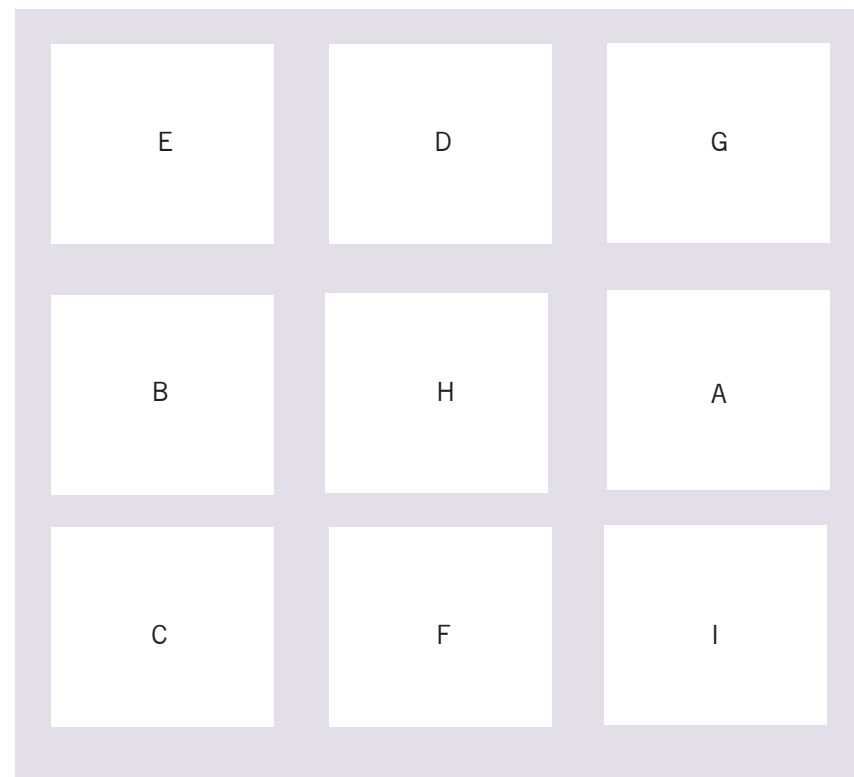


The Romano Trajo (Roma Life!) Quilt



The Roma friends who produced panels for this quilt in Lithuania (profiled below right) decided on a theme which appealed to them all - a love story. The story unfolds through the panels, as told in the captions below left. The artists were helped by Ana Rozanova from the Council of Europe (far left) and Jurate, a Lithuanian artist (3rd from left). Elise Filo, an AP Peace Fellow, profiled the artists and wrote text for this poster.



The panels were assembled into a finished quilt by Alison Wilbur, who works with the Quilters from the Sea Guild, in Portsmouth, Rhode Island.



Quilters Kim, Shannon, and Kelly from Rochester in New York State, began the process of assembling the quilt.

Roma Love Story

The story is set in a time when Roma travelled the countryside. While many of the elements (clothes, caravans etc) are no longer in use, the music and dancing remains a central part of Roma life in Lithuania.
Narrative by Elise Filo.

A. Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a lovely young woman. One sunny afternoon, she went walking in the woods, dreaming of love. She came across a beautiful tree and sat down amidst the brightly-colored wildflowers to wait for her beloved. Despite the beauty of the day, all was not well. Her grandparents had promised her to another man.

B. There lived a good man, a poor man, who had come to the camp to arrange his marriage. But there he had seen the lovely young woman and was smitten. He knew that she was in love with him as well. He decided to pursue her. It was a simple plan: dress to impress in bold red (the color of love and joy) with his finest tall boots to show off his social standing; arrive mounted on his trustworthy steed; and gallop off with her into the sunset!

C. Back in the camp, the lovely woman's grandfather had been informed that she was running away with the poor man. In a fit of rage, he rushed off to follow them. How could she subject him to such shame?! As the horse thundered down the road, a little flower caught his attention and he was overcome with nostalgia for a forgotten love of his own. Little did the young lovers know it, but the lovely woman's grandfather had once been in love with the young man's grandmother. Sadly, their love had been forbidden! The caravan began to slow down as it all came back...

D. The good man's family knew about his plan and was waiting for the couple. A pair of horses were saddled and ready.

E. The lovely young woman, wearing the gold passed down through her family, is smelling the roses for her wedding. They are a beautiful red, the color of love, life and happiness. Also, they match the flower crown and red ribbon of the white veil she will wear at the wedding, as well as the red dress she will wear as the first outfit of a married woman.

F. Tradas bare dromenca – "We are riding on wide roads!" The couple will sing these lines as they traverse the forests from campsite to campsite.

G. Drabaripe mindik Amenca! - "Fortune telling is always with us!" The lovely young woman has the talent for fortune telling and will make a living doing so.

H. The celebration was full of joy, several days long. Everyone came and sang around the fire. Women were dressed in bright skirts, made from six meters of fabric and gathered at the waist, and some women wore aprons and kerchiefs to indicate their married status. All wore their most beautiful jewelry. The men, too, were dressed for the occasion. There were feasts. And how the guitar sang those nights!

I. Romano traio si gili! – "Romani life is like a song!" There will be music - violins, guitars, tambourines, and voices. There will be singing. There is always dance. They will sing the songs that are passed down through their families about money, hard times, and, above all, love.



For **Bozena**, the quilting project was a nice way to learn a new skill in a relaxing atmosphere with new friends. She would like very much to continue using her new embroidery skills to illustrate topics of Romani life, from traditions to everyday routines. Bozena sees this project as the first step towards employment for the quilting group.



Sandra joined the quilting project in order to try something new with a group of friends. One of the project's many successes, in Sandra's opinion, has been its ability to change the opinions of people who think that Roma are incapable of hard work. Each of the women went above and beyond, without anyone asking it of them, and this is apparent in the final product. Sandra added that it is sad to have to say goodbye to the quilt, even though she is happy that it is going abroad to show the world their accomplishment. She says: "Just bring us the quilt back!"



Jurate is our Lithuanian artist and teacher. Although she did not join the quilting to learn how to embroider, she did learn quite a bit! If society is to change its attitudes towards Roma, both sides will have to adapt. This project has provided a basis for women on both sides to reach out by hosting visits to our classroom, offering an embroidery workshop, and organizing charity events.



Oksana's special contribution to the team has been her talent in drawing. Although she has always drawn, she is really struck by how well the designs have been realized. Furthermore, the quilting has succeeded in bringing the women together on a regular basis and building a sense of community - something that is quite rare for Roma women here. The success of the project has surprised the women, and they are enthusiastic to show the world just what they can do - they're in the mood for change!



The quilting project was a dream come true for **Aliona** - literally! She had seen beautiful embroidery in the films she had watched as a child and always dreamt of learning herself. But there was never the opportunity. Now that she has the chance, she plans on continuing to use her new skills, combining what she has learned from the Peace Quilt embroidery with ambitions for the fashion world.



"If you believe in your dreams, they will come true". This is what **Rouse's** mother taught her at an early age. It is very important to Rouse that the quilt is viewed by a lot of people, because it proves to the world that Romani life is not necessarily what one reads in the newspapers. She has enjoyed showing the panels to the visitors who have come to the class, as well as to her family and friends.



Anzela joined the quilting project to show the world what Roma women can accomplish. Rather than focusing on the discrimination faced by Roma every day on her panel, she wants to show the love, singing, and blooming of life. The quilting process has really inspired her to pursue another one of her dreams: fashion. Anzela wants to work on a fashion line that modernizes Romani fashion.