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The lively needle

Back to nature in stitchery

By MARY KAY DAVIS

One of the great ladies of American stitchery was in lower Michigan this month. Jacqueline Embroven of Santa Barbara, Calif. is author of "The Stitches of Creative Embroidery," the brand new "Stitches with Variations," and my favorite, "Stitchery for Children."

She spoke on "Nature as a source for stitchery designs," and Mother Nature never looked so flourishing as when she emerges from Enchanted lands. Here are some of Jacqueline's tips:

- Develop awareness in yourself and in your children. Most people perceive an apple with the preconceptions that they've stored in their brains. Needle artists should use their eyes to see the apple that's really there.
- Create within limits. Volumes of materials, inspirations and techniques

are available to us. It's possible to spend all your energy making up your mind about colors, stitches and designs, and never get around to the embroidering.

- Set boundaries. Try using a limited range of colors, or work within a border. When problems are limited, solutions are better.
- Don't say, "But I can't draw." If you can write, you can draw. And like any activity, the more you do, the better you get. (This hit home to me because I practice drawing on the Davis children's lunch bags. They make the peanut butter and jelly taste better and the kids love them. Picasso I'm not, but in the field of lunch-bag-art, there's not much competition.)
- Use nature as a design source. Look at photographs in books, microphotos from science magazines, maps or views from airplanes. Study patterns and colors of shells, bark or any textured material. Cut open fruit and look at the wild flowers in the woods. How are they put together? The more you see, the more ideas will occur to you.
- Work samplers. These need not be finished, schoolgirl productions, but they should be notebook sized. Try working one sampler per stitch. Embroider in large, small, thick, thin and every way that occurs to you. Play around and explore what it can do. Then file the sampler away in your notebook. When you're designing, browse through the book and make your stitch choices easily and well.
- Don't develop the "Smithsonian syndrome." Every embroidery need not last for 500 years. Use long stitches if you want to. Go ahead and pile your embroidery up off the surface of the canvas or cloth. If the piece only survives for 25 years, these are 25 years of pleasure.
- Collect stitches from books, magazines and other stitchers. The more you know and can do well, the more fun designing will be.
- Be aware, not only of the positive shapes of your designs, but of the negative shapes that the background forms. A design of two apples will have spaces between and around them. These "negative" spaces should have pleasing shapes. One of Jacqueline's loveliest embroideries had only the negative shapes stitched. The effect was textured, silhouetted, and rich.
- After the slide lecture was finished, my head felt stuffed with new ideas and techniques. We'll explore more of them another week.



By MARY KAY DAVIS

Consumer mailbag

Concern recycles with garage sale

I do my best to recycle my old newspapers, bottles and cans but each spring I seem to have heaps of items I don't want anymore. I almost feel guilty after spring cleaning because of all the things I must throw away. Any suggestions for disposal of usable discards?

D.N., Bloomfield Township

Recycling in its truest definition simply means to use something a second time. Items may be transformed into new products in a manner that may lose the original identity, as in making building insulation out of newspapers, or they may be recycled in their original form to be used for a new purpose, such as using baby food jars to store buttons or nails.

So keeping this definition of recycling in mind you can see that many options to recycle are open to the individual.

Another example of recycling is seen often this time of the year. This is the rummage or garage sale. This method turns any usable discards you may have into extra cash for you or operating funds for any number of charitable organizations.

Concern, Inc. Detroit offers many free services to the community including environmental teach-ins in schools, literature on ecology, a resource file for students and a speakers bureau. To help raise funds to support these services, Concern holds an annual benefit garage sale. This year the sale will be held on Friday, May 20. Items donated to Concern will entitle you to a tax deductible receipt.

Remember, one man's trash is another man's treasure. For further information on sale location and hours contact the Concern, Inc., Detroit office, 679-1333.

Members of Concern will be recycling their own pots and pans, furnishings, knick knacks and other belongings this weekend. The sale starts tomorrow (Friday). Look for signs in the Maple and Inkster area to find out where to go.

HOME clubs help parents

Because home is our most important environment, learning to be more effective at managing, and coping with everyday problems of family life is the primary concern of many parents.

HOME clubs are designed to provide parents of preschool children with basic information helpful in achieving a better quality of family life. The primary ingredients needed for a club are a small group of interested parents, a packet of discussion and activity material and enthusiasm for sharing and learning.

The program is a free service offered by the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service. For more information on how to join a HOME Club, call the service, 858-0885.

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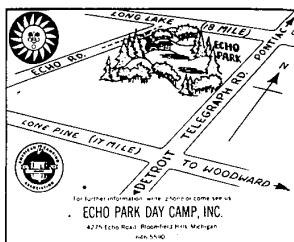
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