
Embroidery Embellished Skirt with Rebecca Ringquist

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(upbeat music) - One of my favorite things to do when I'm out shopping is to find things that look hand embroidered from across the room. And if you go closer, most of the time, they're not hand embroidered. They're machine stitched to look as if they are. And it's always a little disappointing to me. I like things that you get closer and there's almost a reward for looking closer. Things that are hand embroidered are really expensive, but hand embroidery doesn't take a lot of money, it just takes a little time. So, I'm gonna show you how to add a burst of color to a black and white garment with a little bit of hand embroidery.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

^- The first thing you'll need for this project ^is a skirt or a dress. ^I'm using an A line skirt from Cal's A line skirt class. ^When you're picking out your fabric, ^you wanna be sure that you're using a cotton ^or a linen that's not stretchy. ^You don't want knits, you want a woven cotton ^or linen fabric for this project. ^And you'll wanna make sure that it's something ^that's black and white. ^You want the embroidery that you add ^to be a really great contrast ^over the black and white material that you're using. ^Try to pick something that has a pattern ^but something where the color embroidery ^is gonna really pop off the top of it. ^The second thing you'll need is an embroidery hoop. ^We're using about an eight inch embroidery hoop. ^It's a little bigger than we usually use. ^And that's because it's gonna hold ^the inner-facing in place, or the stabilizer. ^You'll need tracing paper. ^You need some embroidery stabilizer. ^We're using a medium weight that is a tear-away. ^You'll need sharp tapestry needles with a big eye. ^And some regular embroidery needles ^that can be used to tack down the thicker threads ^that we're using. ^We're using some thick cotton threads ^and sometimes it's hard to find ^thick cotton embroidery thread, ^but it's easy to find thick cotton yarn ^at the yarn store or the knitting store. ^So we've got a variety of different yarns here ^that are cotton or cotton blends ^that are gonna be really beautiful couched down ^over the fabric. ^As well as some plain embroidery floss ^and some size eight pearl cotton ^that we're going to use to tack things down. ^Sort of look through what you have ^and you probably already have some things ^that'll work great. ^A few tools we need. ^A pencil, an iron-on transfer pen. ^Some paper scissors. ^I like to use these rubber finger grips ^that are meant for sorting paper. ^It helps to grip the needle and pull it through. ^You'll need some sharp embroidery snips, ^a pair of tweezers, and a pair of needle-nose pliers.

Chapter 3 - Embellish Skirt

Sketch designs

- When you're choosing your fabric, you want to look for something that has a print that you can respond to. What I'm going to do is spend some time tracing the flowers that are on this black and white print that I've got, and figure out how to use those in a sort of repeat, to make a pattern that pops off the top with a lot of color. You want to look for something that has some distinct shapes. If you pick a fabric that has a smaller pattern, you could always photocopy the pattern, and enlarge it on the photocopy machine before you start to trace it, but this pattern has some really nice rose

shapes and a few other flowers that we're gonna sort of spend some time experimenting with. So I'll get my tracing paper out, smooth the skirt out, and I'm just going to spend some time sort of doodling, and I always like to say that drawing is a good way of exploring and learning something about the world, and learning something about the shapes that we've got here, so I'm not going to try to duplicate these flowers exactly. I'm going to make them more of a stylized version of them using embroidery. So first, I'm just going to start by tracing the shapes and see what comes up, so I'm just tracing around the outline of this flower, and then maybe I'll sort of estimate what that might look like in the middle, and that's kind of a nice blobby flower shape, and got some leaves out here that I'm try to try to trace. There's another flower down here. I'm gonna, this is more of a rose shape. (pencil scratching) Another good one. You want to kind of move your paper around, and figure out what you want to trace next, and, you know, tracing paper is really cheap, so you can trace as many of these as you want until you get something that you really like, so we're just in the doodling phase right now. I'm just tracing these just to sort of see what happens and see what kind of shapes develop. I'm noticing that these flowers don't have any stems that connect them, they're just kind of floating around this pattern. I'm going to make up some stems that connect these things, and, you know, you're just sort of playing around. It doesn't have to be what is really happening on the fabric. We're just doodling. So I'm going to add one more. I think I'm to try tracing a few more on another piece of paper. There's a different shape of flower over here. This is more of like a strawberry flower or something. (pencil scratching) Let's get some of those. These have some nice leaves coming off of them. There's another rose down here I'm gonna trace, oops. You want to make sure your pencil lead is a little on the dull side, otherwise the fabric creates a little cushion, and then you might rip through your tracing paper, like I did just a little there. So make sure, you wouldn't want to use a mechanical pencil here, use a nice, dull, regular, old fashioned pencil. (pencil scratching) Let's try one more. (pencil scratching) Okay. (paper crinkling) Alright, I've got a bunch of drawings here that I like, and now I'm going to spend some time sort of playing with them, and figuring out where I'd like them to go on the surface of this skirt. What I'm going to do is move them around and figure out what kind of composition I'd like them to be in on the skirt, and what I'm thinking is, it be nice to have sort of a grouping of flowers that go down one side of the skirt. I don't want to have it in the center, I think that would look kind of strange, so I think off to the side would be a nice feature. I like this flower that has the stem attached to it. Maybe another one over here. (paper crinkling) I would, how would this look... I think a lot of times, things in groups of odd numbers works well. I like this flower with these two. I think that'll look good, one, two, three, so I'm going to cut this out and cut the other one out, then we'll show you how to get these ready to transfer, so this one is going to bite the dust and is going cut that off. That one's out of the picture. I'm gonna cut these little strawberry flowers out as well. So three, maybe one little strawberry flower in contrast would look good. Where should that go? Getting back to our odd numbers, maybe we'll have five. One up by the waistband. That I think would look weird there, 'cause it'd be sort of like the belly button. We don't want that to look weird. Maybe just two down here at the skirt. It might be helpful at this point, once you get a composition that you really love, you could take a picture with your phone or a camera, to have a mental memory of what this is going to look like, or a physical memory in the form of a picture, but I think I can come back to this. So, these are just pencil drawings, we need to add the iron on transfer marker to the back of the drawings that we've made, in order to turn these simple drawings into an iron on transfer. So I'm gonna pull this skirt up here, so I've got a little more work surface, and then one at a time, I'm going to use this iron on transfer pen to trace, to retrace, really, the designs onto the back side of the tracing paper. So, to

get this pen activated, sometimes it's helpful to kind of press it down, until you can tell that the ink's flowing, and then I'm gonna just trace the lines that I already made, and I wanna be careful to trace them exactly how I drew them before, one of the things that I like about these drawings is that I made them in a really quick, sort of sketchy manner, and I wanna try to capture that in the embroidery, so I'm gonna try to transfer these as true to the original hand as I can. Continue tracing all your drawings until you've got them all finished, and next, I'll show you how to transfer them onto your skirt. I think I remember my original composition, and I've laid out the skirt with the drawings on top, and they're sitting now on top of an ironing pad, and I've got my iron hot and ready. You want to make sure that all your drawings are transfer pen side down, so the pencil is going to be face up. Otherwise, the transfer will go onto your ironing plate, which is gonna create a big mess. So, I'm going to transfer the one that's closest to the bottom first. We're just gonna set these aside. Got my iron ready. Keep in mind that this iron on transfer pen is permanent, and it transfers pretty quickly, so you don't want your paper to shift. While you're ironing it, the iron is gonna hold it down, so you have one hand on the paper at all times, keeping it steady, and then the iron's gonna be transferring it. Try not to shift it. If you're worried about it shifting, you could use a little bit of that blue painter's tape, or masking tape, to hold it in place while you iron, but I feel confident in that my hand will hold it steady. So I'm using an iron with no steam. I'm gonna turn the steam off so that this can steam, and just press it across. You want to keep the iron moving so that your fabric doesn't scorch, and your paper doesn't scorch, and you can see here I'm gonna hold the iron down and then pick the paper up to make sure that it has transferred before I moved it. So the iron was holding the paper in place while I did my peek, I'm gonna do it again from this side, so I can see that the line has transferred. If it hadn't, then just keep going over it. I'm not moving the paper. Every time I go to move in the other direction, I take my hand back to the other side, so that the paper stays stable. Alright, that first transfer looks great. We're going to recycle this paper. They don't really work more than once. If you wanted to use the same design again, you could retrace it and sort of re-ink that image. Let's do the second design, making sure that the red is face down. We'll go with like that. (paper crinkling) We've got to check. See, that hasn't quite transferred yet, so we're gonna keep going. It takes a few seconds to get that ink to release onto the fabric. There we go, it's starting to go. Make sure we get the other side. Let's check from this side. That transferred faster. That one looks good. When you're picking out your fabric, you want to make sure that you're using a cotton fabric that's not stretchy. You want a woven cotton fabric, or a linen would work really well as well, but just make sure it's not a knit. You don't want a stretchy fabric for this project. I'm just gonna move the skirt up a little bit for the last two flowers. I think I like the way they look in the white area of this fabric, and the transfer will show up better. I think we'll go, about like that. I'm just gonna do one at a time. Make sure that the red is facing down. Make sure you keep a finger on the paper, don't get too close to the iron, but you don't want it to wiggle around, hold it firmly in place. Still check, that needs a little more time with the iron. That looks good. We'll do one more. The transfer will go much quicker if you preheated the fabric, so this transfer went much faster because I was basically preheating it while I was doing this other little strawberry flower.

Stabilize fabric

- Before we can embroider, I need to cut out a piece of stabilizer that's a little bit bigger than this overall design, so, my stabilizer, you can buy this by the yard or you can buy a pack of it, depending on where you shop. This is a medium-weight embroidery stabilizer that tears away. So, the stabilizer, I can see through it enough to see where my design is, and I want this stabilizer piece to

be bigger than my embroidery by about an inch on either side, give or take; you don't need to be precise here. So I can tell that my skirt starts here, I'm gonna go about an inch in that direction that's last. The widest spot over here is this little strawberry flower, so it actually works out to be right along this crease, so I'm gonna use my paper scissors. This stuff will probably dull your fabric scissors, so don't use your best shears for this. And I'm just gonna cut right along that fold, and I'm gonna trim it a little bit in the other direction as well so I need it to be about an inch further than the tallest spot in both directions, so that's gonna be about here, and you can give yourself a folded line to follow with your scissors so that you don't have to draw anything. Set that aside for another project. Before I add the stabilizer to my skirt, I'm gonna iron out any wrinkles to make it lay flatter. And again, this is not fusible web, this is a tear-away stabilizer, so it's okay to iron it. Kind of beat it into submission with your iron. There we go, it's flat enough. And now I'm gonna slip this into the skirt. Turn the skirt so that, the stabilizer is centered behind the design, iron this crease out while we're working on it. Now I'm gonna add the hoop. You could baste this stuff into place with the stabilizer but embroidery is gonna keep it pretty secure, and while you're working on it, the hoop is gonna keep everything in place, so, I always like to say if I have time to baste I have time to embroider and I'd rather spend my time embroidering, so just slip this part of the hoop, the part that doesn't have any hardware, underneath the stabilizer and the top layer of your skirt, and center it where you'd like to begin embroidering. I'm gonna start with these stems that I've created. So I'm gonna center that there, and then loosen this up. You probably need to loosen it as far as it'll go, and then smash that down over the top. Before you lift the hoop off the table, I recommend tightening a little bit so it grips everything in place. And then you can tighten it the rest of the way once you've lifted it up. The stabilizer really does a great job; it does exactly what its name implies and it's gonna keep the fabric nice and taut while we're working on it so that the fabric won't bunch up while we're doing our embroidery.

Couching stitch

- The first thing I'm gonna do is I'm gonna outline all these transfers that I've already done using a couching stitch which is a great to add a thick line of color to whatever you've transferred. And then I'm gonna go back and fill some things in with a satin stitch later. Couching is a great stitch for this because it goes pretty quickly and like I said, it's very thick. So I've got this cotton, turquoise yarn that I'm gonna couch down using a double thickness of it. So I put it through my needle then I tie both ends together. I'm gonna trim that end. So I'm gonna bring this first thread up from underneath starting on this, the line here, the stem line. So, bringing that up and then I can set that aside. Couching actually uses two needles, so I've got another one threaded here with another color of green thread that's gonna tack this green, this first green line down. You can see when I pull this green yarn aside, that the red transfer line is actually pretty thick. 'Cause transfer markers only come in one size, that is on the thick side, but that's okay for this project because I intentionally want these lines to be thick and really pop off the surface of the black and white fabric. So, you've gotta cover it. It's not gonna wash off. This is a permanent transfer. So let's get started with the couching. I've got screen underneath and I've got a second thinner green line that I'm gonna secure it with. For the first stitch I'm gonna come up from underneath my fabric with that second needle. I'm gonna push this to the other side and then come back down. Like I'm just gonna give it a tug to make sure it's laying flat on that line that I'm following. Pulling it off to one side, bring the needle up and I push it to other side and go down, right on that same line. Give it a little tug to secure it and keep going like that all the way along this line. You can make your couching, your tacking stitches,

close together or further apart. You don't want them to be much further apart than about a 1/4 of an inch. Otherwise your line might start to wobble once your skirt goes through the washing machine a couple of times. Just about finished with this first green line coming up to the flower. So I'll show you how I tie off the green. I'm gonna go back down underneath with this mint thread. Then before I go to the back side, I'm gonna make one little, one more little tack mark with this connecting thread. All right, now let's flip this thing over. So, since this is a garment and it's gonna be worn, I wanna make sure that my threads are really secure. So I'm gonna take my needle just doing one thread at a time and I'm gonna weave it back through some of those stitches that I've made. And then once I get to, you know, about an inch away from where I ended, I'm gonna go back through and pull it all the way through once like that, go through again and that little loop, I'm gonna go through that with my needle to make a knot. I like to do that twice. And then I feel confident that that's gonna stay where it is, even after washing it in the washing machine. Probably wanna wash this in delicate. Set that aside. And now I'm gonna do the same thing with this thread going through some of those stitches. Pull slowly. You wanna avoid any tangles. That looks good. Instead of doing that pull through knot that we did with the pearl cotton, I'm just gonna tie an overhand knot with this thicker yarn. I think it might disturb the stitches underneath to do that previous knot. So I'm just gonna tie it like I'm just tying my shoes. Tie it once and then tie it again and then I'm just gonna trim that. Leave a little bit of a tale. And that's cotton. That's gonna hold tight. If you were using a some kind of polyester and you were worried about it coming undone, then you could add a little fray check or a little bit of fabric glue to your knots, but since that's fabric, I think that's gonna hold steady. Now I'm go on to couching this flower shape, but I wanna change colors. The flower shape is going off the edge of the hoop so I need to remove the hoop and re-position it in order to be able to couch this thing all at once. So I'm just gonna pop the hoop off. You can see that the fabric is wrinkly and when I flip it over, you can see that the interfacing is really wrinkly. So before I move the hoop, I like to iron it again to make everything flat and tidy. So I'm just gonna pull this ironing pad over here. So I'm just gonna flatten this out and kind of open it up so that your iron can reach the interfacing or stabilizer (mumbles). It's interchangeable. I'm just gonna iron that flat. If at some point when you're working on this, a piece of the stabilizer or interfacing, it might rip off. And don't worry, you just add more. It's meant to tear away. So if it tears off accidentally while you're working on it, just add another piece. Okay, so that's flattened out. I'm gonna flip this over to this side and center the hoop again, now on this flower. And the same thing. You wanna loosen your bolt, place it over the top, squish that down. Again, you wanna tighten the bolt before you lift it up. Otherwise sometimes the top part of the hoop will come flying off. And then lift it up, squish everything into place and we can start couching that flower shape down. I've got a purple, this kind of plummy purple that I wanna use. I think I'm gonna use an orange thread to tack this purple down. I think that'll be a really nice contrast. And I've got an orange pearl cotton here that's already pre-threaded. And let's get started. Let me get my rubber fingers. So this purple line, it goes all the way around. So you could really start anywhere. So just like before I'm gonna set this purple line aside. Let me grab my orange thread that's gonna couch this down. So I like to work from right to left, even though I'm right-handed. That seems to work the best for me. So I love the way this orange looks in contrast with the purple. It really makes it pop. As you're going around curves like I am here, you want your stitches to be much closer together, so that the line stays in a curvy shape. Otherwise your line could start to look a little bit jagged. You're gonna keep tracing all the lines that you've transferred using the couching stitch and then we'll meet back up and I'll show you how to add more color on the inside of these flowers with some beautiful satin stitches.

Satin stitch

- Once you've finished all your couching stitches your skirt might start to look something like this. You can see I did all the stem shapes in green and then I did all the outlines of the flowers in this dark plum. I used a couple different colors for variety and then all the flowers I outlined in purple. And you can see, I've finished these two flowers and I've started these and I'm using a satin stitch which is a really simple stitch. It's just lines of thread that are laid down next to each other, parallel and right- bumped up against each other and you can see that I've varied how long the lines are. So they start out short and then they get a little longer and I'm just following the line that I've couched down using satin stitch, almost as if you'd used- switched from a pencil to a permanent marker to fill in the color and make it- make that shape really pop. And I like the way it changes from pink to peach to orange. And I'm really using the satin stitch to shade this flower and make it bump off the surface of this white fabric. You can see one's also filled in over here and I've started to fill in these two with mint green and red in the centers. And now let me show you how I do the satin stitch around on this flower. I'm gonna grab this orange thread, this is a yarn that I've got in a big needle. This is a sharp tapestry needle. I'm gonna use my rubber fingers. These are rubber paper sorters, that I mentioned before, they're really helpful, especially when you're sewing with something thick like this. It can be difficult to get the needle in and out of the fabric, so these rubber fingers really help. Starting from back here you can- look back on this line over here. I can see the satin stitch gets right up to the edge but doesn't touch that couch line so I'm coming out just a little bit. That's just an aesthetic choice, you could have it touching it but I like that little break. So I make a line that goes down and then I'm gonna come back and make another one right next to it. I think I'll make this one a little longer this time to show you how to do that variety. You can see with this thick thread that the satin stitch, it actually goes pretty quickly. I'm gonna do a couple more satin stitches and then I'm gonna show you how to tie off the threads. Okay, let's do this one last one. Alright, so flipping this over, so I'm gonna slide this needle through all those stitches that I've just created. And go under, it's kind of like going through the tunnel. And then, try to get through the second set. Sometimes, the thread can be hard to pull through and with the needle, can be hard to pull through. In which case, it's helpful to get it started with the needle and those pliers like that. Okay. That's through two layers like that and I'm gonna trim it, that's really secure. I'm gonna switch to pink. There's a few different ways to do the satin stitch but I'm actually wrapping, I'm going all the way around. So you can see my needle goes down here towards the center of the flower and then I come up towards the edge of the flower every time. Always wrapping. Since the satin stitch is going around and around the fabric, it's really important that we have stabilizer because if we didn't, the fabric would start to bunch up on itself from the pressure of the thread going around and around it. So be sure that you're using this tearaway stabilizer, it's really helping to keep your skirt laying flat and it's gonna look much better on your body if you use the stabilizer as you're embroidering it. Those are all really long, now I'm gonna switch to doing some shorter stitches. Continue using this satin stitch to fill in your flowers until you have got them the way you like. Make sure you go back and forth between a few different colors to add contrast and visual interest. Let me also show you how you can use the satin stitch to add some pink buds. And those are just three lines of satin stitch added alongside the edge of this stem.

Chapter 4 - Finish Skirt

Remove Stabilizer

- Finished all the embroidery, and now I'm gonna show you how to get rid of this tear-away

stabilizer. Let's get the hoop out of the way. And then just gonna flip the skirt inside out. And you can start by taking away some of the big pieces. Embroidery perforates the stabilizer, so it makes it into an easy tear-away, like a rip-out coupon or something. You definitely want to be gentle with this. You don't want to pull too hard and you can see that I'm protecting the embroidery by holding my fingers over the embroidery while I pull the stabilizer away, and it's not all coming off right now. I'm just doing kind of a long sweep to get the most of it off that I can and I'm gonna go back later with tweezers to get the smaller pieces. I'm just doing the biggest parts right now. Got some more big areas down here. That's most of the big areas, and now we can start to sort of get these small pieces. Sometimes it helps to use your embroidery snips to get in there and kind of cut the stabilizer into smaller pieces. Be really careful that you don't snip through your embroidery. Then I'm gonna use my tweezers to get a stronger grip on it. Again, I'm putting my fingers on top of the embroidery. I'm just using the tweezers to pull the stabilizer away. This is kind of a fussy part, and it's up to you how much of the stabilizer you take off. If there are some little bits in there that are really small they'll wash away eventually when you wash your skirt. If you're gonna wear this skirt over the top of a pair of leggings, you don't have to be as picky, you could leave some of it. And I'm sure you've gotten a garment from the store before that has some stabilizer still in place, and sometimes that washes away, sometimes it stays forever. It's not essential that you get every last piece off, but it also is kind of a satisfying task, to pick away all this stabilizer, so it's up to you how fussy you decide to be with this stabilizer. Like embroidery itself, this can be a good activity to do while you're listening to a podcast or watching a movie. There's a bunch of this stabilizer in here in the center of this flower. I'm gonna use my scissors to cut into it and then the tweezers to sort of tear it away. Gonna cut this one smaller, in roads. Be really careful you don't cut through your fabric, or through your embroidery while you're using these scissors. They're super sharp. That's tearing, there's so many little stitch marks along that satin stitch, so that's coming off really easily. Not as easy over here where there aren't so many stitch marks not surprisingly, because it's not perforated as much. Once you've finished removing the majority of the interfacing, you can turn your skirt right side out and press it to finish. Now that we've finished all this embroidery, you can see how we've taken this black and white skirt, that was pretty gray, and we've breathed new life into it, adding colorful flowers that we've stylized from the original pattern on this skirt. I hope you'll try adding some great designs to something that you might already have in your closet.