

Printed Memories

Taught by Serena Smith
www.embtreasures.com

Whether it is a special event or just bits and pieces of years in the past, photographs tell a story with so many memories involved. Instead of preserving these snapshots of special people and fun times in albums and scrapbooks, create an embroidered memory quilt. Scan your photos, print on fabric and insert in blocks embellished with many sewing and embroidery techniques!

Choosing Photos

Selecting the photos is the first step! Be sure the pictures are clear and crisp. The printed pictures on fabric will be a bit grainier than the original. Digital pictures usually are clearer, but film camera pictures can be scanned in and printed also. Set your scanner for about 500 dpi for a clearer image. Any size of photo can be used; it can be adjusted in size with any word processing program on your computer. In a word processing program such as Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect, resize the picture to the desired size. Print a rough draft on just white paper to be sure the size is correct. Keep this as a template when laying out your photos and embroidery.

Printing Photos

The fabric MUST be a 100% cotton with a 200 thread count. Usually the bolt is labeled for memory quilts with a thread count of 200. For example, good quality broadcloth is usually 180 thread count, so memory quilt cotton is even denser than that.

The printer you are using must be an inkjet or bubble jet; not a laser printer. There are two methods you can use: prepare your own fabric or use pre-treated sheets of fabric.

If you are preparing your own fabric, the fabric must be washed and then treated with a Bubble Jet Solution. Then it must be ironed onto freezer paper and cut down to 8 ½ x 11 inches to fit in the printer.

Printed Treasures, pre-treated 8 ½ x 11 inch sheets of fabric that are backed with freezer paper are available. The fabric has already been washed, treated and cut down to size. *This is by far easier and faster than preparing your own!*

Insert fabric into printer, set printer settings to print at the best quality on plain paper and print! If you are using more than one photo, try to arrange as many on a page as size allows. *This is the most economical way to conserve the fabric paper.*

Let dry for 30 minutes or until dry on a flat surface. Tear away the paper from the fabric. Run cold water over sheets to rinse off excess ink and then soak in a Bubble Jet Rinse for 10 minutes to “set” the ink in the fabric. This will seal the bright colors, prevent bleeding and allow the fabric to be washed at a later time.

Carefully ring out excess water and allow to completely dry on a flat surface. Lightly press the backside of the photos before using. The photos are now fabric and can be stitched or embroidered.

Stitching the Photos

There are several different ways to incorporate the photos into a quilt, but the most common two are to sew the photos and multiple fabrics together as pieces to create a traditional quilt or applique the photos using embroidery applique designs.

To create a traditional quilt look, cut the photo down to the desired size (be sure to allow for a 1/4" seam allowance!!). Cut coordinating solid and printed fabrics into your favorite quilt pattern. Any pattern can be used – log cabin, rail fence, nine patch, stars, diamond, dresden plate, crazy quilting. It is easy to do; just insert the photos as some of the fabrics.

If using the applique technique, you will need to find basic embroidered applique shapes such as squares, diamonds, ovals and stars. Treat the photos as fabric and cut down to the approximate size of the applique design. Applique designs will stitch a guide stitch, tack down stitch and final satin stitch to hold the photo on the fabric.

Incorporating Embroidery

For some fun results, incorporate embroidery designs and lettering with your photos. To do this you can design the whole block in your computer software, print templates for every design (whether an actual design, lettering or a photo applique) and lay them out on your block of fabric.

Caring for your Quilt

As needed, hand or machine wash in cold water using the gentle cycle and a mild detergent. Air or machine dry using a low heat. After washing and rinsing, iron on the lowest steam setting. Avoid exposure to direct sunlight.