

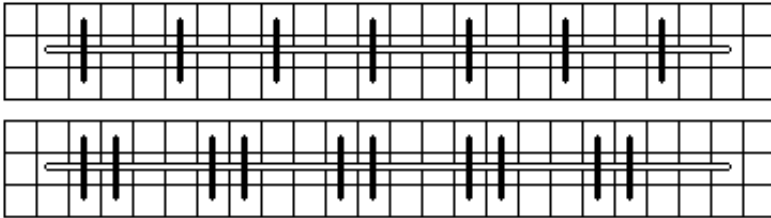
COUCHING

Couching, simply defined, is a method of holding down a thread or other material of any thickness with different and often finer thread creating a visible pattern. It is a linear technique traditionally used to fill solid areas, cover the edges of appliqué and define outlines. Couching may form open fillings, add interest and texture to backgrounds or become an integral part of a design. Whole areas may be filled with couched threads which lie so closely together that no canvas is visible between the threads.

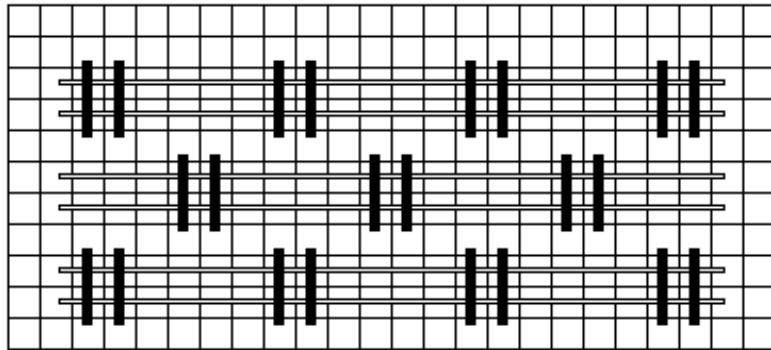
Couching is a technique that adapts well to canvas. It can be used to produce curved, fluid lines either as an outline or as a solid filling. Many types of threads generally thought to be unsuitable for canvas work because of the difficulty of drawing the thread down through the canvas mesh, can be successfully applied to canvas using a variety of couching stitches.

The basic rule of couching lies in the choice of threads. The *couched* thread is generally thicker than the *couching* threads. Ribbon, metal threads, knitting threads, string, strips of fabrics or leathers, weaving yarns and synthetic fibers are just a few examples of unusual textures that can be couched to canvas. Couching threads can also include a wide variety of textures but must be flexible and strong enough to pass easily through the canvas mesh while holding down the couched threads firmly and evenly.

Couching stitches can be as varied as the threads themselves. Straight stitches, Slanted stitches and Crossed stitches can all be used to hold down the couched threads and go between the mesh of the canvas. In some instances however, such as metal thread work for example, it is necessary to pierce the canvas threads with the couching thread to give more stability around angles and curves. Straight Gobelin, Slanted Gobelin, Cross stitch, Buttonhole', Chain and Herringbone are just some of the stitches suitable for couching.



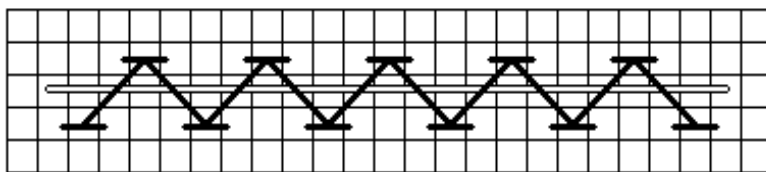
Upright stitches spaced evenly either singly or in pairs



Upright stitches spaced evenly in a pattern.



Slanted stitches spaced evenly as a single stitch or multiple stitches.

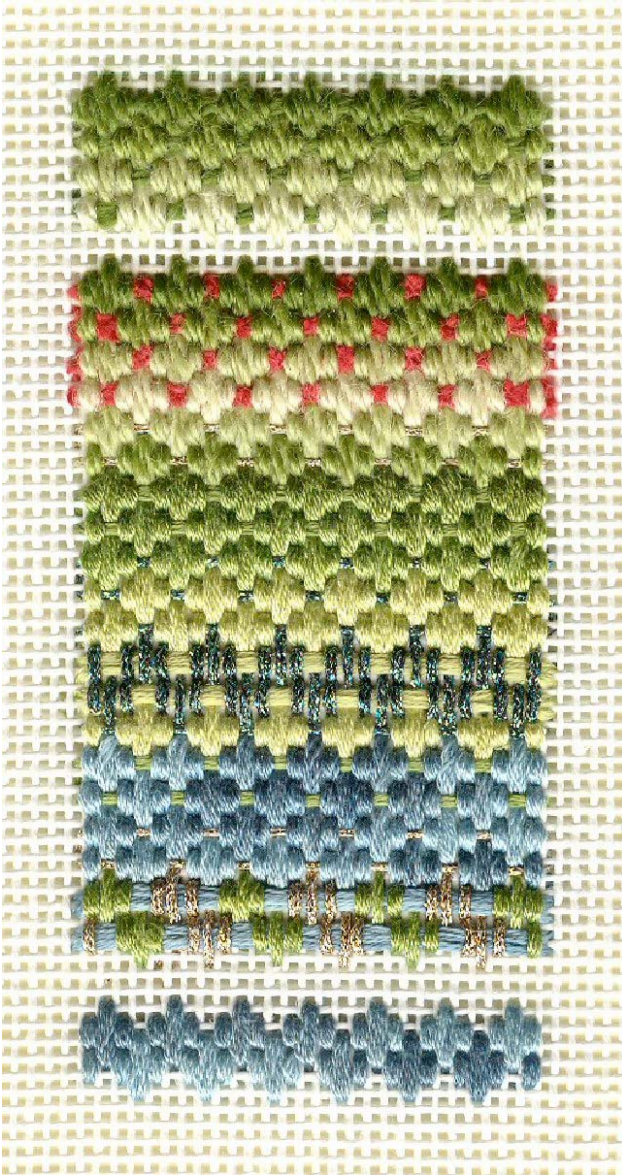


Decorative stitches spaced evenly or worked one layer over another

The texture achieved depends on the skillful combination of couched and couching threads - combinations of fiber textures, luster and color can achieve a wide range of effects from rich, full texture to simple, elegant lines. Experimentation is the key to achieving these textures.

Tramé or Tramming

Tramé is an age-old, but closely related technique in which the design is marked by long basting or darning stitches worked in wools of appropriate color to the area covered. These tramé stitches were traditionally laid between the narrow pairs of threads of Penelope or double weave canvas that had been previously stamped or painted with a design. Besides marking the area, tramé produced a padded effect to thinner stitches that were worked into the larger holes of the canvas and make functional articles such as chair seats, more hard wearing.



The same techniques are used today on mono weave canvas using a variety of threads to create areas of pattern and texture by using an interesting combination of threads and stitches as shown in this sample using the Hungarian stitch as the couching stitch.

Couching metal threads....

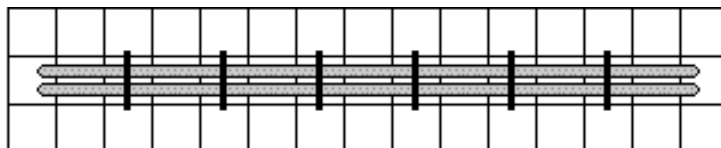
Couching, simply defined, is a method of holding down a line of thread or other material with another thread. It is a linear technique traditionally used to fill solid areas, cover the edges of appliqués and define outlines. Couching may form open fillings, add interest and texture to the background or become an integral part of a design. Whole areas may be filled with couched threads, which lie so closely together that no canvas is visible between them.

Couching is a technique that adapts well to canvas, especially for use with metal threads, producing straight, curved or fluid lines either as outlines or areas of solid filling. There are a number of techniques suitable for use as couching stitches, but for this design a simple straight stitch will be used to couch the Japan gold. The following diagrams illustrate the basic technique of couching metal threads to the surface of the canvas.

The couching thread will usually pass between the mesh of the canvas but in some instances it is necessary to pierce the canvas threads with the couching thread to add more stability, especially around angles and curves. A #9 or #10 crewel needle is used rather than a tapestry needle for piercing canvas threads.

Couching Japanese Metal

When couching Japanese metal, it is important to space the couching stitches evenly. Use the canvas mesh as a guide for placement and keep the couching stitches perpendicular to the Japan gold.



Invisible Couching

Kreinik Medium (#16) Braid is a metallic thread that is usually passed through the mesh of the canvas, but it can be couched easily to the surface of the canvas or background stitches as a single ply using a piercing method. Kreinik Braid is available in several widths, from #4 to #32, and can be couched with a matching cord.

In the piercing method, the couching stitches are virtually invisible, allowing greater control of the braid when working around curves, sharp corners, and in creating scrolls and spirals. Couch through the center of the braid using small stitches, keeping the tension uniform. Working with too tight a tension will cause the braid to pucker or dimple with each stitch.

