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FOUNDATION/LINING/BACKING



Ultrasuede is a synthetic suede and is available in many colors, so it's easy to match or complement your beadwork. Ultrasuede is strong, flexible, and doesn't fray when it's cut. It works as a lining or a backing.

Sherry's Foundation

My favorite foundation is Lacy's Stiff Stuff. It's a wonderful material that can be glued, painted, dyed, and drawn on. It also has unbelievable strength. It's very porous, which makes it great for gluing stones, because you'll only need to wait about 20 minutes for the stone to be secure. For beaders who prefer a stiffer embroidery surface, Lacy's is fabulous. I began my cabochon gluing "back in the day" on index cards and interfacing material. Since Lacy's Stiff Stuff came onto the market, I've been beading on it religiously. When working with certain colors, you may want to dye your Lacy's.

To dye: stir 1 tsp. powder dye to 2 cups boiling water. Watch carefully, as the dye will fizz and boil up. Allow the Lacy's to soak in the dye for 60 seconds. Rinse with cold water, and pat with a paper towel. Allow to air dry. Fabric paints or permanent markers also work great to color Lacy's.

Ultrasuede is another good beading foundation. It is a lightweight, synthetic version of suede and comes in a wide variety of colors. As opposed to Lacy's, it is a very flexible foundation.

Sherry's Lining

Cereal boxes and plastic container lids work great when you're embroidering a piece that requires added "stiffness." For example, a porcelain centerpiece or a long, heavier cabochon needs to be stabilized so the foundation won't bend. After beading the desired design, cut out the beadwork. Lay the beadwork down onto the plastic or stiff board and trace around the design. Cut out the piece you've traced, approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ -in. (2mm) smaller than the beaded piece, as you will be edging and need to take the needle through the edges of the piece. Glue the plastic or cardboard to the back of the beadwork, and let dry. This lining becomes sandwiched between the beadwork and the backing.

Sherry's Backing

Ultrasuede is a wonderful backing. Ultrasuede is my preference as it is lightweight, which makes it easy to sew through when backstitching or doing a brick stitch edging technique. The many color choices make it easy to match the Ultrasuede to your beadwork.

If Ultrasuede is not available to you, leather or suede are good substitutes. But you will have to use a much stronger needle, as these materials are more difficult to stitch through.



Photo by Larry Sanders

Heidi's Foundation

You can use many fabrics for a foundation, but there are a few things you might want to consider.

The foundation's thickness is one; if it's thick, as leather is, you will need a stronger needle and a thimble. If your foundation is too thin, it may not give your beadwork the support it needs and it may be flimsy and hard to handle, especially if you're working with large stones.

The other consideration is fraying. When you cut the material, does it fray? If so, you don't want to use it for a foundation, unless it's already sewn (as in embroidering on a pair of jeans).

Ultrasuede is my ideal foundation material. You can cut it next to your beadwork and it won't fray. Ultrasuede is the perfect thickness for a #12 needle to pass through easily. It also comes in a large selection of colors, and is washable (not that you want to put your beadwork in the washing machine, but you can clean excess glue and marker off Ultrasuede with a wet cotton swab).

When you cut out your foundation, make sure you leave extra room; you never know if your design might grow as you bead. If you're using a pattern, trace it onto the Ultrasuede and then cut around the pattern leaving a 1-in. (2.5cm) border.

Heidi's Lining

Your project determines the lining. In most cases, poster board works great. If you are making a bracelet, you'll need something flexible so you can curve it. Poster board is excellent for getting a curve and holding it. Fabric lining is another good lining for flexibility. You can get lining material at the fabric store in many different thicknesses; some are even thick enough for foundations and don't fray.

If, however, your project needs to stay flat because it has heavy stones, then you might need to use something thicker, such as a cereal box. You won't see the lining when the work is complete, so use something you already have around the house. Recycle those boxes!

To cut your lining, place the finished beadwork on top of the lining material and trace around the beadwork with a pencil. (If you use a pen, you might get ink on the Ultrasuede.) Cut the lining about $\frac{1}{8}$ -in. (3mm) smaller than the traced line or finished beadwork. Apply glue to the lining rather than the back of the beadwork — it's less messy this way. If you're working on a larger collar, it's a good idea to put glue on both sides. Now you're ready to apply the backing.

Heidi's Backing

The back of your piece is just as important as the front. Use Ultrasuede in the same color as your foundation. Lay the finished piece with the lining glued in place on the inside of the Ultrasuede, trace around the piece leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. (1.3cm) extra Ultrasuede or more (don't cut yourself short here), and then cut. Spread the glue on the back of the lining and then lay it on the inside of the Ultrasuede just cut. Make sure you have extra Ultrasuede all the way around. Carefully press your beadwork into place, massaging it onto the backing. Now you're ready to begin the finishing, which will be covered on p. 28.



The Ultrasuede foundation used for this cuff becomes part of the design. And, because it's used on the back as well, it makes for a soft and comfortable fit.

DESIGN

Sherry



Photo by Larry Sanders

Design is such a personal “animal.” When I teach, I always urge my students to follow their hearts and just let a design happen. It isn’t something that can be forced, it must flow from one’s own soul. Finding your own creative niche can be an enriching and spiritual journey. Free-form embroidery’s spontaneity allows me to change materials, stitches, or direction on a whim. The final product is never exactly known; the excitement is watching the beadwork develop its own personality.

I approach my artwork by thinking in shapes and colors. An odd-shaped cabochon may throw me into a designing frenzy. It helps sometimes to think of these individual pieces as puzzle pieces — just play with them until you have the perfect fit.

Architecture and shape within design are important to me, as I like to play with strength in a design, especially in my broad collars. Sometimes I embroider several pieces and play with their shapes to create a pleasing piece of wearable art. It’s helpful to use an actual display bust to design a large piece. Like a dressmaker would, pin pieces of your embroidery to the form to see how your piece will look as it progresses.

When approaching a new piece of art, I often play with the cabochons and move them around — much like finding pieces to fit into a complex puzzle. The colors should complement each other, and the shapes should have a good visual fit.

The stones or buttons are almost always my focus when creating. Their shapes dictate the creation of the piece. If a stone is triangular, the design may take on that particular shape. The focal point is important in telling you where to place other beads and the shapes that will flow in your design.

I believe the key element to designing is playing. Look at the elements around you with a creative eye. That vintage button you’ve been hanging onto can be used instead of a cabochon, or you can use actual pieces of nature! I once used bamboo in a design that displayed a panda bear, and incorporated a refrigerator magnet into a beaded collar!

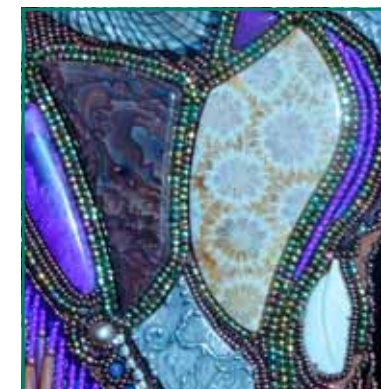
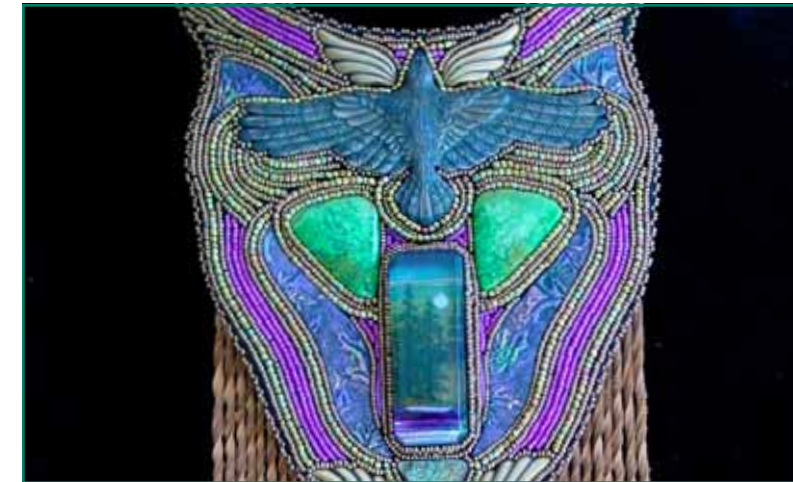


Photo by Larry Sanders



Photo by Larry Sanders

Heidi



Once you have an idea or beautiful cabochon in mind, you need to transform it into a pattern. Basically this pattern is going to be the area that will be covered in beads.

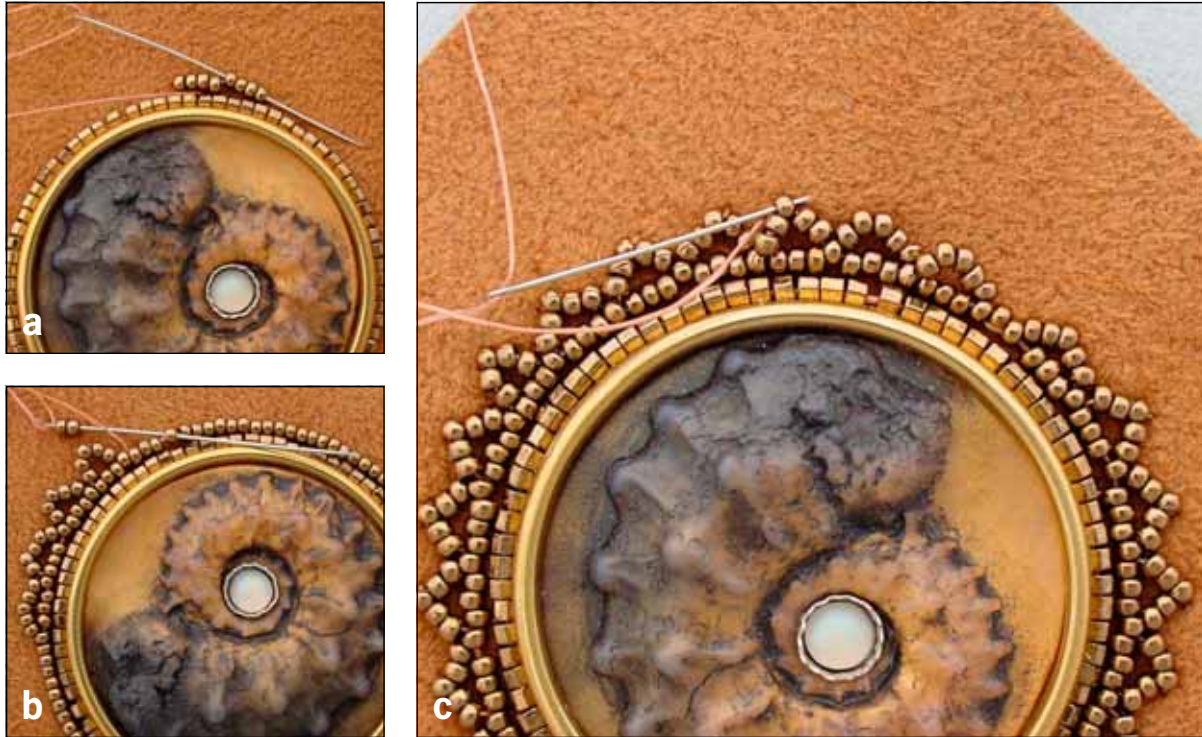
You also need to think of what specific piece of jewelry you will be making. Here we will be talking about necklaces. If you are going to make a broad collar, it will take many hours, months, or maybe even years. You can make something elaborate but on a much smaller scale that won’t take you as long to finish. In that case the focal point will be in a pendant or bib where the majority of beading is in the front, and you use a heavy cord or chain that wraps around your neck to finish, rather than beading the entire piece.

I have an assortment of necklace patterns I have made from old T-shirts or clothing patterns. The most important part of your pattern is the inside where it fits around your neck. You can cut up an old T-shirt, save the collar, and then cut the collar in the back and remove approximately 1 in. (2.5cm) to allow for the clasp. Make sure this fits your neck the way you want, and then trace it onto a sheet of paper. Make sure you leave enough room on the paper to lay out your idea or your cabochons.

Start by picking a center focal point: a stone, a button, even Grandma’s old cameo. Lay the stone in the center of the paper pattern. Place other stones around to see what looks best to you. Move them around on the paper; try different locations and stones. There is no right or wrong way; it’s all a matter of what looks good to you. If you’re planning to incorporate an animal, get a photograph of the animal you wish to use and copy it to the desired size using a copier. (I copy mine on tracing paper so I can glue it to the Ultrasuede and actually stitch through it.) Cut out the animal and place it in various places, as you did the stones, until you find the spot where it wants to live (see more about this in my collar project on p. 92).

Even if you’re not making an elaborate piece, it helps to lay your stones out on the paper so you can get an idea of where a chain or bail will need to be placed. My grandfather drew beautiful sketches of his carvings before he ever began carving; you might find it best to draw your design idea first. I have a little black book I keep new ideas in. However, I never design by drawing a piece first, because for me everything flows into place as I start working on it.

AMMONITE BOX



Designing the beadwork

1. Your design depends on your box. Does it have a round lid or is it square? This ammonite is the perfect size for this stone box. Choose a focal stone that complements your box.
2. Select Ultrasuede that complements the color of the box and the cabochon.
3. The bead color you choose should reflect the box and cabochon colors. The ammonite is beautiful by itself, so my choice is to use only 15° metallic gold seed beads for this piece.

Gluing and stitching

4. Glue the cabochon to the Ultrasuede using two-part epoxy: Spread the glue on the back of your cabochon with a toothpick, firmly press the cabochon into place, and use a cotton swab and rubbing alcohol to clean up any excess glue. Allow the glue to set for at least 15 minutes before stitching any beads.
5. Single thread a #12 sharp needle with 1 yd. (.9m) of beading thread and tie a knot at one end. Push the needle up through the Ultrasuede, next to the cabochon. Pick up eight 15° beads and work backstitch 8 (see p. 22) all the way around the cabochon, then sew through the round of beads again to bring the beads snug against the stone and strengthen the round.
6. Add a second round of beads using the same technique as in step 5 (a).
7. After you have finished the second round, begin the webbing (see p. 22). Start by exiting a bead on the last round, and picking up five 15° beads. Skip

three beads and sew into the fourth. Continue working webbing around the whole cabochon (b).

8. Next you will tack the webbing down to the foundation. Using your needle, pull the third (or middle) bead of the first five-bead webbing and position it so it forms a point as shown (c). Tack it in place to give it a nice centered look. Sew through to the next center (tack) bead and repeat around the cabochon.

Trimming and finishing

9. Very carefully trim your piece, leaving about a 1/16-in. (2mm) border so you don't trim the tack threads (d).

10. You are ready to glue your piece to the box. Using tacky glue and a toothpick, spread the glue onto the back of your piece, making sure to glue close to the edges (e).

11. Center the beadwork, glue side down, on the lid and press it into place. Use a cotton swab to clean up the excess glue and also to help press the finished piece onto the box lid (f).

Save those small lengths of thread for beading around small cabochons. Hang them on a tack near your desk.

