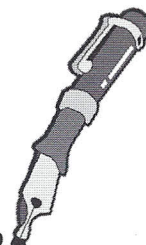


The Creative Process



Hannah Bradley

A needle art piece is developed using a process. In a formal process for an original piece, each step should be documented. The exploration of options directed through the following process, enables and ensures an exciting, dynamic design and finished piece. Following this process also allows you to take risks that maybe otherwise you would not have considered. While many needle artists state that their piece has been developed through intuition or sensing what needs to be done, the discipline of using the creative process would enhance their expression. Designs are strengthened through an understanding of this process.

1 Identify your theme or idea from an inspiration source.

Starting points for design may be found in any of the following sources:

- arts (painting, sculpture, music, poetry)
- architecture (buildings, furniture, bridges)
- nature (plants, animals, insects, reptiles, microscopic perspectives)
- ancient cultures & ethnic origins (Maya Indians, Ukranian culture)
- ceremony & religion (head-dress, chausables, altar frontals, copes)
- historical (textiles, costumes)
- geological (rocks, gems, microscopic perspectives)
- ocean (shells, sea creatures, boats)
- universe (clouds, aerial views, cosmos, planes)
- commercial (man-made objects, advertising)
- landscape (macroscopic perspective)

Refrain from using trademarks or any material that is under copyright.

Drawing is a tool for all design activity. Keeping a sketchbook to draw ideas and journal thoughts will provide sources for future design development. Record feelings, colours, textures and shapes. Collecting found

objects such as a shell, seaweed, bark and leaves may be useful reminders for future use. Creating a collage using painted or purchased papers is an alternative to drawing.

Sketches made from the actual object or landscape are called primary sources. Sketches made from a picture or photograph are considered secondary sources. However, a photograph may be used as backup for a primary source when sketches and notes are available elsewhere.

2 Explore the subject in your sketchbook.

Designs begin with an awareness, seeing things perhaps for the first time. Capture the details by sketching from different perspectives such as close up or from a distance. Explore viewing from different vantage points such as the front, side, top and bottom. Observe and document patterns. Use a view-finder (two L-shaped pieces of paper), to focus on a specific area and draw this in more detail. Explore colour further by documenting all the colours that are seen and the percentage by percentage.

3. Explore composition using the principles and elements of design.

The principles are guides for using the design elements in creating a composition in any type of medium. Developing an understanding of the elements and principles of design and having the discipline to explore the many possibilities will enhance the final needle art project.

Elements of design are the composition of the structure of any subject. They include line, shape, form, movement, size, pattern, texture, colour and value.

Principles of design are the basic laws. They include harmony, contrast, rhythm, repetition, gradation, balance, dominance, emphasis, variety and unity.

IDEAS MAY STRIKE
AT ANY TIME...



Design is looking and recognizing both the principles and elements of design in order to modify and organize for a purpose. Document this exploration in the sketchbook. Design is also simplifying. Remove anything from your design that does not enhance the overall effect that you are trying to create. This may mean the removal of lines, shapes, textures, values and colours.

Consideration should also be given to the compositional structure in the design format. They include radial, directional orientation, wedges, medallion or contained shape, containment/compaction/expansion, cruciform, emphasis on rhythm, S-curve entry, shapes within shapes, proportional placement, opposing forces and bridging.

4. Decide on the structure of the final piece (eg. purse, cushion, vest, wallhanging).

After determining what the structure will be, develop several paper mockups of possible sizes and shapes for the final piece.

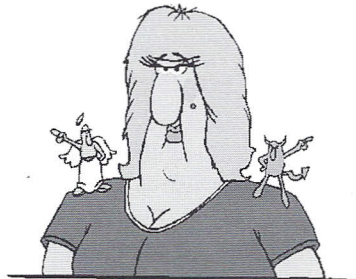
5. Choose a design that works for the chosen structure.

Using the paper mockups as a starting point, incorporate your design onto them. Ensure that the scale of the design is appropriate for the chosen size and that the design suits the shape of the structure. Usually, an organic shaped design is best suited to an organic structure. Ensure that the centre of interest or focal point is in an appropriate location in the structure.

6. Plan a colour scheme.

An understanding of colour relationships shown in the colour wheel is critical in the design development. Individual colour choices are influenced by the design source, personal preferences and cultural influences. Colour choices for the background are equally important as colour choices for the design. Work your design in black and white and gray before transferring to colour. Address problems such as weight and depth before choosing shades and tints to match the values in the design. Incorporate the chosen colours onto the paper mockup and evaluate.

DECISIONS...DECISIONS...



7. Decide on a variety of stitch options and finishing techniques to prepare samples.

The design often dictates not only the technique but stitch choices to be explored. Textures and colours sampled with different threads should also be assessed for their effects. Options for finishing should also be explored. This would include beading, tassels, embellishments, closures, linings and backings. Samplings prevent expensive errors in time and material costs from being made.

8. Choose stitches, finishing techniques and colours that give the desired effect.

Document the rationale for choosing techniques, stitch choices, threads, colour choices, embellishments and finishing techniques that will be incorporated into the finished piece. Thread choices should be wrapped on a slim piece of cardboard proportionate to the amount of each colour seen in the design.

9. Assemble unused samples and all other backup materials.

Organize a binder with all the materials that were used in this process. This material supports the originality of the design.

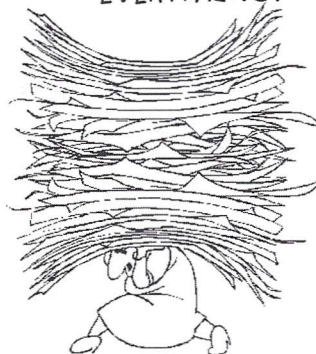
10. Stitch and assemble the finished work.

Document any changes that were made during this final stage of the work.

11. Document time and costs.

A detailed account of time and cost is not only valuable for this piece of work but may be useful in the future if a commissioned piece is requested.

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING!



12. Optional: Prepare for exhibit.

- Write an Artist's Statement - refer to position statement and example.
- Assemble a visual account of the process on the foam board. A display board can be created by cutting foam board to make three panels, each with a measurement of 14 x 20 inches. Join the panels using tape. The folded board will be suitable for transport. Remember to take an artistic approach, appropriate for your design, in finishing your display board. Choice of background board colour can detract or enhance

the presentation. Include stitched samples and wrapped colour cards for visual effect.

- Assemble any materials necessary to augment the display of the finished piece. This may include mounting, framing or draping fabric if the piece is dimensional.
- Review entrant requirements if applying for an award. Check for special instructions regarding framing and requirements for anonymity.

13. Optional: Prepare to include in portfolio.

- A visual account of the process can be prepared on paper instead of foam board. However, the size may need to be modified. Remember the importance of the background colour.
- Photographs of the finished piece should be done professionally. A close-up showing details may also be beneficial to the viewer. Stitched samples and wrapped colour cards should also be included.
- Write an Artist's Statement - refer to position statement and example.
- Remember the importance of presentation in creating an impression.
- Portfolios are useful for both aspiring and professional needle artists and teachers. They also provide documentation of personal growth.
- A portfolio may be purchased or hand made. Choose a size for ease in handling, both for the viewer and for transport.

TAKE
YOUR
PORTFOLIO
EVERYWHERE!



Hannah Bradley is a member of the Embroiderer's Guild of Victoria. References to this article can be found on the EAC website at http://www.eac.ca/embroidery_canada/jun_2003/refs.html