stitch pro { AFRICAN HELIX } *Jean Campbell*

I think the most exciting thing about our community these days is the absolutely ravenous hunger beaders have for learning new techniques. Mix wire and seed beads? "No problem…check." Incorporate no-hole crystals into beadwork? "Did it! What else you got?" Punch holes into sheet metal and embellish with seed beads? "Uh huh. NEXT?"

The best part for me as a beading teacher and designer is that this craze for unique beadwork keeps me on my creative toes. I find that one of the richest ways to stay current design-wise is to go retro, delving into the many types of historical beadwork we have at our fingertips, techniques that may have been lost in the current sea of popularity. African Helix is one of those techniques. It might not be part of everyone's beading arsenal, but it should be. It's a fun thread-to-thread technique that forms a lovely spiral rope. Want to go retro with me and learn (or remember) how?

MATERIALS & TOOLS
Size 11° seed beads in two colors (A and B)
Size D nylon or 6 lb braided beading thread
Scissors
Beading needle
Pencil to use as armature
Tape (optional)

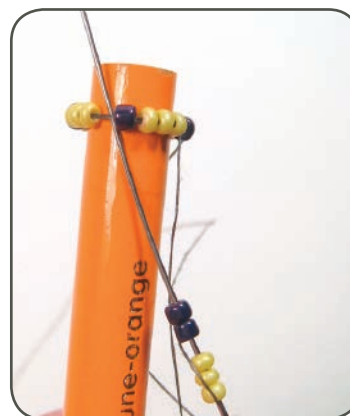**1)** Place the needle on the thread and string {3A and 1B} four times, leaving a 3" tail. Tie a square knot to form a circle, pass through the beads again, and exit from 1B. Slip the ring over the pencil (**Photo 1**). *Note:* It's okay if there is a bit of space between the beads. If it helps you keep your place, tape the tail thread to the pencil. In this example, the A beads are yellow and the B beads are blue.

2) String 3A and 2B, then pass the needle under the thread between the next 1B and following 3A (**Photo 2**) and pull tight (**Photo 3**); repeat three times (**Fig. 1**).

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

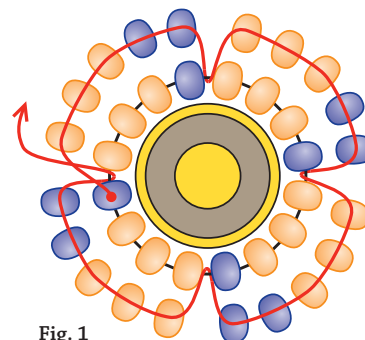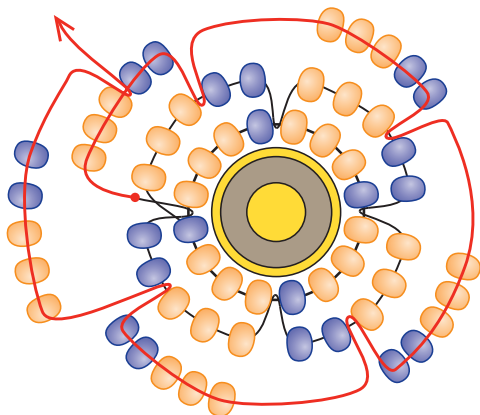
Fig. 1

Photo 4

Photo 5

3) To make the first loop of the next round, string 3A and 2B; pass the needle under the thread between the 3A and 2B of the first loop of the previous round (**Photo 4**) and pull tight.

4) Continue repeating Step 3 to the desired length, spiraling the work (**Fig. 2**). *Note:* There are no step-ups with this technique since you'll never pass through a bead on the body of the rope again after you string it.

5) Work the last round with 3A and 1B in each stitch. To reinforce, pass through all the beads of the last round again (**Photo 5**). If desired, tighten and shape the rope by passing through the spirals of B. ✦

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Fig. 2