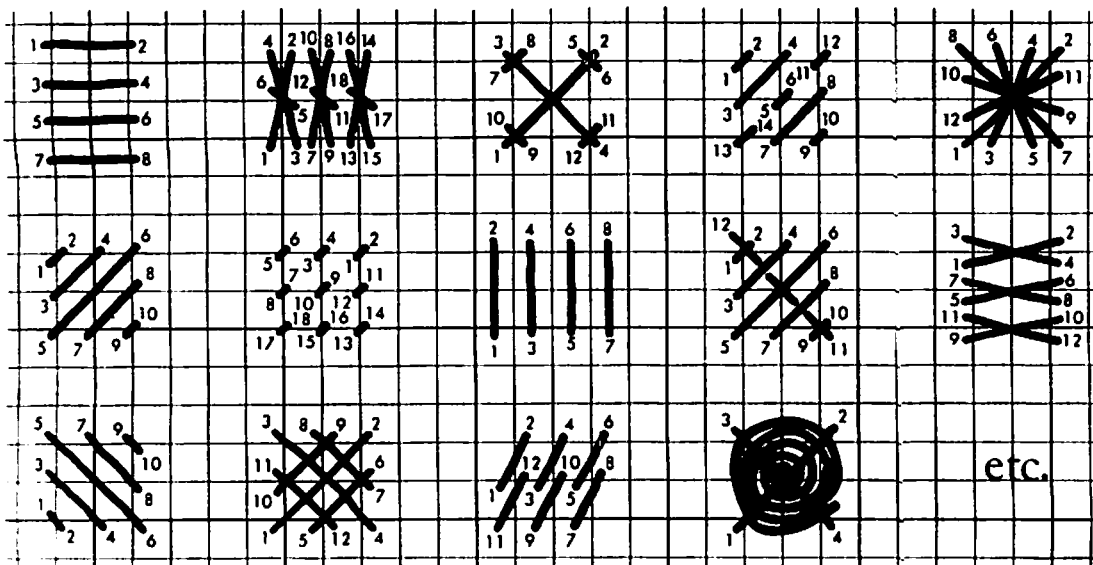
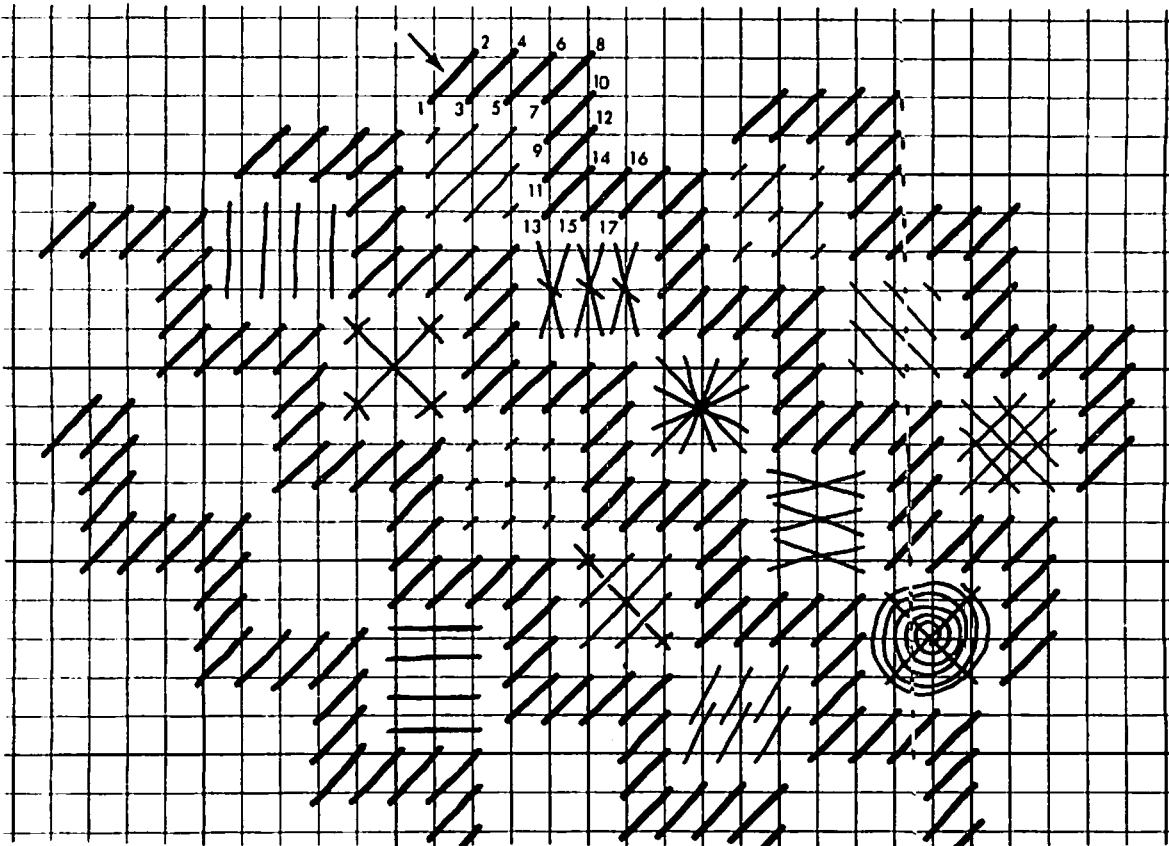
- - - Ralph Waldo Emerson

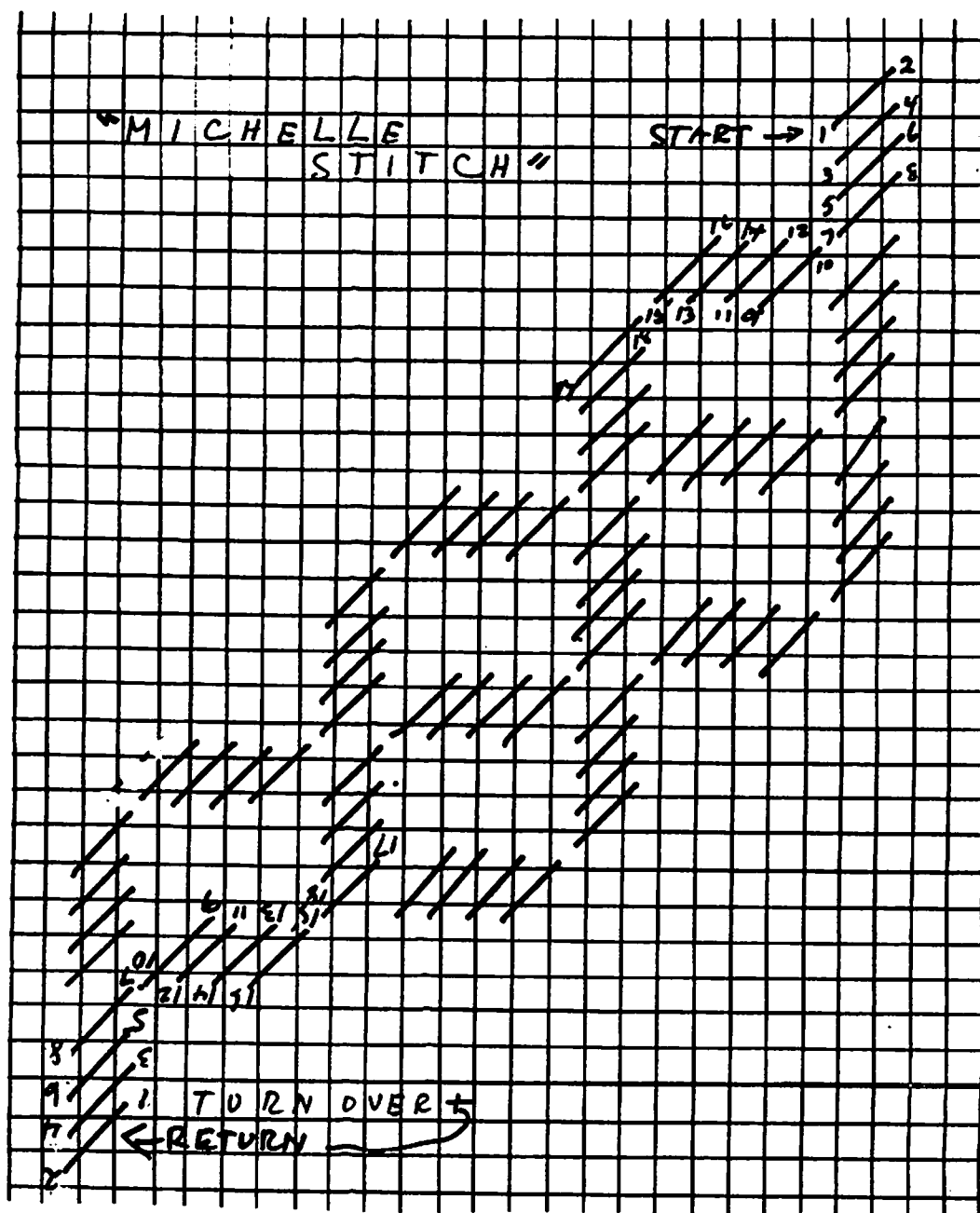
STITCHES FROM CHOTTIE ALDERSON - Especially for our "SEMINAR'76" QUARTERLY

FROSTY STITCH - to symbolize the Canadian winter

This was born one winter day when I drew my finger in zigzag lines across a frost-coated window - leaving the frost in the square areas between the finger lines.

Work the zigzag lines. Then fill the voids, using different stitches that will fit the area. It is interesting in one color but can be quite exciting if you use many colors or metal threads.



MICHELLE STITCH - from Chottie Alderson

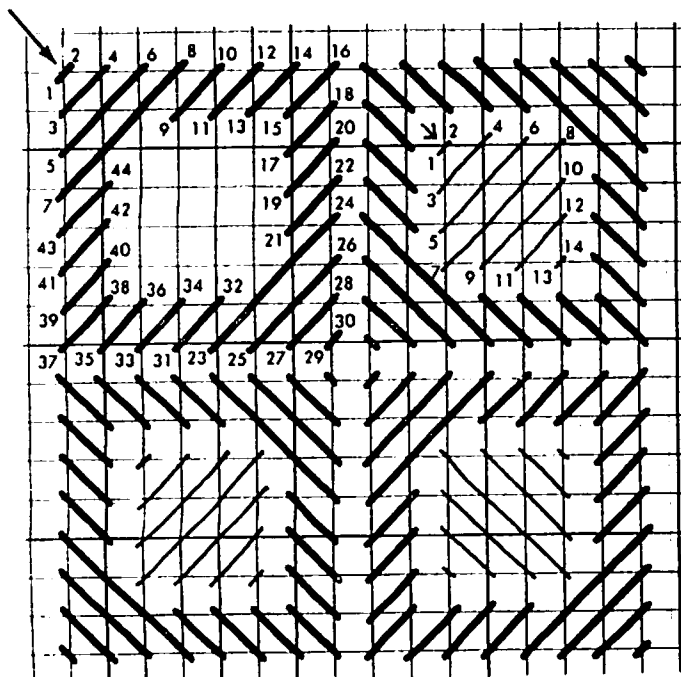
- *** It's good for a ribbon (as worked) and put a slanted Gobelin border on each side.
- *** Use it for a total background; all one color; Basketweave fill.
- *** Fun worked in ONE color and Basketweave background in another shade or color
- *** METHOD: To work, start and proceed from RIGHT to LEFT on the diagonal.

To return: Turn your work over and work in the same manner.

GREAT MOON STITCH - to symbolize the Canadian Summer Moon

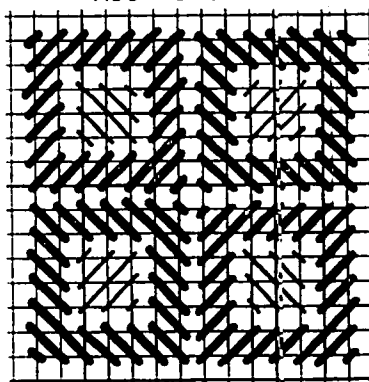
Work the boxes first, being sure to alternate the direction of the stitches for each box. Then fill the centers with the Great Scotch stitch. Notice the stitches of the Great Scotch lay in the opposite direction of the box they are in.

An elegant texture will be achieved using two shades of one color: shade A for the boxes and shade B for the Great Scotch stitch; or try wool for the box and matching perle cotton for the Great Scotch stitch.

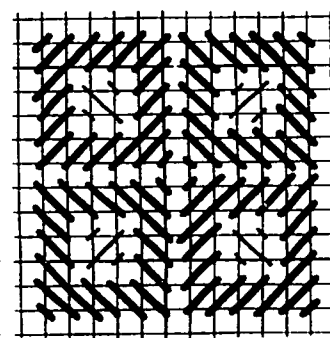


GREAT MOON

This stitch looks well if you reduce it to the FULL MOON or NEW MOON size.



FULL MOON



NEW MOON

LIBRARY: Anyone wishing to, may make a contribution of a book, or funds for the purchase of a book, for the E.A.C. Library. These books will be available, upon request, through the mails, to assist Embroiderers in their studies or to help those who are working alone. Additional contributions are as follows:

TITLE	DONOR
NEEDLEWEAVING - easy as Embroidery - Esther Warner Dendel.....	Leonida Leatherdale
QUILTING & PATCHWORK - a Sunset Book	Peggy Shade
DESIGN FOR ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN - Louis Wolchonok	Peggy Shade
TEXTURE & COLOR IN NEEDLEPOINT - Michele Wealt	Mrs. H. Massey
NEEDLEPOINT - Hope Hanley	Leonida Leatherdale

To the troubles of Job a whole book is devoted.
Of those of his wife not one instance is noted -
But, heaven forbid that her grief we should probe;
To the rest of her troubles she had to add JOB!

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JACOBEOAN EMBROIDERY WITH ACCENT ON COLOUR - Fran Oakley

To successfully interpret any type of embroidery, study its characteristics, preferably by going to the source which, in this case, is English. Study English books, hangings and museum pieces to get the true flavour of Jacobean Embroidery.

Rhythm seems to be the dominant feature. Trunks, stems and tendrils writhe and wander; leaves twist and turn and birds, fruit and blossoms gracefully bend to fit in the composition. Nothing is placed out of character in a good design.

The East Indian and Oriental interpretation of English botanical drawings in the original patterns is what gives Jacobean crewel its unique charm. Proportion, perspective and detail are manipulated, and the playing of "solid against pattern against space" is what appeals to the creative needlewoman.

Jacobean embroidery can be very effective done in only one or two stitches, or many different stitches, depending on the area to be worked. The secret is "COLOUR". COLOUR is the first thing that registers when the eye sees an object. Mass is second, texture third.

COLOUR SPEAKS! It can convey serenity or excitement. It can shout and scream, depress, inspire or antagonize. COLOUR can completely involve you in a painting or piece of needlework by the way it is used. COLOUR can also bore you to death if used monotonously with no feeling or knowledge behind it.

To learn how to use COLOUR effectively - again, GO TO THE SOURCE. Take a few lessons from an artist. Who is better equipped to teach you how to mix COLOURS; mute them, combine them to make a blend? She can show you why accents, contrasts, COLOUR families are important, etc.

A working knowledge of COLOUR enables you to express YOUR taste and personality and insures your work will be individual not stereotyped. I hope all creative people will begin this new season by putting the "YOU" back into COLOUR.

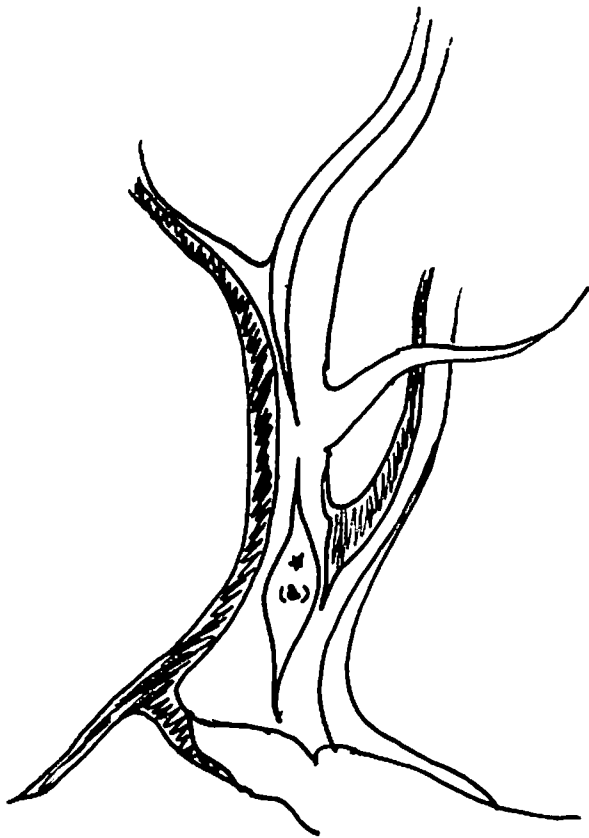


DIVIDING LARGE MOTIFS:

Most people have no trouble doing a small pattern but when confronted by one with large leaves, blossoms, hillocks, etc., the reaction is, "Where do I begin?"

In embroidery, as in a house, you must first build a firm foundation upon which to attach everything else - so the trunk is where you begin.

Jacobean Crewel by Frank Oakley (cont.)



TRUNKS: Following the contours and twists of the widest part of the trunk, you can break it up into several vertical sections. They must be graceful, usually wider at the bottom.

If trunk is wide enough it may even take an interesting shape in the centre, widening to a bulge from a narrow top and bottom (a).

Close buttonhole, close herringbone, rows of chain, all are fast fillers for vertical divisions. Begin with deepest brown and use perhaps two other shades -- related colours are nice added later; so leave plenty of open spaces. SPACE, SOLID, PATTERN, have equal importance.

*** Rhythmical vertical divisions will keep the flowing appearance characteristic of Jacobean Crewel

BRANCHES: are done next and will always look best if they flow from the trunk. This is easily achieved by rounding the spot where branches and trunk meet. Study large leaves in Jacobean patterns (drapery, wallpaper and upholstery) and notice how branches continue right into the leaves to form veins.

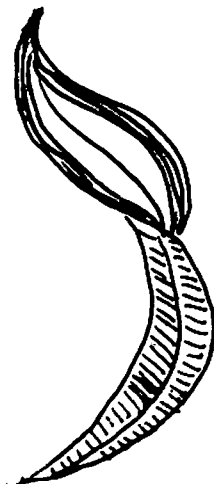
HILLOCKS: Do at least two good solid chunks of brown in the hillocks. Survey your work from a distance and you will see if it is balanced; if it isn't, add more brown by doing another hillock on the side which needs balance.

Summation: (a) Work by colour

(b) Divide embroidery into workable-sized sections, keeping shape of motif in mind. (This applies to flowers, leaves, etc., too)

DIVIDING LARGE LEAVES: (Please turn to Page 9)

OGEE:



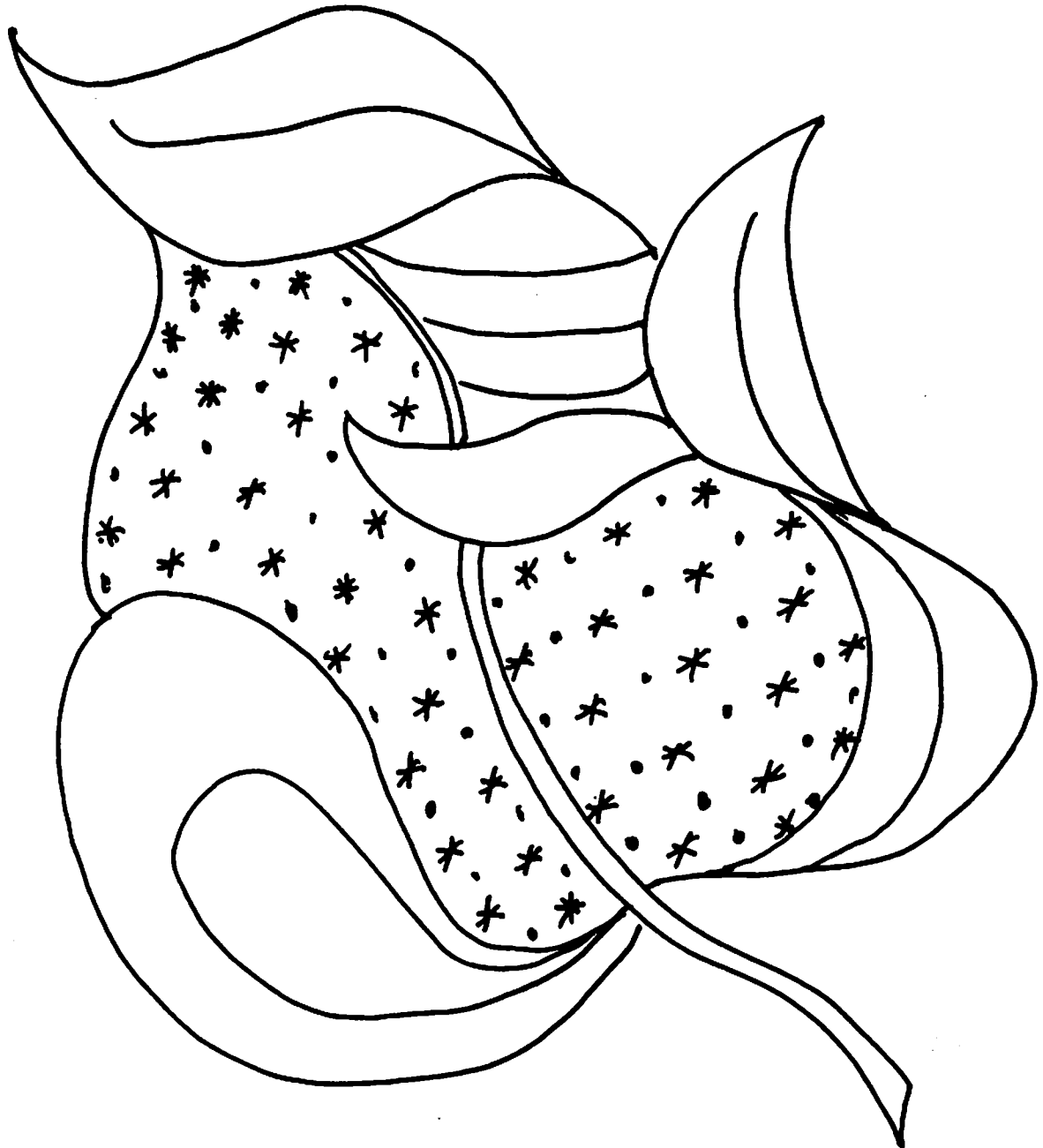
I would interpret this as a leaf which has turned and to make it interesting, would have stitches going in two directions (Ogee)

Two rows of close buttonhole.

Jacobean Crewel by Fran Oakley (cont.)

DIVIDING LARGE LEAVES:

These are very exotic and Oriental in appearance, made up of three shapes and combinations or variations of those shapes, which can be easily broken up into workable sections: (a) Teardrop (b) Leaf (c) Ogee or "S". These form an odd inside shape which takes a traditional 'filling' and is best left until the last.

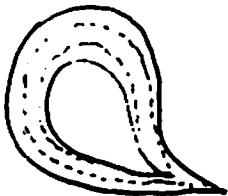


MOTIF FROM "PEPPER HARROW" - a Fran Oakley Design for Windsor Chairback

Jacobean Crewel by Fran Oakley (cont.)

TEARDROP:

Leave centre open and vein undone; do vein later in colour needed to balance. Might even add to it by doing vein in THORN or FEATHERSTITCH.



The dotted lines show how you would follow the contours to make sizes comfortable to work with.

Rows of close HERRINGBONE in three shades, make a nice, graceful filling for narrow parts.

Leave centre for later when you might need a bit of weight, or pattern or a sharp colour to pick up.

The stems carry the trunk colour right into the leaf, continuing the rhythmic flow which distinguishes Jacobean from any other embroideries.

When dividing, follow the contours; use related colours - not necessarily all shades of one colour. (Perhaps 2 or 3 shades olive, a mustard, a pale honeysuckle) Pick up centres by using deep brown for your filling.

HINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL JACOBEOAN EMBROIDERY:

Do not completely finish a motif. A painter does not completely finish each little part before he goes on to the next; he distributes his colour so that the picture will have cohesion.

You are doing the same thing, with coloured wool or thread. So, like an artist, the first thing to do is choose colours which are pleasing to your eye, then distribute them (in a triangle, loosely).

1. Have plenty of mid-values; especially in greens. These act as a foil for the other colours and shades.
2. Have plenty of related greens, as well as leaf greens, golden greens, olive, avocado, greyed olive - whatever you want to call them. You can use greenish yellows, mustard, bronze gold, tobacco; they should all harmonize!

If you have a green that shouts "Hey, look at me!" - put it away to use for something else. (e.g. Paddy Green or Jade)

If the piece you are embroidering is particularly large, it could also use some cool greens such as sage green; anything with a bluish cast but, NEVER MIX THESE with the warm greens. (They are more closely related to turquoise).

3. Use light stitches and colours for light motifs (e.g. Butterflies' wings). Use heavy application of stitches where suitable; something small you wish to appear solid.

If you are going to use Crewel patterns and illustrations as reference, try to go to the source: Library books on 17th century costume and embroidery; museum displays; Indian Tree of Life patterns; only there will you see the rhythm, balance and imaginative use of stitches which show the charm of Jacobean Embroidery.

Don't get too fancy nor too colourful too soon, or you'll drive yourself crazy and end up with a disjointed, indistinct hodge-podge. Rather, do the browns, greens;

Jacobean Crewel by Fran Oakley (cont.)

then decide to work on your prettier colors, remembering that the middle value OF EACH COLOUR, usually is used more than the lightest or the deepest.

Your sharpest colours are used last in tiny amounts and if your work needs a lift, try a bit of deep brown or sharp turquoise. They help!

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The following profile on MARIE AIKEN taken from "Blue & Bronze" - Georgian College

THE MARIE AIKEN TOWER STUDIO:

It is difficult to summarize Marie Aiken of Gravenhurst. It may even be impossible. Picture a blond shag bobbing along the Simpson Desert of Australia in a land Rover, collecting desert flowers after one of the first rains in 20 years, explaining to a settlement of aborigines that materials other than human hair are good for weaving.

Picture the same woman unravelling the mysteries of lichen dyes to an audience of Englishmen and Irishmen, conducting workshops in Mexico, showing Canadian Eskimos how to use beer cans and beach stones for looms, leading seminars at community colleges across Ontario, and teaching in dozens of centres from the East to West Coast.

Despite such a hectic travel schedule, she makes time for Georgian College in Barrie where, each Wednesday, she teaches interlacement. She is also a member of the 1975 Georgian College Summer School of the Arts in Gravenhurst.

This is Marie Aiken the internationally-recognized fibre craftsman and teacher in a multitude of areas -- embroidery or creative stitchery, primitive interlacement (which includes knitting and crochet), spinning and dyeing, loom and off-loom weaving, macrame, applique, tapestry, and so on.

There is another Marie Aiken -- wife of lawyer Gordon Aiken, MP of Muskoka-Parry Sound for 18 years, author of "The Backbencher," and now retired; mother of four grown children and grandmother of five.

And now, there is Marie Aiken of the Marie Aiken Tower Studio, which may well be the most unique resident-studio complex in Canada. Before we embark on a brief inadequate word tour of that marvellous facility, let's try to get some perspective on this many-faceted woman.

She married immediately following graduation from the Vancouver School of Art and, with a few exceptions, pursued a career as wife and mother. One of those exceptions was her insistence that she be allowed to spend her holidays taking the best craft courses available. She also taught sewing and tailoring at night school and began developing her own skills in work she did for her home, family and friends.

About 10 years ago, however, she decided to make certain claims for herself as a person. She began travelling and teaching, became involved with the World Craft Council, and exhibited widely. Since then she has conducted workshops in many countries of the world and has collected crafts from all over the world. Marie Aiken could probably launch the second annual World Crafts Exhibition entirely on her own.

While in Australia, she was intrigued by the massive prison-like homes built by that country's prisoner-pioneers. One day it dawned on her that similar structures existed in Gravenhurst at the nine-acre site of an old potash factory on the lake front. Although the Aiken homestead (now up for sale) is a beautiful rambling house, it is not suitable for an artist living alone much of the time --

Mr. Aiken travels extensively. Ms. Aiken decided to convert what remained of the factory into a studio-home where she could teach, work and display her wares.

The factory, constructed about 1915 when supplies of potash were cut off during the war, proved uneconomical and ceased operation within a year. Since then it has stood firm defying demolition -- little wonder since the concrete walls are 28 inches thick. When work began at the site in April, 1974, existing structures included three massive towers (one is a double), from 42 to 50 feet high and 14 feet square inside; the shell of a building approximately 32 feet square, a huge outdoor kiln, and various crumbling foundations. A fire had destroyed all except the ageless concrete.

Basically, the towers are being converted into studios, the original walls of the nearby building enclose the residence area, and the two are connected by an overhead bridge. The interior defies definition. Open alcoves connecting one level to another, stairways, balconies, a lack of interior walls, and the fantastic use of angles and slopes to lead the eye from one area to another, create a feeling of freedom, brightness and airiness in this structural monastery.

On a wall in the Aiken house on Bay Street hangs a prose. Entitled "Tapestry of My Life," it begins - "I wonder what the other side will be when I have finished weaving all my thread. I do not know the pattern nor the end of this great piece of work which is for me....."

And that says a lot about Marie Aiken.

* * * * *

§ § § People wrapped up in themselves make small packages!

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TRULY CREATIVE

JAND DAMS' show of embroidered tapestries in Toronto in October was superlative. Talent, imagination and a complete command of many crafts made it a beautiful and inspiring exhibit.

DOROTHY LEWIS' talk on quilting at "Advancing" in Scarborough, Ontario was also inspirational. Her samples were varied and interesting, from the quilted rug made from old faded mounties' uniforms to the century-old diamond-pieced taffeta block, to her maple leaf quilt in fall shades. Designed from the shapes of several real leaves and quilted, using a maple "key" as the corner motif, it was really original.

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§ § § Never have we seen a bird that wanted a nest that didn't get one. That is because birds, being dumb creatures, do not depend on conferences, committees, and politicians to supply the nests.

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MAKING "STITCH WITCHERY" WORK FOR YOU - by Joan Black

I have always had an aversion to fabric glue. Somehow, it just doesn't seem to go with fabrics and thread. But last year when people in my stitchery class began using the fabric glue yardage (sold under the name of "Stitch Witchery") to enable them to accomplish their work more efficiently, I began to change my mind.

Thus began a time of 'playing around' with "Stitch Witchery" to see what I could make it do. Most of all I wanted to be able to use it to make any fabric into a giant piece of mending tape, but the problem was - how to get the glue to stick to only one side of the fabric at once. After many frustrations, and a great deal of iron cleaning, I developed a system which works.

Place a piece of aluminium foil on your ironing board. On top of the foil place a piece of smooth cloth (broadcloth is good) which has been wrung out of water. Cut out a piece of material about 6 inches by 12 inches. Cut the "Stitch Witchery" slightly smaller than your material. Place the "Stitch Witchery" on the wet cloth and your material on top of the "Stitch Witchery". With your iron set on "steam" and "wool" slide your iron across the strip of material, lifting it up from the wet cloth as you go. You will have to experiment with your iron to find the exact heat and it may take several swipes of the iron to make the "Stitch Witchery" bond to the material.

With a little practice you will soon find the knack of getting the "Stitch Witchery" to bond to your material just enough to enable you to cut out shapes, lettering and finely detailed bits; just as you would cut them out of mending tape. Because the pieces are cut out of the glue and fabric at once, there is no problem with your iron sticking to bits of glue which "hang out". Wring your smooth cloth out of water for each new piece of material you pre-bond as it seems to be the wetness that keeps the glue from sticking on the under-side.

I have found that this technique works well on broadcloth, rayon lining, polyester satin - for a beginning. Pre-bonding the fabric this way enables you to cut out the pieces of your design and move them around until you find a pleasing arrangement. Then it is a simple matter to bond your design to your background as the manufacturer suggests. For clothing, and articles that are going to be washed, I have then satin stitched the pieces by machine, using a monogram hoop. The use of "Stitch Witchery" here saves an endless amount of basting which is the time-consuming part of machine applique. If the project is a costume, or a purely decorative piece such as a banner, then the stitching can be omitted. The fabric glue does add a bit of stiffness to your finished piece and results in flat work but it also enables you to design very freely and spontaneously. I found our six year old son picking up my pre-bonded scraps and ironing them onto his T-shirts!



ORIGINS OF CHINTZ - Researched by RUTH HORNER (Part III)

Gathered from "The Origins of Chintz" by John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett

THE FLOWERING TREE

This writing will report in a general way the scholarly argument offered by the authors, John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett to explain the flowering-tree motif which, for more than a hundred years, dominated the design of large palampores and hangings and is one of the most distinctive and appealing features of Indo-European chintz. In its most familiar and characteristic form it consists of a tree with serpentine trunk and branches growing on a mound or rockery, often with partly exposed roots, and bearing a profusion of fruits, flowers and foliage of mixed and multifarious botanical association. Such a fanciful conception strikes the Westerner as essentially exotic and reminiscent of the "Tree of Life" symbolism of the ancient Near East. Yet, research in recent years has shown that the flowering tree of Indian chintz is neither an ancient inheritance nor wholly Oriental, but the hybrid product of particular cultural cross-influences which prevailed under particular trading conditions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Although there is an undeniably Indian contribution to the finished style, it is none-the-less clear that the sources are polygenuous, combining the most diverse and disparate cultural elements: Hindu, Islamic, Chinese and European. The odd thing is that the flowering-tree palampore appears no less exotic to Asian eyes than it does to European. Observed from either standpoint, its inspiration seems to be alien, irreconcilable with the observer's own culture.

To understand how such a hybrid style came into being, we must start in the sixteenth century, before it existed. At this time the only kind of Oriental art familiar in the capitals of Western Europe was Chinese. Products of China were then arriving in Portuguese ships and being sold, not only in the markets of Lisbon and Antwerp but, also in the fashionable 'China Shops' of London's Royal Exchange. Hence, the art of China became synonymous with the art of the 'East Indies', and so vague were current notions of Asian history and geography that the existence of India as a separate and culturally autonomous part of the East Indies was not yet generally recognized.

Thus, when Sir Thomas Roe (a man of wide knowledge and advance dilettante tastes for his period) arrived in India in 1615, to take up his appointment as James I's ambassador to the Mughal Court, he was both surprised and disappointed to learn that Chinese arts and crafts were not to be found in India. "I thought all India a China shop", he wrote, "and that I should furnish all my friends with rarities; but this is not that part. Here are almost no Civil Arts, but such as the straggling Christians have lately taught." And again, later the same year: "Here are none of the rarities of India; they all come from the Eastern part (China), and are as dear as in England." In other words, Oriental or 'East Indian' art was identified exclusively with China. The art products of Hindu India were so alien and unfamiliar as to be beneath notice except, as we shall see again later, those the Hindu learned from the foreigner.

*** The drawing (at left) of the palampore pictured at Plate 9 gives no notion of its color or of its fabulous detail. The top part of the tree and the borders of the palampore are missing.

The portion sketched, measures 8'2" x 4'1"

Origins of Chintz (cont.)

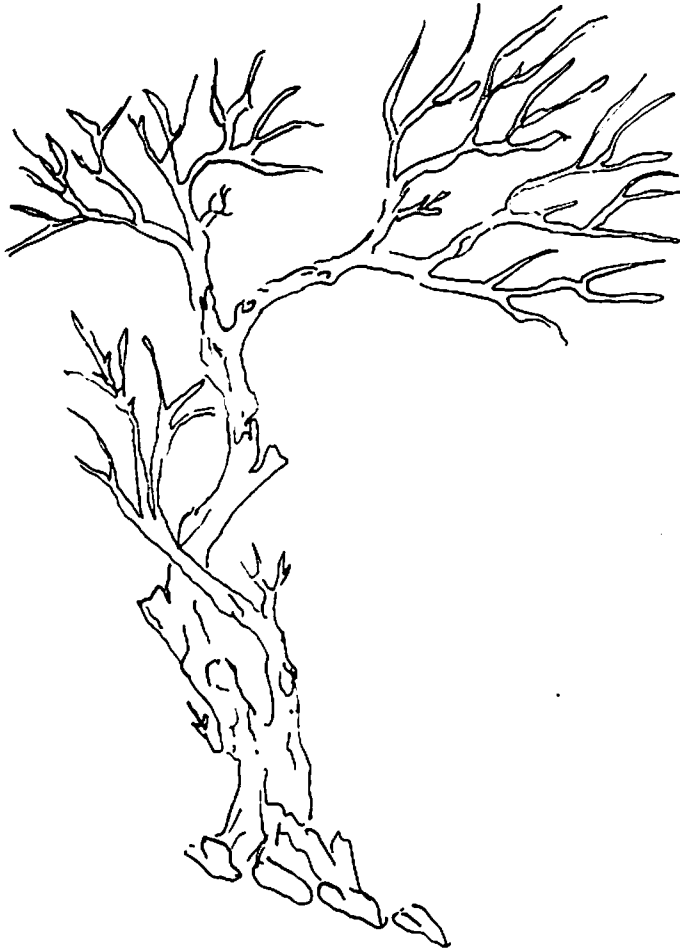
Roe's disillusionment had been earlier felt by the Islamic invaders of India. Even the Emperor Babur (1526-30) founder of the Mughal Dynasty, had recorded in his memoirs a haughty disdain for all Hindu craftsmanship and it was left to his successors, especially Akbar (1556-1605) and Jahangir (1605-27), to improve the situation to the Mughal taste by introducing foreign craftsmen to train Indians in new styles and techniques. Turks, Persians and Italians were among those known to have been brought in; and simultaneously court craftsmen were dispatched to the Portuguese settlements to study and emulate whatever they could find there. From these mixed influences there gradually emerged the eclectic tradition of Mughal Art.

But Mughal art was at this stage a localized and courtly tradition. Its influence had not yet penetrated the centres of cotton-painting where craftsmen were self-employed members of a Hindu caste community, inheriting their craft experience within a closed social circle. These very conditions, so conducive to the accumulation of craft skill and its transference from one generation to the next, also made for extreme conservatism in matters of taste and habit. The one quality the Hindu cotton-painter conspicuously lacked as a craftsman, was power of invention. If required to produce anything new, he could do so only by copying a model placed before him. In practice, as we shall see, the Hindu craftsman seldom copied exactly. Instead, he copied foreign musters. i.e., patterns 'after his own manner' (a phrase recurring in English East India Company records), imposing upon the borrowed subject-matter his own decorative style and idiom, and it was precisely this indigenous contribution which gave individuality and distinction to the designs and supplied what, to the European, was their exotic appeal.

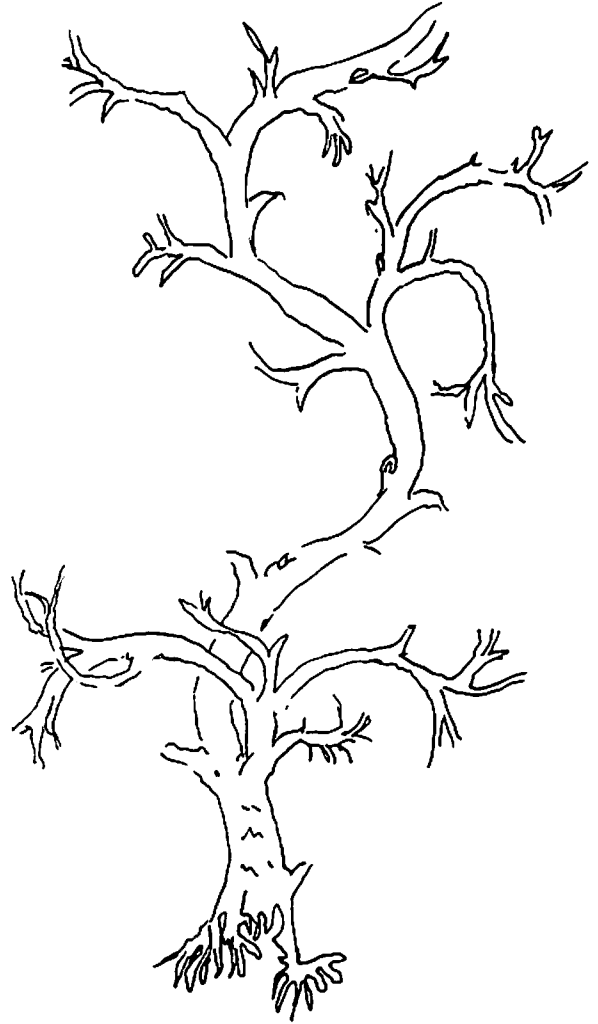
The traditional function of the Indian cotton-painter was to decorate cloths used as wearing apparel and, left to himself, it is doubtful if he would have ever thought of producing fabrics for domestic furnishing. Wall-hangings, carpets and bedspreads are not features of the traditional Hindu domestic interior, which was usually plain or very sparsely ornamented. (Hindu temple-hanging is in a different category because its real function was to serve as a substitute wall-painting, and its subject-matter was didactic or story-telling). Before the Europeans, the demand for furnishing fabrics came mainly from Muslims. This meant, on the one hand, the Persian market and on the other, the Persianized courts of the various independent Islamic kingdoms which had sprung up in Western India and the Deccan after the collapse of the Delhi sultanate in A.D. 1398. The most important of these were Gujarat, Khandesh, Golconda, Bidar and Bijapur and it was within the first three that some of the important centres of cotton-painting were located. The Muslim rulers of Golconda were of Persian origin and cultivated in a most deliberate way the tastes and fashion of the Safavid Court (Safavid was then the ruling dynasty of Persia).

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, who ruled from 1580-1611, married one of his daughters to Shah Abbas the Great and between 1603-1609 kept an embassy of a hundred Persians at his capital. More over, the Golconda rulers, and their nobles, had direct stakes in sea-commerce with Persia, upon which depended the regular supply of horses required for the state cavalry. Cotton-paintings, designed for the Persian market, were one of the main commodities traded in exchange. The recurring use of Persian carpet motifs, in the borders of the cotton-paintings, is a reminder that there was a settlement of Persian carpet-weavers at Ellore, about seventy miles north of Masulipatam. These weavers were described in 1670 as making 'the best carpets after manner of those in Persia', and as having been brought from Persia about a hundred years previously.

And so, the authors argue, the first inspiration for the flowering-tree design came from Persian and Indo-Persian sources before the Europeans reached India, and at a time when Indian cotton-painters were producing fine furnishing fabrics, mainly for Islamic patrons.



Outline of tree from 'Book of Kings'



Outline of tree from palampore shown on Plate 9

The line drawings above illustrate that a typical chintz flowering-tree of the early eighteenth century is clearly related to a tree copied from a mid-fifteenth century illustrated manuscript of the Persian 'Book of Kings'. On another page of the same manuscript is a tree with flower-heads of mixed species, which is clearly a forerunner of the Indian chintz tree.

The authors look to Persian art for two other features: (1) the highly conventionalized rockery or hillock (sometimes depicted scale-like and sometimes with rocks resembling colored sponges), (2) the weird convention of depicting the tree with exposed roots so that it sometimes seems to be magically poised above the mound rather than growing organically from it. The first is a somewhat simplified version of rock-conventions recurring in innumerable Persian miniatures. The second is an outcome of the Indian copyist's naive misunderstanding of those rocky landscapes in Persian painting where one finds trees with their roots partly exposed on the inhospitable rocky surface. The Indian copyist, unfamiliar with such terrain and its vegetation, has misunderstood what he was copying to the extent of depicting the root-system completely exposed.

The Origins of Chintz - cont.

The authors refer to such conventions as Persian because they reached India through the medium of fifteenth and sixteenth century Persian Art. It must not be forgotten, however, that from as early as the thirteenth century Persian art itself was influenced by China. These Chinese influences, first reaching Western Asia in the wake of the Mongol invasion, continued to fertilize the visual arts of the Islamic world throughout the period with which we are concerned. There is no aspect of Persian art in which this ultimate debt to China is more evident than in the treatment of rocks and rocky landscapes.

By the third quarter of the seventeenth century European influence had begun to interpose. When Dutch and English merchants first arrived on the scene, early in the century, they found the best cotton-painters were making goods either for the indigenous courts or for export to Persia. By mid-century, European trade seems to have been paramount and made first claim on the best craftsmen, and it was at this time that many of them deserted their villages and migrated to the European settlements.

It might be interesting to note here that there are indications that the Dutch were ahead of the English in the early development of the Indo-European chintz trade and, when the Dutch archives have been examined for evidence on the subject, it may be found that they were exporting Coromandel chintz to Europe long before the English and French. Further evidence, of the Dutch lead in exporting fine cotton-painting to Europe, is suggested by the fact that in 1683 the English company was buying specimens in Holland, in order to send them back to India for copying. (The authors remind us that in the story of the flowering-tree all the evidence is not yet in and that there are many links missing).

Since 1643 the English East India Company had been trying to secure modifications to the colors and patterns of the cotton-paintings commissioned for the Western market. (Instructions from London included at least one specific request for the 'branch' to be placed in 'the middle of the design', implying a preference for a symmetrical arrangement with one central 'branch'). By 1662 they were sending out sample patterns for the cotton-painters to copy. English embroidery styles of the late sixteenth century, and early seventeenth century, reveal a preference for branched designs with large leaf-forms, naturalistic in outline yet often filled with abstract patterns or hatchings which, undoubtedly, left their mark on Indian chintz. (The main difference is that whereas the English fillings were usually abstract, the Indian cotton-painter preferred to use smaller naturalistic plant-motifs as infillings and was reluctant to combine naturalism with non-organic ornament);



A leaf from an embroidered ('black-work') cover, English, and late 16th century.



Leaf of European origin, with Indian naturalistic plant infilling.

Origins of Chintz (cont.)

Another link, of particular significance, is the Flemish verdure tapestries, their curled and scroll-like leaves of Gothic origin being a possible source of some of the curled leaf-forms in later Indian chintz. Large numbers of verdure tapestries were imported into England during the seventeenth century and they had a deep and lasting influence on contemporary Western design.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century most of the flowering-trees displayed exuberant Baroque curves. The flowers closest to Western decorative art accord with contemporary Dutch taste for lavish floral display. Tulips, carnations, roses, anemones, chinoiserie peonies, chrysanthemums, and various fanciful kinds of Baroque and Oriental origin are mixed in profuse array. The Indian cotton-painter had completely mastered his theme, and his drawing was vigorous and assured. The flowering-tree palampores and hangings of the period are among the most successful in design and execution.

The wheel had turned full circle. What had earlier been sent out, to help the Indian craftsman to conform to conventions of English taste, were now returning in parodied form to feed the new appetite for exoticism. The East India Company directors wanted more and more of such goods, and the more fanciful the better.

May I quote from a catalogue description of Plate 9, a typical flowering-tree hanging of this period: "A serpentine tree, with partly exposed roots, stands on a mound composed of crenated scales. It bears large, fanciful, and stylized flowers (some resembling roses, peonies, and carnations) and small flowers and fruits like borage, periwinkle, poppyseed and strawberries. The scales of the mound are decorated with spot, flower and seaweed patterns and small plants. This form of tree can be paralleled in Persian miniatures but the miscellaneous flowers and foliage are of mixed Indian and European origin (some reminiscent of seventeenth century Western embroideries and silks). The inclusion of fruit, protruding from behind some of the large dentated leaves is the result of the Indian cotton-painter's misunderstanding of bulgy leaf-forms in the European musters.

We will leave the history of the flowering-tree at this point though the authors carry their story to cover time into the nineteenth century and the use of chintz for clothing.

This book was published in 1970 and one wonders what new information has come to light in the last six years.

I would hope that all readers will at some time see an actual painted cotton and experience the thrill of recognition and knowledge.



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