



COMIC PATCHWORK/THE GOSSIPS

From: FANCY WORK CREATIONS by Eva M Niles.
Minneapolis, Minn Buckeye Publ Co 1884.

Comic Patchwork is a series of irregular geometrical figures, so combined as to form a representation of the human figure in various attitudes.

From the necessity of using angles more or less acute, in this kind of work, the figures have always a grotesque appearance. The design now describes is one which, although presenting apparent difficulty in the execution, will be found perfectly practicable, if the directions given are carefully attended to.

The quantity of silk required to cover each piece is so small, that those who keep up a silk rag-bag will have but little trouble in assorting the necessary number of colors. But those who wish to execute this piece of work, and have no such resource at hand, are recommended to go to any respectable shop where they are in the habit of dealing, and to select one-eighth of a yard of each suitable ribbon, carefully saving the overplus for the next piece of work.

The design may be, when finished stretched on a frame to form a hand-screen, in which case a pretty lining for the back and a quilting of ribbon or deep fringe to finish the edge handsomely, will be necessary.

This comic design is also well adapted for a carriage bag, in which case it would require a neat border round it, also of patchwork, but of sufficiently subdued colors not to interfere with the brilliance of the central figures.

The ground color is of considerable importance in this kind of work, as, should too bright a tint be employed, the effect of the figures is quite spoiled. Black silk is not objectionable, but by far the best material that can be employed is gray glaze silk - the kind which is made of black and white woven together, but not a dyed gray.

The pattern should be carefully drawn or traced on a sheet of paper. And the worker is recommended to number the pieces, as in the copy, as a guide to the coloring.

Should further aid be necessary, it will be found useful to tint the patterns lightly with water-color, and then to proceed as follows:

The piece in the corner marked with a cross X (not shown) should be cut out, and covered carefully with the gray silk; a second piece should then be cut out, covered, and sewed to the first, before another is cut off. Proceed in this way until all the pieces are covered and sewn together. Observe that only one piece is to be cut from the pattern at a time, otherwise confusion would ensue, and the work be spoiled.

An experienced needlewoman will find no difficulty in executing this pattern, but those who attempt silk patchwork for the first time must be careful when covering the pieces, to fold the silk exactly over the edge, neither leaving any extra space, or turning down any portion of the paper.

It will be evident that the sewing must be of the neatest description and done at the back. Should difficulty be found in procuring the requisite fineness of sewing silk, fine sewing cotton, Nos 50 or 60 (not glaze) will answer very well.

For an article on "The Gossips" see pg 13

The following selection of colors is recommended; the numbers in the list refer to the proper places in the illustrated pattern: The suggested material is silk.

1. Background gray glaze
2. Faces, necks, hands. pink
3. Young woman's hair brown
4. Young woman's dress purple
5. Young woman's feet black
6. Young woman's handkerchief white
7. Young woman's stool yellow
8. Old woman's bonnet straw color
9. Ribbon, curtain, bonnet green color
10. Old woman's shawl. Plaid ribbon
11. Old woman's gown pale, small patterned
12. Old woman's umbrella dark blue
13. Old woman's feet black
14. Old woman's chair orange

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See "Comic Patchwork (The Gossips)" pg 7

An applique picture (Fla-TE-17), similar to the one pictured on pg 7 was catalogued by the Index of American Design. According to the records, kept in the National Gallery of Art, Washington D C, it was made by a Eunice Cook of Vermont, owned by Mrs T N Holley of Coral Gables, Florida, and the watercolor rendering was by Carmel Wilson. The description reads "very colored silk pieces appliqued on a piece of 'ashes of roses'".

THE INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN by Erwin O Christensen, 1959 MacMillan Co, pictures it on pg 202 and describes it in the list of illustrations (pg 202) under item "#11 The Linen Chest" as "#211 Applique Picture, nineteenth century; rendered by Carmel Wilson, Florida Project. Privately owned."

The National Gallery of Art reproduced the "appliqued picture" on a postcard with the caption "No x-18 Applique Picture The Gossips (19th c) watercolor rendering by Carmel Wilson (Index of American Design)"

WOMAN'S DAY MAGAZINE published a picture with a caption "The Gossips" in the article "The Story of American Needlework: #6 Appli-

que" by Rose Wilder Lane, Nov '61. The caption reads "The Gossips, a humorous picture, 11 x 12 inches, appliqued in silks about 1830 by Eunice W Cook. Index of American Design, Nat'l Gallery of Art, Washington D C.

It was reproduced again in WOMAN'S DAY BOOK OF AMERICAN NEEDLEWORK by Rose Wilder Lane. New York: Simon & Schuster, '63 pg 102 The caption reads the same as above.

The "Gossips" appear in TREASURY OF AMERICAN DESIGN by Clarence P Hornung. 1976 Harry N Abrams, Inc Publ NY Vol Two. Pg 565. "The appliqued piece, called "gossips" introduces a humorous commentary in needlecraft by Eunice W Cook of Vermont" # 2074.

ARTISTS IN APRONS: Folk Art by American Women, by K C Dewhurst, B McDowell, M McDowell, N Y: E P Dutton, 1979 it appears on pg 47-48; Figure 27.

In the pictures attributed to the Index of American Design there are minor variations to the "Comic Patchwork" figures and the background color varies from source to source.

A postcard of "The Gossips" is available for \$1.00 (includes postage) from the JOURNAL.

RESEARCH STUDY GROUP

by Bets Ramsey

The Southern Quilt Symposium opened at the Hunter Museum of Art in Chattanooga on April 8, 1986 with a presentation of brief research papers on quilting. Merikay Waldvogel served as moderator. Laurel Horton described a group of cloth quilt blocks and drawings which are part of a large folklife collection of the 1920s at Durham, NC and in need of interpretation.

Gail Trechsel enumerated Alabama quilt projects: a discovery day in Mobile where 450 quilts were photographed; a publication in progress with Robert Cargo on Alabama quilts; preservation of a silk quilt made to raise money for a Confederacy gunboat; and especially an NEA-funded textile survey of the Deep South.

Cotton Raising was Linda Claussen's topic which was initiated while working on a project with Jim Lilles involving dye studies and textile history. An interview with a local Knoxville woman who had grown cotton leads to further investigation of the cotton industry, perhaps to the extent of raising cotton for a Lilles-dyed heritage quilt.

Nancilu Burdick, in the search for quilts

made by her grandmother, Talulah Bottoms, has located 103 and written brief histories of each. From her home in New York State she crosses the country to visit relatives and add to the rich store of material gathered in the past few years. She sees a deeper meaning to the research as a way of finding her roots. She feels a strength and peace coming from the quilts because of the human qualities inherent in them and sees this as a universal need in a hi-tech society.

My own paper described floral patterns found in a large sampling of quilts from Tennessee and nearby states and included examples of exceptional applique and some unusual pieced work.

Merikay Waldvogel gave an account of Mary Browning's collection of 19th century textile-related artifacts at the family home in Kingston, Tenn where bolts of cloth, letters, cards, thread, bills-of-lading, flax, magazines and calling cards have been virtually undisturbed for a hundred years.

Participants and presenters continue their studies in anticipation of the American Quilt Study Groups's meeting in Gatlinburg in October 1987.