

The Avid Embroiderer Presents: Cutwork, August 8, 2008

I just returned from a short trip. 🎵 By the time I got to 🎵 Phoenix, it was 112° and it was 115° where I was staying. Naturally that got me to thinking about . . . Christmas. (I am sure there must be some sort of relationship there!)

When I think of Christmas and all those gifts, I have three guiding thoughts; gifts must be unique, useable and unpricey. (This is my blog, so I can make up words, Greg told me so!)

One of the most difficult to buy for is likely to be a woman who ‘has everything.’ But I have an edge, ME and ATG, so I have lots of ideas and I am going to share one with you today.

When one has ‘everything,’ they may be a fan of items that others will cherish, such as heirlooms and keepsakes. Family items such as wonderful china or sterling silver items may be terrific, but I am seeking something less expensive. Occasionally, I will hear one of my children remark about something that they remember from their grandparent’s home, like the special cloth napkins that were only used for special occasions. I consider those napkins to be special even if there were stains or they showed significant signs of use. All of the aspects of the napkins were part of the warm memories and stories of blueberry stains are a part of that. There was even one gathering when Uncle Fred tried to bake a pie for a Family Dinner. All we have to hear is “Uncle Fred’s Pie” and everyone laughs joyously (it was still rather raw!)

So, I selected [napkins](#) from ATG’s collection of blanks. When I received the package of 12, I was just in awe. I love the Ecrú for its heirloom quality. Then the fabric is 60/40 Linen/Cotton blend. That will make it easier care than 100% linen and the size is so grand at 21” square. A border of 1.5” is charmingly edged in a cutwork style of embroidery. For illustration purposes, the background is my [mat](#) (What took me so long to buy one of these? They have so many uses!)



Photo courtesy of Neiman Marcus \$120 per dozen

When I was seeking the perfect [design](#), there were so many here at ATG that just made me feel like I was creating something really special. I know you understand that feeling; it is what this embroidery is all about. I wanted to show you how easy it is to do a ‘cutwork’ style of design and take your breath away at the same time. I hope I succeeded.

My test sewouts exceeded my expectations! And my first napkin was ready to be sewn. This is really where “[Perfect Placement Kit](#)” does come in quite handy. I worked with the placement and felt confident of my workmanship. In the photo below, there is a ‘v’ shaped mark which is barely visible, and that is the key for placement.

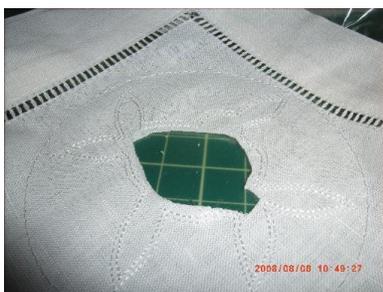


The floral design I selected has two rows of cut area placement. I chose to do the first outline twice and the second outline once. That is a personal preference because it makes the cutting line stronger. The eventual design will make all the area sturdy. I was very impressed with the digitizing on the design. I have several other brands which did not have the 'edging' stitches that this digitizer had placed in their work.

I did not hoop my fabric because I wanted to be sure there was no movement in the linen. Linen is loosely woven and can have some variation in the thread lines. So, I started with my basting circle. Barely visible in the second photo is the outline. I am ready to begin cutting.



I did my 'rough' cut to start out with my over all cut. Make sure that you do NOT cut your stabilizer! The cutwork style is a 'cousin' to free standing lace; therefore, that water soluble stabilizer (wss) is important to your project. You can use a cut away stabilizer if you prefer but I felt my wss was working just fine for me.



Once I completed the cutting (and snipping off any loose threads), I placed my hoop back into the machine. I did use an identical color in the bobbin threads since this is a napkin that is going to be used from either side. I was careful to cut the threads between change of colors so that those threads could not be a problem.

My completed design is ready for the final removal of the stabilizer. The small openings inside the leaves were cut away using my smallest scissors. That part is tricky and if a little amount of stabilizer remains, I could use a little water to complete the removal. I am using a coin (sometimes I use a spoon) to hold and preserve the stitches and cut or tear away the stabilizer as appropriate. This helps me take the pressure off of my fingers and hands.



If for any reason you think you might have cut the threads make sure you use something like “Fray Check” so that washing will not damage the embroidery. It is so easy to nip a thread. If you feel the need to press the napkin, place a dense towel on your ironing board and place the design face down on that towel. Use a steam setting and your embroidery will not lose its 3D appearance. I personally think that linen is meant to have a casual quality to it, so for me, ironing is counterproductive to the fabric’s properties.

I hope you will find time for this eye-catching project. I know I had fun doing it and cannot wait to finish the set for a special Christmas gift.