



# Bargello

Embroidery Technique · August 13, 2021

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**Figure 1: Classic bargello ribbon pattern.**

**“Candy Ribbon Ornament”** Design by Diane M. Scott / Worked by Gwen L.



**Figure 2: Bargello working with negative space.**

**“Bargello Tree”** Design by Joyce Olson / Worked by Gwen L.



**Figure 3: Quilt work using a bargello technique. Worked by Kathy Reid. Reproduced with permission.**

**History:** Bargello stitch has its origins in Florence, Italy. It first appeared sometime between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries in patterned covers for cushions, furniture upholstery and carpeting. Because such items were functional, a technique worked on canvas and stitched with wool - with the stitches counted over four or more even numbered threads of fabric - was required to withstand daily wear and tear. Named after the Bargello Palace in Florence, this style of embroidery is also known as Florentine point, Hungarian point, flame stitch, Irish stitch and Byzantine work.

Unlike cross stitch, where stitches intersect with (or cross) each other, bargello stitches are sewn alongside one another, always in the same direction. Further, bargello stitches are typically the same length, although stitches of different lengths can be used to create illusions of depth and variety in texture. Figure 1 (above) presents an example of bargello worked in the classic ribbon design.

**Innovation:** Although bargello fell somewhat out of favor by the mid-twentieth century, a revival of this technique in the 1960s and 1970s led to innovations in both technique and materials used. For example, the development of both four- and eight-way bargello has resulted in 'kaleidoscope' patterns that are worked by dividing the canvas into four or eight triangles and then working outward from the center, usually on the diagonal. In terms of materials used, the exclusive use of wool has been expanded to include materials that can produce smaller and finer works, such as cotton threads, silk and even beads for accents. The introduction of finer materials has also allowed needlecrafters to make use of negative space (Figure 2, above), moving the technique further away from the solid strips or square pieces of work for which bargello is traditionally known.

**Adaptation:** A further innovation in bargello is its more modern adaptation into quilting. Quilting in the bargello technique involves sewing together straight strips of fabric in the same stepped pattern that embroidered bargello is stitched. This quilting technique also draws upon the same principles of color tone: namely, a gradient that goes from a lighter tone to a darker tone of a single color. Bargello quilting draws upon the use of complementary colors as accents within a single tone gradient, as seen in Figure 3 (above).

### References and further reading:

[Florence Art Museums. 'Bargello Museum'](#)

[Minor, H. 'Bargello: Cloaked in Legend'](#)

[Nordic Needle. 'Bargello \(canvas work\)'](#)

[Wikipedia. 'Bargello \(needlework\)'](#)

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