

AUGUST 2017: Thread painting

This month, we will be playing with thread drawing and thread painting techniques. Thread sketching and thread painting are both machine embroidery thread art techniques that allow you to personalize your fiber art with imagery. Thread drawing involves using the needle of your machine as a pencil, drawing with thread over the fabric to create what looks like a sketched image. Thread painting is used to create dense machine stitching, using thread colors in close proximity to create lifelike images with shadows and highlights.

We will be using very basic, beginning techniques. This can be done with a regular home sewing machine and a straight stitch. The next most commonly used stitch would be the zigzag. Everything that can be done with machine thread painting can also be done by hand. You may use either technique that you wish. If you wish to pursue this type of thread embellishment, there are many tutorials on the web that will be useful to you and give step-by-step instructions and visual demonstrations.

Take the outline of your vulture and draw it on your background fabric. Prepare your background anyway you choose, such as a tree limb or a rocky beach or whatever your imagination dictates first.

If you are not going to use any colored fabric sections for the body, wings, and head then you will need to put either stabilizer or iron-on interfacing onto the back of your background fabric. Using colored thread of your choice, sew the length of the birds chest up and down between each wing. You may use either several different solid colors of thread or a variegated thread if you have one with the colors that you want. Next, tackle each wing separately. Finally, decide how you will treat the head and neck. You may wish to change from thread to yarn. If you do want to switch to a heavier product then you can use a very narrow zigzag stitch to couch it in place as you apply it. The legs and feet can be stitched using a very small stitch and will need to be doubled or tripled to be visible.

If you decide to appliqué some or all of the bird, you may use very light thread painting to accentuate the shadows or creases of the body and head. The legs and feet can be done the same way as described above. Any area of the bird that does not have fabric appliqué on it will need either stabilizer or interfacing ironed onto the back so that the thread does not cause bunching of your background fabric.

