

PROJECT THREE

# desert dawning

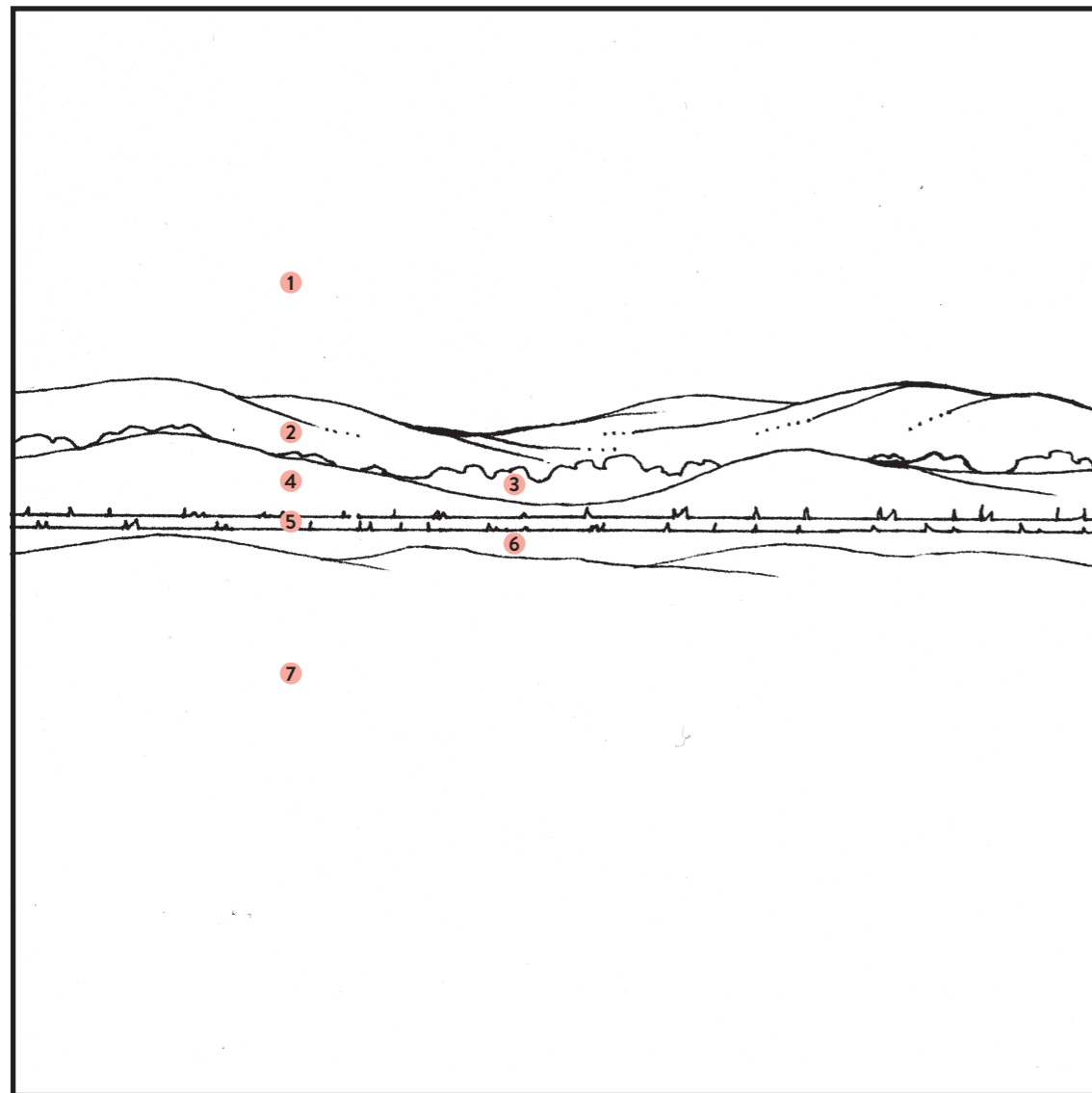
*Gathering the material for this project was a trip back in time through photographs, slides and rough sketches. I found small pots of red sand; chippings of salt from a dry salt lake reminded me of the intensity of the glare and shimmering mirage of rising heat; a desiccated insect; the jawbone of a tiny marsupial; small pebbles from a desert mosaic.*

*The landscape is based on the area north-west of Coober Pedy; a place of distant sand dunes, the occasional salt lake, dry brittle grasses, everlastings and the weather-worn remains of an old stockyard. The fabrics used here are airbrushed and dyed homespun cottons, Jap silk and silk organza.*



*The early morning sky lights up the sand, giving life to Mulla Mulla clumps and desert grasses. Stockyards stand as a monument against glowing dunes.  
Above: actual size of finished work (approximately 15 x 15 cm/6 x 6 in).*

## BACKGROUND LAYERS DESIGN OUTLINE



Outline is actual size (15 x 15 cm/6 x 6 in). As the above design does not include the mounting allowances, it is important to remember to include them  
Detailed instructions on 'Layering the Background' can be found in Chapter 3.



## FABRIC PREPARATION & LAYERING

All layers are 20 cm (8 in) wide. The depth, both metric and Imperial, is given in parentheses. The fabrics are listed in the order to be laid and ironed before layering. Layer the fabric from the sky to the base; tack the work to the frame and stitch in the three isolating stitches.

**LAYER 1: SKY:** airbrushed cotton, blue into pink (10 cm/4 in).  
*Note:* If you do not have access to an airbrush for the sky fabric you could source similar dyed fabric, or place a sky-sized piece of pale pink silk organza over a sky-blue homespun cotton.

**LAYER 2: DUNE LINE 1:** orange-dyed cotton (3 cm/1 ½ in); trace, Vliesofix, cut.

**LAYER 3: TREE LINE 1:** mid green cotton (3 cm/1 ½ in); Vliesofix top edge, cut freehand.

**LAYER 4: DUNE LINE 2:** orange-dyed cotton (3 cm/1 ½ in); trace, Vliesofix, cut.

**LAYER 5: GRASS LINE 1:** cream Jap silk (3 cm/1 ½ in); torn and frayed.

**LAYER 6: GRASS LINE 2:** lemon Jap silk (3 cm/1 ½ in); torn and frayed.

**LAYER 7: FOREGROUND:** red-brown-dyed cotton (11 cm/4¼ in); trace, Vliesofix, cut.

**LAYER 8: OVERLAY:** white silk organza (20 x 20 cm/8 x 8 in).

MIDDLE GROUND & FOREGROUND STITCHING  
DESIGN OUTLINE

Outline is actual size. There are three dune lines and one tree line marked (A) to be back stitched, beginning with the foreground layer 7. Work the landscape elements in alphabetical order as detailed on opposite page. Refer to the Surface Stitching section in Chapter 3 and the following Surface Elements chapter as you need. Work freely, make changes. Notice how this diagram differs from the final work: as I stitched the work, I felt more height was needed in the foreground area and revised my initial design ideas. Instead of the 'rolly poly' grass bundles is a clump of taller desert grasses.

## SURFACE STITCHING

1. The tree structures are stitched into position in dark brown-grey 3787. The desert oaks' weeping canopies are straight stitch blocks in fern green 522, dark pine green 3362 and medium 3363, overstitched with dark green-grey 3051 for shading. The canopies of the eucalypt are 2-strand French knots in fern green 522.

2. The straight stitch background grasses are in off white 746 and light yellow-beige 3047, with touches of medium brown-grey 3022 at the base. These are overstitched with the rounded shrub-like structures of the everlastings, using medium brown-grey 3022 and the flowers in 2-strand, 2-wrap French knots (1 strand each of white and ultra light plum 3609). The bases of both the grasses and the everlastings are emphasised with light mahogany 3776 after the flowers are embroidered.

3. The broken tree branches in the centre are worked in stem stitch. The grass clumps in the foreground, including the flower spikes, are stitched with the colours used for the background grasses, and the structure for the clump of everlastings on the left side is stitched in fern green 522 over the top of the grasses.

3. The Polyclay fence posts are positioned over a grass clump and stitched down through the 'wire' holes. The area around the base of the posts is heavily embroidered in 4-strand, 2-wrap French knots in a lovely hand-dyed silk thread using a No. 7 crewel needle, with a few small, flat beads in matching tones added. At this point I decided to stitch in another clump of grass in the centre foreground to add height, and so to have the fence wires wandering through it.

4. The foreground everlastings are 4-strand, 2 wrap French knots (2 strands each of white and ultra light plum 3609) worked in a No. 7 crewel needle. For the final touch the 'wire' was couched into place with dark mocha brown 3781.

DMC STRANDED  
COTTONS

Use one strand unless otherwise specified, in a No. 9 crewel needle.

**A: Back stitching**  
(dunes and sand lines)  
light mahogany 3776

**B: Grasses**  
off white 746, light yellow-beige 3047 & medium brown-grey 3022

**C: Trees**  
tree structures  
dark brown-grey 3787  
tree canopies fern green 522,  
dark pine green 3362,  
medium pine 3363

**D: Everlasting**  
everlasting structure  
medium brown-grey 3022  
everlasting flowers white,  
ultra light plum 3609

**E: Fence**  
fence posts polyclay painted with  
grey acrylic; stitched on with  
dark brown-grey 3787  
fence wires tightly rolled paper;  
couched with  
dark mocha brown 3781

**F: Flowers at base  
of fence posts**  
spiral-dyed silk, colour Walnut,  
4 strands, No. 7 crewel needle;  
small flat glass beads to match