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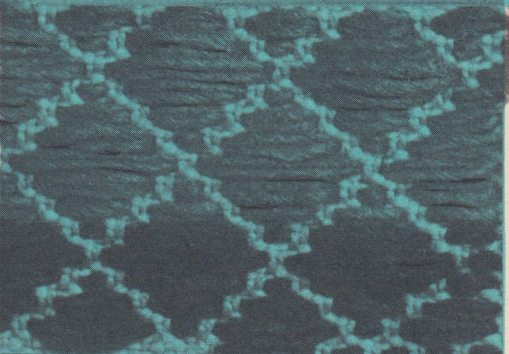
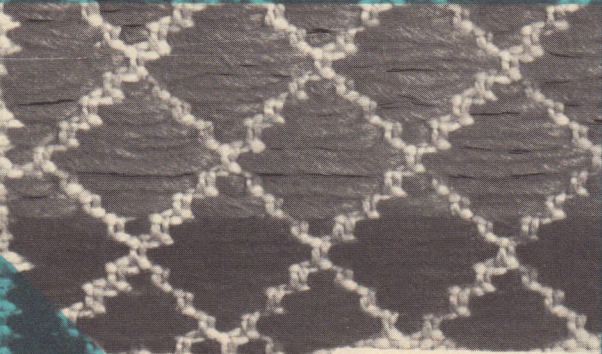
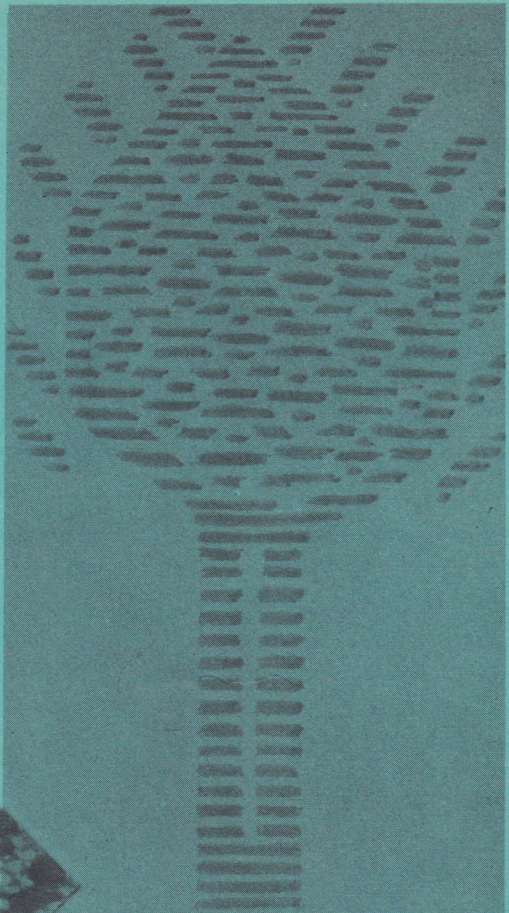
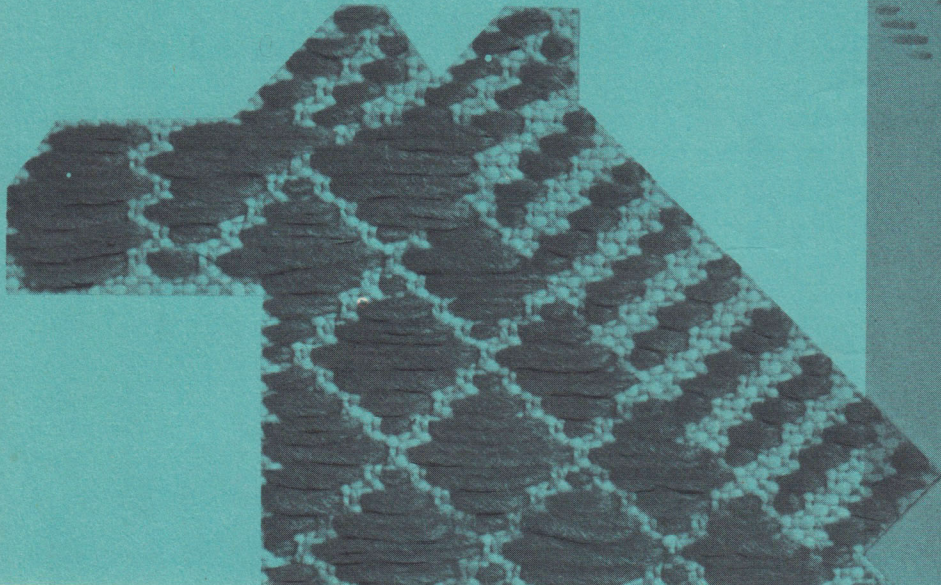
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Ideas for pattern darning



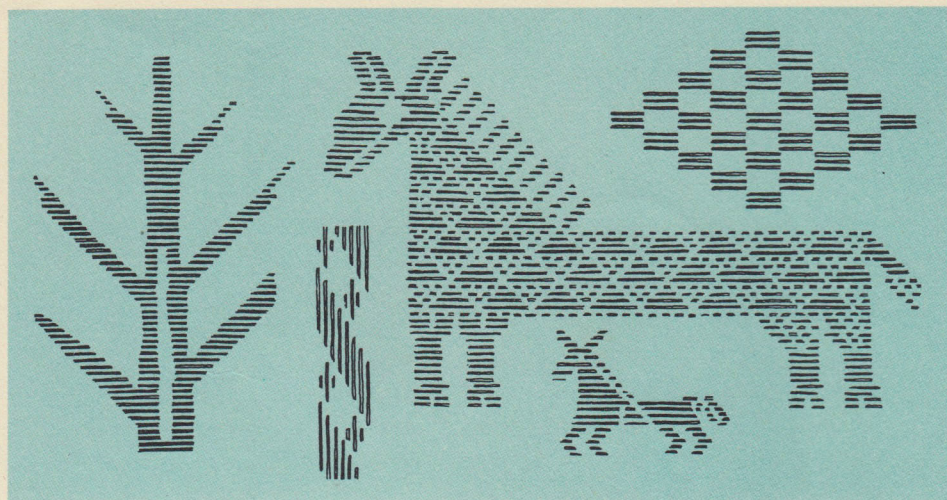
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Bulletin 39

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And so to embroider

Ideas for pattern darning



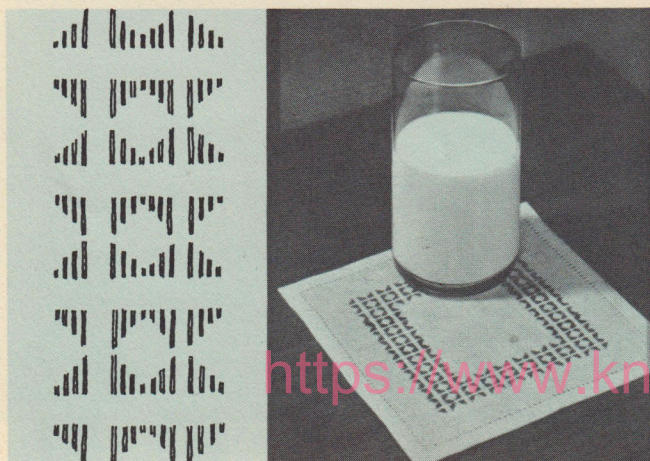
Darning is a familiar word which we tend to associate with a workbasket filled to overflowing with the week's mending! In this bulletin, however, we consider another type of darning, the purpose of which is to produce patterns and fillings resulting in rich and lovely embroidered decorations.

As you know, an ordinary darn can be worked on almost any fabric, but pattern darning depends on the choice of a background of evenly woven threads. These are counted and picked up in regular sequences, using a simple running stitch, and the more elaborate patterns should be drafted out first of all on graph paper.

Like so many traditional methods of embroidery, pattern darning has been practised for a very long time in different parts of the world. Examples can be found among the early Coptic embroideries of the third and fourth centuries. One of our illustrations is of a typical example of pattern darning from Mexico, which shows the link which exists with primitive weaving. Notice that the complete width of the fabric is covered with the pattern instead of certain areas only being selected for decoration.

Study the detailed examples and drawings of border designs and fillings illustrated throughout the bulletin, then try out some of these attractive patterns for yourself. Experiment with different types and weights of fabrics, remembering, also, to vary the choice of threads. A clear, bold effect is generally obtained by working with a slightly heavier thread than that used for the warp and weft of the background material. As pattern darning can sometimes appear monotonous, it is important to try to emphasise to the full, the many interesting and unusual textures and effects which can be produced by this method of embroidery. Ideas for decorating table linen and soft furnishings can be quickly developed, and are most effective if a strong colour or tonal contrast is used. Once you have discovered the fascination of designing in this technique, you might like to try more ambitious projects, such as the long hanging, 'Wild Horses', illustrated in this bulletin.

Although the time spent in the preliminary planning for pattern darning may be a little longer than for some other techniques, the actual embroidery is quick, especially if it is being worked on a bold scale.



Mat. ($5\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times $5\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

The diagram pattern shows clearly the sequence of rows which makes up the repeat for this border design. The embroidery is worked in two strands of embroidery cotton, mainly in bright green, but with four sections in black to add variety. When working this border, the mat is not turned round to start each side, but held always in the same position so that the threads of the pattern darning all run in the one direction.

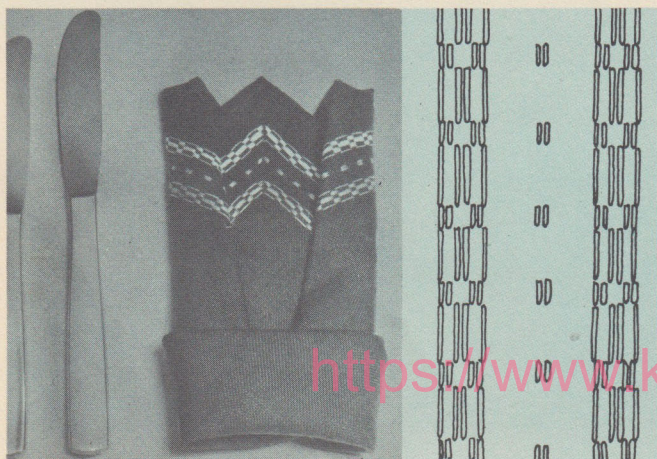
Linen table napkin ($13\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times $13\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

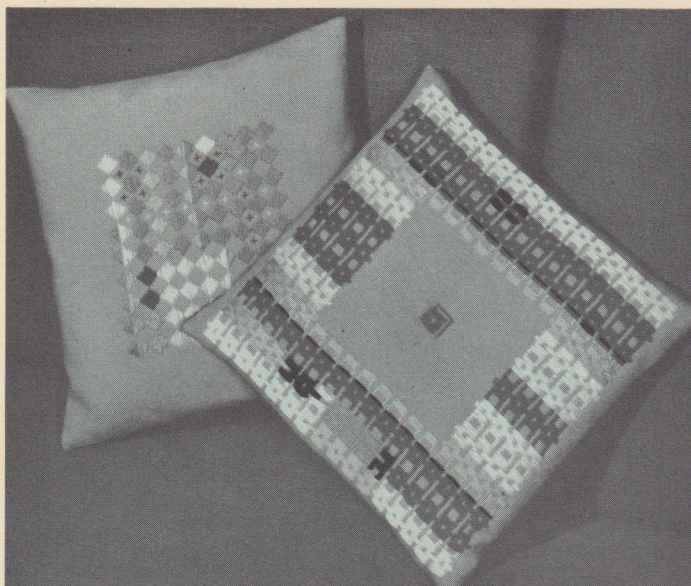
The border on this napkin shows clearly how running stitch can be built up to make a very simple pattern darning design. The embroidery is worked in one and two strands of bright orange and white stranded cotton.

Wall Hanging, 'Wild Horses' (22 in. × 60 in.)

By choosing an evenly woven embroidery linen 22 in. wide, we avoided any side seams on the hanging which is not lined. An experimental sampler was made first of all, from which the most suitable pattern darning fillings were chosen for the different motifs. The sampler proved invaluable, also, when deciding on stitches and threads.

The large horses were placed in position first, the arrangement being decided by the use of cut paper shapes. The outlines of these shapes required to be modified and adapted so that the pattern darning fillings made good silhouettes. The tree shapes were then added and, finally, the little horses and plants which fill in the background. The embroidery was worked in one and two strands of one of the very heavy embroidery threads. No extra outlines and no surface embroidery were added, as this would have detracted from the simple and unusual charm of the method.





Two scatter cushions (11 in. square)

We chose a mustard coloured woollen fabric with an even weave for these cushions. They show how broad areas of pattern darning can be used in an interesting way for contemporary furnishings. The colours in the embroidery range from pure white to fawns, dark brown and black and, in order to avoid too monotonous an effect, the types of threads used are varied. One cushion is backed with black towelling; the other uses a brown woollen fabric, with a further small pattern darning design in the centre.



Head cushion ($8\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times 13 in.)

A scarlet, evenly woven fabric is used for this gay cushion, so suitable for a garden chair. The embroidery is all in white using a soft cotton, pearl cotton and coton à broder to give contrast in texture. As well as straight borders of pattern darning, the design includes some squares and diamonds which show how pattern darning can be used to fill a shape. Four lead dress weights are sewn into the strap which keeps the cushion in position on the back of the chair.

Example of Mexican pattern darning.



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