

The Threads of Our Lives

Dress up your rooms with Arts and Crafts textiles.

BY JUDY SECKLER



PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL BOLIN

above
Trousseau blue textiles signified purity and the beginning of new life. For women who changed their linens with the seasons, spring was the time to display these crisp blue and white textiles.

LONG BEFORE THE ADVENT OF INTERIOR DESIGN GURUS IN THE MEDIA, THE ARTS AND CRAFTS movement encouraged homeowners to dress their windows and use textiles to finish off the rooms. This convergence of pattern, color and texture resulted in a hominess and simplicity that still identifies the era. By rejecting the layered look of the Victorian era, housewives could surround themselves with beauty and a quiet serenity. Arts and Crafts-style pillows, curtains, bedspreads, tablecloths, napkins and table runners still bring a sense of warmth and gracefulness to today's interiors.



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We asked needlework and textile experts for their tips on how to select, care and repair antique and new textiles. Pandora de Balthazar, proprietor of European Antique Linens, has a vast inventory of textiles, including Arts and Crafts, cottage, Art Deco, Americana, French, Country Italian and Belgium styles dating from the 1720s through the 1920s. Inglenook Textiles owner Ann Chaves designs embroidery Arts and Crafts kits, teaches needlework and takes commissions, some of which come from museums. Ann Wallace, owner of Prairie Tex-

above
De Balthazar's collection of intricately woven creams, yellows and golds creates a painting in thread.

right
A detail of a sumptuous Italian lace panel that adds drama and beauty to any room.

tiles, sells Arts and Crafts kits of her own design and provides custom-made pieces tailored to particular space and size requirements. Marsha L. Manchester of Milady's



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above
De Balthazar's bedroom is dressed for the fall/winter with a copper Turkish drapery headboard and a silk charmeuse bed slip.

left
Embroidered dowry linens have been upholstered on the upper wall of this small library. The day bed is dressed with bed skirts and buttoned bolsters made from recycled feed sacks.

Linens, who specializes in the buying, selling and care of one-of-a-kind heirloom linens, discussed maintenance, storage and repair.

Colorful embroidery and a range of abstracted botanical forms are the hallmarks of Arts and Crafts

textiles. Craftsmanship ruled supreme, and even though its execution might vary from country to country, the conventionalization or stylization of natural forms may well have been a reaction to the overdone bursts of floral found in Victorian textiles and wallpaper. American textiles took a "more linear or diagonal" direction, according to de Balthazar. Women employed by embroidery companies sewed textiles with cotton or silk thread. Natural linen was the fabric of choice, prized for its rich, rumpled texture and oatmeal color, Wallace says. At times, Arts and Crafts designs also found their way on to silk or a velvet-like wool fabric known as mohair with or without fringe. Arts and Crafts designs were also reflected in damask weavings.

top
De Balthazar perks up her beach cottage twin guestroom with a medley of red and white pillows made from ethnic textiles.

right
De Balthazar says the tone for every meal in her home is set by selecting linens from her collection stored in her 1700s French inlaid linen press.



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