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Quilter's Home keeps me in stitches



Saturday, December 29, 2007

A word of caution before you begin reading this column: If you're not ready for an irreverent, off-the-wall, engagingly hilarious view of our time-honored quilting tradition, perhaps this submission isn't for you.

On the other hand, if you are itching for a side-splitting new perspective on quilting that aims to raise some eyebrows and have fun at the same time, I offer the following two words: Mark Lipinski.

If you haven't met Lipinski yet, let me take a few moments to get you up to speed on this high-energy guy from New Jersey who is taking the quilting world by storm. He's a breath of fresh air in an art form once dominated by the prim and proper.

Lipinski is editor in chief of Quilter's Home magazine, published six times a year by CK Media. It's billed as the magazine for quilters that's actually fun to read ... for the new generation of quilters. Check it out at www.quiltershomemag.com.

In a recent issue, Lipinski raided the refrigerators of celebrity quilters and snapped photos of what was inside. (Alex Anderson stores her expensive face cream in hers.)

Other staples of the magazine are a section on bling (jewelry with a quilt theme), a quirky readers poll and a pattern section featuring three quilts, one of which is Lipinski's design.

Two of my favorite features from past issues were high school photographs of national quilt divas and a quiz about how brand-name quilt products got their start. (Did you know that OLFA is the abbreviation for two Japanese words that translate as "break a blade?")

I recently spoke with Lipinski by cell phone as he was traveling through Connecticut in a snowstorm. Our conversation was punctuated by his quick wit and hearty laughter. I could almost hear his mind working through the airwaves.

He calls Quilter's Home the Mad magazine of quilting.

"I just hate the status quo — always have, always will," Lipinski says. "I should have been a hippie."

He explains that most quilting magazines are pattern- and technique-oriented, but his is lifestyle-oriented. Lipinski writes most of the content himself and in first person.

"I put it together like writing a letter. I'm talking to my audience. It's like a blog on paper," he says.

Breaking stereotypes is Lipinski's goal.

"I'm appealing to women who have a sense of humor, a wild side," he says. "These women may have been in their 20s during the Woodstock era.

"They've lived through a sexual revolution, the ERA; they've been exposed to all sorts of drugs, regardless of whether they actually used them."

Why treat them "like coffee is the strongest thing they've ever had?" he asks rhetorically.

"I'm challenging the assumptions people make about them. I want to entertain them" with this magazine, Lipinski says.

He definitely has some credentials in that department. An Emmy nominee for his work as a daytime TV producer, Lipinski produced "The View," "The Ricki Lake Show" and "The Oprah Winfrey Show."

"I know my audience" after 25 years in that business, he says. The magazine contains the same type of content.



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He wants each issue to have something shocking (that may translate as racy at times), something historical and something humorous in it.

After proving he could tap into that audience with Quilter's Home, Lipinski is thrilled that his publisher now offers subscriptions to the magazine.

"It's amazing," he says. "We had 5,000 subscriptions in the first two weeks."

What Lipinski is most proud of is that "I've opened a door about humor in quilting that can never be closed."

He's dedicated to making sure we have more fun buying fabric and more fun using it.

"It's good to shake things up," Lipinski says.

I'll buy that. And I'll buy his magazine — for the laughs and for a new slant on an old subject.

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