



Erindale Tapestry Studio

Laura Berlage

11113N Fullington Road Hayward, WI 54843 (715) 462-3453

Wool Embroidered Sheepskin Diamond Ornament Photo Essay



Cute and cozy, this ornament has wool fabric on the front and sheepskin on the back.

Welcome to the beautiful world of wool embroidery on wool fabric! This photo essay will focus on taking you step-by-step through the embroidery and assembly process.

How to Use This Essay

If you are working this project as part of a class, some students find it helpful to read through these materials before class sessions or tackling the kit, while others find it a helpful review after the live sessions. You can also use the essay as a way to capture your notes and ideas as you go. Please use it in whichever ways are helpful for your learning style. Thank you for being respectful of the use of this material in consideration that it takes significant time to create.

Included in Your Project Kit

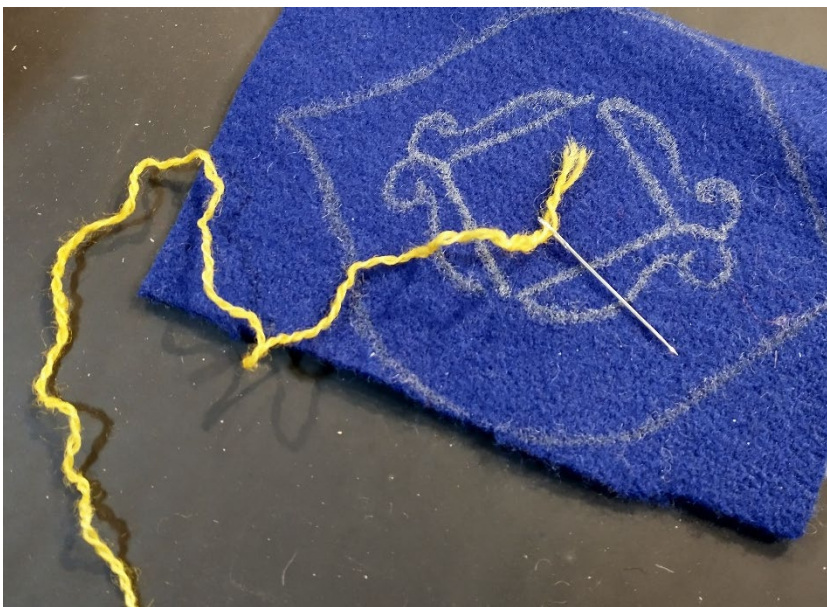
- Washed wool fabric, marked with the project design and outline
- Sheepskin back, but in ornament shape
- Red ribbon for hanging
- Wool yarn in project colors

- Embroidery needle
- Glover's needle for stitching
- Wool roving for stuffing
- Faux sinew for assembly

Additional Materials Suggested for this Project

- Fabric scissors
- Sharp thread scissors
- Thimble (optional) for sewing through the leather

Starting the Thread



Starting with a length of marigold yarn that measures from your fingertip to elbow, thread your needle but do NOT tie a knot at the end. Unlike cotton floss, wool will eventually untie itself, leaving your piece vulnerable to coming apart.

Instead, anchor your yarn with a few small stitches to hold the tail in place.

For a running stitch, pull the thread through just enough so end of the tail peeks out just a tiny bit from the top of the fabric. You could start with a waste knot, as demonstrated in my beginner classes, which is then cut off once the running or seed stitches are in place.





Ending the Thread



Your embroidery yarn can be ended (either because you are running out or because you don't need that color or thread in that location anymore) in a few different ways. One is to work running or seed stitches in an area that will be covered by other stitches later. Another is to take the thread to the back and catch it under existing stitches (most common when working filling stitches). Never is it customary to end with a knot, as eventually the wool will untie the knot.

Here is an example of ending with a running stitch. One has ended and a new one is starting below it, using the same technique.

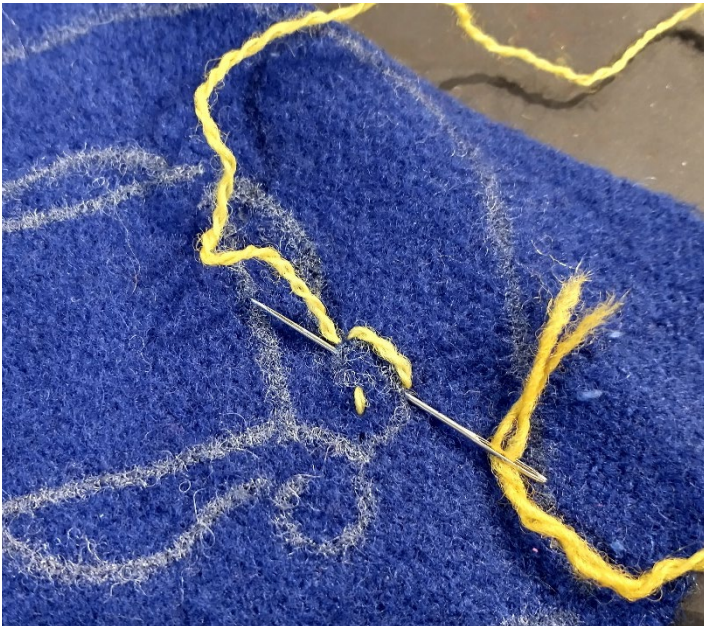
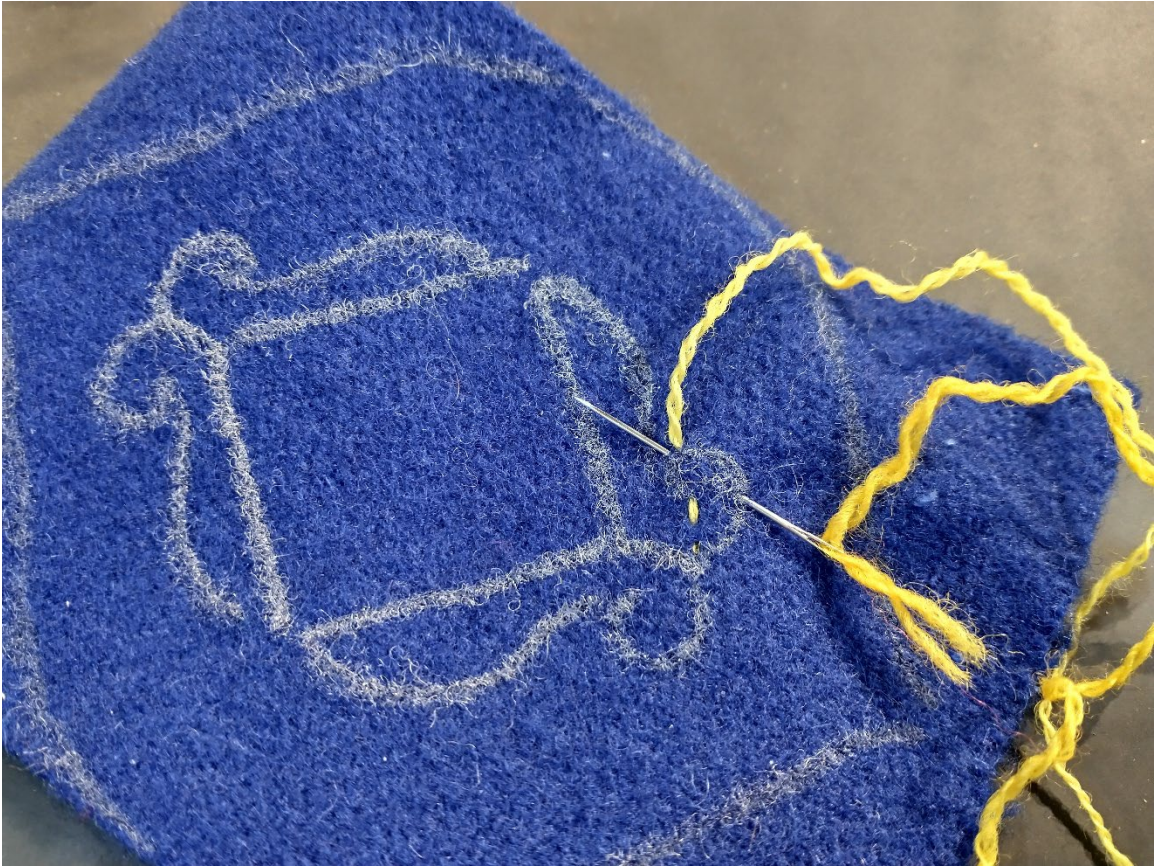


Above is an example of catching underneath threads and stitches at the back of the piece. Pull the yarn through until gently snug, then trim. The trick is not to pull the yarn too tightly, which can add undue tension to your last stitch and make the work appear uneven.

Satin Stitch

Satin stitch is well loved in the world of embroidery, but there are a few tricks to mastering it when working with wool-on-wool embroidery, which is typically worked in the hand, rather than under tension. ***However, it is REALLY EASY to pull your threads on this stitch too tight, causing the fabric to pucker.*** Take care with this one to keep your stitches even and not too tight, so the yarn can bloom and the fabric lays flat.

This is going to feel like a “scooping” method of working satin stitch, and on these modified teardrop shapes, we will work from the fat end to the narrow end. Satin stitch goes round-and-round, going into and coming out of the fabric on the same side each time.



Keep working along the shape, allowing the stitches to lay nicely against each other to cover the surface of the central heart. If you run out of yarn, stop and start using the running stitch when possible, but you can (for stopping only) catch the back of stitches. This is not recommended for starting a new thread as it won't "hold" your first stitch well.



As you come around the curve, adjust the angle of the stitches to follow, like spokes in a wheel. This is best accomplished by slightly crowding the inside of the stitches.



Once you finish one half of the design, start a new thread at the wide end of its opposite shape, working to form a mirror image of your first stitches.



Repeat for the other side of the diamond.



Stem Stitch

Stem stitch is a wonderful, versatile stitch that can accommodate curves with grace. Much like satin stitch, however, if you are working this piece in the hand, you can go down and come up with the needle in a single pass, making this stitch work much faster. Stem stitch is also great for adding accents and outlining shapes.



With white, start at one end in the center of the thick part of marigold, then work along the outer edge of the curving shape. Work a stitch forward, then come back up about half of the length of the first stitch. The needle should come out to either the right or left side of the previous stitch, not split it in the middle. Whichever direction you choose (right or left of thread), stay consistent throughout the entire line you are creating. For a thicker line, allow the stitches to overlap more.



Continue along the edge of the scrolling shape, dipping down where it narrows, then continue to the center of the thick portion at the opposite end. You'll see that this stitch appears twisted.





Repeat as a mirror image on the other side. Bury the ends of the thread at the back of the piece, running under other previous stitches.

Square Filling/Trellis

With white thread, make a grid in the center of the diamond, using laid stitches (which go back and forth, rather than round-and-round, leaving very little thread on the back). I worked 6 strands each way, but 5 or 4 look nice as well. If you have too many, it easily looks jumbled and crowded. Come up inside the marigold, then use the thread to help you know where to go down on the opposite side.

Keep these stitches SOFT to allow the yarn to bloom and prevent puckering of the fabric below.



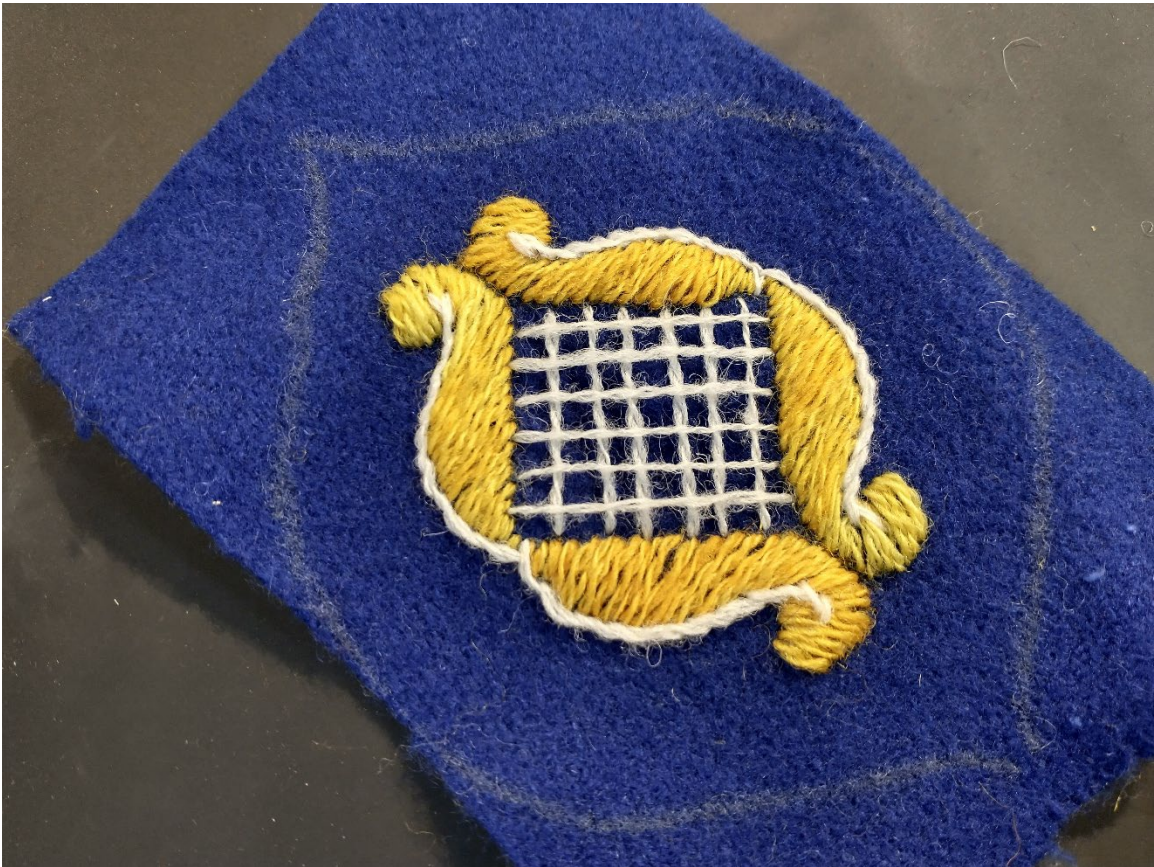
Come up one step over from the previous stitch, then down on the other side. These lines should be parallel.





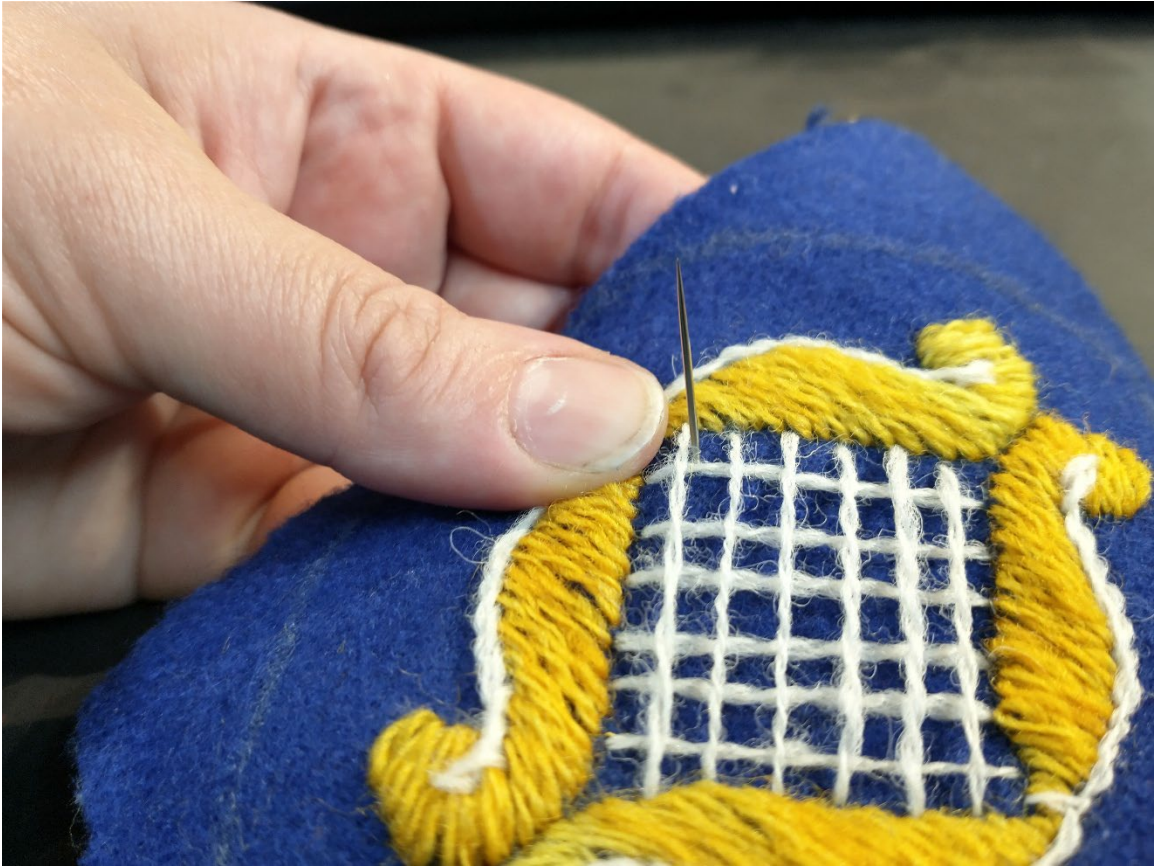
Here the lines of the trellis are in one direction. Then we'll repeat the process, going in the opposite direction. Below is a picture of the back side, so far, so you can see how little thread is left using laid stitches.

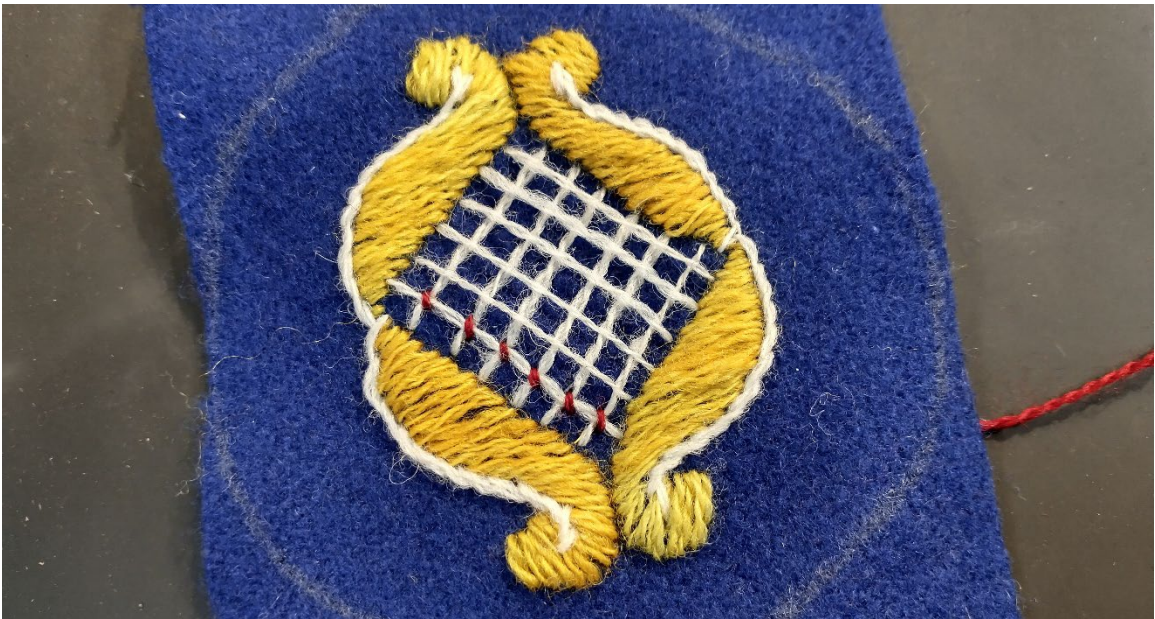
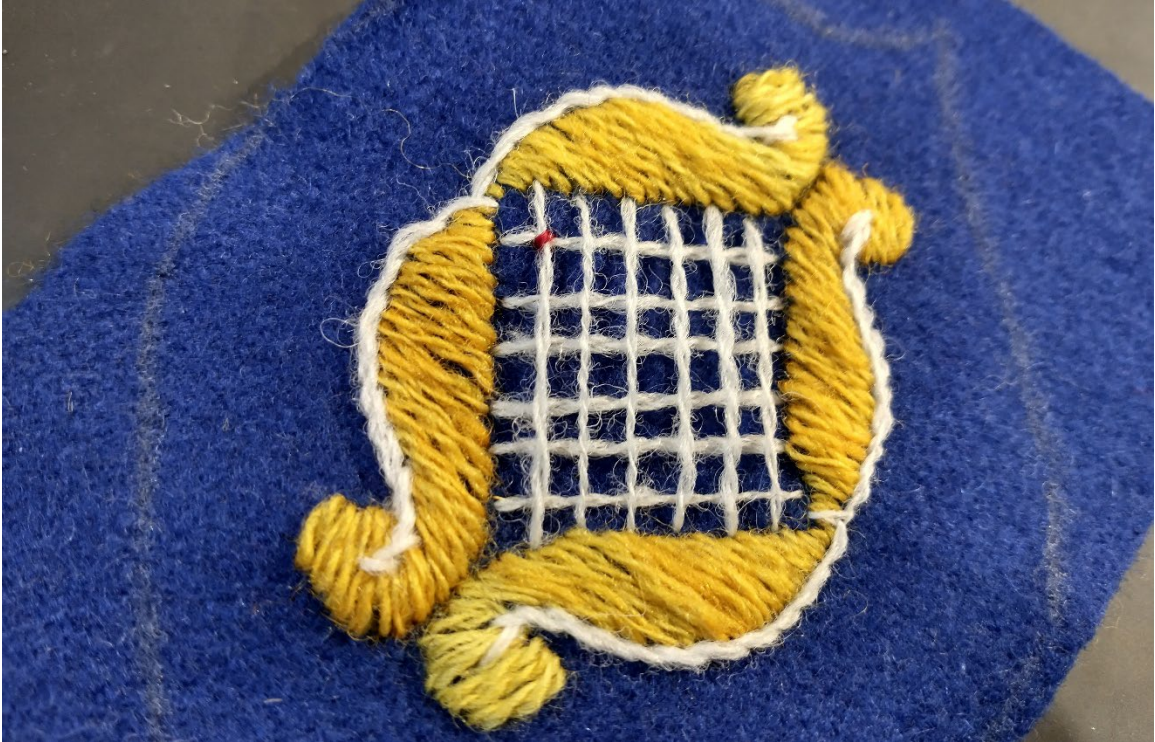




Next, using cardinal, we will hold this loose grid down using small couching stitches, worked at each place the trellis makes an X. Come up on one side of the X, then hop over the stitches, and go down on the other side. Keeping the stitch small looks nicer.

Whichever way you choose to cross the X, repeat that same movement for all the other Xs, working one row at a time. This will help the work look more even.





Continue the process across each of the rows. The stitches should be lightly snug—no need to make them tight. As you make the couching stitches, this a great time to gently adjust the grid of the trellis to make it appear more neat and even.



Below is what the back side looks like.



French Knot

With red thread, work 4 French knots at each corner of the diamond shape, in a diamond pattern. Working a French knot in wool is slightly different than with cotton floss, so I'll illustrate each step. Anchor the thread at the back, under the marigold satin stitches, then come up where you want the knot to land.



Wrap the thread around the needle **ONCE**.



Place the needle into the fabric **SLIGHTLY** over from where you came up. If you place it in the same hole, the knot will end up popping through and go to the back of the fabric. Too far over, and it elongates the stitch.



Draw the thread loop down so it is flush with the fabric and slightly snug. This will neaten the appearance of the knot.



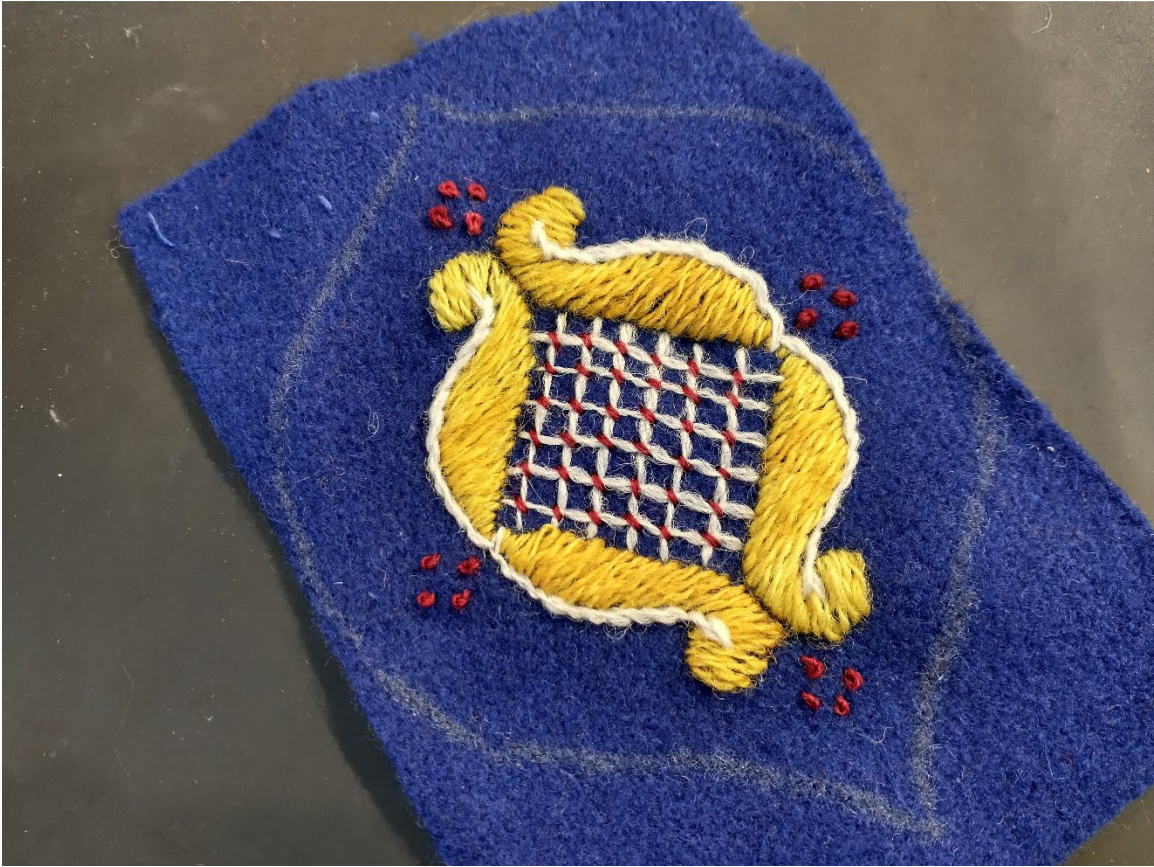
Draw the thread to the back. Repeat for the additional knots.



Here is how that process looks on the back.



Complete by repeating this process at each corner of the design. So pretty!



Assembling the Ornament

Using a fabric scissors, cut out the blue shape from the rest of the wool fabric piece, so it matches the size of the cut-out sheepskin back.



Take the ribbon and fold in half, tying an overhand knot to keep the two ends together.



Next, take out one of the strands of faux sinew and the glover's needle (small eye, three-sided tip). To make a knot, wrap the end of the waxed thread around the needle 4-5 times, then slide off the back end of the needle.





Always stitch through the sheepskin from the LEATHER side to the WOOLY side, otherwise you will drag the wool with you into the stitch. Start by anchoring the knot in the leather at the tip of the sheepskin piece (longer pointed bottom portion of the design), about 1/8 to 1/4 inch from the edge. Do not stitch closer to the edge than this, or the stitches can rip out through the leather.

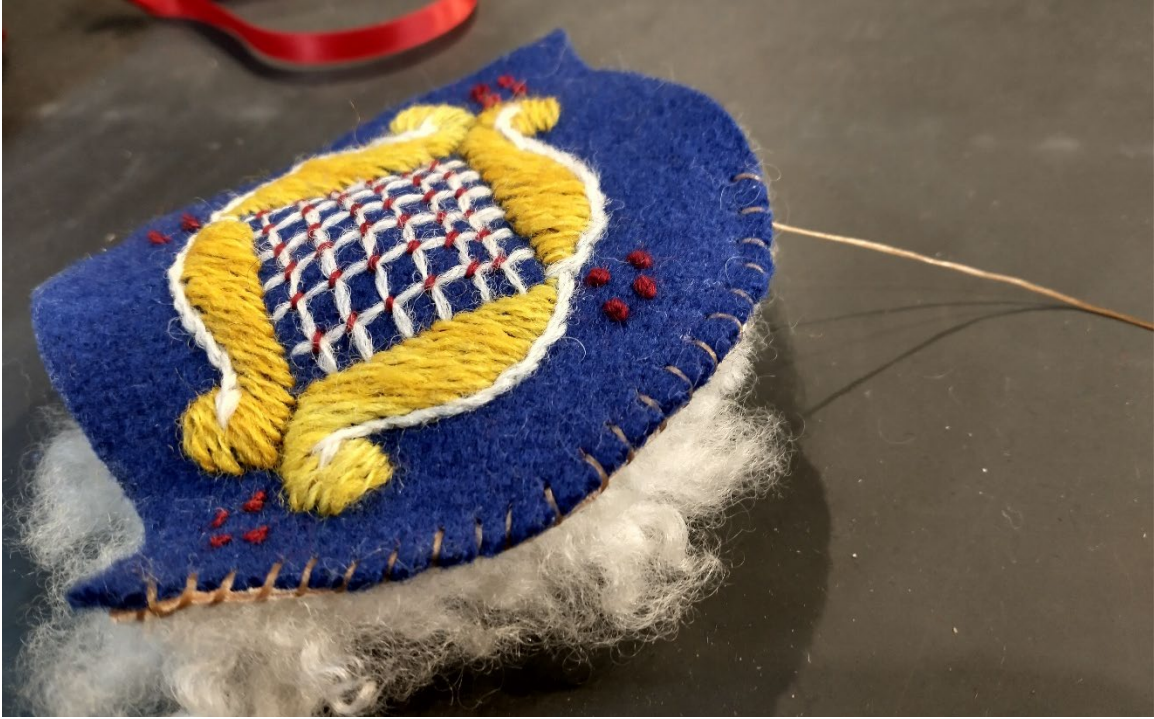


Use a thimble (a leather thimble works great) if that is helpful to protect your driving finger. Next, line up the wool and leather pieces, right sides facing OUT, and stitch in a whip stitch, about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch apart.



Keep stitching along one edge, always going from the embroidered side through the leather and out the wooly side.





As I stitch, I take care to hold back the fluffy wool lock, so it is easier to sew. Also, “placing” the thread where you want it to land before pulling the stitch through will create a neater stitch that lands where you want it.



When you come to the center top, lay in the ribbon, tucking the knot so it will be inside the ornament. Work a few extra stitches with just the ribbon and the leather to hold in place, then fold the embroidered part back over and carry on stitching.



If you run out of sinew, wrap twice around your loop, then pull through. Draw the knot down at the back, then go through the dermis (layers) of the leather and out to the edge, then trim the end of the thread. Start a new thread with a fresh knot.



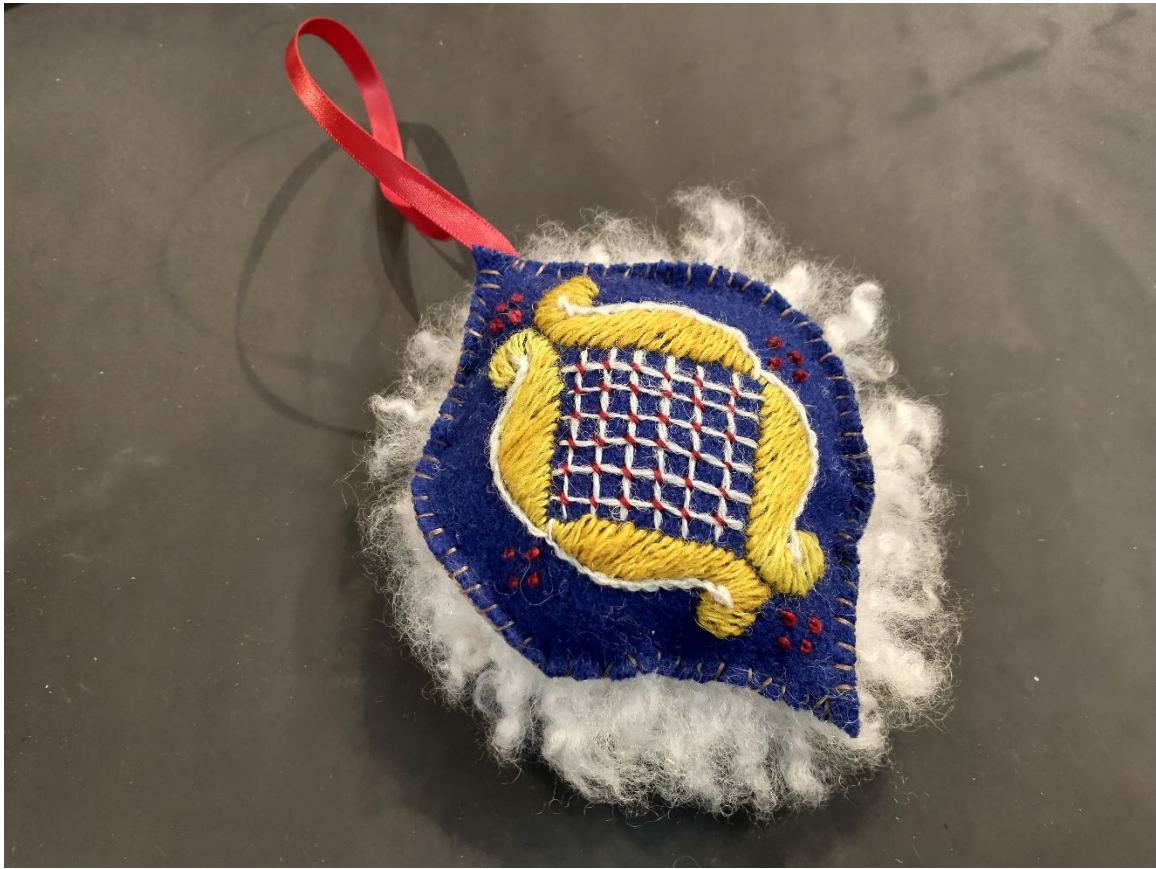


Carry on around the shape, stopping when you still have enough of the seam left open to be able to stuff the ornament. Using the included white wool roving, stuff evenly to your desired thickness. You don't need to use all the stuffing unless you want to.



Hold the layers together firmly (keeping the stuffing inside) and sew up the last of the seam, tying off any remaining sinew.





Congratulations, you have successfully finished embroidering and stitching your wool and sheepskin ornament! I hope that you have really enjoyed this project. Here's to many years of enjoying your creation.

Laura Berlage
Erindale Tapestry Studio