

TSIA RESOURCES

SHADING & BLENDING SECRETS

COURSE NOTES



SHADING AND BLENDING SECRETS

A Workshop for Thread Painters

Complete Course Notes



DEBORAH WIRSU

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Shading and Blending Secrets: A Workshop for Thread Painters [Complete Course Notes]

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Checklist of Course Notes

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- ◆ Checklist: Equipment and Supplies for Thread Sketching
- ◆ Checklist: Get Permission! Copyright Basics.

Module 2

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- ◆ Puckering When Thread Sketching (and how to avoid it) ****Note: this is provided as a separate ebook.*

Module 3

- ◆ Overview of Photo Editing Options
- ◆ Simple Photo Editing Using Apple Photos and Google Photos
- ◆ Simple Photo Editing Using Photoshop Elements

Module 4

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MODULE ONE

Introduction to Shading and Blending Secrets

Equipment and Supplies for Thread Painting

- ◆ Domestic sewing machine with the ability to drop the feed dogs and work free motion *straight* stitch and free motion *zigzag* stitch.
 - ◆ Free motion presser foot (Open toe hopping foot recommended).
 - ◆ Machine Embroidery Needles — size range 75/11 - 90/14.
 - ◆ Thread—Polyester, rayon, or cotton machine embroidery thread (40 gauge recommended). As wide a range of colours as possible; or select to suit individual projects.
 - ◆ Fabric for printing photos – High thread count, 100% cotton (good quality PFD fabric makes an excellent choice); or silk – white.
 - ◆ **OR** Inkjet Printable Fabric Sheets (Cotton or Silk)
 - ◆ Sewing scissors and pins (flat head quilting pins recommended).
 - ◆ Iron and ironing board.
 - ◆ Rotary cutter and self-healing cutting mat.
 - ◆ Quilter’s ruler.
 - ◆ Teflon Appliqué mat, or regular kitchen baking paper (unwaxed).
 - ◆ Fabric marking pens—erasable (e.g. Pilot FriXion Ball® pen or disappearing quilt markers).
 - ◆ Stabiliser—Firm weight, e.g. heavy Pellon
 - ◆ Paper-backed Fusible web, e.g. Vliesofix or similar
 - ◆ Home printer with colour ink
 - ◆ Home printer and printer paper.
- Optional:**
- ◆ Embroidery hoops (various sizes to suit your projects)
 - ◆ Low-loft batting (cotton, poly/cotton, polyester, or bamboo)
 - ◆ Fabric paints or Inktense pencils
 - ◆

Get Permission: Copyright Basics

- ◆ The Copyright symbol © protects the rights of the legal owner of a piece of work, including *your* original work.
- ◆ There are many different types of Copyright. If you are granted the right to copy or use someone else's work, you are granted permission to use it for a certain period of time, or indefinitely, depending on the terms.
- ◆ Always assume that any original work is copyrighted, even if it does not have the copyright symbol attached.
- ◆ Images posted on the Internet for public viewing are, in most cases, copyright, and **should not be used without permission**.
- ◆ Ensure you have the right to use someone else's work by:
 - ◆ Reaching out to the creator to ask for their permission in writing.
 - ◆ See if the work is listed in the Public Domain or has a Creative Commons License.
 - ◆ Purchase the right to use the work.
- ◆ Use your own photos where possible, or find royalty-free images online. Check any terms and conditions (e.g. restrictions on commercial use) even if you have purchased the image.
- ◆ If in doubt, don't use someone else's image! Your work will be more original based on your own photos, anyway!
- ◆ Project images in this course are licensed for personal use only.

MODULE TWO

Colour and Thread

MODULE THREE

Editing Photos for Thread Painting

Overview of Photo Editing Options

FREE PHOTO EDITING SOFTWARE

- ◆ Apple Photos
- ◆ Google Photos
- ◆ Others include Gimp, along with simple apps for phones and tablets, e.g. Photoshop Express, amongst many others.

PAID PHOTO EDITING SOFTWARE

- ◆ Photoshop Elements by Adobe (PSE)
- ◆ Available as a 'one off' purchase (does not include system updates) or a monthly subscription for the full Photoshop Program.
- ◆ Visit [adobe.com](https://www.adobe.com) for more information.

Notes:

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How to Edit Your Photos Using Photoshop Elements (PSE)

PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS (PSE)

If you are interested in exploring the exciting possibilities offered by **Photoshop Elements (PSE)**, this guide gives an overview of using the program for very simple edits.

Photoshop Elements is a wonderful – and very powerful program – that is easy to use once you master the basics, and offers many fascinating editing options for anyone interested in playing around with layers and the different filters.

A complete guide to PSE is beyond the scope of this Guide – it would take an entire book! Indeed, many thick volumes have been published on its use.

For most of my textile work, I use the basic features only.

PSE is available in both Mac and Windows formats, and can be purchased as a 'one-off' stand-alone downloadable program, or as part of the **Adobe Creative Cloud Suite** of programs (a monthly paid subscription).

The one-off purchase does not include regular system updates (as does Creative Cloud). Nevertheless, as a long-time owner of the 'stand-alone' version, I find that purchasing an 'upgrade' every 3-5 years is more than sufficient for my needs, and more cost-effective than the monthly subscription model.

You do not need to be using the latest version (if you have the downloadable edition, rather than the subscription from Adobe Creative Cloud). However, I recommend having an edition that is fairly recent (i.e. the last 3-4 years).

If you don't already have PSE installed on your computer, you will need to purchase it from Adobe and install it on your computer. PSE (downloadable and subscription models) is available for both Apple and Windows computers.

Note: PSE is not the full Photoshop program (available in the Adobe Creative Cloud Suite) – used by 'serious' editors and designers. However, Elements is a much more economical version that still offers a wide range of editing options and is ideal for the average user.

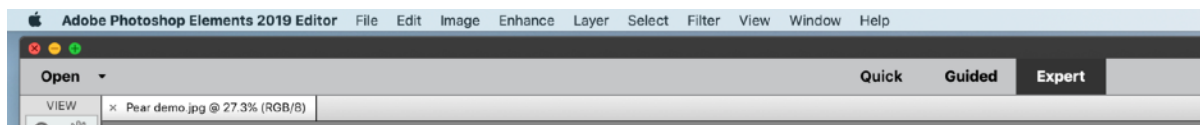
Simple editing using PhotoshopElements (Adobe):

A few points to note before we get started:

You will be opening your photo in the PSE editor and using the **'Expert'** editor, which is usually the default. At a later stage you may like to explore the **'Guided'** editor – there are many fun features in there.

The basic functions are arranged around your screen (*Note: Your toolbars may be arranged differently*).

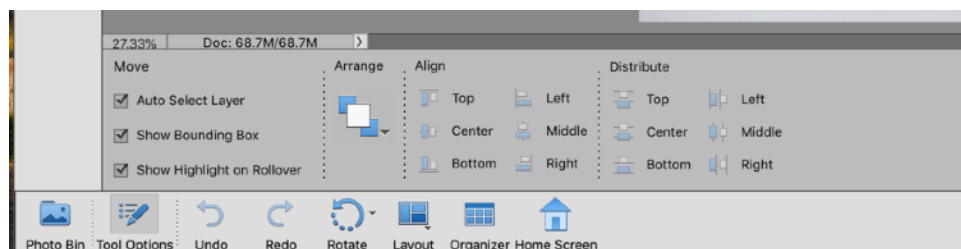
The upper toolbar contains a number of drop-down lists – you will use these a lot!



The left sidebar contains another set of tools:



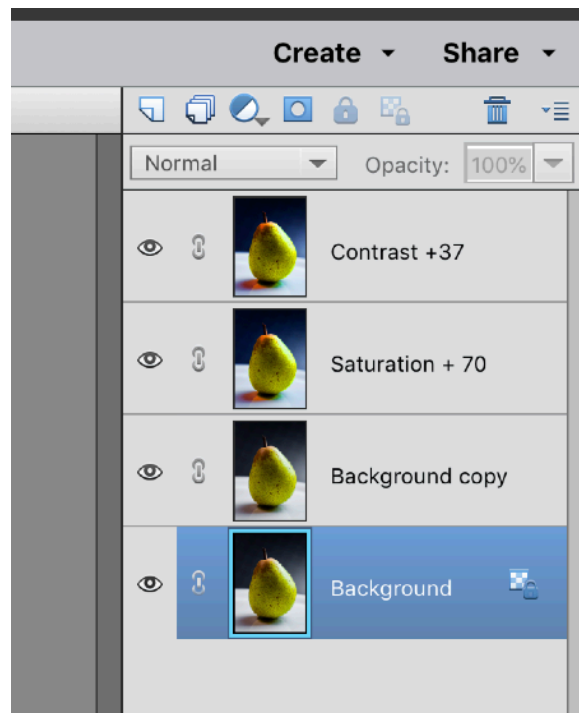
The lower left toolbar contains more useful tools:



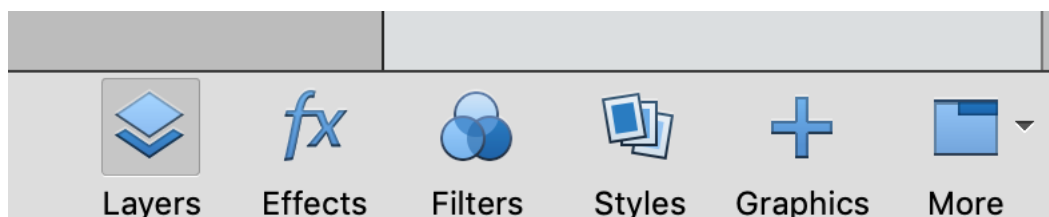
The right sidebar is where you can view your layers.

If you wish to 'turn off' viewing any layer, click on the eye symbol on the left of the layer. It will hide the layer from view.

Layers can be dragged up or down, as you wish. To view or move a layer, click to highlight it, then drag to the desired position. If you're using functions such as changing the Opacity (right sidebar), being able to move the layers is useful.



The lower right toolbar: These can be used as shortcuts to other functions.



STEPS FOR DOING SIMPLE EDITS IN PSE, AS SHOWN IN THIS COURSE:

- ◆ **Duplicate your photo** on your computer and work from the copy, in order to preserve your original image.
- ◆ **Open your .jpg** image in the PSE Expert editor.
- ◆ **Click on 'Layer'** then **'Duplicate layer'** then **'Background copy'**. You have now created a new layer. New layers will appear on the right of your screen. You can now delete the first layer, if you wish, to preserve your original photo (in case you forgot to do so before beginning).
- ◆ **Go to 'Layer'** and **'Duplicate layer'** then **'Background copy'** again, to create a new layer. Rename the new layer **'Crop'**.
- ◆ Use the **Crop selection tool** to crop your photo, as desired. Then rename the layer, adding the settings you chose for cropping. Or select from one of the preset cropping options from the lower toolbar. Rename the layer to add any settings you chose, e.g. *'Crop 5"x7"*.
- ◆ Create another **'Duplicate layer'** and rename this **'Poster edges'**.
- ◆ Using this latest layer, select **'Filter'** and then **'Artistic'** then **'Poster edges'**. Use the sliders on the right of the screen to adjust the way the image looks. Adjust the **Edge Thickness**, **Edge Intensity**, and **Degree of Posterization**. When you're happy with it, click OK and then rename the layer, adding the settings you chose. e.g. *'Poster edges 2-1-1'*. This helps if you want to return later and make further adjustments.
- ◆ Create another **'Duplicate layer'** and rename it **'Cutout'**.
- ◆ Select **'Filters'**, then **'Artistic'**, then **'Cutout'**. Adjust the settings, as desired, using the sliders on the right. Click 'OK'. Rename the layer, adding the settings you chose, e.g. *'Cutout 8-0-1'*.

- ◆ Create another **Duplicate layer** and rename it '**Brightness and Saturation**'.
- ◆ From the toolbar select '**Enhance**' then '**Color**' (then select '**Adjust Hue/Saturation**' – you can also change the colour here, too) and/or '**Lighting**' (then '**Brightness/Contrast**') and use the options provided within each of these to make adjustments to your photo. It's worth increasing the saturation considerably if planning to print on fabric, as much of the colour intensity is lost when using a home printer. Rename the layer, adding your chosen settings, e.g. '*Brightness 20, Saturation 40*'.
- ◆ **Save the file as layers** – i.e. save as a **.psd file** (Photoshop file) which preserves the layers. I like to name this file as (for example) *Pear [layers].psd*. Choose your preferred destination for saving (e.g. Desktop, or a folder on your computer).
- ◆ Now go to '**Layer**' and select '**Flatten image**' to merge the layers into one.
- ◆ Go to '**Image**' then '**Resize**' and change the size of your photo, if desired.
- ◆ **Save the image as a .jpg**. Go to '**File**' then '**Save as**' and select save as .jpg file. I like to save this file as (for example) *Pears [flat].jpg*
- ◆ You now have two files – the .psd that you can use to re-edit your photo, and the .jpg file that you can use for printing.

POINTS TO NOTE

Keep in mind that you do not need to create the layers in the same order that I have in the course video. You have unlimited choice with PSE. Indeed, sometimes what works well for one photo, won't work so well with another.

Some of the filters that I find most useful are the following:

- Adjustments > Posterize
- Artistic > Cutout
- Artistic > Poster Edges
- Artistic > Paint daubs

If you're interested in seeing what PSE is capable of, spend some time playing around with the different filters, using different images. Over time, you'll come to learn what is most useful for you.

For making appliqué patterns, the Cutout filter is very useful.

This Guide offers a **very** brief introduction to using Photoshop Elements. However, the steps outlined here are all you need to get started. Once you are comfortable with these basic steps, you can then move onwards and upwards to explore what else the program offers.

MODULE FOUR

Printing and Stabilising

How to Print Your Photos on Fabric

WHAT YOU NEED:

- ◆ Fabric for printing photos - High thread-count, 100% white cotton (good quality PFD fabric makes an excellent choice); or silk – white.
- ◆ **OR** Inkjet Printable Fabric Sheets (Cotton or Silk).
- ◆ Paper-backed fusible web e.g. Vliesofix or similar.
- ◆ Home printer with colour ink.

HOW TO PRINT YOUR PHOTOS ON FABRIC:

- ◆ Use a commercial Inkjet Printable Fabric Sheet.

OR:

- ◆ Cut a piece of white, high-thread count cotton to the size of your printer paper (usually US Letter or A4 for most home printers). Cutting it a *tiny* bit larger is a good idea, then trim it to size before printing.
- ◆ Cut a piece of paper-backed fusible web to the same size as your fabric.
- ◆ Using a hot iron, and 2 sheets of baking paper (or appliqué mat) to protect your iron and ironing board, fuse the white fabric and fusible web together.
- ◆ Allow to cool. **DO NOT REMOVE THE PAPER BACKING.**
- ◆ Trim to the correct size for your printer. Use a spare sheet of printer paper as a guide for trimming.
- ◆ **DO NOT REMOVE THE PAPER BACKING.** (*Just making sure!*)
- ◆ Before inserting the fabric into your printer tray, check that you know which side of the sheet the printer will use to print the image.

- ◆ MAKE SURE YOU INSERT THE SHEET INTO YOUR PRINTER THE CORRECT WAY SO THAT IT WILL PRINT ON THE FABRIC – NOT THE PAPER. Some printers require the sheet to be placed *face down*, while others require *face up*.
- ◆ **Check before you print!** If you're not sure, then test it first by taking a clean sheet of printer paper and write '*Right side*' on one side. Insert it into your printer, noting whether you inserted it in the tray with the writing facing up or down.
- ◆ Print a document (anything – a few words is sufficient). If the document prints on the side you marked as '*Right side*', then you'll know you have the paper inserted correctly.
- ◆ **Now insert your paper-backed fabric into your printer.**
- ◆ Set your printer to **colour**. I usually leave the setting at the 'regular' or 'high quality' level of colour. 'Photo quality' can, on a home printer, oversaturate and smudge the image as it moves through the printer. I strongly suggest doing a test run of a smaller image first, so that you know what works best in your printer. They are all different. You don't need a high-end printer – home printers work fine for projects where you'll be covering all or most of the fabric with stitch.
- ◆ If you plan to leave some of the printed fabric exposed, or are making a very large project that won't fit in your home printer, then I recommend having your fabric professionally printed.
- ◆ **Once you have printed the fabric, allow it to dry.**

Note: An image printed on fabric usually appears duller or less vibrant than the original. This doesn't matter if you plan to completely cover the picture with stitch. Also print a high-quality copy of your photo on paper, to use as reference during the stitching process.

MODULE FIVE

Project 1: Blue Iris

Blue Iris Outline for Tracing

Print at 100% size. Do not scale.



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BLUE IRIS REFERENCE IMAGE

A .jpg file of this image is available for download.

It is located in Lesson 5.0.



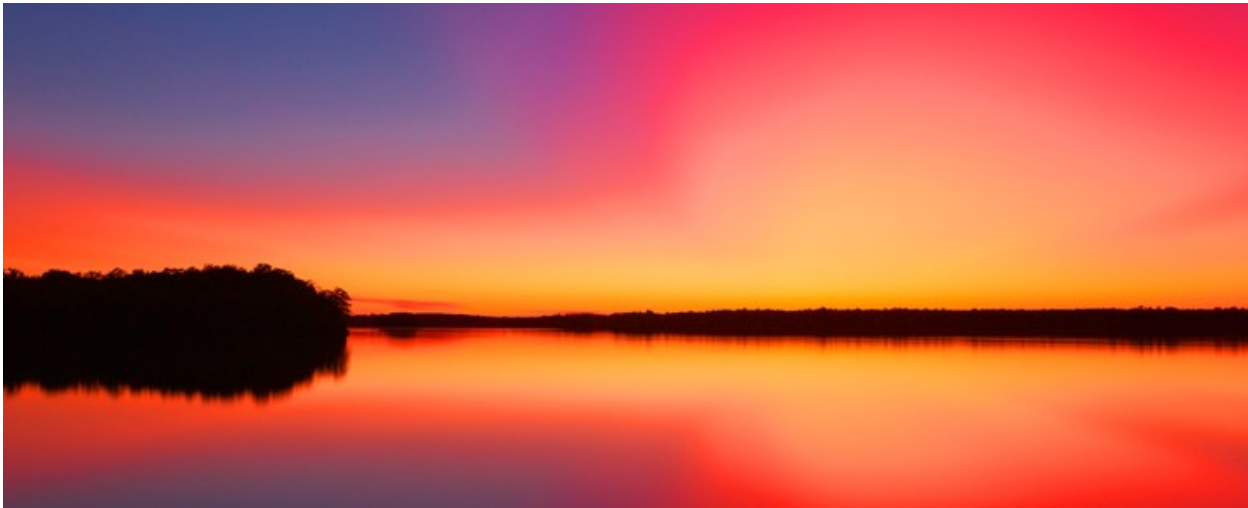
MODULE SIX

Project 2: Sunset Scene

SUNSET SCENE REFERENCE IMAGE

A .jpg file of this image is available for download. Use the .jpg for printing onto your fabric.

It is located in Lesson 6.0.



Preparing the Sunset Scene for Printing

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW TO PREPARE YOUR SUNSET SCENE FOR PRINTING ON FABRIC.

1. Print the image

Follow the directions given in Module 4 to print the supplied .jpeg image onto fabric.

Alternatively, prepare your own photo according to the editing suggestions in Module 3.

2. Stabilise the printed fabric

Stabilise the photo using firm stabiliser, fusing the photo and stabiliser together.

3. Select your thread

Select your thread. I have used 40-gauge polyester machine embroidery thread.

4. Set up your machine

To work this design as demonstrated, set your machine to free motion zigzag stitch and lower the feed dogs.

The stitch width and length used in this demonstration are:

- Width: 2 mm
- Length: 2 mm

The speed at which you stitch, and how much you move the fabric around will then control the size of the stitching. For example:

- Fast stitching speed and small fabric movement results in tiny zigzag stitches
- Moderate stitching speed and much larger fabric movement results in much larger zigzag stitches.

MODULE SEVEN

Project 3: Still Life With Pears

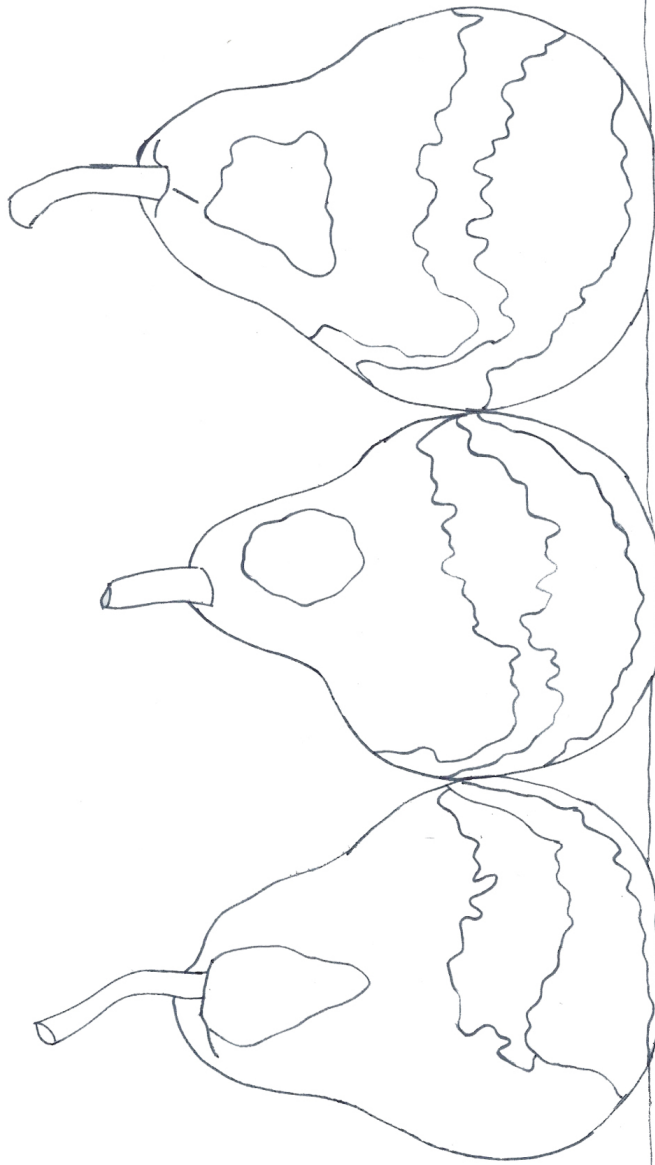
STILL LIFE WITH PEARS REFERENCE IMAGES

Use the .jpg and PDF files located separately in Lesson 7.0 for tracing or printing onto your fabric. These images are for reference only.



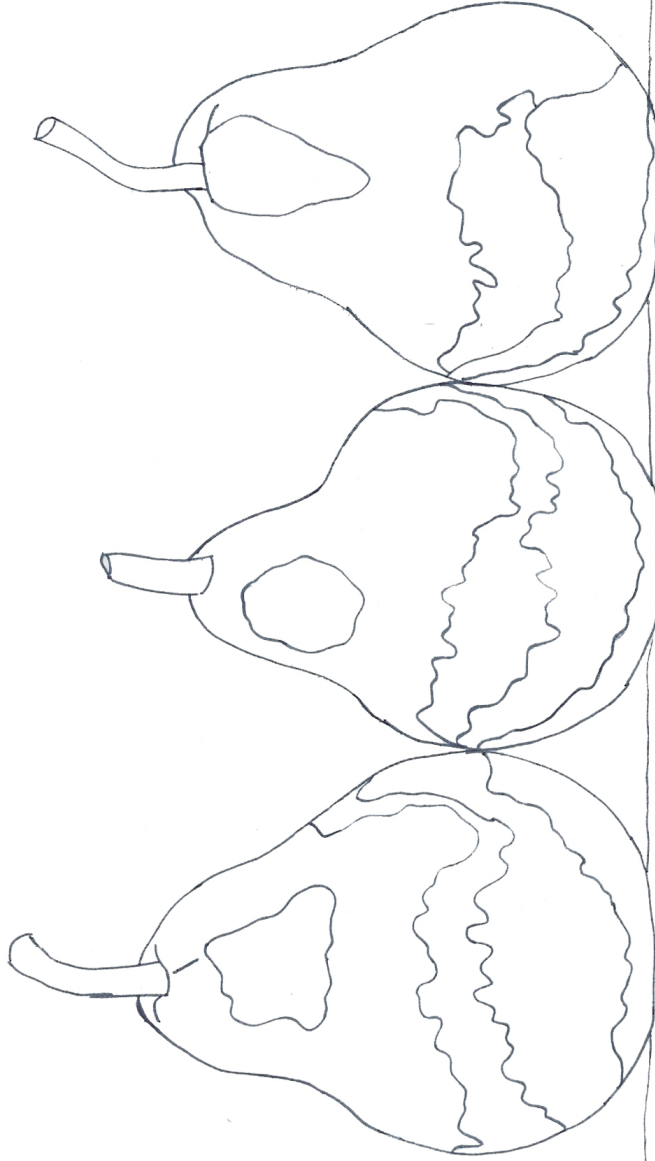


Trio of Pears design



© Deborah Wirsu

Trio of pears - Reversed for tracing



© Deborah Wirsu

Preparing the Pears for Printing

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW TO PREPARE YOUR PEARS FOR PRINTING ON FABRIC.

1. **Choose a Photo:** Use one of the two supplied images of Pears to use for this project. Alternatively, choose a photo of your own to work on instead.
2. The two supplied images of pears are edited and ready for printing.
3. If working on your own photo, prepare it for printing by following the photo editing guidelines in Module 3: Editing Photos for Thread Painting.
4. **Print Your Image onto Fabric:** Follow the directions outlined in Module 4: Printing and Stabilising, to transfer the image onto the fabric.
5. **Stabilise the Printed Fabric:** Using firm stabiliser (e.g. Pellon Heavy Weight Stabiliser, or Buckram Stabiliser) and a sheet of fusible web (e.g. Vliesofix or MistyFuse), fuse the printed fabric to the stabiliser by placing the fusible web in between the two layers.
6. **Select Your Thread:** Use your printed fabric and reference photo to choose a selection of appropriate thread colours for your thread painting. Remember to include colours to use for highlighting or adding depth to blended colours. Recommended: 40-gauge polyester or rayon machine embroidery thread.
7. **Set Up Your Machine for Free Motion Thread Painting:** This project is worked entirely in free motion zigzag stitch.
 - a) Fit an open toe free motion presser foot and lower the feed dogs.
 - b) Set Zigzag stitch width and length: Keeping in mind that you can vary the stitch width and length by moving the fabric freely under the needle, the stitch width and length used in this demonstration are:

Width: 2mm

Length: 2mm

MODULE EIGHT

Project 4: Stitching the Eyes in a Portrait

STITCHING THE EYE IN A PORTRAIT REFERENCE IMAGES

Use the .jpg and PDF files located separately in Lesson 8.0 for tracing or printing onto your fabric. This image is for reference only.



Preparing the Eye Project for Printing

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW TO PREPARE THIS PROJECT FOR PRINTING ON FABRIC.

1. **Choose a Photo:** Use the supplied image or choose a similar picture of your own for this project.
2. The supplied image is already edited and ready for printing.
3. If working on your own photo, prepare it for printing by following the photo editing guidelines in Module 3: Editing Photos for Thread Painting.
4. **Print Your Image onto Fabric:** Follow the directions outlined in Module 4: Printing and Stabilising, to transfer the image onto the fabric.
5. **Stabilise the Printed Fabric:** Using firm stabiliser (e.g. Pellon Heavy Weight Stabiliser, or Buckram Stabiliser) and a sheet of fusible web (e.g. Vliesofix or MistyFuse), fuse the printed fabric to the stabiliser by placing the fusible web in between the two layers.
6. **Select Your Thread:** Use your printed fabric and reference photo to choose a selection of appropriate thread colours for your thread painting. Remember to include colours to use for highlighting or adding depth to blended colours. An appropriate thread weight for this type of project is 40-gauge polyester or rayon machine embroidery thread.
7. **Set Up Your Machine for Free Motion Thread Painting:** This project is worked entirely in free motion zigzag stitch.
 - a) Fit an open toe free motion presser foot.
 - b) Lower the feed dogs.
 - c) Select the zigzag stitch option.
 - d) Set Zigzag stitch width and length: Keeping in mind that you can vary the stitch width and length by moving the fabric freely under the needle, the stitch width and length used in this demonstration are:
 - Width: 1.5mm
 - Length: 1.5mm

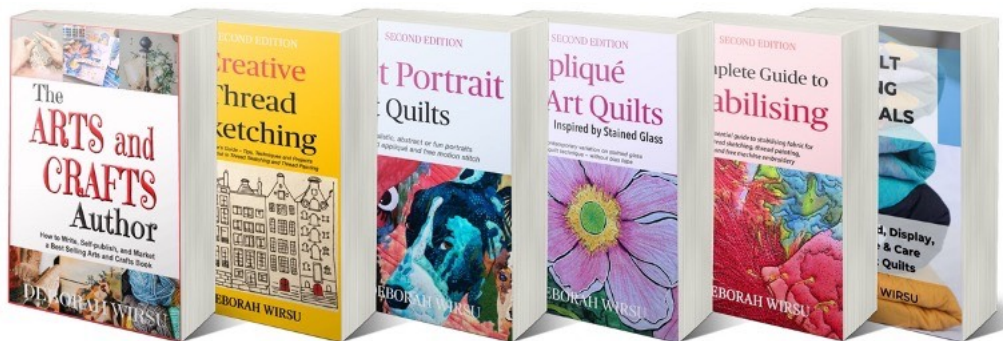
Additional Resources

Books

I have a selection of books available for anyone interested in thread sketching, thread painting, art quilting, or even writing your own arts and crafts books.

Find out more at:

<https://www.threadsketchinginaction.com/books-catalogue/>



Courses and Resources

Explore the range of resources and online courses available from TSIA (Thread Sketching in Action).

For more information, visit:

<https://www.threadsketchinginaction.com/>

About the Author

Deborah Wirsu is an Australian author, artist, musician, and business owner with over 30 years experience in the arts and crafts world, and 15 years of running online businesses, including the highly successful Thread Sketching In Action.

She is a 4 x Amazon Best Seller and has written and self-published eight non-fiction books in the arts, crafts, and online business fields.

Deborah's strong background in creative arts and business, combined with her teaching experience, authorship, positivity, and *'leave no person behind'* attitude have earned her a dedicated following among her fans.

Deborah has qualifications in Creative Textiles, Freelance Journalism, Editing and Proofreading, Music, and (curiously) Medical Administration. She is also a Certified Business and Entrepreneurship Coach.

ThreadSketchingInAction.com

DeborahWirsu.com