

## Biography: Madeleine Mitchell



Back about 1974, a night school "Leather Craft" course afforded me a creative outlet. I was fortunate to have an excellent instructor, Carol McLean, a very talented leather crafter and world class quilter, who inspired me to experiment and learn more about leather. She introduced me to CSCL, the Canadian Society for Creative Leathercraft, and I have been a member since 1975.

Leather is such a versatile medium, and I have, through the years explored many techniques such as carving, tooling, and molding and created many projects. I delighted in the unlimited methods of decorating, embossing, and colouring, but often found myself returning to simplicity of design and letting the leather itself become the prominent feature of the project. I love the bright colours that can be applied to leather but admire the natural shades and textures of the leather just as much.

Leather craft remains, for me, an escape and a relaxing opportunity to create.

### The Red Florentine Leather Covered Box

When I acquired this leather I quickly realized "they don't make this any more" and "how can I use it?". It was important to me to showcase the leather itself.

The simple wooden box is a box to contain treasures and it requires an elegant covering, the red Florentine leather was satiny, soft, pliable and pleasing to the eye and hand and worked easily surrounding this box. Being a thin leather, it was cut like fabric and glued to the box. Because of the angled corners, it was necessary to plan the cuts and avoid unnecessary stretching or any tearing. The finished covered box has a beautiful red colour that enhances the simple box design. The charcoal grey partial lining melds into the hinge and into the inside of the lid; the box opens easily to reveal the treasures contained within...

Dimensions: 15.4cm X 12cm X 8.9cm (6 inches X 4 ¾ inches X 3 ½ inches)

### The Mission Grain Picture Frame

During an Art Course using Acrylics, I was challenged to paint 3 favourite objects. As I thought about the challenge I realized that all 3 items were my past leather craft projects – a molded mask, a covered bottle, and a book cover with an embossed "Lizard". After I completed the painting, the need for a frame became evident. Therefore, to contain my favourite items I created a leather picture frame. The leather is mission grained cowhide that has a beautiful texture and a rich medium brown colour. The leather is thin and when dampened easily molds around a millboard base. As I designed the pattern, I realized the engineering required to ensure proportion and correct fit for the painting. It was also important to provide a removable back panel to be able to change the picture. I decided a welted edge would compliment the frame and made the welting from thin "skiver" coloured to match the mission grain. To hang the frame I secured a leather thong hiding the attachment. Now, I have 4 of my favourite all together.

Dimensions: 31.5cm X 26.4cm (12 ½ inches X 10 ½ inches)

## Leather as a Bowl

Such a versatile medium, leather can function as a useful item such as bowl to contain one's earthly treasures. This superb piece of cowhide, has a smooth texture that lends itself to molding and shaping by hand. The interior lines define the piece's uniqueness, and are highlighted by the rich mahogany colour. The exterior showcases the deep brown colour with the natural texture of the leather. The curves of the bowl undulate around the perimeter and protect any contents placed within. Leather as a Bowl is elegant enough for the mantle but functional enough to serve as a container in any space; it marries design with function.

Dimensions: Circular, diameter about 25.4cm (10 inches)