

Reticella: a walk through the beginnings of Lace

with Sabrina de la Bere

Defining Reticella:

The word is Italian and translates as “little net” or “mesh stitch”. At its base, it is a form of cutwork where squares of woven linen are removed. The remaining threads form a base, or net, upon which the decorative stitches are placed. Reticella is primarily done with buttonhole stitch rather than running stitch, darning stitches, or knotting for fillings.

Reticella, or Reticello, is the diminutive of “Rete”. Rosette is used in some 16th C. pattern books to refer to the more geometric star and “snowflake” pattern used for Reticella. In addition, some of the less geometric needlelaces with projecting points and scallops were referred to as ‘merli’ or “merletti”.

Reticella is thought to be an outgrowth of Punto Tagliato - cut linen work, or in french Pointe Coupe. It is also commonly viewed as the precursor for Punto in Aria - stitch in the air.

The french term “Dentelle” is used generically to refer to all lace. Specifically it means “to the teeth” and refers to indented edges. Dentelle a l’ aiguille is needlelace and dentelle aux fuseaux is bobbin lace. These comprise the 2 main forms of lace. Reticella is a needlelace.

Needlelace initially had a linen ground from which areas were removed. Then this ground was replaced with a cording or thread which was used to define the shapes. The pattern is built up on this outline structure, whether from the initial cloth, added threads or cording.

The main threads are tacked along the pattern lines. Initially

the pattern was done on parchment paper. The paper is then pinned to a hard and slightly rounded sewing pillow. This in turn is held on the workers knee or rested on a table.

The primary stitch is detached buttonhole. This is worked between the lines of the outlined structure. It may be looped into the piece above or next to it. The stitches may be continuous creating a solid ground or varied to give a pattern. The thread may also be twisted or knotted to give variety. The filled patterns are linked by connecting threads which are then oversewn in buttonhole.

A Bit of History :

(ref. Ricci Vol I pg. 6-22, 119-138; Earnshaw, Dictionary pg. 145-6; Earnshaw, Fashion pg. 9-24)

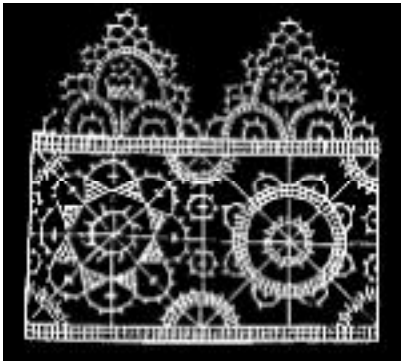
Both Ricci and Earnshaw view the Sforza inventory of 1493 as probably the first mention of lace; any form of lace. However, it is not until 1530 that there is a written mention in a book. This is in a pattern book, *Punto Tagliato* by Matio Pagan, that mentions “rete” (a variant name on reticello). Another pattern book in 1548 mentions “punto in rede”.

The 1560 wardrobe accounts for Queen Elizabeth lists partlets with “de opera rete” and “de opera Rhet”. In the 1565 unpublished inventory of the Castello d’Issogne in Val d’aosta, there are several mentions of what is most probably reticella. In Elizabeth’s 1586 inventory there is a record of cutwork for a ruff “edged in good white lace”. Such edgings begin at the start of the 16th C with narrow edgings on shirt collars,

(continued on page 3)



Design for Reticello From the *Corona delle nobili e virtuose aonne of Vecellio*, Venice, 1592
Ricci, Vol. II, No. 21, pg. 20.



*Ouvrages de point coupe.
Vinciolo - Singuliers, 1587*

Some Lace Pattern Books.

50 were published between 1517 & 1599 of which 28 were Italian, 7 French, 4 German (*Lace*, Bookking pg. 10):

Matio Pagan, *Giardinetto novo di punti tagliati et gropposi per exercito e ornamento delle donne*, Venedig, 1542. **The 1st to mention cutwork.**

Matio Pagan, *Ornamento de le belle et virtudiose donne*, Venice, 1543.

Matio Pagan, *Il spechio di pensieri della belle et virutdiose donne*, Venice, 1544, 1549.

Matio Pagan, *L'honesto essemplio*, Venice, 1550.

Mathio Pagan, *La gloria et l'honore de Ponti tagliati et Ponti in oere*, Venice, 1558.

Giovanne Andrea Vavassore, *Fior di gli essempli*, Venice, 1545.

Dominique de Sera, *Le livre de lingerie*, Paris 1584.

Vinciolo, *Les singuliers et nouveaux pourtraicts d'ouvrages de lingerie*, Paris, 1587. **1st true Reticella patterns.**

Vinciolo, *Les singuliers et nouveaux pourtraicts servant de patrons a faire toutes de point coupe*. Paris 1587.

Claude Nourry, *La fleur des patrones de lingerie*, Lyon, 1533.

Pierre de Sainte Lucie, *Livre nouveau, dict patrons de lingerie*, Lyon, 1530.

Pierre de Saint Lucie, *Patrons de Fiverfes Manieres*, Lyon, 1533.

Pierre de Sainte Lucie, *S'enfuyent les parons de Messire Antoine Belin*, Lyon, 1533.

Sibmacher, *Poinct coupe*, Nuremberg, 1597.

Isabeatta Catanea Parasole, *Specchio delle virtuose donne*, 1595.

Isabeatta Catanea Parasole, *Le studio delle virtuose dame dove si vedono bellissimi lavori de Punto in aria, retuella, de malia*, Rome, 1597.

Isabeatta Catanea Parasole, *Pretiosa gemma delle virtuose donne*, Rome 1598.

Isabeatta Catanea Parasole, *Stickereien u Spitzen*, Berlin, 1616.

Isabeatta Catanea Parasole, *La corona delle nobili et virtuose donne*, Rome, 1601.

Pietro Paolo Tozzi, *Ghirlnda di sei vaghi fiori*, Padua, 1604.

Giovanni Ostaus, *La Vera perfettione del disengno*, Venice, 1557, 1591.

Cesare Vecellio, *Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne*, Venice, 1591, 1593.

Giovanni Antonio Bindoni, *Il Monte*, Venice, 1557.

Sessa Brothers, *Le Pompe*, Venice 1557, 1559.

R.M., *Nuw Modelbuch, allerley Gattungen Dantelschnur...*, Zurich, 1561.

Dominico de Franceschi, *Serena, Opera noua di recami*, 1564.

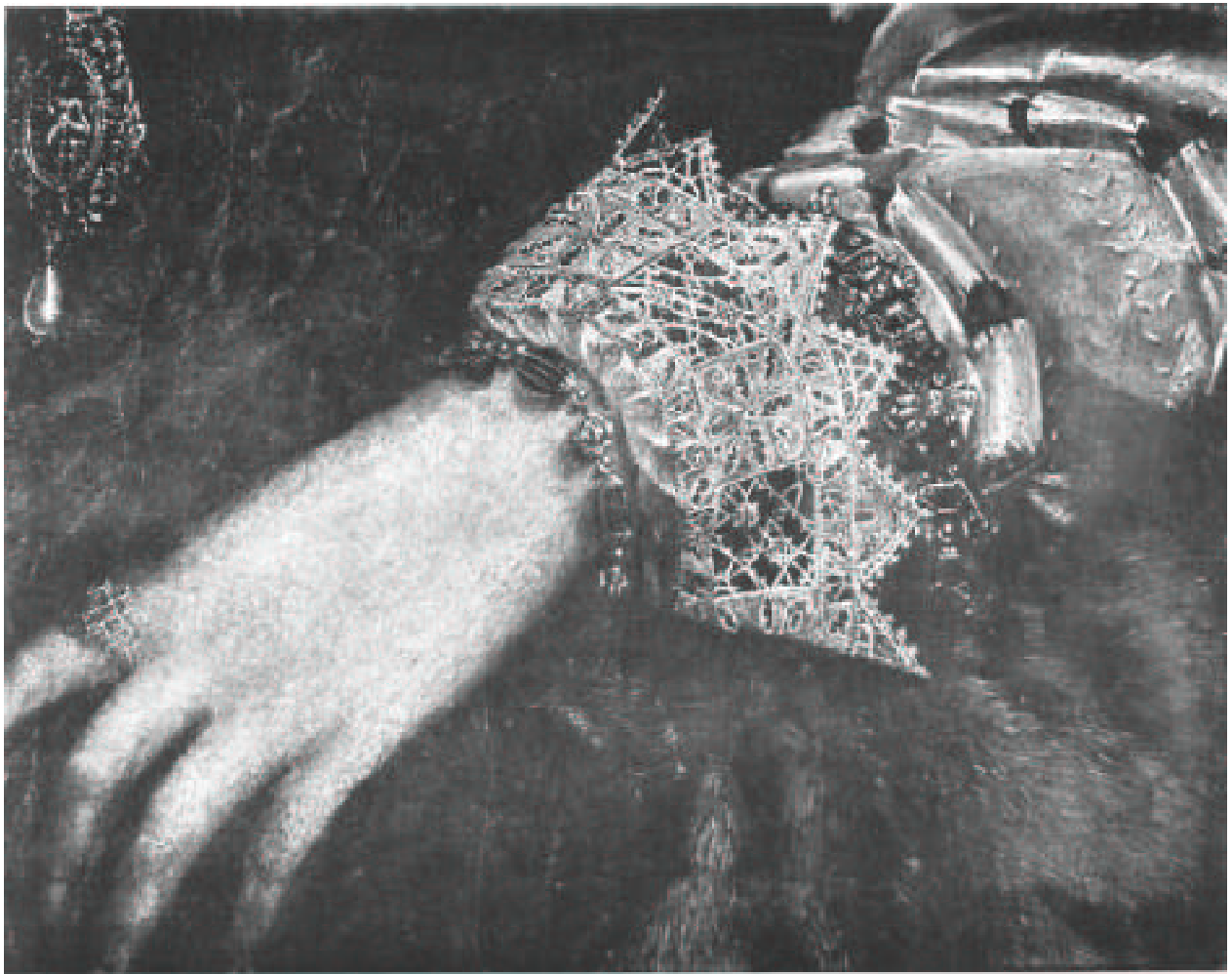
Jacques Foillet, *Nouveaux pourtraicts de point coupe*, 1598.



*Ricci Vol II No. 112 - XVI century.
Reticello rose with laurel crown in
punto in aria. Actual size (print is 2''
sq.) Levier, Florence. pg. 128.*

••••• Websites of Interest:

- Digital Archive of Documents Related to Lace -- <http://www.cs.arizona.edu/patterns/weaving/lace.html>
- The Lace Museum -- <http://www.thelacemuseum.org/>
- Lace Identification -- <http://lace.lacefairy.com/ID/laceID.htm>
- Needlelace -- http://www.geocities.com/monstonitrus/a_and_s/needlelace/needlelace.html - originally published in TI, Issue #138, April 2001
- Antique Needlepoint Lace (private collection) -- <http://www.marlamallett.com/l-needle.htm>
- Basic Reticella (NeedleArts) -- http://www.needlearts.com/articles/article_8/article_8.html



Ricci Vol. 1 No. 113 - Cuff in pierced linen and reticello, Detail from Gozzadini Portrait - Portraits of the Gozzadini family by Lav. Fontana, 1584, Gozzadini, Bologna.

chemises, partlets and cuffs and grow into huge ruffs by the 3rd quarter of the 16th C.

Most of the early pattern books are for the various forms of embroidery - blackwork, voided work, surface embroidery, but few books even mention the stitches or methods to be used for interpreting the patterns. There are a few early patterns suitable for interpretation as lacis - where a net is created from pulling and wrapping threads and then a weaving pattern is used to fill the squares. You also see the same patterns repeated or reversed time and again by different publishers.

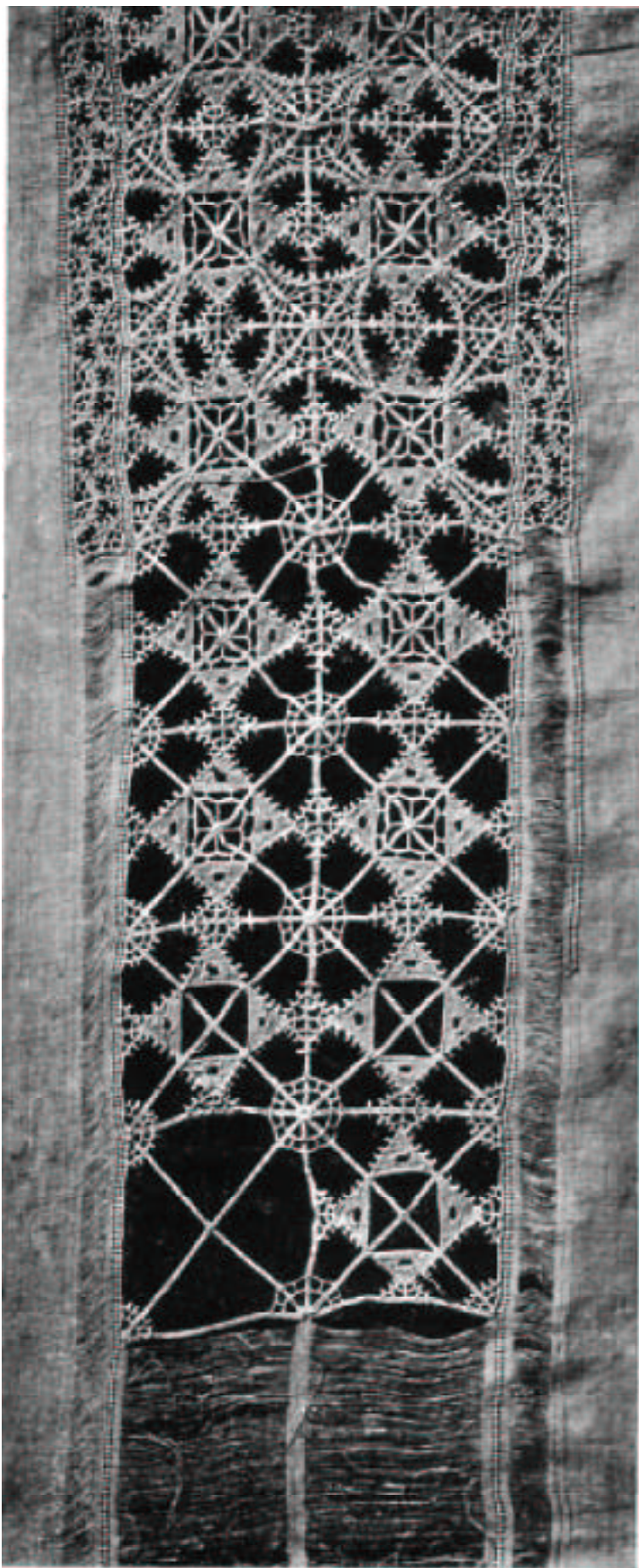
The name "Reticello" first appears in Vecellio's 1591 book *Corona*. Vinciolo publishes patterns that are obviously for Reticello. but in his *Singuliers* books of 1587, and its reprint of 1606, calls them "Pointe Coupee".

While there are no Flemish pattern books of lace, it was produced in Flanders as well as Italy and France. Since there were import restrictions in England, some may also have been produced in England.

Reticella, as with other laces, was done alone as well as in conjunction with other forms of needlework and lace. There are examples of borders with the same design done in embroidery and reticella (Ricci Vol. 1 No. 107). A number of linens have reticella, with curl stitch (outline stitch) and satin stitch (Ricci Vol. 1, No. 122, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, etc.). Bobbin lace was also frequently combined with reticella and appears both as insertions and edgings (Ricci Vol. 1, No. 134, 142, 153, 169, 170, 171, etc.).

continued on page 5





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*Ricci Vol.1, No. 102 - XVI Century.
Unfinished Reticello, executed on drawn
linen. Palermo Museum.*

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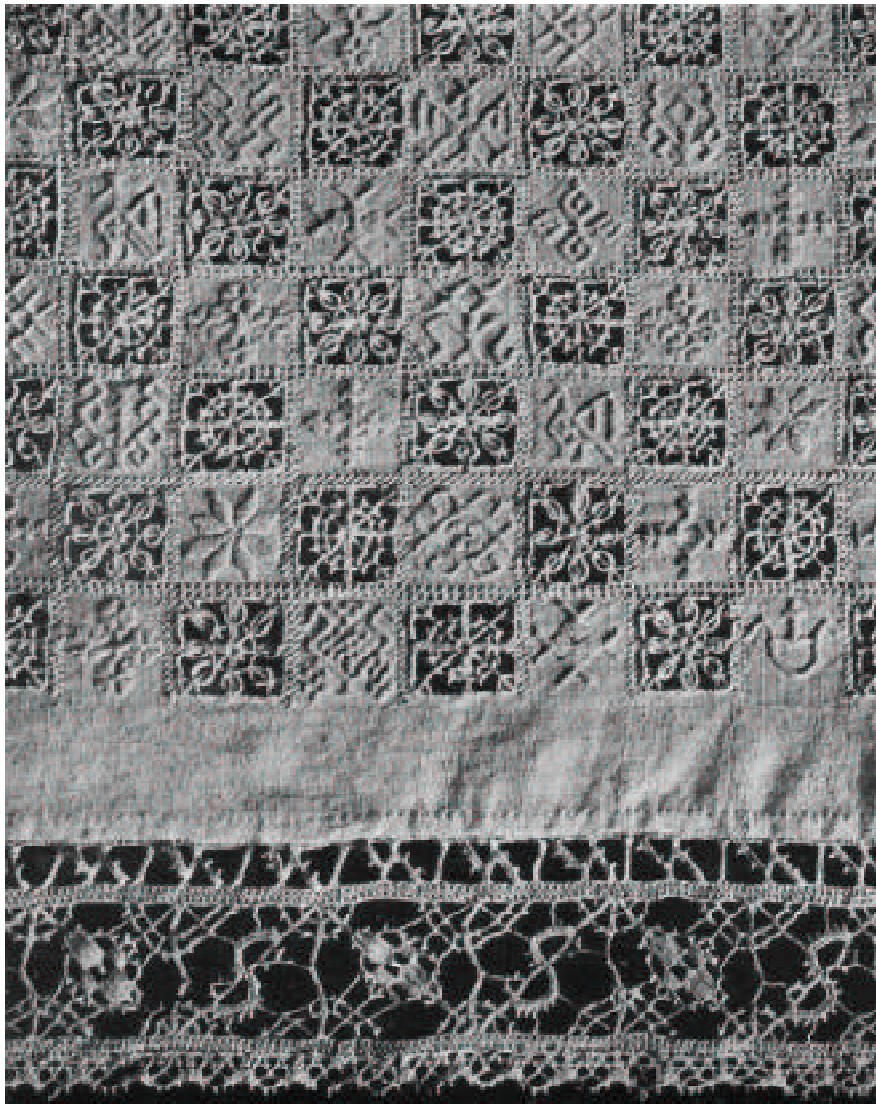
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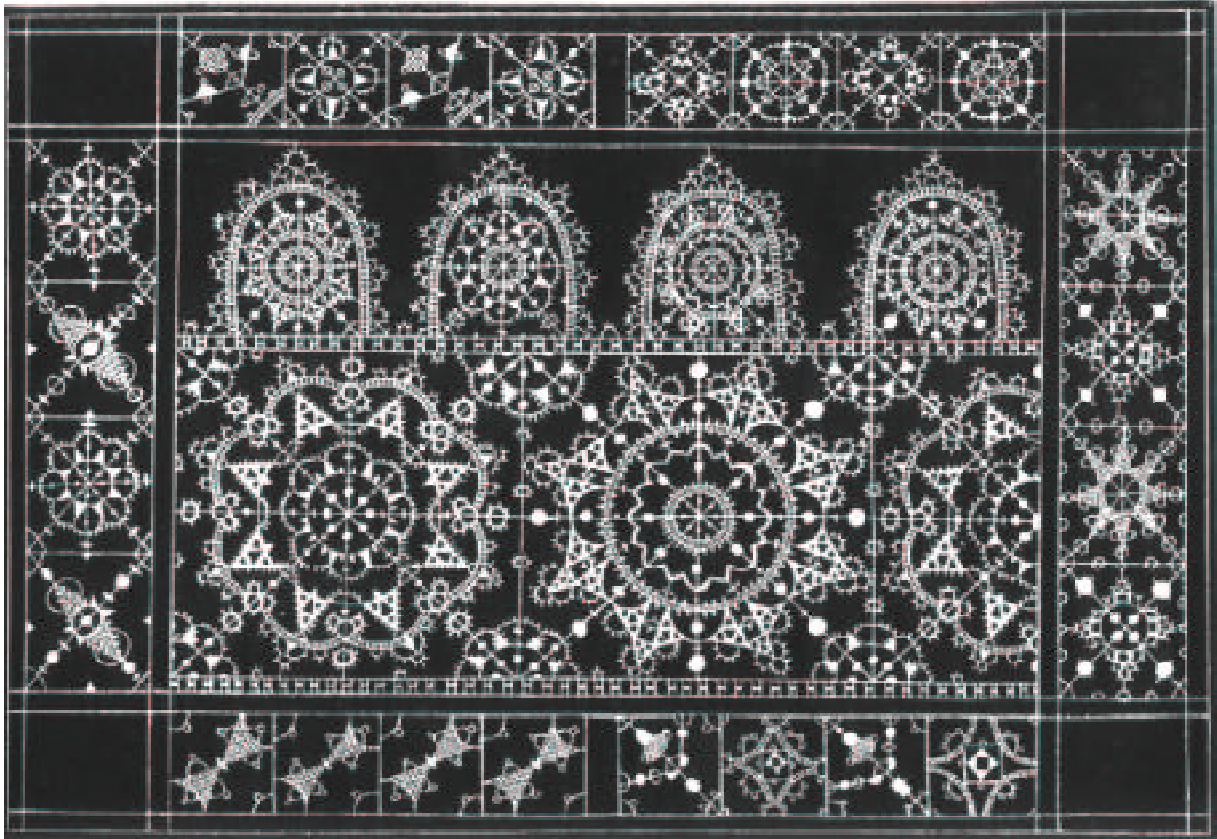
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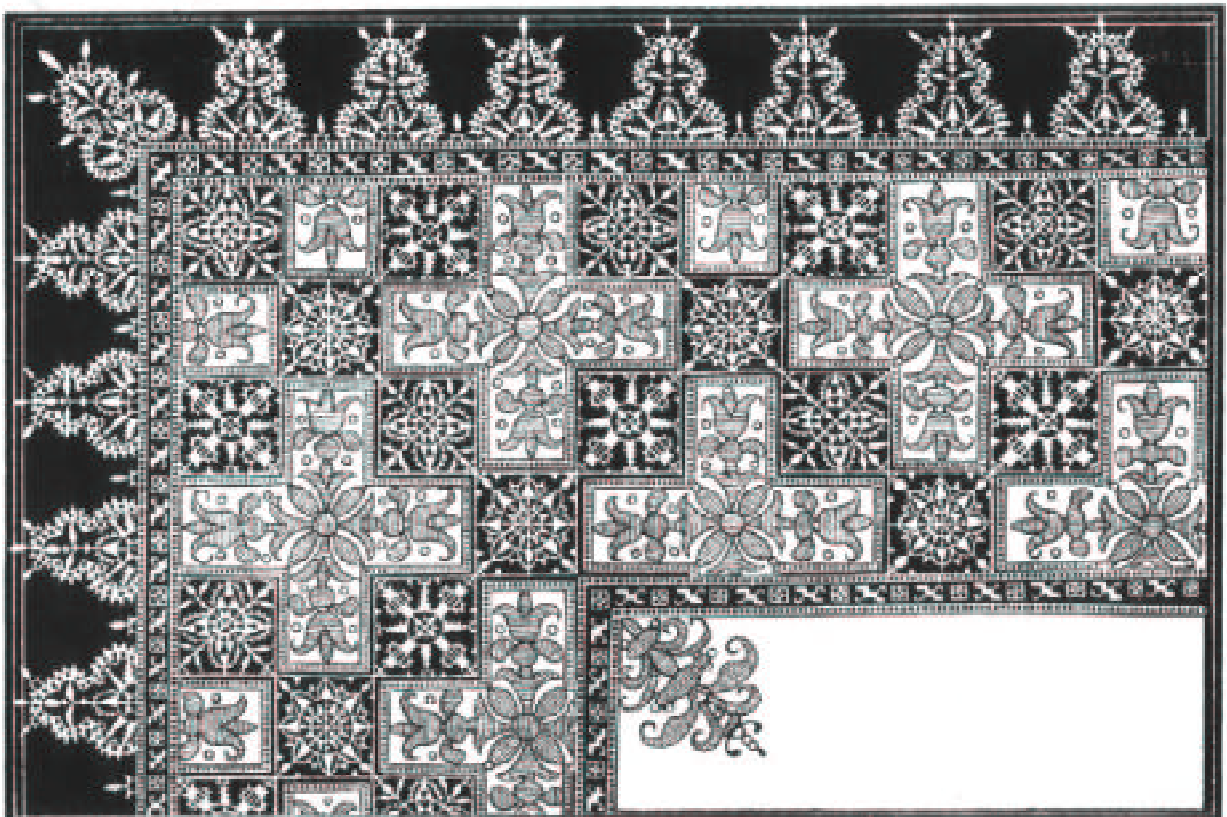


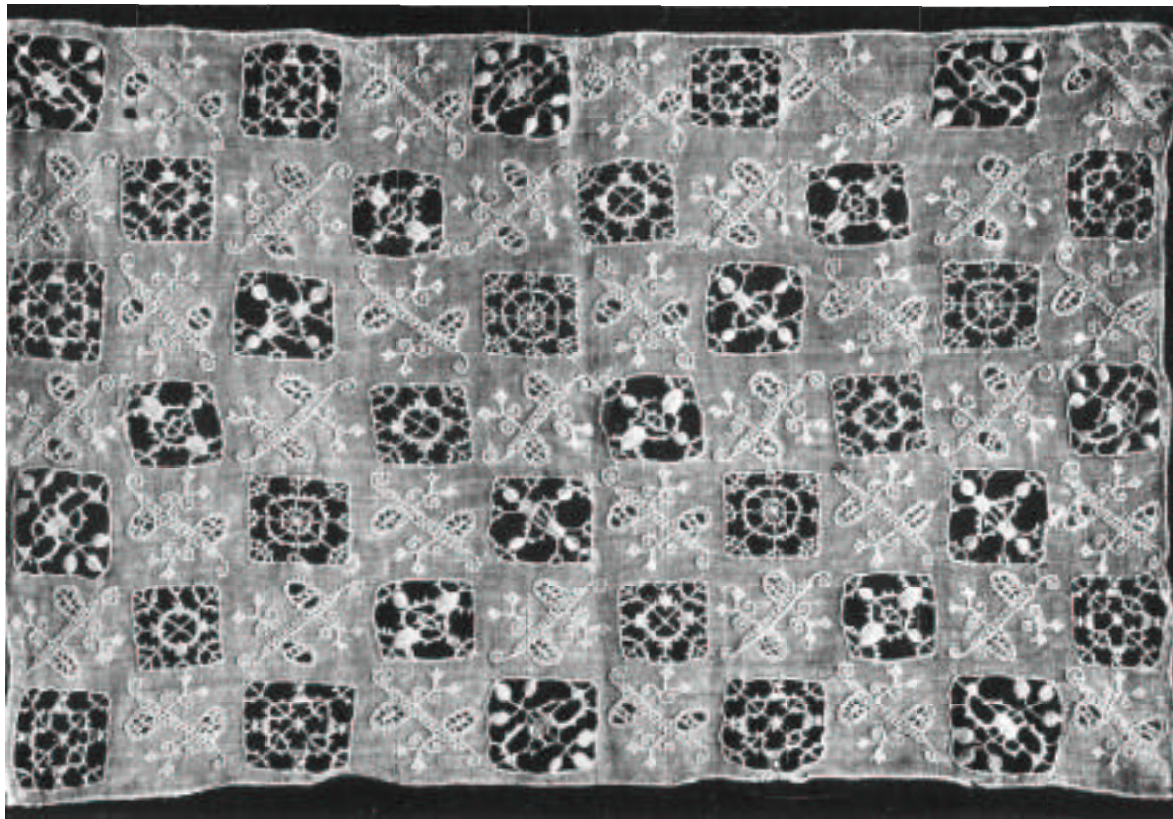
** included as the author gives clear instructions as to how to "fix" problem that occur, such as cutting the wrong thread and weaving back.*

Ricci, Vol 1. No. 162- Pillow Slip, Satin Stitch and reticello. Binney, Florence.

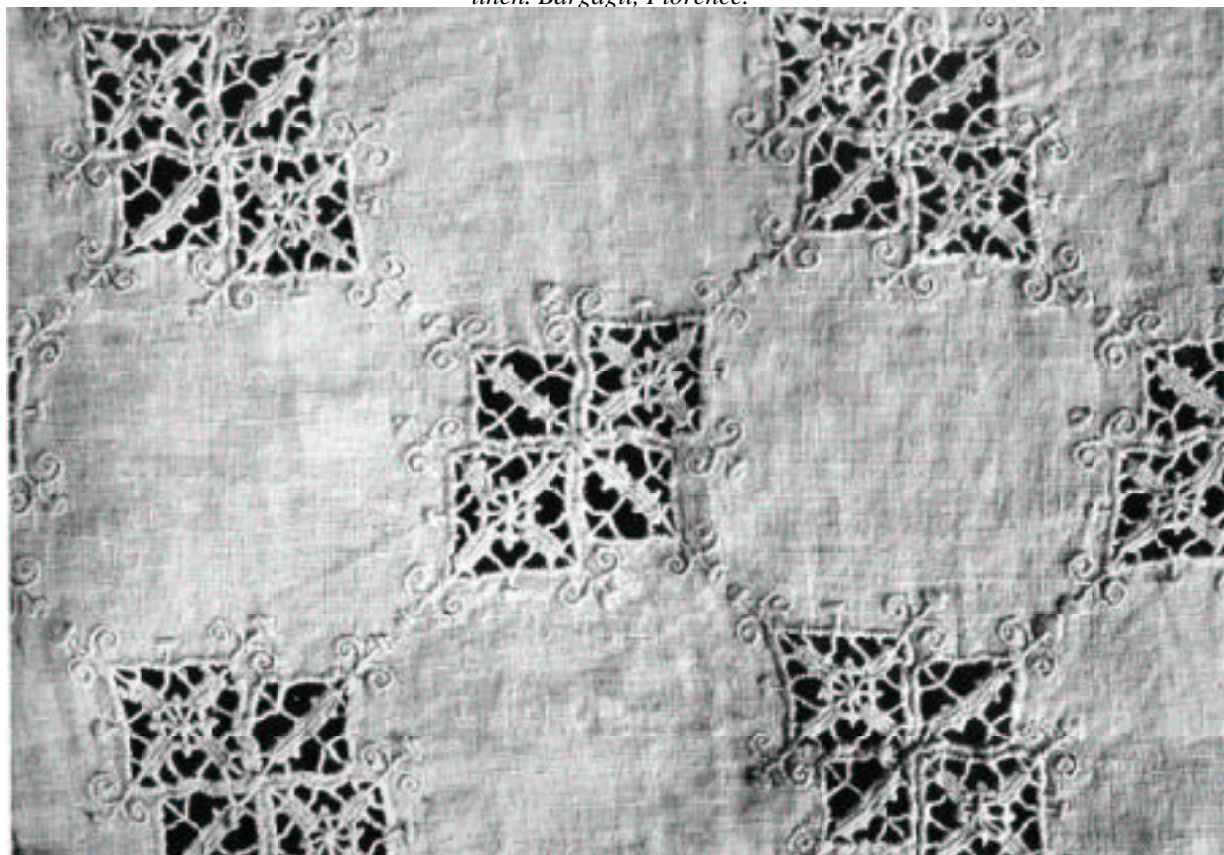


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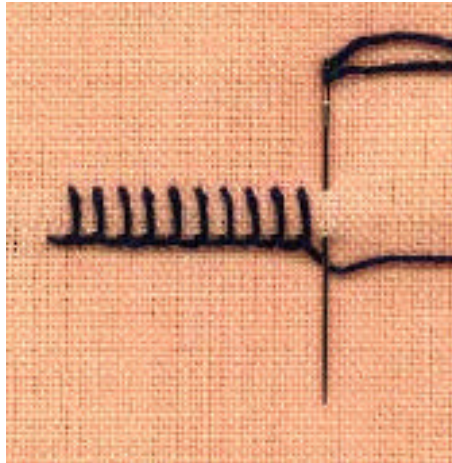
Ricci, Vol 1 No. 172 - Original pillow-slip of drawn thread, curl-stitch, and reticello on very fine transparent linen. Bargagli, Florence.



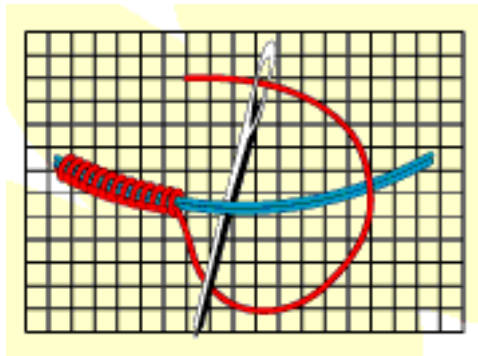
Ricci no. 154 - Table cover with design in curl stitch and reticello. Tranquilli, Ascoli Piceno.

Stitches Used:

Button Hole Stitch**

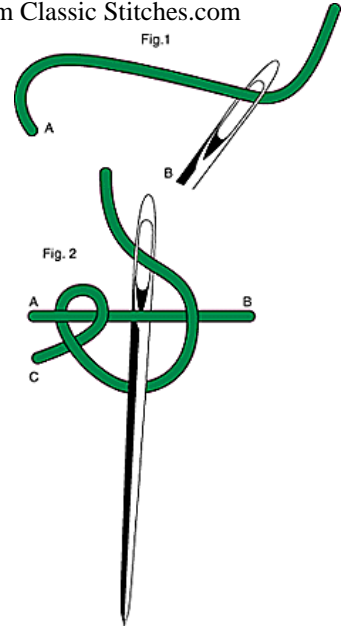


Button Hole Stitch - over bar ***



Detached Button Hole ***

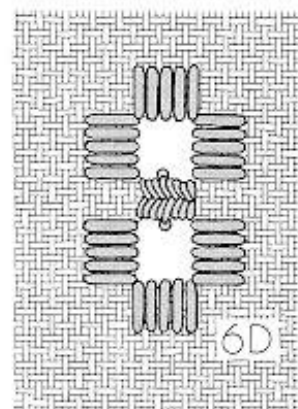
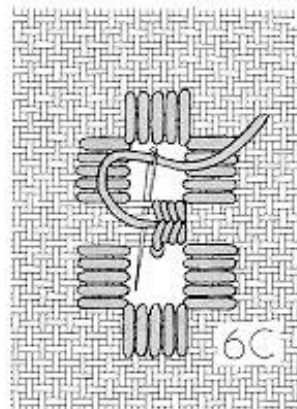
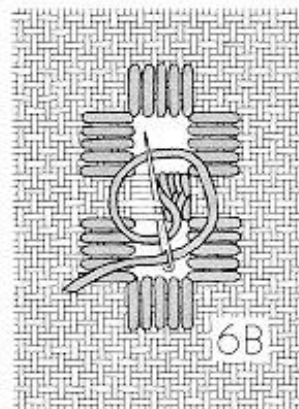
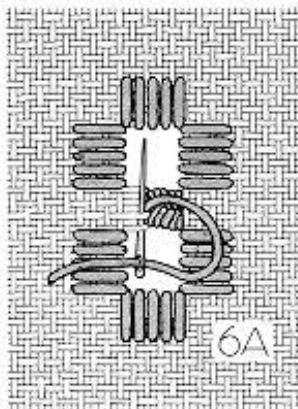
Come up through the material at A and down through the material at B (Fig. 1) making a horizontal straight stitch across the area to be covered (for a firmer base work 2 horizontal stitches). Do not pull the stitch too tightly. Bring the needle out at C and buttonhole stitch closely over the loose thread without picking up any of the fabric (Fig. 2). Every following row of stitches is worked into the loops of the previous row. Work alternately from side to side. Shaping is creating by increasing or decreasing stitches at the end of each row. -- from Classic Stitches.com



** drawing courtesy of Sharon B's
<http://home.iprimus.com.au/ijerry/sharonb/stitchdict/stitch/>

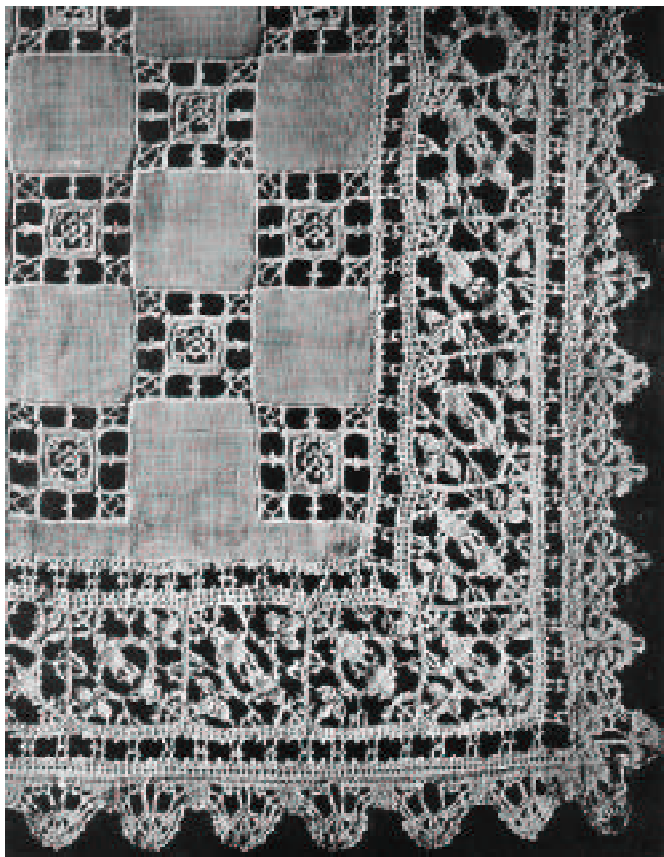
*** drawing courtesy of Classic Stitches.com

Woven Bars & Picots:

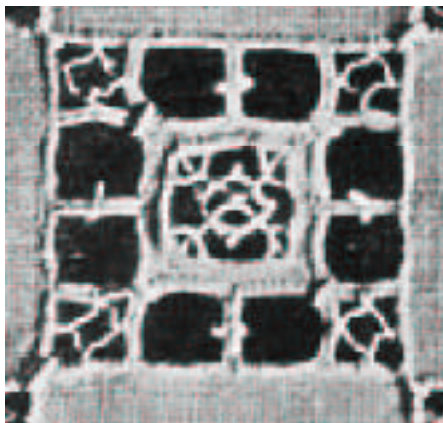


Picots: These very traditional additions are worked at the same time as the weaving is being accomplished. Weave to the center of the bar and insert the needle part way into the bar (6a). Bring the thread from the bar, under the back of the needle and around the front (6b). Pull the needle through, and work with the picot until it lies firmly on the outside of the bar. Wrap that side one time, bringing the needle around the outside of the bar and into the center. Repeat for the other side (6c) and complete the weaving of the bar (6d).

Diagram and Description from Nordic Needle -- http://Nordicneedle.com/tips/har201_a.html

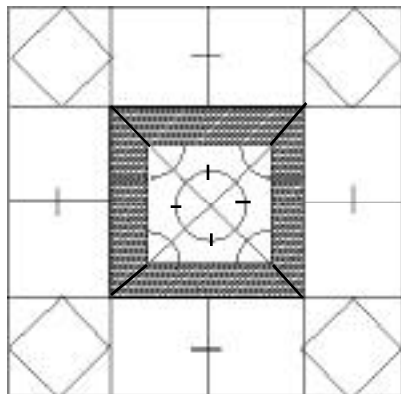


Ricci Vol 1 No. 158 - Table cover with reticello. Bobbin made edging. Cave, Leghorn. Enlarged portion below - class project:



Original was probably 1 to 1.5" square & the flat inset was probably linen rather than the filling stitch we will do for the project.

Outline for Learning Project 2x2"





Class Materials:

- 32 ct. Irish Linen
- #12 DMC Pearl Cotton
- #28 Tapestry Needle


Steps:

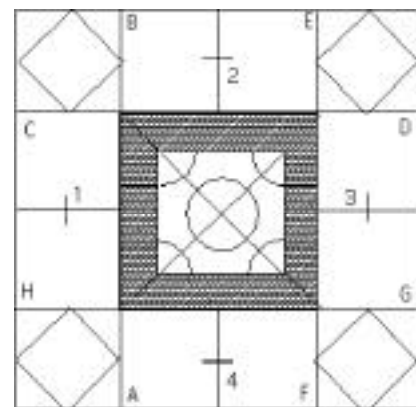
READ Through all the Steps First!

1. Draw a 2" x 2" square on your linen being sure to align it with the linen threads. Draw lines every 1/2 inch within the square.
2. Hoop your fabric.
3. Using a double running stitch, outline the square 1 thread out from the 2" line - over 2 threads.
4. Repeat 2 above except 1 more thread out and be sure your stitches are offset by one thread.
5. Do a satin stitch all the way around, from the 2" square line out, covering the 2 lines of double running.
- At the corners you will be using the same inside corner whole repeatedly until you have completely covered the corner. One satin stitch per thread - 1:3.
6. Cut all the threads from the inside EXCEPT for 3 threads where there is a 1/2" mark. You should now have a grid of 16 squares.
7. Remove fabric from hoop. Place your pattern on the "pillow". Cover with clear protector..

— Hint: use clear self adhesive shelf liner. Cut a piece slightly larger all the way around the pattern. Peel off backing and place over pattern. —

Tack or pin fabric in place at the corners. Then place small tacking stitches over each thread group - 1 or 2 per. Be careful not to distort the lines and do not tack in the center as it will interfere with connecting lines.

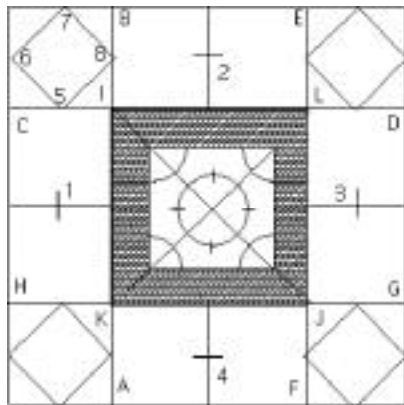
— Hint: Starting and Stopping Threads: you can run the thread end under a previously worked line. If you don't have a place to put the thread, as in the area has not been worked then you need to stitch over the thread end as you work the line. You can also do this to cover an end of thread. Be sure to use 5 or 6 stitches to secure the thread end. Plan where you will start and stop your threads. It is better to start a new thread



in a planned section than to run out of thread at an awkward moment. —

8. Starting at A begin making button hole stitches along the A-B line covering the threads that you did not remove. Be sure the bottom part of the stitch is toward the center of the piece.

9. When you reach the threads grouped at the 1" mark - #1, cast a thread across to the frame. Then begin working your way back across to the A-B line doing a figure "8" overcast-



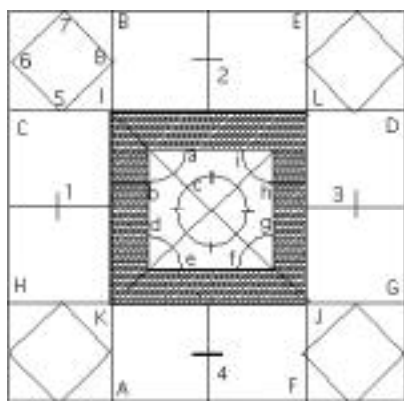
each part of the figure over 2 threads. . When you reach the half way point do a picot on each side.

— Hint: The general rule of thumb is to work the side trips as

you go. Sometimes as here, you cannot work the side trip on the A-B progress and there is nothing to use to hold the thread in place until you are on the C-D run. —

10. Starting at C begin making buttonhole stitches along the C-D line as above. When you reach 5, cast a single thread to 6 - this is known as a "bride". Go under 2 threads at 6 and move to 7. Go under 2 threads at 7 and go to 8. Go under 2 threads at 8 and go back to 5. Go under 2 threads at 5. Continue your button hole over cast along the C-D line.

— Hint: Much of Reticella is about tension. Making sure you have adequate tension in the threads as they cross the area. This is a balance of being aware that too loose makes the final piece limp and too tight, pulls the bit out of alignment. —



11. When you get to #2 do the casting, "8" and picots, as with step 9.

12. Do E-F and G-H - doing the side trips as outlined in Steps 9 and 10.

13. Cut and remove any threads remain-

ing in the center square area.

14. Cast a thread from I-J and J-I. Repeat so that you have 4 threads going back and forth. Overcast from I-J.

15. Cast a thread from K-L and from L-K. Repeat so that you have 4 threads going back and forth. Overcast from K-L.

16. Beginning at I, do Detached Buttonhole from I-L and L-I. Use the crossed threads to hold your return. Repeat lines until sufficient area is filled. Then continue on to next section. Be sure to align your rows and have the same number of rows in each section. Note that you will need to reduce the number of stitches in your rows as you proceed closer to the center.

17. Beginning at "a", throw a thread to "b" and back to "a". Then begin doing a buttonhole over cast along the a-b route. When you get to the cross threads, move to "c".

18. Cast a single thread around at "c" to make a circle. Wrap the casting thread once around the cross threads to hold the cast in place. When you return to "c" after making a full circle, begin doing a button hole stitch over the cast as you work your way around the circle.. Do a picot in the center of each section. When you complete the circle return to finish your a-b line.

19. Beginning at "d", throw a thread to "e" and back to "d". Do a buttonhole over cast along the d-e route. Repeat for f-g and h-i.

— Hint: Steps 17-19 can be done as part of Step 16, if it works in the flow of stitching. —

CHALLENGE: Now that you have worked through the steps and have feel for the method, try scaling the same piece to the original size. The class materials will probably work for 1.5" square, but you may need to go to finer linen and thread for 1" square.

Finishing Your Piece:

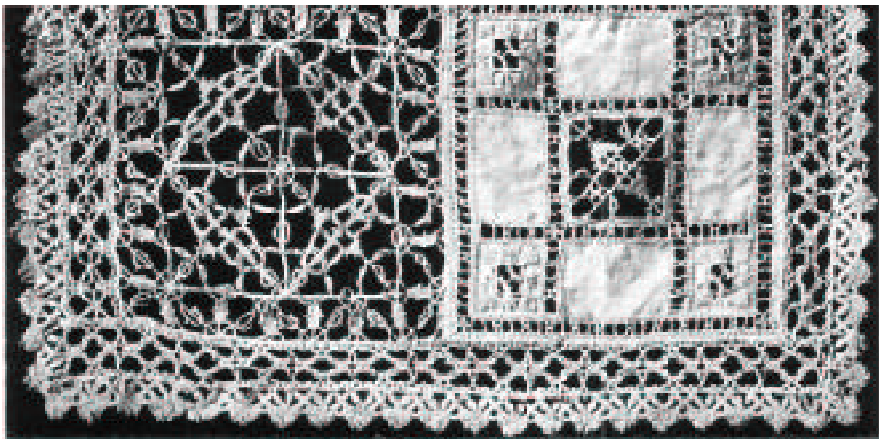
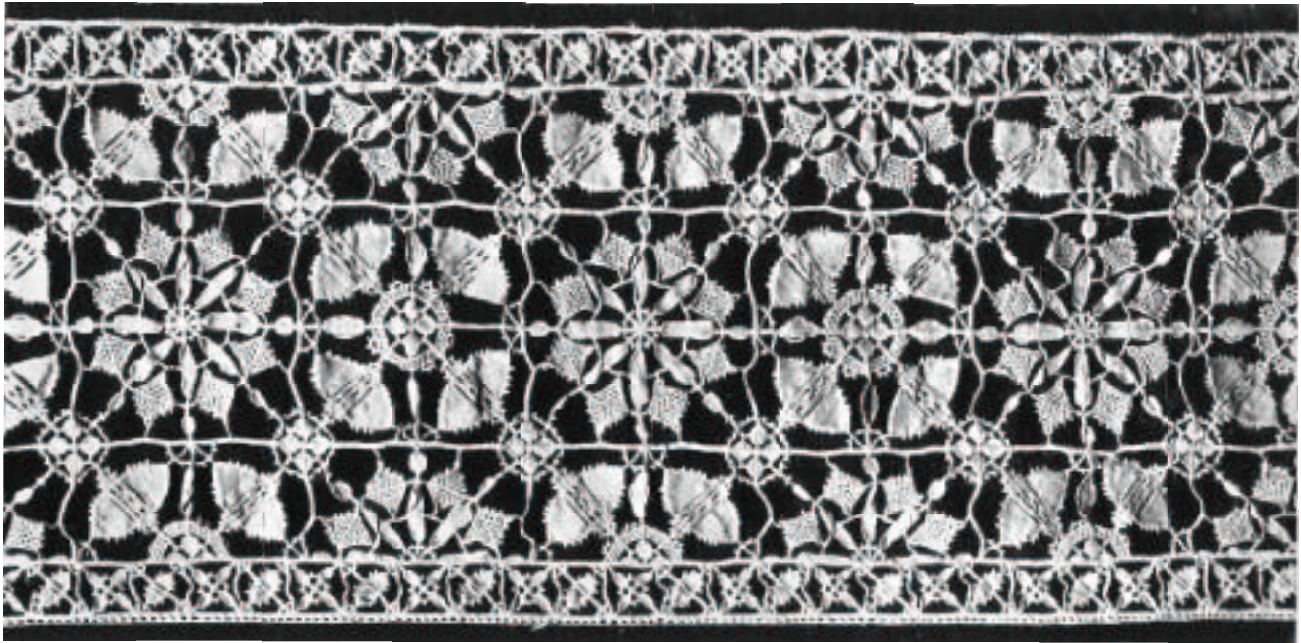
If you want to work a larger area you can make more squares and either abut your frame from the first piece or reuse the appropriate sections. Perhaps you can repeat the pattern in another area of the linen. Another possibility is to do a series of smaller patterns in a corner or around the square you have done.

Since all such pieces had finished edges, consider either hemstitching the piece or doing a needlelace edging. Many pieces had an edging in colored or metal thread needlelace.

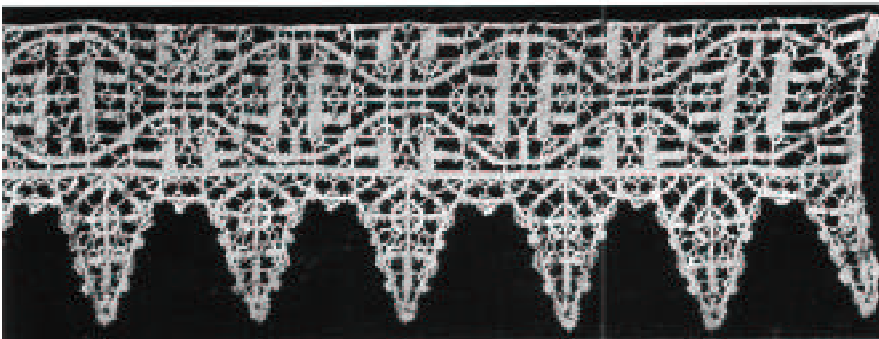
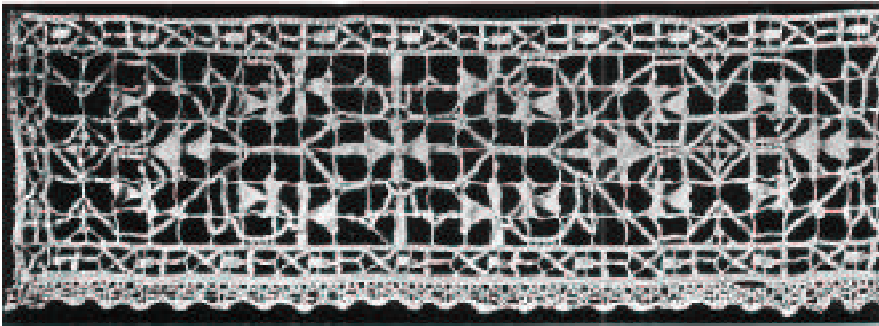
Some appropriate needlelace edgings might be:

- buttonhole bars
- button hole bars with picots
- stacked buttonhole bars
- woven points
- picots cast onto the rolled hem

Whatever you do enjoy!



*Ricci Vol. I No. 181 Reticello
insertion. Chieti Exhibition, 1905.
RLB - note that some of the areas of
detached buttonhole are open and
have a lacey look achieved by
"skipping" stitches.*



*Ricci Vol. I
Squares, insertions and points.
No. 208 - Levier, Florence
No. 209, 210 - Ameri, Florence*