Cruisin' with
Grand Format Embroidery™
and Art and Stitch™
by
Robin Hrabik

About the Author - Robin Hrabik

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Robin Hrabik - had been quilting by hand when her children were young. She made the transition to computer guided quilting years ago, and loves the precision it provides.

She opened her quilting business Candy Apple Quilts (west of Cleveland, Ohio) in 2006, and runs her web site CandyAppleQuilts.com to connect with other quilters and provide designs, patterns, and more.

Robin is a Certified Master Trainer for Innova's Auto Pilot software, and is the Sales Manager for Accomplish Quilting. Her specialty is designing on a large scale for Innova's Grand Format Embroidery, and she loves being able to embroider on a longarm quilting machine.

Introduction

Inspiration is everywhere! When you have an embroidery field that is twenty inches high, the sky is the limit. No hooping, no stabilizer --- only your quilt machine and your imagination! The Innova quilting machine with Grand Format Embroidery – plus Art and Stitch – enables you to create amazing things.

This is an example of an embroidery design, intended for machine embroidery, made really big in Art and Stitch, and stitched on my Innova Grand Format Embroidery system:

Step 1 - Choose a Font

In this Addendum I will teach you how to create a very large applique design, to be stitched on a longarm system: a text for a large banner. The text object is made with the True Type Font tool in Art and Stitch at the end of the Artwork toolbar on the left.

First, you need to decide on a font that would be appropriate for the mood of your project. I had just watched a movie from the 40's and 50's, so I knew the "feel" of what I wanted. This banner is going to be for a garage, and I think it will be a lot of fun to do!
There are many places online to find free fonts. All you need to do is Google what theme you are looking for and lots of choices will pop up.
This font I chose is called Magneto, and is available free from Shared fonts here:
https://www.wfonts.com/font/magneto
When you download the font to your computer, you will have to install it first for it to be added to your list of available fonts.

Cruisin'

Step 2 - Setup Design Page Style and Quilting Area

Let's get started in Art and Stitch.

The first thing you may notice is that I have chosen Design Page Style "Quilting" instead of "Embroidery" for the actual design process, even though this will be an embroidery file when it is complete. I made this choice because I did not need any tie off commands (they are performed on the quilt machine), and because I do not want any underlay treatments.

Via Menu Toools > Select Quilting Area/Hoop, button "New" I have set up my Quilting area and saved it as Grand Format Embroidery 100 x 21. This way, when I show the hoop size, I can easily see that my design will be within my sewing area:
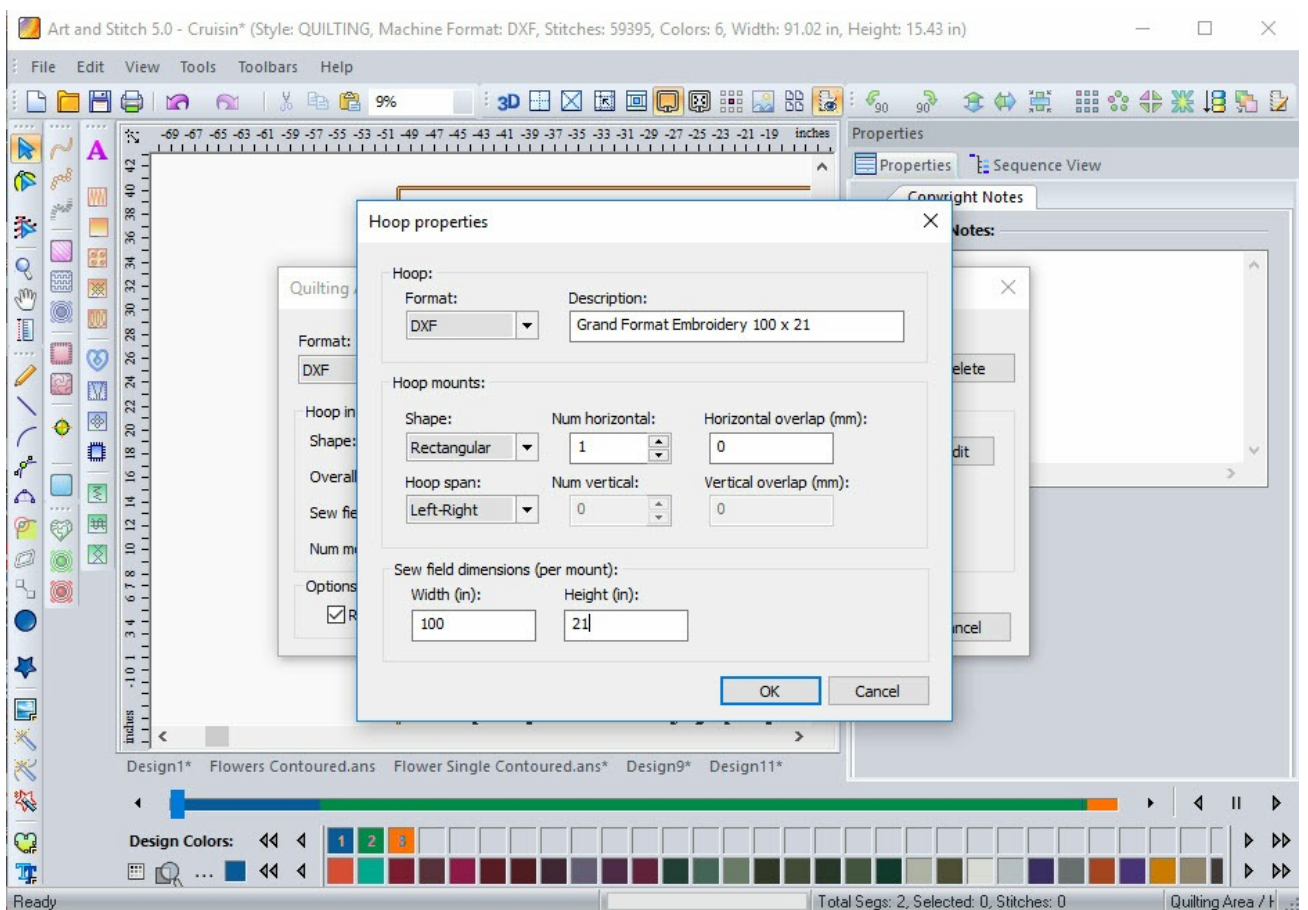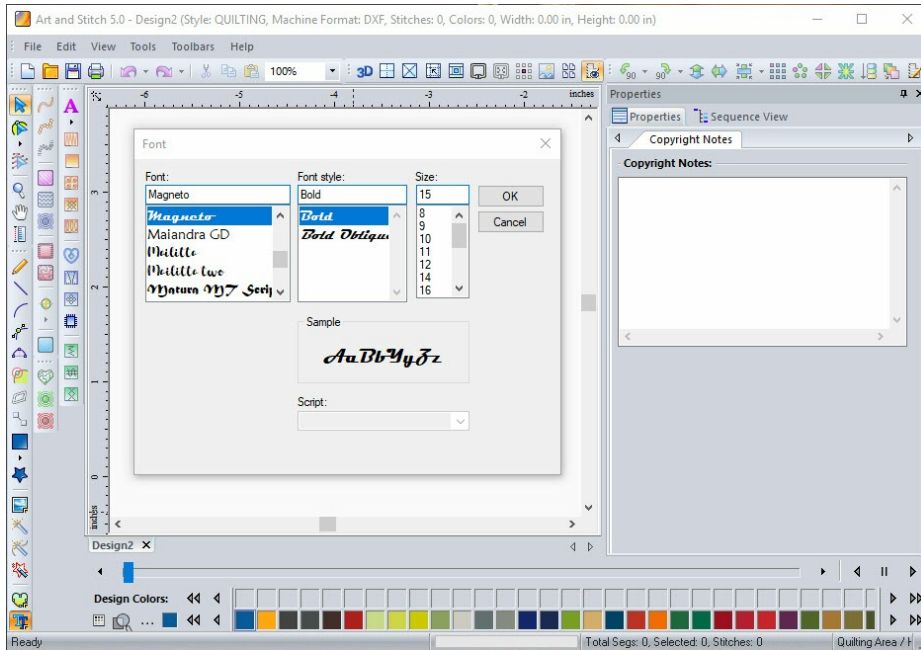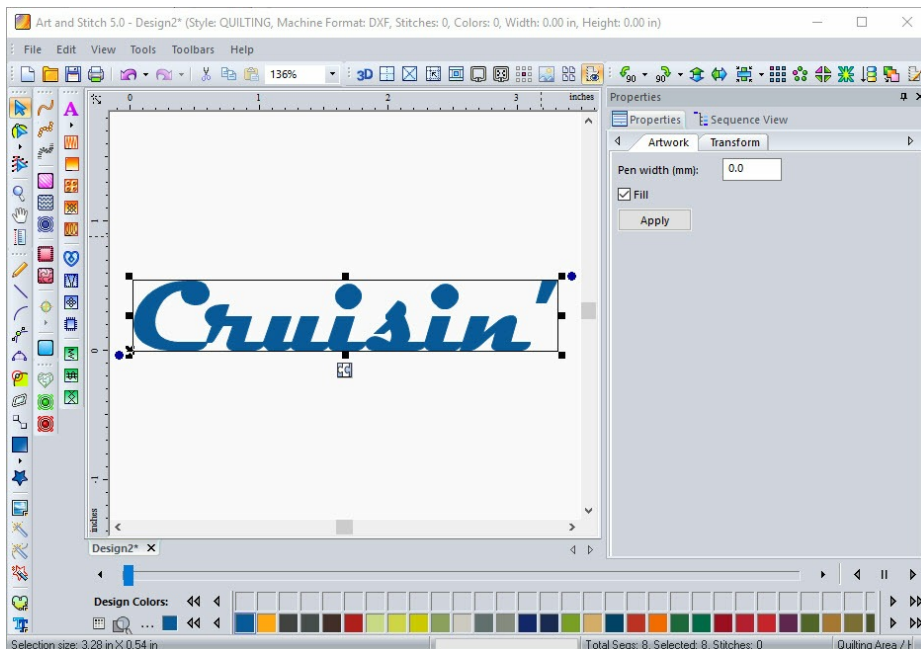
Step 3 - Create the Text Object

Choose the Text Tool from the left side. Type in the word you want to use. Select the font and choose Bold. Click on OK.

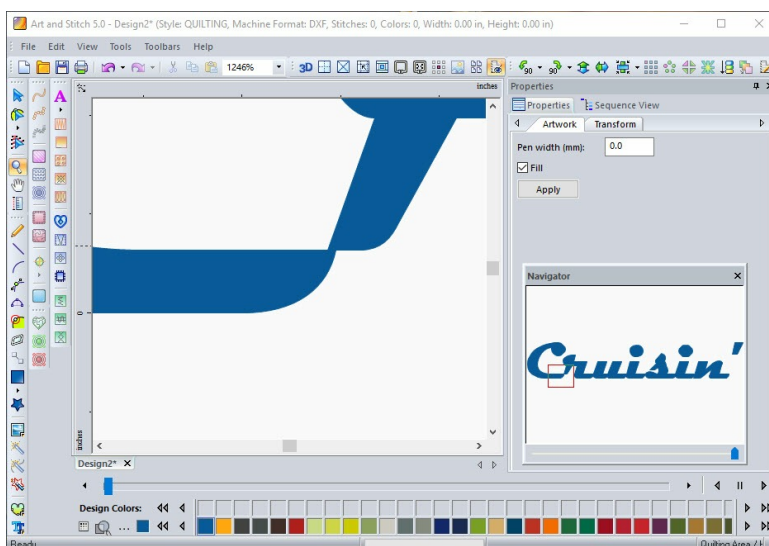Back on the Design Page leave the letters ungrouped because we will be moving them.

Step 3 - Create the Text Object - Cont'd

I like to zoom in on each letter, take the Reshape tool and make sure everything is shaped perfectly. This is also the time when you can nudge the letters closer together so that they are overlapping slightly.

I see one area that could be a little bit of a problem, and that is the connection between the letter "C" and the "r", and I am going to reshape that before I continue.

In order to do that, I select both letters move them together and let them slightly overlap, then right click to bring up the menu where I choose Transform Artwork > Unite. I now have one object that I can reshape.
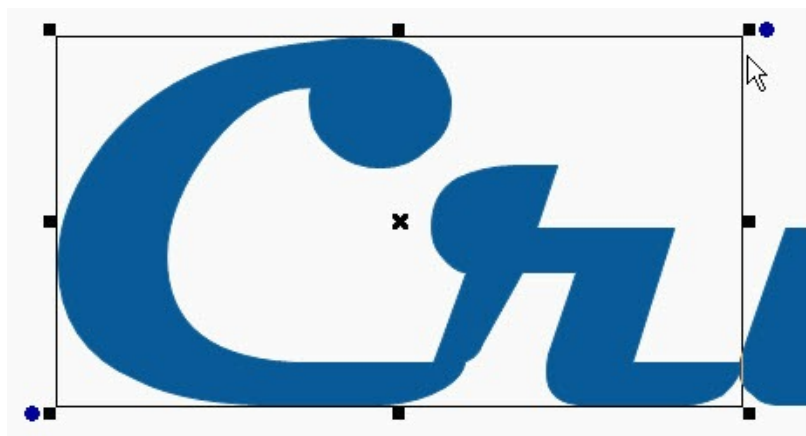
Now that I have reshaped the first two letters, I select them, hold down the Control key and click on the rest of the letters. I will use the right-click menu to choose Transform Artwork > Unite. I now have one nice large shape, with three separate pieces that are the dots on the letter "I" and the apostrophe at the end of the word.

Step 4 - Adjusting the Size

It's time to resize the project so we can do applique on an Innova quilting machine with Grand Format Embroidery.

One thing to note here: We can take this project over to the machine and use the Path Apply function within the software, but I prefer to do projects like this with Art and Stitch because of the vast selection of choices for the edge stitches, and the ability to edit individual stitches. Once you take this design over to the quilt machine, you cannot edit the size of the design, and you can no longer edit individual stitches --- so it is best to perfect everything now and enjoy stitching when you take it to the machine.

Using keyboard shortcut Control+A, I select everything, and see the size of my design.
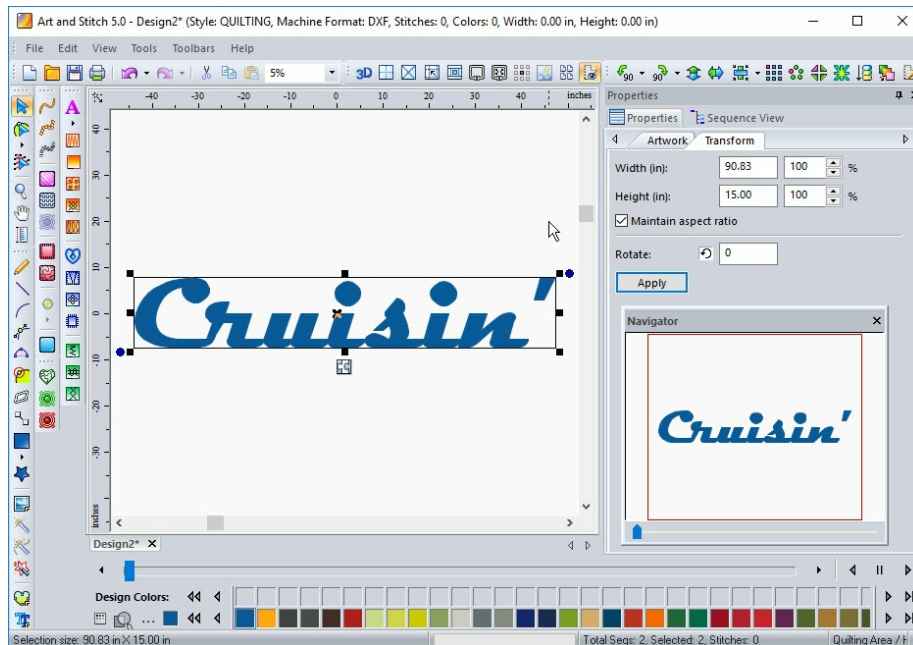
I have more than 20 inches of height to work with on my machine, but that will make the width of this banner very large. I changed the height to 15 inches instead, giving me a width of almost 91 inches. Perfect! I know I will want three "layers" of stitching --- a placement line, a tack down line, and my decorative stitches or (Finish).

Step 5 - Turn the Artwork into Applique

I click on the Applique button in the Stitch Toolbar and have exactly what I need:
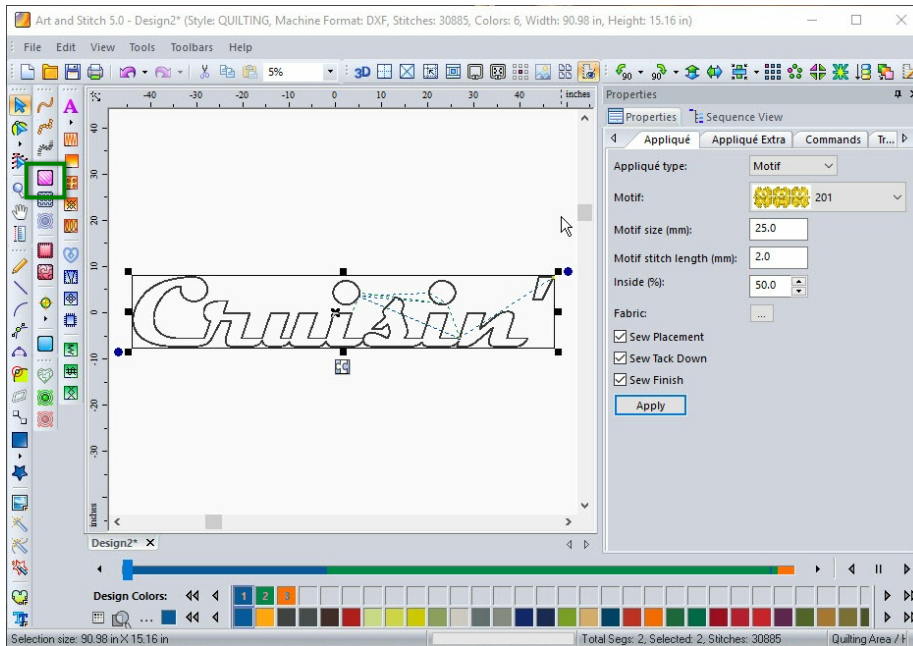
Instead of a Satin Stitch, I change the selection in the drop-down menu to Motif under Applique Type.

Now I can audition various designs for the edges of my applique.

I know that I would like half the stitching to be inside of my applique and half of it outside to make sure that it is held in place perfectly.
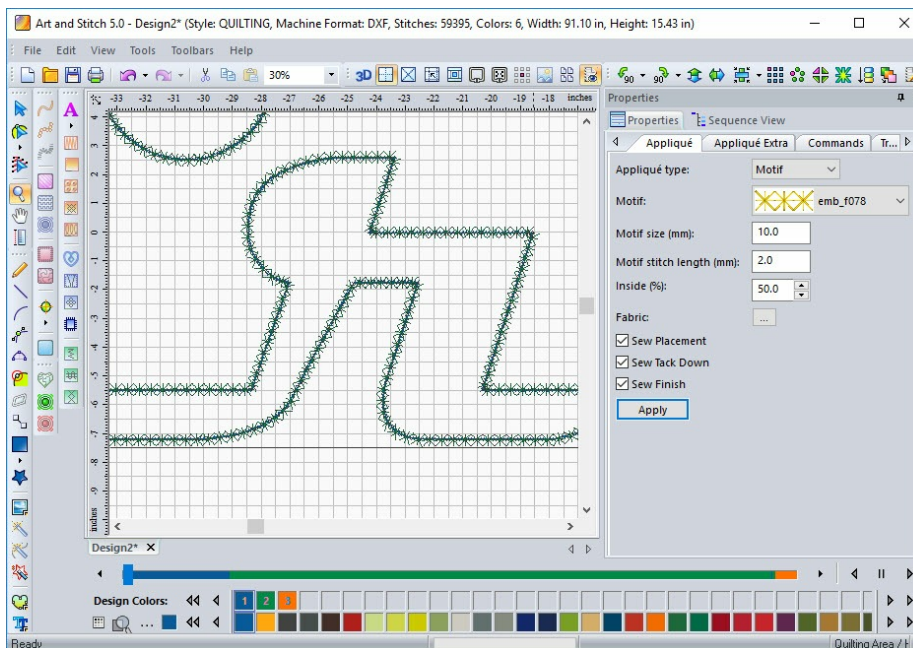

I like the look of the motif emb_f078 and think it will look good here. I turned on my grid and set it at half an inch so I could get an idea of how these stitches will look. Changing the motif size from the default setting of 4 millimeters to 10 millimeters makes it look perfect. I checked the number of stitches in this design – 59,395. That may sound like a lot, but for an embroidery that is 90 inches wide, that isn't many at all!

Step 5 - Turn the Artwork into Applique - Cont'd

I always go into the Sequence View and change the color of each thread for the Placement, Tack Down, and Finish stitches. By having each thread as a different color, you are enabling the machine to stop stitching at the right time. Perhaps you will want to change thread colors on your quilt machine (and maybe not), but having the machine stop and give you the ability to add your applique fabric is mandatory --- and **you can only force a stop by changing thread colors.**
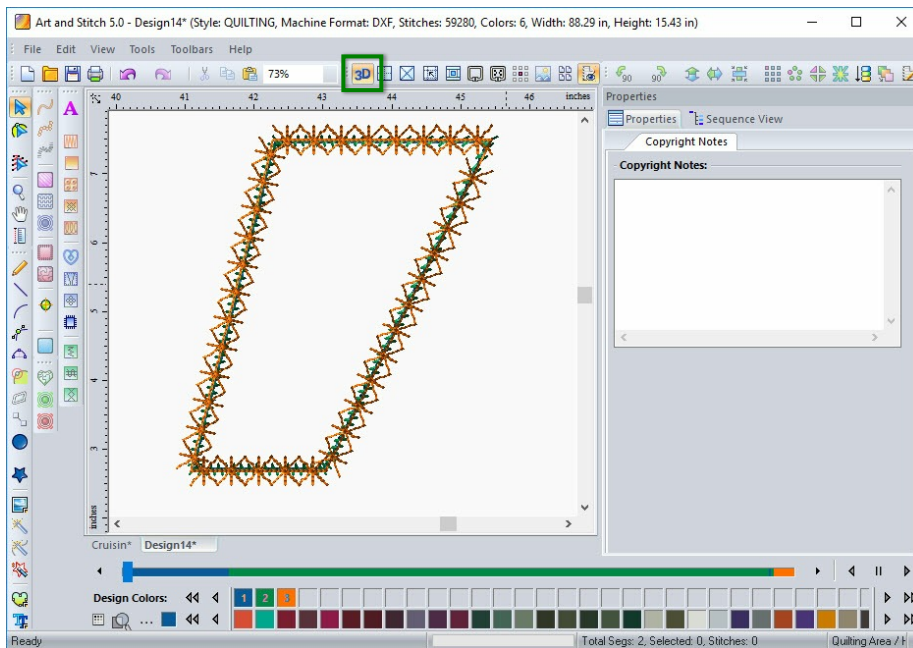
The additional bonus to changing your thread colors is the ability to see what your finished applique edges will look like. Use the 3-D button and zoom in to make sure you will like the finished look. I could have used a Run line for my tack down stitch for a cleaner appearance, but I like the guarantee that my applique fabric will be held in place, so I used the zig zag tack down option. I will be using the same thread for the finish stitches that I did for the tack down, and I think the two will blend well.
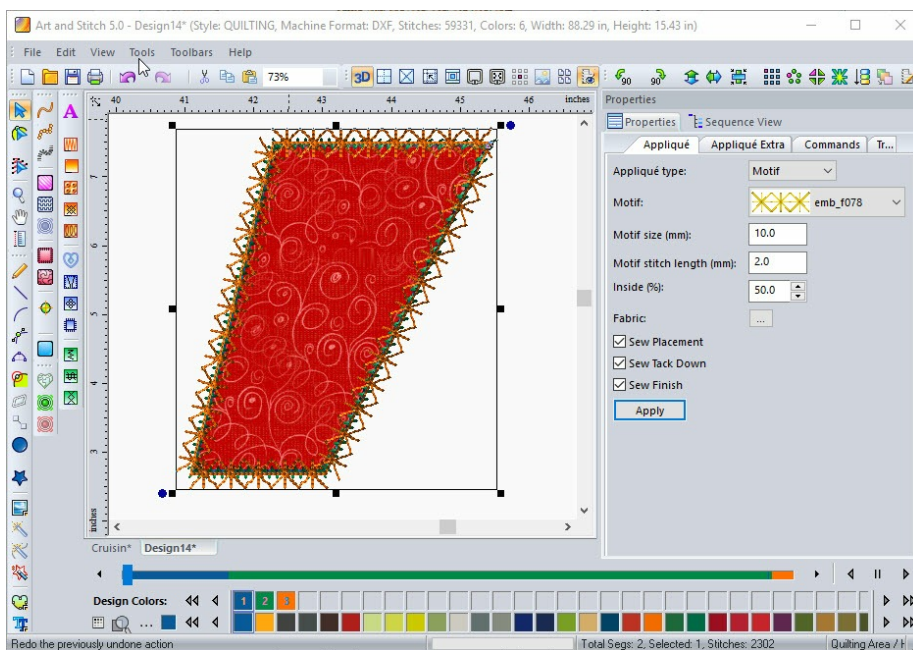

Another thing that I like to do (just for fun) is select a fabric for my applique piece. It only takes a second, and the effect is amazing.

Step 6 - Preparing the Applique Pattern / Fabric

I made a copy of my design and pasted it on another design page. Then I selected everything and took it back to artwork. I changed the Pen width to 2.0mm so I could print a slightly heavier line. Using the top toolbar, you can see how many pieces of paper it will take to print out a pattern at actual size. (Please refer to the manual to see how to set up your printer). With the design ungrouped, I was able to move the two circles and the apostrophe to a more centered location on the sheets of paper. As you can see, this shows 24 pieces of paper, with only 21 of them being printed.
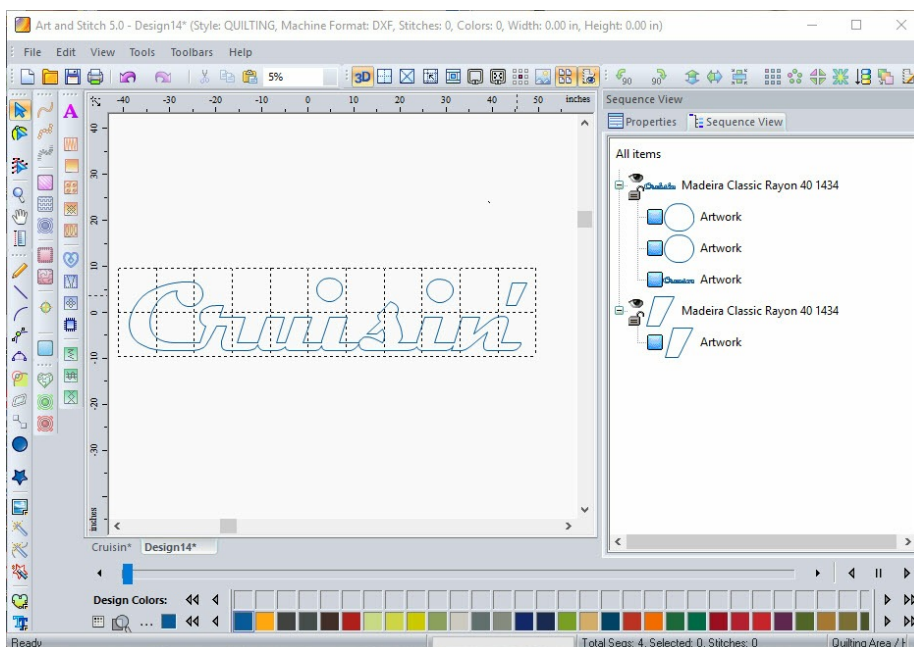
An alternate method for making a paper pattern:

Do you have a very large piece of paper? Go ahead and mount your backing fabric on the quilt machine. Now, lay a large sheet of paper on top of your fabric and pin it firmly in place. Using only the placement line, assign a run stitch to the pattern and save as a pattern to be used for the next step. At the machine, unthread your needle and stitch your placement line. You now have a paper pattern to cut out your applique fabric. This is a quick way to have a large pattern, but It is not my preference because I feel that it compromises the integrity of the fabric a bit.

Some folks who use this method think that it works better if you have your backing-batting-top mounted, and then pin the paper on top of all 3 layers. I would experiment with different ways of doing things and find which way works best for you.

Whichever method you choose to create your paper pattern is fine. After you have a paper pattern to cut your large applique piece, you need to make one final choice for preparing your applique fabric. The best method is to iron Heat & Bond or Steam A Seam to the back of your fabric before cutting. This will allow your fabric to retain its shape while being stitched and has the added benefit of being fusible.

Step 6 - Preparing the Applique Pattern / Fabric - Cont'd

Make sure to reverse your paper pattern so your fabric applique pattern is facing the right way! I used a light box under my sheets of paper and taped them together.

Accuracy is important, and Art & Stitch gives you this accuracy --- but it's up to you to take your time during the following steps to maintain that accuracy.
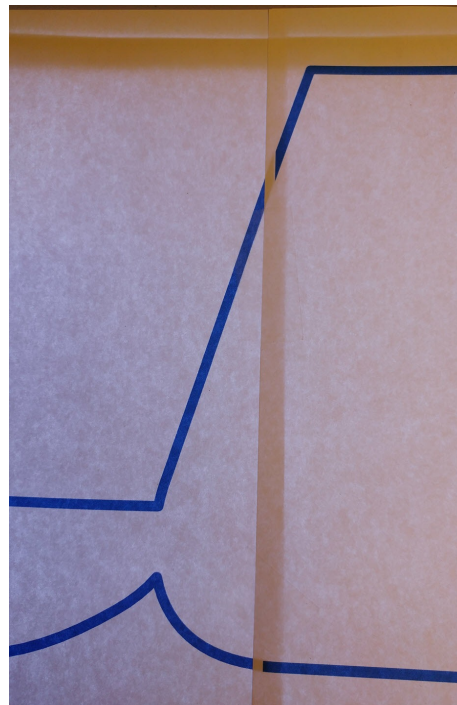
A quick note…. If you have any seams in your applique fabric, try to disguise them in small areas where your letters are connecting. They will be less noticeable here, such as the example below:
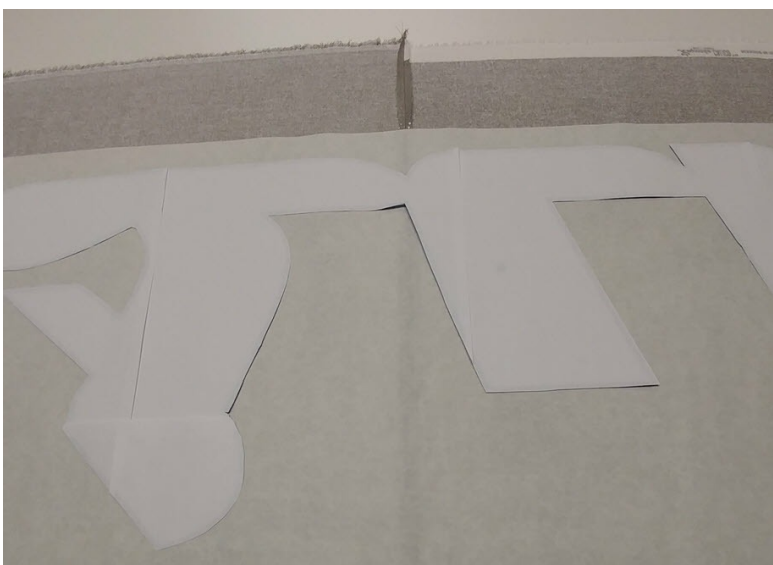

I have an iron right next to my quilt machine, making it easy to fuse the applique in place right over my placement stitches. Stabilized fabric is always the first choice, but if you find yourself without supplies, you can try using a glue stick to hold your applique in place. That's a trick used when doing applique in a small embroidery hoop, and it is not the best approach for a design this large --- but quilters have a way of making things work if there is a quilting emergency!

Step 7 - Again in Art and Stitch: the Background Quilting

I have found that applique looks very nice when placed over a completely quilted background. That makes it so much easier than having to mask and saves a lot of time. I decided to audition some motifs and make a pre-quilted background for this banner. Using motif pattern Line, and playing with the curve capabilities, I was able to shape a background that has a lot of movement to it, and will stitch very quickly:
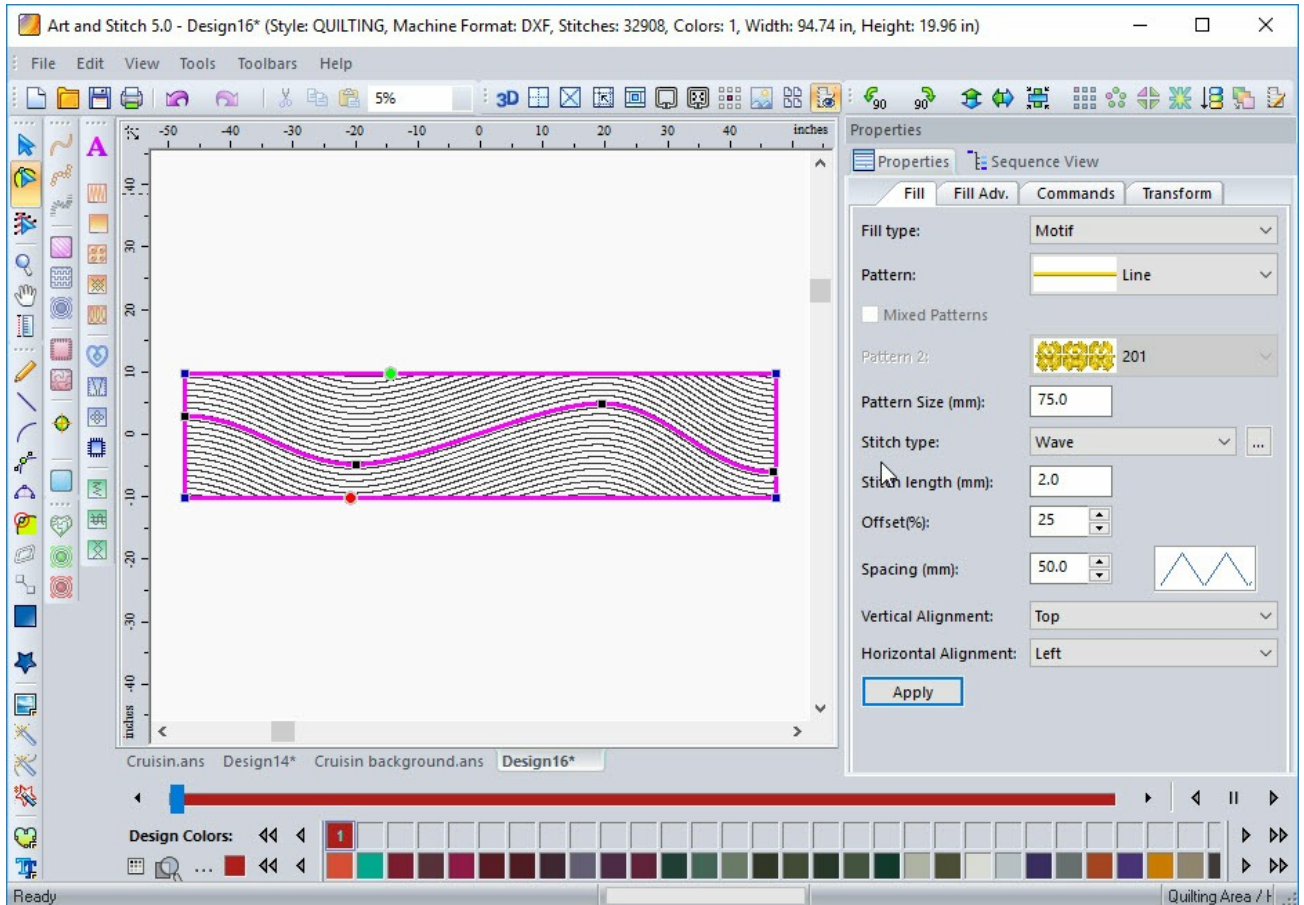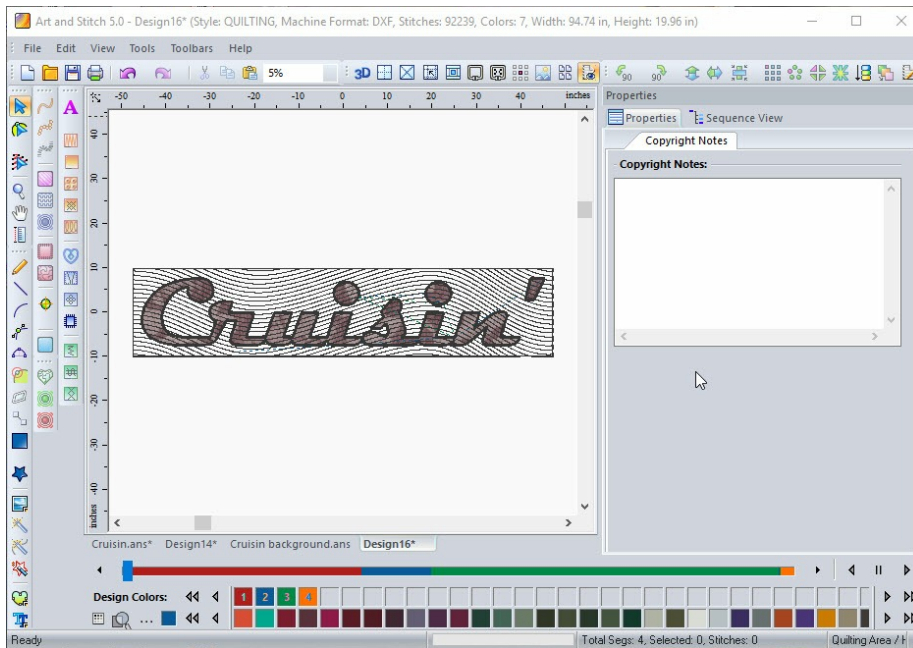

This is one of my favorite tools to play with, but that's a story for another day…..

Step 7 - Again in Art and Stitch: the Background Quilting - Cont'd

You can add fabric to your applique design, and place it on top of your background for a preview of your finished project:

Step 8 - From Art and Stitch to your Innova

Save your background design as an ANS file, and as a PAT file to take to your machine. You can be quilting the background while you are cutting the fabric for the applique.

Save your applique design as an ANS file, and as a DST file to take to the Innova machine with a USB. When you are at the quilt machine, import the DST design into your library and pull it up on the screen. You are ready to start stitching! The colors you have chosen will make the machine stop at the appropriate times so you can add your layers or change your threads if you choose. When you have your background stitched, open GFE for your embroidery. Note that even though you determined where your start and stop points were, saving the design as a DST file does not guarantee that those points will be where you expect them to be. Prepare to be flexible when the machine starts stitching somewhere in the design that you did not plan. This is not a problem with Innova or Art & Stitch. It is simply a characteristic of the file format you are using. That is why your colors appear differently than they did when you set up your applique layers too. This is easy to manage. You can change colors and dequeue parts within the GFE menu at your machine. All your sections will be in the correct order, so get ready to stitch!

Within the GFE, open the choice Edit Colors:
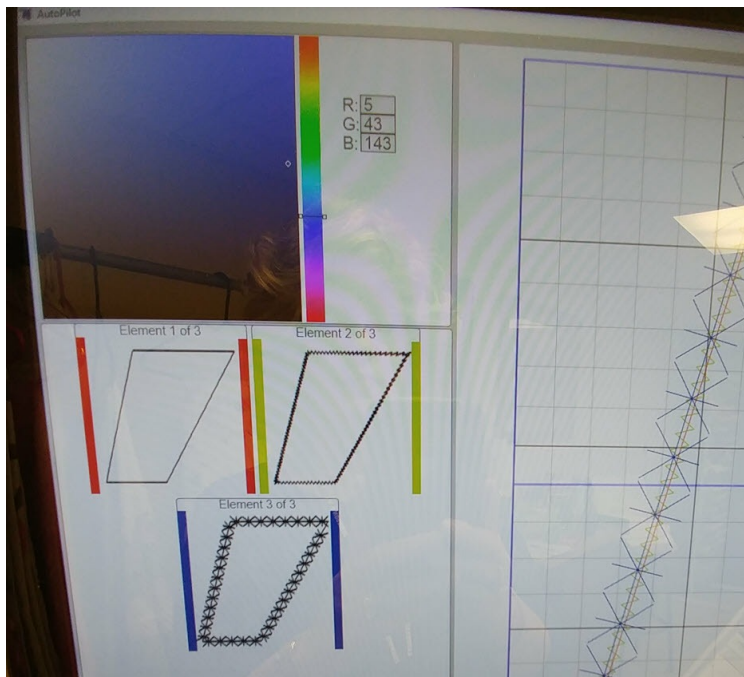
On this screen, you can change the colors of your thread to match what you will be using, or just use any color.

Earlier I mentioned that you need to have color changes so that the machine will know to stop for you. If you left all three of the colors the same for this applique, the machine would keep stitching. You would not be able to stop and add your applique or change your thread colors.
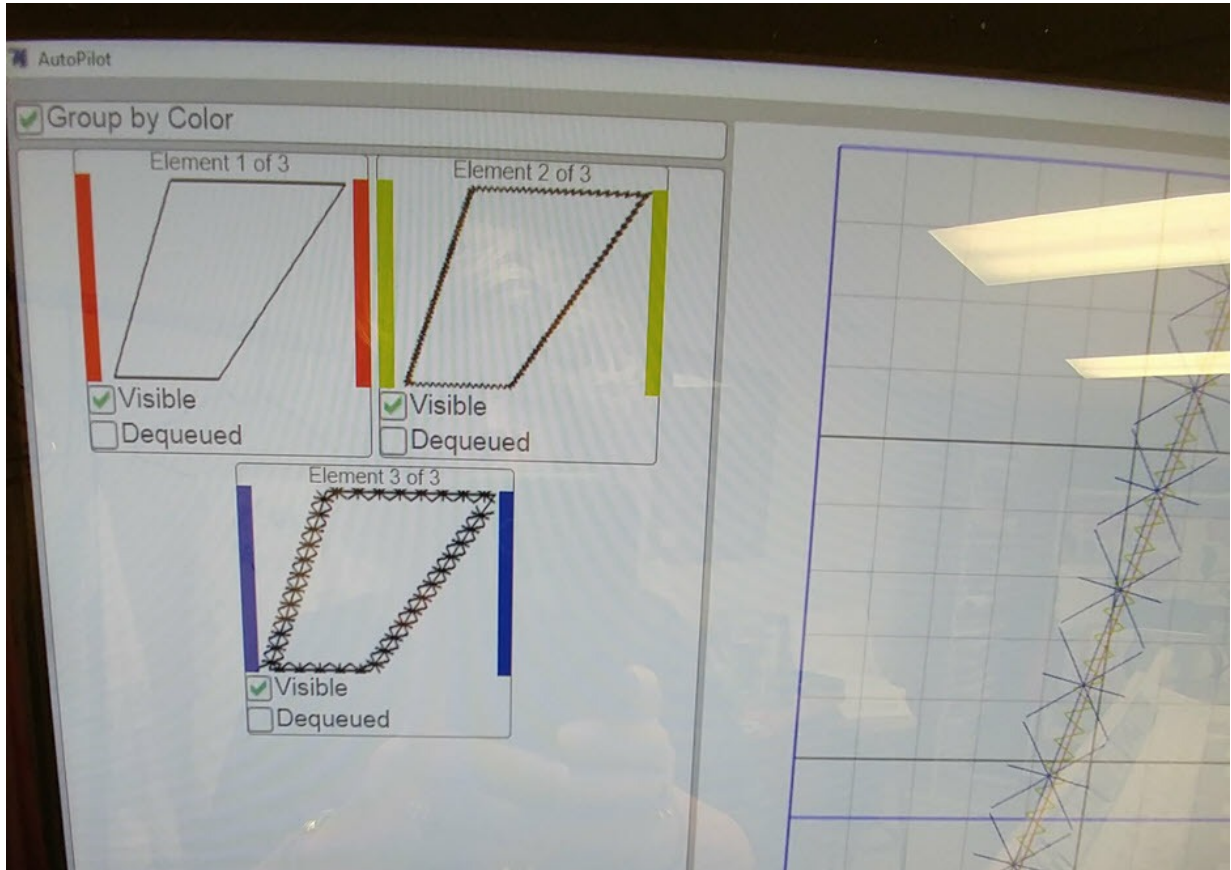
Please do not skip this step!

Step 9 - Finishing up in GFE

The other screen within GFE that you can check is the one named Set Sew Order, and looks like this.

If you wanted to dequeue a step, this is where you can do that.

Step 10 - The Stitching Process

Let's get stitching. First, after your background is ready, stitch the placement stitch and then the machine will stop automatically. You can lay your applique in place and fuse to the area. I mentioned earlier that I have an iron near my machine for this purpose. A word of warning --- do not slide the iron back and forth, do not use a lot of pressure, and do not use any steam! All three of those things can cause misregistration, and on a design this large, you don't want to cause any errors that you cannot fix.
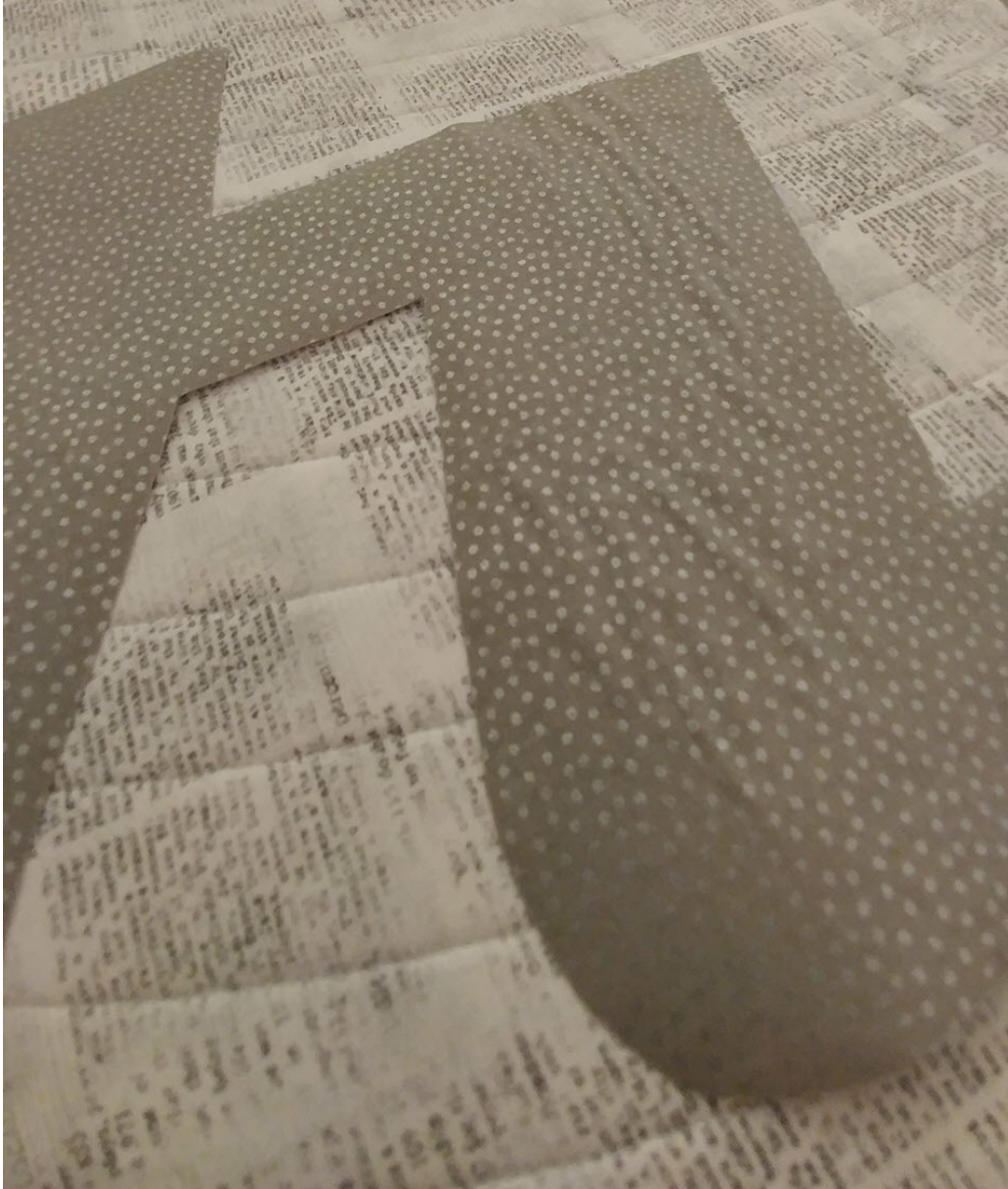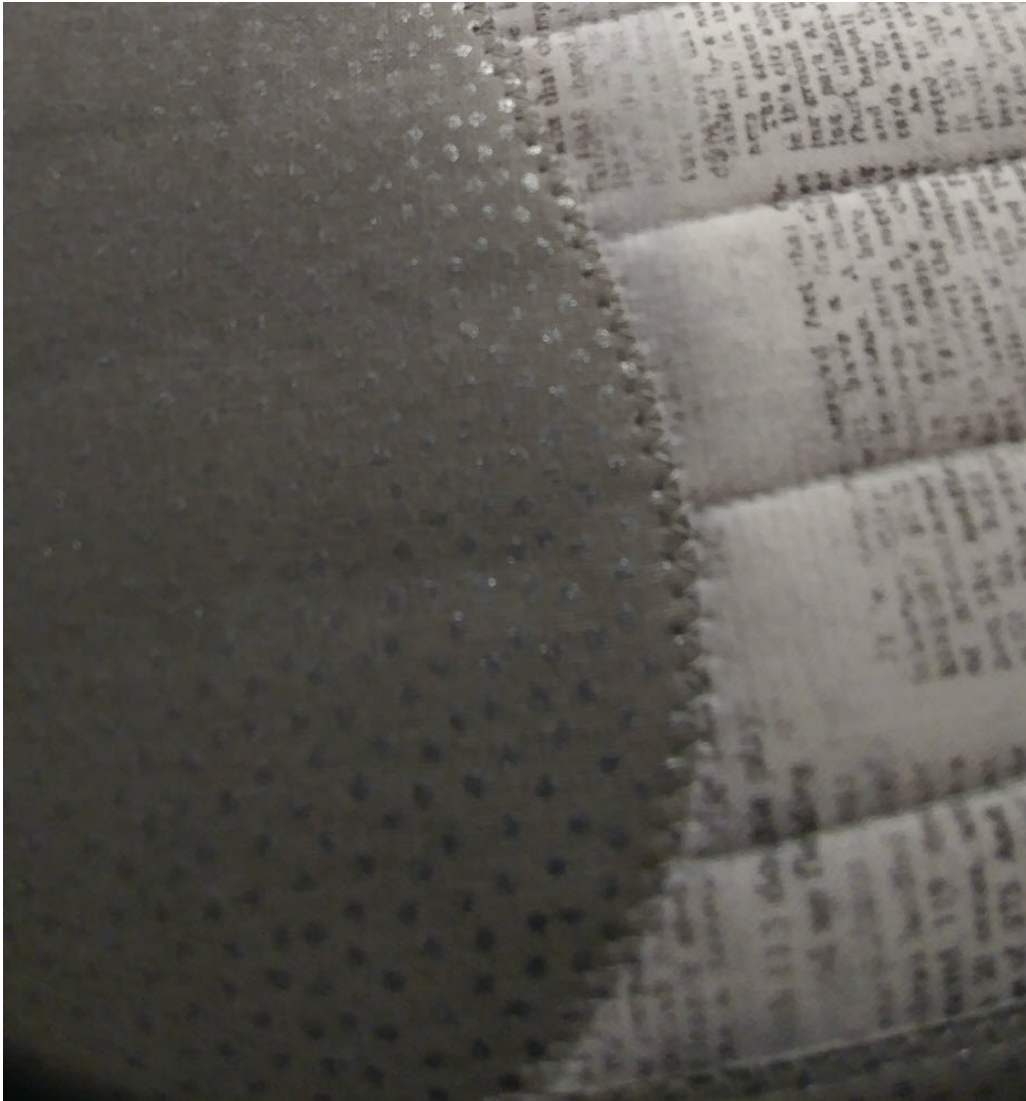
Step 10 - The Stitching Process - Cont'd

Slowly line up your entire design, press lightly, and then start your tack down stitch. You are almost done! Don't worry too much about wobbly lumps and bumps in your applique piece. If the adhesive wasn't applied properly, this can happen. You can always iron the entire piece to perfection after you remove it from the machine (if lightly pressing it doesn't remove all the wrinkles).

Step 10 - The Stitching Process - Cont'd

Here is what the edge of the applique piece looks like with the zig zag tack down stitch that I have chosen:

Step 10 - The Stitching Process - Cont'd

Here is a close-up of the finished lettering:

And the entire banner with a 90-inch-wide embroidery!

The Sky is the Limit

With the Innova, you have a wide assortment of embroidery threads that you can easily use to really make these decorative stitches beautiful. You can download lots of different fonts to make wide banners like this --- but don't stop there! You can rotate your letters by 90 degrees and make a vertical sign too! You can even use the Wing Dings to make pretty designs. Using different fonts can be so much fun, and there are lots of other uses for Grand Format Embroidery as well!

I have seen banners, decorations for the front of tables at shows, signs in windows --- all done in Grand Format Embroidery. The sky is the limit!

Robin