

Possum News

The Newsletter for Kurrara Designs



February 2019: Issue #6

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Introduction to Possum News

Hi Everyone

I wish you all the best for the coming year, which is already galloping by.

I'm pleased to say that we're back up and running with the newsletter after a bit of an absence, so welcome to this edition!

At the moment, I'm dealing with the challenge of working with a "trigger thumb", which sounds ridiculous, but is quite restricting for some types of textile work, as my right thumb is in a splint most of the time. On the up side, it has been a good opportunity to get back to the newsletter, as I can still type and create some tutorials from previously completed projects, which will be posted on the Kurrara Designs website over the coming months.

At the end of last year, I went to see the Escher X Nendo Between Two Worlds exhibition and thought I'd report back on that for you in this edition. It was an interesting and inspiring experience and sparked a few ideas that I would like to share, both briefly in the newsletter and also in a more detailed and step by step Textile Talk on the website. If you haven't already been to this exhibition, I encourage you to book some tickets today and go and see it. It will simultaneously amaze, amuse and confound you. As a taster, I've included a few little Escher-related teasers in this edition for you too!

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Talking of exhibitions, coming soon is the Frankston Foreshore Waterfront Festival, with an exhibition of work by artists from the Peninsula Arts Society, at the Mechanics Hall in Frankston. There will be accompanying work on display and

for sale by local artisanal groups, who will also be demonstrating their skills and taking enquiries. All upcoming exhibition details are listed at the end of this newsletter.

During the not too hot days I've loved being out in the garden, dyeing more fabric with natural plant dyes and I'll be sharing that with you in this edition and on the website, in a new Textile Talk. As well as natural dyeing, I've also had great fun playing with colours using my Procion MX dyes and I've got some new workshops planned as a result of those sessions, along with some new machine embroidery workshops. I've included a list of all the scheduled 2019 workshops at the end of the newsletter and if there is anything of interest to you, please contact me for more details.

Also in this edition, there's a very quick and easy little notebook project for you, if you like papercrafting. It's designed to accompany the notebook pouch sewing tutorial, which is now on the website, if you'd like to make one for yourself or as a gift.

Hope you enjoy reading.

Tina

Exhibition Review - Escher x Nendo Between Two Worlds

This review is a summary of my impressions from my recent visit to the above exhibition. Many of Escher's prints and Nendo's installations are shown on the NGV website, ([link below](#)) with further explanations and information if you want to find out more about the artworks on display. As the images are strictly subject to copyright, I've referred to several examples by name so you can find them [via this link](#).

I have admired the work of Dutch artist M.C. Escher for many years, but have never fully understood his work until now. Having seen this extensive exhibition of Escher's work at the NGV, presented in conjunction with the work of Japanese artist and designer, Oki Sato, it all started to make sense to me.

Nendo

Designer Oki Sato is the founder and principal designer of the Nendo studio in Tokyo. Nendo, meaning clay in Japanese, is his space for creating designs or installations that can be manipulated in such a way as to help

people have that "aha" moment and understand what they are seeing or experiencing at any given time. For this exhibition he has cleverly used the recognisable motif of a house to help us navigate the mind of Escher. Nendo makes reference to the building blocks of experience of Escher's earlier years, through to the culmination of his later concept art pieces which delve into the world of optical illusion or trompe l'oeil.

Nendo's house motif represents space, (a concept Escher explores repeatedly), however it changes form throughout the exhibition. Presenting at

first as a series of regular shaped solid blocks, it then transforms into mirrors and steel rods, playing with light, reflections and perspective to echo the themes of Escher's work.

For example, between the galleries, the Zooming House appears to continue forever down a corridor, but the perspective is in fact an illusion. The height literally decreases, so you'd get stuck if you tried to follow it to its end! Nendo's steel rods, in one of the galleries, act as the frames or the walls for Escher's artwork. From one angle they appear disjointed and placed randomly in

space and, from another angle, they come together beautifully to form the shape of a house.

Escher and Nendo have different approaches to creating art. The former uses a two dimensional medium to create the illusion of a 3D world and the latter uses 3D structures to create a series of two dimensional experiences. The house metaphor works well to showcase Escher's art and is a very fitting motif considering both artists studied architecture!

M. C. Escher (1898 – 1972)

The work of artist, Maurits Cornelis Escher definitely ‘messes with your head’ on many levels, but I love that, as it really makes you consider what he is actually saying. His work is a series of problems or issues for us to grapple with; they are like puzzles waiting to be solved. He was described by art historian Albert Flocon as a “thinking artist”, akin to Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Durer. His prints and drawings delve not only into the constraints of the physical laws and mechanisms of the natural world, but also into the more unrestrained workings of the inner or metaphysical world of the mind.

Coupled with the intellectual thinking behind his work, is the immense skill with which he executes it. The beauty he achieves with his mark-making is a joy to behold! As a textile artist, I particularly loved some of his early wood cuts and engravings (prints which ironically he later dismissed as merely practice exercises of little value). They are full of so many beautiful textures made from marks, sometimes etched boldly and deeply, to give thick dramatic white lines and other times etched so finely and delicately, as if merely brushed with a feather.

His earlier outward-looking portraits and landscapes include linocuts and woodcuts that depict his love for his family and the simplicity and beauty of the natural world, particularly the countryside of Italy where he lived for many years with his wife and children. His later inward-looking work becomes more complex, to the point of obsession when he is focussing on the concepts of infinity, space and dimension. These works are the ones where he is constantly tricking us into seeing something which is seemingly plausible, but is in fact impossible, such as the **Still Life and Street (March 1937)**, which shows a street scene extending from a table top full of books and other objects, in a seamless continuation, as if the two were one and the same.

Escher also loved playing with patterns and shapes, as a result of the visits he made to the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain. This was the start of his fascination with tessellations, or tiles that interlock together with no gaps to form never-ending patterns. The traditional Moorish patterns on the floors, walls and ceilings of the palace, were created with geometric shapes, such as squares, hexagons and triangles, joined together in different configurations and colours.

Escher worked within these regular shape formats, creating his series of tessellated drawings and prints, but also designed his own organic tessellating patterns, using animal, human and imagined shapes. This exhibition shows the progression of his work from simple shape tessellations to those more complex patterns he created for some of his most famous pieces. He manipulates negative and positive spaces, playing with two and three dimensional images, such as his woodcut, **Metamorphosis I (May 1937)**, which shows the progression of a human figure slowly morphing from a flat plane of irregular tessellating shapes, into a series of regular building blocks, to eventually create a 3D townscape of buildings.

Escher called this style of working the “regular division of the plane”. In progressing his explorations of infinity, he corresponded with the mathematician H.S.M. Coxeter, to learn more about dividing circles or hyperbolic planes, exploring the world of non-Euclidean geometry to produce his Circle Limit Series of designs. In these designs we see recurring themes of infinite repetition and multiplication. If you’re into mathematics, here is a link to the [You Tube video](#) where Coxeter explains the process.

In his illusory prints, Escher has successfully merged his logic-based mind and fanciful imagination to create inventive and visionary work. Escher enjoyed playing with all sorts of reflections, from unusual perspectives, using glass and water, to create his make-believe realms, both large and small. Reflection was a device he used to bring real and imagined worlds together.

Within Escher’s inventive work, there are smatterings of various art movements, from Art Nouveau, to Cubism and Surrealism, but his style is truly distinctive and unique. His genius however, was not immediately widely acknowledged.

He had some moderate success in the art world in his earlier life and greatly appealed to mathematicians and scientists, but it was not until the late 60s and 70s that his work struck a universal chord and became more acceptable to the Art Establishment! His later fame brought all sorts of strange enquiries and he reputedly turned down a request to design an album cover for the Rolling Stones. The story goes that he was rather put out when Mick Jagger wrote him a letter addressing him by his first name. Escher apparently told his assistant, “Please tell Mr Jagger that I am not Maurits to him”.

Perhaps one of the most famous works for which Escher is celebrated is his lithograph of an impossible structure "Waterfall" (October 1961), where the water appears to be flowing both up and downhill, giving the illusion of perpetual motion.

This work was inspired by another mathematician, Sir Roger Penrose and his father Lionel. They in turn were inspired by Escher and between them created a 3D version of an impossible triangle and staircase and there is a lovely [YouTube video](#), which goes into more detail about their collaboration.

Depicted alongside Escher's impossible structures are some of his other infinity artworks. He uses the Möbius strip as a symbol for infinity. **Möbius II (1963)** gives us a plausible view of infinite or perpetual motion, whereby a number of ants are walking along a continuous gridded loop without crossing over each other. They can seemingly continue on this path, unhindered, forever. Did I mention "messing with your head" earlier?

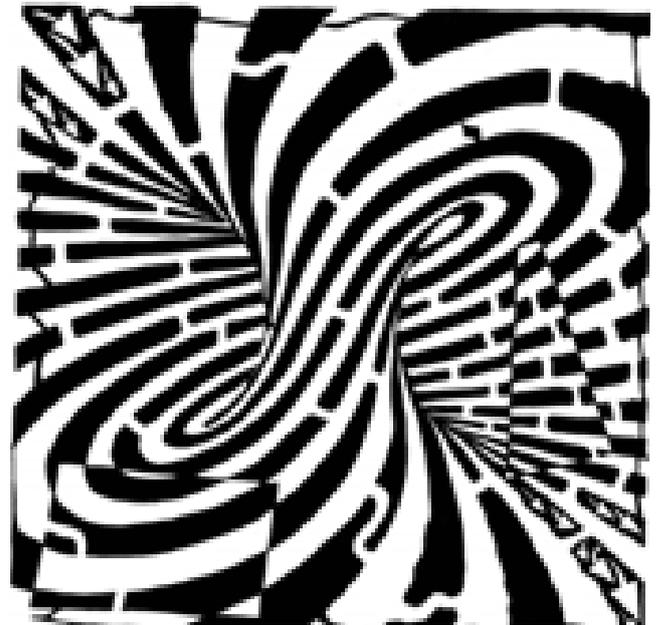
I felt that some of Escher's later prints seemed to depict a rather despairing view of the world, compared to the sense of wonder evident in his early work. For example, in another of Escher's im-

possible structures, **Ascending and Descending (March 1960)**, we see identical hooded figures marching up and down the same staircase, going nowhere, as if on a never-ending treadmill. The scene of disaffected individuals staring into space, or deep in their own contemplation, with no social interaction, is quite prophetic, of our modern times.

However, that said, the overwhelming feelings I had, after viewing all the artworks, were those of sheer delight and enjoyment. I came away thinking, "I must learn more about non-Euclidean geometry!" The added bonus of the Nendo house installations enhanced my viewing pleasure and it was rather refreshing to have a slightly quirky take on the normal gallery experience. I do think that the NGV is so good at staging these larger exhibitions. It is a fun and engaging experience and one that will have you enthralled for a long time afterwards.

Magic Möbius

Following on from the World of Escher, I came across this Möbius maze puzzle on the internet, created by artist Yonatan Frimer and thought it might be an appropriate little teaser to get the brain working. Can you get from the top left of the maze to the bottom right,



travelling along the white paths without crossing into the black ones?

The solution is at the end of this newsletter. No peeking before you start!

If you fancy trying your hand at making your own Möbius strip, take a piece of A4 paper and cut a strip down the length, about 2 inches wide. This cut strip will currently have two sides - a front and a back (if it's the same both sides, colour one side to differentiate). Now pull the two ends together in a circle, but before joining them, give one end a twist, so that the bottom of that edge, meets the top of the other edge and stick them together. In joining the ends you'll see that two sides are now just one side. They have come together to make one continuous loop and you can draw a line or trace your finger along it, so that you never cross over from one side to the other and yet you've covered both sides.

Textile Tessellations

I was inspired by Escher's concept of "division of the plane" using tessellations, as I can relate to working with patterns when creating some of my digitised sewing designs. I often play with repetition, within a bounded area, so I decided to experiment with some tessellations of my own. I started with a 3 inch square of white card and made some tessellated tile shapes. Below are two of the final stitched out digitised designs that resulted from playing with the tessellated shapes.

I really like the simplicity of these cat designs and I doubt I would ever have created them, had I not been

to see the Escher exhibition and been motivated to make my own tessellations. It just goes to show, how valuable it can be, going to see artists' exhibitions in all disciplines, as you never know how and when divine inspiration will arrive and open up a whole new channel of creativity for you.

I hope to build up a catalogue (excuse the pun!) of designs made with this and other tessellations and have a plan to make them into a series of cushion covers and other homeware items, including adding some text and borders around the edges.

If you are interested in making your own tessellated designs, here is a link to my latest Textile Talk, [Tessellation Creations](#), where I take you through the process step by step.



Project - Make Your Own Notebooks



This month there is a new tutorial on the website, which explains how to make a handy little notepad or notepad pouch for your handbag. [Here is the link.](#) If you want to make your own notepad for the pouch, rather than buy one, it's easy and quick to do and is a great way to make use of your 12 inch square pads

of designer series paper (DSP). DSP with designs on both sides is the best to use as it tends to be thicker - more like card than paper, but one-sided is fine to use too.

You can buy little blocks of white or coloured notepads very cheaply from the \$2 stores and they are easy to separate along the glued lines.

Everything you need is shown here and if you don't have any orange double-sided tape (that's the very sticky kind), or other double-sided tape, then any wet glue should be fine to use, as long as you give it time to dry.

Basically you need to measure the width, height and thickness of your notepad and cut a 12 inch

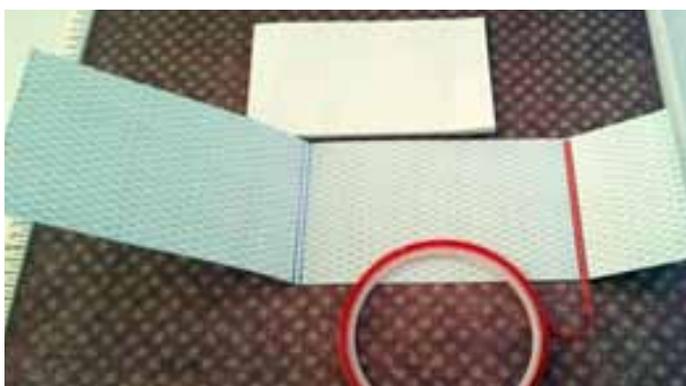
strip of DSP to the exact width of the pad. Score at the appropriate measurements to ensure the notepad fits securely inside its cover when folded.

I found the ideal notepad size to be 3 inches wide, 5 inches high with $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thickness top and bottom. Therefore, measuring 5 inches from the right, I scored



the DSP paper at the following intervals on the score board: 7 inches and 7½ inches, then 2 inches and 1⅞ inches. (Alternatively, use a ruler and stylus to score your paper, if you don't have a scoring board), In order for you to clearly see where the fold lines are, I've marked them with a pen,

cover of the notebook fold up from the bottom and the shorter flap at the top is what folds over and secures everything together. Once you're happy everything fits, unfold and press a 3 inch length of orange tape along the top ⅛ inch as shown below:



in the image above, but you won't need to do that. The pen score lines show where the top of the notebook is glued to the flap and cover and where the bottom folds up.

Cut the tape and peel off the orange layer. Position the notebook so the top glued edge sticks exactly over the sticky tape you've just laid down on the cover. Press down firmly and fold up the cover as shown below.

Fold up the DSP on the score lines. Lay in your notebook to check it fits. The front and back

Attach a pair of sticky Velcro dots to the under-



side of the top flap and on the front of the bottom fold-up cover, as shown. Position the flap dot in the middle of the underside flap and then place its partner dot on top of it, sticky side up. Press down the flap and the dot should stick to the bottom of the cover at exactly the right position. (Velcro dot packs are available from Office Works).



Decorate the top with whatever sparkly buttons or jewels you want to use and your notebook is ready to go.

The online tutorial pouch was originally designed for a slightly different sized, shop-bought notebook, but the ones I made to the size in these instructions will fit just as well, with enough room for a pen or pencil.



Natural Dyeing Experiments

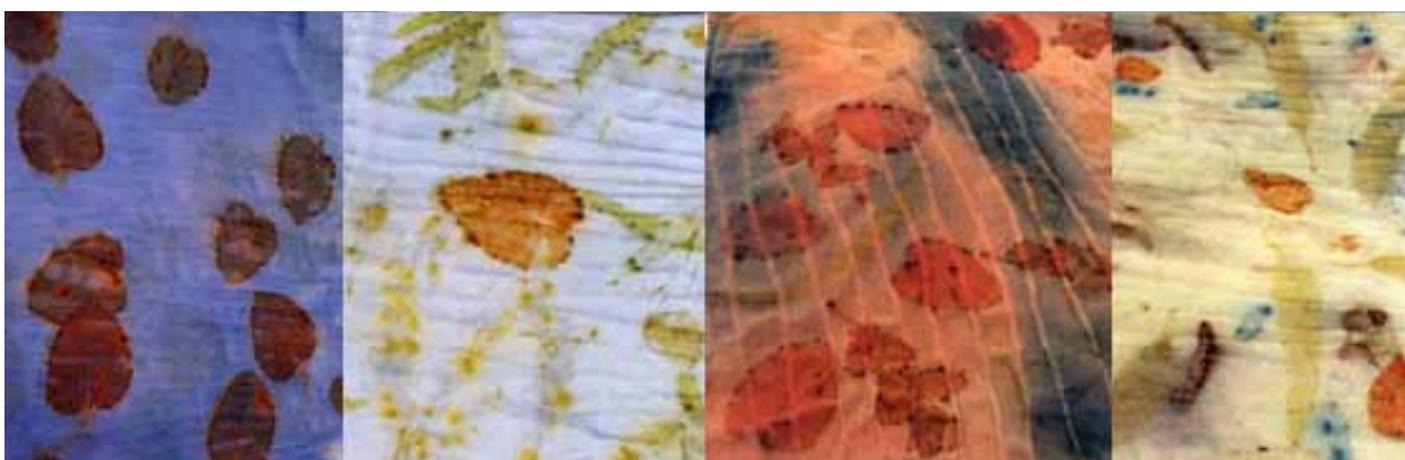
The weather has been particularly warm over the last month and it's a great time to dye and cure fabrics. So I've been out in the garden, trying out some new dyebaths, including loquat leaves and mixing maple and prunus leaves together in the same pot. Loquat gave some lovely subtle yellows and pale oranges. The prunus and maple gave deep gold and bronze colours on silk, cotton and silky merino fabrics. I also loved using

my grapefruit, red cabbage and eucalyptus dyebaths too and between them all, I was able to get a good variety of muted colours and prints.

I wanted to create a background layer on the fabrics and then over-print them to create some scarves and cushion covers. Here are the results of some of the final pieces of silky merino that I want to use for the cushion covers.



I also dyed a selection of embroidery threads to go with the fabrics as I'll be embellishing the front of the covers with stitch before they are made up. Once I've finished them, I'll show you how they come out and also how I make "no-zip" covers.



For more information on natural dyeing in layers, please visit the latest Textile Talk, [Natural Dyeing In Layers](#).

Workshops for 2019

Having done a few demonstrations of natural dyeing last year, I've been encouraged by the number of people, new to this technique, who want to have a go themselves. For that reason, I plan to run another beginners' natural dyeing workshop in early March, as well as the usual one in November. I have had enquiries from people who want to come and do natural dyeing as a group and I'm happy to look at alternative dates, providing the group is between 2 – 4 people.

Natural Dyeing Workshops

The introductory natural dyeing course for beginners covers all the steps from gathering plant material to preparing it for use in a dye bath, using it as background colour and as a printing element on the fabric.

Each course varies slightly, as students have different needs and projects they want to work on, so we will cover all the basics and then work on particular areas that are of interest to the group. This is very

much a practical course which covers not just one, but all fabric and fibre groups suitable for this type of dyeing. In particular we spend time on how to prepare your fabrics beforehand so your results are more successful.

If you're new to this type of dyeing, or if you've tried it before but have been disappointed with your results, once you've attended this workshop, you will be much more confident and happier with your dyeing outcomes.

Details of upcoming workshops are listed below and if you are interested in coming along, please drop me an email and I can send you more information.



MX Procion Dyeing Workshops



There are two 2-day colour mixing workshops designed for anyone who would like to learn more about colour theory and colour mixing, in order to dye their own fabrics and threads to their individual colour palettes.

The workshops will involve a lot of hands-on practice, mixing dyes and making various colour wheel and gradation fabric samples, experimenting with hue, value and chroma.

Over the course of these two workshops you will learn how to mix any given colour, using primary and black dyes, offering extensive colour palette options, including light and dark, bright and muted tones, with which to create an endless range of plain, mottled and patterned fabrics for your own projects.

Following the colour mixing workshops, there is a 2-day workshop involving painting, printing and stitching, where you will be able to create a small quilt or wall hanging that will incorporate your own printed or painted designs and your own hand-dyed sewing threads.

Sewing Workshops



The first of these workshops is designed for beginners, with limited or no knowledge of how to use a sewing machine for creative textile work. All the parts of the machine are explained, including the importance of choosing the right needles and threads for the job.

There will be lots of opportunity for hands-on practice and sampling, learning how to make the most of built-in stitches, playing with needle and bobbin tensions and free motion stitches to create some lovely textured effects in your work.

The second workshop will extend your knowledge to create wearable art pieces or 3D structures using water soluble stabilizers.

In the last workshop you will be creating free machined picture artworks from your own photographs or your imagination, using a variety of colouring media and lots of lovely yummy threads.

All workshops listed above will be held at Kurrara Designs Studios, Red Hill Vic. More details of these workshops are available on email request.

Solution to the Möbius Maze



Workshop News

March 2019 – November 2019

Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd March 2019

Natural Dyeing With Plants
2 day workshop: Beginners

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th November 2019

Natural Dyeing With Plants
2 day workshop: Beginners

Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th April 2019

Dyeing Rainbow Fabrics and Threads with Procion MX Dyes
2 day workshop: Beginners

Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th April 2019

Creating Tints, Tones and Shades with Procion MX Dyes
2 day workshop: Intermediate (or Beginners from previous course)

Saturday 15th and Saturday 22nd June 2019

Painting, Printing and Stitching with Procion MX Dyes
2 day workshop: Beginners to Advanced

Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th May 2019

Sewing Machine and Creative Machine Stitching Basics
2 day workshop: Beginners

Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st July 2019

Creative Machine Embroidery I – (Using Water Soluble Stabilizers)
2 day workshop: All levels welcome, but basic sewing skills are recommended

Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th August 2019

Creative Machine Embroidery II –(Painting with Threads)
2 day workshop: Intermediate to Advanced

For more information about these and other workshops in 2019, please visit the [Workshop page](#) on the website or email me if you have any queries.

What's On

2nd Dec 2018 until 7th April 2019

Escher X Nendo Between Two Worlds at National Gallery of Victoria - 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th February 2019

Frankston Waterfront Festival – Art Exhibition at Mechanics Hall, 1N Plowman Place Frankston

11th – 4th April 2019

Australian Quilt Convention – Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton Gardens, Melbourne