

Selwedge

DESIGNER EDGE

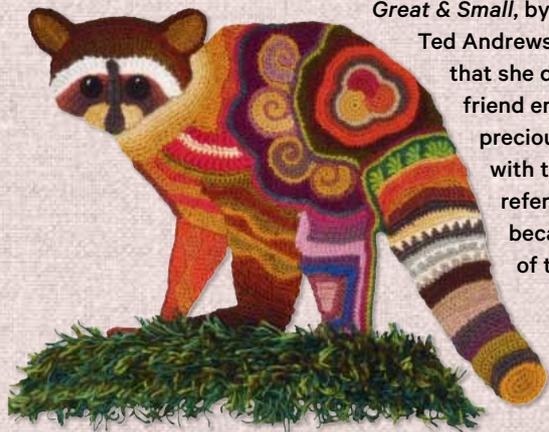


ANN BENOOT

Before Ann Benoot ventured on a five-month-long sabbatical, caravanning through the Alps of Austria, Italy and France, a friend gave her a book for the journey – *Animal Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures*

Great & Small, by

Ted Andrews. Ann worries that she didn't thank her friend enough for this precious gift, because with the book as a reference, she became more aware of the animals she



encountered along the way and their symbolic meaning. Ted Andrews writes, "Every time we see the uniqueness of one animal or plant, we also discover something new and unique about ourselves." This is, indeed, true for Ann, as she later found a new creative side of herself, with freeform crocheted 'power' animals.

Ann combines her subsequent interest in animals with Zentangle designs (line drawings with repetitive patterns) and her crochet skills. The first animal she translated into yarn was a chameleon. "When I made his tail with the crocheted spiral, I still remember

the feeling of 'Yes! This could work!'"

says Ann.

She has now made a menagerie of crocheted artworks – rooster, rabbit, owl, butterfly, turtle ...

And with many of the designs she publishes on her website, she shares a piece of their symbolic meaning, such as the eagle that can teach us to look at problems from a different perspective or the rooster that is a symbol for new beginnings and hope. She intuitively chooses her animal subjects and the colours that would best suit their execution in yarn, maintaining that she doesn't like to overthink things. "When I start thinking, I start doubting," she says. When the crochet is finished, it is mounted onto a lightly painted canvas, usually measuring 40 × 50cm.

The trip to the Alps also inspired Ann to move house – from an urban area of Belgium to a rural region in the south, the Ardennes. She has a room that's an office and creative space, but also crochets in the living room and on the outside terrace, so that she can indulge in her serene surroundings. "What is most inspiring for me is the view that I have to the green forests outside," she coos.

Along with her rainbow-coloured crocheted animals, Ann also designs "soft, round knitted pillows to hug". This year, she's creating a range of crocheted works around the theme of 'stitches of colour and happiness'. All of Ann's creative pursuits are made with a meraki mindset. Meraki is an untranslatable Greek word. Ella Frances Sanders describes it as "pouring yourself wholeheartedly into something, such as cooking, and doing so with soul, creativity, and love" in her book *Lost in Translation*.

"When I first read about meraki, I was immediately touched by the meaning of the word," says Ann. "I like to share the creations that come from my heart to my hands. By making crocheted works, I'm trying to bring colour and little moments of happiness into everyday life."

To discover more about Ann Benoot, visit annbenoot.wixsite.com/crochetart and www.facebook.com/CrochetArtByAnnBenoot. Email enquiries to annbenoot@gmail.com.

– Janai Velez

