



## Multimedia Designs Add Dimension to Fleece

*Combining decorating processes for a mixed media look will make your fleece designs pop, as well as increase sales.*

By Melanie Coakley, Contributing Writer

Walking a trade show is like plugging into a huge energy grid. The floor seems electrified with innovations that will inspire you to take your business to the next level and, in turn, increase your profit potential. Recently, as I walked the aisles of the Atlanta ISS show, I saw rhinestone attachments, laser cutters, embossing machines, direct-to-garment printers, apparel and much more. These unique technologies, combined with traditional embroidery, appliqué and screen printing, are ideal for embellishing the wide array of fleece garments available today.

Embroiderers must know the properties of the many fabric types they use for embellishing, particularly whether the materials are stretch or non-stretch. Fleece, which has stretch properties, is a versatile fabric that also is stable and forgiving. Available in a wide range of styles from promotional weights to high-end garments, fleece is an ideal surface for simple designs or multimedia work, which gives an upscale look with higher margins.

Fleece fabric is easy for embroiderers to work with once a few key characteristics are understood. When preparing designs for fabrics with stretch, the digitizer's role is important because he must consider the push and pull issues that the thread will encounter while stitching. When working with fleece, he also must consider the thickness or weight of the fleece and how to stabilize the fabric to avoid shifting in the hoop.

As with any fabric, hooping fleece usually requires a stabilizer to eliminate the stretch of the fleece, which can cause distortion when sewing. Generally, you should always use a cutaway stabilizer for fabrics that give. The weight of that stabilizer depends on how many stitches are in the design. Always verify the suggested stitch counts for each weight of stabilizer with your supplier.

For this article, I've prepared a multimedia design that incorporates appliqué, embroidery and Fuwari 3-D process on a fleece sweatshirt. First, let's discuss some of the specifics of these three techniques.

### APPLIQUÉ

Appliqué gives fleece a dynamic look, especially when decorating dark garments with light embroidery. Most embroiderers have experience sewing white embroidery designs on black fabrics, and often find that the design appears more gray than



*This multimedia design, which includes embroidery, appliqué and Fuwari, is decorated on Fruit of the Loom's Supercotton Hooded Sweatshirt, which is made from 12-ounce 70% cotton/30% polyester blend fleece and label-free for added comfort. It features a two-ply hood with matching tipped drawcord, rib cuffs and bottom band with spandex, double-needle coverstitching on neck, armholes and bottom band, and metal grommets. It comes in sizes S-3XL in 11 colors.*

FRUIT OF THE LOOM® SUPERCOTTON™ FLEECE  
A SUPERIOR DECORATING PLATFORM

SUPER SOFT • SUPER DURABLE • SUPER VALUE

white. To avoid this, use either a “cover up” type base under the embroidery or turn that section into an appliqué. If you use a white appliqué on a black garment, you will get a truer white since the appliqué has more covering ability than stitches.

Some appliqué products feature iron-on capabilities that allow one side to be pressed onto the fabric for stabilization. Others offer a pressure-sensitive adhesive that holds the appliqué in place to avoid shifting while stitching.

## EMBROIDERY

Embroidering on fleece is easy, but its success greatly depends on a digitizer who understands push-and-pull compensation. When embroidering a design, if the outline pulls away from the fill pattern, then the pull compensation needs adjusting before stitching. The same is true with push compensation. When the fill pattern sticks out from the outline, the push compensation needs retraction.

Stabilizer does exactly that. It stabilizes the fabric so accuracy can be achieved in stitching. If you have the greatest digitizer in the world, but use the wrong stabilizer, you will produce a poor quality design. So it's important to always use the correct weight and type of stabilizer. As fabrics have changed, so have stabilizers for those fabrics. Staying educated on types of fabrics gives you the edge needed to increase design quality and sales.

You can embroider on the appliqué or just use it for coverage. By combining embroidery and appliqué, you are creating a multimedia design. And with the Fuwari 3-D process, you can add depth to that combination.

## FUWARI

Embroiderers are looking for ways to stand out in today's market. For years, appliqué, screen printing, embroidery and even puffy foam have been applied to fleece. Now, you have the ability to add dimension and depth with the Fuwari 3-D process. From athletic apparel to childrenswear, it will allow you to tap new markets by adding unique, multimedia designs.

The Fuwari process occurs after the regular embroidery is created. After the embroidery design is stitched, but before the Fuwari aspects of the design begin stitching, there is a soft pillow or pad that is laid on top of the embroidery. The Fuwari stitching is completed through this pad. Once taken off the embroidery machine, it is run through the Fuwari cutting machine to add greater multimedia dimension. The result is a soft, 3-D design that can be appliquéd or directly embroidered onto a garment.

## Next, let's take a step-by-step look at this multimedia design.

### STEP

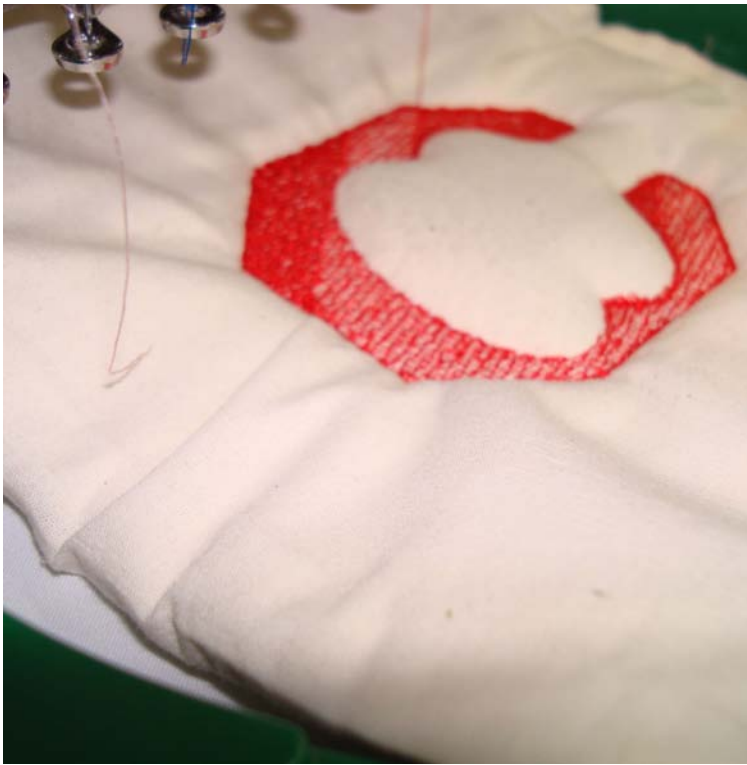
**1** For this project, I developed a design that incorporates appliqué, embroidery and Fuwari 3-D embroidery and can be used to promote tourism in Chattanooga, Tenn. First, make an appliqué by sewing the sections of embroidery onto the fabric to be appliquéd. Here, I'm creating block letter “C”s for the appliqué material (to signify “Chattanooga”) and embroidering large eyes in the middle to give it a fun feel.



**Supercotton™** load-bearing fleece fabric—durable enough for your heaviest decorating applications, yet offers an exceptionally soft hand and minimizes shrinkage.

- 12 OZ. 70/30 BLEND—THE INDUSTRY'S HEAVIEST
- PRICED AT 9 OZ.—A SUPER VALUE!
- LABEL FREE FOR ADDED COMFORT

[www.fruitactivewear.com](http://www.fruitactivewear.com)



STEP

**2** After the eyes are embroidered, lay down a pillow or pad to create the Fuwari part of the design and stitch the Fuwari sections through the pad. As shown here, the outer “C” will feature a red Fuwari texture that surrounds the eyes, giving it a 3-D look.



STEP

**3** The design is now ready for the Fuwari cutting machine, which cuts between the pillow and the embroidery underneath it. Once cut, remove the pillow and you're left with a fuzzy “C” that surrounds the embroidered eyes with height and depth.



STEP

**4** Once the appliqué is cut, place it on the garment and use an appliqué stitch to sew it to the fleece garment.



STEP

**5** Finally, add other embroidery to the garment for even more visual appeal. Here, I've sewn the word, “Chattanooga” vertically using simple lettering that does not add much to the piece's overall stitch count.

**ONLINE RESOURCE:**

To view the Fuwari decorating process in action, visit [youtube.com/rnkistributing](https://youtube.com/rnkistributing).