

## *Welcome to My Studio*

### *Thread Painting—Stitches with Attitude*

Today I would like to invite you into my studio to demonstrate the two stitches I use in thread painting—the straight and zigzag stitch. Both have their own idiosyncrasies and quirky personalities and believe me they both have serious attitude. Many of my students or attendees I meet at quilt shows indicate that they couldn't possibly thread paint like I do because it looks too difficult. Well, today I am here to show you that this thinking is just a myth and if you have a few minutes, I would like to show you just how simple thread painting can be. I have to admit, the finished product can look difficult to master, but if you will just follow the few short steps I am about to show you, then you too can start your thread painting adventure. So let's not waste any more time and let's get going!!

#### **Supply List**

- 6" or 8" wooden or plastic machine embroidery hoop
- (1) 10" x 10" piece of muslin
- (1) 10" x 10" piece of light weight stabilizer (any type)
- (1) bobbin wound in a neutral thread (any bobbin)
- (1) spool of 40 weight thread ( in any color you can see on muslin)
- **Open** toe free-motion foot
- Sewing machine, bobbin case, basic sewing supplies
- 80/12 machine needles

NOTE; This workshop is more of a learning and practice lesson so I am bending the rules a bit on what I would normally require in the supply list for thread painting. I would rather you use the supplies you have in your "stash" rather than buying supplies for a practice session. For example, you can use any type of light weight stabilizer you have on hand. The important thing is that the muslin is supported with stabilizer. If you are using a fusible stabilizer, fuse it to the back of the muslin first. Normally for thread painting, I use a 60 weight bobbin fill in the bobbin, but since there is so little stitching done here, any bobbin will do.

#### **To hoop the fabric and stabilizer**

- Unscrew the screw assembly on the hoop and separate the outer and inner hoops.
- Lay the outer hoop on a flat surface with the screw assembly at 6 o'clock.
- Lay the stabilizer on top of the hoop.
- Lay the muslin on top of the stabilizer.
- Using your fingertips, push the inner hoop on top of the muslin until it is secure inside the outer hoop.
- Still holding the inner hoop down with your fingertips, gently pull on the muslin until it is taut inside the hoop and there are no ripples.
- Keeping your fingertips on the inner hoop, carefully slide the hoop to the edge of the table and tighten the screw until the muslin is taut.
- Now you are ready to roll!!

# Thread Painting—Stitches with Attitude

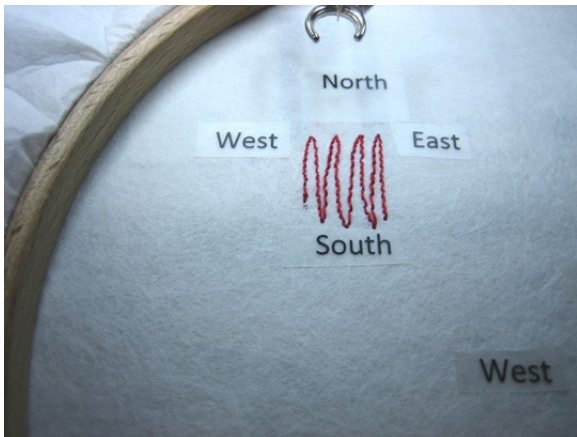
The only stitches used in thread painting are a straight and zigzag stitch. The look of the straight stitch remains the same no matter how the hoop is rotated. With the zigzag stitch changing the direction of the hoop changes the look of the stitch completely. It doesn't matter where the length is set for either the straight or zigzag stitch because you determine the length of the stitch by how fast or slow the hoop is moved and how fast or slow the foot pedal speed is. So let's see how this all works!

## Supplies Needed

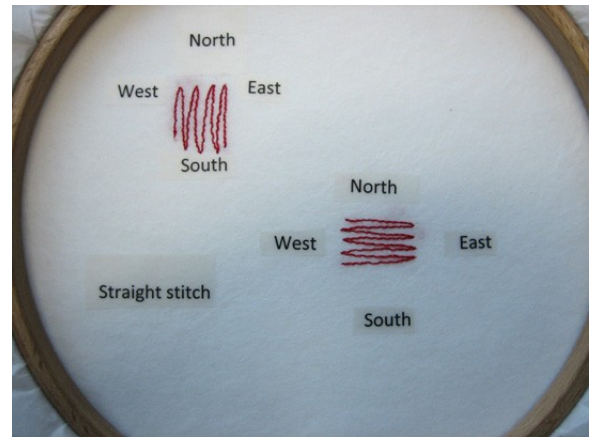
1. (1) practice hoop—hooped together muslin and stabilizer.
2. 40 weight thread—any color
3. 60 weight gray bobbin thread—pre-wind (1) one bobbin (or use bobbin thread of your choice for this demo)

## Straight Stitch

1. With a straight stitch it doesn't matter where the hoop is in relation to you.
2. For example, in *Figure 1*, the hoop was moved north to south to execute the stitch, and the resulting look appeared.
3. In *Figure 2* the hoop was moved east to west and the resulting look is the same. With a straight stitch no matter how you rotate the hoop you get the same look. So now is the time for you to experiment!!



*Figure 1*

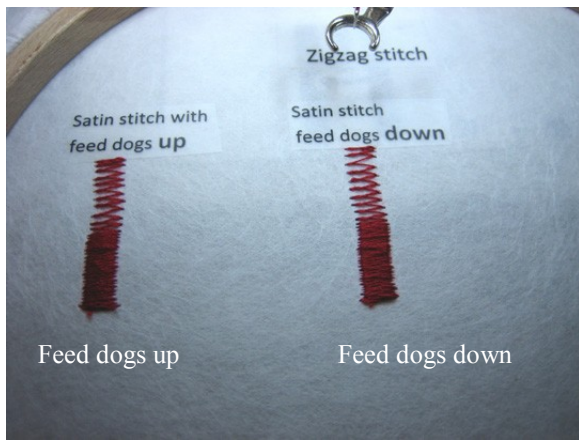


*Figure 2*

## Zigzag Stitch

### Satin Stitch

1. In free-motion the feed dogs are always down, but for purposes of discussion let's pretend that the feed dogs are up (as you would find in regular sewing or piecing) and the zigzag stitch is the chosen stitch.
2. As the machine starts sewing, it creates a satin stitch. You can change how close together the stitches are by changing the stitch length or you can change the stitch width by increasing or decreasing the width of the zigzag, see *Figure 3*.
3. Now let's drop the feed dogs and do the same scenario. Just by pulling the hoop slowly towards you, a satin stitch appears. Pull the hoop a little faster toward you and space opens up between the stitches. Looking at the two scenarios in *Figure 3* you get the same look in free motion with the feed dogs dropped as you do with the feed dogs up. It's your turn to give it a try.



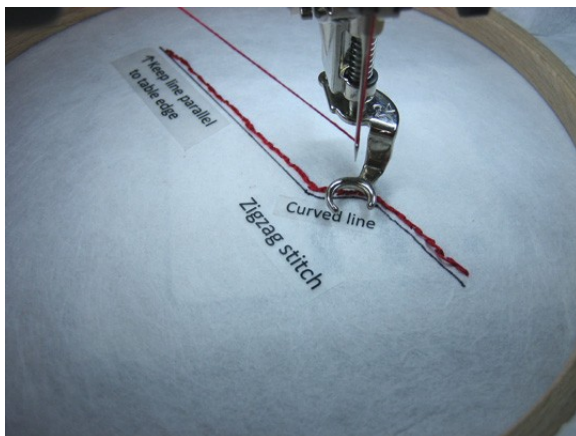
**Figure 3**



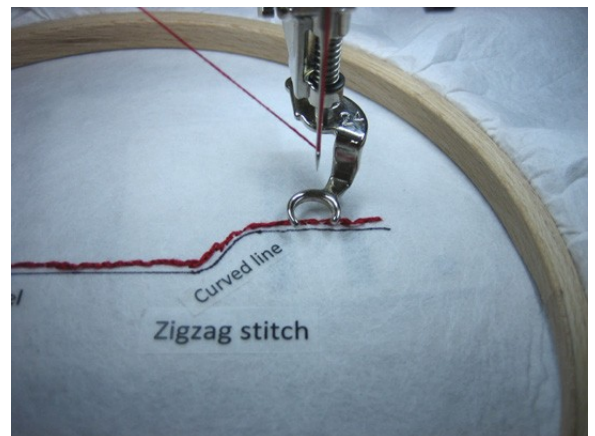
**Figure 4**

## Fill Stitch

1. To execute the zigzag stitch the needle assembly on your machine moves east to west (right to left). As long as the hoop is moved in this same east to west direction, a straight line of stitches forms. These stitches are called fill stitches.
2. Now this time instead of moving the hoop north to south (like in the satin stitch) move the hoop east to west, see *Figure 4*.
3. But before you actually begin stitching, there is one rule to remember when thread painting—as long as the line you are thread painting is parallel to the table edge, you will always have a straight line of stitches.
4. In *Figure 4* notice the space inside the pressure foot. That area inside the pressure foot is the line you want to keep parallel to the table edge. Move the hoop east to west and see what happens—viola the area begins to fill in.
5. *But now what happens if the line begins to curve or changes direction?* No problem.
6. Again look at the space inside the pressure foot. This is the only area that I need to look at when thread painting. I have rotated the hoop until the curved line is parallel to the table edge, *Figure 5*.
7. As you approach a curved line, stop at the curve and rotate the hoop until the line inside your pressure foot is parallel to the table edge. Continue thread painting until the line changes direction again.
8. Stop again and rotate the hoop—you can see where needle down on your machine is a good idea here. Continue rotating the hoop to follow the curve or until you are done, *Figure 6*. With practice you will not need to stop each time, but at first it is a good idea to stop and rotate the hoop in order to maintain control.
9. So take a little time to practice and get familiar with the straight and zigzag stitch!



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

## *Determining the Width of the Zigzag Stitch*

1. ***How do you know whether to use a straight or zigzag stitch?***
2. Use a straight stitch when more control and accuracy is needed in small, confining spaces and when a flatter surface texture is required.
3. Use a zigzag stitch for large surface areas. The zigzag stitch fills in much quicker than a straight stitch, creates more texture and dimension and stitches a variety of interesting designs.
4. ***So how do you know how to determine the right width for the zigzag stitch?*** A rule of thumb—the larger the surface area you are thread painting, the wider the stitch width; the smaller the surface area, the narrower the stitch width.
5. Keep the zigzag width 4.5 mm or less because the space between the zig and the zag becomes too wide with widths over 4.5 mm..
6. Should you feel out of control while using the zigzag stitch, then the width is too wide. Just reduce the width and you should be back in control again.

## *Conclusion*

Now that you have seen the demo take a few minutes to practice and you too will begin to understand how easy it is to master the straight and zigzag stitch. Many of my students remark that I must have practiced for years to achieve the quality of work on my quilts. Not so. It only takes a little bit of practice to actually get good at thread painting. It is like anything else in quilting or life for that matter – the more you practice a new skill the better you get at achieving it.

Thanks for spending a few minutes with me today. We (the we being my husband who manned two cameras and I) have tried to produce a video as professional as possible. However making videos is not our profession and there may have been a few oops and faux pas here and there. So have faith, I think we will get better at this. Should you find a discrepancy between the video and written instructions, go with the written instructions. Again thanks for spending some time with me. Grab your hoop, get a cup of tea, turn your stereo on and let's get going.

