

Lemont Center for the Arts

ART AND CULTURE COMMISSION OF LEMONT



Spring 2012

NEWSLETTER

Betty Burian Kirk: This Lady Sure Can Spin a Yarn

If you come to Betty Burian Kirk's spinning class expecting to get a great workout, you might be disappointed. But even if you don't work up much of a sweat, you may come away from Betty's class with something better: an awakening of your aesthetic and tactile senses, as well as knowledge about preparing raw wool and other fibers for use as garments, accessories, or decorative and handy household items.

If you love color, the soft feel of home-spun wool, and crave that certain satisfaction that comes from making an original work of wearable or functional art, Betty's classes are the perfect match for you.

Betty has always had an avid interest in fiber crafts, first, as a child hand-embroidering pillow cases for which her grandmother would crochet the edging, and later, as an art student in college. She earned both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Art Education from Northern Illinois University, and has put her passion for fiber and love of teaching into practice both as an elementary school art instructor for over 13 years, and, more recently, as an international lecturer and exhibitor.

For those whose knowledge of fiber and textiles is limited to watching the ladies in the cotton bonnets at historic reenactment events spinning a string of yarn, it is worth noting how versatile fiber art is and that, armed with wool, silk, flax fiber for making linen, or even animal hair, the possibilities range from simple tassels, bookmarks, or friendship bracelets to more complicated items like embossed book bindings and high fashion items, such as dog hair scarves and felt hats that rival anything by Versace or Giorgio Armani.

Consider, for example, that it is possible to immortalize your beloved Fido as a hat or scarf by sending Betty the hair you collect while grooming your dog. All you need, depending on whether you want a hat or scarf, is about 4-8 ounces of hair, which is usually easy to accumulate. Betty then washes, fluffs, and cards the hair in preparation for spinning, which then turns the dog hair into yarn, ready for knitting or crocheting. Note, however, that nice yarn can only be spun from the hair brushed off of dogs that are double coated, such as Collies, Great Pyrenees, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Shelties, Chows, Golden Retrievers, and Belgian Sheepdogs. Betty can create anything from a basic cozy scarf to exquisite evening apparel (see photos below).



Stunning Collie "Collar" for Special Occasions

Detail of Winter Scarf Made of Collie Hair, Wool, and Silk



Betty also deservedly takes pride in her felt hats, which are her specialty. Betty points

out that not only are hats classic and chic ways for women to exude their individuality, but they give a woman power.



*“Cloche” style
felt hat showing
some of Betty’s
favorite colors*

“Have you ever seen the Queen of England without a hat?” Betty asks. Or for that matter, the late civil rights leader Bella Abzug of New York, who started wearing her trademark hats as a strategy to gain recognition and respect as a female attorney.

To get a felt hat, though, you need to have felt, which, contrary to popular belief, consists of loose fibers – like rabbit hair and not necessarily wool– that have been layered, then wet down using various substances, and rolled to make a fabric--the felt.

The process of hat-making has changed over the years, and for good reason. For one thing, milliners no longer use mercury to remove animal hair from the pelt and to mat it together to form fabric, a process called “carroting,” due to the orange color of the chemical solution. By inhaling the mercury fumes, hatters and mill workers suffered neurological damage that caused severe symptoms, including confused speech, distorted vision, hallucinations, and drooling. Hence the basis for the Mad Hatter and March Hare characters in the *Alice in Wonderland* stories.

Another undertaking Betty enjoys involves the laborious and messy, yet precise and rather scientific, process of painting a warp--the lengthwise yarns on the loom--to create a stunning hand-painted scarf. Explained very simply, the process basically entails measuring out the warp to thread the loom,

laying it out on plastic on a table and painting the yarns with dyes, then letting the dyed fibers set for 24-48 hours at a temperature of 70 to 80 degrees. Next, the warp must be rinsed out to remove any extra dye. When the warp is dry it is then wound onto the loom and threaded and ready to be woven into a gorgeous scarf like the one pictured here.



Gorgeous hand-painted scarf

Among Betty’s class offerings are various spinning classes, each designed for different levels of expertise. In her beginning spindle spinning class, which is a great class in which to learn the basics to make your own yarns, students learn how to prepare wool by washing, carding, and combing it, and then how to properly spin the wool using a particular twisting and winding technique.

Given the variety of classes Betty teaches, it is best to visit her website to get a feel for what may interest you. Visit Betty’s website at: <http://www.bbkirk.com> for more information about fiber art and Betty’s classes. Betty will be teaching a number of upcoming classes at the LCA, so be sure to check out the LCA’s facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/LemontCenterForTheArts>.

LCA regular hours are:
Friday, noon – 4 p.m.
Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Sunday, noon - 4 p.m.

The Art & Culture Commission Welcomes Two New Commissioners

In December of 2011 the Art & Culture Commission welcomed Maggie Poplawski and Heather Knies as the newest appointed members of the commission. Each is well qualified, enthusiastic and has demonstrated dedication to the mission and goals of our organization. We look forward to working together to bring art activities and awareness to the community.

Joke: Why was the **David** statue upset?

Lemont Loves the Arts

Lemont Loves the Arts is a community arts program sponsored by Central, Everest, Old Quarry, Oakwood, River Valley, Montessori, St. Al's/St. Pat's and St. Cyril's schools in Lemont. The program gives students an opportunity to express their creativity based on this year's theme: "My Dream is...." Students are encouraged to participate in any of the following categories: photography, fine arts, literature, videography, dance, music, or computer generated art. Judges are comprised of local community members with artistic expertise. Entries are judged on the interpretation of the theme, originality, creativity and artistic merit. The first, second, and third place winners for each category have been chosen and their work is on display at the **Lemont Center for the Arts through February 26th!**

Where Is It? Mosaic planter on Stephen Street depicting the Sanitary and Ship Canal.

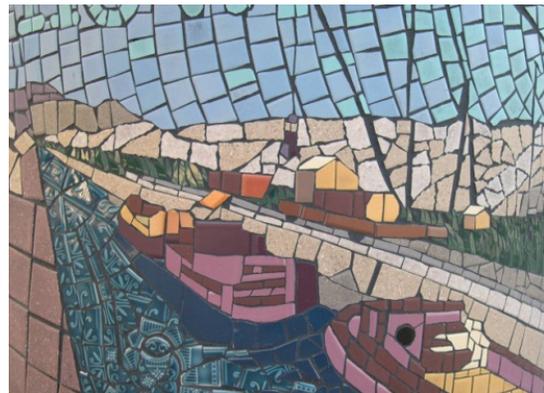
Answer to joke: He had a chip on his shoulder!

Spring Forward Into Art

The Art & Culture Commission of Lemont is sponsoring a **Faculty Exhibit** at the Lemont Center for the Arts. The exhibit will be on display from March 2nd through May 13th. This exciting exhibit will showcase work by the instructors who have provided classes at the Lemont Center for the Arts. It will also be on view prior to and at the same time as the center's **Spring Forward into Art** workshops. The workshop schedule will be available March 1st and will include short classes provided by the instructors to give community members a taste of the wonderful, creative classes available at the Lemont Center for the Arts. If you have wanted to expand your expertise in an area of fine art or if you are ready to "spring" into artistic creativity for the first time, these workshops are for you!

Stop in at the center to see what the instructors will be teaching at the center this Spring!

For more information check us out at www.facebook.com/LemontCenterfortheArts or contact Mona 708 301 7496 or e-mail bobmonaparry@hotmail.com to be put on a mailing list to receive all the latest on events and classes.



Where Is It? Have you seen this image around town?

LCA Class Survey

We are here for you, the community! Please take the time to complete the following survey regarding classes at the center. You may send the completed survey electronically to lemontcenterarts@gmail.com or by snail mail or by hand to the Center, 1243 State Street, Suite 101, Lemont, Illinois 60439.

Have you or a family member ever participated in a class at the center? YES NO

If you answered YES, thank you for your support! We hope to see you again in future classes.

Your answers to the survey below can help us create future classes suited to your interests.

If you answered NO, please continue with the survey below.

Have you ever had an interest in a class but you didn't end up enrolling? Why?

Do you have any suggestions for future class topics?

What frequency of class meetings interests you? Check all that apply.

One-day workshop Weekly for 3 or 4 weeks Weekly for 6 or 8 weeks

What time of day would you like to see classes offered?

Morning Afternoon Evenings Weekends

What length of time per class meeting appeals to you? Check all that apply.

45minutes – 1 hour 1 – 2 hours 2-3 hours 3 hours or more

What age group applies to you or family members who would be interested in taking a class?

Children 5-9 Children 9-12 Teen 13-16 Young Adult 16+ Adult 18+

What cost are you willing to budget for a one-hour small group art class taught by a local professional artist?

\$10 \$20 \$30 \$40

What cost are you willing to budget for a 4 week small group art class taught by a local professional artist that meets for an hour and a half each session?

\$50 \$60 \$70 \$80

Which do you prefer regarding supplies for a class?

Instructor supplies art materials for a fee

Students receive a list of materials they need to purchase for the class

No preference

Thank you for taking the time to give us your valuable feedback. We hope to see you at the Center for classes in the future!