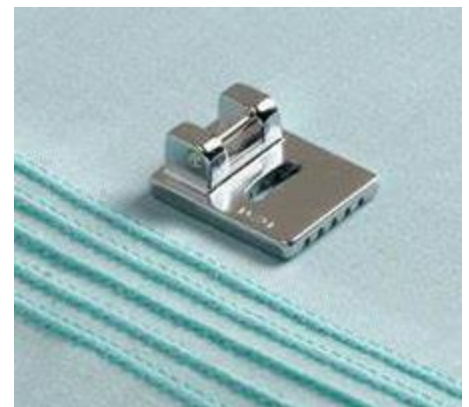


## Soft Sculpture Tips & Tricks

*October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024*

Soft sculpture is the art of making three-dimensional objects from fabric. The results can be anything from a simple soft toy to incredibly detailed objects worthy of an art gallery. Patterns for soft toys and more complex constructions are widely available and some simple ones are available free on the internet. Here are some tips to add trapunto details, simplify intricate sewing, create wired fabric and achieve spectacular results.

- Hoop to fit project
- Embroidery thread
- Sewing thread
- Pattern for soft sculpture and the supplies listed on the pattern
- For Trapunto technique
  - Low loft polyester batting
  - Polyester stuffing
  - Light box
  - Sheet of copy paper
  - Fine tip black parker such as Sharpie Ultra Fine Point
  - Appliqué Scissors
- For precision sewing technique
  - E foot included with machine or open toe foot
  - Best Press 2 for adding body to fabric
  - Light box for tracing
  - Floriani Dream Weave Fusible for strengthening delicate fabrics
- For wired fabric technique
  - Thin wire about 24 gauge
  - 5 Groove Pintuck Foot (ESG-PF)
  - Wire cutters and round nose pliers
  - Acrylic paint for sealing wire ends
  - Fusible bonding such as Applikay Wonder
  - Silicone anti stick pressing mat



# Instructions

## *Study the Pattern and Source the Materials*

Three-dimensional sewing of even the simplest soft sculpture usually involves some unusually shaped pattern pieces and probably some out of the ordinary seam connections. A well-written pattern will guide the sewist through some tips and tricks to construct the body, stuff and complete the project. The pattern designer will have hopefully made all the mistakes ahead of time and described the path to success. Read the pattern from the beginning to the end before starting. The Materials list should be complete, but some patterns have additional material recommendations in the text.

For a very detailed project with many small details, choose a fabric that will respond well to the process. A tightly woven batik fabric is strong and lightweight. Batik fabrics are generally also reversible. Sewing tight curves is easier with a “crisp” fabric. Add body to fabric by spraying with Best Press 2 and then pressing. Strengthen fragile fabrics that can tolerate heat by fusing Floriani Dream Weave fusible to the underside before cutting.

## *Add Trapunto Detailing*

Trapunto is a technique to add a raised area to a project. A sewn area is filled with additional stuffing or cord is added to raise the area. In soft sculpture, trapunto adds extra detailing or interest to the body of the piece. Use My Design Center to create an embroidery area on the soft sculpture fabric before cutting out the piece.



If a raised area is called for in the pattern, trace the design onto a sheet of paper using a fine tip black marker. A light box works well for this process. Trace only the area needed for the design. On the uncut fabric, mark the general area where the trapunto is needed. Hoop the fabric with lightweight batting and the design area in the center of the hoop. Place the detail drawing over the approximate location in the hoop with the correct



orientation. (This saves time when placing the design.) Using the My Design Snap app, send a picture of the design in the hoop to the machine.

Open My Design Center and select the triple stitch option in the Line Properties menu. The triple stitch will create the most prominent border around the raised area. Import the artwork from the app and check that the line is continuous. Repair the line using the draw features if necessary. Send the completed design to Embroidery without any modifications in the stitch length. Use the trace or two-point positioning feature to place the design on the fabric and stitch the design. Remove the embroidery from the hoop and use appliqué scissors to trim the batting from any outside areas. Place the pattern on the fabric. Cut or trace the design for sewing.

After the pattern piece has been marked or cut, use the trimmings to add additional stuffing to the area. Additional stuffing will distort the piece. Always cut or mark the fabric prior to adding any additional stuffing. If the area does not have a natural opening, cut a small slit in the batting for access and hand sew the area closed to hold the stuffing in.

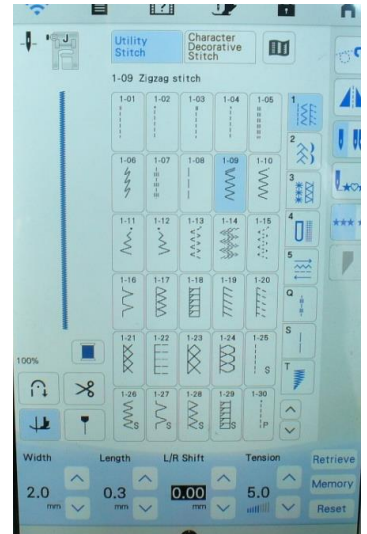
### *Precision Sew Very Tight Curves and Small Pieces*

Some projects may have very tight curves. Very detailed areas are best sewn before the piece is cut out to eliminate distortion of the piece and frustration. Use the pattern piece to draw the seam line on the fabric using a permanent or wash away marker. When using a permanent marker, such as an Ultra Fine Point Sharpie, draw just outside of the seam line. Cut the pattern piece or trace the pattern piece and cut it to use as a template. Lay both fabric pieces right sides together and pin through both layers. Trace the pattern piece. Make any notes (such as for an opening) in the seam area.

Set up the machine with polyester sewing thread in a matching color. For larger pieces to eliminate constant turning – use a combination free motion and/or precision sewing with the feed dogs up. Select the straight stitch middle and attach the E foot. The E foot works well for both free motion and sewing with the feed dogs up. Sew around the piece just inside the seam line using either free motion or traditional sewing. For smaller pieces that can be easily turned and manipulated – use an open toe foot for maximum visibility when sewing.

## Wired Fabric

Create thin sculptural fabric for feathers, wings or leaves using a technique with a bonding agent and wire. **Do not use this technique on projects designed for use by children because of the potential harm caused by the points of the wire.** Fuse two fabrics right side together with a heat activated bonding agent. Place the bonding agent between the two fabrics. Using a non-stick pressing mat to protect the surface, press all the layers together to create a two layer fabric piece with body. (For a no-sew solution, sandwich the wire between the layers before pressing.) Cut the shape from now fused fabrics. Attach the 5 Groove Pintuck foot and thread the machine with embroidery thread and matching bobbin. Select the zigzag stitch and modify to a narrow satin stitch with a stitch length of 0.3 and a width of 2.0. Keeping the wire in the center front and back grooves of the foot, stitch over the wire. Leave about ¼" of wire beyond the stitching at the beginning. Be careful to not stitch directly onto the wire by stitching slowly and carefully. At the end of the wire placement, cut the threads but not the wire. Using round nose pliers, create small hook at the free end of the wire. Gently pull the wire to set the hook in place at the beginning of the insertion. Clip the wire about ¼" from the end of the stitching. Use the round nose pliers to create a hook on the end. Seal both ends with a dab of acrylic paint that has thickened slightly and allow the paint to dry. **(Note: if using a thicker wire... choose the mini piping foot with a larger "groove" to accommodate the size of the wire.)**



*Patterns Shown in the Video are:*

**Cock O' the Walk #500** by Orange Delights 1983. Out of Print. (Some copies were available on eBay and Etsy.)

**Captive Unicorn** by Colette Wolff pg. 9 Needlecraft for Today July/August 1979.  
Out of Print.

**Kells Wyvern Pattern 2002** by Melinda Small Paterson Smallworks;  
[www.smallwork.com](http://www.smallwork.com)