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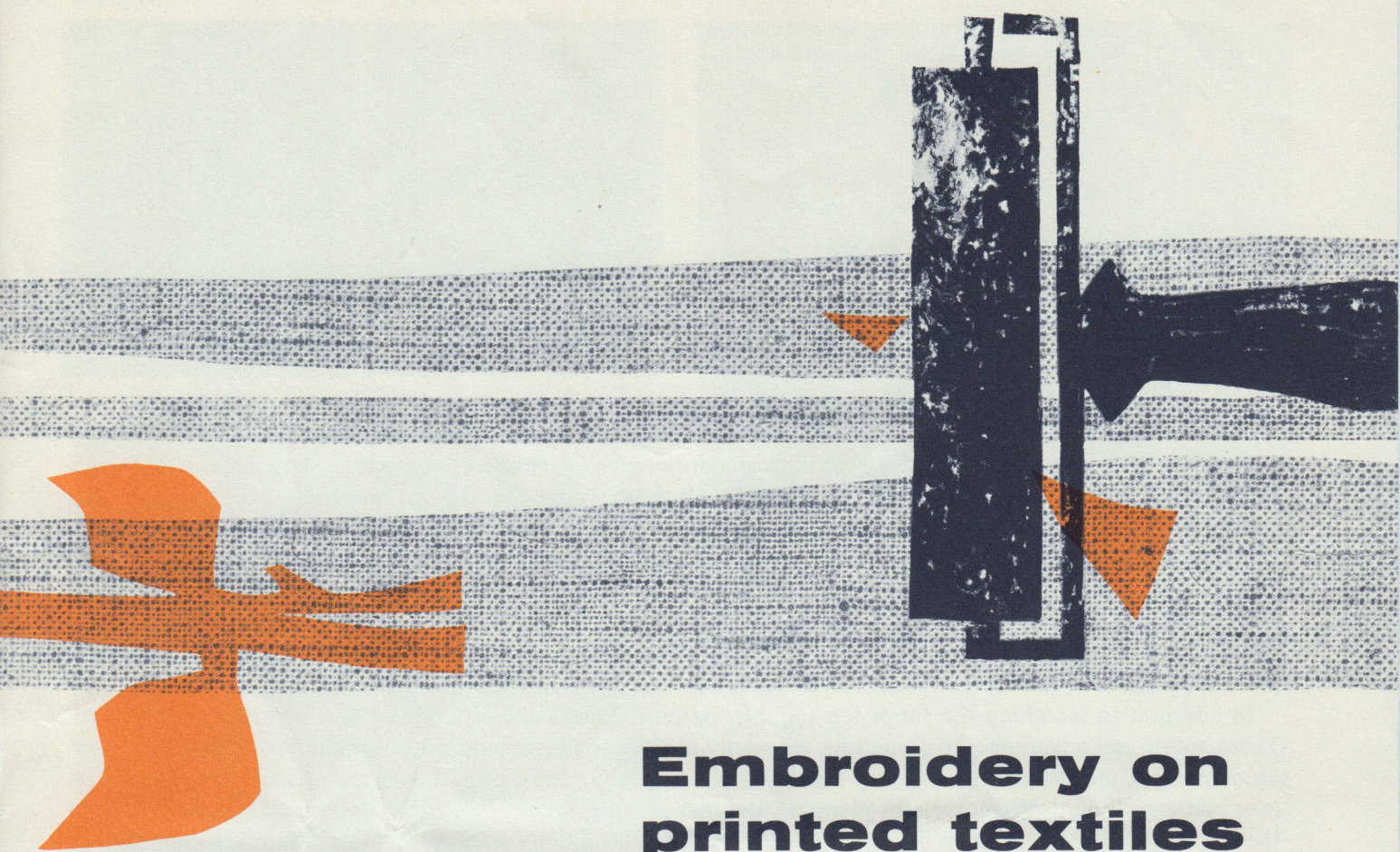
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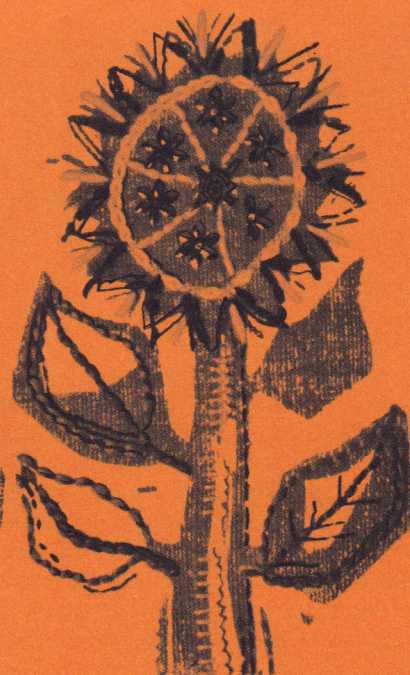
And so to embroider



Embroidery on printed textiles

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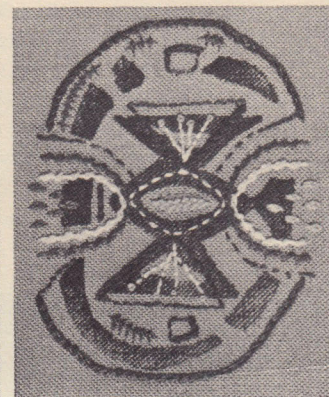
Bulletin 38



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*Potato cut printed with fabric ink on to material.
The same print developed with embroidery.*

Embroidery on printed textiles



With the wonderful selection of fabrics and threads available today, it is possible to break away from tradition and to find interesting and refreshing ideas for embroidery by experimenting with modern materials. In this bulletin, we turn our attention to printed fabrics, both those which you can buy and those which, with a little skill and patience, you can print for yourself.

We suggest that you look for printed furnishing fabrics with designs which are simple yet lively and modern, and which might form suitable backgrounds for embroidery. Select a print on which you can develop ideas of your own and avoid buying a fabric on which the pattern is so complex and detailed that any additional stitchery would look lost and insignificant. Naturalistic designs are also unsuitable and it is generally the simple, restrained patterns, printed in new and unusual colour schemes, which are the most successful.

In addition to searching the shops for suitable, patterned fabrics, you might like to hand print your own. There are several advantages in doing this, especially in schools where hand printing is taught as a craft subject. By combining the crafts of embroidery and hand printing, a group of pupils, working as a team, could undertake really exciting projects, perhaps planning and making such ambitious articles as, for instance, curtains for the school hall and a bed-cover for the homecraft flat. Smaller things such as cushions and place mats can, of course, be just as successful and will require as much careful thought and discussion of the problems involved in order to produce effective designs.

Another advantage of printing your own design is that, from the start, you can plan the pattern with the idea of additional embroidery in mind. This allows you to lay out your pattern as desired, perhaps occasionally leaving out a section of a motif to be completed later in embroidery.

Some schools and colleges have all the equipment necessary for producing first-rate fabric prints by such methods as screen printing, lino blocks, tie dyeing and 'Batik' for example. Potato cuts and lino cuts, however, will produce excellent results with the minimum of equipment. If you have not yet tried this simple but effective method of hand printing, you will find some instructional details in this bulletin.

It is extremely satisfying to have the experience of first designing and printing your own fabric and then enriching it with embroidery so that the finished article is something quite original and unique.

Potato and lino cuts

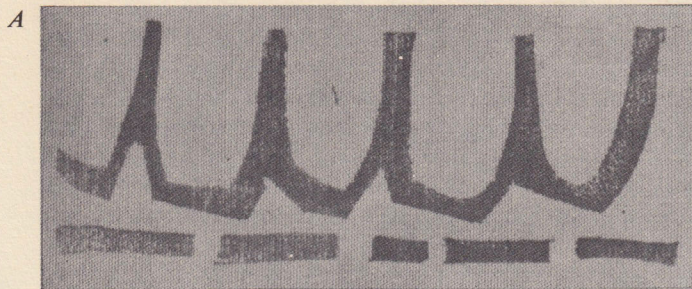
Potato cuts are excellent for starting your experiments. Cut a potato in half and already you have an interesting oval shape. Then, with a penknife, you can easily cut out sections to make such shapes as rings, triangles and even leaves. Ordinary water colour paints can be used to test your motifs first of all on paper, while you experiment as to the best way to place them for your final design. For the actual printing on to fabric, you will need a tube of fabric printing ink, a small roller, a piece of glass or a tile and a flat surface on which to work. Squeeze some ink on to the glass or tile and roll it out evenly, then apply the inked roller to the surface of your potato cut. Finally, press the design, inked side down, firmly on to the fabric.

More variety in shapes can be achieved by using lino cuts and

suitable pieces of lino can be bought from craft shops, along with the necessary cutting tools. Take care not to cut your fingers when using these tools which are generally quite sharp. A good way of planning a lino cut design for fabric is to work directly with brush and paint on paper. In this way you are dealing with flat areas of colour, as they would appear when printed. The freedom of the brush shapes can be easily retained in your lino-cut, if you make a careful tracing of your painted design and then transfer it to the lino.

There are various types of fabric printing inks available and you should always read the manufacturer's instructions carefully, so that you can have ready the appropriate medium for cleaning up afterwards.

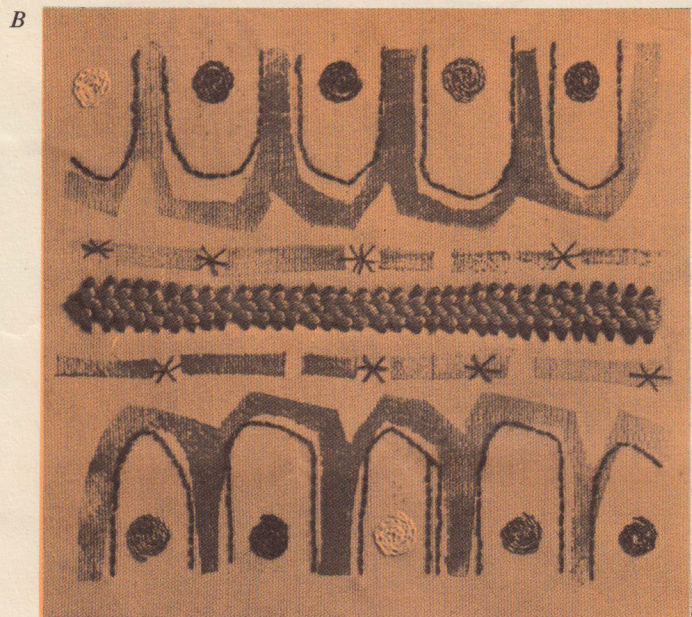
Try the effect of printing on different types of fabric such as



A. Lino cut border pattern.

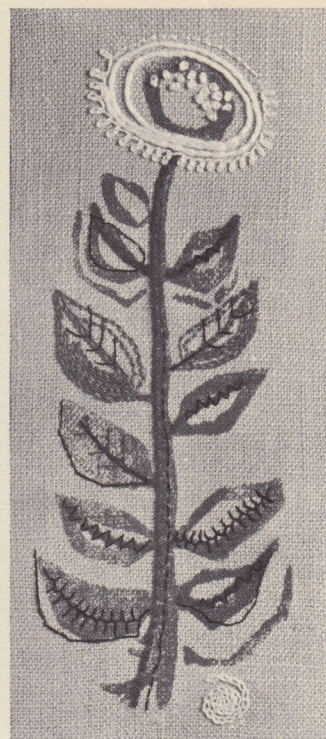
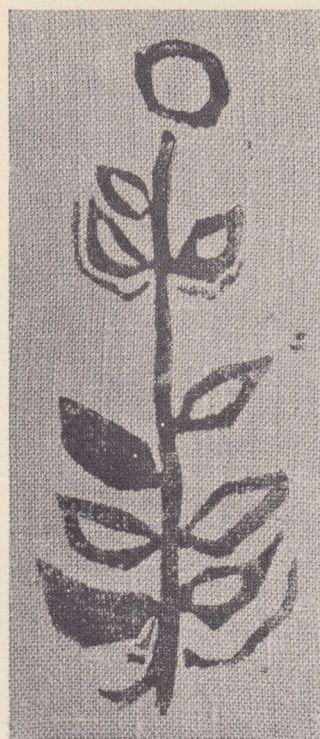
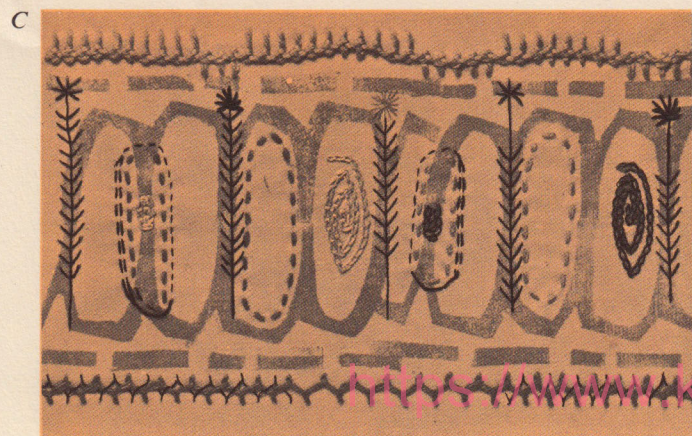
B. Printed facing in. different directions, with additional embroidery.

C. Printed to form a continuous border, and with points joined together to make elliptical shapes.



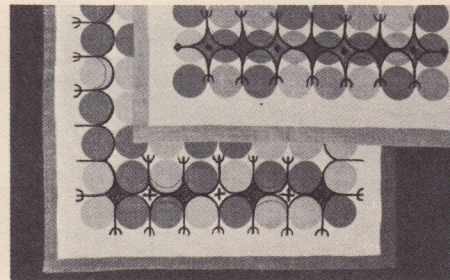
organdie, cotton, sail cloth and even hessian, and before starting the embroidery leave these small experiments to dry out for at least a week, or longer if the ink has been particularly thick. When printing large lengths of fabric for curtains or a dirndl skirt, for example, a drying period of up to three weeks is advisable.

The cleaning and washing of hand printed fabrics should always be undertaken with great care as the colours of the print may not be guaranteed completely fast dyed.



Plant motif (lino cut)

Notice how, in the print, only a ring indicates the flower head, and several leaves are missing from the stem. In the completed example there is an embroidered flower worked round the ring, and leaves, veins and other details are added to give a lively quality in keeping with the spirit of the original design, while making an interesting unity. This is just one way of completing the motif, but many other variations are possible. See the repeating plant design on the curtain illustrated in this bulletin.

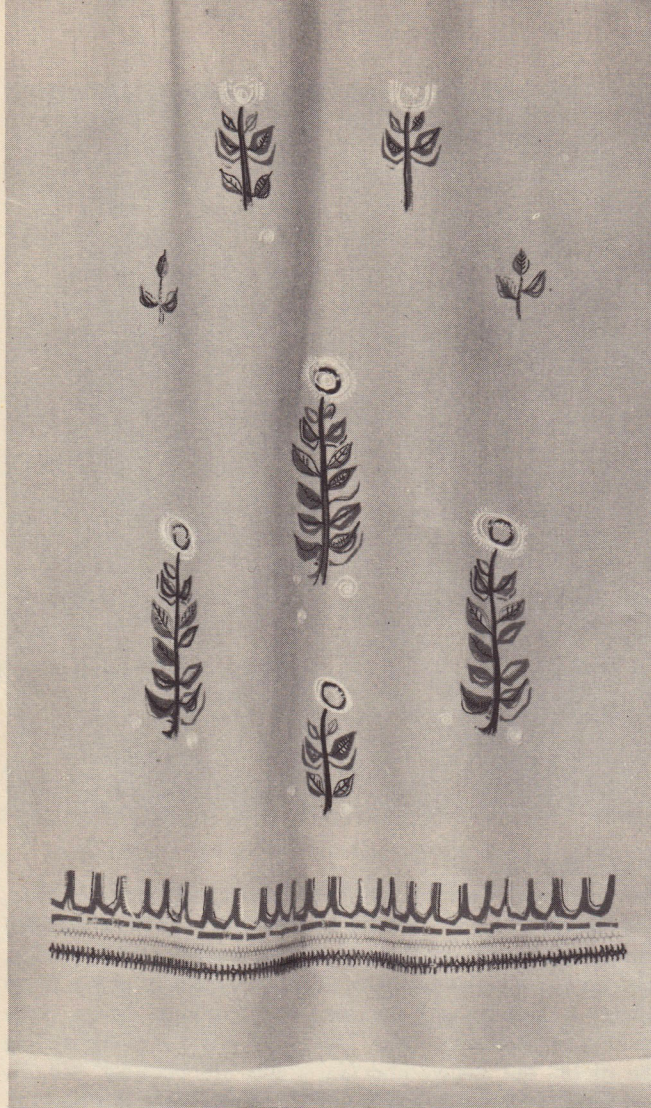


Cushion, 'Clocks' (14 in. × 16 in.)

The front of this cushion uses a repeat from a screen printed fabric produced by an Art School. It is interesting to see how the print has been developed by the use of the ordinary domestic sewing machine to produce delicate line decorations in black and white. These make a good contrast to the flat areas of the print.

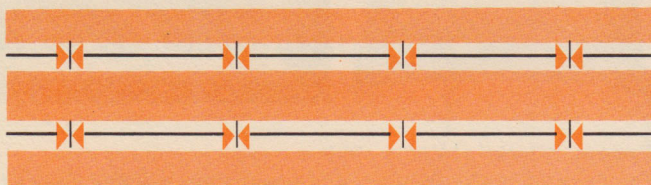
Place mats (size 11½ in. × 15½ in.)

These are bought mats, with large solid spots printed on the fabric. We unpicked and improved the hems, and added some embroidered decoration in two strands of embroidery thread. The solid effect is obtained by working Chain Stitch as a filling. Notice how the different positioning of the embroidered design on each mat completely changes the over-all effect.



Curtain (size 29 in. × 52 in.)

Two plant motifs from lino cuts were printed as a repeating design for the curtain. Notice how the treatment varies, to add interest and variety. Bands of Cretan Stitch in a thick and a thin thread are worked below the border design printed from the lino cut illustrated on previous page.



Plant motif (lino cut 8 in. high) illustrated on front cover

This motif is printed on a heavy slub fabric and is larger in scale than that used for our window curtain. The design was planned by cutting out paper shapes freely with scissors to obtain a bold spontaneous effect. Sequins have been added to make the centre of the flower even more important, and the embroidery is worked mainly in thick threads using Back, Chain, Double Knot and Running Stitch. This motif is included in the plant border design illustrated below.

Plant border design (12 in. deep)

A rich border suitable for the foot of a heavy curtain. It uses alternating types of plants with an edging of linked diamond shapes. The effect is bold and quickly achieved, so making it suitable for a door curtain or for the stage of a school hall. This kind of treatment could also be considered for stage costumes and theatrical banners, for instance.



Buffet supper cloth (size 15½ in. × 80 in.)

This cloth is made from a Swedish printed furnishing fabric with a design of gay vertical stripes on a bright orange ground. The fabric is 48 in. wide, so by cutting and joining we were able to make the cloth from one yard. Two 4 in. bands of the fabric are added at each end. Areas of coloured poplin and cotton are applied using the swing needle sewing machine. In addition, freely crossing lines are embroidered in stitches of contrasting weights such as Twisted Chain, Back and Couching. Other stitches, used as fillings, include Rosette Chain, Up and Down Buttonhole and Chevron. Both a soft cotton and a stranded cotton are used for the embroidery. A section of the original printed fabric is also illustrated



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Bulletin 39 will contain suggestions for designs in pattern darning