

Simply Modern Ideas—with Thread!

Text and Photos by Cindy Scraba

It's time to indulge your creative soul while playing with thread in the process! The modern world of quilting and embroidery (hand or machine) welcomes you no matter the level of experience you currently enjoy. I love the modern term: big stitch. And how about adding: little stitch? They both imply—no limitations—no rules!

Here are some simple and modern ideas, gleaned from my recent samples, to weave into your own quilty projects. Usually when I plan a project, my first thought centres around the threads I desire to play with. Secondly, I consult my stash for fabric and treasure that often hold some special meaning.

The first spark to design my little bag, *Blue Birds*, came from variegated teal/aqua perle cotton #9770 discovered in my (modest!) Presencia™ Thread collection. Plus, the simply adorable embroidery design tugged at my heartstrings (design credit: Helen Stubblings, Redwork Club Birdie Bunting pencil case pattern). My stitching ideas sprang forth once the dimensional appliqués were needle-turned and snuggled into the Soft and Stable by Annie™, which stabilized the bag sides. The bag base became further supported with a layer of Texture Magic™ machine-stippled and shrunk with steam which created a densely textured border. The birdie pair in the focus panel was brought to life by outlining and punctuating with thread. The girly curls were fashioned from bullion knots and the handsome crew cut kept me in stitches!

The functional features of this bag were twofold: the ability to see the contents at-a-glance and keep supplies together for quick access. Wouldn't you rather be stitching than wasting time searching for supplies? The clear



Blue Birds

vinyl on the back showcases the fabric lining and accommodates an embroidery booklet of stitches with the page held open—perfect for travel and quick reference. The side zipper keeps supplies from escaping if the bag is lying on its side. Trust yourself and tap into your own creative resources to develop patterns. Your projects are guaranteed to be unique and made with a high level of satisfaction.





My grand-pugs,
Winnie and Elsie

If you love pets, consider creating a fun bag with their mug shot. This particular bag features photographs of my grand-pugs, Winnie and Elsie, on the front and back. I used EQ® Printable Cotton Lawn Sheets because they are densely woven and the ink jet printing shows detail better than other brands I've tried. Free-motion stitching to outline the pugs' wrinkles, ears, eyes and

mouth were most challenging on Elsie, the black pug. My thread of choice was Superior's MonoPoly™ invisible clear and smoke with Bottom Line™ in the bobbin. I free-motion stitched the fabric print and lining with a layer of Soft and Stable by Annie™ stabilizer between, which gave puffy, trapunto-like results. The border fabric is dark denim and provides extra stability. You could incorporate these ideas into any pattern of your choice.

I couldn't resist sharing a *Blueberry Bag*. Last summer, I had an abundance of amazing blueberries given to me by my neighbor, quilt and fabric artist, Ionne McCauley. I preserved the bounty in a photo and

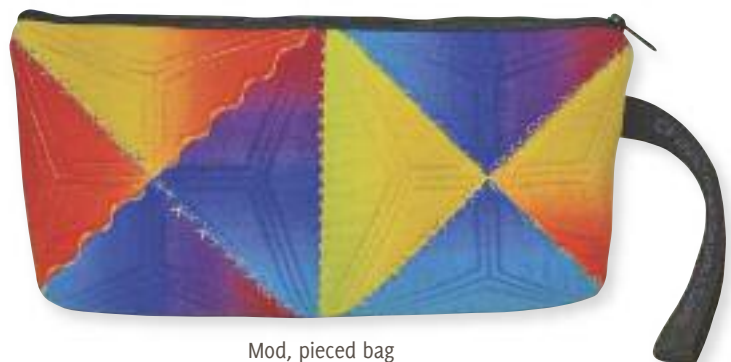
printed the image on an EQ® printable sheet. A single 8.5 x 11 inch sheet was the perfect size to sandwich, free-motion quilt and fold to make this wee sample with a vinyl window. The top thread was Kimono Silk™ Emperor #329.

Tip: The organic blueberry zipper pull was made with this quick felting method: scrunch up a small ball of wool fibre, wet it and rub between the palms of your hands, add a drop of soap, roll into a ball and shape until you have the size you desire, rinse and dry. The fibres are permanently felted.

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Blueberry Bag



Mod, pieced bag

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In my mod, pieced bag (shown on page 39), the brightly coloured triangles were a result of repeated cutting and piecing from a larger block, until I was satisfied with the scale and harmony of the triangles. The piece de résistance was stitching new variegated thread colours and specialty stitches with my sewing machine. The Fantastico™ thread quilted and embellished the patchwork. The gusset was made simply by pinching the bottom of the sides and sewing a seam.

Tip: Choosing a fabric with gradation (the triangles) offers endless surprises when you cut square blocks and re-piece the triangles. Fun! Have you tried running perle cotton thread in your bobbin yet? This is another specialty type thread to wind on a bobbin. Be careful not to make the bobbin full. The stitching appears on the reverse side, in this case the black side, of my sample, which compares eight-weight and 12-weight perle cotton. Both weights show off very well! I've used this same technique in the Blue Bird bag along the top and bottom edges of the white focus panel. The variegated thread spreads its colours effectively with the machine method as well as the hand-embroidered method along the string of pennants.

Tip: When machine stitching with perle cotton in the bobbin, match your top thread colour to the bobbin thread (as shown on the muslin sample) to camouflage and unify your stitches. Slightly lengthen your stitch and avoid dense designs that overlap stitches. I prefer using Superior's Topstitch™ needle size #90/14 for this technique.

I encourage everyone to create a signature dream bag that is functional and expressive. Whether they are small, medium or large, each one is unique and endearing. The samples featured in this article are crafted without traditional patterns, catering to unleashed creativity. I invite you to share you're your dream bag by sending it to: cindysthreadworks@telus.net. It's always exciting to see what other quilters create! ♦



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