

Full of Joy



A MEADOW INSPIRES A PRAYER FOR THE EARTH

by Kay Faye Fialkoff

While I was finishing *Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite, No. 4* (see *Needle Arts*, September, 1998), I thought about what I would design next. I found the answer at a local nature preserve, the Allendale Celery Farm, in Bergen County, New Jersey. It is a treasure of habitats: wetland, meadow, and forest with a two-mile meandering path around the one-hundred-plus acre site.

One can enter the preserve near the wetland area, and then, with a bit of a walk through the wet forest, approach the meadow. The open expanse is welcoming. It is a wild exuberance of a wide variety of dense growth. Its broad, limitless sky painted in deep hues of blue is visited by over two-hundred species of birds throughout the year.

Inspiration

The meadow is a marvelous tapestry of plant life. It is a fascination to learn where plants find their own special places to grow and which species become their neighbors. I love to watch the plants sway in the wind and enjoy the site of butterflies delicately traversing blossoms for nectar. The colors are captivating—golds, purples, wines, yellows, oranges, and green in such variety! The textures tantalize my fingertips—smooth, knobbed, fluffy, thorny, rough-edged, tangled.

The experience can be blissful and serene, when suddenly a few bright yellow birds burst on the scene. Several American Goldfinches undulate across the sky, sounding a captivating canary-like song of trills and twitters in cheerful glee.

Creating Full of Joy

It was such an experience that brought me to create the first Meadowlands Suite

embroidery. The challenge was two-fold: to form a continuity with the Wetlands Suite and to find the forms that would work with a small songbird instead of a large wading bird with a long neck and a spear-like beak.

One day I reflected on those challenges while overlooking the meadow. Standing on a low mound in a small clearing, I peered over a cluster of cattail. Drifting into a reverie, I sensed my very being unite with the essence of the goldfinch. I felt myself transported, tiny and almost weightless, overlooking the meadow's breadth. The breeze swayed me. I commanded any position I wanted. As I viewed the expanse, I sensed the scale that would give me the first of the meadow compositions.

To compose with wisdom, I became an avid observer of the goldfinch. I needed answers to many questions. Where did it like to perch? What does it eat? How does it maneuver around the different plants? What plant species does it rely on the most? What are its distinguishing features? How do the curves of the body interplay? How does light play on the feathers?

The final challenge was to align the composition to a circle motif and to keep the oriental character of the entire series. To get all those plants in a circular composition to read "meadow" was a singular experience in discovery! To emphasize the meadow's exuberant nature, the Hebrew phrase שמחה מלאה (*M'lay simcha*), which means Full of Joy, adorns the circumference. The results are at hand for your pleasure.



Needle artist Kay Faye Fialkoff is a member of the Bergen County Chapter. Residing in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, she is self-taught in crewel embroidery and has been developing the Prayers for the Earth series for over a decade. She is currently at work on the third part of the suite.

An artist's creativity is stirred when an experience has meaning, as happened at a nature preserve for Kay Faye Fialkoff. Full of Joy, (opposite) is part of her Prayers for the Earth: Meadowlands Suite. It is crewel embroidery of rayon thread on silk fabric. American Goldfinch appears with goldenrod, Bull Thistle, and reeds (Phragmites communis).