



THE SOCIETY OF FABRIC

to do two more, so they could all be hung together for sale. I was thrilled when Cheryl Hannah purchased all three. In 2008 I won first prize for a wall hanging.”

Then in 2010 Lois won the Cheryl Hannah \$1000 Acquisition Prize.

“The theme was Norman Lindsay’s Christmas Pudding so I decided to do something a bit different with Christmas decorations and gifts.”

For the past thirteen years Lois has been focusing on free-form machine embroidery. Using a quilting or darning foot, machine embroidery thread and new and recycled fabrics, old lace and wool, she then incorporates her own hand-dyed silks using native flora.

“It was Sandra Fisher who taught me, after I had seen her exhibition of silk dyeing titled ‘Nature’s Footprints’ at the Altenburg Gallery.”

Lois still has a preference for landscapes and seascapes and now attaches the work to canvas frames to enhance the vibrant colours and scenes of the local bush. When her mother died, Lois was fortunate to obtain some of her mother’s vast collection of fabrics, especially 1950s velvatene.

“My mother taught me to always feel the quality of the material. When I am able to, I incorporate pieces of my mother’s fabrics and old laces into the canvases.”

Her work is regularly exhibited at BRAG, our Community Art Centre and is either sold, commissioned or donated to worthy causes. Some of her work has travelled to buyers in Melbourne, rural Victoria, west NSW, the South Coast and to Queanbeyan and the ACT. Surprisingly she sells very little in Braidwood, with the most recent purchase by Jack Featherstone of the piece titled ‘Can’t see the woods for the trees’ featuring the Snail Trail over the Clyde.

Her most recent exhibition has been at the Q Gallery in Queanbeyan where there are prizes of \$5000. This is the first time Lois has exhibited outside of Braidwood.

Lois has recently joined the Braidwood Quilters and she now teaches free-form machine embroidery. It is a six-week course, held at the Braidwood Scout hall on Wednesdays. Lois donates the \$50 course fee to the Hospital Auxilliary. Lois loves introducing newcomers to this beautiful artform and all are welcome, including those who make beautiful quilts, many



of whom have undertaken a number of courses in 2016. As Lois says, “You don’t have to be a seamstress to be successful in Free-form Machine Embroidery, in fact, I can’t sew a straight line.”

For information regarding courses, phone Lois on 4842 1581. ■

An itch to stitch

Lyn Cram met up with Lois McKenzie

Visitors to the Braidwood Library, during November 2016 to July 2017, would have seen the beautiful canvases hanging on the back wall. At first glance they looked like oil paintings, but closer inspection revealed incredibly detailed, embroidered wall hangings.

Lois McKenzie was born in Takaka, on the northern tip of the South Island of New Zealand, into an artistic family. Her mother was a skilled dressmaker and milliner, her father dabbled in oils, her uncle, despite suffering from multiple sclerosis for 40 years, was a professional artist in both oils and watercolours. It’s no surprise then that Lois excelled in art at school.

Lois completed her General Nursing and after graduating she came to

Australia to attend her brother’s wedding in Sydney.

“I fell in love with Australia and was captivated by the colours of the Australian bush, and vowed to return.”

After 28 years of nursing, and travelling overseas for a year she sustained an injury to her right arm and that put an end to her nursing career. While visiting some friends in Braidwood, Lois and her partner decided to purchase five acres on Wallaces Gap

Road, Majors Creek and settle there.

“It was then I decided to get back to my love of art and I commenced doing landscapes and seascapes in pastels. With generous advice from Lucinda Boyd on the use of pastels and the importance of using fixatives to seal the work, I was successful in selling some of these. Some time later I met Judy Schneider who saw some of my work hanging at Majors Creek. On her suggestion I exhibited at Jill McLeod’s Gallery and then through BRAG.”

Lois began selling her work and getting commissions. Judy Schneider became Lois’s mentor and suggested that she undertake a one-day course in free-form machine embroidery.

“I was blown away, and took to the medium like a duck to water. I bought a darning foot for my sewing machine and started accumulating a variety of fabrics, laces etc. and so began my introduction to textile art.”

“In 2003 I approached Marion who ran the Caboodle Café. I took one of my canvases to show Marion. It featured a gumtree trunk based on photographs I’d taken. She asked me



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