

KARURA

Designed by LEIGH DESIGNS

Stitch guide by River Silks Ltd. Copyright © 2007 River Silks Ltd.
10x10 painted area, 12 x 12 canvas, 13 mesh

Materials needed: 12 x 12 stretcher bars, #22 or 24 tapestry needles

Additional materials needed: Kreinik medium gold braid (less than a spool) and black velour or velvet (less than a spool).

River Silks Ltd. 100% silk, hand dyed ribbon

Information (877) 944-7444

www.riversilks.com

7mm	Color	Spools	7mm	Color	
242	Juniper	3	214	Over dye peppermint	1
171	Smoke pine	2	250	Over dye septra yellow	1
158	Chinese Red	4	202	White-white	1
218	Over dye Chinese red	2	233	Chocolate	1
235	Over dye artichoke	2	145	O-dye reseda green	19
4mm					
218	Over dye Chinese Red	2			

BEAK: Colors 202, 242, 171 and black velour or velvet.

RED AREAS (JOWLS): Colors 158 and 218.

EYES: Colors 250, 218, black velour or velvet and Kreinik gold braid.

AREAS NEXT TO THE EYES: Color 235 and 233.

EARS: Color 242.

FOREHEAD: Colors 214, 235, 242, 168 and 202.

CROWN: Colors 158 and 218.

BACKGROUND: Color 145.

GENERAL PLANNING

Attach the canvas to the stretcher bars preferably using tacks.

There is no need to ply the silk ribbon. You will want to work with 2 to 3 foot lengths of ribbon. The ribbon won't show wear so don't worry.

THREADING THE NEEDLE: Cut the ribbon on the diagonal. Insert point of the ribbon through the eye of the needle. Then insert the point of the needle through the ribbon cut end about 1/2" from the cut. Pull the long tail to secure the ribbon to the needle.

SECURING THE RIBBON TO THE CANVAS: We have chosen not to use an "away knot" as it is unnecessary with River Silks ribbon. **There is an easier way.** Bring the needle up through an empty hole where you want to begin. Pull the needle and ribbon through the canvas leaving about a one-inch tail of ribbon on the back of the canvas. With a finger press that tail flat against the canvas. Go back down through an adjacent hole passing through both the canvas and the ribbon tail. Try not to stitch through your finger! With your finger still pressing on the tail pull the needle and ribbon through the canvas and keep pulling until the ribbon is secure on the canvas. Check the back of the canvas to see that there are no loose ends. This is called the "Canvas Lock Stitch".

HELPFUL HINTS: The ribbon does not need to be pulled tightly. Untwist the ribbon as you stitch and lay the ribbon with a laying tool to show the surface. Stitching style will affect the number of spools required. The "economy stitch" is quite acceptable if you are pleased with the look. With shorter stitches this is not always the best.

I RAN OUT OF RIBBON. NOW WHAT? When you need to add more ribbon to continue stitching or to change color or width of ribbon use this easy technique. Select your new piece of ribbon and secure it to a new needle using the "Needle Lock Stitch" described previously. On the wrong side of the canvas cut the ribbon you had been using (removing the old needle) leaving about a 1 1/2 inch tail. Hold that tail and pierce it with your new needle and ribbon very close to the surface of the canvas, keep pulling the new ribbon leaving another 1 1/2 inch tail. Put that tail over the next hole that you want to stitch and put the needle through that new tail and the canvas. Keep on pulling until secure. Turn the canvas to the right side and continue stitching. You may trim those tails to a half-inch as desired.

CANVAS MANAGEMENT

Leigh Richardson has created a series of eight masks from the classical Japanese musical drama called "NOH". The masks are simply wonderful! I chose this Karura mask because of all the white

dots. They caught my eye and were definitely going to need French Knots. However I hadn't considered the other challenges that this canvas presents.

Consequently there was much gnashing of teeth and heavy use of the "Stitch Blade" to deal with judgment errors. Hopefully this stitch guide will steer you clear of these issues.

The canvas has two main challenges: the beak and everything else!

THE BEAK:

I started by working the beak as this has to be done right before moving on to the rest of the canvas. The beak must be stitched alternating sides (right and left) with each stitch. This means that you are running two needles and ribbons at the same time – a stitch on the right side followed by a stitch on the left side. This really becomes an exercise in counted thread technique. For each stitch you will count the number of rows going up and the number of columns going over. Then match that exactly on the opposite side. Do this for each stitch and you end up with a visually pleasing symmetrical beak. A bit of compensation at the outer portion of the beak may be needed.

EVERYTHING ELSE:

The face is otherwise NOT SYMMETRICAL. This is most obvious in the eyes. This is not a problem. It simply reflects the fact that faces are not symmetrical even in mythology.

The background is an integral part of this canvas yet proved to be a serious challenge that I could not meet! The background design features slightly curving edges and straight lines painted in a variety of angles. This creates the classic problems with which our dear painters like to challenge our skills. First, how to give the illusion of a curve on a square grid and second, how to avoid the "staircase" look in a diagonal line. The result had to be smooth and the background design could not compete with the Karura. Everything I tried looked busy or didn't address the real problems. So I eliminated the painted background design and used Horizontal Brick! This causes the Karura to become the riveting focal point of this canvas. That's how it should be!

Please refer to the photograph for the finished look. This stitch guide follows the photo, NOT the painting!!!!

LET'S STITCH

BEAK: Start with the white line down the middle. Run a few real long backstitches twisting to make the ribbon quite narrow.

Next cut 2 pieces of ribbon (#168) and fix each one onto its own tapestry needle.

Start stitching from the bottom of the beak as it is easier to develop the symmetry and curvature.

The painting has a light line at the bottom of the beak. I used this line to define the curve of the beak and did not stitch it.

With color #168 stitch one Straight Stitch on the right side of the beak right next to the white line and go up about 14 holes. Match that stitch on the left side. Continue, repeating these straight stitches, one for each side along the lower green curve, until you have done **three** pairs of stitches. You will gradually be following the curve of the beak as defined by the line on the bottom of the beak. To get the curved perspective you should fan your stitches out from single holes as you move along. These beak stitches cannot be straight up and down! They are angled after the first couple of stitches.

Switch to color #242 and continue stitching both sides of the first row.

Then do a second row on top of the first in the same fashion. Stitch from the top down to pierce the row below. I used two colors to create the color gradation as painted. Follow the painting and the photograph as guides. Row 2 starts with four pairs of stitches in #168 followed by #242 for the remainder of the row.

Row 3 starts with five pairs of stitches in color #168.

Row 4 is completely stitched in color #168.

The completed beak is arbitrarily divided into four equal rows. There is a bit of compensation at the very top of the beak as seen in the photo.

The stitching should overlap the white center line in places. The white line is a light reflection and does not have to be even. This is the only reflection that I retained from the painting. If the white line is completely covered by the green, tease it out a bit.

The area under the main beak is in shadow. To simplify things I did these areas in Tent Stitch with black velour. I also eliminated the semi circles at the outer edge for simplicity.

RED JOWLS: Start these Straight Stitches next to the beak **at the top** so that each subsequent stitch can pierce the stitch above. These are all short stitches to create the illusion of a curve. Use the overdyed ribbon first. This is used to give the sense of a crease as painted. This is all freeform.

Look at it and think about the look you want. You can do one side at a time as the painting is not symmetrical.

EYES: Stitch this with Straight Stitches radiating out from the black iris/pupil, similar to an Algerian Eye. Do the iris/pupil with Tent Stitch in black velour. Outline the eye with gold braid done in Tent Stitch. The red areas use color #218 worked in French knots. For the green areas under the eye use color #235 done in short Straight Stitches, beginning at the top to easily pierce the row above. Fill in with white French Knots – as many as you wish. Outline this green/white dot area with brown and do the ears with color #242 in oblique Straight Stitches. The bridge of the beak is outlined in brown and filled with #235.

FOREHEAD: Each row should go up about 3 holes. Use vertical Straight Stitches. Start with lighter ribbon and move to darker. Add French knots in white. The center bulge is done in #168 with Straight Stitches.

CROWN: This uses the same technique as in the red jowls using # 218 for the outline and the creases.

BACKGROUND: Horizontal brick in color #140 finishes things off.

HAVE FUN!