



TULIP

Thread Stories by Jennifer Day

A project for beginning thread painters

Kit includes:

**Photograph printed on fabric
All fabrics to make a quilt
26 thread colors
Complete instructions**

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TULIP

Tulip is a small project for the beginning thread painter.

We will be using my technique ***Thread Stories*** to bring this photograph of tulips to life. In this kit you have all of your fabrics required to make a quilt plus threads that are color coded to the project. In order to create a finished piece of art in thread that looks like a photograph, you will need to learn how to blend threads together to trick the eye into seeing a third color or shadow. Threads are static. They are not like paint that can be blended before application. You will learn how to choose threads from your “paint box” and layer them so that the applied threads trick the eye into seeing another value or hue of color.



The very first thing that you need to do is pull the paper off of the photograph printed on fabric. I have had many students forget this first step. If they leave the paper on, it affects the finished product by giving a stiffer feel to the fabric and maybe a bit of a crinkling sound when the fabric is touched.



Now that we have all of our materials together for the project we can begin making the quilt. The first thing we need to do is arrange the fabrics in order. The top layer is the photograph on fabric. The 15-ounce canvas, the batting and backing cloth follow.



Make sure that your machine has a free motion foot on it. I prefer the open tow because I can see where I am stitching. Also make sure your feed dogs are down and that you have good lighting.



I want to give a quick lesson in how to start stitching. I always pull my bobbin thread to the top of the quilt before I begin sewing.



This is done by “needle down, needle up”. Pull the top thread to the side and the bobbin thread will come to the top. You then clip the threads so that the bobbin thread is exposed. I do this because I do not want extra threads on the bottom of the quilt. If I do this every time I change threads or move to another area to sew, the back of the quilt is clean of extra fibers.



This is the back of the quilt with all bobbin threads pulled to the top.



Once you are set, you need to begin to audition the threads to be used. I always start in the middle of the quilt and work my way outward. For this quilt, I am going to start on the tulip in the center. Auditioning threads is the most important step in this process. I choose threads that match the printed surface. If I cannot find the correct color, then I look for a slightly lighter tone. I like the Gütermann Mara line of threads because there are 692 colors of thread in this line. Mara was created and sold to the garment industry. It is available from tailors or from an online company called WAWAK. I use Mara 100 thread. This thread is 40 weight and is polyester. It has a matte finish. I like the matte finish because it does not confuse the eye like a thread with sheen can.

I usually will select the threads to be used in a small area first. Once the threads are laid down on the fabric, you may need to adjust your thread selection because of how the light captures the color.

In this quilt, I have chosen six threads to start with.



I begin stitching using the darkest color first. The name of this game is blending. It is much easier to blend lighter threads over dark. This method allows the lighter tone to softly sink into the darker color. If you start with the light color and place a dark one over the top, you will see every stitch of the dark thread.

I have lightly stitched the base of the tulip using the darkest thread color. The net color has been selected and laid next to the first thread. The colors are very similar in tone. This is necessary to create the blended final product.



Next I blend the second color over the first. I still am lightly stitching the thread. This allows some of the photograph color to be seen. Eventually I will cover the photograph entirely, but it is better to tread lightly in the beginning of this process.



I audition the color closest to the area just stitched. I will apply this color to the project and blend it over the top of the first two threads. The color I have chosen is a bit brighter than the photograph. If the final application this thread is too bright, I will layer more threads over the top of it, muting the final appearance.



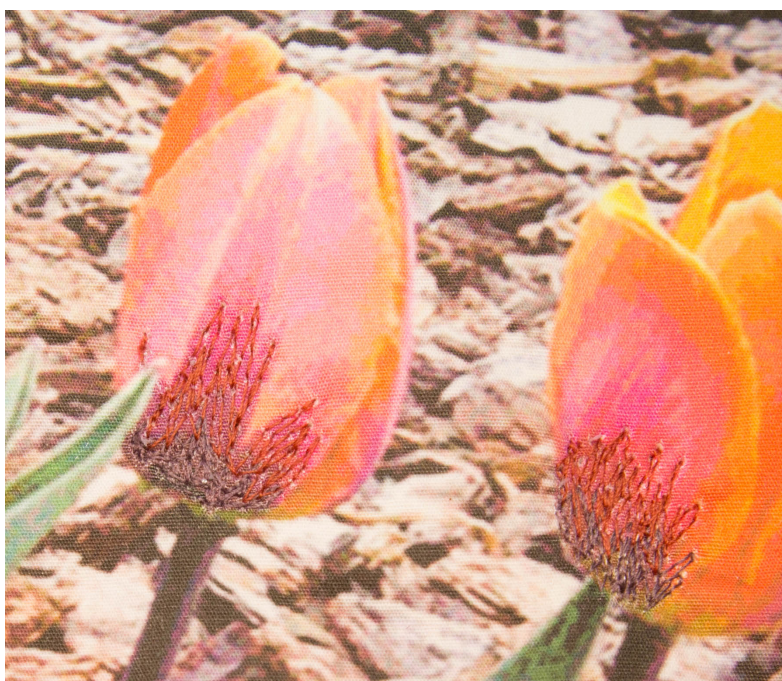
There is space between the tulips. I can continue to stitch the darkest color on all of the tulips, but I need to make sure that the area is flat and pulled tight before working on the flower to the right. If I do not, then a “bubble” may occur. A bubble happens when you intensely stitch two areas over two inches apart. When you go back to add free motion quilting in this area, the stitches are not as close together and you can get creasing of fabric or misshapen fabric.



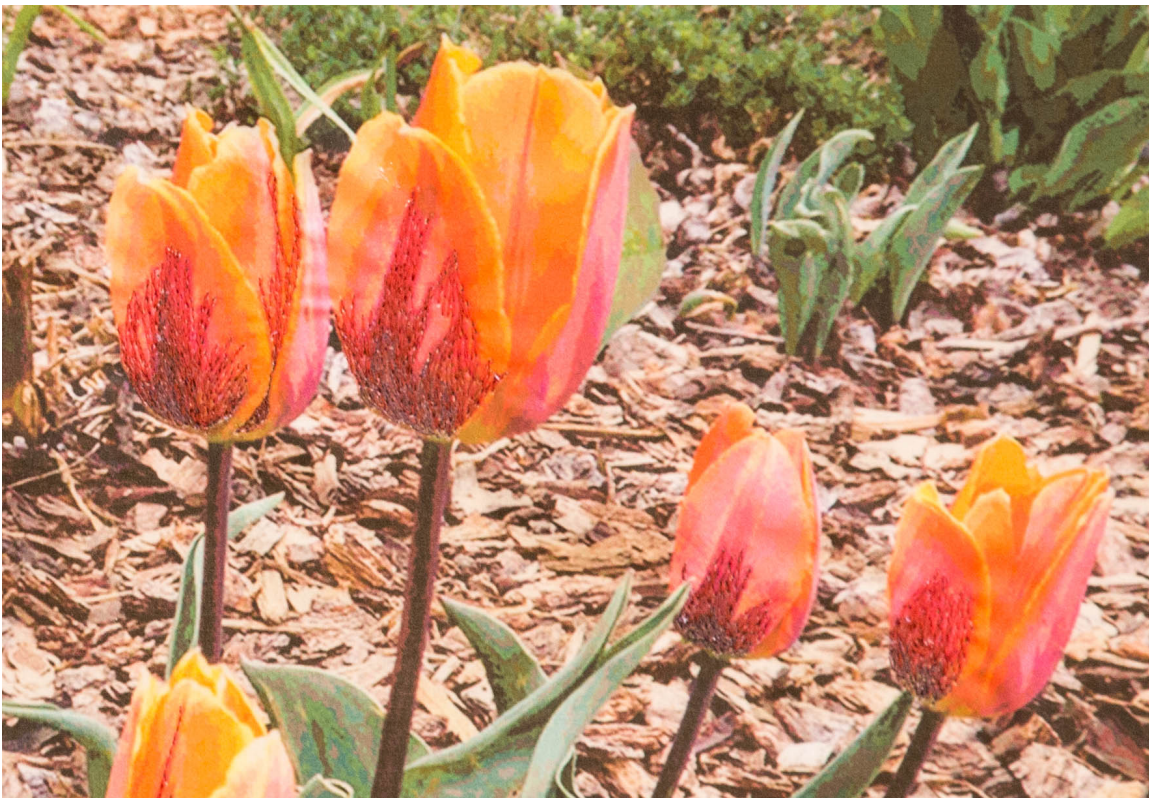
Here I am pulling the fabric and stretching it tight before lowering the needle and beginning sewing to avoid a bubble.



Again, I am lightly applying the newest fiber to the quilt, with a few stitches blending into the previously applied threads. One trick you can use is moving from one area of stitching to another without stopping and clipping threads. I just move the fabric to the new area, leaving a long piece of thread. I refer to this as a “bunny hop”. Once I am done sewing, I clip the threads for a clean finished appearance. You will need to clip the bobbin thread on the back as soon as possible so that you don’t sew over it.



I have now added a fourth color to the quilt. Remember to stitch lightly because you will have more threads to blend over the top.



Now is a good time to put your quilt up in the design wall. Remember, as you are sewing, you are looking at your art from 18" away. Once it is complete and hanging in a room, you will be observing from five feet away. This is how your art is viewed when it is hanging in a room.

Every time you hang your art on your design wall you will see something new. You can best determine how to change thread color and what needs to be blended in a different way.



Continue to add the next colors from darkest to lightest.



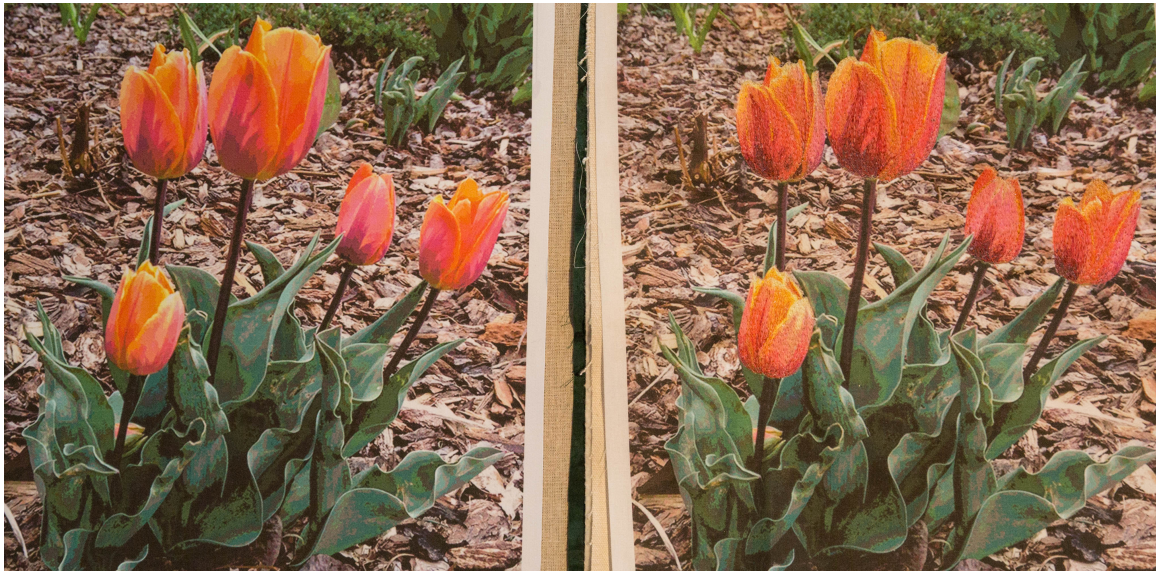
This is a progression of added threads:





The last color to add is the brightest and lightest. It will give a pop to the tulip. Hang the quilt on the design wall and stand back.

I have hung the quilt next to another photo of the tulip so that I can see if my blending is complete. This is where you can finesse the project by adjusting colors in specific areas.

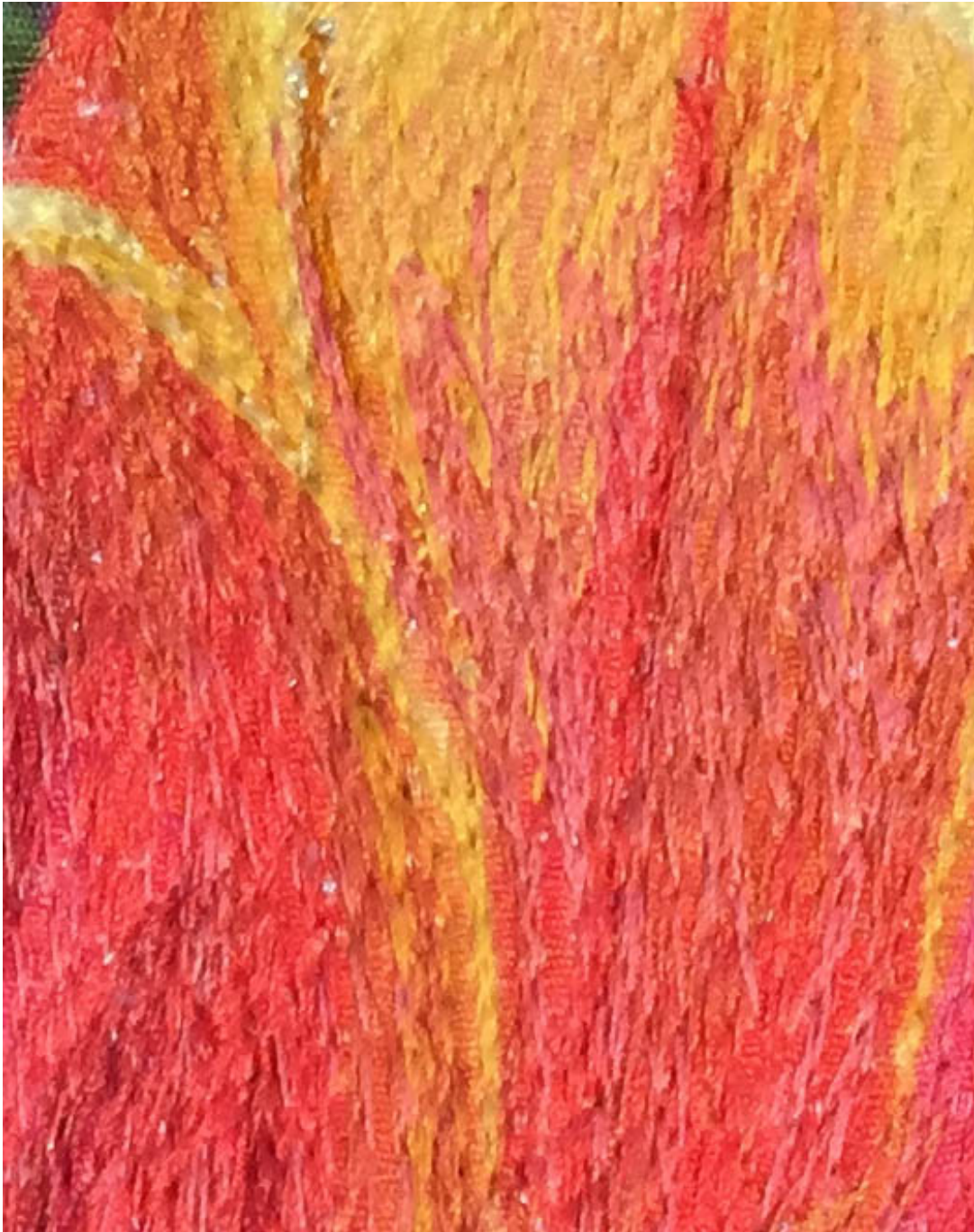


The final step is to blend the entire flower. I chose the bright persimmon color in the center of the outer petal as my blending thread. I will take it over all of the colors with the exception of the yellow. This is done very lightly and will cause the eye to see the flower as a single unit, not a gathering of threads stitched side by side.

This technique can be used on all of the tulips. It is effective because the bud was lightly stitched.



Lightly stitching your quilt will allow some of the photograph to show through between the threads.
This allows the eye to blend the colors and gives texture to the final piece.



Voila.....Now the buds are finished!



Work from the area closest to the buds and move towards the bottom of the quilt. I stitched the stem first to stabilize the fabric.

When stitching the stem of the tulip, use a dark brown first, and then add the lighter purple tone on the edges. Feather your stitches along the stem over the darker tone so that the lighter color appears to be a highlight.



The next step is to stitch the leaves. Start with your darkest color first. There are several areas in the leaves that need this color. Begin stitching the dark color closest to the stem and then work your way down to the bottom of the quilt.

The second darkest color is a medium green color. Because this image was posterized the process clumped colors together. The shadows are seen as a light burgundy and muddy peach tone. We can ignore these colors and stitch over them lightly with thread. These colors will show through the fibers as shadow. This is easily seen in this photo. You will need to use this technique throughout the leaves, ignoring these colors and also some spots of darker color in a field of green.



It is important when sewing the leaves to pay attention to the direction of the stitching. You can emphasize the shape of the leaf by laying the thread down following the curvature of the greenery.

Every leaf has a different curve to it. Follow the lines and the leaf will become real. This is a good time to hang the art on your design wall.



As you sew the next lightest color next to the one that has already been stitched, you will need to bring a few stitches of the lighter color over the darker one. This will blend the two colors together in the layered area. This is critical to the success of this technique. This can be done with just a few stitches or as seen in this photograph with a lot of stitches blended



It is easy to see here the lightly stitched area below the bud of the tulip.

By lightly stitching over the darker color on the photograph, the eye is being tricked into perceiving a shadow without adding more fiber to the art.

I have decided to leave the highlight at the edge of the leaves without thread. This will give luminosity to the art, allowing it to become realistic.



These seven colors were used in the art quilt on the leaves. The leaves had a silver cast in the garden. When I posterized the photograph in Adobe Photoshop, the colors of the leaves clumped together and became more blue green vs. silver. Once the colors were blended together in thread the silver appearance of the leaves came back to life.



The final step in creating this quilt is to complete the background to the flower using free motion quilting. This is easy in this photograph because the ground is covered in bark. I am going to stitch all of the darkest area in a medium brown thread. You can start this process anywhere on the quilt. Once I begin, I do not stop. I can move from one area to another by stitching along the selvage of the quilt to get to another spot and “bunny hopping” to move the threads to areas where the color is not in a consistent line.



Once I am finished with this free motion quilting, I can hang the piece on the design wall and see areas where I have missed laying down threads and then sew again to complete the project.

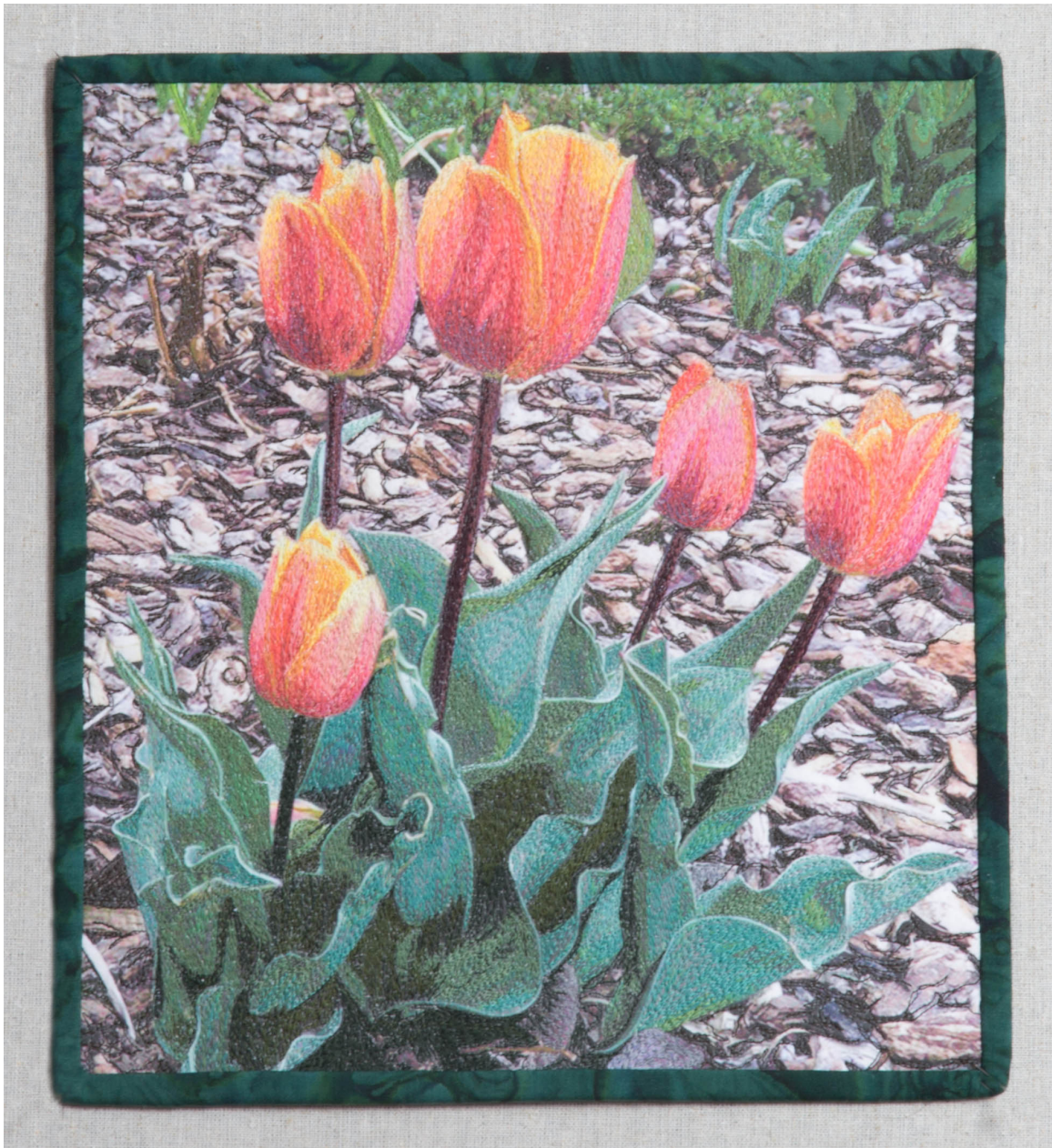
The back of the quilt is almost as fabulous as the front. As you sew, turn the quilt over often to see your progress.



It is easy to see the areas where you have intensely stitched and where the fibers have been applied lightly, allowing the photograph to show through to the eye of the observer.



The final step is to add the binding or to frame the art. I like to use the same fabric as the backing cloth. It should be “quiet”, meaning a fabric that is without a lot of pattern so the eye goes to the art.



Now your quilt is done. I hope you have enjoyed this project.

Please look for more projects from me. Some will be simpler and some will be more complicated.

By joining me on this journey, you will become an excellent artist in thread!



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