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Fabric artist gives new meaning to 'sheer poetry'



Robin Taple (left) takes the words of Mary Logue's poems and reproduces them with images on pillows, table runners and other fabric items. — staff photo by Colin Beltz

Mary Logue, Robin Taple collaborate to match poetic words and images

BY RUTH NERHAUGEN
Staff Writer

Her mystery novels may be stories to die for, but Mary Logue's poems are words to live with.

At least that's the opinion of her publisher, Marianne

Nora of Mid-List Press in Minneapolis. She told Logue, "These poems should be in the home." Nora envisioned them on towels and tea cozies, pillows and other items which are part of home life.

Enter Robin Taple, who creates mixed media col-

lages using fabric. She'd been looking into the possibility of merging her collage art with poetry.

"I looked at lots of poems" published by Nora at Mid-List, Taple said. "I kept coming back to Mary's. Her words spoke to me." Images of home and family, nature and love came to mind.

"A lot of my poems are from the Stockholm-Lake Pepin area," Logue said,

where she has a home and does most of her writing.

Nora linked the artist and the poet about two years ago. At first they worked independently, with Taple taking Logue's words and putting them on pillows.

What she came up with often surprised Logue. "Often she doesn't choose the obvious" image, the writer explained. "She seeks a deeper meaning" instead

of making a simple match of words and picture.

"It's interesting as a poet to see how a reader sees your work," Logue added. "I feel she really brings out another level."

"In the past," Taple said, "I started with the image and looked for the poetry to match. This time I started with the poems and looked for the image."

The two are collaborating more closely now, and will be going out together on some public appearances with Logue's new book of poetry, "Meticulous Attachment." The official release date is in May.

Taple — who founded her business, *Momento*, in 2003 after working in commercial design for 20 years — is currently matching images with words from Logue's latest publication and her second book of poems, "Settling."

Many of the images are from nature, particularly gardens. Taple titled one of their upcoming programs "Texture of the Garden" with that thought in mind.

The title and the whole collaboration are particularly appropriate, Logue said, because "I feel like my poems have a lot of texture in them."

Reflecting that concept, Taple creates pillows, hangings and other accessories for the home using older fabrics, rickrack, beads and buttons which she finds at estate and garage sales and on eBay. "I like to mix old and new" to create just the right image, she said.

Taple designs each one-of-a-kind piece, blending images and words on a computer then printing them on fabric, which she embellishes by hand and/or machine. *Momento* creations can be

found at stores throughout the Twin Cities.

"I just love it," said Logue.

As she travels to promote "Meticulous Attachment" this spring and summer, Logue plans to take along some *Momento* creations from the garden collection.

Taple also will participate in some appearances, including the "Texture of the Garden" presentation May 12 at Seasons on the St. Croix in Hudson, Wis. Also, they'll put on an August workshop at the Arboretum in Minneapolis at which participants will both write and create memory pillows. They may participate as a team at the Stockholm Art Fair in July.

The new book will be available soon in local bookstores. Previews say that it reflects "a new stage of maturity in the poet's examination of our connections to nature, time, and each other."

Reviewers have described her as "a poet's poet." One wrote about her previous book of poems, "Her insight, clarity and simplicity of language, and unshakable calm, set the standard for other poets to follow." Midwest Book Review calls her work, "Direct and eloquent."

Logue plans appearances throughout the region. On April 14 she'll be guest speaker for the Lake City Area Women's Civic Association annual meeting; on May 21 she'll speak at Pepin Public Library; and on June 14 she'll be signing books at Best of Times Bookstore in Red Wing.

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Logue draws from local inspiration

BY RUTH NERHAUGEN
Staff Writer

Going away brought Mary Logue closer to home.

She was in New York City when she wrote her first novel, which was set in the Twin Cities, Logue explained.

"I'm not sure I would have seen how interesting this area is if I hadn't left it," she said.

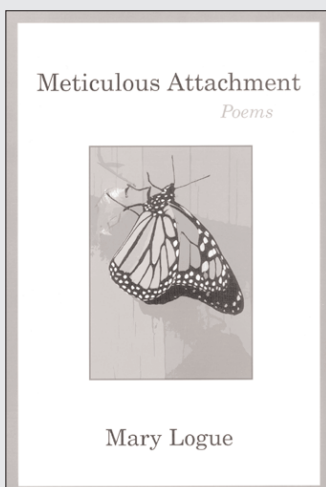
Logue is becoming an increasingly familiar name in Red Wing, situated as it is midway between her two homes. She and her partner, author Pete Hautman, live in Minneapolis, plus she has a house in Stockholm, Wis., where she does most of her writing.

"I work here best," she said. "Going away has really helped me see my home better."

She grew up in Lake Elmo, Minn., near Stillwater, and did a lot of traveling. In addition to New York City, she lived in France, Belgium and Tucson, Ariz., but always came back to this area. Eighteen years ago she bought the house in Stockholm.

Logue didn't think she had what it took to be a

Mary Logue's newest book of poems, "Meticulous Attachment," will be released in May.



fiction writer, so until she was in her mid-20s she wrote mostly poems. "I couldn't say everything I wanted to say in poems," though, so she began writing novels in addition to poems. Mysteries are her genre.

She has published six mysteries: "Red Lake of the Heart," "Still Explosion" and four books in the Claire Watkins series: "Blood Country," "Dark

Coulee," "Glare Ice," and "Bone Harvest." "Dark Coulee" won the Minnesota Book Award for Popular Fiction in 2000.

The Claire Watkins stories are set in the fictitious town of Fort St. Antoine, located between Stockholm and Pepin in Pepin County.

The stories are filled with familiar references to bluffs, rivers and communities including Red Wing.

At first, she admitted, "I was a little worried" about using a local setting. "I've taken some liberties."

Readers keep her on her toes, though, letting her know if something isn't quite right. She hears from them — and gets ideas from them — during public appearances at venues including the Red Wing Public Library, Clara's at the St. James Hotel and Best of Times bookstore.

A reader's familiarity extends beyond place names.

The books also comfortably reflect the way things are in the Lake Pepin region, the way people talk and act and think in small towns.

"I found it fascinating," she said, "the intensity of human interaction. I loved the idea of setting a mystery" in a place where people are not anonymous. Rather, everyone is connected.

"I found it much more powerful to write about

those connections, and about how information moves through a community."

The same characters weave in and out of the different stories, and will continue to appear in Claire Watkins books. Logue's fifth, "Poison Heart," is coming out this year, and she has another two or three "loosely set in my mind." Deer hunting is one of the subjects she'd like to use in a story.

Logue also just finished writing a book set in Stockholm.

"Small," written for 8 to 12-year-olds, is not yet scheduled for publication. She already has had nine children's books published plus a nonfiction book about her grandmother, "Halfway Home." Red Wing is next on the list of settings for a mystery. Logue and Hautman have completed the first in a series of young-adult mysteries set in the town of Bloodwater, which she said is "loosely based" on Red Wing, including the topography. "The river features very large in the book," she said.

The main characters are a girl, Roni, whose mother is secretary to the mayor, and a boy, Brian, whose mother is a police detective.

The book, "Snatched," will be out early in 2006. It should appeal to ages 10-15.

