

DEAR BEGINNING RUG HOOKER

Within a Framework

Putting life experiences in perspective

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GWEN DIXON



Places Real and Imagined, *designed and hooked by Gwen Dixon.*

In the field of sociology, there is an area that specializes in identity. Identity is formed by ideas about age, ethnicity, gender, and other variables, but also by narration, by the bringing together of life experiences into an internal and evolving story.



Making Plans, designed and hooked by Gwen Dixon.

This narrative type of identity provides a framework that contributes to our sense of unity, continuity, and meaning. It often helps us to make sense of our lives, our decisions, and choices. It helps us to give an account of the choices we have made and for the roads not taken. And being able to give an account, especially to ourselves, is healthy.

Every now and then, I find myself returning to a "framework" style of hooking—usually when I am sorting

something out in my life, making sense of changes, or sitting with unanswered questions. When it's the "bigger picture," the expert model, or a fresh perspective that I need, I tend to put my thoughts and experiences into a framework that makes sense.

PLACES REAL AND IMAGINED

I am from the east coast of Canada, and I live here/there, again, now. But for 15 years, I lived on the west coast,

on Vancouver Island, in Victoria, British Columbia. I love both coasts and have close friends from the east and the west. When I am on the east coast, I miss the magnificence of the west, and when I am on the west, I miss the sense of elongated time of the east.

When I moved from Victoria back to New Brunswick, my close friend Ann said to me, "There is no perfect place," and she was right. There are beautiful places everywhere, to be seen briefly

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Aqua Ambiguity, designed and hooked by Gwen Dixon.

and enjoyed, or to be known more fully, and lived. There are experiences that we live, in spaces and times, and these too have a story and are always changing. They seldom remain as we remember them, and the experiences we had then and there cannot often be recreated, at least not exactly.

During one east coast, Maritime-style winter, I hooked *Places Real and Imagined* as an expression of the ambiguity that lives in our memory and experiences of place, time, and people. And of the experience I have labeled “being bicoastal.”

MAKING PLANS

A couple of years ago, my parents moved from their home of 50 years to an apartment. “Downsizing” it is called, but really, it is so much more than just getting rid of one’s excess possessions.

While cleaning out my father’s workshop, I found a schemata of a furniture or floor plan he had made for his new home office, from when he retired. My father was always making plans to build or organize something. I have never used any type of plan to place furniture or to decorate, and

this schemata with the proportioned and cut-out pieces of furniture, made me laugh. But when I considered my father’s work life as an electrical engineer, I imagined how he would have received plans from architects, then designed lighting, heating, and other electrical systems to fit.

I realized that the planning for almost everything uses units of some sort, such as days, dollars, miles or kilometers, people, plots of land, and so on. This gave me a different appreciation for my father’s approach. I hooked *Making Plans* to honor my

father's way of seeing and doing things. I hooked the background in black so that the colors would be "illuminated," as if they were lit.

AMBIGUITY

Recently I read that, in general, older adults live with life's ambiguity better than younger adults. Life has so many ambiguities, and they seem to increase. I turned 60 at the time of my last birthday and I do wonder if I handle ambiguity better than I used to. I hope so, because the flexibility of being able to handle life's ambiguity is helpful in reducing stress and increasing resilience. So very important things!

I recently found a painted wooden frame at a thrift store. It was a beautiful aqua color, neither blue nor green, but somewhere in between. I hooked a framework piece to fit this frame. I used many analogous colors, but also some complementary or opposite colors, such as orange. I thought about using more of a variety of colors in my piece,

especially warm colors, as a way of being more flexible, within the "framework."

If you have never hooked within a framework, I encourage you to try it. It is a way of hooking spontaneously within a small space, and of experimenting with colors and textures. Then, if you like what you see, you can do it again, in larger or more complicated pieces.

Whatever you decide to hook, I hope that it adds meaning and a comfortable structure, or framework, to your experience of life! RHM

Gwen Dixon is an adult educator, fiber artist, and writer from Riverview, New Brunswick.

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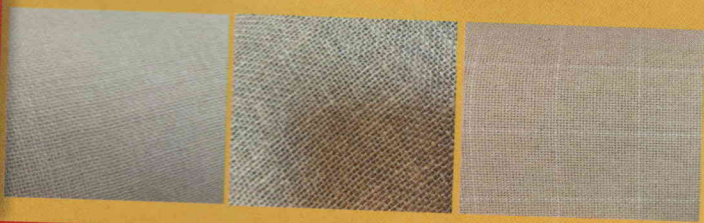


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