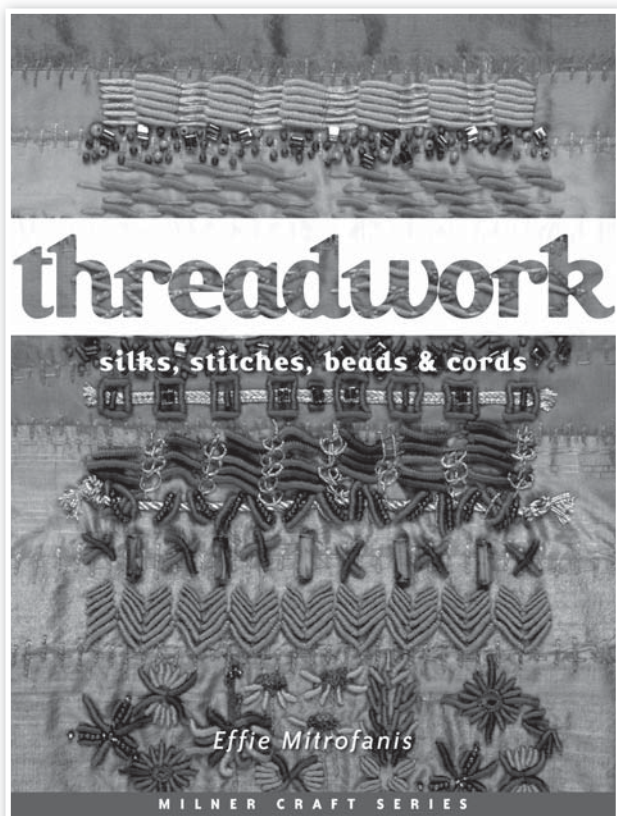


Musings about Cocoons and Butterflies



Story by Effie Mitrofanis

Butterflies, signifying regeneration and rebirth started to obsess me after I read that “a butterfly is a moth in an (exotic) embroidered coat”.

Butterflies hatch out of an egg as a ground-hugging grub with lots of feet, then metamorphose into a silent and dormant state as a chrysalis (from the Greek *khrusos* meaning ‘gold’) within a cocoon (a protective covering). After a period of solitary confinement they emerge into a two-winged flying apparition with a short life span whose purpose is to fly around the garden looking beautiful, pollinating plants, then laying eggs for the next cycle. They must be female!

Creating a book, or indeed being an artist, or just living, comes from finding that balance between being utterly alone and inside, and being “out there” taking the actions to make things happen. Most importantly - make time to nurture and nourish the physical, mental and spiritual body. This takes prioritising and discipline.

The best thing I did was to give myself a year off in 2007, a year after major surgery, to do as I pleased, when I pleased. It took a lot of soul searching because of financial concerns and lots of guilt as I had to cancel a number of major teaching engagements. My fears were unfounded because everyone was very understanding and I found that it wasn't the end of the world or my teaching life.

At that stage my ‘12 part Wheel of Life’ was way out of balance with work taking up a 75 percent wedge of it and no time left for much else. Consider and imagine a 12-part colour wheel with two wedges, 75 percent being red and the rest composed of narrow strips of colour, grey and black.

By clearing the decks I was able to a certain extent to quieten the mind and take just one day at a time. I decided I wouldn't do

anything unless I really felt like it, and took up afternoon siestas. I will never forget that feeling of relaxation and peace at not having to get up every morning, even weekends, to work - without taking adequate breaks.

Next a very special art teacher came into my life who taught me to see my personal creative process in a new light and to seek and find the expression and marks that are unique to me.

My activities were to return to Iyengar Yoga practice, reading and walking and increasing social dancing to three times a week – rock and roll, Céroc and Latin. I also spent time each day on my art and my visual diaries. Slowly, true-to-life butterflies were pencilled into existence, then watercolour painted. As well I found myself creating abstract images without reference to any specific object or model, for no logical or rational reason except that I felt like it.

I came to realize, acknowledge and accept how ‘my’ brain works, and in particular my inherent style, marks and strengths - colour, pattern and stitches.

My creative side started to blossom, undisturbed by having to design and produce new workshops. As most tutors know, this is a long process with lots of paperwork involved.

As a metaphor for art the multi-peded grub eating as much as she can may be seen as the worker expanding and growing.

The chrysalis within the cocoon stage, the “silent and dormant” state, provides time out from day to day concerns to practice art. This practice can be seen as a form of meditation as one soon becomes totally engrossed in the repetitive movements, the concentration and the rhythm, and losing sense of time.

When the cocoon hatches the butterfly is the reward – the object, the rich exotic coat of wings - the result of the added invisible ingredient, the soul of the artist, embellished with her own unique expression.

The time I spent in the cocoon resulted in the hatching out of a new book *Threadwork – silks, stitches, beads and cords*, Sally Milner Publishing, launched in November 2009.

Butterflies in embroidered coats still obsess.



A rejuvenated Effie Mitrofanis, shown above, is a tutor of the 2010 April FORUM in Orange NSW. As well she is teaching for *Wrap* in Rocky in winter 2010, see ad page 6. Her new book can be ordered online from this magazine: www.ggcreations.com.au/tafta