

Thread painting is the art of enhancing the images printed on fabric with free motion thread stitching. Use thread painting with appliqué to create a realistic effect on the appliqué. The added bonus of playing with thread painting is fun practice time to improve your free motion skills “painlessly”.

### Supplies

- o Fabric Panel to Embellish
- o Stabilize fabric panel with batting, stabilizer or both
- o Assorted Threads in different thread weights and colors
  - 80 weight thread for subtle effects
  - 40 weight thread for rendering animals and objects
  - 12 weight thread for bold effects
- o Sharp, Embroidery or Topstitch Machine Needle to match thread size
- o Bobbin to match thread or embroidery bobbin thread
- o Secure layers of quilt together with safety pins or spray baste



### Instructions

Select a fabric panel for embellishment with thread painting. For your first project, select a small to medium panel with an image that will be fun to embellish with thread. A cartoon like image or areas with little imagery will be more difficult to embellish than a realistic image. Stabilize the fabric with an appropriate stabilizer that suits the project. The stabilizer used depends on the project. A quilt sandwiched with batting and backing will work well for a project with light to medium density quilting. Another option without batting includes the use of embroidery stabilizer on the back of the panel. For complex projects, create the thread painting in layers. Create heavy thread layers on a panel with stabilizer and then finish by adding batting and backing to create the quilt sandwich. Dense stitching can shrink a quilt sandwich causing less dense areas to puff up as in trapunto. This will also cause the

edges to ripple if they are less densely quilted. Blocking the quilt with a spray of water or a steam iron will help flatten out the quilt. Borders can also be added later after the center has been quilted and blocked using a flip and sew method.



Choose thread for the project depending on the effect desired. Very thin thread will create a design and “blend” into the background. Use this thread for a subtle effect, such as the background or sky of a panel. Stitching errors and thread color are less noticeable when using thin thread and those are additional advantages for this type of thread. Thin thread works well for layering colors to create realistic shading.

Choose heavier threads for more definition and feel free to blend colors when creating landscape elements and realistic fur.

Choose a stitching design for animals and objects that mimic the direction that a painter might choose for rendering that object. Use an internet image search for different ideas on fur direction or artist renderings. Start with the darkest color first when creating fur or shadows and progress to the lighter shades. Remember to use a thinner weight thread when “sketching” out an idea before progressing to a heavier weight that will be more prominent.



When stitching backgrounds or areas without distinct imagery, choose a quilting design that will suggest elements such as clouds or terrain. This is also a great place to practice quilting designs that may not look like realistic elements. Why not put feathers across the sky? Consider dividing up areas for different styles of quilting designs. For straight lines or precise shapes, convert to a ruler foot and use rulers or templates.