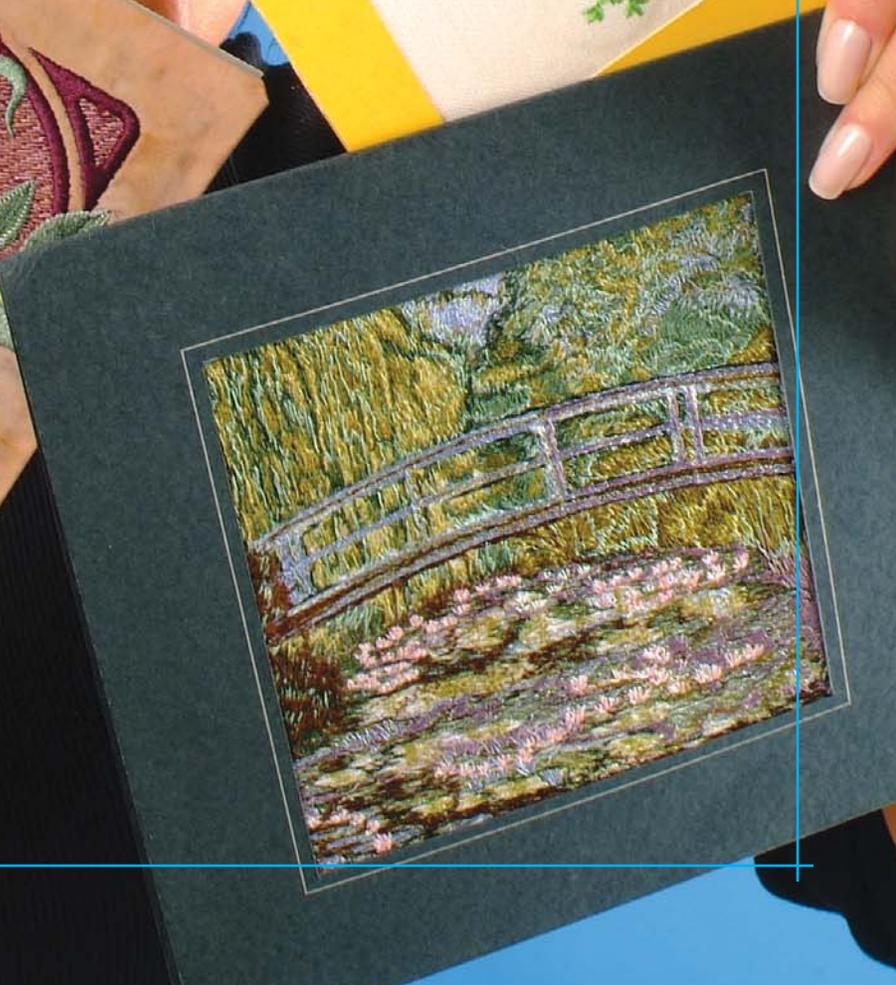
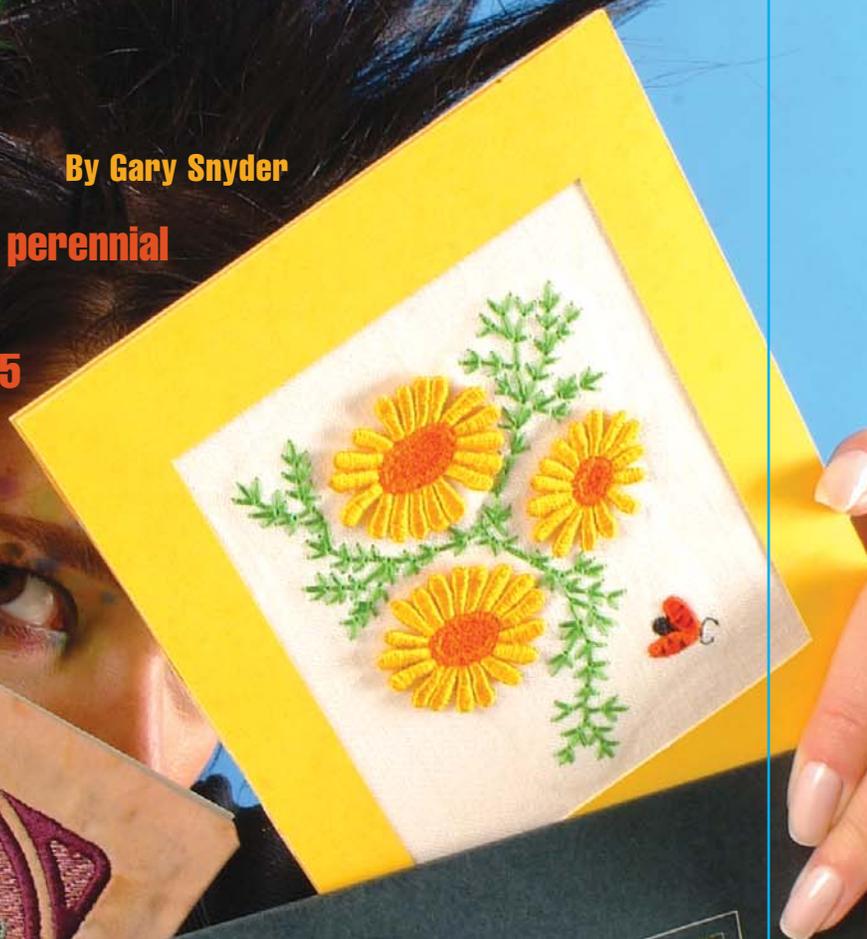


By Gary Snyder

**First-timers and perennial
favorites compete for
four titles in the 2005
Great Greeting Card Contest.**



artists artisans



Winter Holiday &
Grand Prize

The 2005 Great Greeting Card Contest can be deemed an unqualified success thanks to a significant number of entries and spirited level of competition. Novice victors were chosen in two of the categories, while a perennial favorite took top honors in two categories. The rules required that the cards incorporate embroidery and be within specified size limits.

Winners in the Winter Holiday, Valentine's Day, Birthday and General categories were each awarded \$200 and a gift certificate from *Stitches Magazine*. The Grand Prize winner, chosen from these four, won an additional Corel DRAWings Pro 2 software package valued at \$2,249.

This year's arbiters were Joyce Yost of Digitalflash in Golden, Colo., and Donna Lehmann of NeedleUp in

Henderson, Colo., both of whom have judged the contest before, as well as freshman reviewer Phyllis Yetsko of Precision Embroidery in Denver, Colo. Their difficult duty was to decide the best entries in each category evenly weighted on the following:

- Creativity as exhibited in the artistic design
- Technical execution demonstrated by registration, application and sophistication
- Use of color to effectively express a feeling or emotion
- Suitability of design in terms of being aesthetically pleasing
- Overall appeal achieved by the total impression of the card



Valentine's
Day

It is probably appropriate that the Grand Prize card was inspired by a ubiquitous Impressionist. Judges commented that every jump and run stitch used in the winning design was well planned and well hidden. The colors are subtle, not overpowering, and blend much like the original itself. The effect on the judges is that of an embroidered painting that “is just as breath-taking up close as it is from a distance.”

Winter Holiday & Grand Prize

“The Water-Lily Pond—Harmony in Green”

Firoj Mujawar, senior digitizer

Yogendra Bhagat, manager of embroidery

K.T. Radhakrishnan, manager of embroidery

Vinita Ram, executive director of operations

Affinity Express Inc., Elgin, Ill.

www.affinityexpress.com

The canvases of Claude-Oscar Monet generally are regarded as a suitable for all occasions and the judges unanimously found this entry an apropos work of embroidered art based on his 1899 oil painting “The Water-Lily Pond.”

The winning group of artisans chose a Monet painting because he is well known throughout the world and was a pioneer in the Impressionist movement—something they strive to be in their business.

Monet moved to Giverny, a little village about 40 miles outside Paris, where he lived the last half his life. He purchased a small pond adjacent to his property, where he created a water garden with an arched bridge. This piece was one of 10 renderings depicting the scene in differing light conditions.

The group was aware that the interplay of light and color would be especially difficult to translate into stitches. Faithfully replicating the painting in an entirely different medium presented the group its biggest challenge, specifically selecting the right blend of colors to reflect the intricacy of the interplay between the water and the lilies.

All of the members of this team of digitizers have art backgrounds and enjoy creating complex designs, which explains their patience and dedication. They spent 10 hours digitizing the simple design and another 30 fine-tuning the scene for production. The intent was to ensure that the end product was true to the original and illustrated the attention to detail and quality. The 45,220-stitch sewout relied on 12 hues and required a total of 20 color changes.

“Our embroidered cards have always been a great success with our customers,” says Vinita Ram, Affinity Express’ executive director of operations. “When we finally saw the stitched card and heard reactions from co-workers, clients and others, all the hours of effort were worth it.”

Faithfully replicating the painting in an entirely different medium presented the group its biggest challenge, specifically selecting the right blend of colors to reflect the intricacy of the interplay between the water and the lilies.

Valentine's Day

"With All My Heart"

Nathaniel Moore

3rd Planet Promotions L.L.C., Broomfield, Colo.

Birthday



"I am a big fan of Art Nouveau; it's very romantic to me," says Moore. The first-time entrant was looking for an opportunity to express his sensibility and Alphonse Mucha is one of his favorite illustrators. "I wanted an excuse. I just really like that style and I wanted to do something around that."

The artistic and geographic contemporary of Monet inspired Moore to produce his victorious Valentine card. Born in what is now the Czech Republic, Mucha moved to Paris in 1887 at the height of the Impressionist movement and began producing works with strong composition, decorative elements and natural curves and colors.

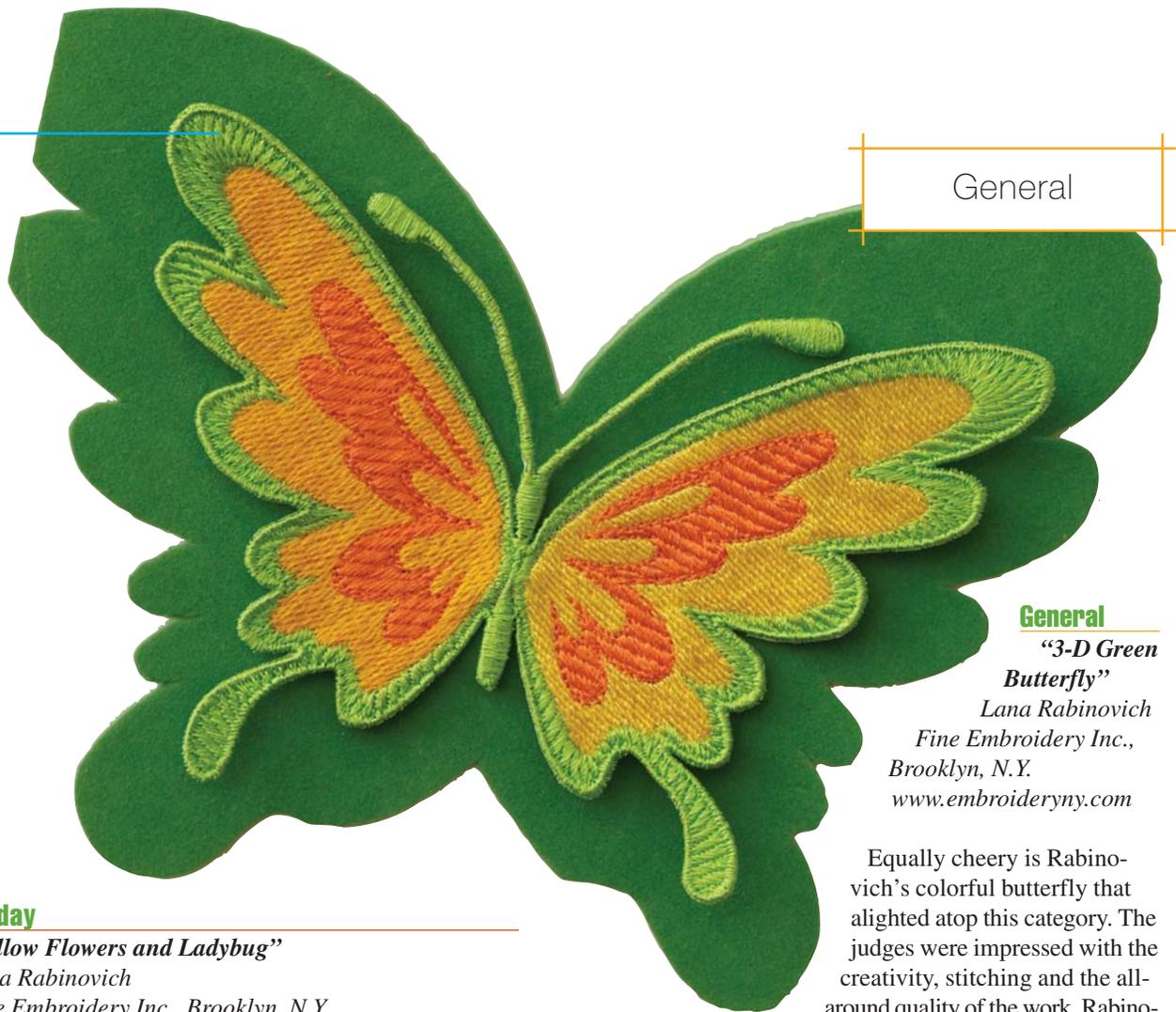
Although fond of the style, Moore's card is not excessively "New Art." In fact, the allusion was sufficiently subtle that the judges did not initially identify it as such, although they did feel the design was quite creative.

Working it when he could, Moore spent three to four hours creating the artwork, going through various sketches and revisions.

"It took quite a while to digitize it because there are some appliques in there that don't show up that much," says Moore, who had never attempted affixing embroidery to card stock before.

"It took me a while to figure out how to layer things the way I wanted them. And the iron-on adhesive rocks." He also credits the feel of the fabric, purchased from a local company he discovered and plans to frequent more often.

Moore says that ultimately the exercise was no different than the exercises he had executed while a student. "I went to school for illustration," says Moore, "so I got used to a lot of projects like that."



General

General

“3-D Green Butterfly”

Lana Rabinovich
Fine Embroidery Inc.,
Brooklyn, N.Y.
www.embroideryny.com

Equally cheery is Rabinovich’s colorful butterfly that alighted atop this category. The judges were impressed with the creativity, stitching and the all-around quality of the work. Rabinovich’s unique hands-on style—she

does everything from appliqué to trapunto, crewel work to renaissance embroidery—historically has set her apart.

A new factor influencing her creative approach is the recent purchase of a digitizing software package. The subsequent experimentation pushes the limits of her art. Turning more to technology has changed the overall look of her designs. She feels the change has improved her work because now she can produce multiple pieces rather than just one at a time. And Rabinovich is aesthetically pleased with the results thus far.

“It was very easy to design because it’s just a butterfly,” says Rabinovich.

While she is reticent to share some of her close secrets, Rabinovich does allow that she only digitized half the butterfly and simply reflected it to create the complete image. The symmetry of the insect certainly enhanced the overall appeal of the card in the eyes of the judges. The cheeriness of the 6,804-stitch design also reflects her outlook compared to her previous Stitch-Off and Greeting Card contest entries. Typically, they were more staid in their aspect.

“How you design things is a lot of feel and everything can depend on my mood,” she states simply. “In this case, it was probably a very hot day in New York and I was in a very happy mood.”



Birthday

“Yellow Flowers and Ladybug”

Lana Rabinovich
Fine Embroidery Inc., Brooklyn, N.Y.
www.embroideryny.com

Rabinovich has been a favorite in *Stitches* contests every year, winning the Winter Holidays category last year. An artist in her own right, it took some soul-searching for her to come to terms with her talent.

“I have a dear friend who told me 10 years ago I shouldn’t be concerned with what people said about my embroidery,” Rabinovich recalls. “She said that I have to do what I really want to do, and although she doesn’t know how to embroider, she inspired me at that time to move forward.”

The words struck a creative chord with Rabinovich and cleared her confusion. She succumbed to her muse, uniting her mastery of a treadle machine with her unique sense of style. She considers her current work the direct result of her friend’s advice and dedicates this year’s winning entries to her.

Rabinovich’s abilities have bloomed over the last decade and earned her increasing recognition. The work itself has become a passion. Her only real difficulty in the 6,277-stitch design was finding the right paper. Its natural sentiment illustrates Rabinovich’s feelings about embroidery as she likens herself to the bee depicted on her winning birthday card.

“If the bee could not make honey, it would die,” she says. “It’s the same with me—I have to produce embroidery; I could not live without embroidery.”

Gary Snyder is a Denver-based freelancer who writes regularly for *Stitches Magazine*.