Complete Charts for

A Renaissance Sampler

from the Victoria & Albert Museum

including 17 patterns

by

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The sampler. Charts are given for the 17 motifs worked in tent stitch.

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The Sampler

The patterns in this book originate from a spot sampler, dating from the first half of the 17th century, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. There are 17 motifs realistically depicting plants and animals, together with some more geometrical designs at the bottom. The sampler material is silk yarn on linen canvas and the motifs are mostly worked in tent stitch. The stitches are fairly small and many different shades of silk were used.

Many such small motifs depicting the natural world were embroidered in tent and cross stitch in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The motifs were later cut out and applied to other fabrics, such as velvet or damask, to decorate various domestic textiles. These motif canvases were often made by amateur embroiderers, among them Mary Queen of Scots in her captivity. Advantages were that canvas is easy to work on, the small pieces were easily carried, and the final decision on arrangement of motifs could be made last. Famous examples of this technique that have survived are the Oxburgh bed hangings, some at Hardwick Hall and some at Victoria and Albert Museum, and the uncut canvases at Traquair House.

It should be remembered that when the sampler was made, the motifs were not only regarded as beautiful images, but usually had deep symbolic religious meanings. The particular flowers selected for this sampler are found repeatedly on both church and secular textiles. As an example, the rose is closely associated with the Virgin Mary. Moreover, various flowers and animals were used as badges for different royal and noble families. The sources of the motifs were often contemporary herbals and natural history books. Printing methods had improved and these types of books became reasonably available and very popular at this time.

The ambition here has been to give charts for all the 17 naturalistic motifs in the sampler, charts that follow the original as closely as possible. From these charts endless variations can be created, for example using different colourways, using only part of a motif, as a single rose or strawberry, or combining these patterns with geometrical borders and backgrounds.

Technicalities

Two types of stitches occur in the charts: squares (in original tent stitch) and lines (in original backstitch). In the original there are also a few occurrences of other stitches, but these have been converted to combinations of square and line stitch.

The charts can be used for many different techniques: cross stitch, half cross stitch, needlepoint, petit point, gobeline stitch, hooked rugs, beading, and even knitting and crochet. In some techniques, the backstitches cannot be included. Because of the many possibilities, no instructions relating to techniques will be given here, nor will there be suggestions of materials to use. The charts are illustrated by the motifs sewn in tent stitch on Penelope canvas using stranded cotton on a background of beige wool gobeline stitch.

The original silk yarn colours are reasonably well preserved, but it is naturally impossible to have an exact idea of the original colours. They were probably brighter than those seen today. In the patterns many different shades of the same colour are usually used. An effort has been made to keep this richness of shades, as it is essential to the beauty of the final results. All colours will be given in the following system: Colour/blend - brightness. Colour is a "pure" colour, such as green or yellow. Blend, where used, indicates that the colour is between basic colours, so that a yellowish green is denoted "green/yellow" and a greenish yellow "yellow/green". The brightness uses the scale: almost black - very dark - dark - medium - light - very light - almost white. The same symbol is used for the same colour in all charts. Thus  is always Red - medium.

In addition to the size and the number of colours for each chart, the number of stitches of each colour is given. This is a help in estimating how much yarn is needed. Make a test square of 7 x 7 stitches and measure how much yarn was used. Double this amount and add 25% for ends, to get the amount needed for 100 stitches. Thus, if 50 cm (20 inches) of yarn was used in the test square, about 1,25 m (50 inches) will be necessary for 100 stitches.

The "Parrot with red berries" slip is used to exemplify the possibilities of variations of a pattern. The parrot pattern was worked in cross stitch on beige aida, using eight different colourways. This example also shows the effect of mirroring the pattern to get a left (original) and a right version.
Parrot with red berries

Size: 57 times 48 stitches. Ten colours.

Square stitches:

- Black 4
- Grey - dark 6
- Grey - medium 49
- White 8
- Red - dark 101
- Red - medium 98
- Yellow - light 53
- Green - very dark 437
- Green/yellow - light 388
- Blue - medium 64
Parrot variations

The parrot pattern is shown in eight different colourways: white, yellow, orange, red, green, blue, lilac, and black. The berries also have the same colours, but in a completely different order. Half the patterns have been mirrored, and the eight birds are bound together with a simple line of stitches representing a vine. The technique is cross stitch in stranded cotton on aida cloth.
Leopard

Size: 95 times 68 stitches. Six colours.

Square stitches:

- Black          20
- White          9
- Brown - dark   674
- Brown/yellow - medium  593
- Yellow/grey - dark  580
- Yellow/grey - medium  497
Wild rose

Size: 76 times 94 stitches. Eleven colours.

Square stitches:

- Red - dark 252
- Red - medium 199
- Pink - light 267
- Pink - almost white 184
- Brown - dark 2
- Yellow - medium 12
- Yellow - light 62
- Green - almost black 842
- Green - very dark 447
- Green - medium 537
- Green/yellow - light 276
Hare

Size: 75 times 57 stitches. Seven colours.

Square stitches:

- Black 15
- White 100
- Brown - dark 366
- Brown/yellow - dark 353
- Brown/yellow - medium 410
- Yellow - dark 252
- Yellow - medium 99
Snake

Size: 125 times 24 stitches. Seven colours.

Square stitches:
- Black 1
- White 167
- Red - medium 53
- Blue - almost black 479
- Blue - dark 117
- Blue - medium 110
- Blue - very light 190
Peacock

Size: 88 times 113 stitches. Thirteen colours.

Square stiches:

- Black: 8
- Grey - medium: 329
- Grey - light: 208
- White: 10
- Brown/yellow - dark: 1395
- Yellow - medium: 846
- Green - very dark: 47

- Green - medium: 84
- Green/yellow - light: 73
- Blue - almost black: 647
- Blue - dark: 377
- Blue - medium: 300
- Blue - very light: 167

xxx 13 xxx
Tulip

Size: 80 times 96 stitches. Eleven colours.

Square stitches:

- Red - very dark 432
- Red - dark 333
- Red - medium 408
- Pink - light 195
- Pink - almost white 245
- Yellow - dark 65
- Yellow - light 156
- Green - almost black 452
- Green - very dark 403
- Green - medium 589
- Green/yellow - light 377

xxx 15 xxx
Violet

Size: 80 times 95 stitches. Fifteen colours.

Square stitches:

- Yellow - dark 121
- Yellow - medium 224
- Yellow - almost white 148
- Green - almost black 901
- Green - very dark 163
- Green - medium 682
- Green/yellow - light 460
- Blue - almost black 434

- Blue - dark 110
- Blue - medium 100
- Blue - very light 132
- Purple - medium 45
- Purple - light 52
- Purple - very light 68

Backstitches:
- Black 139
Strawberries


Square stitches:
- Red/brown - medium 360
- Red - medium 243
- Pink - light 107
- Pink - almost white 87
- Yellow - medium 88
- Green - very dark 1381

Backstitches:
- Green - medium 678
- Green/yellow - light 874

Backstitches are in groups of three:
The mid dashes (vertical on left berry, diagonal on right berries) are Brown.
The outer dashes (diagonal on left berry, horizontal/vertical on right berries) are Yellow.
Grapes

Size: 89 times 111 stitches. Eleven colours.

Square stitches:

- White: 96
- Red - dark: 191
- Red - medium: 138
- Green - almost black: 1671
- Green - very dark: 358
- Green - medium: 995
- Green/yellow - light: 736
- Blue - dark: 220
- Blue - medium: 123
- Purple - light: 188
- Purple - very light: 84

xxx 21 xxx
Size: 93 times 116 stitches. Ten colours.

**Square stitches:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Stitches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red - dark</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red - medium</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink - medium</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink - light</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow - medium</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green - almost black</td>
<td>1061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Stitches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green - very dark</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green - medium</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green/yellow - light</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Backstitches:**

- Yellow/grey - dark | 109
Caterpillar

Size: 65 times 18 stitches. Eight colours.

Square stitches:

- White                9
- Red - medium         35
- Green - almost black 278
- Green - very dark    8
- Green - medium       8
- Green/yellow - light 57
- Green/yellow - almost white 65
- Blue - very light   46
Size: 92 times 99 stitches. Eight colours.

Square stitches:

- Black: 17
- Grey - dark: 3
- White: 31
- Beige - light: 530
- Beige - almost white: 139
- Brown/red - dark: 698
- Brown/red - medium: 574
- Brown/red - light: 673
Carnation

Size: 75 times 93 stitches. Seven colours.

*Square stitches:*

- Red - dark: 568
- Red/brown - medium: 482
- Pink - light: 269
- Pink - almost white: 228
- Green/blue-grey - medium: 1165
- Green/blue - light: 647
- Green/blue - very light: 99
Lion

Size: 84 times 85 stitches. Seven colours.

Square stitches:

- White 13
- Red - medium 12
- Brown - very dark 7
- Brown - dark 1463
- Beige - very dark 1378
- Beige - dark 927
- Beige - almost white 110
Cornflower

Size: 90 times 110 stitches. Ten colours.

Square stitches:

- White 314
- Green - almost black 1003
- Green/blue - dark 490
- Green/blue - light 900
- Green/blue - very light 118
- Blue - almost black 574

- Blue - dark 206
- Blue - medium 270
- Blue - very light 273

Backstitches:

- Brown/red - light 111
Pomegranate

Size: 77 times 93 stitches. Ten colours.

Square stitches:

- White 64
- Red/brown - medium 418
- Pink/brown - dark 131
- Beige - light 147
- Yellow/grey - very dark 112
- Yellow/grey - dark 452
- Green - almost black 758
- Green - medium 682
- Green/yellow - light 575
- Green/yellow - almost white 104