

Stitching *every* together

"It's so relaxing. It's almost as if I have entered another world." Marion Meyers speaks with such ease and passion when she is discussing her love of quilting. But no words could surpass the sparkle in her eye when she mentions the quilting guild, Port Perry Patchers, which she has belonged to for the past few years.

"Everyone comes together to share new techniques and teach each other," she says in a voice that does little to hide her excitement. "The best part is that you get to know other people by seeing their work. It's such a personal art."

As Marion explains, during her monthly guild meetings (which take place on the third Monday of every month), special guest speakers and members take turns presenting their own trunk show. "A trunk show," she describes, "is like a personal history of quilts."

"Quilters will pull their creations from a trunk to show the guild or sometimes quilters may choose to present a slideshow of their work." However, Marion insists no matter what form the presenter chooses to display her work, it's always incredible to see an individual's personal inspirations and unique skills.

Uniqueness, after all, is one of the underlying principles of quilting. It is a quality that is both accepted and celebrated when a person chooses to join the guild. However, despite the lack of limitations in terms of creative expression, quilting does involve some fundamental practices. "Quilting often takes two forms," says Marion. "There's the artistic approach and the traditional approach. Both require intricate design skills."

When asked to decipher between the two, Marion explains that an example of an artistic approach might include one's "impression of a culture." "In some ways, a quilt can be like a collage. It may show places of travel or memories," she adds with a sense of intrigue. Her mind seems to be instantly filled with visions of the glorious travel destinations one may draw inspiration from. She mentions Japan and China as examples of places where the



From left, Deanna Ellis, Tammy Murphy and Marion Meyers of the Port Perry Patchers guild.

fabrics are undeniably cultural expressions in themselves.

This practice of purchasing distinctive fabrics from foreign places, she explains, helps to bring out the culture of a person's travels in their quilt creations. And, as Marion puts in uncomplicated terms, "I simply love the feel of the fabric." All the distinct textures and designs of different fabrics, she insists, helps to spark new and creative ideas for quilt designs.

Marion also references more traditional approaches to quilt-

quilt has a story to tell...

ing. She suggests that 'traditional' might refer to following a more concrete pattern that stems from the past. She also explains that traditional quilts are often created as traditional household items, which might include bed quilts and baby quilts.

A smile washes across Marion's face as she recalls the quilt she truly put her skills to the test in making. It was a present for her parent's anniversary. She remembers the pure sense of accomplishment and pride she felt after she completed the red and cream coloured masterpiece.

After all, the task of quilting requires hours of time and commitment – an aspect, which many non-quilters tend to overlook. And while Marion chuckles at this comment, she explains that the time and commitment shows itself in the quality and intricate detailing of the finished product.

This feeling of enrichment seems to be a motivating factor for all the members of the Port Perry Patchers. In fact, while the guild certainly aims to teach new and innovative techniques to its members, the uniting force behind its existence is the chance to share stories that have inspired certain creations.

"Every trunk show has a different story to it," says Marion.

In fact, with each show, Marion believes everyone gets the chance to get to know new members and long-standing members a little better.

Each month the guild's meetings include guest speakers who, along with their trunk show, may provide lectures, personal stories or anecdotes about their work. Often, guest speakers will also give demonstrations on new techniques, such as dyeing or photo transfer, and they may even offer to sell related patterns, supplies, fabrics and completed pieces.

Monthly meetings also include special workshops, which consist of hands-on activities or make-and-take projects. These projects are meant to improve members' skills and, they also serve as a great socialization opportunity. New tools, techniques and design ideas are discussed and some members even participate in the very traditional quilting practice known as "Bee" style. "Bee" style quilting, as Marion informs, refers to a type of group quilting where the women gather around to work on the same quilt together.

Throughout the year, members will also work on special tasks, such as making Christmas stockings for Operation Food Bank or special quilts to sell to organizations for charity (including women's shelters and the Alzheimer's society).

However, the Show and Share is often regarded as the primary activity of the evening. It allows members to bring in their own finished or almost finished projects to show the guild. Marion

explains that this component often sparks the most interesting discussions as members take the chance to mention their inspirations and discuss their choice of pattern and technique. Members may also choose to mention the classes they attended and the new skills they picked up along the way.

Marion doesn't ignore the cliché image that surrounds the tradition of quilting. However, she is quick to add that "Quilting is really for anyone who has an artistic flare or loves designing." In fact, she says with a laugh, after all her years of quilting she is still surprised at the variety of women who join the guild. "They really come from all walks of life," she insists.

The Port Perry Patchers encourages anyone who has an interest in quilting to come as a guest to one of their monthly meetings. As Marion feels, everyone and anyone could benefit from the show. "There's always something going on!" she exclaims.

Port Perry Patchers meet the third Monday of every month at Hope Christian Reform Church. For more information contact Marion Meyers at 905-706-0552.

By Christina Coughlin
Focus on Scugog



Marion Meyers of the Port Perry Patchers, is a past president of the guild.