

FRETWORKED PICTURES WITH THE SCROLL-SAW.

Fretwork is an ornamental design in wood, typically openwork used to adorn interior and exterior architecture, done with a fretsaw. * * * *

We will be dealing with fretwork pictures cut with a scroll saw. These are pictures made by cutting shaped holes in a sheet of ply and putting it against a contrasting background. Many of you will already have done some of this a year or two ago, but I'll give more detail for those who haven't done it.

If your saw table has a large hole, you'll need to attach a sheet of ply or such as a 'false' table top to support the small delicate areas such as eyes etc.

Fretwork pictures can be:

- a simple 'one-hole' cut-out, giving a silhouette effect, * (*Show fairy*)
- or an 'unframed' cut-out in the shape of the picture to be hung or glued to a background (e.g. Wall), *
- or with a solid 'frame-work' of the ply being used. * * (*Show framed tiger + horse*)
- They are usually 2 layers, but may be more. * (*show shark pic*)

Now to look at the images we use:

Usually, images are made to cut out the black (or negative part of the image). The white which as the positive part of the image, is the ply-wood. *

(But sometimes it's the reverse: i.e. The black is the wood, and the white is to be cut out.)*

- You'll find a lot of images are available on the internet. '**Pinterest**' is a rich source of images which you can use.
- (**But be aware of copyright.** If you are only using an image for yourself or as a gift, I believe that that is OK. But if you are selling it you need to make a few changes to the image.)

Are the images suitable?

When you find an image you like, you'll need to look at it closely. Some images are ready to go, but probably most of them will need either a little or a lot of alteration to make them useable. (I use a white and a black marker pen.)

1. The first thing to look for is white 'islands' in the black. * These will be lost when the surrounding black is cut out. Pay particular attention to the **eyes**. Look for where you can join the 'island' to the positive area to still 'look right'.
2. Be aware of very narrow or long parts of white (positive areas) – are they going to be strong enough, or do you need to cut them wider, -or join them to another part. Even the thin ply can be surprisingly strong – cut on the straight. * But a lot of your fine cuts will be curved or on the 'bias', which will weaken the strength considerably.
3. Do the positive areas have enough 'anchor points' -joins to other white areas? -You should **ideally** be able to follow the positive part right through the picture, joining other areas, for strength, but this is not always necessary.

4. Where you have very narrow cuts, eg. where a thin line, blade width or so, is showing part of the outline of the subject. You need to broaden the cut somewhere so you can put your starting hole there, without being obvious as a starting 'hole'.

* * * * * Here are some corrections I have made to pictures to make them work. (Some of the corrections have been to make differences from the original because of possible copyright too, or because I felt it would look better simplified.)

You can **design silhouette fretwork pictures** from some of your **own photos**.

I use Photoshop, but any programme which changes the contrast of your photo should work. The photo is best to have a fair bit of contrast to start with, but that is not essential.

First: change the photo to greyscale.

Increase the contrast (ie. Make the darker areas darker, and the lighter areas of grey lighter), and also increase the **brightness (which changes lightest greys to white)**. Save the resulting picture, then do it again. (And again, if necessary.) You'll have to 'trial and error' it. What you are looking for is the darkest areas, and the lightest areas – the dark areas to be the cut-outs, and the light areas to be the ply. **Penguin photo series * * * * **

This will leave you with a lot of grey areas. You need to decide what parts of grey would look better black, and what parts white. You'll then need to spend time with white and black pens, blocking out black and drawing in white, where you feel it gives the silhouette effect, without losing the character of the subject, but keeping in mind the points I've mentioned earlier. (If you prefer, you could use photoshop for this part too – eraser and pen or brush.)

[If you are not using a computer, scan the colour photo to get greyscale if you can. It is easier to recognize darker and lighter without colour. Working with a black and white pen, blacken the very darkest greys, making the lighter greys white, while keeping in mind the points I made earlier.]

The **eyes** usually look better if you have a dot of white (showing reflection), giving 'life' to the picture, but this has to be joined with a white 'bridge' to some of the surrounding area. Another area which can be difficult is the smiling mouth – teeth are white, but the lips would have to be basically black to show the mouth. (It's amazing how the brain automatically fills in areas so you 'see' correctly, what is in fact 'incorrect'.)

****Patterns I have done from my photos.....

When your pattern is ready, use stick glue (or spray on adhesive) onto the paper to glue it to the board, or if you prefer put wide painters tape on first, to glue the picture to. Drill a small hole in each of the negative (black) parts of the picture to insert the saw blade.

Cut out small parts first, starting in the central areas. This puts less pressure on sensitive areas. I usually start with the eyes, as the eyes are generally the most important part of a picture.

You can even make other adjustments as you're cutting, but check carefully.

After removing the paper, hold the cut-out picture up to the light to check if the cut areas are clear of wood fragments from the sawing. Sand carefully. I use narrow strips of sandpaper. You'll need strips from 2 or 3 mm to about 8mm, of 240 grit cloth backed sandpaper. Do this very carefully, especially around fine areas, checking against the light periodically. When you oil the board, use a lint-free cloth so you don't get cloth fibres caught on the cut edges. (If you are using a very fine blade, the sandpaper may not fit – I usually use a no 3 blade, but check the teeth are not too far apart -. In this case you may need to resort to whatever you can – an air compressor sometimes helps clear the cuts if necessary.)

Paint a backing board black (or whatever colour you prefer) to sit behind it.

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Two websites on making stencils from photos:

Stencil Tutorial (This is the system I used)

[Stencil Tutorials: Learn How to Make a Stencil of Dick Cheney \(spraypaintstencils.com\)](http://spraypaintstencils.com)

How to make a stencil in photoshop

[How to Make a Stencil in Photoshop: 10 Steps \(with Pictures\) \(wikihow.com\)](http://wikihow.com)