



HOW ABOUT?

with Louise Howland

It's so easy to get carried away when shopping – whether you're buried in fabric at a patchwork store, trawling the internet for bargains or caught up in the excitement of an auction.

Have you been treasure hunting lately? With interest rates rising, the dollar booming and superannuation dwindling, it seems to be a time when many of us are more money-conscious than ever. Whatever the reason, some of our discretionary spending is being dispersed more carefully than ever. If, like me, you've stockpiled resources, it's likely you can live for years from your stores. But having supplies doesn't mean we don't need other things; there are always tempting new attractions and the resurgence of old loves, as seen right here in this magazine.

With that in mind, I've convinced myself it's a good time to invest in my stitching superannuation. There are genuine bargains to be had as shops compete for our craft dollars and the internet has opened many avenues, including price checking and comparisons. Regardless of where we live, we can seek supplies from Narre Warren, New York, Nairobi or Newcastle. Yet, for me, nothing equals the pleasure of going to a store in person, seeing friendly faces and discussing the latest issues and designs; such sharing is a pleasure we can't get from flicking through screens. The feel of fabrics, the sound of a concentrating class and the whiff of freshly pressed material is not to be found on the Net – for now at least.

Being out and about has its rewards and, I discovered, its downsides. Like many weekend wanderers, I view



second-hand shops as treasure houses. From a crumbling bookshop in central Victoria I uncovered the entire bound series of *Stitchcraft* magazine from the 1930s. In Auckland, in a basement junk shop, a silk-lined leather box of old lace and antique ribbon was calmly waiting for me. Printed floral silks lay leisurely around an Adelaide market, still priced as if it was 1970. Such windfalls gave me confidence and a firm belief in seeking and finding. But, as we're told, pride comes before a fall.

While living part-time in Hobart, my husband and I became addicted to the Friday auctions. My husband specialised in buying pianos and I sought craft supplies. One day, while circling the prey, I enthusiastically marked lots in the catalogue, all the while listening to my sister tell of her absorbing romance. My good fortune

astounded me as I opened an old hat box filled with vintage, gold French sadi threads. And there, right next to the box, was an enormous basket of various wools and a box of some 400 knitting patterns and books. Delighted with my luck, I ticked, placed bids, won, rushed to the airport and flew to Melbourne. "What are you doing?" I asked my husband cheerfully when he phoned. "I'm on my fourth ute load from the auction rooms," he answered. "You've bought two house lots. I'm piling it on the lawn. You can sort it out when you come back!" Oops.

Crestfallen and apologetic, yes, but between you and me, you know I'm still a little excited! Who knows what else I'll find among it? Until next month ...

Louise