



Gilding the Needle

The Newsletter of The Cataraqui Guild of Needle Arts

"A few stitches today – an heirloom tomorrow"

We meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, at St. John's Anglican Church in Portsmouth. Come join us!

President's Message



And finally, it is March! February is over. The groundhog didn't see his shadow. I found this winter to be "heavier" than usual, possibly due to the lack of light. Did you notice? More leaves than usual are dying on my indoor philodendron plants. Strange. Must be the lack of light.

On the other hand, our meetings have been full of good company and a lot of stitching. I've enjoyed laughing, enjoyed snacks, and enjoyed seeing what others have been designing with the Learn-a-Stitch stitches we have been shown this winter. They are all so very different, all beautiful. Watch for pictures further in this newsletter.

Our afternoons were more quiet than usual, the unreliable winter weather no doubt playing a role here. Sometimes it's better to finish stitching a project at home before the freezing rain arrives.

Your Executive is busy pulling together information about reducing expenses, considering whether EAC/ACB membership is worth it, whether we can use a smaller locker for storage, and trying to come up with creative ideas on how we can earn more money. If you have any suggestions, please do contact one of us. We do have a few years to figure this out.

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VOLUME 23 Issue 3, SPRING, 2025

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The canvaswork daffodils featured in this issue's header were stitched by Gabrielle.

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I also invite you to consider if there are any techniques you would like to learn, any teachers you would like to learn from, and any places you would like to visit. We have a wonderful screen for projecting Zoom images in the Church Hall. The world can be brought to us as well as local speakers. Let your executive know your wishes. Share pieces you've seen or found. It's always fun to learn something new.

Spring promises to bring new stitches, some interesting speakers, and lots of sharing with good friends. Looking forward to seeing you on Tuesday!

Let's go stitch!

Donna

SAVE THE DAY!!

We will be participating in the Lansdowne Textiles Festival on June 7th. Please consider what pieces you can have finished and ready to display. Beth M. will be organizing and Diane R. will be hanging the show. Please consider volunteering to serve as a monitor on the day of the show.

CGNA Administrative Committee 2024 - 25

Executive

President: Donna

Vice-President:

Katherine/Diane R.

Past President: Diane D.

Secretary: Kristeen/ Beth A.

Treasurer: Lyn M.

Standing Committee Chairs

Programme: Anajli

Communications: Beth M.

Library: Ellen, Mary Ann

Hospitality:

Nancy/Janet/Francine

Membership: Lynn P.

Special Events: Tina, Ruth Ann

On Orts

The word "ort" may sound like the name of an engaging little creature from a fantasy novel, but it actually is a *bona fide* English word, dating from the 15th century. At that time, ort meant "scrap" or "leftover", and was most often used to describe a morsel of leftover food. Stitchers use "ort" to describe the little ends of thread too small to be worked into the embroidery. What do you do with yours?

Some of us are guilty of throwing them out. After draining her morning coffee, Mary Ann used to put them in her coffee cup, then inadvertently washed them in the dishwasher, and found them again in its lint trap. But, in these days of "waste nothing", stitchers are encouraged to preserve them in a glass jar. No, they don't regenerate into skeins of silk, but the layers of different coloured ends create a log of one's stitching projects. Some stitchers used to toss them outside in the spring and enjoy seeing them woven into birds' nests, although this is no longer considered safe for the birds. Others fill clear baubles with them to hang on the Christmas tree.

Orts in a former ashtray are evidence that you have been stitching, or have hosted a stitch-in. But, be careful of the tale they might tell. In one Monica Ferris novel (Warning: this is a spoiler if you haven't read them and intend to!), the criminal murders her husband in her sewing room, then moves the body. But, she couldn't destroy the critical evidence – the truth was revealed when the amateur sleuth detected Orts from the sewing-room rug on the body's pant legs.

Guild News: A Visit with EAC/ACB

Kristeen

Despite our in-person December meeting being cancelled due to the inclement weather, Cynthia MacDougall, Chapter Director of EAC/ACB, was able to introduce us to the EAC/ACB website (<https://eac-acb.ca>) via Zoom.

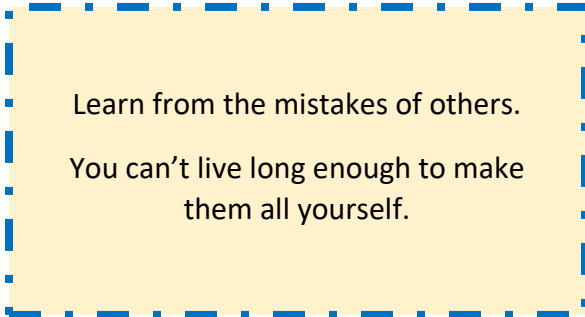
We found out about some of the Learning Opportunities offered by EAC/ACB – the different types of classes and the speakers series. We also learned about how to locate other items on the website - 2025 seminar, policies and procedures of EAC/ACB, as well as several free project patterns. Cynthia did not mention the Youth page, probably because she could see we did not fit into the "Youth" category, but the Youth page does include a small stitch dictionary.

Please do take the time to check out the EAC/ACB website.

Because Cynthia was told we were looking at options for the future, including but not limited to disbanding the guild, she invited the President of EAC/ACB, Terri Briggs, to join her to answer our questions. Although neither Terri nor Cynthia could advise us on what to do, I did find out more information about EAC/ACB. For instance, if we as a guild were to opt for "associate" membership it would be a lot cheaper per person, but individual members could not participate in any classes or seminars, attend the speakers series or borrow from the EAC/ACB Library without paying the fee for an individual membership. There would be at most one copy of *Embroidery Canada* for the Guild. Associate membership would seem to be the same as membership in the Canadian Quilters Association, with different rights and privileges than our current type of membership.

After Terri mentioned that her home guild is stitching on projects by individual designers, I wondered if we should consider that for some of our afternoon sessions. We could decide on a designer or a technique. Individual members would be responsible for gathering the pattern (easy or more difficult, free or not), thread and material but by stitching together they could ask for assistance if necessary within the group.

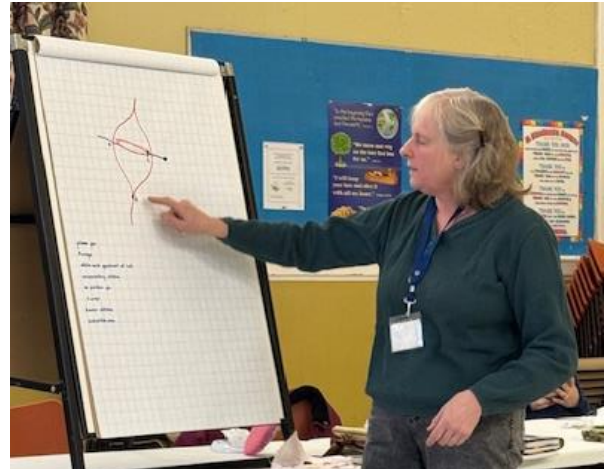
Cynthia (chapterdirector@eac-acb.ca) and Terri (president@eac-acb.ca) both offered to answer any further questions although you might want to approach our CGNA president first.



Learn from the mistakes of others.
You can't live long enough to make
them all yourself.

The Spring Leaves are Coming Out

Learn-A-Stitch has continued through the winter months. At our first January meeting, Kim taught us the Crested Cretan stitch. Next, Nancy instructed us on the Fly Stitch, an easy stitch but one which can be varied by changing the number of plies used, or the spacing of the stitches. Ros wanted a jagged stitch that would be suitable for outlining notched leaves and came up with the Snail Trail Stitch. Anjali was the instructor at the second February meeting, showing us how to incorporate Shisha mirrors into our stitching. A big thank you to these four ladies who took the time to work examples and had the courage to stand up and present what they'd learned.



Kim gave carefully prepared instructions on the Cretan stitch



Left: Leola's leaf illustrates tightly spaced fly stitches. *Above:* Ros used the snail trail stitch on her 3-dimensional piece. *Above right:* a garment sporting Shisha mirrors.



We are beginning to see different concepts for how leaves could be incorporated into a stitched piece. For example, Leola traced a pattern of a tree with many leaves on her fabric, and is filling in the leaves with different stitches. Donna is embellishing the leaves already woven on a piece of upholstery fabric.



EAC/ACB Speaker Series

Kristeen

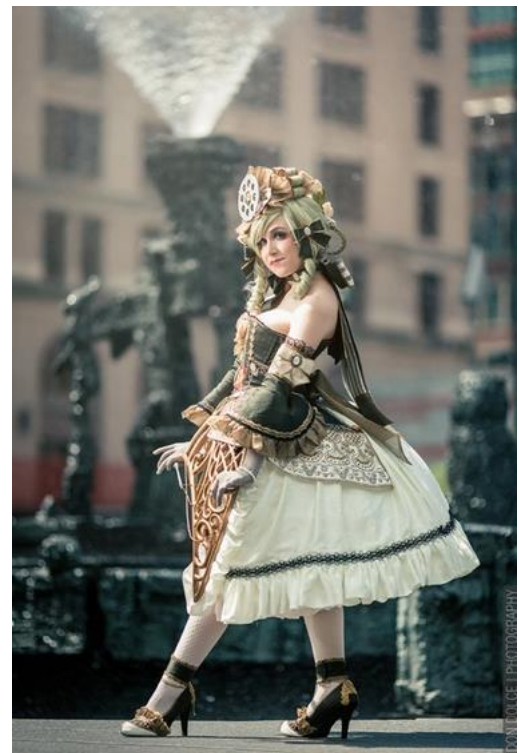
The February Speakers Series talk was ***Embroidery in Cosplay*** by Canadian, Maral Agnerian. The term “Cosplay” is word blended from “costume” and “play”. Cosplay enables fans to bring their favourite characters to life, including historical figures as well as media characters. It is a creative outlet and a way to learn new skills. The term “cosplay” is believed to have been used in 1983 in Japan. There are far more resources available now than when it first started. One used to have to make everything but now one can purchase costumes and use them as is or also add embellishments. Cosplay has been referred to as “Halloween on steroids.”



There are some issues to consider when embroidering in cosplay that may not be present in other embroidery. These include mobility and suitability for fabric type, snagging, weight and stiffness, cost, cleaning, transportation, and the ability to dress oneself.

I was not sure I would enjoy this talk but it was very interesting and the pictures that she showed of embroidery were fantastic. No, I will not be participating in cosplay groups but it was great learning a bit about it.

The next event in the Speakers Series, ***Japan Textiles and Craft Tour***, will be held March 22nd (registration is now open on the EAC/ACB website). The April 19th talk will be ***The Art and Science of Appraising Needlework***. I believe the April talk will be the last in the series until the fall. Please consider registering for the EAC/ACB March and April free talks.



Exploring “Woven Histories” *Corina*

It was a complete accident that I happened to be at the National Gallery in Ottawa when the “Woven Histories” exhibit was there. I had friends visiting from overseas who invited me along. Looking over the guide, I excitedly told them about the exhibit, and we decided to poke our heads in. We ended up spending a leisurely afternoon looking at the exhibition, viewing 130 pieces by 45 international artists



Olga de Amaral: *Cintas Entrelazadas*

who used a variety of textile techniques.

The artwork on display explored how textile art has been separated from fine arts, despite the fact that weaving and related techniques have contributed to modernism’s abstraction concepts. There was work critiquing patriarchal history and gendered identity, works addressing political issues and seeking social change (in particular with industry), and others exploring abstraction’s formal conventions.

Since the light was lowered to protect delicate artworks, we refrained from taking photos. A lot of different tactile materials were used for the works, and there were samples on benches for people who wanted to touch those materials. My personal favourites include tapestries of computer chips woven on authentic 17th century looms and a multimedia presentation depicting the artist knitting socks in front of an industrial sock-knitting machine.



Left:
Lenore Tawney: *Vespers*

Stitching in the Age of Technology

Beth M

Most of our guild's members started stitching in a time when stitching was a pretty low-key domestic activity. Our home-maker mothers embroidered pillowcases and aprons using iron-on patterns or patterns clipped from "Good Housekeeping" magazines. More specialized magazines were available largely by mail, and they were the province of the more skilled. I remember seeing ads in such magazines for the big "Lavender and Lace" angels and weeping with frustration because those patterns were not then for sale outside the U.S.A.

When I started cross-stitching in earnest, most of my fabrics, threads and patterns came from Kingston's general hobby stores like "Leisure World", "White Rose" and "Lewiscraft". I remember seeking out linen and being told, "No, no, dear, this Aida cloth is what is used for cross-stitching." The day I discovered Sandra Roy's "Handiarts" store at the foot of Princess Street was a game-changer.

Then came the Internet. Online shopping gave stitchers access to a plethora of exotic supplies. I spent long hours ogling images of patterns available at shops in the U.S.A., Great Britain, and The Netherlands. They were happy to ship internationally and I started building my file drawers of patterns. If a pattern specified a fabric or thread and I didn't even know what it was, well, I could buy that online too! I discovered the online bulletin boards, sponsored sometimes by shops and sometimes by designers, where there was a wealth of information on technique as well as friends who empathized with stitching issues. Some of those new friends were within geographical range and I went to stitch-ins and connected with ladies who remain my friends 30 years later.

I can remember when patterns were hand-drawn – a laborious process for designers and an eye-strain for stitchers! Then, to make a "working copy", you had to find a shop or a business or a library with that special device called a photocopier (the best photocopiers even enlarged patterns!!). But, computer technology has altered how patterns are created and printed. The software that lets one draw pretty pictures evolved into pattern-makers for designers of quilts, embroidery patterns, cross-stitch, etc. The key advantage of such software is the ability to erase – one can experiment and play ad nauseum and yet end up with clean printed patterns. Good-bye graph paper and rubber erasers! The software allows the amateur to play and the professional to make a viable business out of what was once a domestic hobby.

Online shopping and Canada Post fed my stitching addiction for many years. But, the next technological advance saved on postage. Many designers are now offering to ship their patterns electronically: Pay with credit card, then immediately download a pdf file of your pattern. A pdf file not only saves printing costs, postage, and (sometimes) taxes, but it gives the customer control over the size and quality of the printed copy. After years of S.E.X. ("Stash-Enhancing-eXperience) by mail, I have learned to appreciate S.E.X. in a new position. And, I am gearing up for another new electronic stitching aid: Pattern-Keeper. Pattern-Keeper puts your pdf file on a tablet; it allows you to view any part of your pattern at any size, to highlight all instances of a selected symbol, and to keep track of what you have stitched. Good-bye, Magic Markers!

Although technology has played a major role in transforming the needlearts industry into a modern pastime for with-it crafters of all ages, genders, and life styles, it also has its downside. All over the country, the charming little hobby stores are closing. They just can't compete with the broad inventory of the online shops. But, for those of us who want to see and smell and fondle stitching fabrics, who want to

match fibre colours in daylight, who want to see stitched pieces instead of pictures of them, those closures are horribly sad.

I also think that software may be making it **too** easy to produce charts for stitchers – you don't have to know much about stitching to convert a photo into a pattern or to chart a cute saying using a nifty alphabet. I have purchased a few of these patterns and been disappointed – impossible to stitch, or too simple to be interesting. I find that, when I browse charts, I now concentrate on those produced by seasoned designers – Ink Circles, Rosewood Manor, X's and Oh's, Mirabilia, Victoria Sampler, and so on. It just takes too long to go through everything that's available. If others have adopted my browsing style, it must be very hard for a new designer to break into the market.

Then, there is the issue of copyright. Technology has made it much too easy to make copies of a design and distribute them widely. Have you noticed that the copyright laws are different for printed patterns versus electronic ones? It's the same difference as for printed books versus e-books. Once you are done with a printed book or pattern, you can give it to a friend or even sell it as a used copy, provided that you don't keep a copy. Electronic files may not be passed on this way – but it's a legality that is next to impossible to enforce. Consequently, shady dealers can buy a chart and sell illicit electronic copies on the internet, closing down their bogus shop-front when they get caught but rarely suffering criminal charges. I am embarrassed to admit that I have accidentally purchased such stolen property. And so, upcoming designers have to be prepared to be vigilant and to take time-consuming measures to defend their property, including shelling out for legal fees. It is not a scenario that encourages artists to enter the market; indeed, some talented designers have already left the industry.

Perhaps we are already past the heyday of cross-stitching. After all, cross-stitching – just like quilting and knitting – is a hobby whose popularity naturally waxes and wanes, with technology aiding both those phases. If so, stitchers like Kristeen and me need not be embarrassed by the size of our stashes; rather, we should be glad that we built our collections of patterns when we did.

On balance, I think that technology has advanced our hobby dramatically, and good minds are already at work to address the problems that have accompanied those advances. I do wonder what's next?



Show and Share



Kim's story on her yellow vases:

"These pictures were done, along with a third one, about forty years ago. I was not satisfied with my work on the vases; it was split stitch filled-in work. I decided to appliqué ovetop of the split stitch. Then it became necessary to do some detail work on the appliqués, and because the appliqués were attached with Heat'n'Bond, it was impossible to stitch. My solution to the problem was to use macramé. It is a long time since I have macraméd, but I really enjoyed it. Using two strands of DMC for macramé was a first for me; I have never done such fine work before. Often I

had to use a tapestry needle to separate the threads, but it worked out. The macramé on the project on the right has since been completed and the picture is now hanging on the wall. The other picture is still in the works."



Elizabeth's Cards:

"I sewed Christmas cards for my two granddaughters last year. The base fabric is some silk scraps from their mother's wedding dress (worn 25 years ago). Don't throw anything away! I also made a birthday card for my neighbour. He is a bird carver."



Corina on her Long Dog Samplers' **Pandemic**:

"I started **Pandemic** in 2020, after my mother, Leola, showed me the pattern. It took me a few years to finish as I worked on and off, and even took a whole year off because I didn't want to risk it with a new kitten. Mom helped me get fabric for the project, and I raided her stash for floss. My original plan was to divide the pattern into different colours and do a gradient in between. Turns out I liked the pink a bit too much, so I changed my plan to the current result. It is the first sampler I've ever done, and it was an ambitious learning experience. In the bottom left, I added my completion year: 2024."

Tina writes about her big finish:

"Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa oki nami ura)", casually known simply as "The Great Wave" to English speakers, is a famous Japanese painting by Katsushika Hokusai. He lived in Tokyo, Japan in both a time period called Edo and also when Tokyo was called Edo – around about 1830.

There are major differences between the rendition I did from a pattern by Lord Libidan and the original. Mount Fuji is a central focusing point in the famous woodblock, but the version that captivated my attention had Pokémon creatures subbed in instead. You see, it's a rather well-known Asian folklore that a carp that successfully swims upstream and leaps over the Dragon Gate undergoes a transformation into a dragon itself. So naturally the orange school of fish, known as Magikarp, and its evolution, Gyarados -- the large dragons, encapsulated these two interests together.



The stitch dimensions are 220 x 144 and I stitched it on 14-count Aida cloth. It is entirely cross stitch; there isn't even any backstitching. I started it two years ago and spent about thirteen active months slowly working on this project when my carpal tunnel allowed it. I had to put this project on the back burner while I completed a baby blanket for my brand new nephew. I'm so pleased to be able to share it now that it's finally completed."



Left: Close-up of Gabrielle's pulled-thread sampler. The design of 16 pulled-thread patterns is a freebie on Gitta's website. It can be finished as either a biscornu or a rectangular sampler. We are considering using it in next year's program.



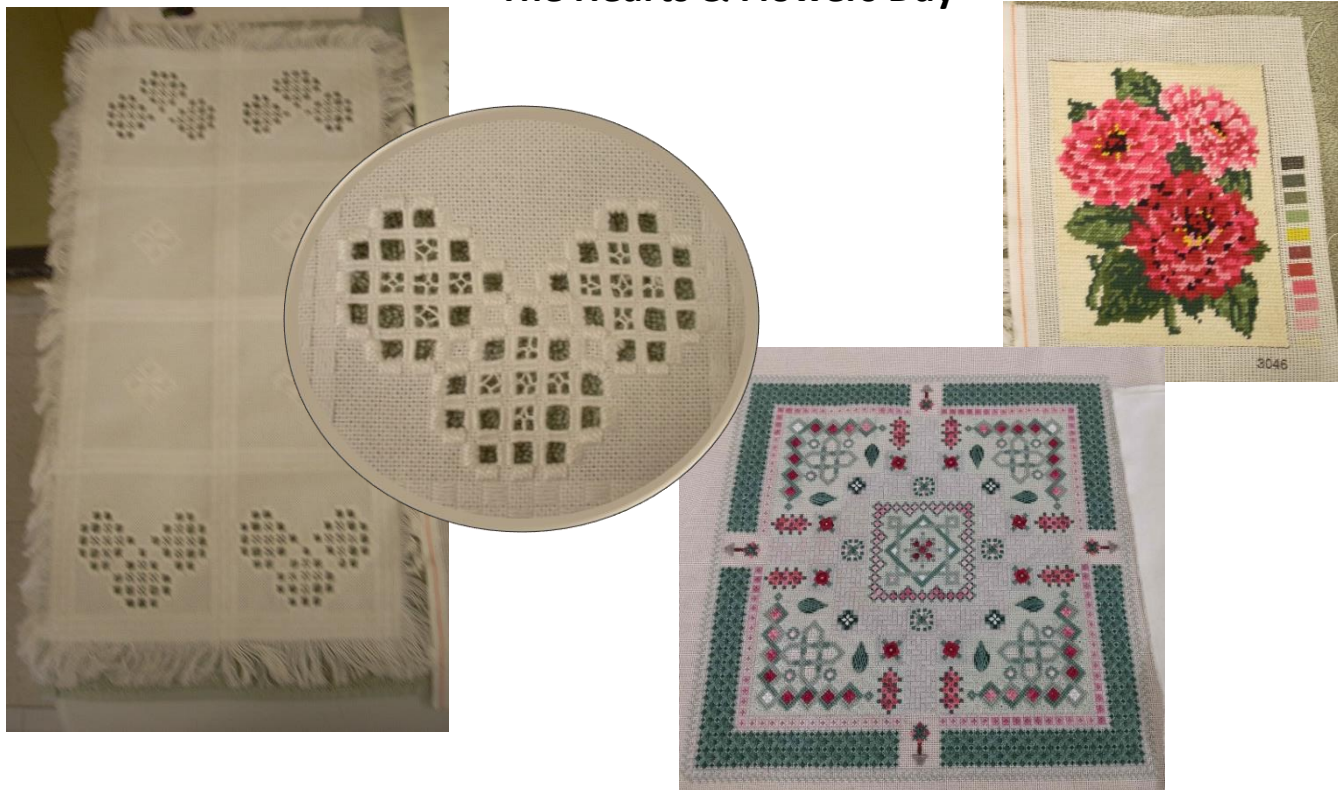
Leola brought in her "Love and Wisdom" sampler, which uses cross-stitch and 24 specialty stitches (design by The Drawn Thread).



The lovely Hardanger table mat shown on the left was a gift to Kristeen from our honorary member, Irene.

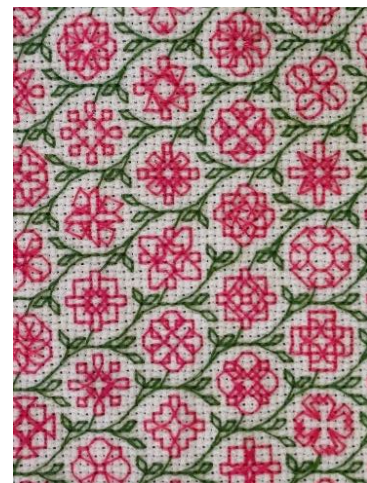
Show and Share

The Hearts & Flowers Day



Kristeen's **Hearts & Flowers** pieces included five different kinds of counted-thread work: Hardanger, Needlepoint, Canvaswork, Vagonite, and Blackwork. Her Hardanger runner (above, left) was the one instance of Hearts amongst the day's Show and Share items. It was her very first attempt at Hardanger, the product of a class in the Toronto area at least 20 years ago. Her needlepoint roses also date from that period. Similarly, her canvaswork ornamental garden was one of a series of three such gardens, stitched in a class organized by Letje of Hummingbird House.

Kristeen's Vagonite tulips (below left) are a more recent effort (2022). Her last display piece was "100 Days of Tiny" (below, with close-up by Leola), a blackwork piece designed by **The Steady Thread**. Kristeen protested that, actually, there were 108 little motifs in this piece!





Eileen clearly loves flowers! She finished her exquisite Brazilian embroidery piece (centre pic) started in the focus group last year. Leola’s close-up of the orange blossom on the left shows the amazing detail in this piece. But, it is the piece on the right that Eileen is most proud of – because she designed it herself!



Diane D. is another lover of flowers! Shown above are two segments of her floral bathroom curtain



Kim’s Biscornu. “I stitched this biscornu, a pattern from EAC Virtual Threads, in January and February of 2021. The fabric used is 28 count and it is stuffed with navy beans. I searched through my many buttons to find just the right ones to enhance the work.”



Anjali’s flower collage from a class by Margaret Vant Erve



Beth M: “I stitched this Lanarte kit, *Black Tulips*, over 20 years ago, but just got it framed last summer. “

Spring Program

Date	Show-and-Share	Learn-a-Stitch	Afternoon Activities
Mar. 11	In honour of Ireland: Celtic pieces, green pieces	Maple Leaf Izzy Dolls	Izzy Dolls Visit by Stitch by Stitch
Mar. 25	Finishes and Finds	Rhodes Stitch (taught by Leola)	Focus Group: Goldwork
Apr. 8	TBA	Stitch taught by Donna	Focus Group: Mending
Apr. 22	Finishes and Finds	Stitch taught by Katherine	Focus Group: Mending
May 13	TBA	Braided Rugs	Focus Group: Mending
May 27	Finishes and Finds	Finishing Techniques	Focus Group: Mending
June 10	END OF YEAR PARTY Annual General Meeting, Town Hall Meeting, Gift Exchange (Katherine's Game), Potluck Lunch, Afternoon Presentation by Colin of Frameworks		

Show-and-Share. Show and Share has always been a place for “Finishes and Finds” – a place to show off finished work and to share with the group the interesting pieces we find in travels, garage sales, and family trunks. We have recently revived a second style of Show and Share: the trunk show or themed Show. At the first meeting of each month, Program will set a theme, perhaps a technique that we are exploring, perhaps a seasonal topic, perhaps something just for fun. February’s theme was Hearts & Flowers, in honour of Valentine’s Day; in March, we will honour Ireland with Celtic pieces and green pieces. Please dig out pieces that fit the theme each month and bring them to educate and inspire us all.

Izzy Dolls



Diane D. proposed that we spend a day making Izzy Dolls. Patterns will be available. The finished dolls will be donated.

Focus Group: Upcycled Mending. The sequel to the mending workshop given last fall at the library.



Braided Rugs. Another form of recycling – a way to recycle old linens, curtains, and garments into something new and useful.

