

LOZENGE SMOCKING- A SPLENDID NEEDLEWORK

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ABSTRACT

As the fashion business is growing and spreading its wings around the globe, the demand of functionality and recentness is rising. Unfamiliar artworks and novel pieces are becoming appeal of the fashion biz even if being unusual. In this world of competition, needle works and embroideries have always been a talk of the town. The art is appreciated and liked by fashion lovers in majority of the countries with varying motifs. Smocking is one type of embroidery which has its origin in England; however designers of many nations have shown their fondness for the technique in past few decades. Although contemporization of the craftsmanship has reshaped the stitches and motifs, but the elegance of this needlework holds the same. Lozenge smocking is one form of smocking echoing the conventional pleated variant endeavoring pleasing designs for clothing as well as functional use. The present paper discusses and defines the technique, outlook and utility of lozenge smocking in current fashion game.

KEYWORDS: Fashion, Designer, Embroidery, Smocking

INTRODUCTION

The possibilities for three-dimensional manipulation of fabric; gathering, pleating, tucking, shirring, and quilting woven materials are seemingly endless. Smocking is an ancient craft conventionally used in heirloom and historical garments. However, this traditional surface embellishment is making a comeback in unexpected ways in modern arrangements (Smith 2010). Because of its versatility and highly decorative qualities, smocking can be used in many exciting and creative ways (Durand 1979). North American smocking is a grid regulated system of pulled stitches alternating with slack stitches that invisibly reshapes the fabric into intricate system composition of folds (Wolff 1996). Lozenge smocking is a pattern variation of North American smocking (Smith 2010). Lozenge has a unique, contemporary feel and the technique is simple and stylish (Shore 2013). McKay (2010) has also discussed about the delicacy and beauty of the art which reveals that it is an age old craft, commonly worked on soft, layered fabrics. As the trade developed, a greater variety of fabrics became available and embroidery grew from simple to elaborate. Accordingly the changes came into being from the ancient times to present era (Garg 2010). The artistry has its own supremacy, appealing to people from all parts of the globe. Now days, embroidered pieces are preferred by most of the people. The use of various stitches, colours, threads, application of stitches on different textures of the fabric to create classics is the beauty of embroidery (Naik 2012).

METHODS

Smocking is an embroidery technique used to gather fabric. Any type of fabric can be smocked as long as it is supple enough to be gathered. Checked or dot patterned fabrics are popular because the checks or dots can be used as a guideline for gathering stitches. It is worked out by gathering fabric into even sized folds, called pleats, before the garment or article is assembled (Young 2000).

Estimation of Fabric

Traditional minds advise to take three to four times fabric than the target width. This is quite a reliable method for estimating the fabric for a smocking project (Wolff 1996). Lozenge smocking pattern consume fabrics both lengthwise and widthwise in considerable amount, so dimensions of the fabric required must be calculated keeping this in mind (Smith 2010). Other than this, type of fabrics, required stitch density and stitch depth are also the factors to be considered while estimating the required amount of fabric. Thicker pleats require more fabric and in the same way, extra fabric is required for a deeper stitch or pleat. All this depends on design requirement and the final look of the end product. Thicker fabrics like wool also demand for extra amount of fabric (Wolff 1996).

Pleating

Pleating is one of the most important steps as it will form foundation of your smocking (Durand 1979). Lozenge pattern is sewn using a grid that alternates taut and slack stitches. When the pattern is expanded to the necessary measurements, design grid is marked and stitches can be worked out. The alternating taut and slack stitches help to create the North American smocking's distinctive look. Commonly, these dots are sewn on a very small scale, about 1/4 to 1/2 inch apart; however the measurements in width can be varied depending upon the design (Smith 2010).

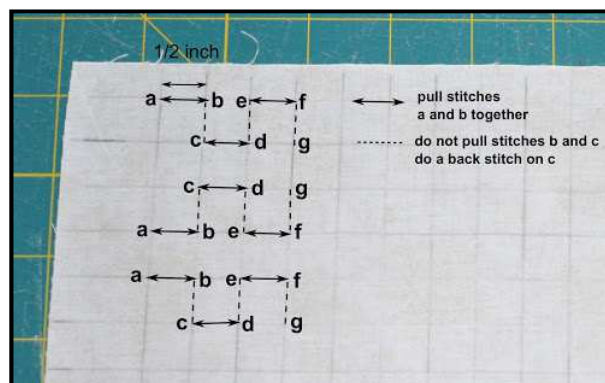


Figure 1: Lozenge Smocking Pattern (Acolchado 2012)

The grid can be transferred to the reverse of the fabric using any of the marking methods, including iron-on transfer, vanishing pen or tailor's chalk. If the pattern is drawn with a vanishing pen or tailor's chalk, the stitched side of the design could be used as the front. It will be helpful to transfer the markings from the chart as well as the grid. The fastest way of preparing the design onto the back of the fabric is iron-on grid interfacing. The interfacing can be added if desired as it will stiffen the fabric, making it hold the shape well and the folds will be much crisper and more defined. Wherever, a softer finish may be preferable, interfacing should be avoided (Singer 2013). The stitches are worked out from left to right in order to create rows of lozenge pattern (Smith 2010). In simple words, lozenge pattern needs creator to

follow two basic stitch sequences. In the first sequence, the two stitches together are pulled as per a and b in figure 1. The Lozenge pattern is worked on the wrong side of the fabric (Acolchado 2012). The next sequence is when one goes from b to c but do not pull the stitches. One third of the pleat is caught while working out smocking stitches.



Figure 2: Lozenge Smocking Pattern (Singer 2013)

One pleat should be worked at a time to pull each stitch in a direction it comes out of the pleat until it is snug. When the dots are picked up, the threads should be pulled firmly in order to secure the pleats. The amount of tightening, however, should be kept similar all along the pattern while working stitches, so as to achieve a neat and harmonious look (Durand 1979).

Pleating Machine

Other than gathering the fabric manually, a pleating machine can also be used. Pleating machines are a little bit of an investment, ranging from \$150-\$300. Smocking machines are available with different variations and attachments (Garza 2016). In a patented method (Durand 1982), a pleating or smocking machine had been developed. The machine passes fabrics or other sheet material between elongated intermeshed toothed rollers onto needles which are supported by the rollers, increasing the width of material that can be processed. Bobbins are provided on the machine for holding the thread for each needle, and means are provided for tensioning the thread passed from each bobbin to a needle.

APPLICATIONS OF LOZENGE PATTERN

Lozenge smocking reduces fullness in fabric with a very attractive stitch pattern. It is a popular method used for shaping and decorating adult and young children's clothing (Young 2000). Before elastic, smocking was commonly used in cuffs, bodices, and necklines in garments where buttons were undesirable. As mentioned by Fain in his article, "smocking divests itself of masculine, lower class, and rural connotations and becomes urban, upper class, and feminized. Smocking ceases to use the qualifier frock, from smock-frock, as it transitions from referencing a single type of garment to referencing a range of embroidery techniques. As smocking becomes widely employed as a descriptive term in women's fashion, it drops its original function and cultural significance as a visible marker of the male rural laboring poor". Today, various forms of smocking patterns add grace, elegance, and style to clothes, bedcovers, furnishings, and wall hangings (The Reader's Digest Association 2007). Also, these can be used for blouses, skirts, dresses, lingerie, nightgowns and lightweight jackets (Stauffer 2004). The sleeves and yokes of garments and even the tops of curtains and cushions can be stocked with great success. There is almost no limit where one can practice smocking skills (Niekerk 2013).

Table 1: Possible Product Articles by Using Lozenge Smocking Technique

Product Category	Articles
Apparel	Majorly women and children wear, Formal as well informal outfits including dresses, shirts, night wears, skirts, aprons, gowns, and frocks. The embroidery can be done upon possibly all the areas viz. necklines, cuffs, sleeve tops, centre panel, at bottom, waist or any other possible emphasis point.
Upholstery	Cushions, pillow covers, Curtains, canopies, bed sheet frills, table mat frills, lampshades and many more.

**Figure 3: Lozenge Smocking**

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com>

SCOPE OF NEEDLEWORK

Textiles were actively traded commodities. Cloth is necessity of life and when transformed into clothing, it becomes portable statement of status, wealth and fashion. In present industry, diverse variety of products is developed from textile materials which are sold in domestic as well as global market. In order to fulfill large amount of needs, textile were bought, sold and exchanged through an international network (Rivard 2002). Almost all the surveys report positive sales in the fields of home textiles and smocked articles. In the present scenario of heavy competition novel product ideas are always welcomed by textile industry. Lozenge smocking having its uncomplicated pattern and admirable designs finds its place in a variety of product markets.

CONCLUSIONS

As one of the ancient handicraft, embroideries and needle works have always contributed to progress and enhancement of country's civilization. Originally used to signify one's caste position, embroideries later came to have purely ornamental value and evolved into favored art of common people (Anonymous 2012). Smocking is craft similar to embroidery. Out of its various patterns, lozenge smocking is an attractive art because of its simplicity and delicacy. It is an inexpensive hobby that only requires threads and fabrics (Niekerk 2013). It is an elegant needlework which can be easily learnt and explored till the limits of creativity.

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