

Level 1 Experimental Machine Stitch

Color and Stitch as a Creative Experience



© Susan Lenarz

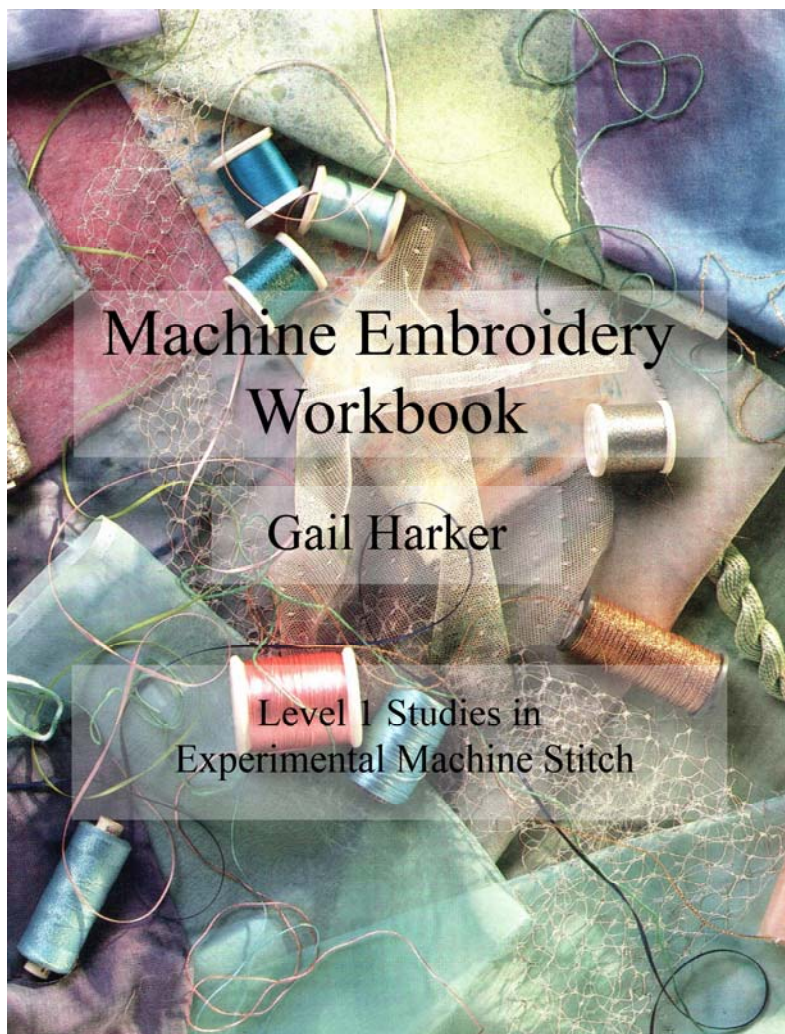
The Creative Experience with Machine

Here is another of our special visual presentations: This time it is about Level 1 Experimental Machine Stitch. We hope that it will give you an idea of the aims, objectives and the accomplishments that students have within this five day course. Send it on to anyone who may enjoy looking at beautiful things.

The Art and Craft of Machine Stitch

We are working from basic patterns of nature, color, line shape and texture. Our conversations about dyed or painted fabrics and threads, the movement of the dye, how colors mix to create new colors, shades or neutrals are part of the dialogue that begins in this class. We dye or paint to get more than just *nice colors* but to begin to understand the messages that can be told through the medium of color itself. We stitch, not to recreate the perfect stitch but to create a line, mark or textural quality to express the essence of an idea, mood or thought.

Gail Harker



This course is based on acquiring a thorough knowledge of your sewing machine with an imaginative approach to the creation of contemporary, innovative samples.

A **workbook** containing pages written by Gail awaits each student. It contains student notes about fabrics, threads, needles, frames, color, dyeing fabrics and threads. There is also a section covering each of the samples and how to do the stitches. This workbook is full of original illustrations and colorful photographs. The student notes are only occasionally used as a reference in the classroom. They are really intended to be a reminder and reference for students working at home.

Working at the Studio



Day One
The first day of class begins with painted fabrics. Every fabric that will be stitched is colored. A variety of methods of paint application are used for exciting results.



There are lots of demonstrations throughout the week. Individuals are also given personal guidance on their sewing machine. Students work with an assortment of threads, needles and stitches.

Painting Fabrics



A package of white fabrics are waiting at the studio for each student. Each of the fabrics has been chosen specifically to work with the stitch or stitches that will be used on it.

Special attention is paid to the weights of thread best suited to specific techniques in machine embroidery. Seeing and feeling different weights of threads and fabrics is one of the first steps in understanding the materials of the needle artist. Students place samples of threads and fabrics in their resource binder.

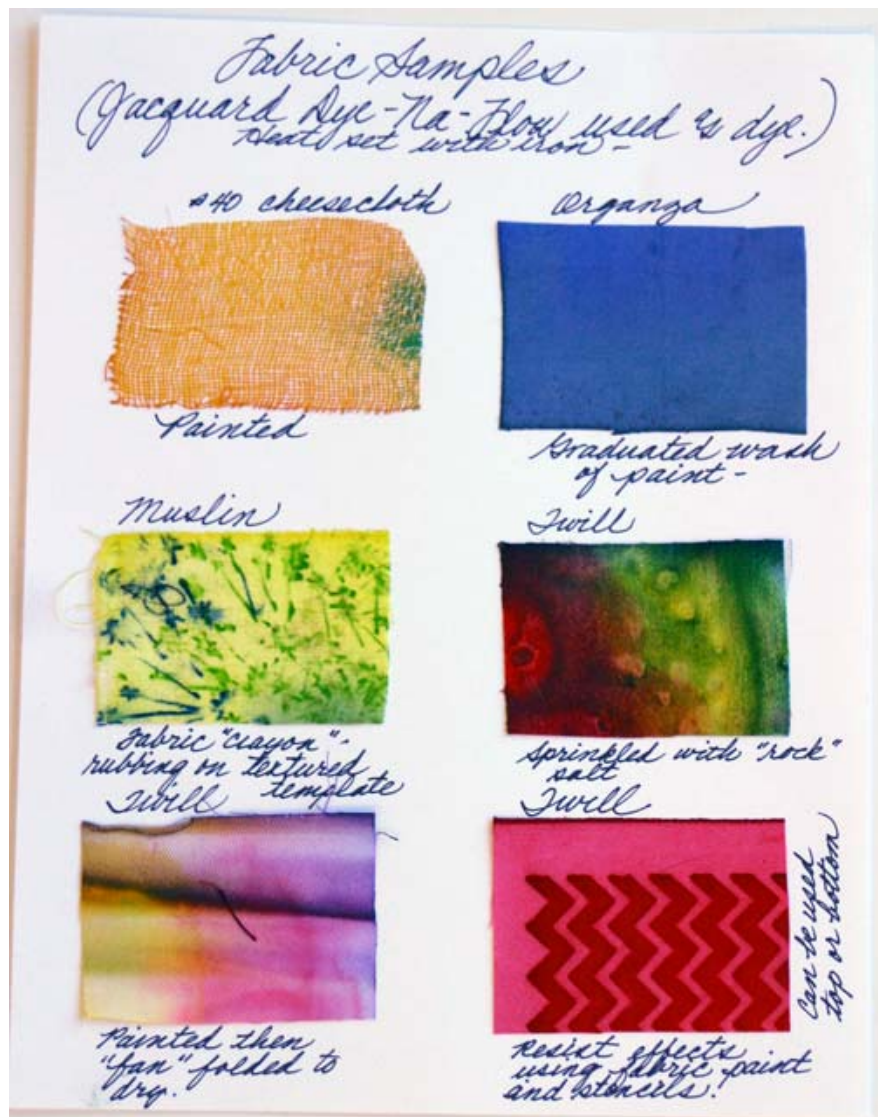
Painting Fabrics



Top Photo: The group above still look fresh and clean as the painting has just begun.

Bottom Photo: We spread large sheets of plastic on the floor to allow fabrics to dry overnight.

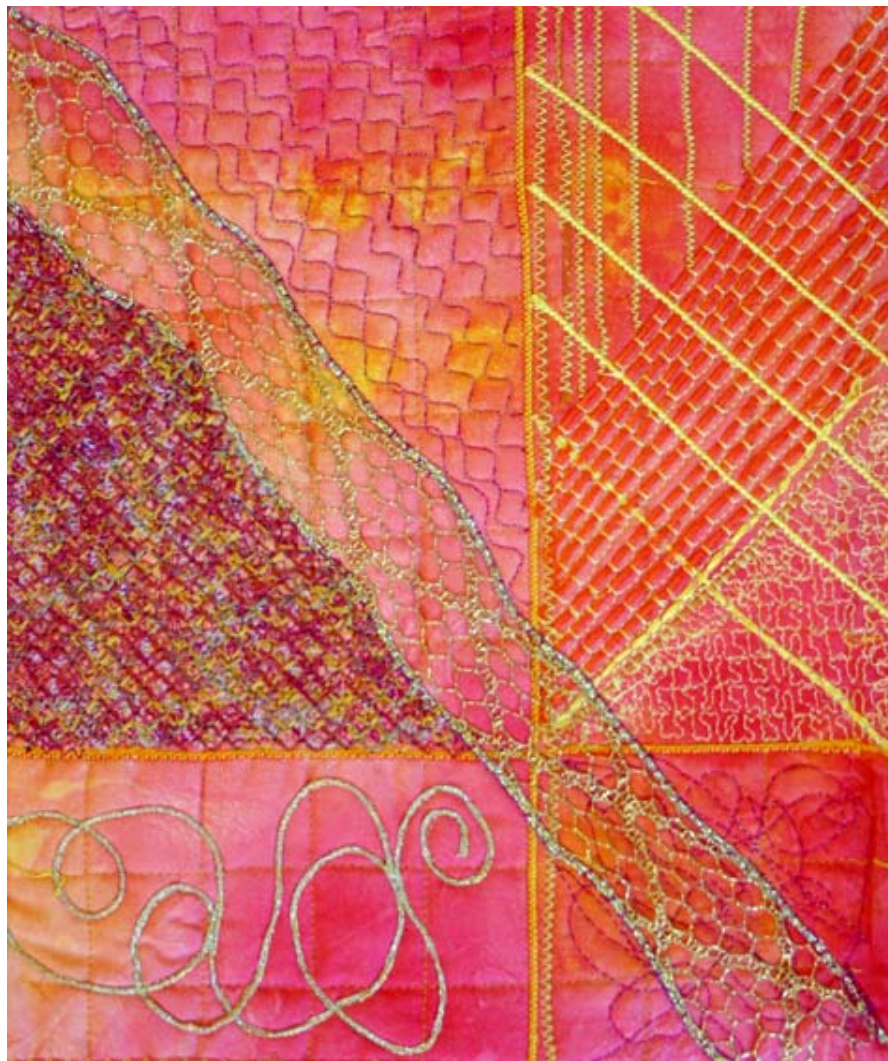
Painted Fabric Samples



© Jana Palm

A variety of techniques are used to create luscious effects on fabrics. Background fabrics that provide a sense of movement and depth are almost always a key to creating a really exciting result. A documentation sheet is used to record some of the **how and why** of the process and the special effects.

Stitch Samples



© Genevieve DeRenne

The stitch samples have been designed to give students a broad experience with the materials. A few stitch types are used for what they do best: line, shape, pattern and texture. Many demonstrations of stitches and techniques are shown throughout the week. Samples are small, and each has a different learning focus. A Documentation page is started with every sample.

Drawing with a Needle - Inspiration



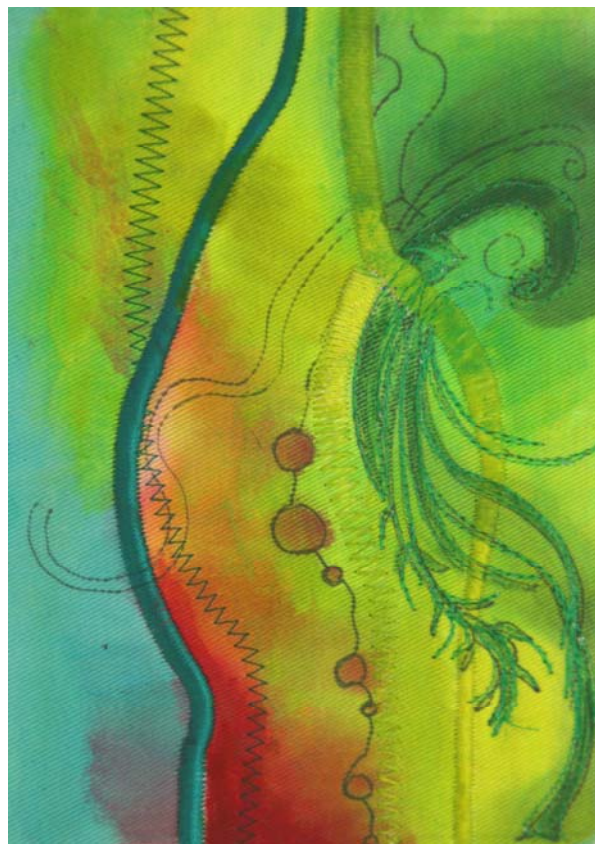
Looking for and finding colorful inspiration is a key component to beginning designers and stitchers.



Drawing with a Needle

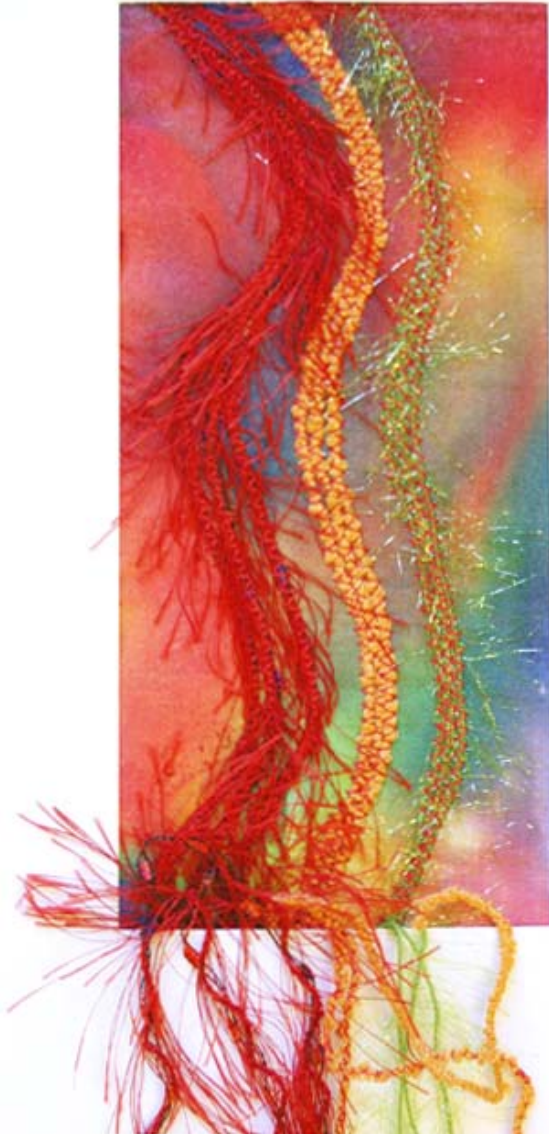


Historic Machine Embroidered apples from *Singer Instructions for Art Embroidery and Lace Work* (1922).



A few curving lines gives the effect of tree branches without realistically portraying them. Free machine stitching showing abstract of curving lines and apple like shapes. *Gail Harker*

Stitch Samples



© Jana Palm

Left: So many colors and such a variety of threads can be used on the sewing machine. Threads that can't be taken through the needle can be applied to the surface of the fabric using a technique called couching. Couching threads create dimension.

Right: Satin Stitch used in irregular line patterns. Sparkly or matte threads can be used to show off the lines. Students develop skills with specialized threads.

Students experiment with:

- Automatic stitches, zigzag stitches and free machine embroidery
- Appliqué techniques, using straight forward onlay and cutback appliqué
- Creation of transparent effects by layering, fusing, appliqué (bonding)
- Machine Lace

Stitch Samples

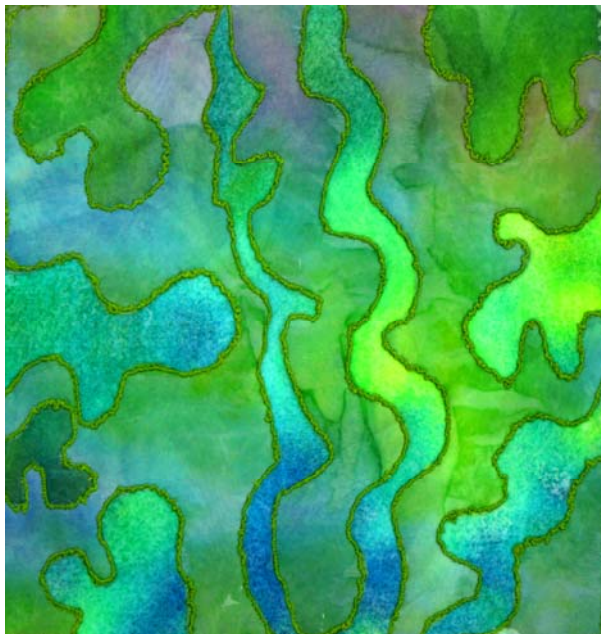


© Ann Maki

Inspiration - Organic Lines in Nature



Organic Lines with Free Running Stitch

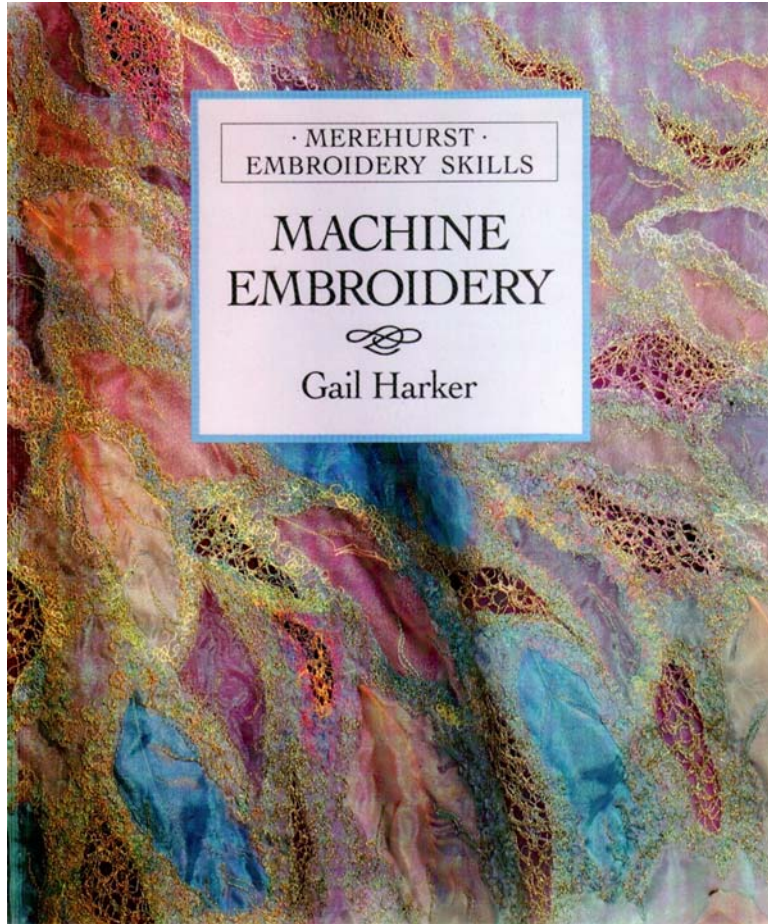


Organic lines abound in nature. Free running stitch captures the essence. The needle goes up and down and the fabric needs to be moved under it to travel from one place to the other. It's a little like using a pencil. Instead of moving the pencil to make a mark though, the fabric moves under the needle.

Left: Student Sample
Below: Ferns - Gail Harker



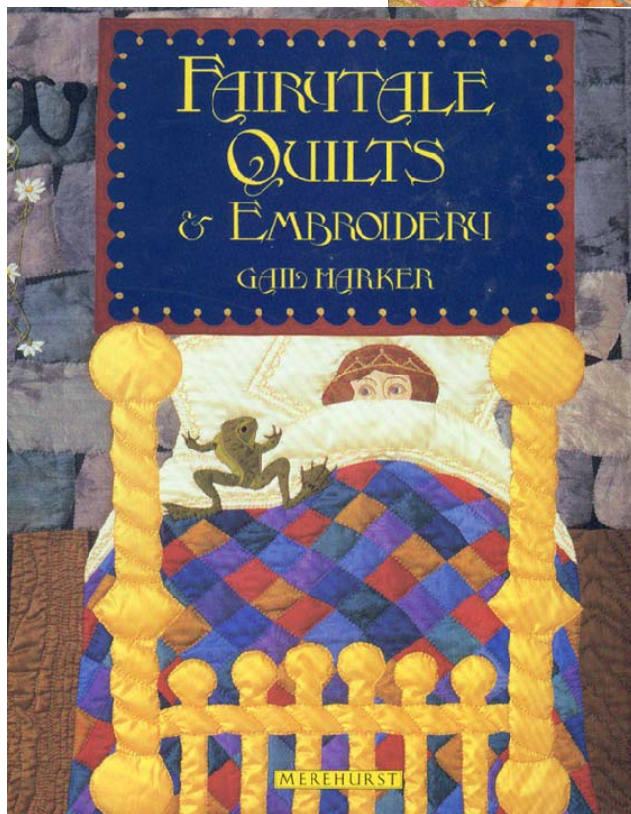
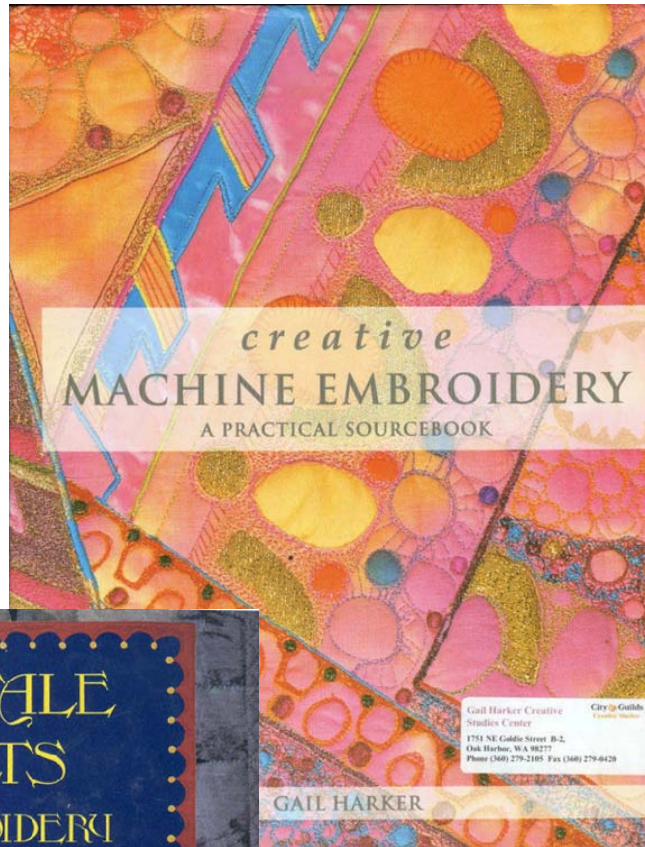
Books by Gail



Machine Embroidery was my first book that was published in England in 1990. It was published in four languages other than English.

This textbook was created for my students from the program that I developed and taught for the City & Guilds of London Certificate Course. When the book was printed, there were only a handful of machine embroidery books available on the subject. Using the sewing machine for embroidery was still seen by some as “cheating” because the embroidery was not worked by hand.

Books by Gail



Two more books that were published after 1990.

A Creative Foundation

At the end of five days, students walk away with a number of samples in their binder. Their library has begun. They have new knowledge about how they can work in their own homes to achieve all that was done in class. A few new samples are set for homework. The notebook is mailed or brought to the center to be reviewed. Whether the student is a beginner or someone who has stitched before, there is always a new challenge in this class. This is a taster class and a foundation for Level 2 Studies in Design and Experimental Hand and Machine Stitch.



Experimental Machine Stitch Gallery



Representational and abstract themes are featured in the above works created in Level 2 Hand and Machine Stitch.

Top Photo: Carol Leach

Bottom Photo: Book by Claire Jones