

# HOW ABOUT?

with Louise Howland



Without a doubt, the only people who truly appreciate the time and dedication that goes into a single perfect stitch are fellow stitchers themselves.

Frustrated at not being able to find the other half of a velvet suit, I stomped back to the wardrobe feeling more than a little violent towards its state. Culling sprees are all too rare but I was in the mood to turf, ruthlessly.

Part way into to a huge cane basket (don't ask) I came across my summer holiday handbag, made for me by my beautiful daughter-in-law. The turfing stopped and I picked it up gently, straightened the straps, puffed out its body and placed it tenderly back on the shelf.

Turning to a half mile of hung dark jackets, I pulled them out, dropped the lot into a heap on the floor, slid the pile across the polished boards then gave them a forceful boot out the door. A flash of brilliant green mohair blinked out from the dark mound and I dived to retrieve it, holding the woolly jacket close, warmth without weight. A birthday gift knitted a long time ago by my neighbour Michelle, it had been years since I'd felt its silky lustre.

A traditional Greek blouse, embroidered with reds and yellows, notched neckline and tassel ties, never worn but brought home from Greece by my mother; from Mexico a purple, off-the-shoulder, elasticised waist garment with a ruffled neckline, adorned with purple lace – the occasion to wear it has not yet arisen.

A theme was emerging in this disposal attempt. Clearly, anything



that had been made by hand for me must remain. Anything bought for me, likewise, regardless of the storage space I don't have and regardless of the usefulness of the item.

Some six months ago we helped a woman begin a special baby blanket for her best friend's first child. Friendship and high regard were powerfully evident as she carefully selected threads and ribbons. She wasn't an experienced designer she said, but nonetheless wished to individualise the piece and was combining various elements to reflect the things her friend loved – Australian native flowers, wombats, butterflies and shades of green. From time to time she called in to show us her progress and we shared her pleasure as the design came together.

Yesterday she came through the door without the blanket. A healthy baby girl; all was well.

And the blanket? "I visited this morning and gave it to her. She seemed to like it, I think," the lady mused. "She said, 'how nice', but I just don't think there was a realisation of the time involved, maybe because she's not a stitcher herself."

We looked at each other. Oooh yes, we've all had that experience. We said the comforting things. "Over time she will come to appreciate the beauty of your gift." We said the understanding things. "My cousin only briefly glanced at a quilt I made her." We said the sympathetic. "Oh how awful for you."

The love, the thought, the time that goes into a handmade gift ... what more can someone do to show you how special you are to them?

Until next month,

*Louise*