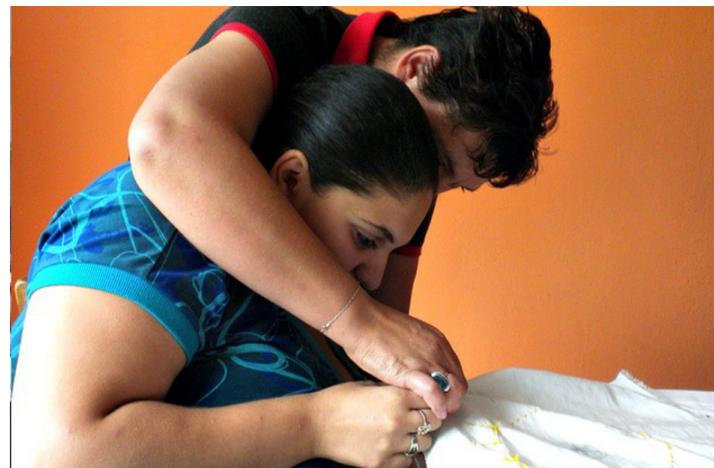
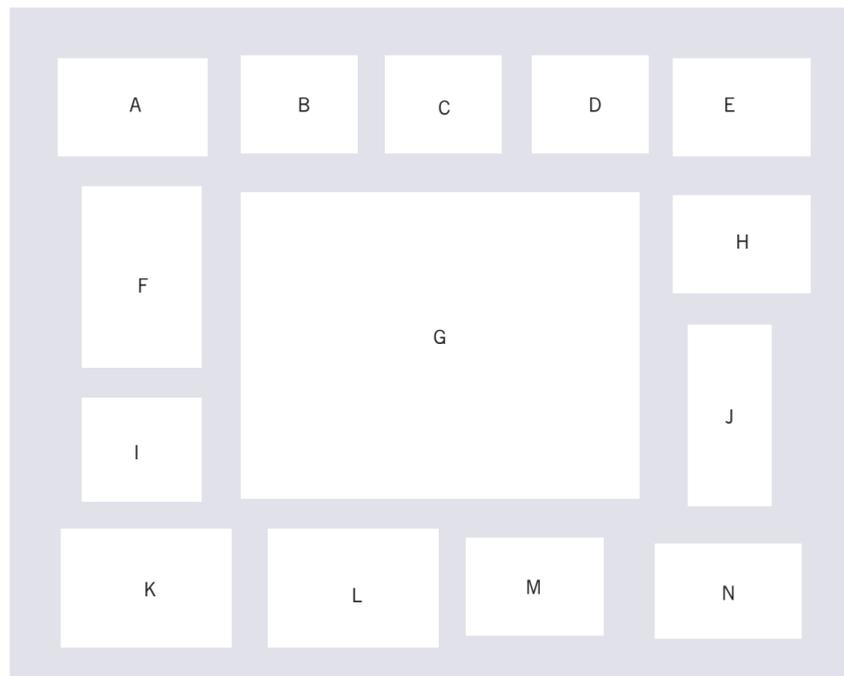


The Czech Roma Quilt



The quilters from Mimoň are close friends, and helped each other.



Peace Fellow Beth Wofford located the Roma artists in Mimoň and helped them to produce their panels which were then assembled in Maryland (USA) by Beth's mother, Barbara, a skilled quilter. Beth wrote the profiles below.



A. **Lenka Dirdová's** panel portrays a large sun, with the international flag of the Roma people in the middle. Lenka chose the sun, because it shines on everyone, including the Roma. Lenka left school at the age of 14, because her family ran out of money.



B. **Leona Polláková's** panel shows the silhouette of a Roma woman dancing, surrounded by yellow stars that represent Europe. This symbolizes the willingness of the Roma to integrate into European society. Leona is out of work and looks after her baby. She found that embroidering her panels provided a welcome respite from the boredom of unemployment.



C. **Emilie Sulejman Žigová's** panel has a heart in the center, showing the Roma capacity for love and hope. Much of the heart is black, however, reflecting the oppression that Roma have suffered. The green plant shows that even out of darkness, hope can bloom. Like several other quilters, Emilie dropped out of school after being treated with disrespect by other students.



D. **Žaneta Gazová's** delicately-embroidered panel depicts a violin, in memory of her sister's wedding. Žaneta remembers the music with great fondness. She found it relaxing to embroider her panels, which she did after her ten month old son David was put to bed. For Žaneta, traditional music is an important part of a Roma woman's experience.



E. **Renata Dufková's** panel commemorates her husband, who has passed away. The clouds represent the sadness that Roma women feel when they are left to raise their children alone. The sun and flowers are her hope for a brighter future, especially for her sons.



F. **Lenka Dirdová** created this panel to depict Jesus on the cross because her religion is extremely important to her and her family. A member of an evangelical congregation, she relies on her religion to help her through hard times.



G. All of the Mimoň quilters contributed to this central panel. The designs on the left show acts of violence against Czech Roma, including fire-bombings (top left); beatings (the baseball bats); intimidation by Neo-Nazis; and death -

31 Roma who have been murdered since the fall of Communism. The middle and right sections are optimistic. They show the Czech and Roma flags surrounded by the stars of the Council of Europe, to symbolize inclusion. On the right are written expressions of hope.



H. **Leona Polláková's** panel underscores the importance of religion in the life of Roma from Mimoň. Leona, 19, is currently out of work and taking care of her baby daughter Sara. She found the process of embroidering to be a welcome escape from the demands of motherhood.



I. The horse is central to traditional nomadic Roma culture and a wonderful companion for Roma. To artist **Žaneta Gazová**, the horse also represents freedom. Žaneta's family has passed down stories about horses that make her appreciate their importance to her family through the years.



J. This panel, by **Žaneta Gazová**, depicts a Roma woman dancing in traditional dress. Žaneta was a dancer before the birth of her children and wanted to demonstrate the importance of dance in Roma culture. Although she no longer performs at festivals, she still dances at the weddings of her friends.



K. **Lenka Dirdová** chose to depict her son's birthday party. In so doing, she emphasizes the importance of family in Roma culture and her devotion to her four siblings and son.



L. This panel by **Emilie Horačková** shows a horse and a traditional Roma caravan. Emilie has been the leader, and inspiration behind the quilting group, and the quilting sessions took place in her home. Emilie is also one of the few quilters to have finished secondary (high) school. She wanted to go to University but had to focus instead on her two children.



M. This panel, by **Leona Polláková**, 19, depicts the importance of family. Leona wanted to show the world that the family is central in Roma culture and something to be emulated across the world.



N. **Renata Dufková's** panel depicts family life. She has two boys - David, 11 and Tomáš, 14. She is determined to see that her children finish high school - something she never had a chance to do.