

# FREE FORM EMBROIDERY

## A TEXTILE ART FORM

by Lois McKenzie

Freeform machine embroidery is a very exciting textile art form and if you are like me (a failed quilter) and can't sew a straight line, this could be just the thing to stimulate your artistic senses.

### WHAT TO BRING

- **Sewing Machine** – that sews straight stitching and zigzag

- **A quilting or darning foot**

- **Two pieces of calico**

One 30cm x 30cm

One 50cm x 50cm

- **Two pieces of Pellon** – This adds a quilted effect

One 30cm x 30cm **This piece needs to be ironed on to the 30 x 30 piece of calico**

One 50cm x 50cm **This piece needs to be ironed on to the 50 x 50 piece of calico**

- **Two meters of Vliesofix**

- Fabric for backing layer with iron-on Vliesofix (or similar) which has a paper backing which you iron on to the fabric (wrong side then you tear off then and press it with the iron onto backing, fabric or the calico.

- Other fabric - I find velvets and silks especially effective. All materials old and new. Second-hand shops are particularly good for fabric in clothing, old lace (I hand dye this). Wool in strands or cut up to look like tree leaves and foliage and using Vliesofix top and bottom.

- **One box of baking paper (GLAD is good) NOT greaseproof paper** - very important to prevent anything sticking to your iron.

- **Pieces of fabric and embellishments – old lace, ribbon, wool, beads -** preferably sewn on last after pressing down with a damp cloth (an old tea towel is also good)
- **Embroidery thread**
- **Plain thread for your bobbin – Have three or four bobbins filled with neutral colours ready to go.**
- **Nail scissors and dressmaking scissors**
- **Photo or picture of intended work**

### **Tips:**

Your iron should be on the highest setting with no water or steam. It is also best to use baking paper to protect the fabrics, especially delicate ones like silk, chiffon etc. Spotlight and some quilt shops have a good selection of machine embroidery threads. These give a shiny effect. Fabric ribbons and velvet ribbons, pieces of knitted jumpers (they may be tatty on the outside, but good on the inside).

It is important to frequently snip the bobbin threads on the underside, otherwise the threads catch and pull on the fabric. To save stopping and cutting thread when using the same colour embroidery thread, lift your presser foot and wiggle the sewing wheel backwards and forwards to loosen the top and bottom thread and move to the next spot, place presser foot down and continue – this is a real time saver.

### **Effects of Straight and Zigzag Stitching**

Straight stitching spacing 0 – 5 in stitch size moving side-to-side.

Straight or zigzag gives a great water effect.

Good for tree leaves/foilage.

Zig Zag

I recommend that you get to know your machine really well if you have not already done so. You can practice on a piece of Pellon ironed on to calico and sample fabric – 30cm x 30cm piece.

You can also do the same as above to try out different effects of fabric and threads, for example – building up of layers.

Another suggestion is to carefully select your fabric as there can be only so many layers before you have a carpet effect and start breaking needles.

**Ideas for your work:**

Use photos, magazine pictures etc to make a scrap book – especially look at nature.

# HAPPY CREATING



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