



Embroiderers' Association of Canada, Inc.  
Association canadienne de broderie, Inc.

# Original Design Reference

Anyone can create an original embroidery design. EAC/ACB implemented the Original Design Award (ODA) for members to have their needlework judged and exhibited at the annual seminar member's exhibition. This award is only for those pieces created as original works by the artist. Entries to the Original Design Award must include documentation of the designer's inspiration and development of the embroidery. This document is intended to assist you with documenting your design process in the event you choose to submit your design for adjudication.

There are very specific and detailed entry requirements for the Original Design Award and this document only provides general guidelines and information on documenting the design process when creating an original embroidery design. The Original Design Award Policy and Procedures document must be reviewed to be aware of the specifics that are in effect at the time of a member's submission.

The embroidery entered must be an original design of the needle artist. Original is defined as "a composition created in its entirety by the needle artist". The design process must be detailed in supporting documentation.

The design process is a formal record of all the steps taken to complete your embroidery design. It may be that there are some steps you eliminate or some that you do intuitively; you may start your project in the middle of the process. One of the requirements for entries to the Original Design Award is that you document your design process. You will need to save everything you use or try out for this work of art; even your receipts! Keep a small diary, log or calendar of the time and money you spend on this project. Include your thoughts and feelings as you work on all of the stages of the embroidery.

It is a lot of work to follow this process the first few times, but soon you will find yourself doing many of these steps without even thinking about it. Check out the references listed with the "Guidelines for Working an Original Design". They are all valuable for different aspects of the process.

Some people start with their design inspiration. If you start with a theme or an idea of what you want to produce, do some research on the topic. If you want to design a work using sea shells as your theme, go to the beach and look at what is there. Or, buy a package of shells in your local aquarium or craft store; look at books on shells in the library; check out the internet for

any information there and flip through magazines (it is surprising what you find there!). Check out the fabric stores – are there any fabrics printed with shells? Make notes of what you see – the texture, the colour, the shape, etc. Try drawing what you have found – and yes, you can draw if no one has to see it! It doesn't have to be exact – it is your working drawing. Can you simplify the drawing? Or, make multiples of it? Or, make a border pattern or change the scale? Photocopiers and/or scanners are marvelous tools for helping with this process. Note down where you did your research and keep any of those sketches and notes you made while doing the research.

Now for the colour scheme – the fun part!! You can have a literal translation of the shell colours ... or not. If, on your last holiday, you saw a wonderful mountain lakeside with deep blues and purples, forest greens and the shocking pink of the fireweed plants along the shore and that is the colour scheme you want to use, then go for it!! Just make a note of where you got the colour inspiration from. If you have a picture of the scene, that would be even better.

Collect your threads and materials in the colours you have chosen, remembering that shiny or sparkly threads will show up much more than dull ones. You might consider dyeing or painting the surface of your background fabrics. Paint a few papers in the same colours – very useful backgrounds for presentation. Save the threads you do use to make a thread swatch for the design board or sketchbook presentation.

Think of what the final shape of your embroidery could take. Is it a garment, a wall hanging, a cushion cover, or a purse? You might make a paper mock up of the project and look at your design on that. Does the design suit the size of your project? Are there any blank areas? Does the scale of the design fit the size of the finished project?

The next step is to try out your stitch ideas on sample pieces. Keep track of what stitches and threads you use and make notes of the success of the stitches with regards to your proposed embroidery. You might note that this is a great stitch, but not for this piece or this stitch gives just the right texture you were trying for. Try out some suitable finishing techniques for the project you are making. Keep all of your stitch samples with as much documentation as possible.

As you are nearing completion of the project, assemble all of your bits and pieces of the planning process together. Decide how you would like to display these back-up materials. Will you assemble them into a notebook? Or a sketchbook? Or place some of them on a design board? Remember that this presentation is part of the evaluation of your work for this award.

# Guidelines for Working a Design for Your Original Embroidery Piece

1. Decide on the structure of the finished item you wish to make, e.g., purse, cushion, wall hanging, vest or ...
2. Create a paper mock-up of the structure in various sizes to determine the best finished size.
3. Identify your theme or design idea. Describe the source or the inspiration of the design. Collect pictures, take photographs or make drawings of your design source.
4. Use a sketchbook to draw ideas and/or journal any thoughts for your design development. Record feelings, colours, textures and shapes you wish to emulate. Collect found objects such as shells, seaweed, bark or leaves as useful reminders or models for sketching. Other possible options to include in your sketchbook/journal might be:
  - a) A collage of painted papers as an alternative to drawing your design.
  - b) Sketches of your object from different points of view – front, side, back, top, bottom, and close up or from a distance.
  - c) Look for patterns in your subject and draw these. Abstract the patterns or designs from the source. Create a repeat or border pattern from elements in the pattern.
  - d) Use a viewfinder (two L-shaped pieces of paper) to focus on a specific area of your subject or design and draw this in detail.
5. Explore the colours and proportion of colours in your design source. Become aware of the dominant and the accent colours. Will you use these same colours or alter them?
6. Explore the composition of your design: focus on the principles of design – rhythm, repetition and gradation, balance, emphasis, proportion and unity or harmony.
7. Explore the elements of design: line, shape or form, texture and colour. Consider colour values, movement and patterns.
  - a) Test your design using only black and white, then add grays before transferring the design to your colours.
8. Add or remove anything from your design that does not enhance the overall desired effect. This may mean removing lines, shapes, textures, values and/or colours.
9. Explore possible background options, threads, stitches and/or embellishments.
10. Incorporate your design onto the paper mock-ups using your chosen colours. When you are happy with the design, you can begin to stitch the piece.

Keep all of these notes and drawings for your documentation. Keep a log or diary of the time you spend on each section of the work for this piece.

## References

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- Nice, Claudia. *Creating Texture in Pen and Ink with Watercolor*. North Light Books, 1995.
- Nice, Claudia. *How to Keep a Sketchbook Journal*. North Lights Books, 2001.

# Artist's Statement

The artist's statement is your way of conveying the feelings and reasoning behind your embroidery piece. The artist's statement will be useful for gallery showings; inclusion in portfolios; and juried exhibitions. Jurors and viewers at an exhibition can benefit greatly from understanding your work the way it was intended to be perceived. The following information should be included:

## 1. Biography

Simply state your needle arts credentials and accomplishments in chronological order and why they are important. This may include workshops; courses/degrees taken; juried work accepted; awards; articles; and classes taught.

## 2. Creative Design Process

Indicate your source of inspiration and the thought processes for your design development. Include feelings such as what the design meant to you, why you chose colours and what you hope the viewers will see. Not everything needs to be included in order to leave some room for the viewer's own interpretation.

## 3. Techniques

Indicate your techniques and describe how your inspiration influenced your choices.

Information contained in the artist's statement should be limited to one (1) page.

See attached sample "Pearl Floss, Artist's Statement" to help you in the preparation.

### Reference:

Bradley, Hannah. "The Creative Process," *Embroidery Canada*. June 2003; 30(4) Embroiderers' Association of Canada, Inc.

(SAMPLE)

## Pearl Floss: Artist's Statement

**Biography:** *For this award the biography must be on a separate page.*

Pearl's interest in embroidery developed through taking correspondence courses with the Embroiderers' Association of Canada, Inc./Association Canadienne de broderie, Inc. Exposure to national and international teachers at EAC/ACB's annual seminar expanded her knowledge and her desire to develop her own original designs. Her work has appeared locally and nationally at the EAC/ACB seminar. Recently, her work appeared in a showing at the Community Arts Council Gallery.

### **Creative Design Process:**

The proximity of totem poles led to researching artists who have captured the essence of these majestic pieces of art. In addition to reviewing the works of Emily Carr and AY Jackson, she visited and sketched the totem poles at the Royal BC Museum and the UBC Museum of Anthropology. Replicas of two totem poles that Emily Carr painted stand in Thunderbird Park in Victoria.

Once Upon a Totem, 2002

61cm x 13cm

A single, wall-hung textile inspired by the Totem Poles of the West Coast Indian

The totem pole is the essence of this piece, emulating the human relationship with nature, each section portraying a story. An interpretation of the images on the totem pole has been applied to textile fragments. A limited palette has been chosen to reflect the basic colours that have been traditionally painted on the poles. With time and with the elements, the weathered wood appears through the paint. This is portrayed by the use of running and darning stitch, bringing unity to the piece. Edges of the textile fragments have been frayed and distorted to also relate to the weathering. Found objects of driftwood and abalone shells have been attached, completing the story.

### **Techniques:**

The approach to embroidery is combining the traditional with the experimental. Applique – cut back

Running stitch

Darning stitch

Hand-made silk paper

Hand-dyed silk cloth and paper

Buttonhole stitch

Couching

**Note:** *This artist's statement is a sample only and the author is fictitious.*