

Stella Obscura

By Valorie Clifton

These earrings were inspired by my love for all things Middle Earth, from the Lord of the Rings trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien. They compliment a necklace that I designed based on the Eye of Sauron and the dark tower of Orthanc, symbolic of the powers of darkness in Tolkien's fictional world. The motif resembles a dark star, an obscure heavenly body that is only detectible through the energy it emits.

This tutorial is intended for those who have a basic knowledge of beading and thread tension. You should also be comfortable following diagrams and charts.



Materials List

- 36 Super Duo 2-hole beads - I used matte black
- 11/0 seed beads in 2 colors (optional) - I used dark bronze and red for the diagrams
- 2 - 14mm Rivolis - I used Swarovski Jet Rivolis
- 4 - 4mm crystal bicones - I used Swarovski Jet bicones
- 2 - earring findings
- 2 - jump rings (optional)

Tool List

- 6 lb test beading thread
- A size 10 or 12 beading needle. Big eye needles aren't recommended.
- A bead mat and bead tray are helpful.
- Wubbers Classic Chain Nose or Flat Nose Pliers (two pairs are handy!)
- A thread burner is helpful.
- Scissors

Project Steps

Step 1. On a comfortable length of thread and leaving a 6 inch tail, string 6 Cs and form a circle. Sew through once more to reinforce. Tie an overhand or square knot and thread the tail thread through a few beads. Snip or burn the tail thread.

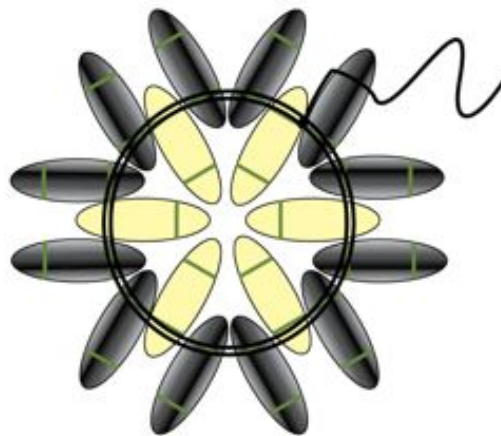
To step up, sew through the top hole of the starting C, as shown.



TIP: In beading, "stepping up" refers to preparing and having your thread in the right place to begin the next row. In Step 1, having the thread exit the top row puts it in the correct position.

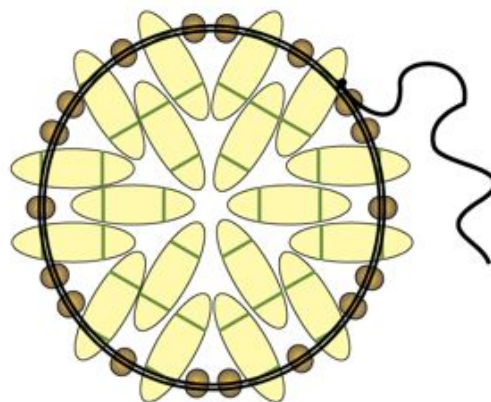
Step 2. Exiting the C from the prior step, [**pick up 2 Cs and sew through the top hole of the adjacent C from the prior round**] around, for a total of 12 added Cs, as shown.

To step up, sew through the top hole of the first C added.



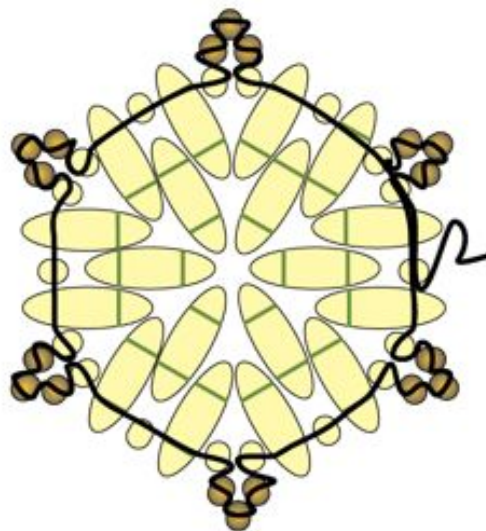
Step 3. Exiting the C from the prior round, [**Add 2As and sew into the top hole of the adjacent C (in the "V")**]. Add 1A and sew through the top hole of the adjacent C] around, for a total of 6 times. The piece will cup a little bit when the thread is pulled tightly; it's totally OK. The cup will fit the Rivoli.

To step up, sew through the first A added, in the middle of a "V", as shown.



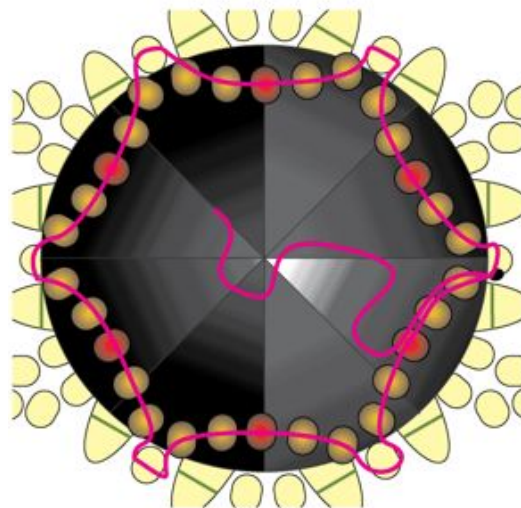
Step 4. Exiting the A from the prior round, [**Add 3As and sew through the adjacent A, C, A, C, A - to exit the next corner**] around, for a total of 6 added 3-A picots at each corner (in the "V"s).

To step up, sew through the first corner picot added and the adjacent A, C, A- to exit the center A of the side, as shown.



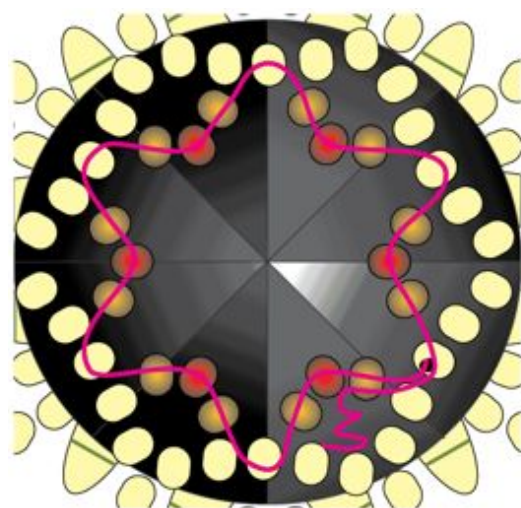
Step 5. Working in circular netting stitch and exiting the A from the prior step, **[Add 2As, 1B, 2As and sew through the adjacent, center side A from the prior round, as shown.]** 6 times, pulling snugly. Halfway through this round, insert the Rivoli as shown. Most likely, this round will not overlap the Rivoli, but rather “frame” it. *The use of two colors of 11/0s is optional. I’ve used 1 color with great results.*

To step up, sew through the first 2As and B added, exiting the B, as shown.



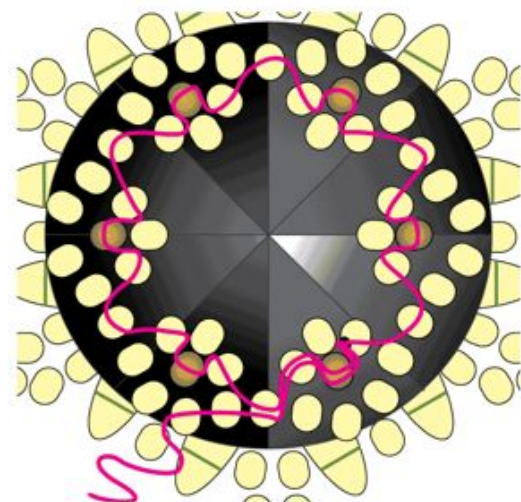
Step 6. Exiting the B from the prior round and working in circular netting stitch, **[Add 1A, 1B, 1A and sew into the adjacent, center B from the prior round]** 6 times, pulling snugly.

To step up, sew through and exit the first A added, as shown.



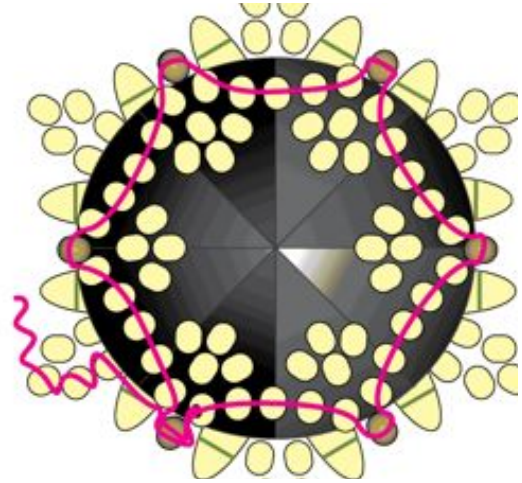
Step 7. Exiting the A from the prior round, **[Add 1A and sew through the adjacent 3 As, passing underneath the peak Bs of each loop, pulling snugly and “popping” the Bs out to form peaks]** around, as shown.

To step up, sew through the first A added and the adjacent 4 As, as shown, exiting near the outer edge at a “peak”.



Step 8. Exiting the edge A from the prior round, [Add 1A and sew through the adjacent 5 As] around, as shown, adding a “point” in the middle of each side.

To step up, sew through the beads along the back, outer edge, as shown. You need to be exiting any 1 of the 6, 3-bead picots (points) from the back side.



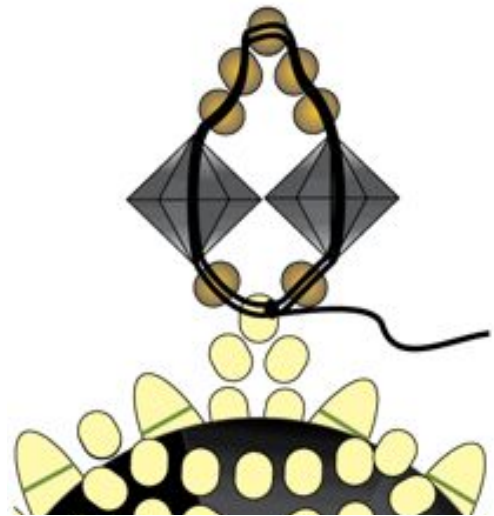
Creating a “Bail”

Step 9. To create an earring from the bail motif, rotate the peak where the thread is exiting to the top, as shown. .

Add 1A, 1D, 5As, 1D, 1A and sew through the peak bead, as shown. Sew through again to reinforce.

To end the thread, sew through the beadwork, tying half hitch knots along the way. Bury the tail thread well before snipping or burning the thread.

Repeat this process for the second earring.



Finishing Up

Step 10. All that’s left is to attach the ear wire! Use your Wubbers Classic Chain Nose Pliers or Wubbers Classic Flat Nose Pliers (any width) to open the loop on the ear wire. Open the ear wire by twisting the loop sideways, like a “gate.” Place the earring in the correct orientation on the ear wire, and close with the pliers.

If the loop on the ear wire is large enough, you can attach it directly to the bead loop as shown. Otherwise, you could attach a jump ring to the bead loop and attach the ear wire to the jump ring.



Congratulations! You now have a sparkly and beautiful new pair of earrings.



Review Questions

- 1) What is the name of the round faceted piece in the middle of the design?
 - a) Rhinestone
 - b) Cubic Zirconia
 - c) Rivoli

- 2) What is a unique characteristic of a Super Duo bead?
 - a) It's shaped like a grain of rice
 - b) It has two holes
 - c) They're sold in sets of two
 - d) Both a) and b)

- 3) Which of the following movies inspired Valorie to make these earrings?
 - a) Game of Thrones
 - b) Finding Nemo
 - c) Lord of the Rings

- 4) True/False. *Stepping up* is the process of getting your thread in the right position to start the next row.
 - a) True
 - b) False

- 5) What type of Swarovski beads did Valorie use in the bail of the earring?
 - a) Round
 - b) Bicone
 - c) Chaton
 - d) Cubes