

Kant Special Series

Normally I try to review books that are available from the NELG library. This review is a departure from that practice. This all started when I needed a simple piece of lace to do during Zoom meetings. The requirements were that I didn't need to refer to a working diagram constantly, and that even though it would be a simple piece of lace, it would also be interesting to work.



The pattern that I chose comes from the Kant Special series. If you are not familiar with it this comes out of OIDFA, the international lace group. Every two years they meet in what they refer to as a congress, and when they do, the Kant Centrum in Brugge issues an edition of Kant Special for that particular congress. This congress is hosted all over the world.

The collection of lace in each issue is by different designers. There is a large range of patterns, running from Torchon (Stropkant) to sophisticated continental laces such as Binche or Mechlin. The formats of these issues have changed over time. The earliest one I have is a folio of thin paper patterns in black and white. I think there was an assumption that the lace maker could figure out the details of the stitches by looking at the pictures. This could be difficult for beginners. The middle years of my collection have graduated to colored diagrams which use the standard Belgian color-coding system. The most recent issue, Estonia, is no longer a folio, but has been

printed in book form. I don't know if this is the future of this series or that it was a cost saving choice made for the pandemic since the Estonia congress was cancelled.

The issues tend to be continental European centric. I have found no point ground laces that are marked Buckspoint lace. They are instead labeled as Lille lace. I have also found no examples of Bedfordshire lace. But beyond the regional preferences, there are a lot of other laces included. There are always Torchon patterns. Some of these are better than others in their design. There are circular mats that can be executed, but have too many pairs in the center, yet I have seen a Torchon Lace collar pattern that the late Ruth Bader Ginsberg would have proudly worn. Most issues will include Binche, Mechlins, Valenciennes, Paris, Bloemwork, and fine bloemwork. I have also seen Duchesse and occasionally Withof. Usually, they also try to include some contemporary lace, including the use of color in lace.

The example that I chose to make is a piece of Russian lace. It is from Caen Kant Special from the 2012 congress. The original used variegated thread for the passive threads. In my case, having acquired a stash of tatting thread recently, I chose to experiment with the worker using the variegated thread. The worker used a black and white thread, the passives were an ecru. Using the worker in a different thread did pose some challenges in the tight curves since exchanging pairs would upset the color flow.

My opinion of the pattern is that this is one that is a little less sophisticated in execution. The immediate problem that I noticed is that



the crossings were not consistent. In working the lace, I expect that a trail is consistently worked either under / over or over / under, and in this case, it would sometimes change the order from crossing to crossing. The pin holes also lacked consistency. The inner parts of tight curves varied from one to another. I also found that sometimes in the gently curved portion, there was some compensation for the spacing of pin holes with a pin being used multiple times. That is a technique critical to tight curves, but not on straighter parts of the tape. For those of us used to very careful pinhole alignment, these were obviously hand-drawn. However, I must say that for all of its flaws, this pattern is very workable since I could easily compensate as I went along.

There are various vendors worldwide that sell this series. The most recent issues tend to be available new. I suspect that the older issues will also appear used from time to time. If you believe you will always be making only Torchon lace or the English laces, this is probably not your series. But for people who enjoy continental laces or see them in their future, these are issues you should look at.

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