

Those busy needles still point toward the next project

By LORRAINE McCLISH

Linda Berlin believes that a lot of the people who are doing needlepoint these days do it because it's a relaxing hobby. "They go into it almost like one would go into therapy. It releases tension and they are still creating something useful," she said.

"Or it's an addiction," said her partner Laurie Brodie. "They can't wait to get started on the next piece, if they

aren't already working on three or four at a time."

The two worked together for a long while before they opened up shop with Accents in Needlepoint, at 28594 Orchard Lake Rd., in Farmington Hills, and then found themselves with pretty much of a ready-made clientele, because of the craft's popularity.

"Needlepoint has been with us for centuries," Ms. Berlin said, "but somewhere along the line women got tired of the flat look, the kind you see on tapestries in museums."

"Now 12 different stitches are considered the basics."

And with what now is known as "creative needlepoint," Ms. Brodie added, "If 100 women purchased the same (design on) canvas, they'd turn out what looked like 100 different pieces."

The difference would come from using different colors, stitches, and fiber textures; all available in velvets, metallics, cottons and wools.

ALONG WITH THE new stitches and fibers came the artists — "millions of them, I think," said Ms. Berlin, who are designing specifically for needlepoint canvases. The designs run from the very traditional to contemporary graffiti.

The designs decorate everything from key cases to aprons; from book covers to hand bags.

Ready-made wrap-around skirts are among the newest items, with canvas pockets, or maybe a vertical gore, ready to be filled in by the needlepointer.

Ms. Brodie pointed out a canvas designed to be cut and sewed for covering a music box.

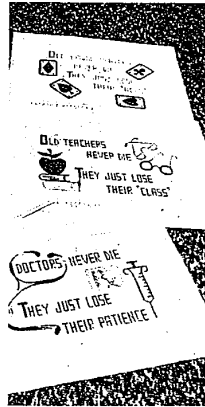
A sort of mix-and-match method is available so that an individual's career, or favorite sport or hobby can be combined with a name for personalizing an item.

"Needpoint isn't confined to little old ladies anymore," Ms. Berlin said. "We have a lot of college kids and a lot of new homemakers who are decorating with needlepoint now. And this past summer we gave one very successful class for kids."

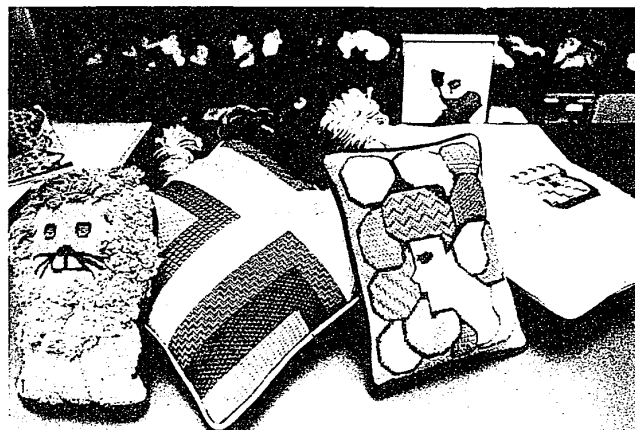
Each class is three sessions, where participants complete one sampler of their choice.

The sampler includes 12 blocks, each containing one of the 12 basic stitches.

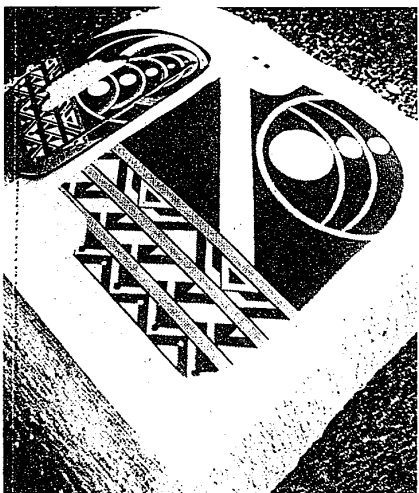
"This is for the beginner," Ms. Brodie said. "We start with how to thread the needle, and the students wind up with one completed ready-to-be-used piece."



The owners of Accents in Needlepoint (top) admit their shop caters to addicts of the hobby. Here (left) Linda Berlin and partner Laurie Brodie try out wrap around skirts with needlepoint inserts. The skirts come in one size which fits all. They are made from canvas and have an elastic waistband. Handbags can be needlepointed, too. This bag (lower left) has a matching geometric print handle which comes with the kit. Beginners try their hand at one of the projects pictured at the upper right. Each of those projects contains a block of 12 basic stitches. The friendly looking lion is a cover for a music box. For those who like a little graffiti with their hobby, the shop carries kits with such sayings as "Old football players never die, they just need more time outs."



Staff photos by Randy Borst



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