

Possum News

The Quarterly Newsletter for Kurrara Designs



January 2016: Issue #1

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Introduction to Possum News

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to my new Kurrara Designs Newsletter: Possum News

One of my new year's resolutions for 2016 (other than the usual move more, eat less) was to start up a short newsletter to include sewing and craft information which I can share with you. I am endeavouring to have enough material to fill a newsletter every three months and I hope you will find it enjoyable and useful.

The aim of the newsletter is to provide you with information on upcoming workshops, tips and online tutorials on the Kurrara Designs website and to let you know of any new techniques or products out there which may be of interest to you, as a stitcher or crafter. I'll also be sharing some of my textile trials and tribulations with you, which I hope might inspire you to try out some new projects, or help you if you are stuck on something.

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For those of you who love all things fabric and paper, I'll keep you posted through the year on what is coming up and I'm really pleased to have any feedback from you, such as anything in particular that you would like to learn more about. Perhaps it's a short project for an online tutorial or a sewing tip, or something you'd like to learn in more depth and have some hands-on fun with in a workshop.

My very best wishes to you all for the coming year – I hope it will be one which brings you lots of creative fulfilment and happiness.

Tina Whiteley

The Story of the Possum

Several people have asked me why I've got a little possum for my logo, so I thought this was a good time to explain the significance. When my husband, Ned and I first came to Australia, we lived on the Naval Base at HMAS Cerberus and we helped to foster orphaned possums. This all came about one day, after we found a baby ringtail possum wandering across the road, outside Frankston station. We scooped him up and took him to Mt Eliza vet and we were put in touch with a lovely lady, who has since become a good friend and she got us started as foster carers for these delightful little creatures. All up,

we fostered around 15 - 20 possums and managed to reassimilate most of them back into the wild. When we moved into our house in Red Hill, we discovered there were possums in the trees around us and we later learned that the word "Kurrara" was aboriginal for "place frequented by possums"- according to

an old article in the Age newspaper. We named our house Kurrara and later, when I began my textile business, Kurrara Designs was the first thing I thought of for a name and that's why there is a little ringtail possum as my logo. So Possum News was the obvious choice for our newsletter!

Playing with Purpose

Another of my new year's resolutions is to spend more time in the studio, experimenting with various forms of surface design on paper and fabric. I have lots of ideas working their way from my head to my hands, from dyeing, to stamping, printing, to gelli plating. My biggest challenge is finding enough time for experimental textile work and yet that is one of the most important aspects of any textile art practice, or indeed any creative pursuit. I am sure I am not alone in this. Mostly I have specific work-related tasks I want to achieve during any given week and then, by the end of the week, my energy is depleted and I'm itching to empty my head of all serious thoughts and do something for fun.

Whatever you love to do, be it cooking, painting, sewing or gardening, it is so nice to be able to take time out to do it just as a

"play session". I call this time a "play day with purpose", as it gives you a free rein to just create without any pressure or expectation of an outcome. The



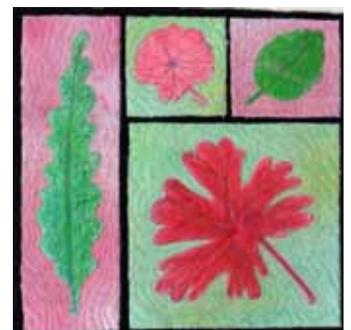
main purpose of this time is to help you relax and recharge your batteries. It helps you enjoy being in the moment of what you are doing. During these times, you're not worried about who will be judging you or what other things you have to do and you're not tied to achieving a specific result. It's something just for you. The other main purpose is to free yourself of any creative blocks or limitations and very often you will have some amazing ideas that lead you to all sorts of new creative heights. So it is a very im-

portant little gift you can give yourself from time to time.

This is the time to ask yourself the question, "what if I tried this...?" as this is where most of your best ideas will stem from. This is where the experimentation happens and subsequently the learning and the developing and also the excitement. Ideally, you don't get frustrated if it doesn't work, as there was no expectation at the outset, just a curiosity as to what happens - which you either like or don't like. If you don't like it, don't do it again, if you like it, work on it more to see where you can take it.

Sitting and sketching or doodling is a great way to

relax your mind and also come up with new ideas, which you can develop. These days if you go into any bookshop or craft outlet, such as Riot Art or Kaisercraft, you can find a number of zentangle or adult colouring books and lovely water colour pencils to go with them. Some of the patterns in these books would work well on fabric, so you could have fun experimenting with different stitches, either by hand or with the sewing machine.



Experimental Adventures with Free Machine Embroidery - Getting Started

As an example of playing with purpose, many, many years ago, I was intrigued and scared by free mo-

tion or free machine embroidery. I'd seen people do it and the thought of even changing the foot, let alone tinkering with

the bobbin tension made me come out in a cold sweat. For a long time, I thought, I'd never be able to do it and avoided trying.

Then one afternoon, back in the UK, I decided I would give myself permission to have a go. I had the whole afternoon to play and thought, "what's the worst thing that can happen - a needle breaks, I go crossed-eyed trying to keep up with the needle, the fabric ends up as a nest of tangled threads and the things I sew look awful. No one will know, so what does it matter?"

I had an old Toyota machine which didn't even have an embroidery foot on it, so I just made do with the needle. I had a plate which went over the feed dogs and some plain fabric and away I went.

I remember that I started by sewing a tree in black cotton. I did a rough drawing first and followed the lines as best I could with the needle. I followed the lines stitching over my wobbly drawing of a very ugly mermaid with a deformed tail, then sewed out lots of squiggles, circles and spirals. I even got a bit adventurous and tried a free-hand dog. After that I can't remember exactly what I did, but I do remember having a lot of fun doing it. As I got more involved in it, it really wasn't about the

quality of the sewing, it was more about enjoying the process and by the time I was really getting into it, about four hours had gone by and I had hardly noticed the time passing.

It took a long time until I was really comfortable doing free machine embroidery and felt confident enough to start making things. I took lessons, practised and experimented with the technique over time, but if I hadn't taken the opportunity to have a go on that first day, I might never have known how much I loved it.

Following on from there a few years ago, I was playing with some die cut fabrics and then rather than discard the waste bits, I wondered what I could do with them and played around with some quilting ideas and ended up making a reverse appliqué quilted brush holder.

Most recently, I wondered what if I could get a free machine embroidered look that can easily be replicated and that prompted me to have a play with my MBX digital embroidery software. If you've had a chance to have a look at the Christmas Bauble tutorial on the website, you'll see this project was originally designed for free machine embroidery. Since posting it, I've now designed

these baubles to be sewn out on an embroidery machine much more quickly and each one will be identical, so that has now got me thinking of other ways I can digitise free machine embroidered designs.

Little did I know when I started out, that I would be combining comput-

ers and sewing. What a world of possibilities that has opened up – however, that's a whole other story! In short, these early free machine embroidery play days, have led me down a number of really enjoyable paths and hopefully a bit of play and experimentation will do the same for you.



Workshop News

Talking of play and experimentation, I have some Procion MX Dyeing (Fibre Reactive Dyes) workshops planned for the next three months, for anyone who is interested in dyeing their own fabrics for quilting or sewing projects. Procion dyes are easy to use, synthetic dyes that will give you an almost infinite colour palette, depending on how you mix your colours and they can be used on silk and any cellulose fabric, such as cotton, linen and rayon.

There are 3 workshops, each of which will explore different aspects of Fibre Reactive dyeing and there will be plenty of opportu-

nity in each one to have a play with colour and colour mixing.

The first workshop will be covering the basics for beginners and is designed to create a set of 24 fabrics that will all co-ordinate together in 12 plain and 12 shibori-style colourways.

The second workshop will focus on mixing shades, tints and tones, controlling complementary mixes and using black dye – ideal for those of you with some experience of dyeing.

The final workshop is an experimental day in which a number of different techniques will be

explored, including rainbow dyeing, spiral dyeing, ice dyeing and low-water immersion dyeing.

By the end of the three workshops you should have enough colour mixing knowledge to dye whatever colour you need and hopefully have

over 50 new colourful fat quarters in your stash to keep you going for the rest of the year – depending on how many projects you can fit in between now and next Christmas!

Each workshop is a stand-alone one, so you can choose if you want

to do just one or several days. These workshops won't be repeated until next year, so if you'd like to come along, please let me know within the next few weeks and I can send you an enrolment form and materials list, as there is a little bit of (easy!) fabric preparation to be done at home for the first workshop.

I will also be running two more natural dyeing weekend workshops in April, with a follow-up advanced 2-day work-



shop, where we will be making a small quilted stitched project, using your eco-printed fabrics and plant dyed threads. Details of this workshop are on the website and I'll be sending out more information on these early next month.



Diary of Workshop Events January – May 2016

Saturday, 30th January, 2016

Introduction to Fibre Reactive Dyes - 1 day workshop: Beginners

Saturday, 20th February, 2016

Learning to Control Fibre Reactive Dyes - 1 day workshop: Intermediate to Advanced

Saturday, 5th March, 2016

Playday with Purpose – Experimental Techniques with Fibre Reactive Dyes - 1 day workshop: Intermediate to Advanced

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd April, 2016 and Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th April, 2016

Natural Dyeing with Plants - 2 day workshop: Beginners

Saturday 30th April and Saturday, 7th May 2016

Natural Dyeing with Plants - 2 day workshop: Advanced

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries on the attached info and if I can help with any general sewing/dyeing queries, I am always very happy to do so.

Have fun creating and I'll leave you with a little colour joke - it's not mine, but that of Michael Wilcox from the School of Colour and it was during one of his talks, "Blue and Yellow don't make Green", that I had my light bulb moment about colour mixing.

A man goes to see his doctor, because he is suffering from constipation and needs help. The doctor asks him about his diet. He says, "I'm on the new billiard ball diet". "What's that?" asks the doctor. The man replies, "Well, I eat 2 brown balls for breakfast. I have a black one for morning and afternoon tea. Mostly, I have a blue and yellow ball for lunch and then three red ones for dinner, followed by a pink one for supper." The doctor smiles and says "I know exactly what your problem is; you're not eating enough greens!"