



Welcome to another edition of Vetty Creations' NeedleNews. In this issue you'll find me waxing lyrical about all the wonderful embroidery I saw on my recent trip to North America! So get yourself a cuppa, sit back and do some armchair travelling with me!

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Yvette Stanton

office re-opened for business!

Thanks for your patience and understanding when our office was closed in June and July. My sincere apologies to those of you whom this inconvenienced.

mountmellick book out of print

Regrettably, we have to inform you that our book "Mountmellick Embroidery: Inspired by Nature" is now out of print worldwide, and we have no stock remaining. If you are still wanting a copy, if you are quick you may be able to find a retailer that still has stock and can send it to you via mail order.

We still intend to keep full stock of Mountmellick embroidery supplies, continue expanding our range of kits and patterns, and teaching Mountmellick classes.

When the time is right, we plan to revise and re-issue the book. If you have any comments, improvements or corrections to suggest, please forward them to us. Any way we can make the book better is appreciated.

pricing changes

As of the beginning of September, Australia Post increased prices for their Parcel Post service. At this stage we have chosen to absorb these extra charges. There is however, a small price increase for our needles.

new website address

We have recently changed the hosting and address of our website. You can now find it at the easy to remember address of www.vettycreations.com.au

Our new site contains no extraneous advertising and pop-ups that the previous one had. We invite you to visit the new site and bookmark it for future reference!

embroidery on my travels

At the end of June my family and I flew to America for a holiday, and a bit of research for me. My first embroidery stop was Deerfield, Massachusetts, the home of Deerfield Blue and White embroidery. As I mentioned in the last edition of NeedleNews, I had written an article on Deerfield embroidery for PieceWork magazine in the US. However, this was the first time I actually got to see some of the work in real life.

At the Memorial Hall Museum, there was a display of a variety of Deerfield embroidery. It was beautiful work, and interesting to see how the scale of the embroidery changed with the scale of the article. The portiere and bed hanging (large works) had large scale stitching, with coarse thread similar in thickness to Perle 3 cotton. There was a selection of 5 small doilies which used very fine thread, approximately the thickness of one strand of 6 stranded embroidery floss.

It was also interesting to note that the embroideries did use white thread. Not long ago I read an article that had said the blue (of Deerfield Blue and White) referred to the embroidery threads, and the white referred to the fabric. As I observed, this is not so. Large sections of the embroidery were worked in white thread.

It was great to see the creative use of stitches and colour – not all Blue and White embroidery was exclusively blue and white. Some pieces used one or two additional colours, or a whole range of colours.

The town of Deerfield is an historic town, and many of the houses have been restored, showing off the grandeur of the local style of architecture. Some of the house interiors have been recreated from earlier times, and are open to the public for viewing.

We toured the Frary House, and saw a glimpse of the way some of its former inhabitants lived. It was here that I saw my very first old-style candlewick quilt. We were in one of the bedrooms looking at some of the framed articles on the wall, and I turned around to look at the bed. On the bed was an unusual spread, in white on white, with lines of bobbly stitching. "That's real candlewicking...!" I said in wonder. "Can I photograph it?" "No," came the reply. So I contented myself with closely observing it and was also permitted to look at the back of it.

Modern candlewicking usually consists mostly of patterns made up of colonial knots and often uses quite fine thread. Old style candlewicking is worked with cotton roving, a lightly twisted, thick, cotton thread that was often used as candlewicks. A number of threads were used together, and the design was running stitched. The stitches were only very short on the back of the fabric, with most of the thread at the front. They were loosely worked so that the thread sat up off the front of the fabric, forming little bobbles. These bobbles could be left as is, or cut to form little tufts, known as tufting. Sometimes combined with stitches such as satin and stem, the designs were very textured and high relief.

While in America, I wanted to visit at least one embroidery shop, and our path took us past the door of *The Wooden Needle* in Waterbury, Vermont. I spent a delightful time there with the owner, Kathy Kovacs, discussing needlework and having a look over the lovely products that she had for sale in her shop. Amazingly my two year old (with lots of close observation and guidance from Daddy) kept her hands to herself. She and my five year old had fun looking through the drawers of specialty buttons, one of which was even an Australian flag!

My next embroidery stop was the Ukrainian Museum in New York. I had arranged to spend two days here, looking at the merezhka poltav's'ka in their magnificent collection. Lubow Wolynetz, the Curator of Folk Art at the museum generously shared her time and her knowledge with me. I spent hours pouring over the embroideries, closely studying them, taking many notes, and turning them over to the back to get a better understanding of the techniques used. I counted threads to see how fine the homewoven fabrics were: very fine – 38 threads per inch was the highest I counted. Most of the articles I saw were shirts from the Poltava region in eastern Ukraine, dating from the 1920s and 30s. They were magnificent! Lubow also showed me her photo albums showing the many images she has taken on her regular trips back to the museums in Ukraine. What a wealth of knowledge and creativity!

The museum also had an exhibition called *The Tree of Life, The Sun, The Goddess: Symbolic Motifs in Ukrainian Folk Art* featuring embroidered folk costume, pysanky

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(painted eggs), embroidered rushnyky (ritual towels), woodwork, kilims, ceramics, and ceremonial bread. A beautiful catalogue accompanies the exhibition.

While in New York, my final and unexpected embroidery stop was the American Museum of Folk Art, next door to the Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition *White on White (and a little gray)* featured amongst other things, about 5 candlewick embroidery quilts. WOW! These were hung on the wall so I couldn't look at the back of them, but I was able to closely study the fronts of them. The notes accompanying each exhibit were very enlightening. Having never seen real candlewicking before the trip, I was suddenly being exposed to some very magnificent examples. They were all very different to each other, some having a range of stitches, and others being simply designs worked in lines of tufting – very much foreshadowing the later craze for chenille bedspreads. I'm definitely going to research more about this striking style of embroidery.

So, what did I learn? SO, SO much! Some things you can only learn by observing the real thing. I found this when I went to Ireland to research Mountmellick embroidery too. You can also learn by observing what it might otherwise take months or years (or never!) to pick up from books. I realise that we can't all travel, but make sure you make use of your local museums, and your guild collections. They are such a valuable resource. Places like the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney also have excellent collections of decorative arts, including textiles. If you want to see something particular at any of these places, make sure you make an appointment well beforehand with the appropriate curator, stating very clearly what it is that you are interested in.

It never ceases to amaze me how kind and generous museum curators and embroidery people are. It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm and passion with which people pass on their knowledge, knowing that it should be shared, not kept to oneself. What a nice bunch of people embroiderers are!

I couldn't wait to get back home and start putting all my newly acquired knowledge into my merezhka book! But it had to wait, as we still had other places to visit, such as a relaxing stopover in Tahiti on the way home!

contacting Vetty Creations

PO box 1723 westfield hornsby nsw 1635 australia

ph / fax 61 2 9477 5214 • abn 60 564 763 965

yvette@vettycreations.com.au

www.vettycreations.com.au

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