

Float Like a Butterfly— Stamp Like Anne Sagor

By Barbara Blanks

Perhaps Anne Sagor is a visionary. To her, a butterfly is not just a butterfly, but a canvas that allows her imagination to soar. She sent *RSM* seven different pieces of art created from the same Ducks In A Row Madame Butterfly stamp—three are shown here full size, three others in miniature.

Anne says, “I became fascinated by Madame Butterfly, and decided to see how many different looks I could create for her. The three cards featured here require the use of two mortise masks — which most fortunately I learned how to make years ago from an article in *RSM*.”

Basic beginning

Anne stamped the butterfly image in the centers of two large (4-by-4 inch) Post-it notes. She didn’t trim around the outside of the image, as you would if you were making a regular mask.

“For one mask, I cut out the inside of the large right wing. (See Fig. 1, below.) For the second mask, I cut out the inside of the large left wing [mask not shown here]. Although



Valentine / Anne Sagor

(Stamp credits: Madame Butterfly—Ducks in a Row; kisses—Stamp Camp [Technique Junkies]; heart—unknown; flowers—Recollections; punch—EK Success.)

using a craft knife is probably the best way to cut the area to be left open, I try to avoid sharp knives without EMTs

Mortise Masking



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

Mortise masks, like those shown at left, are the opposite of masks that solidly cover an already-stamped image to protect it from being stamped over with other images. Like in surgery, the mortise mask reveals the specific, confined area to be worked in, while shielding the surrounding areas. Additional papers may have to be spread around the mortise mask to prevent spill-over of the design onto the rest of the image and/or the background.

standing by, so I use small scissors.” She starts from the center of the area, then cuts a path to the inside of the stamped line, then makes a complete cut of the inside area. The inside of the lower wing was also cut out for use in one of the cards. (See Fig. 2.)

The next step is to stamp the butterfly image on cardstock. Anne placed the matching mortise mask around one large wing at a time. She then stamped the images she wanted inside the wing. She saves the mortise masks for later use.

Valentine kisses for Madame Butterfly

Anne dressed up this first Madam B in red suede paper. Her mortise masks include both upper and lower parts of the image. One was needed for the left wing, so the lip images wouldn't go over wing's edge. The right wing of the butterfly is a cut-out piece of suede, as is the lower left section. Anne created these by using her masks as patterns on the red suede paper.

She hand-drew the hearts and dots with a Uni-ball Signo white pen on the right wing and lower-left area. After decorating the other wings, she glued the suede pieces in place. Pearl-dotted posies and decorative corner punches kiss the lower edges of the card itself.

Springtime Madam Butterfly

Anne stamped Madame Springtime on a piece of Neenah 80 lb. Celery cardstock with Warm Green ColorBox Fluid Ink.

“Using a colored cardstock is a good way to reduce time spent coloring because you already have a base color within your image,” she says. “Most Prismacolor pencils are opaque and will give good coverage over colored cardstock, but always test your pencil color choices on a piece of the cardstock you plan to use.

“Masking one wing at a time, I used a Stamp Camp background image to stamp inside the wings,” she explains. Here's where those mortise masks were put to work.

“After coloring the leaves and flowers, I wanted the butterfly to stand out from the background, so I began shading around the inside of the

two large wings by placing the pencil point against the image outline.

“Using a sharpened pencil and medium pressure, I made small overlapping circles—this is sometimes referred to as scumbling—then pulled a bit into the interior of the wing while easing pressure on the pencil to lighten the color application.

“I contoured the butterfly's head and body using the same coloring technique. I also added a touch of pink for her cheeks, and at the tip of her wavy wings,” she said.

What Anne is doing is called a “valley/mountain pattern” for coloring. Think of fog being deepest in a valley and lightest at the top of a mountain. Shading is darker in the lowest part of the “valley” and then eases off near the peak of the “mountain,” allowing the cardstock color itself to show through.

Anne placed the cardstock with the image under a Spellbinders Nestabilities frame template, and ran it through a Cuttlebug. She glued that die-cut framed piece on lighter green cardstock, then attached the layered section to folded Celery cardstock, on which she had stamped the leafy vine background.

Flowers from Recollections, plus self-stick half-pearls in the flower centers and butterfly antennae add the finishing touches.



Springtime / Anne Sagor

(Stamp credits: Madame Butterfly—Ducks in a Row; flowers & vines—Stamp Camp [Technique Junkies].)

Pencil pointers

“My favorite medium preferred above all others is Prismacolor pencils,” Anne says. “I’ve used them since I was in junior high school. Prismacolor pencils work on many surfaces, including paper, cardstock, fabric, and dominoes.” (Anne suggests soaking the dominoes “in bleach for at least two days to get a surface with tooth to it.”)

Anne started stamping about twenty years ago. “Effie Glitzfinger’s Art and Rubber Stamp Emporium had just opened in St. Louis—it was a great place to take classes. Eventually I was both student and teacher there.”

This former English teacher now lives in Garland, Texas, with her husband, Doug. “More recently I’ve been filling the dual roles of student and teacher at Stamp Asylum in Plano, Texas. I teach colored pencil technique classes, and I wanted images with larger open areas—like Madame Butterfly—for students to practice in.

“I assemble books with hand-stamped images, bind them at the top with Zutter Bind It All and O-wires, and give one to each of my students. This lets them practice different techniques, both in class and at home. Some of the shading lessons include changing pressure on the pencil point, laying down color and burnishing with a colorless blender pencil, and laying down color and burnishing with a white pencil.”

Anne notes that learning to control pressure on the pencil is a basic, most important technique. She also suggests practicing rotating the pencil a bit as you apply color to extend the sharpness of the point.

“I also have students shade in their own color wheels. The idea is to get them to think about varying pressure on the colored pencil, and show them that even the basic package of twelve Prismacolor pencils has great potential, because it contains the primary and secondary colors.



Halloween / Anne Sagor

(Stamp credits: Madame Butterfly—Ducks in a Row; bare branches—Stampscares; spiderweb—Inkadinkado; spider—St. Louis Stamp Design; owl—Toybox; bat—unknown; die—Spellbinders; border punch—EK Success.)

“By the way, use a soft brush—like a make-up brush—to sweep away any small bits of color that might flake off from the pencil points during coloring,” Anne advises. “DO NOT BRUSH away excess bits of color with your hands and don’t blow them away! Soft brushes, like make-



More Butterflies

/ Anne Sagor
Additional cards show there’s an endless array of butterflies ready to be stamped and colored.

(Stamp credit: Madame Butterfly—Ducks in a Row.)

up brushes, make excellent tools for colored pencil artists. Mine came in a kit from the Dollar Tree—I tossed everything but that wonderful brush.”

Halloween Madame Butterfly

This spooky version of Madame B makes one wonder if there are vampire butterflies fluttering around.

Anne stamped with VersaFine Onyx Black ink, mortise-masked one large wing at a time, and stamped the images inside. After coloring the swirl portion of each wing as an (evil) eye, she used the Uni-ball Signo pen to create the white highlight that makes eyes look alive . . . even in the flying dead.

The image was die-cut with a Spellbinders Nestabilities frame template. Anne used Prismacolor pencils to color the inside of the wings and to lightly shade the outline of the entire image. The card edges were sponged with ColorBox Fluid Chalk Ink Tangerine, while the black cardstock was spritzed with Ranger Perfect Pearls Mist Kiwi. The creepy-crawly webs were spun with an EK Success border punch.

“Ducks In A Row has other marvelous, timeless images that offer large areas for coloring. I ordered several, then wrote to Linda Leong, the owner of Ducks, telling her how much I liked the images, and how well they worked for colored pencil classes. She requested scans of some of the samples I made. As a result, I now color samples for Ducks—I really love the challenge!”

“From Linda, I also learned how taking digital photos of a work-in-progress can show problem areas that require more work—the photos let you see the artwork differently.”

And finally Anne offers this: “The most useful advice I have on using colored pencils is to keep practicing and don’t give up! Sometimes I’ll look at a work in progress and think ‘Oh, this is really dreadful.’ But the point is—the work *is* in progress. So I make myself finish it—and suddenly the piece looks much better.”



Barbara Blanks is a piece of work. See for yourself at www.barbara-blanks.com.