

"Inspiration"

by Gül Laporte

Hiltburg Wussow

Germany

Hiltburg Wussow was born in northern Germany, in a city close to the Dutch border. Cherished by her parents and protected by a brother 8 years older, she finds herself very lonely when he leaves their home to study medicine. She tries to overcome his departure with manual occupations, knitting, crochet, weaving, etc. This is how she discovers that the creative process makes her happy. She also learns how to play the piano and likes the possibility of transforming feelings into something wonderful which bring balance to her life.

She studies languages in Heidelberg, Paris and Madrid. She loves the contact with other cultures.

After getting married, she buys her first sewing machine and uses it to make garments for all her family. She also makes decorative items for her home, tablecloths, pillows that she embellishes with lace and appliqué, without knowing that she soon would discover patchwork. For their 25th wedding anniversary, her husband gives her the top of the line sewing machine on the market at the time. During the same period, she meets her first patchwork instructor. She wants to learn and constantly seeks new teachers who will help her broaden her knowledge.



When she follows her husband to Sofia, Bulgaria, a lot of her packing boxes are full with patchwork stuff. During her 7-year stay in Sofia, Hiltburg travels a lot. She likes the Byzantine side of the orthodox culture and the wild beauty of the landscape. She tries to transfer her feelings and impressions into her quits, which become more and more influenced by her environment.

Once a year, in March, she participates to the Patchwork and quilting symposium in Irsee, Bavaria. It gives her great pleasure to take classes from different famous teachers who are there and she feels every year that her work is evolving and allows her a more personal expression.



Photo 1

"Batschkovo - Monastère"
(Batschkovo - Monastery), 1996.
Done using the bargello technique
and quilted by hand and machine.
The small pictures of the monastery
are painted on silk and appliquéd.
Silk and cotton.

Photo 2

"Berlin 2000",
especially designed for the exhibit
"Fireworks 2000", organized
by Madeira threads. Free-motion
machine embroidery on silk.
The Reichstag is the only piecing
done in the quilt (19 small pieces).

"Inspiration"

Hiltburg Wussow



3

Hiltburg remembers her first quilt, a hand quilted Ohio star. Very soon she feels "trapped" by the geometry of traditional patchwork and the almost impossibility of sewing an irregular curve. She likes paper-piecing, because she can use it to assemble more complicated shapes. She learns all kinds of quilting. She can quilt by hand as well as by machine, according to the look she wants for her quilt. She also learns how to manipulate fabrics, how to change their textures with paint and dyes, by changing their colors, making them shiny, embroidering them, etc. "All the techniques are good as long as I manage to use them in my pieces to represent what I feel" Hiltburg says. Because she spends all her free time quilting, her friends call her "Quiltburg".

As a member of the IWC (International Women's Club-Sofia), Hiltburg had organized the visit of a silk factory in the area. In the bus on the way back, while she was leafing through the German Guild quilting magazine, her only contact with other quilters at that time, her life changes all of the sudden: she hears a French lady exclaim: "vous faites du patchwork? Mais c'est formidable!" (You do patchwork? But that is wonderful!") For 2 years, they work together and create an international patchwork group. They even organize an exhibit at the French Cultural Center. Patchwork is unknown in Bulgaria and between 350 and 400 visitors came to the Center every day for this first contact. The group does not exist any more, all the members having returned to their home countries or having been transferred. But Hiltburg is certain that all of them have kept on "spreading the virus" around them.



In 1997, Hiltburg had an extremely successful solo exhibit in Plovdiv. She did some demos there that really interested the school children, university groups. Bulgarian radio, newspapers and television all talked about the exhibit with very warm words.

Since 2001, Hiltburg is back in Germany. She finds more and more stimulus to work, but unfortunately less time than when she lived in Bulgaria. Looking back, she appreciates more the years spent there and her solitary work.



4



5

Photo 3

"L'arbre" (The tree), 2001.

The bottom part is made of pieces sewn together, the tree and the bushes are fused, embroidered and quilted.

Photo 4

"Maria Orans", 1998.

This is an interpretation of a fresco in a Byzantine church, in the middle of Lake Ochrid in Macedonia. Dyed cotton, pleated and painted gauze, free-motion machine embroidery.

Photo 5

"Diptychon", 1999.

On the left, St. George, on the right, St. Demeter. Inspired by an old stone portal decorated with the 2 saints, in a northern Bulgaria monastery. The artist tried to reproduce the look of stone with the trapunto technique.

Photo 6

"Patriarche de Constantinople"

(Constantinople patriarch), 2000.

Interpretation of a Russian icon from the 15th century, which reminds of El Greco paintings by its elegance and the austerity of its character. The square on the bottom left was first drawn on black, then covered with a copper-colored gauze, redrawn, embroidered and quilted.

It does not prevent her from meeting with her quilting friends since she lives in Frankfurt. She regularly meets new people who delight her. Because of her international background and her knowledge of several languages, the German guild asked her to be its international representative. This is how she discovered that within 10 years patchwork evolved from a simple hobby to an artistic occupation.

Hiltburg has a weakness for abstract quilts. She finds that international exhibits and contests promote contacts between quilters from all over the world. She likes to remind people that we cannot forget the use of modern technology, particularly the use of computers to transfer embroidery designs on the fabric via high-technology sewing machines. Hiltburg is curious and impatient to see what the next patchwork and quilting trends will be in Europe and everywhere else in the world.



► around a project



When Euroquilt asked Hiltburg Wussow to make an "inspiration" quilt, she felt that she needed to analyze herself to understand better how she works.

"My inspirations come from my surroundings. I feel the need to draw and transfer on fabric everything that touches me physically or psychologically. None of my quilts is made with a decorative goal, but they mostly help me balance myself and keep my soul and spirit in harmony".

"Blessing Hands" is kind of a good bye to my life in the Balkans.

▶ around a project

Hiltburg Wussow



Photo 1
"Blessing Hands".

This quilt has some of the same characteristics as icons. It is an adaptation of traditional characters. The Orthodox church forbids the figurative representation of God, hence the various symbols used instead. Beyond the benediction, the hands represent sublimation and wisdom. The 3 curved rays that cross in the center represent the Trinity. All these symbols protect the globe.

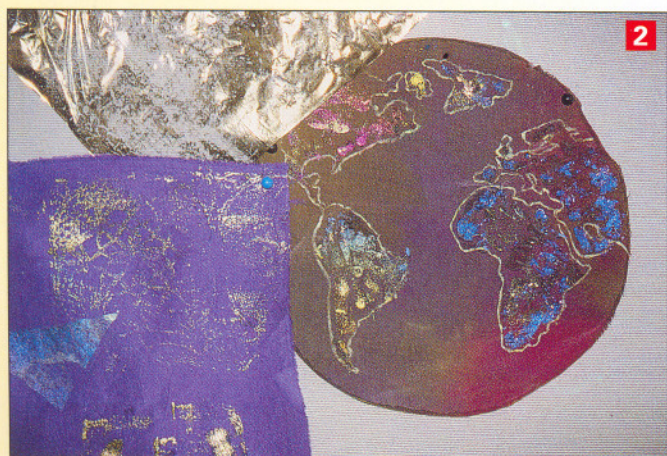


Photo 2
The circle represents the continents that will be protected by the hand symbolizing the Sky, that is God the father. Hiltburg had the idea of putting 2 squares one on top of the other after admiring a 17th century Russian icon. "The flaming thorn bush". She liked this geometric play. It is here geometric patchwork with a different effect.

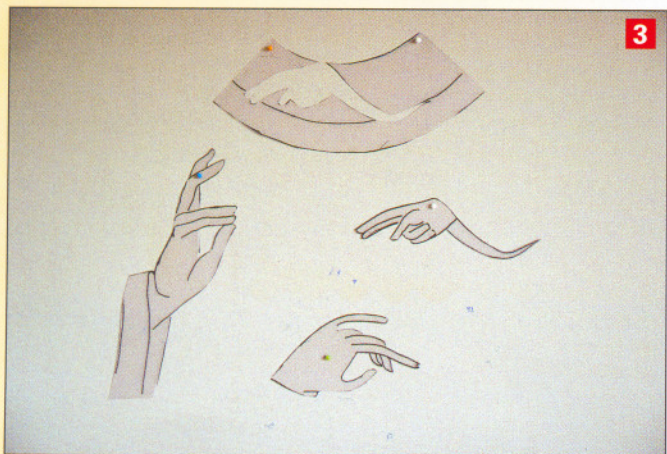


Photo 3
Drawings of the hands on paper.

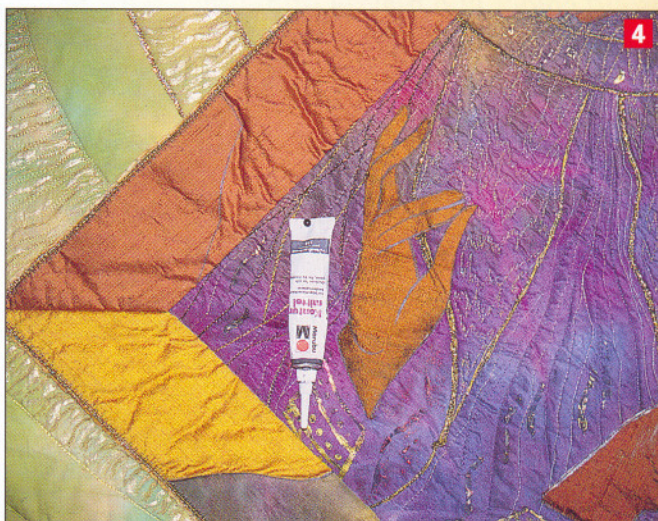


Photo 4
The hands are transferred on fabric and fused on the background.



Photos 5 and 6
Embellishment work done with thread and gold paint to achieve the look of light. Gold cannot be categorized as a color since it is a metal that shines and produces an abstract light. Almost all the icon backgrounds are gilded since the Orthodox church likens this splendor to the existence of God in this world.