

# AUSTRALIA DIARY

*Submitted by Trish Johnson*

In September, I went on a holiday to Australia to visit a friend of mine. I had a chance to meet with some Australian rug hookers. I met Martha Birch, who drove me to her lovely house and studio in Clovelly, near Sydney. Martha has hooked seat covers based on the woodcuts of Margaret Preston. I saw Margaret Preston's work at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and also the work of Grace Cossington Smith. Google their names if you're not familiar with their work. Both are Australian

women artists. One had a rich husband and one had a rich father. Martha told me of the difficulty getting supplies in Australia, especially heavy items like cutters that come from America.

I was invited to meet with the Yarra Valley Rug Hookers, near Melbourne. Being a thrifty soul, I was dismayed that I had to buy a MYKI card (similar to Toronto's Presto Card) and pay for the train trip on top of that (total \$9.50). I caught the train at Melbourne Central and as soon as I sat down, I found an Australian ten dollar bill, which cheered me up considerably. This serendipitous moment eased some of the trepidation I felt setting out on this adventure.

I disembarked at Ringwood station, where Robyne Melia met me. We drove to Anne Schafer's house in the country. I wasn't sure where I was going but the photos on my phone tell me that I was near Warrandyte, in Victoria. Anne's house was full of interesting things, a quilting studio, rug hooking wool, rug hooking books, rug hooking magazines and of course rugs.



**Photo credit: Martha Birch**

The wood stove was on and so was the soup pot. For lunch, we had homemade *osso buco*, gluten-free bread (also homemade), cheese and crackers and for dessert, a lemon cake (made with mashed potatoes), coconut macaroons, green grapes, strawberries and blueberries.

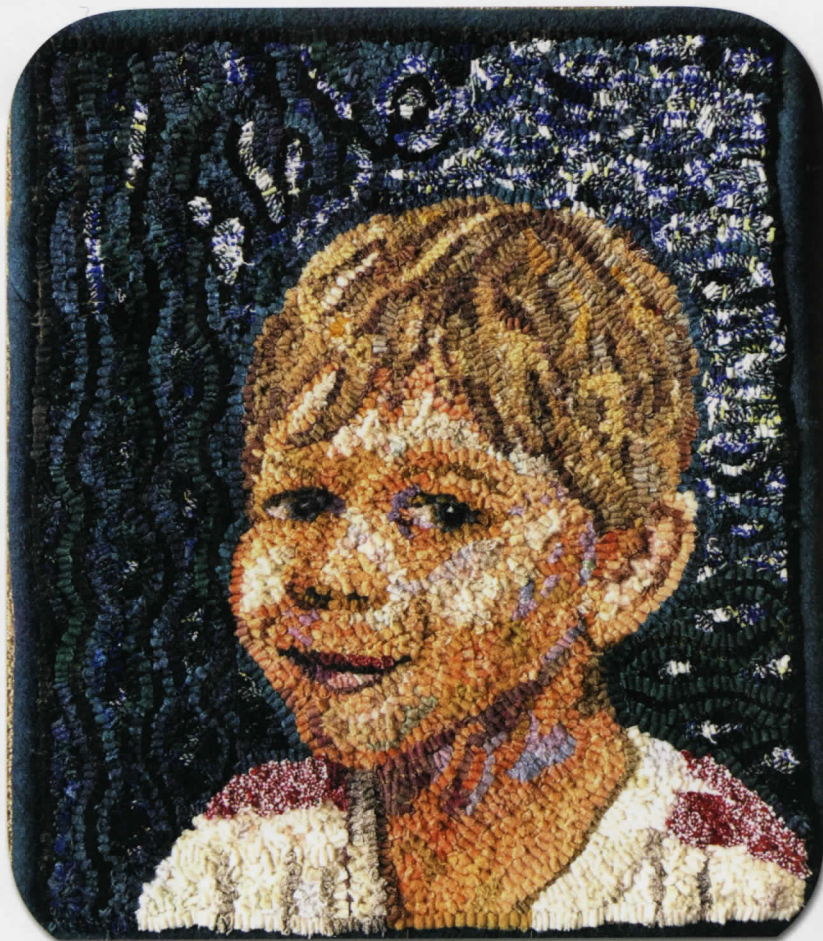
I had images of most of my rugs on a USB key which we connected via a laptop to the TV. I talked about my rugs and I saw their delightful rugs.

Chris Noorbergen has hooked a series of rugs of people important to her, her husband and 6 portraits of her grandchildren. Young faces are one of the most difficult things to hook but Chris' rugs were wonderful.

**Above: Martha Birch's chair pad**

**Right: Chris Noorbergen's grandchild, Blake**

**Remaining 4 photos by Trish Johnson**





***(Australia Diary, cont.)***

Joy Marshall was also hooking a series. She's a minister and she was hooking stair treads that illustrated Psalm 23 (The Lord is My Shepherd). They were beautiful pictorial rugs of green pastures and sheep. Joy's rug about Anne of Green Gables was in the Nov/Dec 2017 issue of Rug Hooking Magazine. Joy had read all the Anne books before she discovered that Prince Edward Island was a real place. Of course, once she realized this, she wanted to go. Her congregation raised the funds for her travel to PEI. When she was in Canada, she visited Deanne Fitzpatrick and discovered rug hooking.



Robyne Melia, who drove me to Anne's, had a work in progress, a beautiful hooked rug influenced by Uzbekistan textiles (right).

Anne Schafer's "Fowl Mood" rug (pattern by Gene Shepherd) matches her sweater, proving my theory that rug hookers hook with the colours they like to wear.



I saw some beautiful rugs, had a delicious lunch and met some interesting hookers. There's no such thing as a free lunch, but once in while there is such a thing as a free train ride.



**Top: Joy Marshall's Psalm 23 stair riser**

**Above, right: Robyne Melia's Uzbekistan inspiration**

**Left: Anne Schafer and her "Fowl Mood"**  
*(though she looks anything but)*