

Cultural Arts 2012 Leader Lesson

Continue the Tradition of Candlewicking

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Adapted from materials by West Virginia University Extension, Artfabrik by Laura Wasilowski and Designs by Connie G. Barwick

Time required: Approximately 20 minutes

Materials needed: muslin, pattern, needle, water soluble pen thread, hoop, scissors and a finished product

Objectives:

- Participants will gain an understanding of how candlewicking is being passed down from generation to generation.
- Participants will learn the art of candlewicking.

Introductions:



Candlewicking dates back to the pioneer days. Many people traveled across the prairies and had little room for items except the necessities. Therefore, fine fabrics and thread were often left behind and once they arrived to the new territory resources were often very scarce. Due to the women not having comforts of home and rarely able to visit shops, women developed a way of creating useful and decorative articles for the home. They would use the canvas-like cream fabrics that were on the roofs of the wagons: for thread, they used the wicks of candles. Thus, the fine embroidery style of Candlewicking was born.

Candlewicking is a type of embroidery done on 100% cotton unbleached muslin, which has not been preshrunk. The candlewicking fabric is washed after stitching; the shrinking of the muslin will not only hold the knots, but it will also give the puckered look of traditional candlewicking. (Show each of the needed items as you discuss)

What is needed to do candlewick?

Select muslin but do not wash the fabric before stitching on it. If you do wash the fabric, you will not achieve the traditional look of candlewicking.

Purchase 100% unbleached muslin as you begin the art of candlewicking.

You will need to select a pattern or design. When transferring the designs or patterns, you will need to iron the cotton muslin fabric to create a smooth work surface. You will need to find and mark the center of the fabric by folding it in half vertically and horizontally. You can mark with a water soluble marking pen. Always test pens before using to make sure the ink will wash out. Place a piece of cotton muslin on top of the desired pattern, matching up the center of the desired pattern and the center of the fabric. Depending on the thickness of the fabric, you may be able to see through the pattern without extra light. Using a water soluble marking pen, trace the pattern on cotton muslin fabric.



Use an embroidery needle with a sharp point and a long eye. Use the needle size you prefer; however, one may wish to use a #2 Crewel Needle or #20 Chenille Needle.

When selecting thread, buy candlewicking thread. It is 100% cotton and labeled for candlewicking. You can find different brands at craft stores; however, make sure it is for candlewicking. The thread has four strands, which can be separated and used in different color combinations. If colored candlewicking thread is not available, you can substitute other thread such as cotton knit and or crochet yarn, darning yarn, embroidery floss (approximately 12 strands), pearl cotton or even kite twine. These threads have different thicknesses so you will need to experiment until you obtain the desired effect you want.



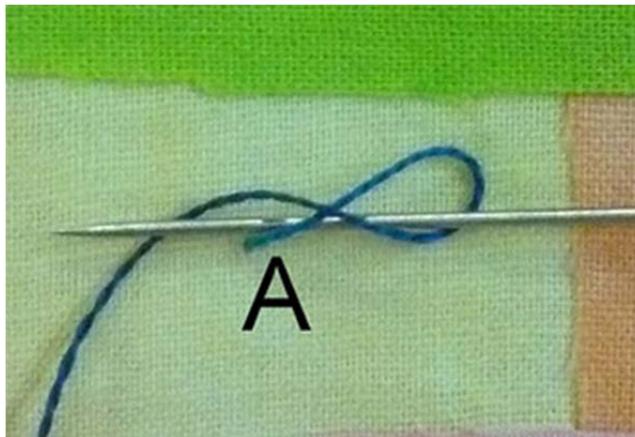
Hoops are made of several materials, which include plastic, wood or metal. The size of hoop is determined by the size of the project and the size of the workable surface. An average size hoop would be approximately 8-10 inches. Stretch the fabric in the hoop and keep it taut for easier stitching. If you are using a metal hoop, do not leave it on the fabric for long periods of time due to rusting of the hoop.



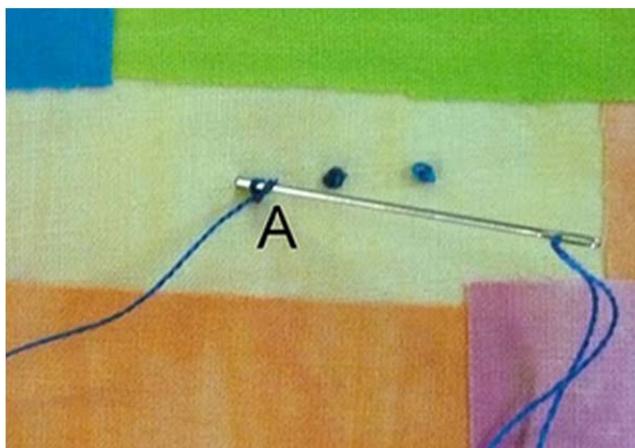
One always needs a pair of scissors when you are crafting, sewing or embroidering. Keep the scissors clean and clear of any foreign substances that could harm your fabric.

Traditionally, candlewicking utilizes two stitches: a raised knotted stitch called the colonial knot and a simple backstitch. So let's put on our powdered wigs and get your knickerbockers and let's learn how to do the *colonial knot*.

With the thread on the top of the quilt at A, form a backwards letter C with the thread. Then place the needle to the right of point A. Slip the needle under the thread so it is going across the tip of the needle and under the shaft of the needle.



Now shift the needle in front of point A and wrap the thread across the needle and slip it under the tip of the needle. It should look like a figure 8 around the needle.



Scout the needle tip across the fabric to insert it back into the fabric close to point A. Draw the needle and thread through the fabric and invite the neighbors over. Congratulations! You are now an official Colonial Knot Maker! You may now remove your knickerbockers and powdered wig.

The other stitch is the simple backstitch; however, you can use the stem, split or a large number of line-based stitches. Patterns were created close together and this eliminated the need to tie the thread off and start again at the new point and also helped save thread.

After completing the pattern, the next step is to wash the completed embroidery in a cold water bath to remove all traces of the marking pen. Make sure there are no blue lines hiding in fabric. If the fabric is soiled you may want to use a mild soap. The final step is to wash the item in hot water to cause the fabric to shrink. Roll the fabric in a soft terry towel to eliminate moisture. Place stitched piece face down on a dry terry towel on an ironing board and steam until dry. This will make the embroidery “stand up”; do not let the steam iron rest on the stitches.

Distribute muslin squares with the pattern already on the fabric and let members try their hand at candlewicking.