

the
stitchbook
COLLECTIVE 2022

Workshop 5 of 12

Couched Lines, Lettering & Laid Work

These notes should be read in conjunction with the online video



www.untangledthreads.co.uk/MEMBERS

Video Password: couch

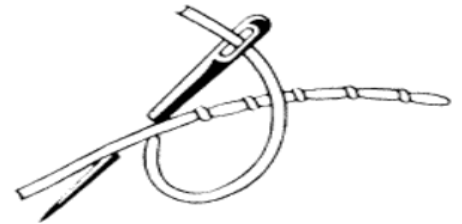
Couched Lines, Lettering & Laid Work

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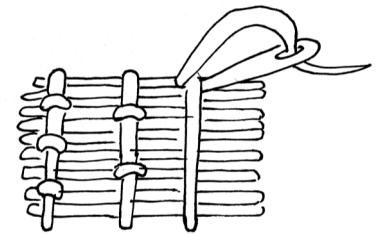
Couched Lines, Lettering & Laid Work Introduction

In this workshop we are looking at how to incorporate lettering and line-work into some of your designs, using a very simple couching technique. As an extension to this, we will take a look at how the images on the Bayeux Tapestry were created, using a form of couching called laid work.

Couching generally has 2 layers of thread: the main (laid) thread which is attached to the surface of the fabric, and the working thread which holds it in place.



Laid Work generally has 3 or more layers of thread. A surface satin stitch, then a 2nd thread to hold the satin stitch, which is itself couched into place.

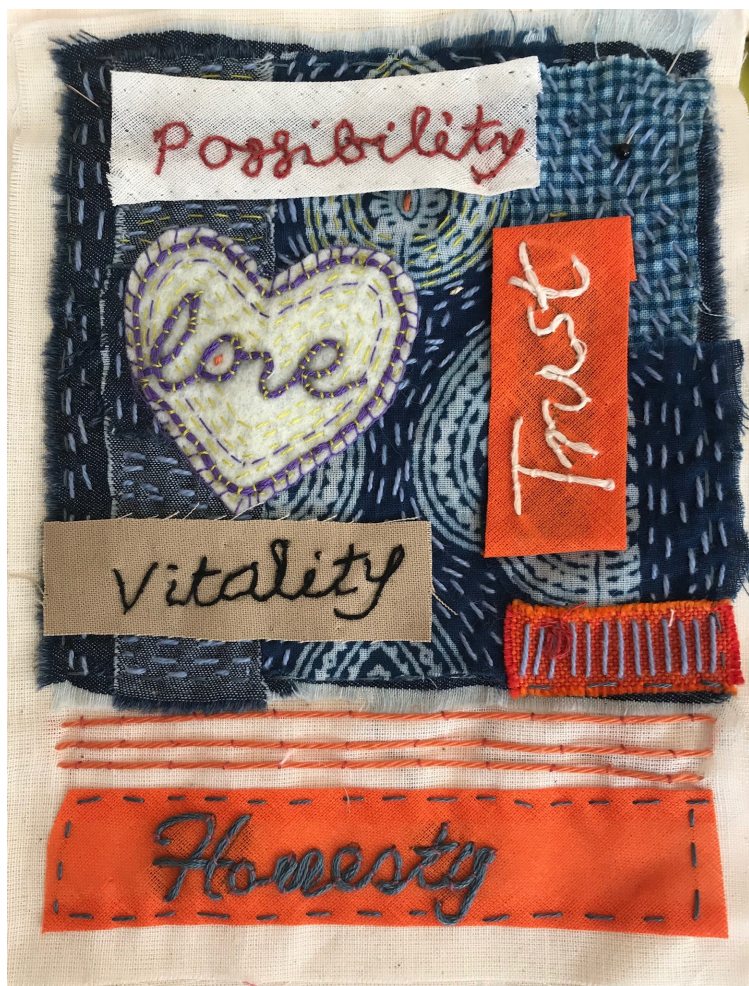


Probably the best know example of laid wool work is the Bayeux Tapestry. This uses a technique which became known as 'Bayeux Stitch'. It is a form of laid work which begins with an outline stitched in stem stitch.



Sample 1: COUCHED LETTERING

Hand embroidered lettering can often look very formal and relies heavily on the neatness of your stitching. Couching is a great way of creating lettering which is more fluid and expressive. It may be more suitable for a slow stitched, mixed media style. Your own handwriting might become an important feature of your work, and couching is the perfect way to translate it into stitching.



BASIC TECHNIQUE

This technique is much easier to understand by watching the video than the written instructions which follow!

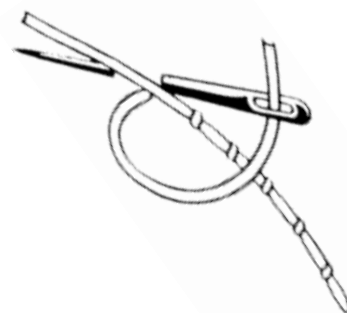
Choose your text and transfer it to your fabric (trace or freehand). The stitching will cover the line, so it's up to you if you use permanent, washable or air soluble marker pens. I like to use pencil. Make your lettering about 2cm tall to begin with. **YOU WILL NEED to work with TWO needles AT THE SAME TIME** (it's really not as complicated as it sounds!)

You will use two threads:

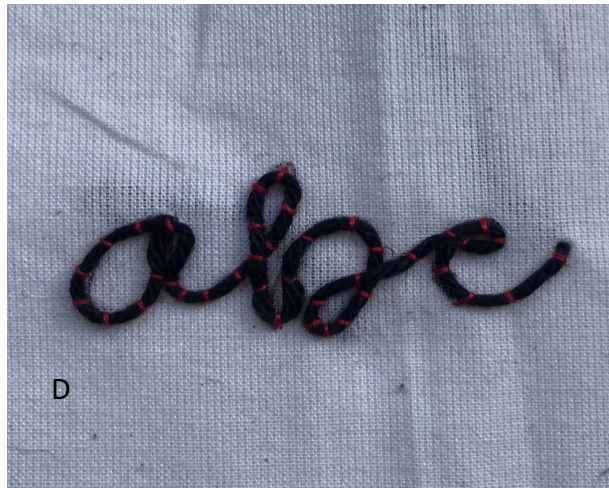
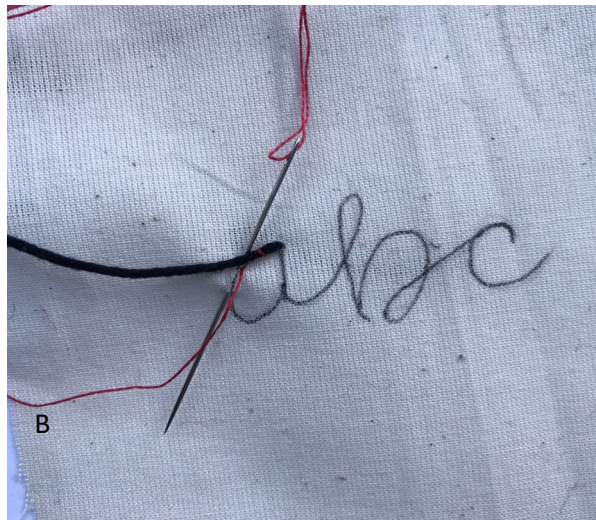
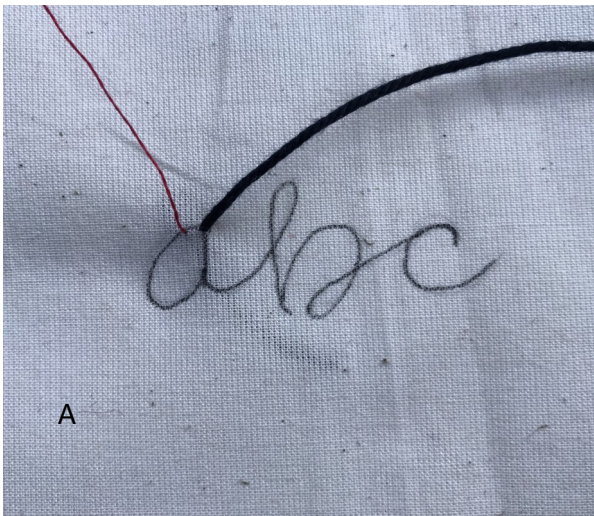
Laid Thread: the thread you use to form the letters.

Working Thread: the thread which holds the laid thread in place..

You will quickly find which weight of laid and working threads suit the style of your lettering. As a beginner you may find it easier to handle this stitch if your fabric is under tension (i.e. in a hoop).



- A. Bring the laid thread up from the back at the start of your lettering. Leave it there for now. Bring the working thread up from the back, through the drawn line, a small distance away from the laid thread.
- B. Pass the working thread back down, through the same place as it came up, making sure that it loops over the laid thread. Next the working thread is brought up through the drawn line again, a short distance from the last stitch. Repeat. *If necessary you can move the laid thread to one side of the line to see where you should be coming up.*
- C. The laid thread will follow the stitches make with working thread and sit on the drawn line.
- D. Continue in this way until you reach the end of your letter or word. When you reach the end, pass both the laid thread and the working thread through to the back and fasten off.



Sample 2:

EXPERIMENT

I don't consider myself to be an embroiderer (I don't have the necessary dexterity, skill or patience), but I really enjoy the textures and flowing lines of couched work and it is a perfect technique for using yarns and ribbons which are otherwise difficult to stitch through fabric.

Experiment using different thickness/colour/numbers of laid and working thread.



Sample 3:

LAID WORK

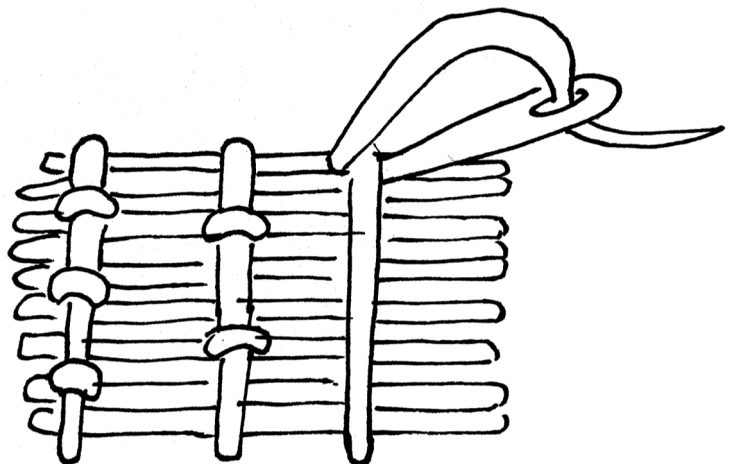
Laid work is a more complicated form of Couching. It uses several layers of threads. It is used to fill large areas with stitching, and to build up a textured surface.

If you are interested in learning more about traditional embroidery stitches (including several different types of 'laid work') why not take a look at The Royal School of Needlework's STITCH BANK. It is a truly wonderful FREE resource. www.rsnstitchbank.org

BASIC TECHNIQUE

Once again, this technique is much easier to understand by watching the video than the written instructions which follow!

You need to begin with an area of basic satin stitch. I suggest you first fill a square or a rectangle. Bring your needle up on one side of the shape and take it back down on the opposite side. Then bring your needle up on the same side as you went down, directly next to where you went down. Repeat this until your shape is full.



You have now made an area of satin stitch. Depending on how long your stitches are, they may feel loose and floppy when the fabric is moved. This is where the couched lines come into play.

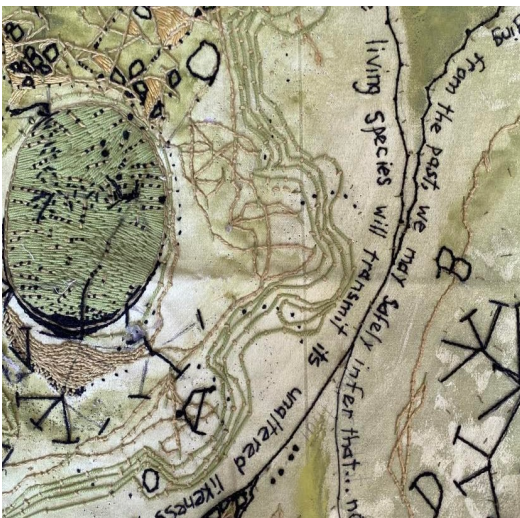
Using the two needle technique we have used already, add couched lines at right angles to your satin stitches. This is basic laid work. You can play with a variety of sizes and positions for the satin stitch and the couched lines.

Sample 4: EXPERIMENT



Different examples of couching and laid work can be stitched into beautiful 'samplers'. Here is one by Sarah Bradberry of www.knitting-and.com

Although I do use laid work quite often in my stitching, it tends to be a little more 'rough and ready' than the work we are going to look at on the Bayeux Tapestry. You will inevitably find your own style.

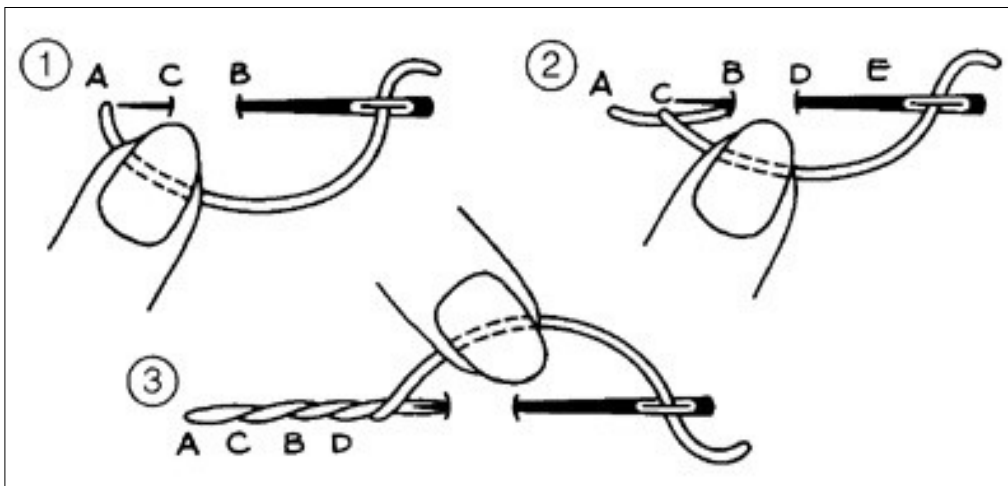


In these examples, I have used a combination of paint, laid work and couching to focus on achieving an organic 'surface texture'.

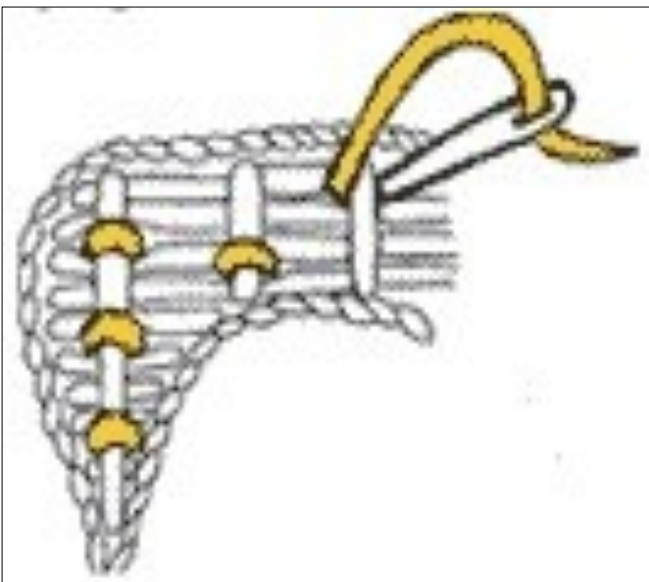
Sample 5:

BAYEUX STITCH

Despite its name the Bayeux Tapestry is in fact a narrative embroidery. It consists of pictures and text inscriptions. The majority of the embroidery is simply a combination of stem stitch, for the outlines, and couched satin stitch (Bayeux Stitch) to fill the shapes. A full demonstration of Bayeux Stitch can be found on the video.



Stem Stitch



Bayeux Stitch

The Bayeux Tapestry is one of the world's most famous pieces of medieval art. It is 70 m long, and chronicles the legendary tale of the Norman conquest of England, when William the Conqueror invaded and defeated King Harold. Reading Museum, which houses a 19th century replica has a brilliant website which shows images of all 13 Chapters of the story. www.readingmuseum.org.uk

Sample 6:

BAYEUX TAPESTRY INSPIRED TREES

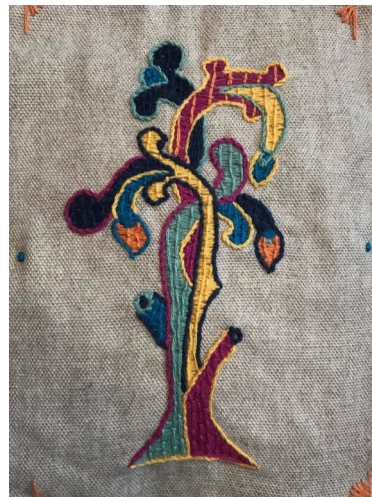
Sections of The Bayeux Tapestry are separated by a stylised representation of a tree (a sort of chapter-type marking). There are a total of 37 trees or groups of trees depicted.



Why not try drawing your own stylised tree and use it as a centre-piece for a design using Bayeux Stitch.?

On the next page are a few, randomly selected, examples of Laid Work Trees inspired by The Bayeux Tapestry by members of The Stitchbook Collective





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COLLECTIVE 2022

Next Workshop



July:

Heat Distressing Techniques

7th July 2022

Workshop 6 of 12

Heat Distressing Techniques

A list of supplies needed for this workshop will be announced in the next Newsletter (June 18th 2022) and online

www.untangledthreads.co.uk