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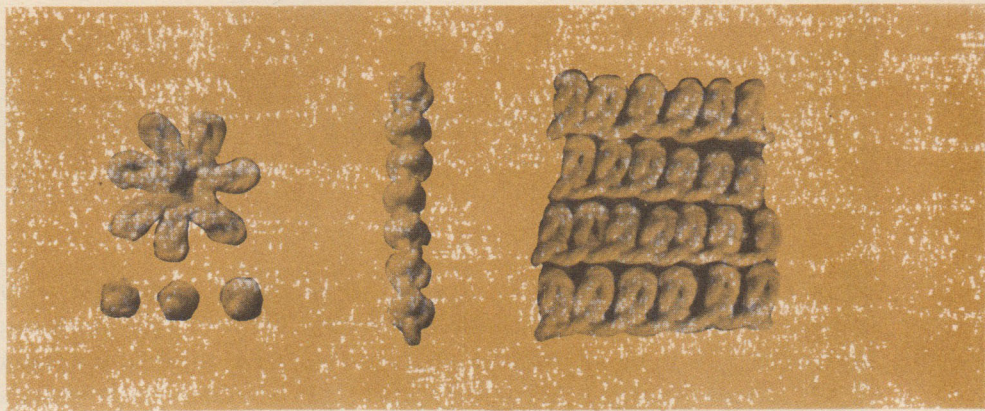
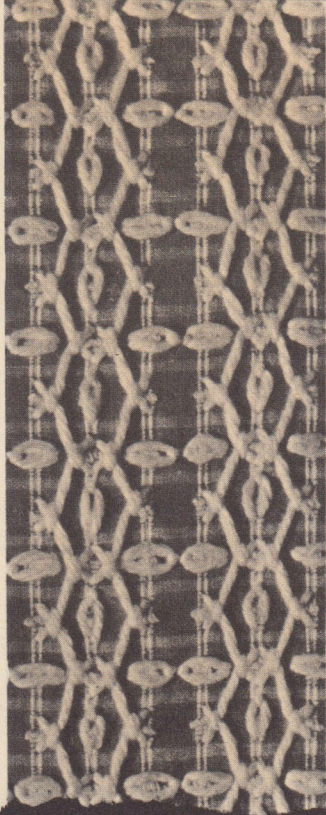
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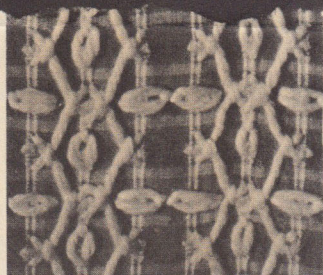
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Bulletin 35



DESIGNING WITH TEXTURES



**And so to
embroider**



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Designing with TEXTURES

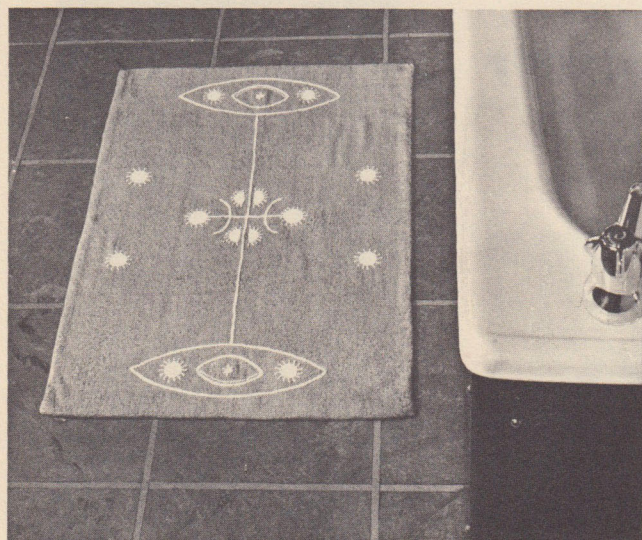
How often have you heard the words, "Don't touch!", especially when you were very small, and particularly when something which attracted you was very fragile or even dangerous. Yet it is a natural instinct to want to feel and handle things in order to appreciate to the full the different materials from which they are made.

We all find pleasure in using our sense of touch to distinguish between the different textures of things met with in our daily lives. For instance we are attracted by the grain on a piece of wood, the polish of old leather, the coldness of glass, the smooth delicacy of fragile china and the surfaces of different types of fabrics.

There is great variety in the texture of fabrics. Children delight in feeling the softness of velvet, the cool smoothness of satin, the coarseness of net and the roughness of tweed, for example. In sewing and embroidery a wide range of these fabrics can be used, and you will find it very rewarding to experiment, sometimes working on coarse weaves, and on other occasions choosing perhaps a patterned background, a furnishing satin, or one of the new delicate nylons or organzas.

Not only the background fabric, but also the threads you choose to work with, should be selected to add interest and character to your embroidery through their particular textures. Consider the different threads available today, such as thick bold cottons with a dull or shiny finish; finer stranded threads with which you can vary the number of strands used to give a fine or heavy appearance to your embroidery: and the many others including linen threads, silk threads, gold and silver threads and embroidery wools.

Embroidery stitches too, have their own characteristic textures, some being rough and knotted, others smooth and rich. It is the selecting, contrasting and emphasising of these qualities, combined with carefully chosen fabrics and threads, which help to add originality and charm and, at the same time, make the creating of an embroidery such an exciting and interesting experience.



Right: A corner showing the reverse side of the mat. The selvedge edge of the turquoise towel forms a 'piping' on the spotted side.



Reversible Bath Mat (20½ in. × 29 in.)

Towelling has a pleasant, rough texture which can be satisfactorily combined with other fabrics. For example, we chose black towelling to back the woollen cushion illustrated in this bulletin. It can also be used as a background for bold, simple embroidery. If a tapestry needle is used, the blunt point will make it easier to avoid splitting the threads.

For our reversible bath mat we chose a turquoise hand towel and backed this with a piece of spotted towelling, about 4 in. shorter, bought by the yard. Both sides are decorated with embroidery in thick soft cotton, using Chain Stitch, Rosette Chain Stitch, Knotted Buttonhole Stitch and Running Stitch. The embroidered design on the turquoise towel includes solid white circles to match the spots on the other side, while the printed pattern on the spotted side is emphasised by enriching several of the spots with embroidery, so making them more important.

After completing the embroidery the two right sides are placed together and the short ends machined and turned through. This allows 1 in. of plain towelling to edge each end of the spotted side of the mat. Solid Chain Stitch circles can then be worked at intervals along the joins. The long sides are then sewn together by hand so that the selvedge edge of the turquoise towel forms a 'piping' on the spotted side.

Net Curtain (46 in. × 36 in.)

There are many different textures of net ranging from the gossamer fine variety used for wedding veils, to the coarse furnishing net we have chosen for our short curtain. The variations are not only in the scale of the weave and weight of the threads used, but in the actual method of making the net, which can have either a square or a hexagonal mesh.

It is the hexagonal variety which is most frequently used in embroidery, and most dictionaries of embroidery stitches include diagrams of some of the intricate patterns which can be worked out on this lacy background. There is no reason, however, why a square meshed net should not also prove suitable for embroidery, and many patterns can be worked out quite quickly on this type of mesh using darning or needleweaving, for instance.

Our curtain is of heavy net with about four threads to the inch. We experimented with some of the stitches found in Filet Lace Work, and although at first these may seem complicated, once mastered, they are quick to do and most effective. Using a tapestry needle, we worked the embroidery in shades of ochre and coffee coloured soft embroidery cotton, with some pure white to make a contrast. Pearl cotton is also used for some of the motifs and its mercerised finish helps to add a sparkle to the work. The ends of thread are finished off carefully and neatly at the back and oversewn with a fine matching sewing cotton. This helps to keep the back of the curtain looking as neat as the front.

Cushion (12 in. × 16 in.) (Detail on front cover)

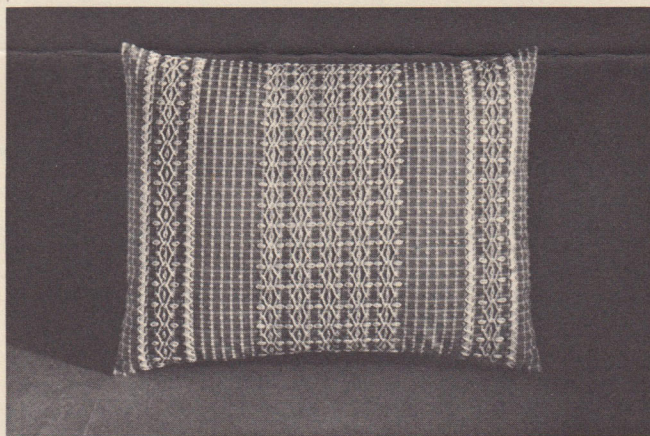
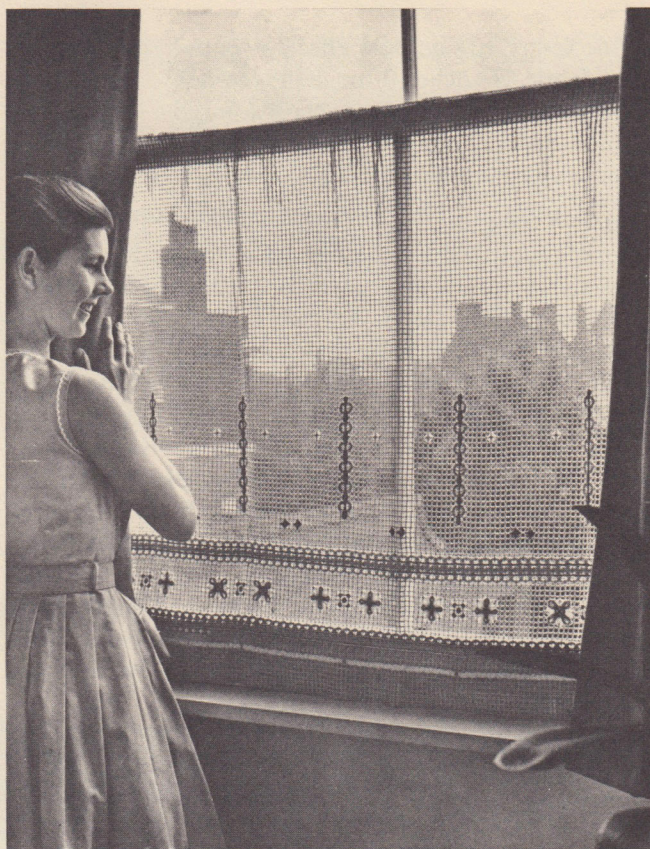
Seerloop cotton fabrics are made with many different weaves. These offer possibilities for planning an embroidered decoration by using the weave as a guide when spacing the stitches. Experiment with various stitches and types of thread to find out the different effects which can be obtained in this way. Often a stitch will take on a new look when seen against an unusual background, or if the scale of working is changed. It is important, however, that your embroidery should be strong and bold enough to hold its own against the background fabric, the pattern of which is often very interesting in itself.

A grey and white seerloop cotton was chosen for this cushion. The embroidered decoration is in soft white embroidery cotton using Fly Stitch, threaded, which gives a bold effect, Detached Chain Stitch and a variation of Herringbone Stitch worked in bands to form a filling.

Cushion (18 in. square)

A striped woollen fabric in red and black is combined with smooth red felt to make this bright cushion. The striped fabric has been cut and pieced together to make a chevron pattern, contrasting pleasantly with the plain red felt which is applied as a border and central decoration. Red zigzag machine stitching is used to apply the felt, but if preferred, it could be hand-sewn neatly in position.

The embroidery is worked in a thick soft embroidery cotton using such stitches as Rosette Chain, Wheatear, French Knots, Couching and a variety of Woven Wheel. Notice how the thread and stitches chosen combine to give



Above: cushion from seerloop cotton.

Below: red and black cushion.



the necessary strong, bold effect. A button, covered with black fabric, is stitched through the centre.

Black towelling has been chosen for the back of the cushion, and the rough texture of this is both attractive and practical, as it prevents the cushion slipping from the chair.

Traycloth (20 in. × 13 in.) (Detail on front cover)

Recently there has come on the market a wide range of attractively printed and woven place mats and traycloths which are sold separately. These offer scope to the embroideress who wishes to experiment, by providing her with the opportunity of buying a small piece of interesting fabric which is still large enough for some practical purpose.

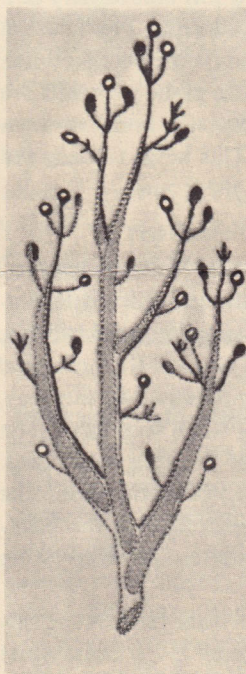
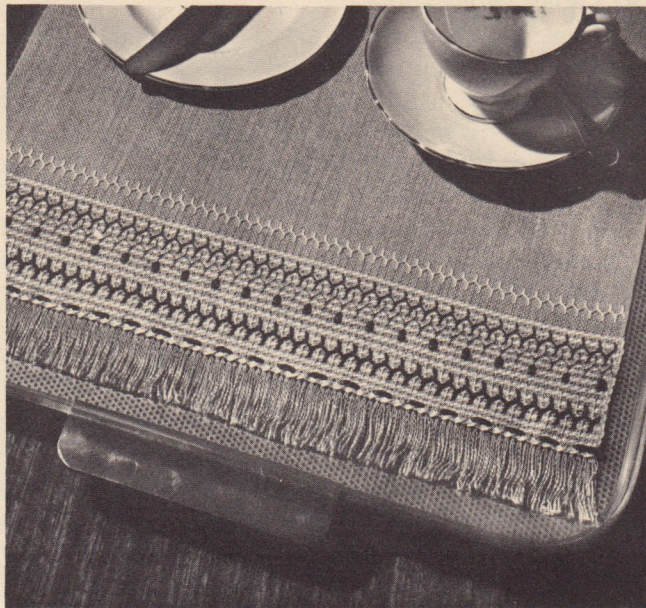
The traycloth illustrated here is of turquoise blue linen, with a woven border of heavy white stripes at each end. Using these as a scaffolding on which to build up embroidered borders, we worked Cretan Stitch in several different thicknesses of thread to add contrast in texture, the finest lines being in one strand of cotton, and the heaviest in six strands. Small Straight Stitches and a line of Running Stitch in a heavy embroidery thread were added to give emphasis to the design.

Organdie Teacosy

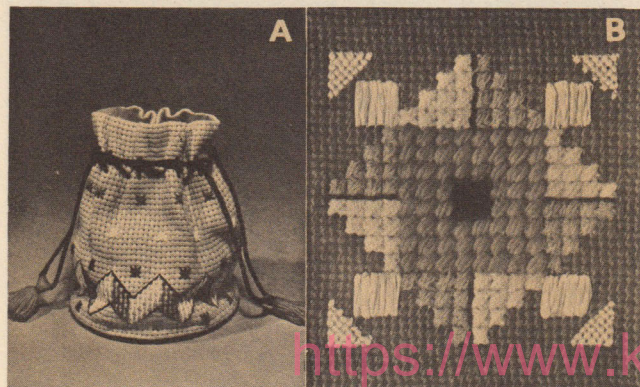
There is a special appeal in using delicate, transparent fabrics, and for these it is important to choose a method of embroidery which enhances these qualities. When working on fabrics such as organdie, voile, georgette and the various types of nylon now on the market, use only one or two strands of embroidery thread, and see that your technique is as perfect as possible, as bad workmanship will show through from the wrong side.

Shadow Work is the most popular method of embroidering on transparent fabrics and, combined with Back Stitch, a fine Whipped Running Stitch and Eyelet Holes, for instance, it will certainly make a most effective decoration. You will find information about Shadow Work in our And So to Embroider Bulletin No. 4B, while the method of transferring the design is illustrated in Bulletin No. 24.

The teacosy illustrated here is worked in soft, subtle shades of greys and greens, and the tiny points inserted round the edge help to emphasise the delicate quality needed for this type of work.



Organdie teacosy decorated in Shadow Work. The enlarged detail shows the decorative quality of this type of embroidery.



(a) Embroidery canvas used for a workbag

The decoration consists of Double Cross Stitch worked at intervals and a zigzag border of Threaded Running Stitch in red, navy blue and white. A draw-string is threaded through buttonholed loops and the lining is of bright red cotton.

(b) Canvas Embroidery

Different textured embroidery threads, wools and raffia are combined in this example. Stitches used include Tent Stitch, Cross Stitch and Upright Gobelin.

And So to Embroider Bulletin No. 36 will include ideas for using trees in embroidery.