

Workshop - Tension Techniques

Free Machine Embroidery

Through samples and demonstrations, you will be shown a range of tension techniques that will allow you to achieve a variety of effects.

This is intended to give you a grounding in the exciting and varied textures you can produce with your sewing machine by exploring both your top and bobbin tension possibilities.



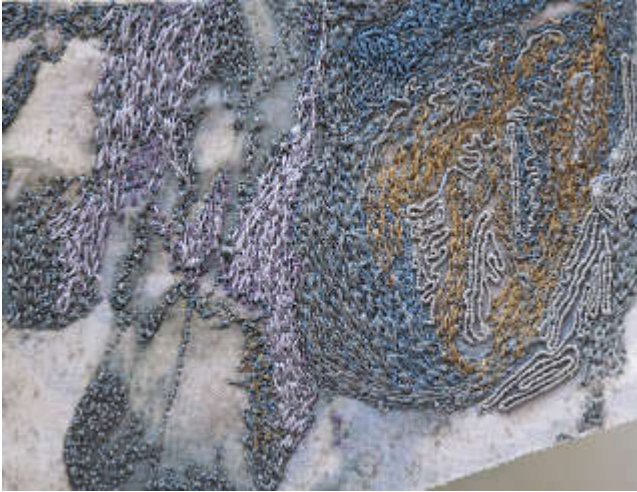
This will include looking at the different textures possible when producing Whip and Feather Stitch just using your top tension and how these can be developed further by altering your bottom tension at the same time.

In either case we will look at the interplay between differing weights and fibres, how the tiniest changes can cause markedly different textures and how friction also plays a part.



Then we will move on to Cable stitch using the top and bottom tension techniques already learnt.





You will continue experimenting with your own range of threads which will include yarns more usually associated with hand embroidery and these might include smooth yarns more usually associated with hand embroidery to include: ribbons, stranded cotton, stranded crewel wool, fine knitting wool, perlé, silks, rayon threads and so on as well as anything else you think might be suitable to use.

You might also include some wadding to try some free quilting or you could bring along some felt that you have made to machine into.

The emphasis will be on you finding out what you can achieve with your machine and you will be encouraged to produce an interesting range of samples in line with your own ideas and interests.



N.B

I am not a sewing machine mechanic! I expect students to have an excellent grasp of how their own machine works.

Usually the full range of techniques can be achieved on a machine with a vertical loading bobbin case with a tension screw. Some people prefer to buy a spare bobbin case to play with but this is not necessary as there is a simple trick that you will learn to reset your bobbin case back to normal.

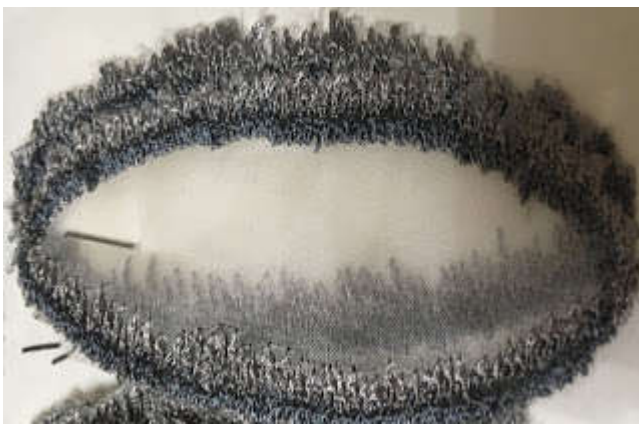
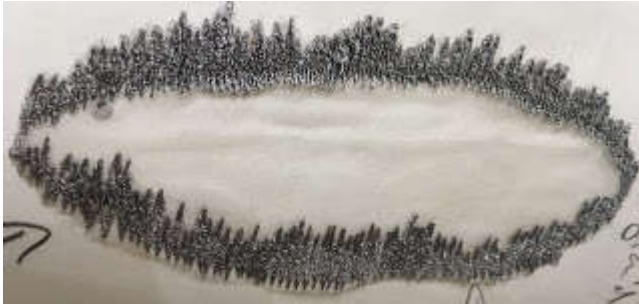
Those with a horizontal loading bobbin where the tension screw is in the bobbin holder mechanism, will find they are very slightly limited as to what they can do, however, the tension mechanism can usually be bypassed and most things can be achieved!



Materials Required

- a sewing machine (recently serviced or in excellent running order) where the dog feed can be lowered or covered.
- your sewing machine instruction booklet
- sewing machine toolkit (it is essential that the brush is included)
- a normal screwdriver so that you can do up your hoop really tightly
- embroidery/darning foot
- spare needles (a pack of assorted sizes is fine)
- your usual sewing kit to also include small sharp pointed scissors
- 8-inch embroidery hoop with the inner hoop bound with bias binding
- plain calico for initial samples – if you have any pre-dyed calico this might be used later in the day to experiment with, using toning threads.
- if your bobbin is loaded vertically you might want a spare bobbin case if you will worry about returning your bobbin case to normal tension but this is not essential
- if your bobbin is loaded horizontally you will simply by-pass the tension mechanism and need nothing further
- any other fabrics, fibres and thread that you are interested in working with as listed above

These images form part of my present research into Voronoi patterns. Of course, the shape is inappropriate and came from the rings in the Namib Desert but the process is entirely right for my Voronoi work. Very, very loose bobbin thread built up in graduating greys and then Nuno felted.



© Molly Tufnell 2019