

NEEDLEWORK PATTERNS

from The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Susan Siegler



NEEDLEWORK
from **PATTERNS**
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

SUSAN SIEGLER

New York Graphic Society *Boston*

TO BILL

Diagrams by Susan Siegler

Photographs by William F. Pons,

Walter Yee, and Allan Rodney

Designed by Margaret Dodd

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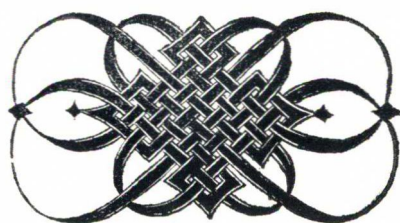
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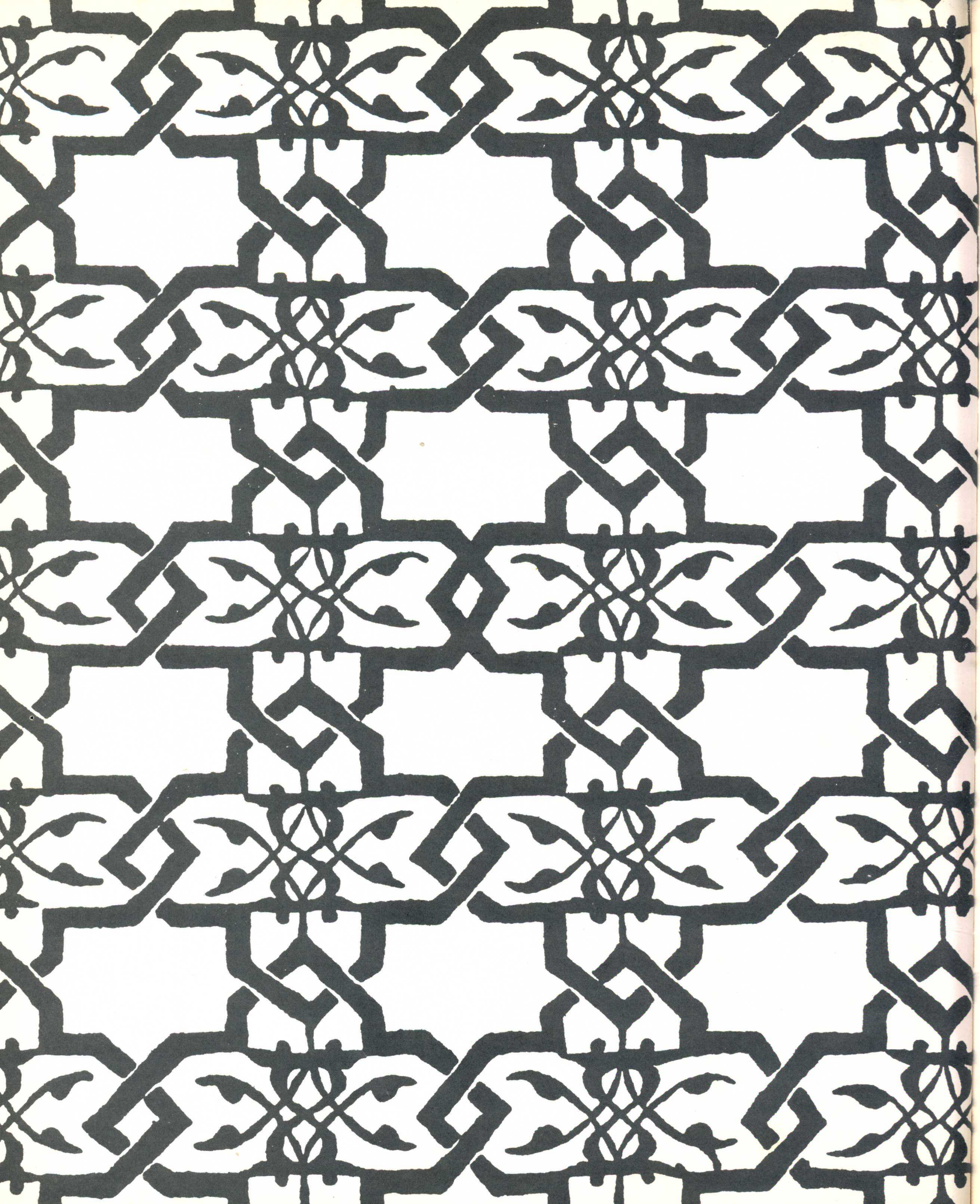
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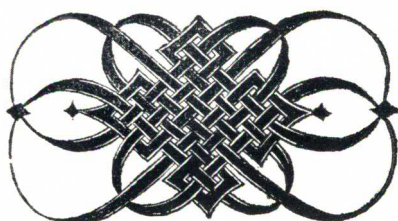
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Pattern 124 Color illustration 117

FLOWERS OF THE FOUR SEASONS — 1, *from an embroidered sleeveband, Chinese, nineteenth century.*

Pattern 130 Color illustration 118

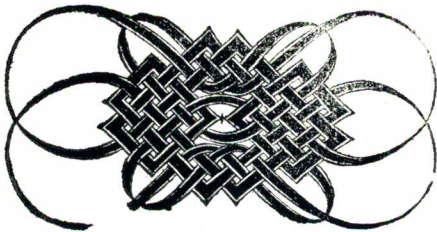
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TURKISH PEACOCK, *from an embroidered bedspread, Albanian (Janina), eighteenth century.*

Pattern 138 Color illustration 120

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Preface



Over the years The Metropolitan Museum of Art has received many requests for needlework patterns based on designs in its collections. Borrowing and adapting designs from the work of others is certainly not a new concept; needleworkers, artists, and craftsmen in all media have done this throughout history. It is a creative way of keeping design traditions alive and fresh, for a design removed from its original context may often be appreciated in a totally new way.

All of the patterns presented in this book were inspired by tapestries and embroideries in the Museum's collections. The adaptations are not necessarily of the rarest or the most famous pieces, for the models were chosen primarily to delight, teach, and challenge today's needleworker. In making the selection, I tried to gather a group that would convey a sense of the great range of designs produced by needleworkers throughout the centuries. These are not provided simply as exercises in imitation, but as a way of transmitting a variety of embroidery techniques and attitudes toward design and the use of color. In all cases I tried to retain the character of the Museum's textiles in the process of adapting them for presentation in a book. This meant that many otherwise wonderful embroidery designs had to be rejected since they required oversimplification to make them readable and workable. By choosing examples from different cultures and civilizations, I tried to show that each design has a unique story to tell. Some were clearly dictated by myth or tradition and reflect the beliefs of a particular society; others mirror the fashions of their day; still others are personal creative statements made by anonymous hands.

The patterns are arranged without regard for chronological sequence. This was done intentionally to heighten the impact of each design, and to avoid having it viewed solely as a historical document. I hope that through this presentation these inspirations from the past may find new meaning today.

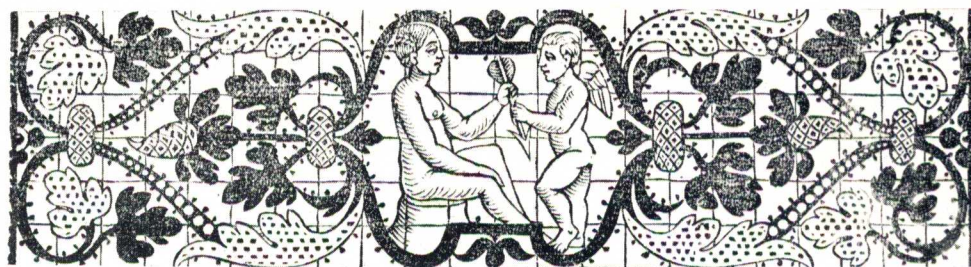
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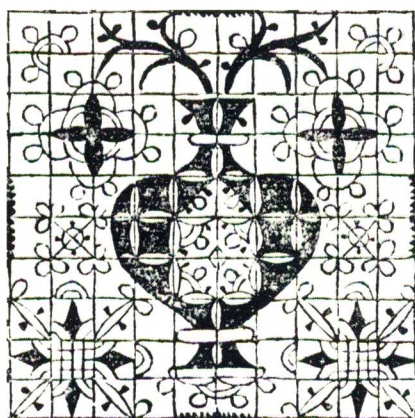
Introduction

These needlework patterns are for embroidery on canvas (needlepoint) or on other types of fabric. The term "embroidery" is generally used to describe the process of applying decorative stitches onto fabric. Developing and working an embroidery design can be an exciting and rewarding project, but to create a beautiful piece takes some knowledge, a little patience, and lots of enthusiasm. Before beginning any one of these projects, you might review the ways of handling the materials to achieve the best finished results, and the various methods for preparing and working an embroidery design.

Embroidery on canvas



ABOUT CANVAS



Most embroidery canvas sold today is made of cotton that has been treated with starch to give it body. It is available in several weights, ranging from a very fine canvas, with 27 mesh to the inch, to a coarse 3-mesh canvas. The most popular mesh sizes for needlepoint are #10, #12, #13, and #14. The smaller 20-mesh canvases are used for delicate petit point and the larger #4 and #5 for rugs and wall hangings. Canvas can be purchased in a variety of colors; white and tan (unbleached) are the most commonly used. The names applied to the canvas types — mono and penelope — refer specifically to the way in which the canvas threads are woven. I used both types for my needlepoint adaptations.

Mono canvas is woven with single vertical and horizontal threads. A mesh on mono canvas is the point of intersection of a vertical and a horizontal thread. The mesh size refers to the number of mesh in one inch; the greater the number of mesh, the finer the canvas. I used #10 mesh and #13 mesh for my adaptations on mono canvas.

Penelope canvas is woven with double vertical and double horizontal threads. The two warp (vertical) threads are woven very close together; the two woof threads are spaced slightly apart. A mesh on penelope canvas is the point of intersection of double vertical and double horizontal threads. The mesh size for penelope also indicates the number of mesh to the inch. My adaptations worked on penelope were done on 11-mesh canvas.

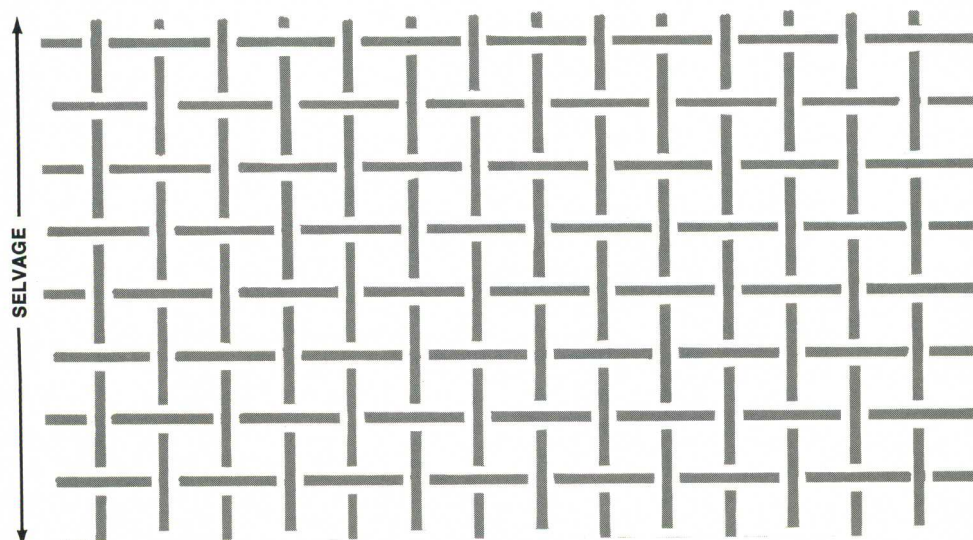
Both types of canvas should be worked with the selvage on either the right or left side. This gives better mesh coverage and helps to reduce the amount of distortion caused in working the canvas, since the stitches are then worked “with” the canvas grain, not against it.

ABOUT NEEDLES

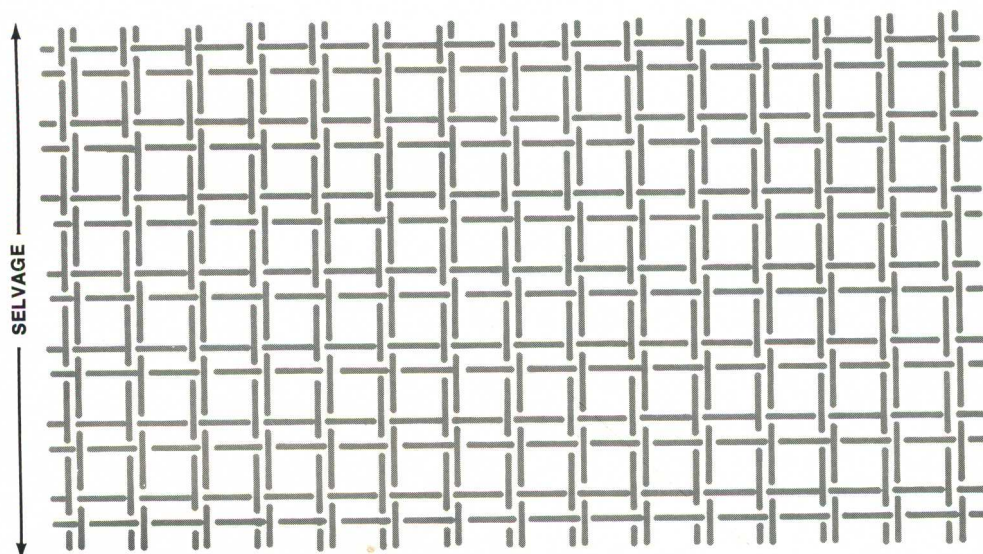
The needle used for canvas embroidery is called a tapestry needle. Unlike the usual sewing needle, it has a large, elongated eye and a blunted point. The needle size you select will depend on the weight of the canvas being used:

- For 10-mesh canvas, use a #16 tapestry needle
- For 12-mesh canvas, use a #18 tapestry needle
- For 13-mesh canvas, use a #20 tapestry needle
- For 18-mesh canvas, use a #22 tapestry needle

As with canvas weights, the higher the number of the tapestry needle, the finer it is.

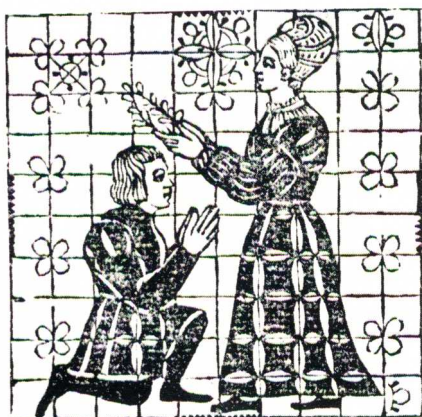


MONO CANVAS



PENELOPE CANVAS

ABOUT YARNS



Many types of yarn are suitable for canvas embroidery. These include crewel yarn, tapestry yarn, cotton and silk thread. Since I worked only in crewel-type yarn and cottons, I will describe these in some detail.

WOOLS Wool has been used in embroidery for at least a thousand years. The word "crewel" has its roots in sixteenth-century England, where it was first used to describe any worsted yarn made of two threads. Actually, all embroidery worked with two-ply wool may be referred to as crewelwork, although today we normally associate the term with a style of embroidery reminiscent of the exotic floral patterns of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. The type of wool I used throughout is Persian wool, which is a two-ply yarn made of three loosely