



This is not  
the official  
newsletter  
of the  
Australian  
Guild of  
Rugmakers

This is an additional newsletter compiled by Miriam Miller, President Emeritus

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## QUEENSLAND - *Judi Tompkins*

### *Kingaroy Regional Art Gallery*

The Kingaroy Regional Art Gallery (QLD) is exhibiting my work, *“Not your granny’s mats”* throughout the month of June and I hope a few of you have had a chance to visit.

I have worked in many disciplines (pottery, taxidermy, jewellery, music and textiles) and rely on techniques from these varied disciplines to create 2D / 3D works.

My inspiration draws from the natural environment, science and literature as they are influenced by design, sculpture, architecture and people who perceive the world differently.

My fibre/textile works pays respect to the tradition of “rug hooking” while at the same time pushing the boundaries by using unconventional fibres, framing, designs, embellishments and “odd things” to produce installations, wall art and interactive art pieces.

My goal is to create pieces that have an element of whimsy, illustrate a “fibre pun” or challenge the viewer to move beyond the point of merely “thinking outside the box” to a point where they do not see the box in the first place.

Having an opportunity to exhibit within a regional art gallery like Kingaroy not only gives me an opportunity to sell some work but also offers a venue where it is easier to engage with visitors who are often intimidated to ask questions or artists in large venues.

I grew up in the “big snow” of northern Michigan (USA) in a time when thrift, recycling and traditional crafts - and the philosophy of “passing it on” - was the norm. I watched my grandmother and her friends patiently recycle and upcycle unwanted fabric into clothing, hooked and braided rugs, artwork quilts and other practical creations. It was magic to think she could transform fabric scraps even into beautiful floor art.

The unhurried, repetitive nature of this traditional craft has taken me on a journey that has offered me creative time to reflect on the both the subject of my work and materials. Though my networks, fibre groups, workshops, public talks and demonstrations (in the virtual and online worlds) I feel I have come full circle and joined my grandmother in a contemporary group of “quilting bee ladies”.

I believe that passing on the basic philosophy and skills associated with this craft serves to pay tribute to the ingenuity and creativity of our grandmother’s and other skilled migrants.

**Continued Judi Tompkins**

**“From childhood’s hour I have not been as others were; I have not seen as others saw” –  
Edgar Allen Poe**

**“Not your granny’s mats!”  
and the “lost” craft of Australian Rug Making**

Knowledge of the craft of making rugs/mats (for the floor) came to Australia primarily with the many women who were transported - or voluntarily migrated – to this country. Over the years, the craft of making floor coverings from rags or scraps of fabric fell out of favour for a number of reasons:

- the rugs did not last since they were made from feed or flour sacks and fell to pieces over time – thus very few examples are seen in this country; and
- only a few women’s crafts were deemed to have “value” (e.g. quilts, lacework, embroidery, cooking, etc.) so rugs were not seen to be culturally valuable; and
- as migrants prospered, they often did not want to be associated with a craft of thrift, so “proper” woven carpets – from “home” i.e. England - replaced handcrafted ones and rug making skills were no longer taught to children.

Recently, the traditional craft of rug making (hooked, prodded, punch needle, etc.) has seen a revival in Australia and is quietly practiced by a small number of women (and a few men) who continue to teach the basic skills to others. As a result of the activities by this growing number of artisans, the craft of handcrafting traditional rugs (which now extends to include wall hangings, fibre and 3-dimensional art and more) has re-emerged as an accessible art form. The continuation of this craft serves to pay tribute to the ingenuity and creativity of our grandmother’s and skilled migrants.

As sister craft to quilting, rug making originally evolved out necessity in the cold climate of the Northern hemisphere where warm floor coverings had an important practical function. At the same time, these handcrafted rugs served to beautify the home and supported the philosophy of thrift by making good use of scrap fabrics and fibres. Depending on the source of the rug material – and the region of the world where it was made - a variety of techniques – ranging from practical craft to fibre art – developed and flourished

In Australia, a rug/mat is referred to as **hooked** (called a “hooky” rug) if the hooker (a person who hooks!) works from the “top” or pattern side of a rug, and **pulls up** the fabric strips through the backing with a rug hook to create a surface covered in loops. These loops can either be pulled short (to produce a carpet-like finish) or pulled long and are shaped to produce textures and three-dimensional effects.

If the hooker uses the **prodded** or **proggy** technique of **pushing** or **prodding** short, wide strips of fabric through the backing (on reverse or bottom side) with a prodder tool, they create a lush pile on the top side. The resulting shaggy rug surface of the proddy/proggy rug can be trimmed or simply left “as is”. [**Note: these techniques are not latch hooking**].

To learn more about the rug making craft of your transported or migrant grandmother, please contact me to arrange a demonstration for your group: [judi.tompkins@bigpond.com](mailto:judi.tompkins@bigpond.com) or Cell: 0400 988 777

## Continued Judi Tompkins

Quite simply

put, to “put a cat among the pigeons” is to say or do something likely to cause a fierce argument, trouble or controversy. This expression was first recorded in 1706 where it was used illustrate a man coming into the company of a group of women. Another idiom, “flutter the doves” is based on the same idea of a group of pigeons as a tranquil or harmless community disrupted by something or someone.

With that in

mind, who amongst us hasn't enjoyed a quiet afternoon relaxing in the park while feeding the pigeons (birdseed of course)?

This park would

appear to be popular with doves, songbirds and pigeons that gather for a feed. Notice that one of the pigeons has a bad foot (and has a leg band). In nearly every park at least one pigeon is disabled but still manages to find the food.

Behold! The

pigeons find in their midst a CAT, but it's *not* one of the feline variety, instead it is a CAT(erpillar) but it's not one of the edible variety either! How will the birds confront or even argue with this diminutive, scale-model Caterpillar road grader



Judi has sent several photos and stories, so they will be in the August newsletter.

Miriam

next month Continued



CANADA – Nova Scotia – Cindy Noble.

Here is a photo of our Comfort Mat which I designed and the Fundy Rug Hookers hooked a few years ago. This is meant to bring you **Love and Comfort** at times of misfortune. love and hugs, Cindy and Fundy Group.

ENGLAND – Brighton -Katrina



Hi Miriam,

Here is my sample that I have edged and made into a wall hanging.

I also used some wooden printing blocks from Nepal to decorate the edging.

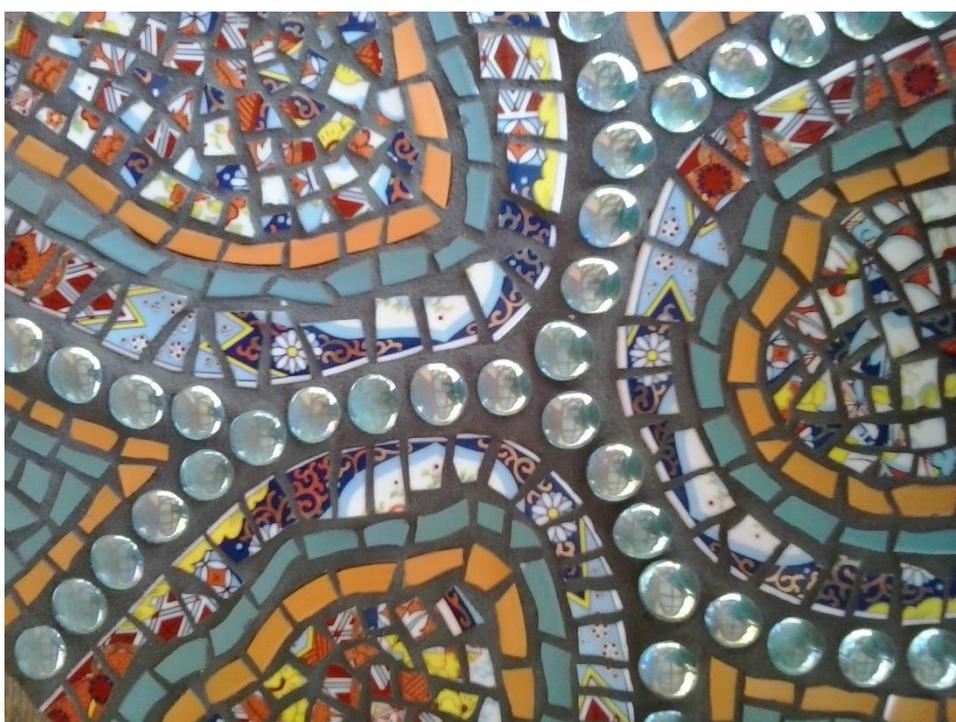
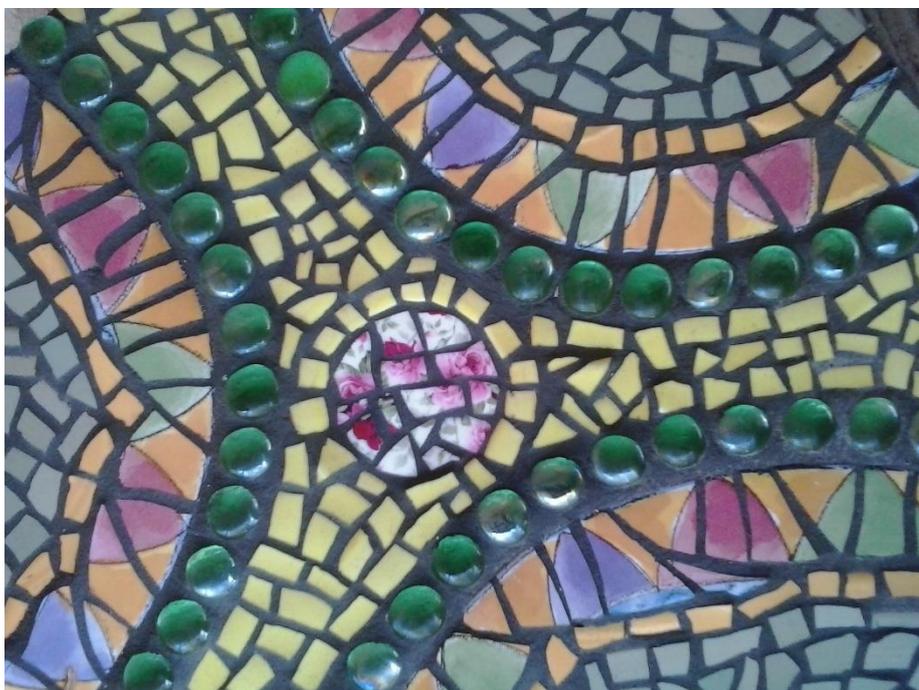
It is supposed to be a field on wild flowers with a woodland on the edge

Love

Katrina

QUEENSLAND – Tolga -Jennifer Walton

Photos: 2 of the mosaic stepping stones I made for the garden. Smashed plates from the op shop.



**NEW SOUTH WALES – Milton** -Helen Stinson

Dear Miriam,

I thought you might like to see the picture of my latest rug which I finished last night. I'll also send the rug I finished about a month ago using the same colours. Just changing the predominance of the colours makes a huge difference, doesn't it?

**NEW SOUTH WALES. – Milton – Marama**

I thought you might like to see my new blog post. You can go there if you click this link.

is <http://creativemarama.wordpress.com/>

Sending love, Marama-oxox

<http://creativemarama.wordpress.com/>

**NEW SOUTH WALES – Braidwood** -Gail Nicholls.

Here is a photo of that rug ..  
It's called 'Blue Garden'.  
New and recycled fabric hooked on primitive linen, 152 x 97 cm.  
It was inspired by a view of the cactus garden at Stanford University, where I participated in a ceramics art and science symposium in 2017.

My exhibition at Suki & Hugh Gallery in Bungendore opens on 29 June and runs through 11 August. Open Thursday to Sunday 10am-4pm.

Best wishes,  
Gail

**CANADA- Northumberland Rug Hookers.** Susan Sutherland.

Hi Miriam, I thought you might enjoy looking at this blog from the Northumberland Rug Hookers. They took a lot of photos of Kay LeFevre's hooked pieces. Kay only hooks using 2 ply yarn. She dyes all her own colours and she lives in an RV! hugs, Susan

[https://northumberlandrughookers.blogspot.com/?fbclid=IwAR12O8y4XReJhRpc8yym3E\\_-MYPcEfd7-gLmeYAEcdlmhRKFcTtZ03s9L0](https://northumberlandrughookers.blogspot.com/?fbclid=IwAR12O8y4XReJhRpc8yym3E_-MYPcEfd7-gLmeYAEcdlmhRKFcTtZ03s9L0)

**CANADA- Nova Scotia – sent by Cindy Noble.**

**Subject: Primitive Wool Tree instructions**

#### SUPPLY LIST

ruler

wire cutters

heavy florist wire (16 gauge)

brown florist tape

wool, green or whatever color you want your tree ( I used red for the fall)

good cutting scissors

adhesive tape (the old cloth kind) - use to attach the branches to the dowel. It hold the branches better  
glue

pins - use to hold wool while you are fringing them

pencil

at least a dozen clothes pins or paper clips, something to hold the wool in place while drying

need some kind of base (we used a tree trunk)

#### SIZE TO CUT WIRE - FOR 12" AND 18" DOWEL

cut 4 2.5"

cut 4 3"

cut 4 3.5"

cut 4 4"

cut 4 4.5"

cut 5 5"

(this is the amount for 12" dowel)

cut 5 5.5"

cut 5 6"

cut 5 6.5"

(use all 9 cuts for the 18" dowel)

If you would like it taller or fuller just continue to increase  
by .5".



This is the base that my husband made us with the dowel.

YOUTUBE - WEBSITE FOR THE PRIMITIVE TREE  
IS

How to create a wooly pine tree

by Sara Renzuilli

Enjoy and have fun.

Sue McCafferty



CANADA – New Brunswick - Anna Sutherland

Below continued from previous page  
Primitive tree photo



QUEENSLAND Kingaroy -Judith Brook

to left book cover drying Bookmaking. Wax resist with vegetable dyes. Right some of our finished journals



## SOUTH AUSTRALIA – Adelaide Ashleigh Gibson

I learned hooky and proggy in Newcastle in the UK but I purchased my own tool from Miriam after moving to Sydney in 2014. After a few email exchanges we found out we had emigrated from adjacent villages in the north east of England albeit with a 50 year gap - how extraordinary!

My 13 year old requested a rug for her birthday, designed with Harry Potter in mind, I think this is the symbol of the Deathly Hallows. The fabric is shredded leggings and a wool blanket we found in the street. I'm pretty much addicted to rug making now, and my 7-year old just requested her own hook!

I have moved on to Adelaide recently and I love receiving Miriam's monthly newsletter as inspiration for more projects. I hope one day to meet her and thank her in person for connecting me to this great craft.

Ashleigh Gibson



## JOKE

A mathematician, an engineer, and a computer scientist are vacationing together. They are riding in a car, enjoying the countryside, when suddenly the engine stops working. The mathematician: "We came past a gas station a few minutes ago. Someone should go back and ask for help." The engineer: "I should have a look at the engine. Perhaps, I can fix it." The computer scientist: "Why don't we just open the doors, slam them shut, and see if everything works again?" L

THE END.

Please advise me at [narrawillyfarm@shoal.net.au](mailto:narrawillyfarm@shoal.net.au) if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter