

Painted Embroidery Pillow

You guys seem to really love stitching the painterly style designs, overlapping open fills that mimic the loose fills of watercolor painting. Sometimes, though, you just have to think: why let the embroidery machine have all the fun? Let's go back to the roots of the painterly style, and actually paint 'em! You heard me, you can turn any one-color scribble design into a painterly design, even if you're not feeling terribly artistically inclined. The style just dictates large, colorful washes. It's easy for anyone to try! When you're done, turn it into a chic pillow to show off not only your crafty skills but your artistic ones as well.

Supplies

So, to make your painterly pillow, you'll need:

Awesome light-stitching scribble design (You can

Steps To Complete



A hairdryer!

See, sometimes when I do these tutorials they go smoothly. And sometimes they don't. So let this be you learning from my mistakes. Keep a hairdryer around! Why? Because getting your paint to dry when you want it is an important step. You'll see what I mean later.



Now you'll want to wrap your fabric around your pillow form, so the backsides almost completely overlap one another. Then, flip your fabric over and lightly mark or take note of where you want your design to be. Probably, smack dab in the middle of the pillow.

Now it's time to stitch that design!

Hoop up some cutaway stabilizer with your fabric. (For lighter-stitching designs like you're using here, a sheer mesh cutaway such as Sulky Soft 'n' Sheer or Floriani No Show Mesh can be an awesome choice.) You can either choose a regular scribble design, OR what you can do if your machine will allow it is pick your favorite painterly design, but just stitch the outlines, and leave off the open fill washes. This is usually the last stop on the design. I would recommend stitching this outline in black or another dark color so it hides your brush strokes on top of it.



Here's my nice black firebird design. Looks quite different from the [original](#), doesn't it? Well, it's up to us now to add that brilliant pop of color...



Start by coating your entire design in a light wash of water. I tried this with a brush, but honestly, I think a spray bottle of water might be better, and distribute the water more evenly. You also want to add this wash of water well outside your design area, so the paint has space it can bleed into before it hits a dry patch. Also, the goal here is lightly damp, NOT soaking!



You can mix up your colors like you would on a palette. I recommend watering your paints down so they can bleed and blend a little better. Painting with paint straight out of the bottle might be too harsh, and not give us the light washes we're looking for.



I started with the yellows in the center of the bird. Remember, this doesn't have to be perfect! That's the fun of this, and why it's so easy for anyone to try. Just loosely brush the color where you'd like it to go and let it gently bleed out.



Next I worked in the orangey red color...



And then some both splashes of purple, in the wings and tail. You can see how my colors are starting to spread and blend into each other. That's good! That's the look we're going for. Try not to have a perfectionist's mindset with this project. The beauty is the organic nature the paint brings!



Finally, I added a few touches of blue to the tips of the wings and tail.



Big, bright, bold and beautiful. This is exactly the look the stitches are mimicking in the painterly designs, only now we get to do it for real! However, you might notice something about your design at this point. Your paint is slowly starting to bleed outwards...



If you're happy with how your painted embroidery looks now, we want to STOP that paint from going anywhere else! This is where your hairdryer comes in. On a medium setting and not too hot, gently blow air on your fabric to quickly dry it. Make sure you don't have it so close to the fabric that it starts to push the paint around! Just keep it steadily moving around your piece, starting at the outer edges (where bleeding is most likely to spread) and then working towards the middle.



You want to know WHY it's so important to stop the bleeding process? Well, take a look at my first attempt. My nice pretty washes soon dried out into shapeless, tie-dye inspired blobs. Pretty I guess, but not at all what I was going for!

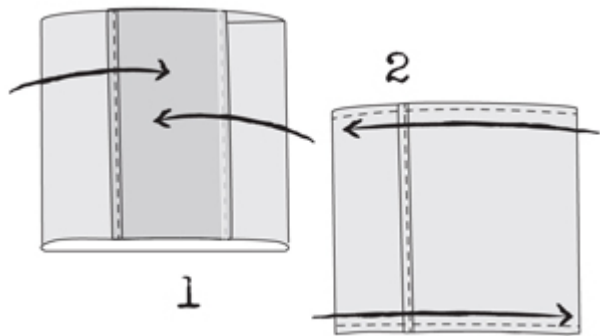
If you want to avoid this, be sure to control how your paint dries. Learn from my mistakes!

Somebody might as well...



OK, so once your fabric is dry, we might as well turn it into something fun we can show it off on! This can be anything, but I thought a pillow would be fun. I'm using my favorite technique for pillows, which is a no-zipper folded back.

Simply fold over the raw edges of the long sides of your fabric, like so, and pin in place. Sew a seam down the sides to give them a finished edge.



Now, with right sides facing in (that means your pretty painting should be facing inside) fold those two overlapping edges over each other, so your new folded square is the same dimensions as your pillow.

Once it's folded in place, sew a seam down either side (like shown) to close up the top and bottom of the pillow. Then turn it right side out!



Once it's turned right side out, you can stuff your pillow form inside, and the overlapping edges will keep it safe and snug inside. No messing with a zipper! Just how I like it.

Before you set your pillow up completely, you may wish to treat your fabric paint according to your bottle directions in order to set the paint permanently.



So, love the painterly look? Let it inspire you to try it out yourself! Recreate your favorite painterly styles in real washes of color, or go to town on a scribble or light stitching design and make your own “painterly” style design. It’s craft meets art, and a perfect way to brighten up your home decor.