
Embroidery Transfer Techniques with Rebecca Ringquist

Chapter 1 - Overview

Introduction

- Image transfers are a great way to add your own images or vintage images to your embroidery projects. I'm gonna show you two ways to do this, one using a special water soluble transfer material, and another way that lets you create your own iron-on transfer patterns. If you're interested in customizing your embroidery projects, this is a great workshop. (upbeat music)

Chapter 2 - Working with images

Materials

- [Instructor] Here are the materials that you're gonna need. The first thing is an image. I'm gonna be using this image of a dog from a vintage illustration book. You could use your own drawing, something that has clean lines that are easy to trace. The next thing you'll need is tracing paper. This can be any kind of tracing paper from the dime store. It doesn't have to be expensive art store tracing paper. You're also gonna need drafting tape or masking tape, an embroidery hoop. You're gonna need a pair of paper scissors, a pair of sharp embroidery scissors, some Sharpie permanent markers, a pencil, embroidery needles, and tapestry needles. You'll need beeswax, something to protect your fingers. I like these rubber paper sorters. They're comfortable and flexible. We're gonna be using a couple different kinds of thread: pearl cotton. This is size eight pearl cotton. And embroidery floss. You could use just embroidery floss or just pearl cotton. It's completely up to you. Next you're gonna need fabric. I like to transfer images and embroider images over found embroidery. Things like pillow cases and table runners work really well. It gives you some color and texture to respond to. But you could certainly also use the plain fabric, anything that's not stretchy like cotton or linen. It's also a good idea to prewash it to get any sizing or finishing treatment that's on it washed off. That can sometimes be a resist to the iron-on transfers. And lastly the transfer materials. I'm gonna be using a water-soluble stabilizer. I like this brand Sulky and it's called Sulky Solvy. I'm not sure that there are other brands on the market. There might be a couple others. This is the most readily available and it works very well. For iron-on transfer pens, I'm also gonna be using a Sulky pen and these come in a few different colors. There might be other iron-on transfer pens on the market that I'm not aware of. You could try those as well. That's all we need to get started.

Ideas for Images

- Before we get started, I wanted to show you a few of my favorite sources of images. One of the things that is great to transfer is text. This is a vintage typography book. You can also find lots of great fonts in a Word program on your computer. There's tons of great fonts online. Lots of great clip art, also, at the library or the internet. Anything that has a nice bold line. You can see these are all black and white, there's not a lot of gray tones, which makes them really easy to trace. Vintage coloring books, or even current coloring books are another great resource. These have really clear lines that are simple to trace. This is another coloring book. Even if they're already colored, the images, the line quality on the images is still really nice and crisp, so it'll be easy to trace those. Even something like a seed catalog. These are photographs, but they have really clear, crisp lines that would be simple to trace and follow along with with embroidery. I love all these plants, the fennel is really beautiful. If your image seems too small, you can blow it up at the copy shop or using some

kind of image program on your computer. If you have your own sketchbooks, you can look in your sketchbook for images that might be great for transferring. These knots that I drew a while ago have really clear lines that would be simple for transferring, and I've transferred lots of these onto my embroidery projects. What we're gonna be working with today is this image of a dog that I showed in the introduction. This is an old flannel board book. It's full of images that were designed to be cut out and made into flannel story telling projects, but they're perfect for transferring 'cause they just have nice, clean, even lines. Next up, I'm gonna show you how to transfer this to the water soluble material and get started.

Chapter 3 - Sulky Solvy Technique

Trace image

- The first thing we need to do is to transfer the image onto tracing paper. So I cut a piece of tracing paper that's just a little bit bigger than this dog. And I'm gonna tape it onto the book. This is a masking tape that's not very sticky, it's low tack, so it's not gonna mess up the pages of the book. And I like to tape it down in a few places, so the masking tape isn't shifting around while I'm tracing it. And then, just trace with with a pencil. So making sure that you get all the lines. As you're tracing, you might find that there are parts of the image that you like, and parts that you don't like. For instance, this dog has three spots, if you wanted to make it more of a dalmatian, after you're finished tracing you could add in your own elements, and kind of alter the image to get it just how you like it before you go on to the transfer material. Down like that on his snout, and I think that's all set except for the eye, and the spots. These spots are a solid color but I'm not gonna shade that in, I can refer back to my original drawing as I'm embroidering it, I don't need to shade that all the way in. Alright, so, the tracing paper is done, I like to pull back just one side, and pull it back, make sure it's how I want it, make sure I haven't missed anything. Especially since I'm tracing in black pencil, and my image is black, it's easy to convince yourself that you've traced everything, and then you pull it away, and realize that, oh, there's a missing leg. But it looks like I've traced everything, so I'm gonna pull it all the way off. So now I've got my image, I can set my book aside. Since this table is kinda bumpy, I'm gonna tape the image down directly to the book, so I have a solid surface to trace on. If your table is a more even surface than mine, you could just tape it directly to the table. And now I'm gonna place the sulky solvy over the top of my traced image, and transfer it onto the sulky solvy. So, here's a piece of the transfer material that I've already cut out. The transfer material is water soluble, which means that, if it comes in contact with water, it's gonna start to dissolve, and disappear eventually, which means that you should keep it protected from water, I like to keep mine in a plastic bag, if I have little scraps of it, I put them back right away into a Ziploc bag. And while I'm working on a project, I like to keep it in a Ziploc bag. Especially if you live in a humid environment, or if it's a rainy day when you're working on it, you wanna protect your material from water. So this piece of the material is a little bit too big. I'm gonna cut it in half, so that I can save the rest of it for later. I'll set that aside. Once you've got your transfer material in your hands, you can feel that one side of it is a little bit bumpy, it almost has a grid pattern on it, and the other side is smoother, I like to trace onto the smooth side, which means that the gridded side goes down. It doesn't make such a huge difference, but the marker glides over the smooth side easier. For your transfer materials, I like to use sharpies. I've tried other kinds of permanent markers, and these seem to work the best. If you know what color you're gonna be embroidering her image with, I recommend using a different color to trace it with than the color that you're gonna be embroidering with, and it's for the same reason like we talked about in tracing, if you're embroidering with red

thread, and you use a red sharpie, it's more likely that you'll forget an area, your brain will kind of play a trick on you, and it'll see a red line, and think it's an embroidered red line, so I like to use an opposite color to the one that I'm gonna be stitching with. So I'm stitching with brownish color, I'm gonna use a bright purple sharpie. If you're using a dark fabric, sharpie also makes some metallic markers in silver and gold, and those work really well, and show up fantastically, even on a dark fabric. Next, I'm gonna tape down my material over the top of the traced image. And again, this stuff is a little bit stretchy, so you wanna make sure that you're laying it down, really smoothly, and I like to tape it down in a few areas. Gonna make sure that the sulky solvy is smoothed out. Sometimes you can kinda stretch out the creases. Don't attempt to iron it. I made that mistake once, and it didn't turn out very well, so it's not meant to be ironed, especially not a steam iron, that would be disastrous. Now I've got my image all the way taped down, and I'm gonna start to trace it with purple marker. So it's the same thing as tracing it before, you're just gonna go over each line. Don't worry if your lines are a little thick, just because they're drawn on thickly doesn't mean that they need to be embroidered thickly. If you have something really delicate, you could use a fine point sharpie. Make sure that you don't use a water soluble pen, it needs to be a permanent marker. The permanent marker, it bonds with the water soluble transfer material, and as the water soluble transfer material is dissolving, as I'll show you later, the permanent marker bonded to the material, and it washes away right along with the transfer material. You can see it's a little bit wobbly over here. Just gonna hold it there with my hand. Got one more leg to trace. There we go, I think I've got all the lines, and now I'm gonna peel this tape back, and I'm gonna re use the tape to tape it down to my fabric. So I can set this book aside. Once thing I wanted to mention before I go ahead and place it on my fabric, is once you've got your image traced, you might wanna take your tracing paper, and hold that over the top of your fabric. So I've got this vintage embroidered fabric, maybe it was used on the arm of an arm chair, and you can kind of figure out where you'd like your image to go on the embroidery by looking through the tracing paper. Do I want this dog to be jumping into the embroidered flowers, or sort of over it. And at this point, before you trace it onto the sulky solvy, you can also reverse it. So if I want my dog to be jumping from right to left, instead of left to right, I could lay it down like this, and then I could have traced it with the sulky solvy in the opposite direction. So that's something to think about when you're laying it out before you trace it onto the sulky solvy.

Embroider image

- So now I've got the sulky version of the transfer and I'm gonna tape it down on the fabric exactly where I want it to go. I want him to be sort of jumping over this field of flowers, and I'm gonna tape it into place, the tape is what's gonna hold it in place. You could certainly base this down. I think tape works just as well and it's a lot faster. I'd rather spend my time embroidering than basting. Go there. Put a little more at the bottom. And then I like to also get a little bit on each side. The Sulky Solvy goes all the way to here on this side, so I'm gonna cut off some of the extra Sulky Solvy so that I can get more tape in there. Set that aside. Lay that down like that. All right, so that's taped all the way around. The next thing that I'm gonna do is put it in a hoop. The hoop is really the main thing that's gonna hold the image down onto your fabric while you're sewing it, but you're also gonna need to move the hoop around. You can see that this hoop, even though it's pretty big, doesn't cover the whole image, so at a certain point I'm gonna have to move the hoop to get this dog's butt. And that's why the tape also comes in handy at that point. So this hoop is in two parts. I'm gonna put the part underneath that doesn't have any hardware. Center it. You wanna get the

most that you can of this dog to begin with, so gonna put it in the center and then I'm gonna work my way out. Loosen up the hardware on top. And then I can push that down over the top. There I go. So now I've got this dog sandwiched in there on top of this already embroidered fabric. You can see here at the bottom of the dog that part of this embroidery is going over the top of that green leaf that's already embroidered on top on the bottom layer fabric. That's what's so great about the Sulky Solvy is that it sort of creates a separate plane that your eye can focus on while you're embroidering it. Later I'm gonna show you some examples of really dense areas of embroidery that I've transferred images over the top of. And the Sulky Solvy's kind of a unique transfer tool in that it allows you to go right over the top of existing embroidery. I'm gonna embroider this dog in pearl cotton. This is a variegated brown pearl cotton. I'm gonna thread my needle with this just using a regular embroidery needle. Just gonna wax the end of it to make it a little easier to thread. This is just regular beeswax. If you have a beeswax candle laying around your house, that will work perfectly. I'm gonna pull that through. This is size eight pearl cotton. I'm gonna double it up so tie the ends together to make a little bit of a thicker line. We'll just bring the ends together like that. I'm gonna grip the two ends between my middle finger and my thumb and then my pointer finger rolls over the top of it and makes a twisting motion with my thumb to make that first knot. Then I like to do one over the top of that, so my pointer finger goes down over the top. And then I get another knot right on top of it. So I'm just gonna trim those threads with my embroidery scissors so that I don't have a lot of excess. The needle's kind of off-center so I'm just gonna pull the thread until it's in the center and the knot is at the other end. And now I'm ready to get started embroidering. So I like to wear these rubber finger protectors. Again, these are just paper sorters that you can buy at the office supply store. They're flexible and they allow you to grip the needle as well as push the needle around. So I'm gonna get started here at kind of the crook of this dog's neck and do the back stitch, so I'm coming up from underneath. I'm gonna go forward a stitch. Skip ahead a stitch. And as the back stitch's name implies, I'm gonna go back and fill it in. I'm using the back stitch cuz it's a great way to make a continuous straight line, it's pretty straightforward. To learn about other stitches, you can check out my sampler workshop, there's tons of different ways that you could complete this image. So again, for the back stitch, just coming up here, the sequence is I go forward, skip ahead, I go back, fill it in, going down in that same pull. Now I can come up right where I left off. Go forward a stitch. Skip ahead a stitch. Go back to that same spot and fill it in. And then you can start fresh here at the beginning again. You're skipping ahead every other time. If you notice that you're skipping ahead every time, that's fine. You use a little bit more thread that way, but it's not incorrect, it's just a different way of doing it. Just gonna keep on sewing this back stitch line until your image is completely filled in. I have one over here that's already finished save for one spot, so I'm gonna show you how to finish that up. Ta-da. Here's the dog, same one. Same doily, or it's the same pattern anyhow. All that's left is this spot. So gonna back stitch this one. Whoops. All right. Got one more stitch and then I'm gonna flip this over and knot it off. Okay. I'm just gonna shimmy under the nearest stitch. Shimmy under again and that creates a loop. Gonna go through that loop with my needle, and that'll create a knot. The same thing again, there's that little loop. Knot. Cut that off close to the knot with my scissors. And then I'm gonna take this out of the hoop and just give it a real close up look over to make sure that I've embroidered everything before I get ready to soak it off. I think this looks great so we're gonna plop it in to some water and I'll show you how it washes off.

Dissolve Solvy

- Now I'm ready to dissolve the Sulky Solvy off of my image. Before I dunk it right into the water, I'm going to cut off the excess. There's a pretty big piece here that I could use for another small image transfer, so I'm going to save that. Don't cut it so close that you risk cutting into your embroidery, but just cut off the big areas. You can reuse those later. So, that's a pretty big piece. I'm just going to set that aside, and there's another little bit over here. All right, to dissolve the Sulky Solvy, it needs to soak for a while. I usually clean my sink right before I go to bed, and stop up the sink, and put my cloth in there that has water soluble transfer material that needs to come off in the sink and I just let it soak overnight. You want to use cold water just in case your fabric might shrink or might have thread that is not colorfast and you wouldn't want the thread to run in the process of dissolving your transfer material. We don't have a sink here today so I'm going to dissolve it in this bin. You'll see as I lower it into the bin, it's going to right away start to become kind of gummy, and it starts to dissolve pretty quickly. You can see here, it pulls off and turns into goop really quickly, and it'll seem like it's all the way dissolved, however, if you just dunk it quickly, and then let it dry, basically, it just sort of redistributes the starch and it'll be really stiff once it's dry. I recommend leaving it in the water at least eight hours or however long it takes you to sleep that night, and then when you get it out in the morning, just let it dry flat on a towel until it's completely dry, and then you can keep working on it. If you have a bigger project, you could always put it in the bathtub. And just set that aside. I have another version that I have already embroidered and already washed, and the Sulky Solvy's completely disappeared. Let me just dry my hands. Okay, there's this dog, which also kind of looks like a lamb or a pig. Someone said it looks like a deer. Whatever this animal is, here's the finished version of it, and I also have a reverse image of it. I made the same embroidery in two different directions, using that tracing paper trick I showed you to go, to do a flip-flop, so I have a symmetrical image of two of these animals running toward each other on another embroidery. And on this embroidery, the images are laid down over the top of a lot of stitching, so it really shows off the way that you can use Sulky Solvy over the top of something that's already really textured, or even something that's really patterned to make another image layered over the top. I have a couple other images that I want to show you of some finished artwork, using the same technique. On this example, I traced the font right off of the vintage towel, and repeated it four times up here. Here's an example of kind of a crazy sampler. This one, I already had a ton of embroidery on it. You can see this image that was behind the rabbit's head, all this busy information, and the Sulky Solvy allowed me to really create a separate plane to create this rabbit's head and then this ribbon of text below it. The Sulky Solvy still hasn't been washed off in this example, and lastly, I wanted to show you a segment of this piece. You can see where I used the same repeat technique that was used in the towel. I traced this bird and then bird down once to repeat that same bird shape, and the same thing up here, I traced this house and then repeated the house twice. I love using this water-soluble transfer material in my own work because it allows me to create easy repeats and transfer images to create lots and lots of dense layers of color, image, and text.

Chapter 4 - Iron-on Transfer Technique

Trace image and iron

- I'm using the cover of the book that we used earlier. Starts out the same way. I'm gonna tape down a piece of tracing paper in a couple places, tape over here, and now I'm just gonna trace this text. Again, if there are things that you find as you're tracing that you just don't like, you can leave those things out or add other things to suit your own design tastes. The text here said story telling. I could just trace story or I could just trace telling. If I wanted to embroider the word tell, I would just

trace tell and forget about the I-N-G. It's your project; you can customize it any way you want to. Alright, I've got the text all the way traced. I'm gonna peel back three corners of the tape. Just make sure I've got the whole thing traced how I want before I pull it all the way off, but I've got that looking good. I'm gonna, oops, there's the dog from before. Set that aside. In order to turn this tracing into an iron-on transfer, I need to first trace the image again with an iron-on transfer pen. If I did it on this side and then flipped it over so the ink was facing the fabric and ironed it, the text would be backwards, so to solve that problem, I'm gonna turn my tracing paper over and trace it again from the opposite side with the iron-on transfer pen. Think today I'm gonna trace it in brown. These iron-on transfer markers work like a paint pen, so you need to shake them up first to get started. Just gonna reverse this, flip it over so I'm tracing it from the back side. I like to test out the marker in an inconspicuous spot, make sure it's working. Sometimes, you have to push down on the nib to get the ink flowing out, and then I just trace it again over the top of those letters that I traced just before in pencil. Can be as detailed as you want. These iron-on transfers are permanent, so make sure that you're transferring it onto something that you're committed to embroidering. On the flip side, they're permanent, so you could transfer them onto something and not embroider them, potentially. You could transfer a design or an image onto a T-shirt, let's say, that you want to have an image on that's not stitched. Okay, that's all set. You can see from this side, the text looks backwards which is perfect because that means when I lay it down on the fabric, the text is gonna be reading forwards, so it's more obvious in a text example, but it's the same thing if you have an image. You wanna make sure that you're transferring it the way that you want it to show up on the fabric, so if you trace it with pencil in one direction, remember that it's gonna be reversed once you add the ink to the other side. Alright, I have a piece of white cotton that I'm gonna iron the image onto. I'm gonna set this book aside. Got my iron over here and I just have a piece of folded up cotton that I'm gonna use as a hot surface. You could definitely use an ironing board. Alright, so I'm gonna lay down this piece of white cotton. This is where it's important to prewash your fabric. If your fabric has any kind of fabric softener or sizing, if the fabric is direct from the fabric store, you wanna wash that off. All those things can act as resists to the transfer ink. The next thing I like to do is to heat up my fabric so it's nice and hot when the iron-on transfer ink hits it. It'll make the transfer happen a lot quicker. You also wanna make sure there aren't any wrinkles or hard objects underneath where your transfer's gonna go. This technique doesn't work very well over a fabric that has a lot of texture, so this is a good opportunity to use something nice and smooth. You know, burlap would be something that's really bumpy, a fabric that has a lot of texture and fuzz on it. Corduroy wouldn't work very well, but something like a nice, smooth cotton, an old sheet would work really well. A really smooth linen, not a linen that has a lot of nap will work really well for this technique, so again, I'm just heating up the fabric. I'm gonna lay the transfer down in the direction that I want it to transfer, which is this way, right side up. What you see is what you get. I can read this, it says story telling. It's gonna transfer as story telling, and not whatever story telling spelled backward says. I'm leaving the tracing paper pretty big so that I can hold onto it with one hand, the hand that's gonna be away from the iron and now I'm just gonna put the iron over the part where the image is and keep the iron moving for a few seconds. You don't wanna hold it in one place or you'll scorch your fabric. After you've been ironing for a few seconds, I like to leave the iron, holding the fabric down so the image doesn't ship, and then pick up the paper and see the transfer underneath. So you can sometimes get two transfers out of one drawing, so this will probably transfer a second time. Let's see if it does. It'll be a little bit lighter the second time around, so if you know you have something that you want to be lighter and not quite so dark, you could transfer it

first onto a sample piece of fabric then transfer it again onto your main project. Alright, let's see how this one turned out. It's a little more faded than the first one, but that's to be expected 'cause it's the second transfer. Overall, I think these transfers look great.

Embroider image

- This embroidery started out the exact same way that these transfers did. It's the same text and everything. I chose a thick stitch to cover the thick lines of the transfer, and in this case I'm using couching. Let me show you how to finish it up, I've just got a little bit left of this G to continue embroidering. Let me grab my needle. So for couching, I'm going to come up right here right where I left off with one needle full of thread. This is a size 5 pearl cotton that's been doubled up. I'll lay that down, kind of forget about that needle for a while until I'm finished. I've got another needle here with a smaller size pearl cotton in it. So to complete this line, I'm holding the blue thread out of the way. I came up right on that printed transfer line with my green. There's the green thread. I'm going to hold it off to the other side and go back down with the green thread in that same spot. And now I'm just going to continue doing that all the way around the G to trace it. There are a lot of stitches that would look great to cover up this transfer and you can see a huge variety of them in the other sampler workshop. Coming up here I'm going to make a right angle to go back in the other direction to go down the leg of that G. So I'm going to make a mark right at the crux where that curved line meets the straight line. That'll make a nice sharp corner. When I'm working on bigger pieces, often I use a big quilting frame so that I can see the whole composition at once and also so that I can be sewing with both hands, sort of like I am here. I'm holding the thread with one hand and embroidering with the other hand. So I'm going to make one more green mark here and then you can dip back down underneath with the blue to complete that loop. There we go, ta-da. Now I'm going to skip over with the blue into the center to do that center open part of the G. I need another, I need to refill my green needle. I'm just going to loop that in there to tie a knot. Don't have quite enough to make a knot so I'm just going to go through twice and then I'll secure it. And cutting the needle, cutting the thread off the needle right at the eye of the needle. I ran out of thread too quickly so I didn't have enough to make the knot that I usually make which is using a needle. Now I just cut the threads off right by the needle and I'm just going to do an over hand knot just like I was tying a knot in my shoelaces, like that, and now I'm going to cut the thread down right at the base near the knot and that'll be just fine. Got another thread here so I can keep going in the center of the G. Just going to whip around and do this. Here at the corner you want to make sure that the attaching stitch or the green thread is right at the corner where you want the right angle to be. I think I've got room for one more green attaching stitch and then I'm finished with this G. So the green is underneath, now I can get my blue needle back, go right down next to where I started, pull the blue through, there we go. Now I'm going to flip this thing over, take my rubber fingers off and I'm going to, since these threads are coming out at virtually the same space, I can tie them like an over hand knot just like you'd tie your shoes. So I'm just going to do it once and then twice. You can trim those threads right down where they start, close to the knot as possible. And then I'm going to set those aside and I'll show you the finished result of this font. Since this transfer technique lends itself so well to text, I have another transfer that I want to show you using a slightly different font. Here's another font example. Remember we transferred it in the same way with the same iron on transfer pen. I found this text in a vintage typography book. You could also look for great fonts on the computer as we talked about before. It's a great way to do it because you can customize the size to exactly what you need. I'm going to stitch this one with a split stitch. I'm using four strands

of embroidery floss that have been separated and brought back together so it's like using eight strands all at once, the ends were tied together to make eight, it works much better than the pearl cotton, it just lays down flatter and tends to twist less so you can really get these defined splits in your stitch and really shows off the pattern. For this split stitch, I'm going to start at the very beginning of this letter and go forward a step to make a stitch. And then I'm going to come up in the center of that first stitch and split it. So my needle is coming up between length-wise and also between width-wise in the center there, splitting that stitch. It has a very descriptive name. And then I'm going to go forward a step, you want your stitches to all be the same length, approximately. Don't sweat it if they're a little different. And I'm going to split that stitch. Go forward a step. I like this split stitch because it's pretty fast and easy and it looks kind of like a variation on the chain stitch but it's a lot simpler. Same thing as the font that we picked before. There's any number of stitches that would look beautiful as a way to transfer this text and you can see all those in my sampler workshop. You can see as each stitch goes down, I kind of flatten it out with my thumb so that I can find the center easier. If you've got a weird twist or something you can usually flatten that out with your fingers or your thumb before you split it. I'm going to do a couple more stitches and then I'll show you a finished version that I have next to me. Pull that up, go down, you can see how that just continues all the way around. If you're going around a tight curve like you can see here at the top of the A, you'd want your stitches to be a lot shorter so that they don't become detached in their splits. Over here I have a finished version of that text also done in a split stitch. Here's another example of the split stitch. This was with the variegated embroidery floss. I love the way it gives you sort of a modeled color effect. I've got one more example. This one is also embroidered in a variegated floss, this time in a beautiful fuchsia. I hope you'll try out some of these embroidery transfer techniques. They're a really great way to add vintage images, repeat patterns, lots of layers and texture to your own embroidery projects.