

Marie Campbell

by Cheryl Sharp



Marie Campbell

"I am constantly motivated by life experiences close to home."

Beads instantly attract most viewers. Marie Campbell's magnificent beaded pieces are no exception. They draw the eye, and we linger over them, imagining that someone with this much skill and artistry has been beading since childhood. However, Campbell did not come to beading at an early age, nor did she begin her embroidery career with beading.

In 1978, while teaching in the Departments of English and Education at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland, she joined EGA. Her first instruction in needlework was a needlepoint class given by Harriet Downing. Within a year, she enrolled in the EGA Master Craftsman Program in canvas, and in the mid-1980s, she received her certification. But within ten years, she caught the beading bug.

Campbell remembered her own early emotional response to beads as a "pleasurable and legal addiction." She explained this phenomenon:

Our eyes and our being are drawn to the colors, the reflective quality, and the pure yumminess of BEADS. That enticement is rewarding—a feast for the eyes and mind.

Beaded wearables are a tactile as well as a visual pleasure; fingers move to the flowing, smooth, warm texture of the beaded object. People who admire beaded wearables have a minor-key awareness of the time involved in creating. Stitchers willing to devote days—or a lifetime—to plying the needle on 22-count canvas, 42-count linen, or silk gauze have true empathy for the pleasurable passing of time as the beaded object comes to life through the work of their hands.



Mariner's Art bracelets by Marie Campbell

Campbell began bringing beaded objects to life in 1990 after admiring intricate amulet bag necklaces shaped like scallops in the Victorian fashion. Helen Banes' needlewoven neckpieces also inspired her. Through Banes' tapestry weaving process, or pin weaving, the artist first loads beads onto a warp, then weaves beads on a variety of threads through it. Carol Wilcox Wells' *Creative Beadweaving* introduced Campbell to off-loom beading.

Campbell learned tubular right angle beading from Margaret Fleming. This experience led her to classes by NanC Meinhardt, who teaches artists to ask "What if?" and move beyond their current practices to conceive of a wider range of possibilities (See *Needle Arts* June 2008).

After retiring from the university, Campbell became Region Director for EGA's Mid-Atlantic Region. Honoring the region's tradition, she offered classes while visiting chapters and in doing so, introduced many embroiderers to the delights of beading. She began serving on EGA's national board in 1995 and became president of EGA in 2001. During the board's quarterly meetings, she enjoyed Friday evenings when members took turns teaching embroidery projects. Campbell said, "I taught, and I learned."

Campbell finds inspiration for her work everywhere. Sometimes it springs from a special bead or artifact to be incorporated into stand-alone or wearable art. Nature inspires other pieces. Living in an A-frame house nestled in the wooded Terrace Mountains of central Pennsylvania, a thousand feet above Raystown Lake, is a joy for her. Campbell explained:

The environment is peaceful and beautiful. Inspiration is readily available. I love the quiet and the occasional visits of turkey, deer, bear, porcupine, eagles, great horned owls, and other birds, and a few people now and then. Over the years, I have created a number of beaded objects and wearable art inspired by the world outside my door. After years of accumulating knowledge and inspiration, coming up with ideas for new designs seems a natural act. I am constantly motivated by life experiences close to home.



Photo by Scott Dam

Frosty Rill by Marie Campbell. This design was inspired by a sparkling summer day when the illusive Mount Whitney was visible from sunset to sundown. The tiny marcasite beads and Swarovski crystals reflect the frosty rill of snow and ice that day.



Photo by Scott Dam

Detail of Frosty Rill

“I am always ready to pack a bag and go to new places.”

On the other hand, opportunities for experiencing new environments and influences also excite Campbell. “I am always ready to pack a bag and go to new places,” she said.

Campbell records her ideas in a small notebook in her purse, or takes photos, downloading those that suggest designs into a designated folder on her computer. In summer 2011, she traveled to Oregon, Washington, and Montana, and photographed mountains, streams, lakes, and ocean views. A pendant, bracelet, or lariat will recapture moments standing in lush lavender fields below Mount Hood and on the Olympic Peninsula. In May 2012, she will take a long-awaited trip to Italy, focusing her sketchbook and photos on mosaics, architecture, and natural scenes that might be recorded in beadwork.

Although she travels a lot, Campbell usually begins new projects at home. She reported:

For a design session, I like to have a wide array of possible materials at hand—that means access to many colors and types of materials. Creating new designs is great fun and requires patience. The path is smoothed by working at my beading station with all choices either at my elbow or a few steps away. Only after narrowing the choices will I consider the project portable.

When Campbell travels with a project, she carries it either in a 12" x 16" x 7/8" metal case or a 5" x 5½" x ½" plastic case. The larger case has three hinges and is lined with beading pads on both sides; the smaller container is a CD case. She cut Ultrasuede to fit and glued the pieces inside the case. She wraps a rubber band around it as an extra precaution against losing materials. “I stow threaded needles inside the case or in a small zip-lock bag to use while I am traveling,”



Night Out created by Marie Campbell



Photo by Scott Dam

Jester's Doff by Marie Campbell. This design was inspired by a call for artwork with a Renaissance theme. Campbell's design was planned to suggest a court jester's chapeau with whimsical appendages.

Campbell said. "It's easy to stitch almost anywhere, even on a plane, using this small case."

Campbell keeps a number of pieces in progress at the same time. Some are UFOs ranging from seed beading to projects from wire- or metal-work classes she has taken, to pieces she intends to teach or exhibit. Some lie dormant for a time, while others, such as projects she will teach, progress fairly steadily from inception to completion. Original works, including those developed for exhibition, seldom have deadlines, so three or four projects are kept either on display in her work area or close at hand to her beading station. Campbell commented, "If the feng shui philosophy dominated my life choices, I'd spend eighty percent of my beading time with these pieces, instead of twenty."

Like many artists, Campbell finds time spent creating invaluable. "Nothing is as important to my creative efforts as concentrated time focused on the work at hand," she stated. The time she allots to each piece must be weighed. "The issue becomes one of selection—which of the ideas teasing my mind and fingers to do first, which to take notes on to do later." Meeting deadlines for the twentieth EGA National Exhibition, submitting teaching projects for upcoming seminars, or completing a stitching challenge on time may equally motivate her. For Campbell, the following equation sums it up:

inspiration + motivation + calendar deadlines = creation

This formula helps her move from notebooks, photos, and artifacts to designs to completed works.

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Chiles on the Plaza by Marie Campbell

Photos on this page by Jennifer Riefenberg



Details of Chiles on the Plaza by Marie Campbell

Campbell is efficient, too, and can adapt her seemingly endless stream of ideas to the current need. The lariat necklace that evolved into *Flip-Flop Fandango*, a teaching piece for EGA Seminar 2011 in Naples, was originally conceived as the *Chile Pepper Necklace*. The Seminar Committee accepted it but asked that Campbell consider using embellishments more reflective of the Florida locale. So she embellished the necklace with fish and flipflops. Ever resourceful, Campbell has created another design, *Chiles on the Plaza*, to be taught at the national seminar in Santa Fe in 2012. Festooning a ribbon



Flip-Flop Fandango by Marie Campbell

of beads with peppers appealed to Campbell as did a focal area of a chile ristra, a string of dried chiles. "Right-angle weave, which forms a diamond or square, lent itself to the ribbon form," she stated. "It reminded me of Santa Fe's noted central feature, the Plaza, so I had a name for the necklace, *Chiles on the Plaza*."

At Seminar 2012, Campbell will also be teaching *Tierra Treasure*, a twenty-two-inch necklace, conceived while admiring hundreds of strands of 4mm natural stones in a Sarasota, Florida, bead store. Her years of teaching American Literature came back to her as she mused about Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*; the role of Spain in New Mexico's history; and the huge impact of the natural beauty of the Sandia Mountains, Taos, and Santa Fe on humankind.

The netted rope technique includes four strands of natural stones, but pearls, fire-polished crystals, or beads could also be used. A skeleton of bronze metallic seed beads is both functional and decorative: It wraps around the natural stones, contrasting with them, integrating the composition and providing a focus as well. The back progresses from netted rope to embellished herringbone to a fully integrated closure of the same materials.

In Naples, during the preview of Seminar 2012 classes, one observer commented that *Tierra Treasure* looked Elizabethan. Campbell added, "Perhaps that look could also be considered Renaissance Spanish influence, carried over to the indelible milieu of the Southwest."

Other pieces call to her for attention. She has begun, but temporarily set aside, a beaded embroidery of woodland, mushrooms, a stump, and other forest detritus inspired by the area near her home. She intended this piece to fulfill Step 1 of the Master Craftsman program in beading. "Since it was begun, bead embroidery has moved in my beading



Tierra Treasure by Marie Campbell



Rolling on the River
by Marie Campbell

repertoire from the least favorite technique to a challenging, creative, and pleasurable endeavor,” Campbell noted, stating that she would like to take it up again.

Currently, Campbell is working on beading a three-dimensional red drum, a Chesapeake Bay saltwater fish, and endowing it with human features. The fish is now on schedule for submission to the upcoming EGA national exhibition. “Some years ago, that fish was created in my notebook at the Fiber Forum retreat in La Conner, Washington, as an idea for a free-hanging 3-D object.”

Campbell participates in Mid-Atlantic Region (MAR) challenges. The MAR 2011 Jar Lid Challenge, which provided funding for the MAR PRiDE Scholarship through registration fees and a silent auction, inspired her to create a bead-embroidered and embellished lid for an elliptical jar, *Sea Urchin*. Campbell is already thinking about a design for the 2012 Ornament Challenge, this year’s funding opportunity.

In addition, Campbell makes the effort to attend a variety of design workshops. In Asheville, North Carolina, one of her early teachers, Carol Wilcox Wells, led a 2010 Extended Study Program that focused on creative inspiration to free students from fixating on an end product.

A long-time juried member of Fiber Forum, Campbell attends the Fiber Forum retreat almost every year. During a retreat in Santa Fe, another of her early teachers, NanC Meinhardt, urged students to use beads to shape the artistry of their own insights. In 2011, Campbell returned to Santa Fe for another Fiber Forum retreat with Jan Beaney and Jean Littlejohn (See *Needle Arts* September 2011). “The retreat offered opportunities to visit the Taos Pueblo and revisit the appealing land and art of the Southwest,” Campbell stated. “Plans are afoot to return to the area for a Fiber Forum retreat in 2014, and my name will be on the registration list ASAP.”

Teaching and learning have infused Campbell’s life, both in her academic career and in her artistic career. Attending EGA seminars since joining in 1978 has been part of that experience, and her participation in them has been varied. “I was often content with being student. Now I am enjoying teaching at EGA seminars.” Enjoyment and satisfaction comes not just from teaching but from observing the progress of new teachers. “Real lightness of heart and happiness arrives when I see generations of young teachers offering their skills and creativity in beading, embroidery, knitting, and all the textile arts.” She has high hopes for the future, adding, “Our organization has the means to thrive with their dedication.” Campbell’s own dedication to teaching and to her art may well provide inspiration for their continued success. ■

Cheryl Sharp writes the *Designers Across America* profiles, and designs her own work as well. She exhibits her work through Fiber Forum and has exhibited nationally through EGA’s *Through the Needle’s Eye*.

DESIGNERS ACROSS AMERICA PROJECT

Garden Path by Marie Campbell – A Beaded Nametag



Garden Path presents an opportunity to try your hand at bead embroidery. Worked on a stiff fabric, the project incorporates a wide variety of beads—seed, flower, and leaf beads; two sizes of bugle beads; and a Swarovski marguerite focal flower. Color selections reflect a seasonal garden—spring, summer, autumn, or even winter. Familiar embroidery stitches, such as backstitch, picot, and seed stitch, are incorporated here as bead embroidery. Stitch as shown in the photograph or, omitting the name portion, as a heart shape. Wear your *Garden Path* as a necklace pendant or as a pin.

To receive a copy of the instructions, send a check for \$7 payable to EGA, to Designers Across America EGA, 1355 Bardstown Road, Suite 157, Louisville, KY 40204. Please provide the address to where the instructions should be sent. This pattern is available until June 1, 2012. Orders received thereafter will be returned. Previous designs from the Designers Across America and the Designers Around the World series are no longer available. A yearly subscription to the project series (four projects per year) is available by sending name, address, and payment of \$25 (10% savings) to the above address.