

Local artist-author inspires revival of stitchery as art

Few art forms have come as far in recent years as stitchery. And one of those largely responsible for the vastly increased dimensions of what is now considered art is Carolyn Hall of Beverly Hills.

Not only is Mrs. Hall as skilled with the needle and the sewing machine as any around, she is also a photographer and writer of no small talent.

All of these skills together are in many ways responsible for the national stitchery exhibition that opens at the Pontiac Art Center Saturday, April 22.

The artists in the invitational were all chosen from Mrs. Hall's book "Stitched and Stuffed Art," published by Doubleday & Co., 1974.

She is now clearing away the final details on a second book, "Machine-Sewn Crafts," due out next year.

In conjunction with the exhibit in Pontiac, Mrs. Hall will give two workshops at the center, "Dimension," 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. April 26 and "Surface Design" 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. May 3.

"Dimension" will be concerned with techniques used in trapunto, quilting and soft sculpture. The second course will include demonstration of machine embroidery, couching and decorative stitches. Slides will be shown in both workshops. There is a limit for both classes, and those who wish to register should call the Pontiac Art Center.

IN ADDITION TO Mrs. Hall, one of the artists who will have work in the show is her daughter, Claudia. Mother and daughter worked together on the first book just as they have for many years on stitchery projects, separately and together.

Claudia, a graduate of Groves High School, completed her BFA from Denison University of Ohio and is taking graduate work in design at the University of Michigan. She has combined her interests in stitchery, soft sculpture and photography in a series that will be in the Pontiac exhibit.

Each piece in the series is contained within a sculpted, fabric-covered box. "Most of these, she said, "relate to my experiences, and I like working within a box because it is a small environment."

To see what is inside, the viewer may look through a Kodolith, a photography process in which the negative

becomes a positive transparency. In others, there may be only small peep holes to allow a view of the box's interior. Four months study in England inspired some of the scenes like an impression created by a relief vessel in London.

Mrs. Hall, who will probably have four or five of her own things in the exhibit, hopes to finish a reassembled piece that could be either a quilt or wall hanging. The artist designed it with diagonal stripes of materials against a beige background. Then the pieces were cut and reassembled as a pattern would put together a collage.

OTHER STITCHERY ARTISTS represented in the April exhibit will be Haruno Iwashiro, Jo Ann Alber, Jean Battles, Carlos Cobos, Pat Maloney, Doug Peterson, Dee Burbee, Sue Hegenbarth, Susan Aaron Taylor and Mary Jane Mazuchowski.

While most are from outside, Peterson is from Oakland University and Ms. Taylor lives in Livonia. Ms. Hegenbarth of Orchard Lake is president of the Pontiac Art Center board.

The Hall home in Beverly Hills is like a private exhibition area to showcase the talented mother and daughter artists in the family.

Claudia said she finished high school early so she could help her mother on the first book. To pass the time in the evening, she would make jewelry, porcelain with gold and porcelain with stoneware pendants, which she sold at several Ann Arbor art fairs.

She once entered two pieces of her stitchery in Michigan State Fair art competition—one in the professional category, another in the amateur because she couldn't decide which was appropriate. She won a prize for each.

The lifeseize and lifelike grandmother who sits in a rocking chair holding her cat is stuffed sculpture—the work of Mrs. Hall. A large red and orange wall hanging in the living room that has been exhibited many times is Mrs. Hall's. The medieval motif one is the entryway was done by her daughter.

A REAL LOOKING sewing machine, circa 1920, stands in a small hallway leading to Mrs. Hall's studio.



Jean Battles-Irvin of Wilmington, Del., is the creator of this work which will be in the stitchery invitational.

but it is soft sculpture, not metal, Mrs. Hall's work.

As evidenced in the stitchery work in the home, stitchery and soft sculpture are limited only by the imagination of the artist. While some of the work may have roots in folk art, just as much is totally contemporary in

approach. And in the hands of a pro, almost anything that can be made, can be duplicated in fabric and stitchery.

The exhibition at the Pontiac Art Center will run through May 6. Those who wish to register for the workshops may contact the center by phone, 333-7847 or write to the Pontiac Art Center, 47 Williams, Pontiac 48053.

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