A decorative border made of yellow and white scrollwork surrounds the text. At the top is a horizontal scroll with the title. Below it are two vertical scrolls on the left and right sides. At the bottom are two larger, more complex scroll designs.

Flowers of the Needle

Introduction

A Garden of Delightful Designs for
Needlework, Gathered from the Most
August and Ancient Books Writ upon
The Excellency of the Needle; with
which You may Devise and Work
Most Beautiful and Glorious Works
in Various Kinds of Embroidery,
which shall bear Witness to Your
Industry and Skill.

Compiled and Annotated by
Mistress Kathryn Goodwyn, OL
(C. Kathryn Newell)
And Newly Reissued In this Form in 2012

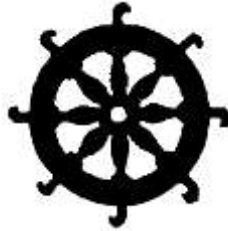
Flowers of the Needle, Introduction

DEDICATION

To Michael, my beloved husband.

You have always supported me in all my endeavors.

You are the rock on which I stand.



To my fellow members of The Historic Needlework List.

You have been never less than kind and generous, constantly offering help and advice. You have also been outstandingly patient with me on this project. I hope it lives up to your expectations.

Flowers of the Needle, Introduction

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have realized this work without the additional help of several people.

I start with thanking Fred Curtis (“Fred from Australia”); Lord Barak Roz, OTroub. (Emil Stecher); Mistress Mathilde Eschenbach, OL (Rosemary Stecher); The Hon. Lady Jerusha Kilgore, GA (Susan Farmer), Mistress Alia Wasa Care, OL (Lynn Symborski); Dame Christian de Holacomb (Chris Laning); Lord Migel Gneuyle de Normandie, CSC (Michael Newell); and Countess Ianthé d’Averoigne, OL (Kim Brody Salazar), for their technical assistance and advice. All of you show great patience in supplying me with helpful solutions for various problems which arose as a consequence of this project.

I thank Mistress Ingvild Josefsdatter, OL (Nancy Spies) for her assistance in the thankless task of helping to edit some of the Introductions. You wielded your blue pen with firmness but kindness, for which I am most grateful.

My special thanks to Countess Ianthé, who also assisted a great deal in editing, layout, and acting as my “Second Brain”.

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BACKGROUND

Flowers of the Needle exists for one basic reason: I was seeking Medieval or Renaissance proof of the existence of cross stitch patterns. When I joined the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) in 1973 I was a keen embroiderer, though my repertoire was limited to some simple stitches. In the late 1970s I learned traditional counted cross stitch, working mostly on Hardanger fabric. I eventually was asked if I knew of any patterns older than “ethnic” or “folkloric” patterns available in sources like the excellent pattern collections produced by Dover Books.

I was living in the Boston/Cambridge area, and I had Harvard library borrowing privileges. Therefore I had access to some libraries whose holdings included books older than I could find in typical public lending libraries. While I was researching historic costume, I would sometimes search the card files for embroidery books. One day I saw some file cards written in Italian. What caught my eye were the dates — they seemed to mention the 16th century.

I had found entries for part of a set of 16th century Italian books, reprinted in 1878. I requested some of the books from the non-circulating collections. When they arrived I was excited to see that they contained reproductions of old woodcut plates that seemed to be from 16th century Italy. The condition of the books as I saw them in the early 1980s was worrying. They originally were bound in white kid, stamped with gold, with marbled end papers, on heavy rag (linen?) paper. I don't know how they were stored but the boards were warped, and the covers badly faded. The pages were fragile but I was still able to photocopy them with great care. Many of the books in this series were for various forms of needle lace; i.e., *punto-en-aero* or *reticella*. I selected books which had charts.

I showed some of the pages to my friend Mistress Elspeth of Morven, OL (Elizabeth Cain). Elspeth can read Italian, so she translated some of the titles and captions for me. I had already decided to photocopy and share a few volumes. Elspeth and I hoped that the few pages of text would reveal needlework secrets or special needlework knowledge. Elspeth set to work on this project using an early 17th century dictionary by Florio. The project took her a year. Translating archaic Italian

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is not easy, because the language is very “forsooth-ly”. Elspeth’s husband, Joe Casazza, helped her with some translation. He later did layout for the text pages in the first edition of *Flowers of the Needle*.

During this year of waiting I did all I could towards the eventual production of the book. Elspeth and I were able to print the first edition by means of a grant from the *Beneficium pro Artibus Carolingianum*, a special fund set up by the Barony of Carolingia (the Boston area SCA group) — a fund established for educational purposes.

I sold copies of *Flowers of the Needle* at various SCA events or by mail from 1985 until 1993. I was quite discouraged to find that although the book contained nearly 200 pages of designs and patterns, that potential buyers objected to the modest price. I made very little income on this book, which was a labor of love. I eventually decided to cease publication and put the work aside. There were a number of professional reprints of early pattern book facsimiles issued during the 1990s so I felt justified in making that decision.

In 1995 Countess Ianthé published her great work, *The New Carolingian Modelbook* (currently out of print). *Flowers of the Needle* was mentioned in her bibliography as a good source for Italian needlework patterns. As a result of her kind notice, I found myself being contacted now and then by embroiderers who were hoping that the book was still available. A few years ago I tried a simple photocopying, only to find that modern photocopier technology was too sharp and clear. I was dismayed to find that the clumsily pasted pages now showed lines. I could not make this work available as simple photocopies.

REPRINTING THE BOOK

I received a great deal of advice for reprinting this work. Mistress Alia Wasa Care, OL (Lynn Symborski) has a great deal of experience both as a graphic artist, and a computer graphic artist. Her advice was hard to hear — I would need to manually darken the faded areas by hand.

The next step was to scan in each page, then and digitally remaster it using some kind of software. I ended up using a very simple one, “Microsoft Widows Paint”. This was a very arduous task and has taken me years, but it was the simplest way to deal with the pages, all of which presented a variety of issues. The ink on my copies had faded badly since the 1980s, but it had not faded evenly. An even worse problem

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was inherited from the 1878 originals — the migration of ink. I learned that the acidity of the original linen rag pages made them prone to disintegration. As a result, the ink on those pages did not have a strong foundation, so some of it migrated and blurred over time. This had happened to the 16th century originals before they were republished in 1878, and again to the 1878 reprint. I had to erase dark blots where it should be white, and darken areas that had faded. I literally was working at cellular levels of magnification. I now have a greater respect for the skill of the original 16th century engravers.

You will notice that the pages are often not straight – please do not assume that the page formatting is responsible. Skewed images is an error resulting from the technologies of the time, printing blocks were not always carved or applied evenly.

There is no way of knowing how large the original pattern pages were. Photographic reduction was known in the later 19th century, when these facsimiles were produced. Some of the graphic elements of pages I was seeking to darken were too small for me to do manually, even using the finest felt tip markers I could find, with magnifiers clipped to my glasses.

THE NATURE OF THE PATTERNS

When I originally made these patterns available it was the early 1980s. I have learned a great deal about needlework since then, so I am now able to look at the designs with a more informed mind. In the 1970s and 1980s many of us in the SCA attributed interlace designs to Celtic or Norse cultures. We now know that many other cultures also used such patterns, including areas under Islamic influence. Some of the charted patterns are Germanic in nature. The work of Master Richard Wymarc, O.L. (Timothy J. Mitchell), shows some of the counted work patterns done in earlier centuries, as *opus teutonicum*, a counted stitch style that later evolved into what we now call *bargello*. These bargello precursor patterns can be seen in the charts presented in *Flowers of the Needle*. Please visit <http://www.wymarc.com/index.php> for Richard's inspiring research and more patterns of this type.

I assumed at the time that the charted patterns were used only for cross stitch. While there are some extant pieces of cross stitch worked from Italian or German pattern books of the time, I have since learned that main interest to 16th century Italian needle workers was *lakis*. *Lakis* is another term for net darning. If the darning is done on a knotted net, it is called *lakis*. If it is done on a woven net background, it is called

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buratto. This technique seems to have been used mostly for house furnishings. A number of museums own table covers or spreads made of individually net darned squares joined with needle lace.

The lack of overtly religious motifs is puzzling. In other countries and centuries ladies of leisure often embroidered vestments for their church. I assume that the convents may have done most of the needlework required for the Catholic Church.

Over the years I have found some books on the history of embroidery which mention needlework pattern books. The assertions have been made that the books were only for men, who ran most embroiders' guilds. I find this rather surprising, given the title pages of some of the books in this work. The workers are mostly ladies, and I admit they do seem to be in a workshop. There are, however, some German pattern books of the time which show ladies in a more domestic setting. One often sees a lady referring to a pattern book, open on a pillow in front of her. I have also seen paintings of the late 16th and early 17th century where young noble women are doing needlework in a garden. They are usually attended by a chaperone of and there is a book open, so that the needle worker can refer to a pattern. I have had the advantage of knowing the translations of the texts to the books in this series. Constant reference is made to young women, as well as men and boys.

TRANSLATIONS AND COPYRIGHT

A few years after I ceased making *Flowers of the Needle* available, I considered going back into print. An objection was raised at this time by Mistress Elspeth. Since we first published she was suddenly worried about the fact that we had not sought permission from the library where we found the originals. I had assumed that since they were 16th century patterns that they were in the general domain. Elspeth's concerns, as she expressed them to me, were in regards to the fact that these books are unusual or somewhat rare and that the library or museum which owns such works needs to grant permission. She refused to have anything to do with any reprint.

The translations Mistress Elspeth did are her intellectual property. I cannot use her translations. There are, however, a couple hundred copies of this book still in owners' hands. I feel I can at least distill the essence of each text and present it to you.

The Italian used in these works is archaic in nature. I have tried to insert some of the words into Web translation sites, often with unintentionally amusing results.

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Sometimes all but one word translated. Take, for example, *La Vera Perfettione del design...* The word “perfettione” does not translate into modern Italian. It is not that large a leap, though, to “perfection”. The word “esemplario” does not translate, either, but one can extrapolate “sampler” or “sampling” from this.

This collection is somewhat rare, but other copies obviously exist or they would not find their way into books on historic needlework. I am told that copies of some of the books in this series exist on microfilm at the State University of New York (SUNY), Albany. I know that facsimiles of other 16th century needlework books (English and German as well) exist on microfiche or microfilm at other universities. Mistress Mathilde Eschenbach owns her own set of facsimiles of the complete 1878 series which are the origin of this series. She has given me permission to reprint. I hope this puts to rest any concerns that one might have.

This project owes a great debt to Mathilde. Ink fading on some of these pages was so bad that they could not be reproduced. She supplied me some scans so that the designs could be included. I cannot thank her enough!

I also cannot thank Countess Ianthé enough for her assistance in formatting *Flowers of the Needle*. She has broken the book back into its component parts and reformatted the pages. My earlier edition presented two designs to a page on most pages to keep the page count manageable. The patterns are now separated out so that each design can shine on its own. I feel this is a vast improvement to the entire project, and one which will enhance each design's use.

In the past few years I have been saddened to find that most of the early pattern book facsimile reprints issued in the 1990s are now out of print. It is not that easy to find Italian pattern books of the 16th century on the Web without a great deal of detective work. This seems to make this collection even more important and useful than I had thought when I started towards this reprint.

I am happy to finally be able to present this work to you for your use and enjoyment.

Kathryn Goodwyn
(C. Kathryn Newell)
2012

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography presents a list of the 1878 entire pattern book reprint series, which I found while working in a rare book room. The first seven books were used in *Flowers of the Needle*:

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2. Tagliente, Giovanni Antonio, *Esemplario nuova...* 1531
3. Zoppino, Niccolo, called Aristotile, *Gli Universali de I bella recami...*, 1546
4. Sera, Dominico da, *Opera nova composta per Dominico...* 1546
5. Vavassaro, Giovanni Andrea, *Opera nova universali...*, 1546
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9. Serena, *Opera Nova di recami...* 1564 (new work of embroidery)
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(Theatre of noble and virtuous ladies..)
14. Romana, Lucretia, *Ornamento nobile per ogni gentil...* date???

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