

# Needleworkers gain new status as artists

The needlework scene is slowly changing. No longer are all students content with being "needlepointers" or "crewelers" or "quilts." These needle skills are interrelated and, now that many stitchers have sampled more than one craft, they want to learn new ways to integrate their skills.

Europe, especially England, is far ahead of us here. Schools of fine arts include needlework in their curricula. Individual skills are taught, not as separate entities, but as parts of a much larger whole with infinite variations.

Needleworkers are beginning to realize that they need to learn composition, color theory, drawing and many of the skills taught at schools of art.

But schools of art are not very interested in needleworkers. "What's in your portfolio?" they ask. "Three chair seats and a quilt." "Oh my God, a little old lady in tenies."

PART OF THE image problem for American needlecraft may go back to its history. Needlework, unlike painting and sculpture, was a strictly feminine occupation. Women were considered — for that matter, considered themselves — second-class citizens. Not surprisingly, their work was also considered second-class, no matter how skilled or inspired. "Just a little thing I whipped up" was how it was offered and how it was received.

Look at what's happened to quilts. They lay on beds and moldered in trunks for years until the rise of feminine awareness. Now they hang in museums and are hot collector's items. Betty Friedan would collapse if she were accused of upgrading needlework. It's a subject feminists avoid. But upgraded, it is.



the lively needle

Mary Kay Davis

WHERE DO YOU learn what you need to know in order to move forward? Art schools will teach you to sculpt and paint. Many of their skills will translate to needlework, but more won't.

Painting, for instance, focuses upon the manipulation of color. "Add a touch more yellow" — "mix in a little of that burnt umber." We who work with commercially available fibers do not have that luxury. We have to learn to control the color we have, not turn it into the color we would like.

You could go to England and study at Goldsmith's or another school. But your family life might suffer and your bank account surely would. Courses of Design and Color theory for Needleworkers are beginning to pop up here and there. They fill rapidly. Their excellence, or lack of same, depends upon the skill and talent of their teacher. This is up to the consumer to evaluate. No academic awards or degrees are given in this country to reward excellence in needle artistry.

What we need is a department and a teaching faculty skilled in needle arts in an institute of higher learning. If you know the dean of such a school, make a pitch. Somebody's got to start somewhere.

## Learn to teach the handicapped

The fourth annual Project Early conference for parents, teachers, social workers and medical personnel concerned with handicapped young children will be held 9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 2, at Meadow Brook Hall on the Oakland University Campus in Rochester.

Conferences will have a choice of two keynote addresses and two of 10 break-out sessions, each focusing on a topic in relationship to young children who have emotional impairments or learning disabilities. A puppet demonstration which can be used with handicapped and non-handicapped children to help them understand "handicappedness" will be presented by Don Place, director of the Oakland Schools Special Education Department.

"Learning Disability in the Early Years" will be the subject of the keynote address by Dr. Corrine E. Kass, Professor of Special Education at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. Dr. Kass was funding coordinator for teacher training programs in Learning Disabilities at the U.S. Office of Education in Washington, D.C., and a Professor of Special Education at the University of Arizona.

"How Knowledge of Child Development Can Help the Special Education Teacher" will be Dr. Doris

Sponseller's keynote topic. Sponseller, Associate Dean of the School of Human and Educational Services and Co-Director of Project Early, is currently on leave from Oakland University working in Lansing with the Michigan League for Human Services to study day-care services under a grant from the National Institute of Science.

Breakout session topics will deal with working with hearing impaired children, integrating creative movement with developmental stages, operating special education programs in public schools, changing legislation and its effects on programs for young handicapped children. Additional topics will include how it feels to be handicapped, practical methods to mainstream children into non-handicapped classrooms, theories and art activities for different developmental stages, and practical applications for facilitating language.

Presenters of the breakout topics are on the staff of nursery schools, county, community and local school districts in the tri-county area and from the university.

Deadline for conference registration is Friday, Feb. 1. Contact the OU conference department, 377-3272.

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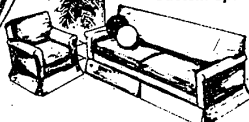
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### volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of volunteer opportunities. Further information about these and other volunteer needs at over 200 agencies may be obtained by calling the bureau at 642-7272. Any non-profit organization needing assistance may also call the bureau.

CLERICAL — Brush up on your office skills by accepting this volunteer job with the Oakland County department of social services in Royal Oak. Duties include completing and mailing forms, filing, answering the phone and maintaining supplies. Hours are flexible.

FRIENDLY VISITOR — Georgian Bloomfield Nursing Home in Bloomfield Hills is currently recruiting volunteers to visit patients on a regular basis. Friendly visitors may choose to be

come involved in craft programs, assisting with activities, or escorting patients, but are primarily needed to listen and talk with residents. Hours are flexible.

TUTORS — If you enjoy working with young children, Frost Elementary School in Pontiac has a place for you. Volunteers are needed to work with kindergarten children on a one-to-one basis to teach basic concepts of shapes, colors, letters, numbers, etc. Time commitment is one morning a week.

TV LADY PROGRAM — Men and women with a concern for the effects of television on children are needed by the Committee for Children TV, Birmingham. Volunteers will meet as a committee to develop a "fun" program to make children aware of the role television plays in their lives. The volunteers will then present the program in area elementary schools.

### Is this you?

Participating in a national study, the University of Minnesota is seeking persons 27-64 years of age who have had only one heart attack in the last five years.

Those who answer the description may call the university collect. The number is (612) 376-4494.

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### Pat Bordman

### There's nothing like a secret message

There is nothing a child likes better than telling secrets. Usually nothing earthshaking is revealed in these exchanges, yet the magic of talking sotto voce seems to give the teller a special feeling.

The telling of secrets imparts an identity, a certain separateness, a role elevated over others. There is power in deciding who should know, who should hear, who should share the secret.

Sometime whispering gives greater meaning and a larger importance to what is being whispered. The whisperer also invariably garners the undivided attention to the listener.

Perhaps even more fun is the secret relayed without even a whisper. To make this time in their lives

have real excitement, send youngsters concealed secrets and teach them the art of message cryptography.

On a plain sheet of paper write a message. Use a thin brush as the writing instrument. For invisible ink, dissolve one teaspoon sugar, or salt or baking soda in two teaspoons water or vinegar or lemon juice.

Allow the paper to dry. To read, hold the paper near a source of heat such as a light bulb. (Light bulbs can be very hot, so caution your child and supervise the reading.)

When the paper is warm, the writing will turn brown and the secret will have been passed on soundlessly. Shhhh!

### Polish dance troupe plans Madonna show

The Galleja Song and Dance Ensemble will offer a program of Polish folk songs and dances at Madonna College, Livonia, at 3 p.m. on Sunday as part of a "Dance Showcase" offered by the college during the winter term.

Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for students and senior citizens. (313) 591-5124.

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