

Possum News

The Newsletter for Kurrara Designs



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Introduction to Possum News

Hi Everyone

This year, 2020, has been one that we will all remember, thanks to the Covid 19 virus. One of the biggest challenges of having to stay at home has been finding innovative ways to connect with our friends and family that don't break the 1.5 metre distance rule! Thank heavens for Zoom I say, as it has been a godsend over the last few months to enable us to chat to each other online, share ideas and projects, learn new skills and work remotely.

From personal experience, I have found that being involved in some sort of group or individual creative pursuit and having a regular routine during these last few months, has been the key to sustaining a positive outlook for the present and the future. I hope that you have managed to find something or several things to keep you going and more importantly bring you joy in our various states of lockdown. I hope too, as you read this newsletter, that you will now be looking forward to spending time again with your family and friends, as our restrictions are being eased.

Until now many of us have not been able to get to the shops to restock our craft or sewing supplies, so this newsletter is all about recycling and repurposing. We have had to be creative in finding alternatives for tools or materials that we lacked and making the most of what we did have squirrelled away in our stashes.

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I was particularly pleased to find a use for a tapestry fabric remnant I've had hidden in a tub in the roof eaves for several years. It just happened to be the right size to cover a bright green office chair that had seen better days. The green covering was ripped across the seat and the stuffing was coming out, so it was not a pretty sight in



the craft room. Rather than throw out the chair, recovering it, to give it a new lease of life, seemed a better option. I didn't have a pattern, but fitted the fabric as I went along, making a sleeve and hand stitching it on to make it fit. (In case you're wondering, the L-shaped seat was detachable from the base, which made it easier to cover). I am pleased with the outcome and now it brightens up my craft room and I get to look at that lovely fabric every day. If we hadn't been confined in lockdown, I'm not sure I'd have tackled this project, but having no other distractions or commitments, I had a run at it for several consecutive days, which made it very doable.

In this edition I'd like to share some more ideas for recycling projects, that I've been working on over the last few months and hope you might find them useful to incorporate in your own work.

Where possible, I've tried to do something on most days and when I didn't feel like sewing or couldn't get motivated to do any real arty projects, I started playing with my stamps and dies to make embellishments. One day I would do some image stamping and the next few days I would colour in the images with watercolour paints, inks or pencils and then cut them out. Although it seems a really simple thing to do, when I pulled out all my leftover scraps of card and paper it's amazing how they started to engender new and more elaborate ideas, one of which was how to get creative with an old Tetley tea bag box (more on that later)! During our lockdown, I made lots of cards and flower boxes to send out to friends and neighbours, using these paper scraps, but my main project this year has been creating artist trading cards, which I'll talk about below.

Hope you enjoy reading.

Tina

Artist Trading Cards



As you may know, I'm a member of the Peninsula Arts Society (PAS), which is understandably closed until further notice. The PAS textile group has been busily working on a project suggested by a lovely lady called Jillian Schneider. Jillian thought it would be a good idea for us all to create some

Artist Trading Cards, or ATCs, to send to each other to brighten up the seemingly endless days of lockdown. Well Jill certainly started something, as I think it has been a fabulous project for us all to get our teeth into and we have all exchanged loads of ATCs by mail since lockdown began.

Artist Trading Cards first appeared in the late nineties, almost as a mini art culture, pushing back against the way art was displayed, priced and critiqued. They were introduced by a Swiss artist, M. Vänçi Stirnemann, as a means of exchanging art pieces, rather than

selling or buying them, similar to the concept of cigarette or football swap cards. ATCs are meant to be a specific size, 2.5 inches (6.3cm) x 3.5 inches (8.8cm), mounted on a card base and should include details of the work and artist on the reverse. You should stick to the rules if you are officially swapping ATCs, but you can do your own thing if you want to make them for fun, for yourself or as gifts for others.

As they are only small pieces, you won't be using lots of materials, but can use up scraps of fabric and threads, or use paper offcuts,

paints, colouring pencils, markers and stamping inks to make them. Most importantly, you can have fun with them and put your own personality into them, not worry about the outcome and just enjoy the process. You can learn a lot along the way. Sometimes they are hard to part with, but if you make doubles you can always have a record of what you've produced, as well as sharing one with someone else.

Here are a few examples that I've made and machine stitched onto card backgrounds using a zigzag stitch, but you can also use any suitable

liquid adhesive or double-sided tape.

If you'd like to see some more of my artist trading cards, please visit the Kurrara Designs website where you'll find a virtual gallery, and the latest Textile Talk article, which will explain a little more about ATCs in general and some of the specific techniques I used for the ATCs on display.



Here are the links:

<http://www.kurraradesigns.com.au/gallery%20menu.html>

<http://www.kurraradesigns.com.au/textile%20talk.html#12>

What to do With Sewing and Dyeing Scraps

Paper Products

For most of my embroidered ATCs, I used a stabiliser or two in the construction process, as it gave a firmer surface to stitch on.



Stabilisers come in all different shapes sizes and types, but the one I use the most, if I am doing regular stitching, is tear-away. It is a paper product that looks a bit like a thick blotting paper. It is strong enough to stitch on, but can be cut or torn into shapes if required. When you use stabiliser in a hoop, the middle

bit stays under the embroidery, but the outside is usually the waste that gets thrown away, as it's too small to use for re-hooping another project.



Tearaway is perfect for using all your colouring media on, as it mops up colour and can be lightly stitched into without breaking up. It can be die cut into shapes and dyes beautifully with Procion MX dyes. For extra strength and durability, it can be ironed onto a fusible webbing, and recycled for appliqué or other sewing projects. It has a great textural quality to it and, when

coloured, it can be a great substitute for felt shapes and makes lovely flowers for stitching, or mixed media.

I also use paper towel to mop up my excess Procion MX dyes. The colour stays vibrant when it's dry as it doesn't have to be washed out and, if you scrunch it when wet, the colours merge to give some lovely, mottled effects. If you carefully open out the scrunched towel, once it's dry, you can then add additional colours or metallics to it.



It too lends itself to flower embellishments, backgrounds for cards or mixed media projects and can be stiffened with starch, or a product called Terial Magic. Alternatively, the two-ply sheets can be separated and bonded together with a fusible webbing to make a stronger fabric paper for light stitching. You can use bonding powder to add snippets of leftover fabric to it and cover with organza or netting for more extensive stitching.

In fact any paper, even waste photocopy paper, that has been dyed or coloured with liquid paints or inks, works well for paper sculpting once it's dry. The wetting and drying seems to strengthen

the fibres so you can manipulate it more easily.



The sample above has been dyed with left-over Procion MX dyes after scrunching. It has been left to dry and then opened out. This method gives some great markings where the paper has been creased and it's perfect for mimicking the petals of flowers, especially, my favourite hydrangea flower petals.



This recycled box has been embellished with a hydrangea flower made from dyed and stitched paper tearaway stabiliser.



Fabric and Fibres

Any threads and/or leftover fabrics that you cut off from either handwork or machine stitching projects are also fair game for recycling. These

threads and silk snippets were the result of only a few machine embroidery sessions and I ended up using them to make free motion leaves for some of my earlier ATCs.



If you sandwich them between two sheets of water-soluble stabiliser, you can easily stitch over them without snagging them on the hook race. The trick is to criss-cross your stitches to connect all the threads.

You can draw on the top of the washaway with an erasable marker if you prefer to have a guideline to stitch along.



Make sure you stitch an unbroken outline around each shape and cut them out so as not to break the stitch lines and then rinse away the stabiliser. Leave a little bit of the gloopy glue in the cut shapes and let them dry on a non-stick surface.



At this stage you can manipulate them into a more natural shape or let them dry completely and iron them flat with a pressing cloth. Any leftovers from the first stitch out (including the stabiliser scraps) can be added to and re-sandwiched for another project. You can also soak those tiny little bits of scrap water soluble stabiliser in a small amount of warm water to create a liquid fabric stiffening medium.

Recycled and Repurposed Tea Bag Box



This has been another of those lockdown projects that resulted from a session of play with stamped and die cut flowers. I spent several days making a whole batch of different flower shapes from stamps or freehand doodles and I had such fun colouring them in

with Pan Pastels, water-colour paints, stamping inks and alcohol markers. I find it very relaxing and calming to do this sort of activity for hours on end and disappear into a world of my own.

As they were flat rather than two dimensional, these flowers were perfect to use on the empty Tetley tea bag box I'd been saving. I loved the shape of it, particularly the lid, but wasn't really sure what to do with it, until I saw all these flowers together.



I decided to use them for a découpage project all over the box, along with torn designer series papers, Mod Podge sealer adhesive, inks, stamps and a bit of bling for the opening and closing tassel.

I covered the sides of the box in Mod Podge first and applied the torn papers in a random manner, after stamping the individual pieces with small images and wiping the torn edges with distress ink pads. Once the sides were dry, I tackled the outside of the lid and the bottom of the box in the same way. The inside of the box was also

covered with the torn papers. When everything was dry, I applied another coat of Mod Podge all over – outside first and then inside. Before the sealer dried, I added my paper flowers all over the box making sure they were well stuck down. I added a final coat of Mod Podge inside and out and when everything was dry, I hot glued the tassel and gemstone on the outside of the lid. This box has been the perfect place to store all my ATCs.

Online Tutorial Project – Scrapy Appliqué Bird Cards



My last suggestion for using up scrap fabrics is to turn them into appliqué shapes. These birds were made from fabric odds and ends that were bonded and stitched onto cards. My pattern for the birds is freely available to download on my latest tutorial (Tutorial 9 - Scrapy Appliqué Bird Card), which takes you through the whole process step by step. If you want to have a go at making some for birthdays or Christmas, [just click here](#).

Workshops

Unfortunately I have had to put all my workshops on hold this year, due to the lockdown and social distancing rules, but I hope it will be possible to have them up and running again sometime next year. For all those people who had booked in for workshops this year, I will let you know rescheduled dates for 2021 as and when we are permitted to get together again in groups and it is safe to do so.

I've missed not seeing my students this year, but I hope that next year we can embark on some new projects as well as revisit some favourites – including more dyeing and machine embroidery workshops.

General details of workshops are on the website and I can forward more information on request if required, but obviously, I'm not able to confirm any future dates at the moment.

I had originally looked at Zoom to do some live or recorded workshops and had hoped to have something put together by now, but that is still a work in progress. I may yet go down that route if there is enough interest and if I am not able to conduct workshops at my studio.

In the meantime, I hope the information in this edition has been of some interest to you and if you try out any of the projects, do send me some pictures so I can see what you've all been doing.

Take care everyone and enjoy all your creative pursuits.



**Procion MX Dyed Cotton Panel
Ready for Stitching**