

———— Cutting Line

Cut through 5 top layers - do not cut through the bottom base layer.

### Fluff

9) The next step is to fluff up the rows and allow the chenille effect to bloom. Start brushing the surface of the block with a stiff brush to begin to loosen the threads. Then at the sink, place the sample in a large bowl of water and start rubbing the cut fabric side against itself as though you're trying to scrub out a stain. Keep agitating the cloth until the chenille rows start to bloom. Be patient – this can take some time.

### And Dry

10) Put the chenille samples in a dryer with a couple of wool dryer balls to fluff up the rows. Add a few towels to the dryer to help agitate the cloth further. Check the lint filter on your machine before and after drying as a lot of lint and loose threads are created. The sample should be completely dry before taking it out of the dryer. Repeat this step if you aren't satisfied with the amount of bloom. Keep brushing with the brush until you achieve the desired effect. Trim any uneven threads and voila! Your chenille sample is now lovely and soft!

## Ideas for Using this Sample

### Wall Art

To finish the chenille sample as an art piece, add border strips (two rounds in contrasting colors) and then mat and frame with no glass. When hung on the wall of the shop, prepare to have your chenille sample "petted" as people cannot resist touching it!

### Pillow

Feature the chenille sample as the center of a pillow top and design a three-hour class around this technique. You can assemble a kit for the class including border and pillow backing fabrics and sell pillow forms. Students get to choose the color order for their chenille stack so their class samples will all look quite different.

# Modern Chenille

(using Peppered Cottons)



by Megan Downer, Design Director, StudioE Fabrics



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In the past, chenille in the quilting world has meant anything from small embroidered and embellished details on Victorian crazy quilts to ‘rag quilts’ made with fuzzy flannels. What makes the following chenille experiment different is that it is a small do-able sample and still can be finished into a work of art or a utilitarian object. The use of Peppered Cottons is essential for several reasons. Peppered Cottons are yarn-dyed fabrics and that means all the threads have been dyed through-and-through prior to weaving. They look exactly the same on both sides. When cut through in the chenille process, every layer of fabric, however small, that peeks through a cut shows its true color. And after fluffing, washing, and drying, Peppered Cottons chenille is irresistibly soft. Don’t use other fabrics and expect the same results! The following instructions are a fresh take on this vintage needlework technique.

Fun fact: Did you know that ‘chenille’ is a French word that means caterpillar?

## Instructions for Making a Basic 8” x 8” Chenille Sample Block

Equipment:	
Sewing machine with walking foot	Fabric marker that you are sure washes out
Thread	Sharp scissors or chenille cutter scissors
Safety Pins (alternatively hand baste or use a light spray fabric adhesive)	Small, stiff brush (e.g. a grout brush)
Rotary cutter with extra blades and self-healing cutting mat	6 x ten by ten-inch (minimum size) squares of Peppered Cottons.
Large clear ruler (6” x 24”) with marked 45 degree angle line	Optional: ½” wide masking tape to ensure evenly stitched rows. A rotary square to help cut squares for samples. Wool dryer balls.

### Read all instructions before beginning.

#### Choose and Stack Fabrics

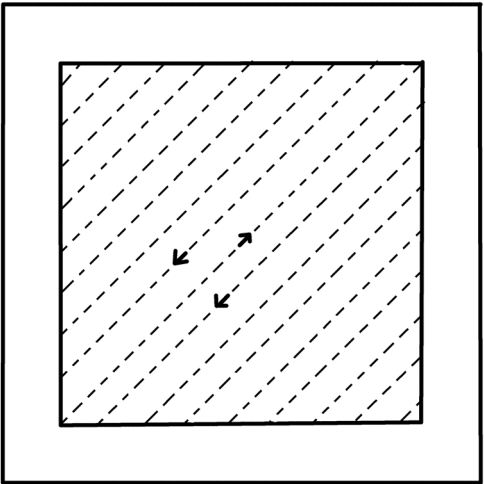
- 1) Choose 6 Peppered Cottons colors and decide which color will be used as the backing/base fabric. Keep that fabric as a 10” square.
- 2) Stack the 5 remaining Peppered Cottons fabrics that you want to “chenille” on top of each other, ending with the top layer. Cut through all five layers to make an 8” x 8” square using your rotary cutter, ruler and mat. Note: if you plan to make a lot of samples, keep extra blades on hand as cutting through so many layers can dull your blade quickly.
- 3) The base layer color is a 10” x 10” square. Note: the base fabric must be a larger square so that the “chenilled” sample can be sewn into a project. Cutting the base square as 10” x 10” provide enough room for seam allowance that can be trimmed down later.

#### Chenille Preparation

- 4) Center the 5 top layers on the base fabric and pin through all 6 layers with evenly spaced safety pins or you can do quick hand basting or use fabric spray adhesive. (I prefer hand basting as there are no pins that get in the way of the sewing machine plus it is more environmentally friendly than spray adhesive.) Note: changing the color order in which the 8” squares are stacked will give different color results so you might want to try some experiments. Be sure to take a note of the fabric order so you can go back later and repeat for the same results.
- 5) Use the ruler to designate a diagonal line from opposite corner to opposite corner of your 8-inch square (this is a 45-degree angle to the straight of grain). Mark with washable marker.

#### Sewing

- 6) Stitch along the marked line, corner to corner, using a few back stitches at the beginning and end of the row.



----- Stitching Line  
Stitch each row in opposite directions

- 7) Starting from the center stitched line and working outward toward the corners. Sew rows evenly spaced ½” apart. If you have a guide on your walking foot, set it so that the rows can be stitched evenly at 1/2 inch. This is the quickest method if you are a confident sewer. Alternatively, you may use the ½” wide masking tape as your guide between rows. Note: each row should be stitched in the opposite direction from the row before it. Start/stop each stitching row with a few back stitches. Continue stitching the rows until the entire square is covered.

#### Cutting the Chenille

- 8) Using sharp scissors, chenille scissors or a chenille cutter, cut a straight line in the center of each row between the stitched lines through the 5 top layers. Be careful not to cut the bottom layer! (see on back page)