



Erindale Tapestry Studio

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Wool Embroidered Sheepskin Heart 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
- 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 white 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 L-1, 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 are examples 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.



In the second image, you can see how I am holding the fabric to help stabilize it and prevent puckering.

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.



Next, thread on hunter, and work the secondary petals on either side of the central heart, again starting at the wide end.



Note, this works best and will turn out looking “cleaner” if you put the needle in NEXT to the previous color (in this case white) and come out AWAY from that color. If you come out with the needle next to the previous color, it is very easy to snag it with the tip of the needle, leaving a messy finish.



This process can be easier to do, if you allow the fabric to bend over one of your fingers at the back, as shown, so the white is even more out of the way as you stitch.



Next, repeat the same process, working the outermost petals in marigold.



You will notice that the dip method makes slightly shorter stitches at the back, with a bit of a red gap between the areas of color. This is normal for this technique.



Starting at the center, work the central point in hunter. Then pass under the threads at the back and go from the center to the other side.





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 marigold, start at one end on the outside of the white heart shape, then work a stitch forward, then come back up about half-way 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 from the point of the heart and follow around the curve, moving the fabric around so you can stitch at a comfortable angle. You'll see that this stitch appears twisted.



On the back side, this stitch looks like a running stitch.



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



Assembling the ornament

Using a fabric scissors, cut out the red heart 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, 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 1/4 to 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.

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