



COUCHING EXCHANGE A Great Guild Activity

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Couching is a very simple technique that can lead to a myriad of effects. It involves laying down a braid, yarn, thread, trim or any similar embellishment onto your project. It can be used to form an image, create an outline, emphasize an inner or outer border, replicate grass and stems, write a word—the uses are open to your imagination. Attach by hand or machine, straight stitch, zig-zag or a decorative stitch; use matching thread, invisible thread or let a contrasting thread create a secondary layer of interest. There are special feet designed for your machine, but often the decorative stitch foot works very well.

The problem, though, is that you need to have a stash of couching material on hand to stimulate those creative juices. LANGLEY QUILT GUILD (BC) members participated in

their second Couching Exchange this summer and it was a great success, with 25 quilters participating in the day and 17 in the evening. Some members who had participated a few years ago were wise enough to attend both meetings and really fleshed out their stash.

Before explaining the logistics to your group, it's good to have some examples of couching to tempt them to participate (see facing page).

Secondly, you need to have samples of couching material, from bargains at the thrift and dollar stores to that beautiful expensive yarn from Japan that you've never known what to do with.

Now's the time for everyone to sign up to participate in the exchange, usually during the coffee break. Before the meeting breaks up you'll need to announce the number of participants. At the next meeting everyone participating will bring X number of couching yarns (X = the number participating).

Our first exchange was for 3 metre lengths, but if you want to use it for borders a five metre length is better. It doesn't have to be all the same yarn as you might not want to part with all of one ball.

Everyone needs to bring their cut-up yarn in a plastic bag labelled with their name. Finer yarn may need to be wrapped around a piece of cardboard; thicker yarns can be tied loosely in a loop. It would be good to include a reminder in any notices that go out for the next meeting.

I brought my own large Ziploc bags which I had numbered and placed upright in plastic bins. As people arrived they had to put their contributions in each of the bags I had brought and hand in their labelled bag. Once everyone had turned in their yarns, I transferred the yarns in each numbered bag to the bag they had brought, labelled with their name. It was fun to witness all the oohs and aahs as participants picked up their bags and some regrets from those who didn't participate. It's a good idea to bring a few extra lengths of yarn in case of some miscount.

Displaying your yarns where you can be inspired by them is exciting. One guild member uses canning jars set on her shelf, where she can admire them and be inspired by them. I use a large clear plastic jar that contains some of my balls of decorative yarn. The smaller bits are colour coded in plastic bags and set in a basket. A beautiful

hand-dyed silk fuchsia thread hangs on my inspiration/design wall.

I hope I've excited you enough to try your own couching exchange. I think couching is one of the simplest, most effective techniques to have in your bag of tricks. Have fun incorporating it into your repertoire.

