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Miniature Needlepoint

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The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

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Needlework is a timeless tradition, whether it be embroidery, knitting, lacemaking or any of the other many beautiful textile arts evolving from needle and thread. There is a human intimacy with fabric that has developed over 20,000 years of sewing traditions from cultures around the globe. For those who make handmade fabrics or handstitched textiles, there is a feeling of camaraderie with previous generations, a delight in being a part of an art form that has such a long, rich history.

Those who do needlework in miniature practice the same techniques as they would in full scale, adding a formidable challenge in patience and dexterity to an already demanding discipline. Those who do fine scale, miniature reproduction petitpoint must do the same quantity of stitches as they would on a larger template – the size of the stitches become remarkably reduced, at times no larger than the



Needlepoint footstool by Annelle Ferguson. This footstool (shown in detail in the bottom picture) is located in the Music Room of *Forget-Us-Not Fairy Castle* (Ron & April Gill, 1998). Photo by Emily Wolverton.

period at the end of this sentence. These artisans must use magnifying lenses to produce detailed works which are often smaller than a postage stamp. These are objects of great beauty and skill, sought out by private collectors and museums such as ours.

One of these miniature needlepoint artists is IGMA* Artisan Annelle Ferguson, whose tiny stitches can be found in several pieces throughout our collection, including *Forget-Us-Not Fairy Castle* (Ron & April Gill, 1998), *Gone With the Wind/Chestnut Hill Studios* (Acq. 1988), and *Alderly Manor* (Throop, 1985), among others. In her article, “Mini Stitches, Maxi Talent,” Anne Day Smith writes about how Ferguson found her way into the miniature world of needlepoint.¹ As it turns out, it was really Ferguson’s next door neighbor who gets the credit, teaching her how to do needlepoint after the two of them had decided to build dollhouses for their daughters – the skill helped Ferguson make a miniature rug.²

Ferguson, who described herself at the time as a “homemaker, jumping into this craft and that craft, never finishing anything,” suddenly found herself inspired – “I had never done anything so fascinating in all my life,” she recalls.³ Her fascination with the art form led her deeper and deeper into the world of miniature stitching. She has polished her technique, working exclusively on fine silk gauze and using only silk sewing thread or silk embroidery floss.



Needlepoint on stand by Annelle Ferguson. This piece can be found in *Gone With the Wind/Chestnut Hill Studios* (Acq. 1988). Photo by Emily Wolverton.

Ferguson points out that it was the late Barbara Cosgrove, another excellent miniature artist, who initiated her love of antique samplers, which have now become one of Ferguson’s specialties. “I am very attracted to the 18th Century style of needlework...I love the school girl samplers that became very popular around 1750.”⁴ Ferguson does avid research, collecting books on antique needlework and closely examining museum collections in the U.S. and abroad.⁵ Doing so has helped her adapt antique patterns and create her own miniature sampler kits, which she sells through her company, [Mini Stitches](#).

To see some of Ferguson’s beautiful work, come wander through our museum’s collection – her name is on several citations. In the Enchanted Realm Gallery, peek into the Music Room of *Forget-Us-Not Fairy Castle*, where a lovely needlepoint footstool rests in front of a charming Savonarola chair. The

stool is a traditional design, featuring a tree motif with red and yellow flowers and a red-breasted blue bird. In our Exploring the World Gallery, there are many examples. The needlepoint displayed in *Gone With the Wind/Chestnut Hills Studios* is quite charming, resting with one thread dangling as though just completed only moments before. Keeping the needlework within a miniature frame in this way reminds the viewer that this is a handmade piece –



Needlepoint sampler by Annelle Ferguson, located in Alderly Manor (Throop, Acq. 1985).
Photo by Emily Wolverton.

something worthy of a second glance. In *Alderly Manor*, take a look at the sampler above the blue and white striped loveseat in the middle upstairs bedroom. Ferguson dated the sampler “December 1862,” a perfect fit for our manor house. While you are there, take notice of another magnificent piece of needlework by another artist, Bobbie Schoonmaker. The petitpoint parrot sitting on the bed in the room to the right was also done one miniscule stitch at a time, and the hoop itself is about the size of a quarter!



Petitpoint parrot on embroidery hoop by Bobbie Schoonmaker. This piece can be found resting on one of the upstairs beds in Alderly Manor (Pam Throop, Acq. 1985).
Photo by Emily Wolverton.

Annelle Ferguson continues to be busy, teaching classes at the Guild School and designing new kits, as well as making handstitched originals for collectors. She also currently serves as the US Representative for the Miniature Needlework Society, an international society founded in 1997. We are proud to have Annelle Ferguson’s work displayed here at The Mini Time Machine Museum – her little stitches make a *big* impression.

Emily Wolverton
The Mini Time Machine
Museum of Miniatures

* International Guild of Miniature Artisans

1. Smith, Anne Day. “Mini Stitches, Maxi Talent.” *Nutshell News*. November 1995. Vol. 25, No. 11. p. 58 – 61
2. *Ibid.*, p. 59
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 58
5. *Ibid.*, p. 59