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Tiny Dress STITCHINGS

by Colette Copeland

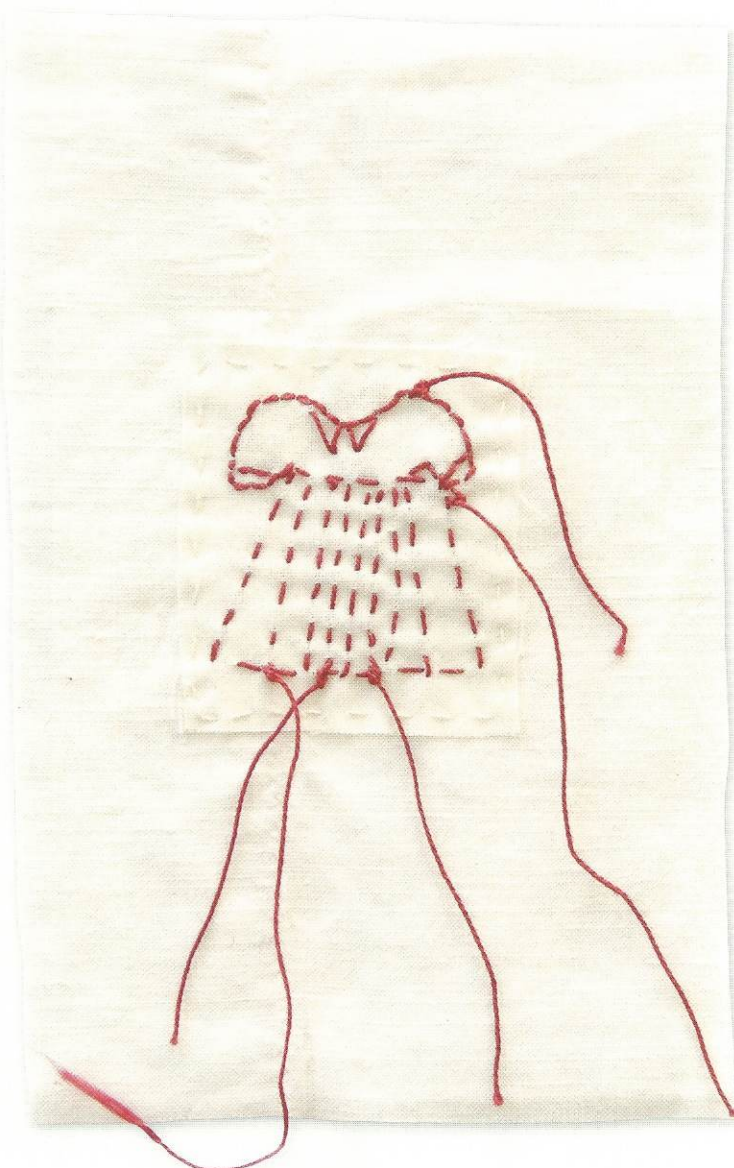
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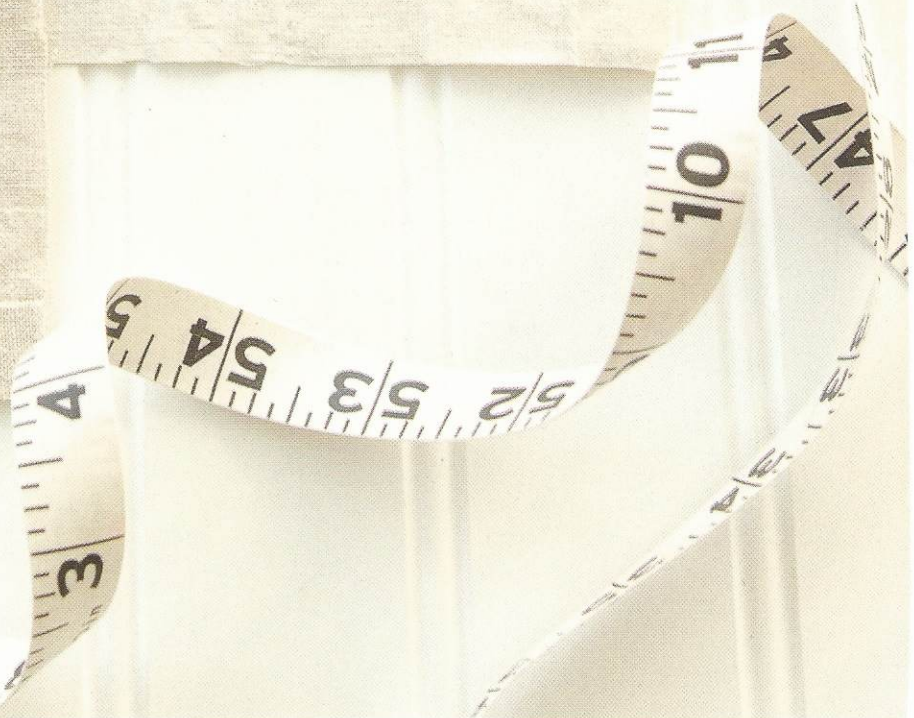
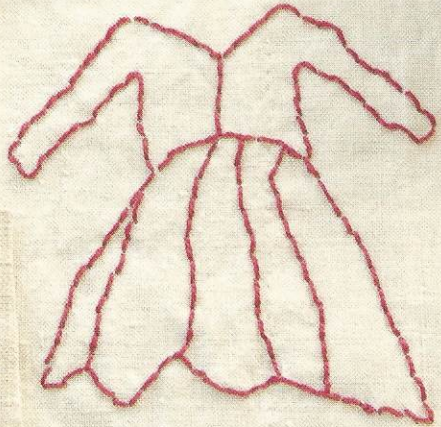
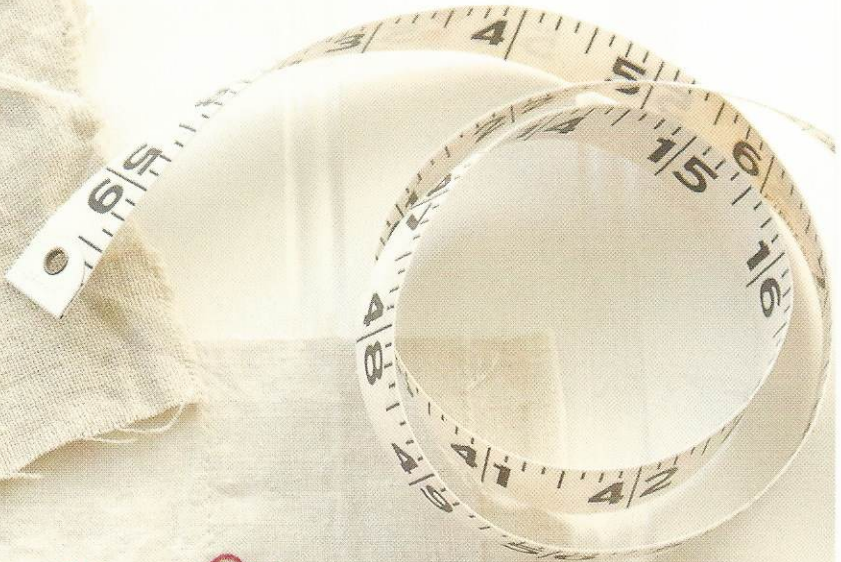
**I have two good friends in Montreal, Canada: a married couple who own Atelier du Presbytère. Their company creates beautiful things for the home from antique French linens that they import from their native France. Twice a year, I get to spend time with them when they bring their wares to the One of a Kind Show in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.**

Some years ago, I asked them what happened to all the remnants of vintage and antique linens that they turn into their magnificent line of home goods. They told me they end up with mounds of useless scraps that can't be used; I blanched. "You don't throw them away, do you?" I said, my fingers crossed behind my back. We looked at each other, and a few moments later, the penny dropped. "I'll put them all in a bag and send them to you," my friend promised.

She kept her promise, and the next thing I knew, I had a package of the most precious remnants from the cutting floor of their studio. Pieces of white and taupe-colored linens, heavy and delicate, gorgeous lace, embroidered monograms ... an embarrassment of riches, as far as I was concerned.

I hoarded my stash for a while, until I went through a fairly intense embroidery phase, and when I wanted to stitch some tiny dresses, I knew I had the perfect fabric backgrounds. The little dress shapes were inspired by little girls' dresses on the cover of old sewing patterns and antique doll dresses. ♦♦







## TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Embroidery thread: red, white & ivory
- Fabric: heavy linen/cotton, white & neutral
- Fabric pen: fast-fade
- Needle
- Pencil & paper
- Scissors
- Thimble

Odd shapes are the nature of these remnants, and that's part of the attraction for me. I may trim a corner or part of it that's more of an eyesore than artistic, but I leave the rest intact. I'm not hiding the fact that these are remnants, and the last thing I want is a perfectly cut and trimmed piece of fabric. This, and the long, loose threads, give the pieces a lively and organic look, to say nothing of handmade, which is the effect I'm looking for.

## TECHNIQUE

You'll need a small, preferably irregular, piece of fabric, roughly 3" x 4" (a little more, a little less), and one and a half times that size for stitching two dresses on the same fabric. Torn and uneven edges, and pieces with a little lace trim or hanging threads add to the vintage and antique look of the pieces. Practice different dress shapes with pencil and paper until you have something you like; then draw that shape on the fabric scrap with a fast-fade pen. I prefer fast-fade pens (available in fabric and sewing shops) because if you make a mistake, it's not permanent. On the other hand, you'll need to finish the stitching before the ink fades — so, no coffee breaks or other interruptions!

Stitch around the drawing, alternating a simple running stitch with a backstitch. Try to keep the size of the stitches small and the spacing between stitches even. Don't pull on the stitches too hard because the fabric will bunch.

There are two ways to add the long, loose threads. Tie off a piece of thread at your chosen points, and cut it at about 1-1½-inch lengths. The alternative is to stitch in the threads separately.

Pin singly or in groups to a matboard and display in a frame or shadow box to result in a piece of art full of charm that will surely make anyone smile. But apart from framing them, there are many other ways to use them. Stitch them to something else: sachets, small pillows, clothing, small quilts, blank greeting cards, and postcards; or embroider a dress on a very small scrap, and then stitch that to a larger piece of fabric. ❄

## Colette Copeland



is a full-time artist who works with paper, paint, and textiles. She is the designer of Carved by Hand, a rubber stamp line for Stampington & Company, and a regular contributor to the Stampington group of magazines. She blogs regularly at [a-bird-in-the-hand.blogspot.com](http://a-bird-in-the-hand.blogspot.com). To view more of her work, visit her Etsy shop at [colettecopeland.etsy.com](http://colettecopeland.etsy.com).

