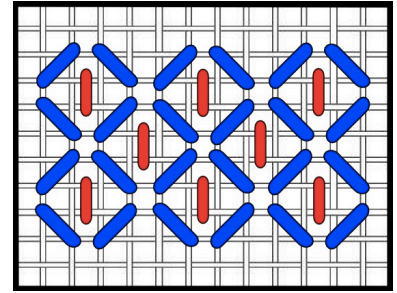


Stitch Spotlight: Alicia's Lace Variations ***by Diane Snyder***

One of my hands-down favorite stitches to use is Alicia's Lace Variations. As its name suggests, it works well for a lacy effect on clothing such as collars and dresses or textiles such as curtains and linens. The basic structure of diamond shapes is very easy to compensate because the diagonal stitches are over only two threads so the compensating stitch will be a single tent stitch in the correct orientation to match the pattern.

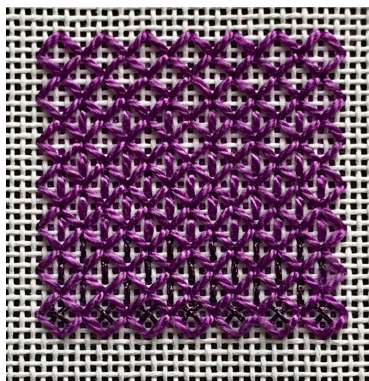


I find it a very versatile stitch because of all the variations that can be used within the basic diamond shapes. You can leave the open areas as they are; this produces a very light and airy stitch perfect for backgrounds. The weight of the thread or the number of strands determines how much open canvas reads visually in the overall texture. Adding a single upright stitch over two threads in the center of the diamond adds more texture and makes the overall pattern denser; again, the choice of thread weight or strands will determine how dense or open the overall pattern appears. You may choose to fill every diamond shape, every other diamond shape or row in a pattern, or add the uprights randomly throughout.

My favorite way to use this stitch is for skies. On an 18-mesh canvas, I like using two strands of a subtly overdyed silk that matches the canvas color. In areas where I want the sky to seem lighter I'll work the diamond shapes with the space between left open; in areas where I want the sky darker I'll add the uprights in the center. Because I am only using two strands and matching the color, this effect is very subtle. You may not notice it while you are stitching, but stand back from your project and the visual effect will become more apparent.

You can also play with the density and texture of this stitch by changing the thread types as well. You may choose to use two different weights of the same overdyed. Use more strands for the diamonds and fewer strands for the upright or vice versa. Some other options are Caron threads in Watercolours and Wildflowers, Gloriana in Lorikeet and Princess Perle, Threadworx Merino in Tapestry and Crewel weights. You can also change the thread textures, for example, by using a matte thread such as wool or cotton with a shiny thread such as metallic braid.

Other ways to vary this stitch would be to use a French or Colonial Knot in place of the upright stitches, work Cross Stitches or Smyrna Cross Stitches over 2, work a small space stitch such as Mosaic, or even put a bead or small sequin in the space between the diamond shapes. Use any stitch or embellishment that will fit in a 2 x 2 thread area and your imagination is the limit!



The sample was stitched on 18 mesh white mono canvas in a contrasting thread to show the stitch structure. The diamonds are work in #5 perle cotton throughout the sample. The top 3 rows have no upright stitches. The 4th row has upright stitches with #5 perle in each space while the 5th row does not. Rows 6 through 9 have upright stitches in #5 perle throughout. Rows 10 through 12 have upright stitches in each diamond using #8 metallic braid, while the last row uses #8 metallic braid in a Cross Stitch over two threads instead of an upright stitch.

You can see how changing the thread and the options for the upright stitches can have an overall effect on the density and texture of this very lovely and versatile stitch pattern.