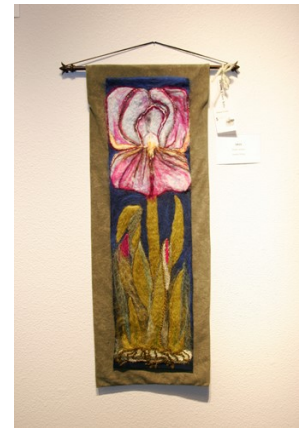


**OPAA February ArtWalks Column, Suzan Noyes 2021**

*“The journey matters as much as the goal.”* Kalpana Chawla

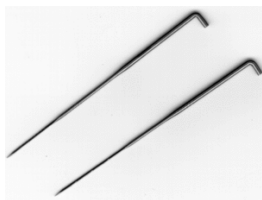
This month’s ArtWalk continues with Estelle Jackson, January’s Contemporary Tapestry artisan, regarding the concept of an ‘artistic journey.’ Artists generally view progress as lifelong learning and application, but it can be an uneven process. It’s normal to be derailed by personal factors in our lives, depending on age and personal relationships. Education, careers, births, health issues, care-giving, deaths – all factor into our life-spans. Creativity takes an inordinate amount of time, unwelcome interruptions keep coming, also plenty of interruptions we’re grateful for! That’s life. Someone wrote a song about it.

“Handwork is recreation for me,” says Estelle, “sewing machines to clay, embroidery... from childhood onward, there’s always been ‘projects’ in my life – paper-making, lost-wax cast jewelry, silk fiber fusion and hand quilting, among others.” After years of needle felting, the repetitive process caused physical issues. Frustrating to relinquish something you love in this manner, but when one door closes, another door opens. Felting opened the door to Estelle’s journey into Tapestry weaving.



Felting is the earliest known textile. Here is wonderful Wikipedia: *“Hot water is applied to layers of animal hairs, and agitation and compression causes the fibers to hook together or weave together into a single piece of fabric. Fleece from the alpaca or Merino sheep, mohair (goat), angora (rabbit) or certain rodents – beavers and muskrats.”*

I had seen samples of *Wet Felting*, but Estelle pursued a felting specialty termed *Needle Felting*,



which is creating felted objects without water and using a variety of special needles for special crafting uses. In her own words, “I read about this in a library crafting book and it sounded like something I would like to try. I could use colors in fiber on a piece of work to be picked up or put down

without restrictions of materials and lack of a workspace.”

She describes the process, “I use a fabric base with a tooth to it, such as suiting wool. Wool roving (roving is not yarn until it’s spun, both can be used in needle felting), yarn or other fibers such as silk are driven through and matted into the base fabric using a barbed single needle. As more



roving is applied, the mix of fibers blended together thickens and blends the colors as well. It's felting without water and heat."



For her first projects she used 'found wool' as a base fabric – material from old stash piles or from Goodwill. Her projects in wool and silk fibers became wall hangings, including other



accent threads and beads. She wanted to create images much like using

paints, only with fiber – and achieved this as she slowly mastered the medium in about two years. At this time Estelle was still a member of Desert Fiber Arts. Besides shows and sales in their own space, this guild also did a biannual show



at Allied Arts Gallery in Richland, Washington. The revolving attendance of patrons as well as tourism led to sales for Estelle's work through the gallery and other commissions. Juried competitions contributed to her audience.



Estelle worked exclusively in dry felting for about four years, then transitioned into combinations of felting and tapestry. She believes the time spent doing dry felting was extremely rewarding both as an entry into the world of fiber arts at an



elevated level, and as a vehicle introducing her to people, ideas and opportunities that continue today. It's a journey other artisans can easily relate to. Her love of color and texture are readily apparent in photographs of her work. Thank you for sharing, Estelle!



In honor of journeys, it's time for artists to exit post-holiday funk and pursue an artistic goal. Create something for **Small Treasures**, OPAA's yearly fundraiser-gone-virtual. Funds go to school scholarships and local causes - like necessary art supplies for local philanthropic organizations. We can't meet, greet and schmooze – not until we've all been vaccinated and the pandemic is finally stopped in its terrible tracks - but inside your studio, create a small and lovely work of art or two and we'll work together for a good

cause. Find additional information in our one-of-a-kind OPAA Newsletter. Entry deadline is April 3<sup>rd</sup>, open to *all* artists (OPAA members or not). Create and donate a tiny 5" x 7" or 8" x 10" masterpiece and continue your own artistic journey along the way.

*MORE:* OPAA is searching for Scholarship Applicants, 2021! If you know a graduating High School Senior who'd qualify, we'd love to hear from you. Access the Scholarship Application online at our website **opaagroup.org**. Students must apply even if recommended by others.

Images:

1. Needle Felted Wall Hanging
2. Craft Needles/Felting
3. Roving
4. *White Magnolia*, 16" x 16" /Needle Felting
5. Detail *White Magnolia*
6. *Succulents*, 21" x 17"
7. *Sunrise/Sunset*, 19" x 16"
8. *Bird of Paradise*, 22" x 30"
9. Detail *Bird of Paradise*
- 10 & 11. Mixed Felting and Tapestry