
Felt Advent Calendar with Kata Golda

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- This advent calendar is a seasonal ritual you can use for the month of December. It's inspired by where I live in Pacific Northwest where we have a lot of fir trees. It's assembled just with the running stitch and the back stitch, and it's nice with the little detail that we put into the trunk here. And we will learn how to sew the numbers on these stars. And lastly, we will incorporate the blanket stitch when we add the final detail of the sheep to the bottom of our tree. It's a family heirloom you can keep for years.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- The materials you will use for your advent calendar are wool felt and you need half of a yard of the dark green and half of a yard of this mossy green, an eight by 10 piece of this butter yellow, an eight by 10 piece of white, about a four by six piece of the light brown and the dark brown, and then just a bit of this oatmeal color. You can buy sheets of wool felt. You could use wool sweaters to create this. I also have kits available with these materials. The templates are a large tree. This is the background. Then you have the tree that goes on top of the back tree, and you have two pieces to create the stump, and then the detail of the sheep, and the little pocket shape and star to create the pockets. The tools you'll need are sewing needles, and I like to use these size five Crewel needles. They have a narrow but long eye. They're easy to thread, and they go through the felt very nicely. I like size five. A glue stick, an eraser, writing utensils to mark the felt, a seam ripper, a fabric shears, a small scissors that's very pointy, a paper scissors, embroidery floss, and a ring to hang the tree, or you can use a fabric loop. And lastly, you'll need 24 safety pins.

Chapter 3 - Cut and Stitch

Cut felt

- To start I like to lay out all my templates on their materials. And we're gonna start by cutting out the tree shape. I use my Sharpie and I outline the tree shape. And I keep my fingers close to the edge where I'm making the mark. So that I don't mark in on the fabric. And it's okay if that line gets thinner and thicker, it doesn't have to be a perfectly even line. It's just an indicator of where we're gonna be cutting. For this particular project I wanna make sure that I get these nice curves because they add so much character to our tree. Okay. I use my fabric shears and I cut inside the line, the black line, that I drew. This is when you really appreciate your materials here because you can create such beautiful curves and you don't need to finish the edges. This piece will be laid on top of the dark green felt, and they're not going to match up. So if you don't get the lines exactly, you cut a little in, it's not exactly the same shape as the template, that's just fine. This job is much easier if you're using a sharp shear. Do not ever use your shear to cut paper. 'Cause that will really dull the blade if you use this to cut paper. I use this technique of drawing the template shape directly onto the felt for the big pieces, and that would mean the two trees, the stumps and the sheep. And the technique that I use for the smaller pieces, like the sheep accents, the pocket and the star, is just handholding the template and cutting around the edge. You will cut 24 of these. You will cut 24 of these. And you will cut two of the sheep body and one of everything else.

Stich trunk details

- We're gonna work on the details now. The first thing we're doing is gonna use some glue stick. We're gonna glue the light part of the tree onto the dark part, the shadow. And you'll see how I glued it so that there's dark that comes from underneath and on the two sides. I always have a hard time figuring out which way this head piece goes. The way to figure out is to lay it actually on top of the template. Now I know it fits exactly on the template this way. Then I glue up my sheep head and lay it on. If you're not sure if you're laying it on correctly, you can always lay it onto of your template piece to see if it matches up. And adjust accordingly. This gluing part is only a temporary hold. So it doesn't need to be like, you don't have to go crazy with your glue stick or anything. It's a temporary hold on there. Then I'm gonna glue the two pieces of the sheep together. Again, this piece I like to line up to make sure I'm doing it correctly. They match up so it doesn't matter which one you glue, just make sure it's the back. Lay that on top. I like to do this sheep in two pieces because it gives it a little more, little more substantial when I have two pieces. Then you're gonna glue all 24 of the stars and the pockets together. So I put a dab of glue on the back of the star and place it on the pocket 24 times. Now we're gonna start sewing the details. We'll start with the tree trunk. The tree trunk I'm using a dark brown thread. So it shows a contrast on the lighter brown felt. There's not exact way this needs to be. But I like to have my template nearby so that I can refer to it if needed. I really like this detail of that little swirl in the trunk. It gives it a little extra character I think. I'm gonna do one stitch. Because I'm traveling across the piece and I don't intend to come back, I'm gonna tie a knot on the back here. I did that knot three times. I'm gonna use the backstitch here. Go back into the exact place I came out. Then I'm gonna skip a little space and make another line. My eyes are wandering between my felt piece and my template. Here I'm gonna do another backstitch. I've completed the first line of this. I'm gonna work across following this. I'm gonna jump down a bit. I should mention that this is two strands of embroidery floss that I'm using here. Here I'm gonna do the backstitch as well. I'm gonna jump down to the bottom. There's no real right or wrong way to stitch the trunk. I'm just following this loosely as a guide and making sure that I get this little swirl in here somewhere. It's helpful too to see for spacing just to make sure that I'm getting nice lines and enough lines across the entire trunk. Here I'm gonna incorporate the swirl. First I'm gonna do another backstitch there on that one. Then I'm gonna start this swirl. Here I'm just doing a running stitch. Then I'm gonna go back in and fill in the running stitch. The reason that I prefer the running stitch here as opposed to the backstitch is because in case I make a mistake, it's much easier to rip out the running stitch than the backstitch. At this point I need to add another piece of thread. I like to work with a thread that's just a little bit longer than my arm. Then this is two strands of embroidery floss. When I attach it, I'm just tying it on. I like to make the knot go as close to the fabric as possible. That's one knot and two and three. It's important that you don't, and I'm guilty of doing this too, it's important that you don't wait til your thread is this long to tie a knot. Give yourself a piece of thread to tie a knot with that's about three, at least three inches long. Even though it might seem wasteful and maybe you could get just a few more stitches in, it's really inefficient. And really frustrating too when you're tying a knot with just a little tiny, short piece of thread. Thread my needle. And you work the tree stump til the end in the same way. After I'm done with it, we'll just set it aside for when we do the final assembly of the tree. When I tie off this piece of thread, I'm gonna go underneath the stitch I just took and go through the loop, under again, through the loop and a third time. Each time I'm going underneath, I'm catching a little bit of the felt. That just helps secure the knot.

Stitch sheep details

- So I've already glued these pieces together and these pieces together and we'll start by doing the facial features. So I have one of my needles threaded with two strands and my other needle, for sewing the facial features, with six. I'll start with the eyes. The sleeping sheep's eyes. I can look at my template and see the placement. And that is the reason I like to glue this head on. This head piece is a little bit in the way, you're wondering why you're not sewing it, but it also helps me with the placement of where the eye should be. So I'm gonna stitch these little half moons using a double running stitch. Again, I don't like to backstitch here in case i do it wrong. It's easier to rip out a running stitch than a backstitch. So there's one of the little half moons. And when I started, I didn't knot the thread. I'm gonna knot it now. One. Two. Three. Since I'm not knotting my thread, I pull the thread through until I know that I have a nice tail back there and I create that half moon with my running stitch. And then I go back and fill in that space. And tie off in the back. One. Two. Three. (mumbles) And I always brush all my threads and extra pieces that shouldn't be here onto the ground so they don't get in the way. Now I'm gonna take my strand of six threads, which is a full embroidery floss piece and stitch a little nose. And here I'm using satin stitch or just making a few parallel lines. I think two is plenty there. And I started that with a knotted thread. You can start with a knotted thread or stitch the pieces together as we did with the eyes. And because it's a full thread, just gonna do it twice. It's kind of bulky. Two knots, there we go. And clip off. We're done with the black thread and the facial features. We're gonna move on to the off-white, kind of ivory colored thread. So I'm going to look at my template here of the sheep body so I can see the placement of the sleeping head. And when I'm stitching the lamb together, I like to start in a place which will secure all the layers together with one stitch and that is the top of the head line here. So I'm gonna start in the back and I'm using the whip stitch. I'm gonna do one stitch, front to back, through all four layers. I'm gonna tie a knot here. One. Two. Three. And then I'm gonna continue whip stitching through all four layers. These pieces together. I work with my right hand but I like to keep my thumb of my left hand close by the needle. Just helps me secure my work. And here's an example of why felt is so forgiving. I'm gonna have to tug this out a little bit so I can land that extra little head piece around the face. And I'm gonna continue whip stitching this head piece on. Now we're going to stitch the lamb fluff. So starting from the back and moving to the front. Again, here, I didn't tie a knot. I'm just gonna hold the thread with my finger. And I'm doing a running stitch, just making like little loops, kind of like the letter M or a sideways three. After I've done the running stitch one way, I'm gonna go back in, create a double running stitch to fill in those spaces. I don't really have a specific way or pattern, I don't have a specific pattern that I'm creating here, I'm just sort of creating these little fluff lines randomly around the piece. And on the template, I drew nine little fluffs. So I kinda gotta shoot for making nine of these. But here I'm just gonna demonstrate these two. So I have my loose thread on the back here where I started and I'm gonna tie one, two, three. And cut. Now we're gonna move on. So you'll continue putting the little fluffs in here and you can look at your template to see the placement or how many. And now we're gonna blanket stitch the edge. So I'm gonna start down here at the bottom under his sleeping head. I started in the back, I move through to the front. I'm gonna do that one more time fully. And another time fully. And then this time, I'm gonna come up in the middle and land between in the center of that clump of thread and that will secure the stitch. So when you're doing this blanket stitch here, in some places you're gonna be catching two layers and in some places you're just making a decorative edge on a single layer of felt. On the back side, this is just a single layer, so that's all you're gonna be sewing with the blanket stitch. So I'm gonna move that direction to show you how that works. So you start in the

back and move to the front, catch your thread. Start in the back, move to the front, you're gonna catch your thread again. Oops, so keep a little loop, go through the loop. Here I'm moving on and I'm just going through a single layer. It's a little tricky because you want to make sure not to fall on the front of that tip there. In through the back, up through the front. And go through the loop. Up through the back, from the back to the front. I always, when I do the blanket stitch, I always want to have my work up facing me so I can look at the spacing and make pretty stitches. It doesn't really matter what they look like on the back side. So always keep the work with its face up towards you. And I continue along the edging here. And at one point, at some point during this edging, I'm gonna come to a place where I'm catching, actually, at the very end of his head, I'll be catching three layers at a time. Just continue along doing the blanket stitch until you've completed your entire way around the whole lamb. And then it will look like this when you're completed.

Stitch number details

- Now, moving on. We're gonna stitch the numbers onto the stars, which we'll also be attaching them to the pockets. So at this point, you will have all of your little stars attached to the pockets. There's 24 of them. We're gonna use red thread and we have a two-ply. So, let's start with number one. Stitching the numbers on can be very intimidating to people. So, look at the placement of the number on the star. The one falls directly in the center of the star. But, a number like 12, has a two digit number, has one number to one side and the other number to the other side. So, think about placement, think of the relationship to the stitching to the edges. Each time before you begin stitching a number, look at the number and think about its placement. And, we have the stars and pockets attached temporarily with the glue stick but this is the permanent attachment. So, start it on the back moving to the front through the two layers. I'm doing a running stitch which I will fill in after I get the basic shape right. Let's say I made that shape. It was off, it's bad. I just do the running stitch so I can pull it right out. I'll just start again. And, I guarantee you, you'll be doing some pulling out when you're doing all these numbers. So, one. And of course, a one can also be a simple line as opposed to this type of one that I'm creating. And, I'm gonna tie it off. One. Two. Three. You'll continue stitching on the numbers until you've done 24 of these, and then we'll move on to the next step.

Chapter 4 - Finish Assembly

Layout and sew pockets

- Now we're going to pin our numbers onto our tree and we're gonna refer to our template for placement. So we have all the numbers stitched onto our stars. And we're going to start at the top. It's important when you're pinning on your numbers that you start at the top and work down so that you can keep your tree smooth and there's no lumps and bumps created as you assemble your number pockets on your tree. So we'll start with number one at the top here. And here's where you need your 24 pins. So I'm gonna start number one and go through all three layers. Three layers meaning you don't need to pin through the star but you're pinning through the pocket and the two layers of the tree. And it's not essential that you get through all the layers every time because if you just get through enough, you'll keep all the parts in their right place. So then we'll take number two and before I put it on, it's important to look at your template for placement. Paying attention to where the curve falls and where your pocket is falling so that you create a nice layout of your pockets on your tree. I'm going through the three layers. I'm referring to my template and looking at where at little cut comes in and putting my pocket in the right place. I try to stagger them a bit. Not

to make them just look like a straight line across the tree. Go ahead and pin all 24 of your pockets on your tree. Pinning on the last number and then we're gonna go right into putting our tree trunk. You'll see that I put the number 22 up a little higher and the reason is because the tree trunk's gonna slip right underneath there. And I'm gonna use a two ply brown thread. And I'm just gonna use a running stitch at the top of the the trunk. I'm using quite big stitches here but they're hidden stitches so that's okay. And then I'm gonna go back and doing a double running stitch. It's just to secure it in place. And then it will be hidden by this top layer of the tree. Okay, so there's the line of stitching. I'm gonna tie it off on the backside. One. Two. Three. And now we're going to stitch our pockets on. I like to start, like the pinning, at the top. And work my way down. So we'll start with number one. And here I'm using a contrasting dark green thread or you could use the same color green if you wanted it to be invisible or you could use red. Whatever color you like, brown. So I'm gonna start on the backside. You're gonna be using a running stitch here. So I'm gonna do the first stitch. And because I'm not going all the way around, I'm gonna tie a knot with my thread here. And that's one. Two. Three. And because I'm not making a complete line of stitching all the way the entire perimeter, I want to tie a knot there because I'll end up tying another knot at the end of the pocket. And I like to do two stitches here at the top because that's where the pocket will be pulled. So two stitches next to each other, kind of secures that pocket in place. And then I'm just gonna do the running stitch, around the pocket and not go through the star like I just did there. So if you decide that going through all these three layers is difficult using a running stitch, you can use the backstitch instead of the running stitch here. So when you get to the end of your pocket, you're gonna do two stitches, just as you did when you started your pocket. And I'm gonna go to the backside and catch underneath my thread of the last stitch and go through the loop. I've created a little bubble but that's okay. Go underneath again. And again. Every time I tie off, I do three stitches. So I did a triple knot here and a three times going through the loop. Just to make it secure. And then I want to snip off my ends and unpin. So you have one done. And you have 23 more to go and I like to, as I said, start at the top, in case you need to smooth things out as you go and work your way down.

Final details

- Adding the final details to our advent calendar, we're gonna add the little sleeping lamb. And I like to place him at the very bottom of the tree, so you're not missing any of this curved tree detail here. So, using the off white thread, I put him in his place. I'm gonna flip over the layers here. I'm making a few big stitches with the two ply thread. The goal here is to go through three layers to attach the sheep. You don't want these stitches to go to the front, so you're going through the trunk, and you're trying to hit the middle layer of the sheep. And I'm kind of working back towards where I started. And I'm gonna tie it off. One. Two. Three. Snip. So there you have your little sleeping sheep attached. There are a lot of ways to hang your tree. I'm gonna show you with the ring. This happens to be a binder ring, but any ring will do. So I place this ring near the top center. And here I'm using a contrasting thread so you can see the stitches that I'm going to be making. The goal is, you only wanna do this, attach this ring, and you only wanna go through the first layer of felt. You don't wanna end up showing your stitches through the top layer of your advent calendar. So I'm just going through one layer of felt. And I have a six strand thread here, leaving a nice tail for tying off. So one. Two. Three. One, two, three. I like to do this in three places. One. Two. Three. One, two, three. And lastly. Only through one layer of felt I went behind the ring there. One. Two. Three. And the way I'm counting this, it's each time I come up. When I go into the felt, and then I go up, that's

one. And then up again, that's two. And then up again, that's three. And now, I'm gonna tie my knot. One, two, three. So that is one option of the way to hang your advent calendar. There are two other options I'm gonna tell you about. One is sewing a loop on the back. Like so. Another way is to take a tack or nail, and go through the back two layers, once you're in the pocket. So that's invisible. And you would take a nail, or tack through these two layers, inside pocket number one. And then, a final variation for the advent calendar, and you do have this template in your set of templates, is to add a fox. So you wouldn't have the lamb here, but you'd place the fox over the tree trunk. His head over the tree trunk, and his tail attached to the end edge of the tree. And you have this gap here, where you can see the nice curve. So, your advent calendar is complete. You can tuck in your treats, and you have a hand-made family heirloom you can pull out year after year.