



## Book Review

RAISING THE SURFACE with Machine Embroidery by Maggie Grey (Published by Batsford, London, 2003)

Every time I read a Maggie Grey book I know that I will have to extend my life expectancy by another 10 years to attempt all the inspirational ideas she engenders, and **Raising the Surface** is no exception.

Her first chapter deals with making backgrounds. She explains the basic techniques of how to produce five backgrounds: Angelina fibres (or Crystal Shreds); a fine chiffon sandwich; brown paper and fusible webbing; 'strippy' backgrounds, and computer print. In each of these sections, having explained the basics, she then explores several variations. For me, this chapter included some techniques that I know, but Maggie gives them a twist that you can't wait to try.

The second chapter, *Raising the Surface a Little*, starts by introducing the use of raised strips. These strips can be made by knotting cords, crocheting threads, stuffing net strips and beading them, and plaiting anything - including pipe cleaners. The variations are endless and this is only the first section on how to raise the surface a little, there are another five sections of ideas! Again the chapter takes you from the easy and familiar to lesser known techniques to use with textiles.

The third chapter, *Raising the Surface a Lot*, explores using interesting items such as straws, satay sticks and chopsticks. It also explains how to make a variety of beads, for example from zapped felt, nappy liners, wire and from paper - including brown paper, tissue paper, soluble paper and tyvek. Other sections cover fabric manipulation, puff paints, using a heat reactive thread and carving Vilene.

Chapter Four, *Using Applied Motifs for High Relief*, looks at using a hot glue gun, Model Magic, Softsculpt, Polymer clay and Wireform to make motifs that can be integrated into a textile piece. There are clear instructions about how to make the motifs from the different medium and how to stitch the motifs so they merge into the work.

The last two chapters apply the preceding techniques. Chapter Five deals with *Frames, Masks and High Relief Embroidery*. Chapter Six explains how to make *Three Dimensional Constructions* including boxes, caskets, bowls and a variety of vessels.

Every page has coloured pictures of sample works with clear descriptions of the techniques that are used to make the sample. I found the photographs inspirational and the explanation of how they were done very useful.

Maggie Grey tends to use a great variety of materials, many that I am not familiar with. However, I think most of them are available - perhaps under a different name - from The Thread Studio ([www.thethreadstudio.com](http://www.thethreadstudio.com)). Fortunately, there are still enough 'common materials', with exciting ideas on how to use them, to keep both beginners and experienced machine embroiderers busy for a long time.

This book cost \$33.95 from Needlecraft Book Service  
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