

Karina Hittle's Artful Offerings

From the breathtaking forest that surrounds her home in Northeastern Massachusetts to her earliest recollections of her paternal grandparents' home in Southern California . . .

From her travels across the United States and as a young girl to her family's tours of Europe and Okinawa . . .

These life experiences and surroundings are the roots of inspiration for award winning quilt artist Karina Hittle. For Karina, something as little as a word, a hymn, a poem, a phrase or a thought that seems to drop out of the clear blue sky can literally send her mind racing with a thousand ideas.

Karina has always enjoyed anything that had to do with art. In fact, she distinctly recalls loving art so much that at the tender age of five, she was negotiating on a daily basis with her kindergarten teacher, Miss Skinner, for extra time on the easel so she could continue drawing and painting.

"As a young girl, a box of crayons coupled with a big, thick coloring book yielded hours and hours of pure pleasure for me," recalls Karina.

Born in Shreveport, LA, Karina was raised in an Air Force family and moved frequently due to her father's work as a communications and radar officer. Her parents liked to travel and some of her earliest memories of growing up include traveling nationally and internationally. The frequent moves, coupled with regional camping trips to explore different countries, provided her with tremendous exposure to a diverse group of cultures and environments.

During her schooling in the various locations, Karina tried her hand in many different art avenues. While in junior high, she started sewing through a traditional home economics class. In high school she got involved with ceramics, and as the years progressed her artistic talent grew through encouragement

of several art instructors. Karina explored and enjoyed all forms of art, everything from coloring, drawing and painting to ceramics and rubber stamping. In needle arts, her interests include cross stitching, crocheting, knitting, sewing and quilting.

After graduation, Karina married her high school sweetheart and later furthered her art education by taking a college level class with her husband.

"Ever since I can remember, I have always wanted to be married and be a homemaker," said Karina. "That wish came true when I married Audie, my very best friend, in October 1976. I was 18 and Audie was 19. Then our beautiful daughter was born in 1979."

Three weeks before their daughter's birth, Audie and Karina finished a college art class together. Wanting to be the greatest wife and mother that she could be, Karina did her very best to apply her artistic abilities to caring for her family and creatively educating their daughter.

"Over the years I designed numerous art projects, including greeting cards, art for our home, and fabric art and cross stitched gifts for family and friends," noted Karina. "I guess you could say I've always had a special place in my heart for artistic endeavors."

It was in the spring of 2000 when Karina was captured by the quilting bug. She took her first quilt class and





says from that point on she “was hooked.” Her first quilt top, was designed at her request by Olga Bratkovskaia from Eddie’s Quilting Bee in Mountain View, CA. Karina calls it “Portrait of a Sunflower.”

After designing her first six quilts, Karina entered a couple of them in a regional competition in Portsmouth, NH, at Merri Stitches Center. Her quilts won first and second place, and the impact of such recognition gave Karina the confidence to start thinking that perhaps she could turn her artistic skills into a business and career.

“The positive feedback from Mary

Turner and Jill Patsfield, owner and manager respectively, helped me believe I could really do it,” recalled Karina. “Jill and Mary’s encouragement coupled with the fact that while the quilts were on display at Merri Stitches, the regional fabric representative for Hoffman, RJR and Timeless Treasures, Stu Millen, was so captivated by the ‘art’ of my quilts that he put us in touch with Emily Cohen at Timeless Treasures Fabrics, Inc.”

Through this connection, Karina was asked if she would be interested in designing quilts using their future fabric collections and teaching those patterns to help promote their fabrics. This, in addition to many prior years of support and encour-

agement from family and friends to do something more with her talent, led to the launching of Karina’s business, Artful Offerings™ in July of 2002.

“During the business startup and planning phase, I reflected on how I’ve always enjoyed making life experiences extra special,” said Karina. “I give a lot of thought to every detail from the ambience of a party to the design and construction of a gift and how it is wrapped and presented. I wanted to extend this type of experience to my potential Artful Offerings’ customers.”

At about the same time the Hittles were starting their company, Karina and Audie attended a business seminar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School of Management. They took to heart the words of guest speaker Joe Pine, an

internationally recognized author and inspirational speaker, when he spoke about “The Experience Economy.”

“Joe’s talk resonated with me as it emphasized the importance of creating memorable experiences,” Karina said. “He discussed how the economy, over time,

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How does your garden Crow ???

Artful Offerings

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had evolved from agricultural to industrial and from a focus on products to services and then to....experiences. His presentation helped me solidify the focus of Artful Offerings on creating a positive, memorable experience from the first moment an individual sees one of my patterns through the entire creative process.”

As a result, Karina’s business goal focused on creating an artful experience for her customers — one that evokes an element of excitement and surprise. Her patterns are designed to be user-friendly and easy to follow, so as to enhance understanding and overall gratification.

She added, “The Artful Offerings vision is to build a company where we always treat each customer the way we would like to be treated and create an environment where Artful Offerings’ customers and key stakeholders can dream big, work hard, get it done, have fun, and make a positive memorable experience for everyone.”

Karina’s artistic style accommodates students wanting to explore. Her



patterns are designed in a way which makes it easy for the sewer to experiment with the designs while working with a variety of embellishments and techniques to create their own masterpieces. When asked about her style, Karina describes her patterns as eclectic and diverse in design. She says you’ll find everything from folk art to easy elegance.

“I like incorporating all the forms of art I enjoy into my patterns to come up with fresh, new ideas that are exciting, fun, and easy to make,” she shared. “You may notice that I design lots of patterns with a garden theme. I believe it must come from my paternal grandmother’s

gift for gardening. And while I can’t garden to save my life, I thoroughly enjoy maintenance free gardening with fabrics. It’s total gratification!”

Over the years, Artful Offerings has grown very well, as planned with a deliberate pace and consistent growth. The Hittles have just passed their two-year milestone and are delighted with the progress. They are right on target for meeting their customer acquisition and marketing goals. In addition, their sales are ramping as they had planned and they have more than quadrupled their first year sales so far this year.

“We’ve secured a number of key quilt shop customers and are thankful to have recently added two national distributors, Moda/United Notions and Petersen-Arne,” Karina added. “Another goal recently achieved is collaborating with fabric companies like Moda and National Nonwovens on the coordinated availability of new fabrics and Artful Offerings’ patterns that leverage those fabrics. This is a great opportunity and there are several new patterns at the 2004 Houston International Quilt Market that demonstrate the win-win-win nature



of these relationships. These collaborative relationships benefit the quilt shop owners, the fabric companies, and Artful

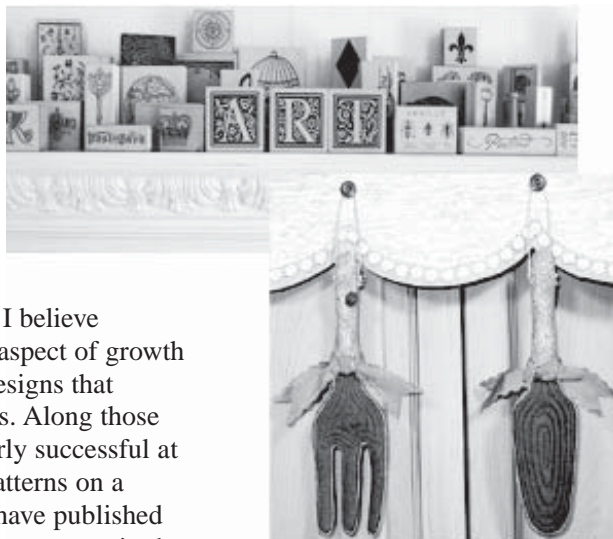
Offerings. Finally, I believe another important aspect of growth is the number of designs that evolve into patterns. Along those lines, I've been fairly successful at introducing new patterns on a regular basis, and have published over two dozen new patterns in the past 18 months."

Karina's incredible energy to continue designing stems from the positive feedback she receives from her customers. She said she loves it when her students and customers excitedly show her the artwork they have created using her patterns. She also enjoys hearing that her pattern directions are easy to follow and that students have learned so much in her classes.

At the same time, keeping pattern directions written in the most clear/concise easy-to-use-and-understand way is what constantly challenges this dedicated artist.

She admits, "I really do obsess over every word that is put into my pattern directions. After all, I realize how hard people work for their money and when they choose to purchase an Artful Offerings™ pattern, I want them to have fun and enjoy the entire process of creating their project. In my opinion, great pattern directions are an essential component of the total experience."

Karina Hittle has always loved art and the direction she has taken with her talent is a natural extension of that interest and



passion that she has had since her youth.

"I've chosen this artistic field of work because I believe it will lead to the type of long-term career that my husband and I can pursue together," added Karina. "And it allows me total freedom to create and the gratification of designing and completing projects that educate and inspire."

Looking ahead, the Hittles hopes and plans are to continue to be blessed with new ideas so they can grow the fabric arts designs and pattern publishing business with continually fresh and exciting products.

Samples by Karina Hittle and Artful Offerings will be on display at the following three booths during Fall Quilt Market in Houston, TX: Moda/United Notions, National Nonwovens, and Petersen-Arne Distributors. If you can't attend Quilt Market, you can see Karina's art quilt gallery, award winning quilts, and fine sewing patterns online at www.artfulofferings.com. 🧵



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