



Christmas Bauble Bling

Free-Machine Embroidered Baubles

Creating new textiles with water soluble stabilisers and machine stitching

By Tina Whiteley

Handmade decorations always add an element of fun and unique personality to your Christmas tree. You'll love making these free-motion embroidered baubles, as they are quick and easy to sew and you can make them any size and colour to fit with your home décor and Christmas theme. Even better, they are very light and won't shatter or break if they fall, which makes them perfect if you have active toddlers and pets around the tree this Christmas.

You will need

- Selection of threads, fibres, fabrics, wool & silk roving & Angelina fibres.
- Fabric scissors
- Low-sided embroidery hoop
- 2 x 1 metre of water soluble Vilene
- Sewing machine, needle at least size 12 and suitable threads.
- Hand sewing needles and threads, beads sequins or ribbons to decorate (optional)
- Old towel and baking parchment
- Cardboard template(s) and pencil or water-erasable marker pen

Step 1 – Using your shape templates

- Print off the bauble templates onto a sheet of A4 card. Cut out the templates by hand and use a hole punch or an awl to give you the hole at the top of each bauble. If you have an electronic cutting machine or a bauble die then use those to cut out the shapes for you.
- Using a water erasable pen or soft pencil, trace around the templates onto one of the 1 metre sheets of water soluble fabric. Flip the fabric and lay it face down on the bench.

Step 2 – Layout your yarns

- Lay out your chosen yarns, threads and fabric scraps over the drawn templates and arrange so that most of them lie within your template shapes.



Step 3 – Making the bauble sandwich

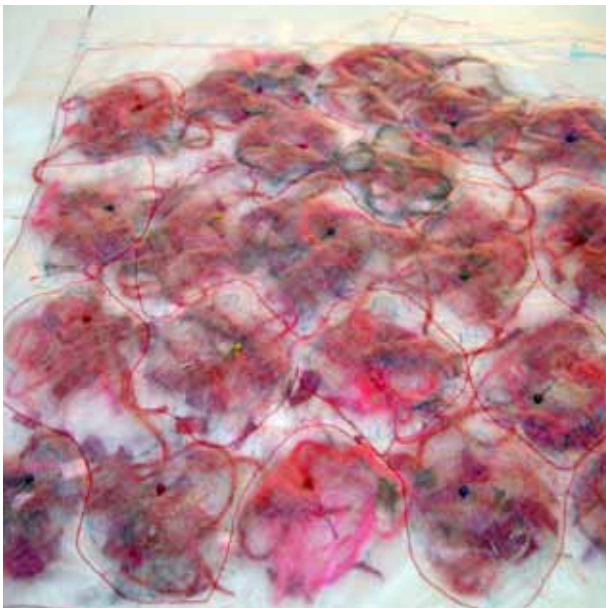
- Place the other metre of water soluble fabric over the top to make a sandwich. Carefully roll the sandwich, flip it and unroll it back on to the bench, so the

traced shapes are face up. Pin along the very edges of the water soluble fabric to enclose all the filling within the sandwich rectangle.

- Set up your machine for normal straight stitch with any thread that you have in the machine and then stitch around the 4 sides, (inside the line of pins), so that the sandwich is secure. Remove the pins from around the edge and use them to pin each bauble, so that the layers stay put, as shown below.

Step 4- Stitching between bauble shapes

- Set up your machine for free motion embroidery. Please refer to your manual for the correct settings for your machine, regarding tension and dropping feed dogs for free motion stitching. Ideally, stitch length should be zero. Avoiding the pins, roughly straight stitch in between all the bauble shapes, to further ensure the filling doesn't move too much when you start to sew your shapes as shown below.

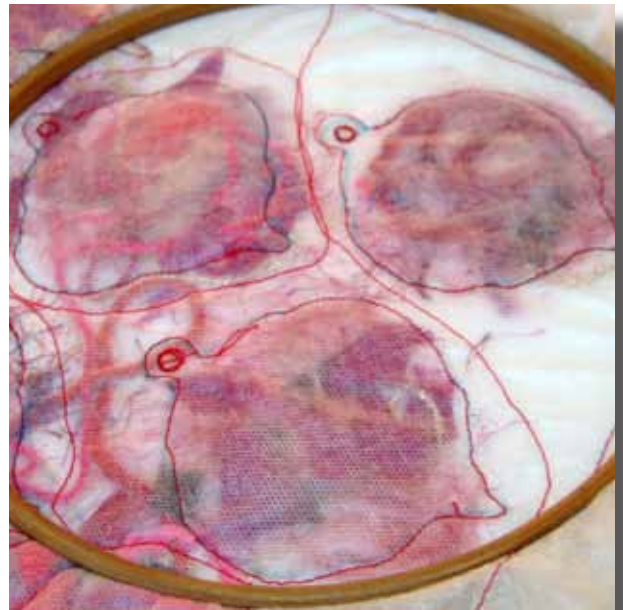


- Don't worry too much about the neatness of this stitching, as it will disappear when you soak away the water soluble fabric. It's just designed to keep everything in place while you sew your individual baubles.
- You can use a contrasting thread or use the same thread that you will sew your bauble outlines with, whichever you prefer. This random stitching will also act as a bit of a practice for you to get used to the movement of the fabric as you free motion stitch. However, you can practice on a spare piece of fabric too. Remove the pins

at this stage, before outlining the baubles.

Step 5 - Stitching your bauble - the shape outline

- Next, outline all the bauble shapes with free motion straight stitch. This line will not be seen so you can use the same thread that you previously used for sewing in between the baubles, however it is the foundation stitching of your bauble, so start and end with a locking stitch to avoid any unravelling.



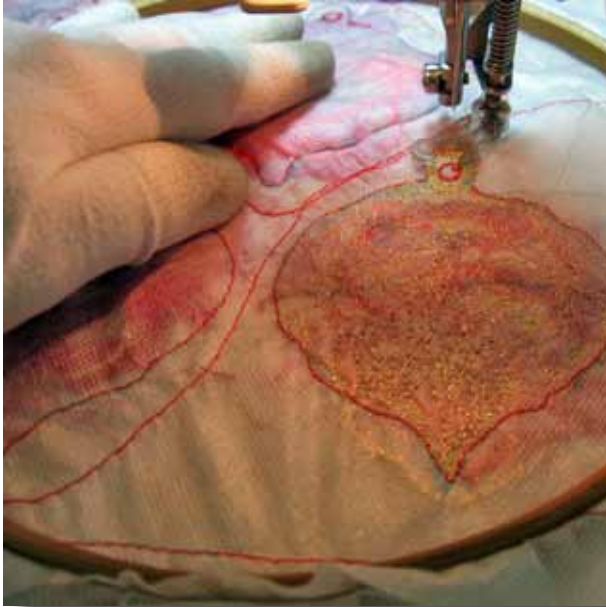
- If you are a beginner, you may wish to use a low-sided spring hoop to assist with free motion sewing, as it will take some of the strain off your hands. It takes a little longer to sew out all the designs, as you are constantly moving the hoop, but there are other types of hoops on the market that move more freely across the fabric, so it's worth experimenting to see what is most comfortable for you.
- Alternatively if you are not using a hoop, gripping gloves such as Machingers can help with guiding the fabric under the machine

Step 6- Stitching your bauble - criss-cross inside

- Next, sew free motion straight stitch randomly across each bauble, within the outline. Start and end sewing with a lock stitch. You can use a metallic thread, or choose a colour that you like and use the same thread in the bobbin so the front and back match. It doesn't matter how you do it, or in which direction you sew, as long as you make sure that all the threads and fabric scraps underneath are connected with stitching and

that you also connect your outlines, so that they don't unravel when you rinse them out.

- Don't forget to outline the small holes, which will be where the hanging thread goes through and ensure you connect the stitched circle with the rest of the stitching as shown



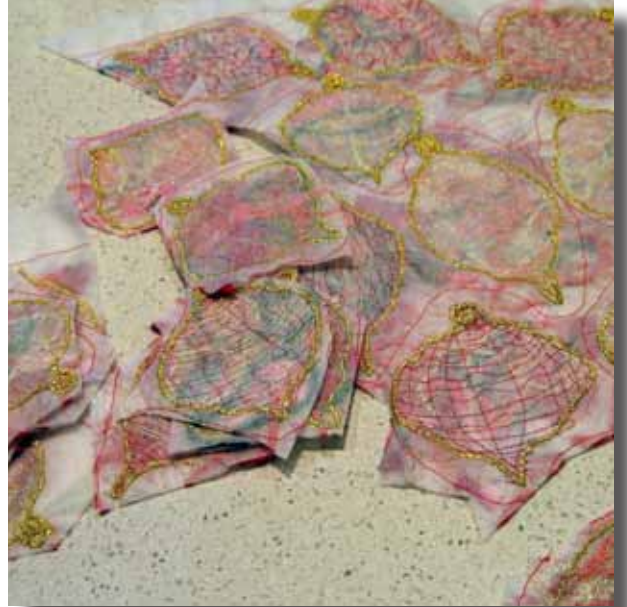
Step 7 - Stitching your bauble - outline satin stitch

- After criss cross stitching of all your bauble shapes, you will then be going over the outlines with a close satin stitch. Set up your machine for free motion zig zag stitch. Again, refer to your manual for correct settings, but I usually use a stitch width of 2 and a spacing of 0.4 to give an even close satin stitch. Reduce your stitch width to 1.5 for the satin stitch around the small hole at the top of each bauble.



Step 8 - Remove work from the machine

- Once you have completed all of the stitching for the bauble designs, remove the water soluble sandwich from the machine, ready to cut out your bauble shapes.



Step 9 - Cutting out the baubles

- Roughly cut the baubles out as shown in the picture above and then carefully trim them, snipping close to the outside edge of the satin stitch, but not into it. If you are a bit wary of getting too close to the edge of the stitching, leave a little gap as you can always trim up the edges and cut off any whiskers of thread poking out the sides, once the baubles have been rinsed and dried.



Step 10 – Rinsing your baubles

- Place all your baubles in a sink, bowl or bucket and soak in hand hot water. As the water soluble fabric starts to dissolve, the baubles should feel a bit gloopy and you should now be able to see all the threads and stitching, as shown above.
- You don't want to have any of the water soluble fabric visible on your bauble, but at the same time you need to leave them a little bit sticky, so that when they dry they will harden slightly. With practice, you will get to know at what point the baubles feel just right and will dry clear.



Step 11– Drying your baubles

- Place the wet baubles onto some baking parchment or an old towel and leave in the sun or in a warm place to dry. When completely dry, iron each one flat (place a sheet of baking parchment over the top so you don't burn them or melt them on the iron).
- Feed a loop of thread, decorative ribbon or twine through the hole of each bauble, tie off the loose ends and thread those through the loop. Now the bauble is ready to hang on the tree.

Some additional things you can try:

- Vary the sizes and colours of your baubles to suit your tree or space to be decorated.
- Suspend a number of baubles from a length of ribbon and use them as bunting over

a doorway, window or mantelpiece.

- Try the same free motion stitching technique using any shapes you like, such as holly leaves, snowflakes, stars or even angels.
- If you have more time, let your creativity go wild and further embellish your baubles with stitch, beads, paper or fabric flowers. If adhering fabric to the bauble at this stage, use a hot glue gun or fabric glue.

I hope you have fun with this project and remember that you can use the techniques listed here to make any banner or free-hanging shapes you like. You can even use your shapes to make some brooches.

(Please refer to Tutorial #1 for instructions on how to attach brooch backs to your project).

