



Mid Week Moments #69

Wednesday 21 July 2010

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Welcome to your Midweek Moments. This week, Deborah Louie, who won two ribbons at the recent Quilt & Craft Fair at Darling Harbour Sydney, gives some advice to all fellow quilters about why it's worth submitting your quilts for entry, even if you're at a beginner's level and don't feel you're good enough.

In the Who Wants to be a Milliner column, we're proud to present the low down on the iconic nurse's cap. This was suggested by a reader, Barbara McCaig, and her memories of the starched cap she had to wear as a trainee nurse. Here's what we've come up with, Barbara, and we hope you find it interesting.

Winners are Grinners

When Blueberries tutor Deborah Louie entered her vintage-inspired quilt at last month's Quilt & Craft Fair at Darling Harbour Sydney, she wasn't expecting the quilt to win not one but two ribbons. But, as is so often the case, it's the unexpected that ends up happening.



Deborah's creation picked up the Judges' Choice Award, as well as being awarded third prize in the Professional Traditional Quilting category. Not a bad haul for something that only took her three weeks to complete.

"I made the quilt back in January as an 18th birthday gift for my daughter Claire," she says. "The design was my own, based on a vintage quilt. It's basically a whole cloth with white trapunto and five blocks of red and green whig rows."

Deborah, who has been quilting for 20 years as well as teaching, says she tries to enter a quilt every year and has a number of ribbons from previous years as testament to her skills and tenacity. She believes the official acknowledgement of winning at the Quilt & Craft Fair has twofold value, as it's very satisfying on a personal level but also important professionally as it raises the quilter's profile.

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And for all those novice quilters out there who regard the winning of an award at the Quilt & Craft Fair as something out of their reach, Deborah believes that there are many benefits to be gained by just entering your quilt, regardless of how experienced you may be.

“I’d like to encourage quilters of all levels to exhibit at Darling Harbour Sydney as it’s such a buzz to be able to stand next to your quilt hanging there on display at such a huge event,” she says. “Many people think they’re not good enough, but if it was only ever the best of the best who were displaying their work, then it would take about five minutes to walk around the entire exhibition, and that wouldn’t be much of a show. Everyone who’s a member of the NSW Quilters Guild is eligible to enter, and the more quilts that are exhibited, then the better the show is for everyone. After all, it’s about having fun and quilting is for everyone, not just the ‘elite’. We all have to start somewhere.”

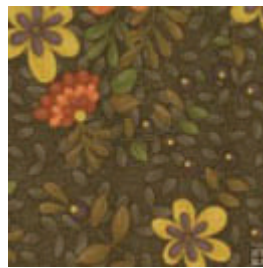
Or, to put it another way – it isn’t just about the destination, but the journey as well. So novice quilters, start seriously thinking about next year’s Fair.

Tell us what you think of Deborah's article, click [here](#) to leave a comment on our blog.

Awesome fabric



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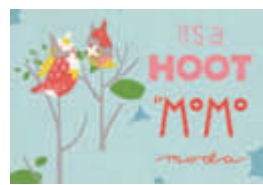


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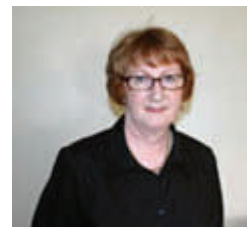
Anne Sommerlad explains her Miniature Sampler classes

What first got you interested in Miniature Sampling?

I've always been interested in things that are either miniature or massive, both ends of the scale spectrum I suppose. One day I sat down to see how small I could make these sampler blocks. I decided the only way to do it was to use foundation printing. I made them in two inches instead of the usual six to twelve inches.

What's the challenge of working in miniature?

It's the particular complexity involved. There are many simple blocks you can do but I wanted to see how complex I could do them. I chose a fairly complex pineapple block that had 61 pieces in it.



Anne Sommerlad

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What are the reactions of class participants?

It's funny, most people start out being pretty incredulous, almost horrified, at the idea of working on something so small. But once they sit down and give it a go, they're usually blown away at how simple it actually is. They're so used to seeing the blocks in normal size that the miniatures have a real 'wow' factor. It's the novelty of the different scale.

How popular are the classes?

The Miniature Sampler classes have probably been one of my most successful projects to date. Every time we run a class it seems to be full.

How can you best summarise the basic premise of foundation piecing?

It's about having to think backwards – that is, working in reverse. Once people have their heads around that, there's no stopping them.

What's your current project?

I've now actually created a one-inch version, so watch this space!

If you would like to express interest in a miniature sampler class or any of Anne's classes send us an email to enquiries@blueberries.net.au. Click [here](#) to leave a comment on our blog.

Who wants to be a Milliner?

The Secret Life of Hats, Episode 19 - the Nurse's Cap

Is there any other occupational headwear with a nobler history than the much-hallowed nurse's cap? Attributed to the most famous pioneer of the profession, Florence Nightingale, who is reputed to have debuted it in the 1800s, the nurse's cap has been in a continual state of metamorphosis over the last 200 years, evolving to keep up with the ever-changing practices, values and traditions of the profession.

Early forms of the nurse's cap were modelled on the nun's coif, acknowledging the already well-established tradition of Catholic nursing, upon which much of the profession was based. Not surprisingly, overtones of female subservience and obedience were therefore incorporated into the cap's design (at no extra cost), something not uncommon for many early forms of female headwear, as regular readers of this column will know. It can only be guessed whether the Lady with the Lamp herself ever intended this subtle form of covert disempowerment, but it does help to explain the stiffness and general uncomfortableness of the cap, as well as the fact that male nurses have never been required to wear them.

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*Pictures from
Anne's class*



Click [here](#) to see more photos.



*The Lady with the Lamp - Florence
Nightingale*



A nurses around the time of WWII

The original official purpose of the nurse's cap was mainly practical – to keep the hair neatly tucked away. It also served as a handy means of instantly identifying if someone was a nurse, as well as presenting a reassuringly clean, neat and modest appearance. Some time in the first half of the 20th century, the Bruck Company of Chicago began manufacturing nurse's caps on a commercial basis, which created a consistent and uniform style. However, for many decades before this there had been a variety of styles, some of them from the humblest and most resourceful beginnings. Around the end of the 19th century, the "dust" style of cap was common (also known as the "muffin cap"). This covered much of the head and had a veil to cover long hair, a design that many women found distinctly unflattering, hence its disparaging names.

In the 1920s, the muffin cap soon gave way to the peaked "handkerchief" style of hat, so named because nurses had begun to fashion their own caps using men's white handkerchiefs. This new peaked-style graduate nurse's cap was stiffened using starch or sugar water and had the practical advantage of being able to be folded flat which made it ideal for being carried in a book to maintain its shape. It was also shorter than its predecessor and didn't have the veil, as the general trend amongst women by then was for shorter hair. In spite of these improvements, however, it still created discomfort for its wearers as it needed to be pinned directly to the hair.

As the 20th century progressed, the caps became gradually simpler and less uncomfortable, with later incarnations designed to sit further back on the head, which is now especially common in the UK. The nurse's cap never lost its symbolic reverence though, with many schools presenting graduates with their caps in special capping ceremonies, similar to those of the academic mortarboard (see [Episode 4 in Midweek Moments Issue #54](#)). The precise design of the cap often signified the alma mater (place of training) of its wearer.

In the last 30 years, traditional nursing caps have almost completely disappeared in large hospitals, with nurses now wearing the well-known coloured "scrubs". This is largely attributed to the rise in number of male nurses, which has led to the adoption of a more unisex outfit.



More contemporary caps showing the black band

Throughout all of this, Florence Nightingale has not been forgotten though. Latter day nursing caps often had a black band sewn on them, which was officially supposed to signify the training level of its wearer or a clinical unit's head nurse. Popular speculation, however, claims that it was originally intended as a sign of mourning for Ms Nightingale's death, the 100th anniversary of which, by the way, is three weeks from now. So spare a thought for the pioneering work of that great lady on 13 August and give a moment of silence for the iconic item of headwear that she inspired almost 200 years ago.

Quote of the week: Quilting is my passion – chocolate comes in a close second. (Thanks to Jacqui Gardiner, regular Mid Week Moments reader, for providing this quote).

Til next week!
The Blueberries Team