

Spun Gold Award: an afternoon to honor Diane Fitzgerald

Posted on [November 21, 2011](#) by [Dulcey Heller](#)

The Spun Gold Award is given by the [Textile Center of Minnesota](#) to honor a lifetime dedication in a textile field. This year's award goes to [Diane Fitzgerald](#), renowned beader, bead teacher, beadwork designer, bead store owner, and all-around bead enthusiast.

Margaret Miller, executive director of the Textile Center, welcomed attendees to a lovely buffet of treats, with a generous display of Diane's work, and a wonderful strolling accordion player. In her introduction, Jean Campbell spoke of how Diane's "absolutely contagious enthusiasm is why we're here today."





Diane gave a slide show presentation, “Beads and Me – My love affair with beads,” of her personal bead journey, punctuated by bead inspiration and stories. She started by honoring the connections and friendships she has built with people all over the world.



She completed her first beaded piece at the age of 4, taught by her mother; it was a cat embroidered on a tea towel. She also loved her Indian beadweaving loom kit that she got as a gift from her parents. Her plunge into beads really came when she bought someone else's large bead stash, and brought it home in her Toyota hatchback. Diane took design and color classes at the University, which has continued to inform her beadwork with what she learned.



Diane's involvement with beads has been in three directions: collecting, creating, and writing and teaching. The class that changed her life was with Helen Banes, which led to a collaboration with her to write *Beads and Threads*. Diane then introduced herself to Horace Goodhue, a local author of *Indian Bead-weaving Patterns*, who inspired her further to work with seed beads.

Diane fell in love with Loren Stump's beads, and showed examples of pieces she collected; she gives herself permission to buy the beads she wants, so she doesn't hesitate when she sees

something she wants — like his netsuke-inspired beads of the zodiac. She showed slides of a few of the things she's collected over the years: Turkish prisoner-of-war crochet snakes, pin fruit (sequins and beads pinned onto a fruit form — purchasing enough to cover a Christmas tree), Edo period Japanese beads, Venetian wedding cake beads, and more.

One of her first classes was her one-to-many strand necklace, a lovely exercise in color and design. Her ginkgo leaf necklace (which I have made, and wore to this event) has sold out for 11 years at Bead & Button, and she's taught it in Germany, Japan, and England.



At this point, we had a selected tour of the books that she's written — that ginkgo leaf necklace led to her first solo bead book with a commercial publisher, *Beading with brick stitch*, published by Interweave Press. She went on to publish others with them, one on netting, and another on

beaded flowers. This last was unusual as it used thread and beads only, not wire.





The Zulu book grew from a box of beadwork that Diane bought, took apart piece-by-piece, and recreated. Diane is very impressed by their beadwork, “No one does beadwork as intricate or unusual as the Zulu.”



Altogether, Diane has authored ten books on beadwork, as well as numerous magazine articles. Her most recent, *Shaped beadwork*, was published in 2009; I've seen it translated into Spanish. She has two books on the horizon; the first in 2012 is *Diane Fitzgerald's favorite bead projects*, her favorite existing projects under one cover. In 2013 will be *More shaped beadwork*, where she takes everything in *Shaped beadwork* a step further, like Moorish tile beaded beads.



I'm very glad I was able to go, and see Diane honored for the work she's done advancing and promoting beadwork, from which beaders all over the world have benefited. It was a lovely afternoon, honoring a inspiring and dedicated bead artist.



Jean Campbell, Diane Fitzgerald with her Spun Gold Award, and Margaret Miller, executive director of the Textile Center of Minnesota