



A FEW STITCHES TODAY — AN HEIRLOOM TOMORROW.

The Newsletter of The Cataraqui Guild of Needlearts

President's Message

by Lyn M

It's a beautiful day to have coffee on the porch and sit outside with my dog. Spring has finally arrived, and I know that I, for one, am ready for the nice weather.

We had a few important decisions to make this year as a group. Taking the decision to remain with the EAC/ACB means we can now move forward and not revisit that question. The vote to increase our membership fee will hopefully allow us to continue to grow our programs this year without the constant concerns about financial constraints. That does not mean that we can be cavalier about it, but we do now have options.

As the year draws to a close, I want to thank you all for your support and patience with me in what has been a new role. I hope you enjoy a marvellous summer and that you can find the time to do some embroidery . . . and make one or two items for our fall boutique.

**Gilding the Needle
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Guild News

Administrative Committee

At our Annual General Meeting in June, Donna announced two changes to our Administrative Committee. Francine will be our new Membership Chair, and Eileen and Sally will be co-chairing the Programme Committee. We thank Lynn P. for her hard work as membership chair over the last two terms, and Anjali for her years of work on the Administrative Committee (one term in Programme, preceded by two terms as Vice-President, which included organizing our fair).

Membership Renewal

Please be sure to give your membership renewal form to Francine. Remember that our annual fee was raised to \$100 (covers both EAC/ACB and CGNA). Fees can be paid by cash, cheque, or e-transfer (via Leola).

New Brochures



Beth M., with assistance from Leola, has updated our brochures and there are 1000 copies in our library cupboard. They will do no good there – please take a handful and watch for venues willing to make them available to clients and passers-by.

Anime Kingston Workshop



Anime Kingston held its second annual community convention on July 5th. As we learned from EAC/ACB's presentation on Maral Agnerian and Cosplay (see Kristeen's report in Gilding the Needle, March 2025), the elaborate costumes created for this event often involve rich embroideries. Tina taught a cross-stitch workshop there on our behalf.

CGNA Administrative Committee June, 2026

Executive Officers

President: Lyn M.
Vice-President: Tina
Past President: Donna
Secretary: Tricia
Treasurer: Leola

Standing Committee Chairs

Programme: Sally & Eileen
Communications: Donna
Library: Mary Ann
Hospitality: Nancy
Membership: Francine
Special Events: Tina

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5 Minutes to Midnight

EAC/ACB Speaker Series: Yvette Stanton

by Leola



Last February, Yvette Stanton, the “Queen of Whitework”, gave an online lecture entitled “5 Minutes to Midnight” for EAC/ACB. She is using her degree in graphic design to document and pass on stitching knowledge to the next generation of stitchers. Yvette has published 11 books, writes a blog, teaches classes, and specifically tries to provide left-handed stitch directions. It takes about two years for her to research and produce a book documenting a traditional whitework style.

This specific lecture was about learning and documenting stitching from the last practitioners of traditional needlework before they die. As more women move into the workforce, fewer have the time to learn cultural skills. Obviously, we risk

losing needlework knowledge if it is not documented. It is easier to get accurate technical stitching information and interpretations of designs from these custodians with living knowledge than to guess at techniques and meaning from artifacts. These stitchers are primary sources who know the cultural context and meanings for the placements, interpretations, and movement. We need to record their methods in books and other means which will outlive people. These people and any books they write are the most accurate source of their traditions.

When Yvette researches a style, she first tries to identify whether it is a distinctive style, not just a variation of another style. She defines “style” as a group of people doing the same type of embroidery for a period of time, with at least 40 different examples. If possible, Yvette tries to spend time with embroiderers of the traditional method. Otherwise, she spends several days in museums photographing the front and backs (in detail) of historical artifacts. She returns home, tries to resource similar fabric and threads, and then attempts to recreate the artifacts’ stitches.

On January 26th, “Australia Day”, the Australian government announced the recipients of the “Medal of the Order of Australia” for 2026 – and Yvette Stanton was amongst them! The citation was “for service to embroidery”. Yvette’s response (<https://yvettestanton.substack.com/p/medal-of-the-order-of-australia>) included the following remarks:

...to many, embroidery is “just” women’s work. Something to keep the little lady happy.

But no, it’s far more than that. . . . Yes, it certainly keeps me happy, but what I do is important to many people. There’s the aspect of preservation of culture: some of the skills of the historical embroidery styles that I have studied and recorded have never before been written down in English or even in the language of their culture of origin - this helps to keep those skills alive! The stitches, skills and techniques I teach bring new ways of expressing creativity to many. For some, these skills connect them to their heritage. Slow crafts such as embroidery are excellent for health and wellbeing - there are many studies that show this. And I could go on...

Congratulations, Yvette!

Her overarching desire is to respect the work, not culturally appropriate it, and to produce books which will outlive the people. She tries to be “honest” to the evidence instead of giving her own interpretation.

Next year Yvette is starting her Ph.D. on endangered embroidery styles. Obviously, she will need to write a dissertation. She then plans to publish her learnings in a more meaningful format for embroiders. People specifically asked her to include lots of pictures, and to come to the EAC/ACB Seminar in early May, 2028 in Longueuil, Quebec (3 hours, 15 minutes from Kingston).

Some interesting information included in Yvette’s talk was:

- She is researching an Iron Age embroidery. It is hard to verify the motifs, placement, and so forth because there are no other sources of information.
- Friesian whitework was traditionally done on 100 ct. linen with a thin linen thread. Comparable fabrics and threads are no longer available. The style did not have a name so Yvette coined the phrase “Friesian whitework” as a descriptive title for the book.
- Hardanger was traditionally done on 40 to 60 ct. fabric. Traditionalists find our modern interpretations crude by comparison, both in the fabric used and the use of coloured threads.
- Bordado de Guimaraes embroidery is only done in DMC blanc, 310, 321, 415, 644, 796. It uses lots of bullion knots.
- Hedebo, in the Grieve Museum, has 6 distinct styles. The expert in this style is in her 80’s.
- A used copy of Yvette’s out-of-print book on Ukrainian Drawn Thread Embroidery is currently available on Amazon for \$1,162.99. That is a pricey used 48-page paperback! Yvette was going to republish that book, but her car broke down so the money went towards that.

Throughout the lecture, Yvette displayed an authentic interest and respect for the people producing embroidery, their knowledge and their skills. It was awesome to interact with this embroidery superstar! I wish her the best in her studies, and hope that she will indeed come to Canada.

Portuguese Embroidery: A Response to Yvette Stanton’s Lecture *by Leola*



Yvette Stanton’s comments reflect the sentiments of many in the embroidery community. Even we, as CGNA, regret that excellent stitchers are older and unable to participate and mentor us as they previously did. The same dilemma is experienced as one travels. The following examples are from Portugal, the mainland and the islands.

On **Terceira** (a Portuguese island in the Azores), there is an embroidery centre and museum with exquisite whitework. I asked whether it would be possible to take a workshop. The response was that the average age of their embroiderers was 81. They had tried having workshops, but the

elderly ladies found it too physically demanding to work all day. Instead, they preferred to embroider a little at a time to make some extra cash. Their work sold for \$10 to \$25 per doily up to \$1,700 for a large tablecloth, so their income, per hour of work, is very low. Younger island women were pursuing their educations and careers to improve their standard of living. They did not have the time or inclination to do the time-consuming embroidery.



Other Portuguese city areas or islands have their own unique style of embroidery and customs. In the **Guimaraes** folk museum is a red sampler. Traditionally, a young woman from that area would embroider a sampler which she would present to the man she fancied. If he accepted, they were considered to be courting. (Having the girl make the first official step is the opposite of the Welsh tradition where a male would carve a large decorated wooden spoon to present to the female of his choice.)

We found three embroidery stores open when wandering around downtown Guimaraes on a Tuesday evening. People were coming into the official DMC store for supplies (incredible selection). The other stores had displays, items for sale, and worktables. One by one, women were entering, sitting down, and starting to embroider with their red threads as the shop owners came over to check and help.



The next day's stop at the **Mateus** estate illustrated the importance of embroidery. The family home and private chapel complex were completed in about 1744. The chapel itself was not consecrated for another nine years as they waited for the chapel embroideries to be completed by several embroiderers working full-time. The embroideries were considered an essential aspect of the sacred space without which the chapel could not be officially used. These chapel cloths are now kept in museum conditions, with the lights only briefly turned on so that tour groups can examine them for five minutes at a time.





A neighbour insisted that we visit the embroidery museum in **Castelo Branco** to see their famous traditional “embroidered rugs”. These “rugs” are brightly embroidered bedspreads with unique designs and stitches. This embroidery centre has a display floor, shifts of working embroiderers, workshops and courses, and they try to bring their traditional techniques to haute couture to keep the skills relevant to today’s context.



The square representing Portugal on the **Quilt of Belonging** was stitched by Oliva Abreu. The description in the companion book speaks of Madeira’s highly valued cutwork embroidery and the reality behind the beauty. Olivia started learning cutwork from her older sisters when she was seven. Then,

....by the age of eleven, she had finished her basic schooling and was working full-time embroidering at a highly skilled and professional level. There was no time to play... “Sometimes,” Olivia recalls with gentle sadness in her voice, “we had to work all night to meet the deadlines.” Perfectly stitched, unique Madeira pieces were worth thousands of dollars in the world market, but even the most talented embroiderers were paid very little for their diligent efforts. Most women, including Olivia, lost part of their childhood as well as a chance at a formal education because of their involvement in the embroidery industry.



- Quilt of Belonging, page 53

As Yvette Stanton indicated, the older custodians of embroidery traditions and skills are dying, and it behooves us to document the skills and meanings of the embroideries within their contexts. It also behooves us to grapple with the role of embroidery in their lives and situations, and the choices we make in our context.

What was the personal cost to past professional embroiderers? Was that role ever economically viable? What is the role of professional embroiderers in our world? How does one preserve traditional skills and respect the stitcher? What do they embroider and how are these items treated?

Or, for us, when does a hobby become an obsession? Where is the balance between personal enjoyment and societal responsibility? How does our embroidery contribute to the society we live in?

Learn-A-Stitch, 2025-26

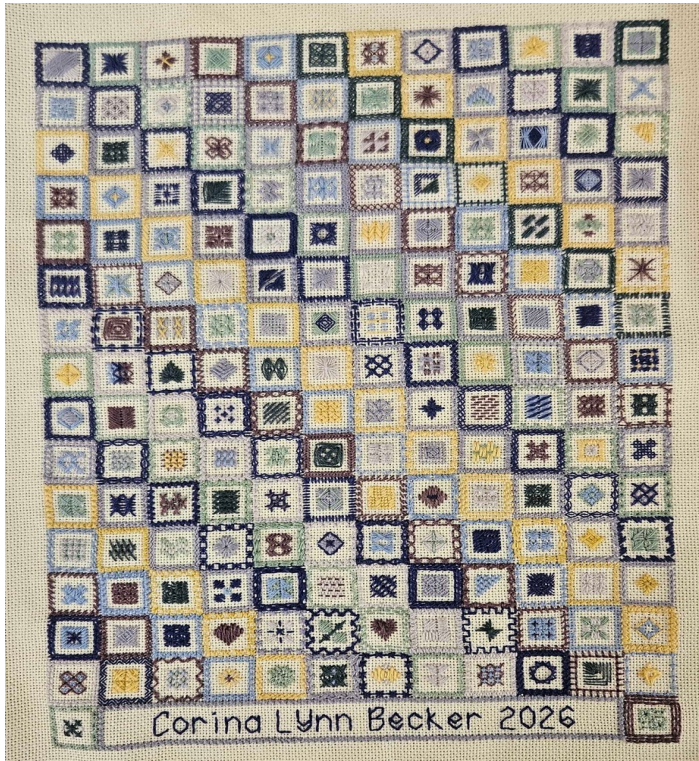


Last year's Learn-A-Stitch involved two types of stitches. From September to February, we worked on specialty stitches for counted-thread work, such as Rhodes, Sheaf, Herringbone, Jessica, Norwich, and the like. Several members chose to stitch Northern Expressions' **Twisted Band Sampler**, modifies the stitches to run on the diagonal. Lynn P's piece – finished and framed – is shown at the top left. Francine had to adjust the pattern to fit her fabric, but is now on the home stretch, as is Sally (middle picture) and Donna (top right picture).



In the spring, we switched to crewel work, in order to focus on something that would appeal more to our surface embroidery stitchers. The stitches taught, and the recommended project, came from the pattern for a crewel sewing case cover in **Embroidery Canada** (Fall, 2025). Eileen's work-in-progress (top right) uses the suggested colours, while Lyn M's choice of materials (bottom right) gives a completely different effect.

The Stitch-A-Day Sampler by Corina



The "A Stitch a Day" sampler, from *Morning Glory Needleworks*, is a project in which one is meant to complete 365 different stitches, one per day, in a year. Designed to start in the top left-hand corner and working across the row, you complete an outline box one day, and the centre the next day. The overall effect reminds me of a quilt.

It had been suggested to me as a summer project; however, I'm not one to stick to "one a day." And so, I completed the project in about a month.

To be honest, I have some mixed feelings about the project. I wouldn't immediately suggest the pattern to someone just learning the stitches, because the stitches and variations thereof are not in order; a variation of a stitch is often presented before the basic form. I also found the closeness of

the boxes could be confusing, especially with the more complicated stitches in such a tight space. If I were to do the project again, I would add space around each box and possibly work larger so that the stitches are easier to see. Something else to keep in mind is that the pattern diagrams have some typos early in the pattern, specifically with the colours. So I would recommend referencing the chart for colours instead of the diagrams, at least in the first two rows.

However, it was a fun project to pick up, and a great way to learn stitch variations. I found I made fewer mistakes in this piece than I thought I might. This is because mistakes (especially the ones I make) throw off the geometry/grid of the pattern, so they're easier to notice and correct. And, while I personally don't like the colours I picked (I deliberately used surplus supplies from my stash), the pattern calls for a palette that people can easily customize to their individual tastes.

Altogether, it was an enjoyable and relaxing project, especially to pick up for a little bit from time to time.

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The Spirit of Your Stitching



News – Good and Bad – From Our Library *by Beth M.*

On a pleasant Thursday morning in June, Kristeen and I did a full inventory of our library. The bad news is that there were 15 missing books, although, to be honest, that's fewer than we expected. So few that I can print the full list right here:

MISSING BOOKS	
TITLE	AUTHOR
Encyclopedia of Needlework	de Dillmont
A Little Book of Embroidery Basics	Lufholm
Sampler & antique needlework, vol II	Anchor
Complete Guide to Creative Embroidery	Beaney/Littlejohn
The Colour Book of Embroidery	Simpson
101 Needlepoint Stitches	Hanley
Country Cross-Stitch	Perna
Long and Short Stitch Embroidery	Burr
Crewelwork Embroidery	Wilson
Cutwork Heirloom Sewing IV	Howard
Ayrshire and Other Whitework	Swain
A Signature in Time	Vanessa Ann C'n
Christmas Tree Ornaments	Bodger
Embroidery on Paper	McNeill
Paper Needlepoint	Sewmakers

If you see any of these books lying around, please bring them back to us! I would particularly like to reclaim the Anchor book (we have seven of its siblings, and should complete the set), the Beaney/Littlejohn book (again, we have others in the series), Trish Burr's book, and the two little books on paper embroidery.

The good news is that our library is up to 609 items. But, wait, let's make that 615! Beth A. appeared at our year-end party with two cartons of books she was culling from her collection. Although many of her titles were already in our collection and went straight to the Heron Table, I snaffled six goodies to add to our shelves.

So – you might want to take a peek at:

1. **Blended Embroidery** by Brian Haggard. What's *blended* here are ideas, images and techniques from different time periods. A hard book to categorize; in the end, I put it with the omnibus project books (Section 1.5) as the bulk of the text details 12 projects – but it is much more sophisticated than most of the books in this section.
2. **Boro for Beginners** by Boris Joseph. It's exactly what the title says, and now lives in Section 6.4 with the other books on styles from different cultures.
3. **Brazilian Three-Dimensional Embroidery** by Rosie Montague. Although there are instructions for some embroidery stitches, the bulk of the book consists of 50 ornate transfer designs.
4. **Creative Embroidery** by Dilys Blackburn. Some technique, but mostly inspiration – a good book for summer browsing! (Section 1.1)
5. **Creative Embroidery: Mixing the Old with the New** by Christen Brown. This book makes me wish I had not discarded so many of Aunt Cathy's hankies! A book that is both inspiring and practical, now in Section 2.3 of our library.
6. **Freestyle Embroidered Mandalas** by Hazel Blomkamp & Di van Niekerk. A book of surface embroidery projects that will convince even the strictest devotee of counted-thread work to give free style a try. (Section 4.1)

Thank you, Beth A, for such a generous donation.

Carie Collette: Stitch Enthusiast by Francine & Beth M.

On June 9th, our Guild was blessed with a wonderful speaker, Carie Collett, from right here in the Kingston area. Our President, Lyn M, had met her recently at a quilt retreat run by Stitch-by-Stitch. She was so impressed with Carie's energy, knowledge, and accomplishments that she proposed her as our year-end speaker. Even though Carie has a full-time job, a husband, a teen-aged son, and a house, she finds the time to stitch, to quilt, to explore fabrics and fibres, to shop for samplers – both charts and antique pieces – and to re-produce those antique samplers with an eye to marketing them. I guess Lyn thought that we could all learn from such a woman!



Carie started cross-stitching as a youngster and was hooked. She worked her way through stamped pieces, little Dimensions kits, the charming cross-stitched children from a book called “All our Yesterdays”, and graduated to buying charts, fabrics, and fibres which she put together to suit her own taste. Largely self-taught, she takes advantage of the resources on the internet: the online shops (Evertote from London, Ont is a favourite), the instructional flosstube tutorials, the auction sites, and the opportunities to join groups and attend retreats. (Her interaction with Jacob de Graaf should ring a bell with guild members – our former member, Karen Q., was a fan of his Modern Folk Embroidery).



As one gains experience and confidence, one starts to modify patterns. On the top sampler, Carie replaced the bright pink skins of the angels with more “inclusive” flesh tones. The bottom picture shows a purchased antique sampler and Carie's reproduction.

Carie loves samplers, and, over the last year or so, she has been buying antique pieces online. She warned us that this is not a foolproof method and showed us one sampler whose backside clearly showed that it had been worked by machine. A relatively new venture involves using PCStitch to convert these precious antiques to charts which she can stitch for herself. She's planning to market her charts on Etsy.

If I had a recording of her talk, I would play it and count the number of times she used the word “love”. Carie *loves* hand-dyed fabric, she *loves* Sulky thread, she *loves* samplers, she *loves* time with stitching friends: She just plain *loves* stitching! And, her enthusiasm reminds us that we *love* it too! I'm looking forward to the day when our paths cross again, as they most certainly must.

Lyn M. was taken with Carie's version of a “thread drop”. Carie winds a skein of floss into a long loop, cuts the loop at the bottom and threads the top loop through a hole on a cardboard tag with a Lark's Head knot. Identifying info is written on the tag. The thread drops needed for a project can then be stored on a metal ring. A single ply can be lifted out with one's needle. Neat!!

Fall Programme

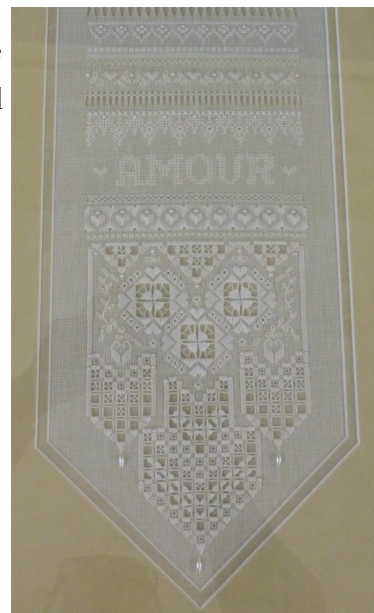
It wasn't until our June 9th meeting that Eileen and Sally accepted Donna's invitation to co-chair the Programme committee. Necessarily, plans for the 2026-27 stitching year are still tentative. That said, the theme for the 2026-27 Learn-A-Stitch will be whitework.

Whitework has a long history. Traditional whitework involved stitching with white threads on white fabric, creating designs with texture instead of colour. Early whitework was so expensive to produce that only royalty and the church could afford it. As linen and cotton became more widely available, however, the embroidered altar cloths and christening robes were joined by table linens and garments. Whitework spread and flourished during the Middle Ages throughout Europe, where different cultures developed their own particular styles: Italian Casalguidi, German Schwalm, Norwegian Hardanger, Scottish Ayrshire, Irish Mount Mellick, and so on. The result is a whole family of styles that overlap and borrow from each other.

Eileen and Sally believe firmly in CGNA's mission as a teaching guild. If all members are to enjoy Learn-A-Stitch, the yearly theme must be broad enough to appeal to everyone. Whitework has such breadth: It combines surface embroidery with counted-thread techniques. Consider pulled-thread work: The lacy areas must be bounded by an outline where the threads can be started and ended. Those outlines might be made in satin stitch, or Palestrina Knot stitch, or coral knots – all stitches from the surface work repertoire. And what would a Mount Mellick floral design be without eyelets – a basic pulled-thread stitch? We hope that counted-thread stitchers will choose to incorporate some surface embroidery elements in their projects, and vice versa. That is, members with different tastes and different preferences may unite under a white(work) flag of truce.

For the initial meetings next September, you will need a scrap piece of linen to try out the stitches. (Although, technically, one can do pulled-thread stitches on evenweave, linen is preferable because it is more loosely woven and its threads can be more easily pulled into designs.) Some scraps of linen will likely be available from our supplies cupboard at fire-sale prices. You will also need some perle cotton – floss is not strong enough for pulled-thread work. Your practice materials don't have to be all white – it is easier to see the stitches when the threads and ground fabric are different colours.

Some members will spend time this summer perusing books and magazines and online shops to find a whitework pattern to stitch or to adapt as a Learn-A-Stitch project for the year. Indeed, we already have a group of stitchers committed to stitching the free pulled-work sampler offered by Gitta's (<https://gittas.com/Products/FreeStuff/KathrinsFreebies/kathrinfreebies.html>). It's a good choice – a clear structure for those most comfortable with that level of instruction – but lots of opportunity to adjust size, colour, and design to one's liking. Kristeen has already nixed the beads that were called for. Also, remember that, just as modern blackwork doesn't have to be black, modern whitework doesn't have to be white, although the threads and ground fabric should match.



Section of Lynn P's wedding sampler, which incorporates many whitework styles, including Hardanger, pulled-thread work, and drawn-thread work.



Close-up of a square from the freebie sampler (Gitta's), stitched by Gabrielle.

Upcoming Events

July 5 – 25. Frameworks Canada (Kingston) presents **Sean and Margaret Morris: Mother and Son**. 673 Innovation Drive, Mon-Fri: 9 – 5, Sat: 9 – 4. No admission fee.

July 30. **World Embroidery Day**. All stitchers are encouraged to take finished or unfinished work to a public place, such as Lake Ontario Park, and engage with the general public.

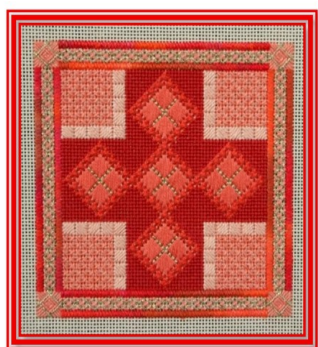
August 22, 10 – 5. **Stitch Day at Knowledge & Needles**, 190 Smith St., Brighton. Bring a contribution to the potluck lunch, a fold-up chair, and whatever stitching – finished and ongoing – you’d like to show and work on. A time to stitch, shop, and chat in a convivial atmosphere.



August 27, 10 – 2. We have been invited by the Quinte Guild to join their **Stitch-in at the Ameliasburgh Museum**. Bring your own lunch, but drinks and snacks are being provided by the museum. No fee. (Some attendees have decided to make a donation to the museum.) RSVP (Tricia has the address).

October 17, 10 – 4. St. John’s Anglican Church. **Celebration of Fabric and Thread**. CGNA and The Kingston Heirloom Quilters present an exhibition of quilts, embroidery, and bobbin lace. Boutique. Vendors. Admission: \$5.

CGNA members are asked to spread the word, to prepare your finished pieces for display, and to make a few little items to sell in the boutique. Tricia has already finished a set of cards with embroidered inserts (pic on right). Above all, save Fri. Oct. 16 (set-up) and Sat. Oct. 17 (the big day) – we will need all hands on deck!!



October 27 – 28, 9:30 – 3:30. St. John’s Anglican Church. **Carolyn Mitchell Canvas Workshop**.

Carolyn will teach both a beginner’s and a more advanced canvaswork pattern. The workshop is open to both CGNA members and non-members, so spread the word and enlist your friends! The fee (\$72 for CGNA members, \$77 for non-members) covers one pattern plus the two days of instruction. Once the fee is paid (cash, cheque or e-transfer), a supply list will be provided. For more details, visit <http://quiltskingston.org/cgna/workshops/carolynmitchell.htm>
Thank you to Kristeen for her work organizing this event.