

Biscornu Program

Presented by Maria Hall

Background and Introduction

The word biscornu (bis-cor-nu') comes from the French adjective meaning having an irregular form or complicated and bizarre. In embroidery, a biscornu is an eight-side stitched piece that has a pinched or dented middle. They can be used as pincushions, scissor fobs, ornaments, key chains, pillows, sachets, etc. A biscornu can be any size and can be made using fabric or canvass. The designs can be stitched using a wide variety of stitches. They can be filled with polyester fiberfill, wool, flower petals, potpourri, etc.

A biscornu is made up of two congruent squares. In other words, the front and back are squares of the same size. The front and back do not have to be the same design, but the design should be the same size. The designs do not have to be squares as long as the border around the design is a square. More on this later in the instructions. A biscornu gets its eight-sided shape by attaching the corner of the front piece to the middle of the back piece. The dent is formed by attaching one button each to the middle of the front and back. Although a biscornu can be any size, tiny ones are harder to assemble because turning the corners can be tricky.

Let's get started.

Instructions

1. Choose a design. Included in this packet are some free patterns. I've also listed some websites where you can find more free patterns. If you already have a pattern or kit, please feel free to use it. As mentioned in the introduction, the designs themselves do not have to be perfect squares. They can also be circles or rectangles as long as you can frame it as a square. Please note that all the patterns included here are squares. Also, the front and back do not have to be the same design. You may even want to leave the back blank.
2. Choose a fabric or canvass count that you like. Remember, if you go too small, it's going to be hard to turn a corner, and you've got eight of them to do. I suggest a size of 2 to 6 inches for the first project.
3. Stitch your design(s). Once the designs are complete, it is time to backstitch a border on both the front and back. This forms the edge in which to lace the front and back together. Please note that the patterns do not show the borders. For an even count (24 by 24, 50 by 50, etc.) stitch the border an even number of threads from the design. I recommend placing the border 2 to 6 threads beyond the edge of the design. For an odd count (25 by 25, 49 by 49, etc), stitch the border an odd number of threads beyond the design. I recommend 3 to 7 threads. This works for linen. If you are using aida, then just count the spaces (2 to 6). **THE BACKSTITCH BORDERS MUST BE PERFECT SQUARES (ALL SIDES EQUAL). BOTH BORDERS MUST BE THE SAME SIZE.** If you would like an ornamental border, choose a contrasting thread for the border. If you do not want your border to be noticeable, choose a thread color to match your fabric color. Also, you can use a double running stitch instead of a backstitch for the border.

4. Once the borders are complete, cut around the border leaving a ½ inch seam allowance. For smaller pieces (less than 2 square inches) you may need to trim the seam allowance. For larger pieces (greater than 6 square inches), you may want to use a larger seam allowance such as 1-inch. However, I would not use more than a 2-inch seam allowance.

This ends Part I of the instructions. We will assemble the biscornus in October.

What you will need for Part II.

1. The front and back pieces completely stitched with backstitched borders.
2. Two buttons, one for the front and one for the back.
3. Thread for assembling the front and back. It should match the borders.
4. Ribbon or cording if you would like to make a scissor fob or ornament. *
5. Stuffing such as poly fiberfill.
6. Beads if you would like to add them to your border*

* - Optional

You can find more patterns at the following links:

www.theflossbox.com/store/biscornu

<http://kincavelkrosses.wordpress.com/2010/06/11/rhodes-butterfly-biscornu/>

Pinterest has many free patterns

If you have questions, the best way to reach me is by email: mariathall@msn.com .

EGA Biscornu Part II – Assembling the Biscornu

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You should have two same-sized squares with backstitched borders of the same length.

The following instructions and photos were adapted from Own Two Hands (<http://own-two-hands.livejournal.com/4186.html>)

1. Trim the fabric to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch beyond the backstitch border. Fold the edges along the backstitched borders towards the back and finger press in place.
2. If your border has an even number of backstitches, place a pin in the middle of each side. If your border has an odd number of backstitches, place a pin in the middle plus one stitch.





3. Using two strands come up from the back of the corner of the first square. The thread should be the same color as the backstitches. If you are going to be adding beads, you probably will have to use a beading needle with a single strand of thread doubled (similar to hand sewing).



4. With wrong sides together, insert the needle under the first backstitch of the first square and then under the center backstitch (marked with a pin) of the second square. **DO NOT PIERCE THE FABRIC.**



5. Pass the needle under the next backstitch on your first square and then the next backstitch on the second square. Continue this lacing motion from the first square to the second square. If you would like to add beads to your sides, pick up a bead between first square and second square. Do this every second or third stitch.

6. When you reach a corner, you may need to go under the backstitch more than once, especially if you have an odd number of backstitches. Corners are the best time to make sure that your edges are still lined up, and to make corrections if necessary.



7. Stop stitching when you complete your 6th side.



8. Stuff your biscornu, making sure to push stuffing into the corners. If you would like to add a hanger (ribbon, braid, etc), you can add it now. Pin in place in corner of one square and center of the opposite square. When lacing, secure in place with thread. For an alternate finishing for hanger, see next step.

9. Stitch the last two sides closed. Tie off the thread securely, then pass the needle inside the biscornu and out again, snipping the thread close to the biscornu while the

thread is taut. The thread end should retreat inside the biscornu, hiding it. Alternate hanger. You can add a small ring to corner of one side by sewing into border. You can then tie a ribbon around ring to make a hanger.



10. Sew on your buttons or beads. The thread should go from one button, pass all the way through the center of the biscornu, and then go thorough the other button.





11. Keeping the thread between the buttons very taut is what creates the signature "dent" in the center of a biscornu.

Your biscornu is now complete!