



Mid Week Moments #71

Wednesday 4 August 2010

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Welcome to your *Midweek Moments*. If you were wondering why this edition looks a bit different to previous ones, it's because we decided to give it a bit of a tart-up. Nothing over the top, just a subtle tweaking here and there, just to keep it looking fresh and glamorous. Heaven knows, we all need a bit of zhushing up every now and then, including *Midweek Moments*.

This week, a special treat. We have an interview with quilting aficionado Kay Haerland, who recently took home the gong for 'Best in Show' at the Darling Harbour Sydney Craft and Quilt Fair in June. This is one of the most coveted awards at the Fair and therefore not given out lightly. Read on to get Kay's take on this extraordinary journey.

Why not visit the Quilt and Art Show at Terrigal this coming Saturday, click [here](#) to find out more.

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Inspiration Under the Canopy



"Never doubt your own ability" - Kay Haerland, textile artist and teacher

Kay Haerland loves rainforests. "It's the beautiful lushness of them," she says. "My husband and I both love the thought of being in a rainforest and seeing its different levels from canopy to ground vegetation. That's what I wanted to convey with the quilt, the feeling of being able to walk right into it."

Under the Canopy is the title of Kay's award-winning quilt, which was bestowed the honour of 'Best in Show' at the recent Quilt & Craft Fair at Darling Harbour. Kay has been a quilter for many years and cites nature as one of her primary sources of inspiration. Having previously created rainforest-themed quilts in the US, she decided that it was high time for an Australian version, having lived here for seven years.

"This particular quilt had quite a long gestation period," says Kay's husband Bard. "All up it took her about six months to complete and that was working on it fairly solidly, sometimes for stretches of up to 12 hours at a time. But really, the idea for the quilt had been slowly growing over many years. Kay often takes a very organic approach to her work."

Bard should know. He often does a lot of preliminary research for Kay's projects, including the design work and checking to make sure the details are accurate. "He's a very good critic of my work," says Kay. "He understands where I'm coming from but he's able to bring a fresh perspective, not being a sewer himself. With 'Under the Canopy' we both went through a lot of books on Australian rainforests to make sure that the details in the design were all botanically correct, right down to the orchid. People appreciate that level of detail, even if they don't notice it consciously."

Kay says winning 'Best in Show' was a complete surprise, but also an amazing experience. She encourages all quilters to take any opportunity to exhibit publicly, regardless of their level of expertise.

"The first time I was talked into exhibiting, my immediate reaction was 'I'm not good enough'," she recalls. "But it's a wonderful learning experience and very inspiring for your own creativity seeing your quilt hanging there in public with other people's quilts. It also helps you to push your own boundaries and work as well as you can. It can bring an amazing focus and heightened dedication to how you work. It doesn't have to be about winning a prize or not. It's about sharing your work."

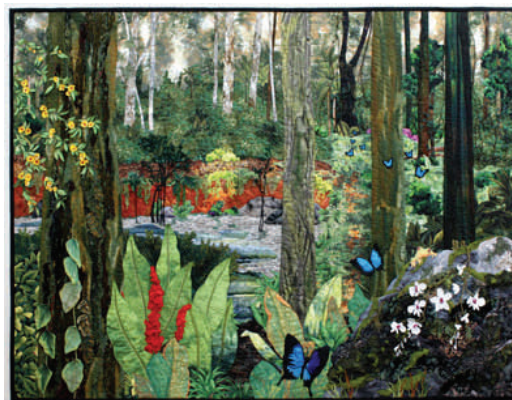
The other key piece of advice Kay offers to all quilters is to experiment with ideas and never doubt your own ability. "Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone," she says. "Take the risk and try something new."

Bard agrees. "There are lots of good quilters out there but they tend to do the same thing over and over again."

"Be brave with it," says Kay. "and you'll be amazed to see where it can take you."

Visit Kay's website at www.kayhaerland.com

To leave a comment on, go to www.blueberries.net.au/blog



'Under the Canopy'

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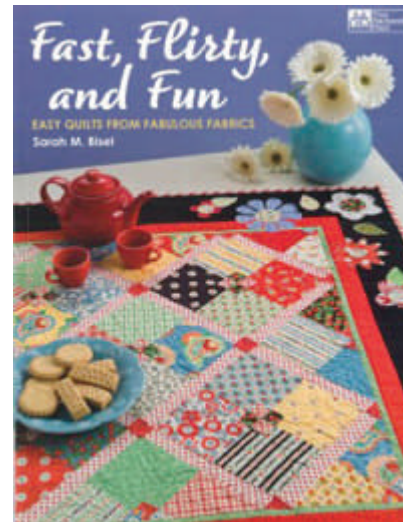


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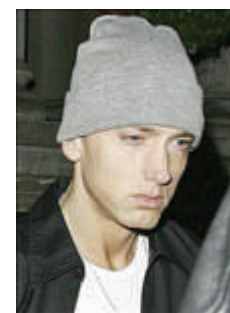
The Secret Life of Hats, Episode 21 - The Beanie

For most Australians, the word beanie almost certainly conjures up the familiar knit-style skullcaps so popular during the cooler months, and an essential item for winter sports activities such as skiing and snowboarding. Throughout most of the world, however, a beanie is actually a working hat, mostly associated with laborers and tradesmen, as well as being an item of headgear for first year college and university students, especially in the US.

So how did the simple beanie acquire these multiple personalities? A look at the origin of the word provides only limited help. Students in Medieval universities traditionally wore a yellow skullcap called a "bejaunus", which was gradually shortened to "beanus" which gradually evolved to become the beanies of 20th century colleges and universities.

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Multiple personalities of the beanie...



"Angry" beanie - rapper Eminem

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There was also the propeller beanie, a bizarre helicopter-style variation which became a popular fashion statement for science fiction nerds throughout the 1950s and '60s, especially with comic book characters. It was the propeller beanie that gave us the modern term "propellorhead", which is often applied to I.T. savvy people today, and usually not in an altogether flattering context.

And just in case you're not totally confused yet, there's also the beanie's other name of "toque", which is what Americans, Asians and Europeans call our knitted beanie. The most famous toque is the traditional red one with the white pompom, worn by Santa. In fact, it's only in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Canada where a toque is almost exclusively called a beanie, indicating that it might be a Commonwealth thing. Who knows?

But enough of all this fiddly, etymological detail. What about the juicy stuff? Where's the blood, sweat and tears in the story of the beanie? Unfortunately, this item of headwear has never really been associated with interesting people like pioneers, adventurers, royalty, movie stars, soldiers, artists or revolutionaries like so many of the other hats we've examined in this column.

However, there is one thing worth a mention - the world's one and only annual Beanie Festival (serious!). This is held the last week of June right here in Australia, and in Alice Springs of all places.

The middle of the desert might seem like an unlikely place for a festival that celebrates beanies, but considering how freezing it can get out there on winter's nights, it starts to make a strange, woolly kind of sense. This community-based event has been going since 1997, earning The Alice the rather odd title of Beanie Capital of the World.

It seems that hand-made beanies have long been held in high regard in Central Australia. The original purpose of the Festival was to sell beanies that had been hand-made by Aboriginal women in remote outback communities. Over the years it's morphed into a large, internationally-recognised event, where the quirkiest and most amazing beanies you're ever likely to encounter are created, displayed and celebrated.

The Festival, which became incorporated in 2004, explains on its website that its aims have been "to develop Aboriginal women's textiles, promote women's cultures and the beanie as a regional art form". It also strives to reduce poverty through the development of artistic skills, and, significantly, to promote reconciliation. Unlike many of our politicians, this last objective is considerably more than just talking the talk. The Festival is built on the premise of both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians sharing and exhibiting their cultures side by side.

Now there's an unexpected thought. Reconciliation through the humble beanie? Bring it on.

www.beaniefest.org (definitely worth a look!)

**"Blessed are the children of the piecemakers
for they shall inherit the quilts!"**

**Til next week!
The Blueberries Team**

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