

Sunflowers

Framing a Quilt by:
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Helianthus I by Yvonne Brown
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I was first introduced to Yvonne Brown when she gave a presentation on quilts to the Impish Quilts in our local village. Yvonne creates contemporary wall hangings and embroideries for exhibitions and commissions. She has a passion for fabric, threads, texture and colour, and constantly seeks to explore ways in which she can use textiles as an artistic medium to produce images with a tactile surface that has a richness and depth not often possible by more conventional means. Yvonne finds inspiration in the natural world and from art historical sources, particularly the medieval period.

Designed and created in 2005
Helianthus I was inspired by the glorious fields of Provencal Sunflowers with their wonderful heads following the sun.



Fig 1. Unframed Helianthus I

It has a machine quilted background on hand-dyed cotton. The sunflower heads are layers of sheer, synthetic fabrics on a background of synthetic felt, the design is machined on to the layered fabrics and cut back with a fine-tipped soldering iron. The work is finished with hand beading and each of the small sunflowers are hand embroidered. Heliathus I was originally made to enter the 'Small Wonders' category at the Chicago International Quilt Festival in the spring of 2006 this little quilt was then exhibited at the Houston International Quilt Festival in November 2006, subsequently it has been featured in Quilting Arts Magazine April/May 2007.

Prior preparation and attention to detail were the most important aspects of this project. In the framing of fabric art the same questions arise before you start work and in this case the major issue was 'How was I going to Support the Quilt' and second the frame design as I wanted to see both sides of the quilt. Normally quilts are hung vertically, using a pole, either through hoops attached to the top of the quilt or, in this case, through a sleeve sewn into its back. However, when I used a 20mm dowel to support the quilt I realised that the quilt did not hang as I wished and that to achieve the best fall I would need to use a rectangular wood support.



Fig 2. Covered Support and Sleeve.

I sealed a 35mm x 8mm wood support with two coats of PVA and then using aqueous EVA I stuck material, obtained from Yvonne, along the length of the support basically lining the support so that the wood did not come in direct contact with the quilt and it also disguised the support where it could be seen within the frame. Further, I needed some support at the bottom of the quilt first to prevent it flapping about in the frame and second to slightly tension the quilt to enhance its appearance. I used the 'D' part of a 'D ring' sewn into a small loop of material and lightly sewed this to the back of the quilt.



Fig 3. D Ring Support.

My idea was to use brass picture wire rather than thread to tension the quilt; the wire was to secure the 'D' to the frame; as mountboard was to be used to line the box the wire needed to be threaded through the mountboard and attached to the frame. Rather than drill a hole directly through the mountboard I used an eyelet which gave a much more professional look; conscious that the stapled wire would cause a bump in the mountboard I chiselled a small area in the frame that would hide the secured wire



Fig 4. Eyelet and Brass Picture Wire.

The main box frame was constructed using Arqadia moulding 152.400.000, this obeche moulding had a depth of 50mm which gave me a sufficient distance away from the glass either side of the quilt especially as the very tips of the sunflowers were not secured to the main part of the quilt.



Fig 5. Moulding used as Box Frame.

I initially hung the quilt from its wood support in order to establish the size of frame required and then very carefully cut the moulding in very small bites of the Morso as the rebate supports did not reach the rebate; had this been a harder wood or I had to cut numerous pieces then I would have made an extension to the rebate supports. Once each section of the frame had been cut I carefully measured the positions for both the support and the area to be chiselled for the brass wire. Regarding the support one hole was cut into the moulding to a depth of 5mm and the second right the way through the side of the moulding thereby allowing me to insert the quilt when the construction of the frame was complete. The inside of the moulding was then coated with

PVA which would give a stronger bond when attaching the mountboard.

The frame was then glued and pinned, I managed to stack three 15mm wedges but before joining the actual frame this was tried on a test piece to ensure the wedges did not pierce through the edge of the moulding. In addition, the top edge of the moulding was nailed using 20mm framers nails these were punched into the moulding and the holes filled. The frame was then painted using Everest paints; my aim was to attempt to achieve a similar mottled effect and colour to the fabric. I used two coats of undercoat then a coat of green; I then mixed a variety of browns and reds and stipled this onto the frame with a sponge then added a dark blue to the mix and repeated the stipling. Finally, I washed the frame using a watered down yellow and wiped the residue off, I did this several times until I achieved the desired shading.



Fig 6. Finished Box with Screw Holes.

I needed to complete some decoration prior to final assembly because it would have been difficult to paint the face of the box moulding without getting paint all over the glass.

The glass for the back was cut to size and the back window mount cut; the aperture of this window mount was 5mm smaller, on each side, than the front window mount to ensure it did not stand

proud when viewing the finished frame direct on. No 1 brass picture framing wire was stapled into the base, the glass cleaned and placed along with the window mount into the frame. The mountboard used to line the box was cut to size, the eyelets inserted and rectangular holes cut, at 90deg, on my Valiani CMC.

The mountboard was then fastened in place using double sided tape in the usual way i.e. top and bottom first and sides second to aid support.



Fig 7. Finished Box with Mountcard.

Having completed the box I turned my attention to the front frame. The moulding used was Arqadia Larson Juhl Florentina 457905 selected because the colours and mottled effect were reflected in the quilt. The frame was cut to size and the front window mount cut; all mountboard used was Arqadia 8626 Andover Cream chosen because the tone, colours and speckled effect were reflected in the sunflowers and these properties lightened the inside of the box drawing one's eyes directly to the quilt.

As normal, for my fabric art collection I use conservation glass and in this case True-Vu Conservation Clear. The glass and window mount were cut to size and all that was left was to fix the quilt to its support, fasten it into the box and then complete the final assembly.

The cloth covered support was inserted in the sleeve of the quilt and located in the box and when attaching the wire to the 'D' rings I realised that some small modifications were needed to the lower supports to ensure I achieved some slight tension on the bottom edge of the quilt this was done by attaching the 'D' rings at a slight outwards angle and moving the eyelets towards the edge of the box frame.



Fig 8. Supported Quilt in Box Frame.

This was completed and following a final check that I was satisfied with the positioning of the quilt the front frame was attached to the box using multipoints and taped using gummed tape. Because the quilt was for my collection I then painted the tape as above and then waxed the box with Liberon Tudor Oak; however, commercially, I would only offer the decoration of the box at a price.

A particularly interesting and challenging project but by keeping to the aim, albeit making modifications to one's ideas as work progressed, this resulted in superbly finished piece of work demonstrating what, I believe, can be done by attention to detail and thinking outside the box.



Fig 10. Finished Framed Helanthus.

Like most projects of this kind the design and development were initially time consuming but once the lessons were learnt I could complete a second considerably quicker and certainly, economically viable. I believe there is a market for framed fabric art as more embroiderers look raise the profile of their work perhaps, into the decorative art market but are we as framers ready and most importantly, qualified and able to meet this demand?