

» Stitching Solutions

Back when I was a smart-aleck kid (when I was 30), I thought people who stitched on a ground less dense than 24 mesh were just lazy. Once I even attempted needlepoint on 84 mesh silk gauze. It's a fortunate thing that it was a gift for my sister's doll house. Otherwise it would never have been completed.

Just lately, in an airport lounge, I cursed (well, not literally; but I thought it) when counting on the diagonal on 24 mesh. What has happened to me? My eyes are no longer young. The muscles that allow quick switching from near to far focusing are stiff and slow to work. This is called presbyopia. I once tried to joke that it was a curse by Presbyterians on the rest of us. Obviously the smart-aleck part of me has not aged well. Add to this that older eyes develop cataracts that cloud the vision and make us more dependent on our lights to stitch comfortably. Cataracts start younger in people who damaged their eyes by excessive exposure to UV rays. But eventually they seem to affect us all. Even so, I be darned if I'll give up stitching.

Therefore, we may need corrective lenses to stitch easily. But to return to the days when tiny stitching was a joy, we need more help. I followed the advice of Mary Corbet www.needlethread.com to first try inexpensive magnifying glasses from the local drug store. When those were no longer effective, and a prescription change to my regular glasses did not help, I turned to Craft-Optics.™ The glasses are made in my prescription and then the mini telescopes are adjusted to my preferred stitching distance. **It is like being reborn with eyes that can see a flea on a gnat.** But only if it is 16 inches from my eyes. That seems to be the sweet spot for me where I am comfortable with in hand stitching and with stitching on a frame stand both. So that is where my telescopes are focused.

Now I may look silly stitching with my telescope glasses, but **I can be the precise and careful stitcher that I was at age 30 without giving up the high count meshes that I love.** I have been working on a surface embroidery project for a couple of years. No snickers, please. I can see the demarcation line between before and after the Craft-Optics™ arrived in my home. I have

no desire to go back to the "before" state of my stitching. Therefore, you will see me in Washington, D.C. this fall at Seminar looking like an old watch-maker lady in my classes. So be it; I will be happy and productive.

I have also gone through a series of lights for my stitching until those spectacularly bright LED lights were invented. Now I have plenty of light in a portable unit. I saw that the ANG list was discussing which model is best. There are so many to consider.

I will list the criterion I use to choose a new light. First, it must be bright. A dimmable light would be nice, but it must be very bright because I never know what kind of room I will be in when the mood to stitch strikes. So, LED is the best choice for me. Second, it must be portable. I don't mean totable, I mean truly portable: under 2 pounds. Again, the LED lights are better than the competition. Third, it must be battery driven because there may not always be an electric outlet available, even at a national seminar. Of course, the battery life is critical. I need at least 6 hours of battery in case I am in a class. If the light runs on disposable batteries, I guess I could schlep along a dozen extra. But there goes my weight requirement. So, a long lasting rechargeable battery in a portable LED light is my ideal.

With my criteria clearly defined, I can now go online and look for the perfect light for ME. The ANG list is a good place to start and Google™ can't be beat. But your perfect light and mine will probably not be the same. None-the-less you may need the help of many stitchers to find that perfect light for YOU. (Ed. Note: check out Cynthia Thomas's article found on pages 18-19 for more helpful information.)



Now you have your glasses and your light. The next question is what to stitch. Stretch yourself a little and pick a challenging project. It doesn't necessarily need to be a new technique. You could challenge yourself to create a technically perfect basketweave piece. You could choose a painted canvas and change all the colors. You could make your own stitch guide for a canvas. There are many ways to throw the gauntlet down for yourself. Just dare to be better at what you love.

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Be sure to check out the new Distance Learning offerings found on page 31.

Thank You Jean by Karen Garinger and *Carrots* by Jennifer Riefenberg are available through April 30, 2018. Sign up for the Cyberworkshop and Workshop by Mail classes before they are closed.