

Want to be a JAM?

Let these tips boost your chance for success

by Dorothy Raymond

Being a Juried Artist Member (JAM) of SAQA provides you with many benefits, not the least of which is confidence in yourself and your work.

By definition, a JAM is an artist who has successfully presented a portfolio to the JAM Review Panel, comprised of current JAMs. Every other month, beginning in January, the Review Panel evaluates each applicant's portfolio and gauges its level of artistic merit and professional

Being juried into this group has added to my confidence level. It has provided validation for my efforts and my body of work. I enjoy the privilege of having my artwork published online and in *Art Quilt Quarterly*.

— Sherri Lipman McCauley

practice. Your portfolio includes a selected body of work and documentation that demonstrates a professional approach to art.

Several considerations can improve your JAM application's chance of success, starting with the work you submit. Your portfolio needs to present a body of work that represents a singular point of view or signature collection. Your artist's resumé must demonstrate a record of juried exhibitions beyond local quilt shows. Documentation and images need to be of high quality, as expected by galleries, museums, collectors, and publishers.

These are the process basics, however. A successful application also

demonstrates a professional approach to your art.

The Review Panel looks for very specific things that display a readiness to submit your work to a gallery or museum. (Actually wanting to be in a gallery is not a requirement—some JAMs seek the designation for peer recognition.) First and foremost, the Review Panel expects that applicants read and follow the application guidelines found at saqa.com/jams.

Attention to application details is key to success. As JAM coordinator, along with Deb Cashatt, I've often seen applicants stumble at the same steps in the process. The list below isn't a substitute for what's in the guidelines, but it should help you better understand the process.

- **Selection of work for your portfolio:** The Review Panel looks at whether you have a consistent voice that has some artistic merit. As a professional artist, you should be able to recognize a cohesive body of work. The panel does not want to see a portfolio that shows you have mastered a variety of different techniques. If you've made seven art quilts that are a cohesive body of work, you're ready to proceed. Submitting a portfolio of seven works is not a lifetime commitment that your art will be consistent with those seven pieces.

- **Images:** Your photos must be of professional quality. The photos should be in focus and evenly lit on a plain background. Also, the Review Panel must be able to see the actual edges of your art in the photo. This means that a small amount of the plain background behind your art

quilt must be visible. Why do we care? It's not arbitrary. The members of the Review Panel need to see your edge treatment as part of their evaluation of your portfolio. The artist's chosen edge treatment for an art quilt can easily enhance or detract from the artistic merit of the work. For example, the Review Panel wants to know if the work is mounted on

Sherri Lipman McCauley
Aging On
60 x 24 inches | 2014





Susan Lenz
Loss Installation

Approximately 10 x 8 x 4 feet, as shown;
site-specific, flexible dimensions | 2018

canvas, or not. It is also SAQA's belief that most galleries and museums, when viewing an artist's portfolio, expect to see the edges of the work.

- **Exhibition record:** You need to have an exhibition record beyond local quilt shows. It doesn't need to be *Quilt National* or a SAQA global exhibition, but it must show that you've been juried into art quilt exhibitions or art shows.

- **Resumé:** The Review Panel wants to know about your art quilt background. We ask for specific things in a specific order; it's not likely that your career resumé will have what the Review Panel needs to see, so you will need to create an artist's resumé. If you have a formal art education, list it; many JAMs do not.

- **Artist's Statement:** The Review Panel wants to know why you make the art you've submitted in your portfolio. Your artist's statement

Applying for JAM was an opportunity for peer review. Being a JAM is artistic acceptance as a true professional. — Susan Lenz

should connect the viewer to the artwork in your portfolio; techniques and materials are less important to the Review Panel. The shorter and more succinct you can make it, the better.

As a SAQA member, you have access to many resources to aid you in preparing the items you need for your JAM application. The guidelines contain direct links to some of these resources. SAQA also offers specific mentoring for the JAM application; details can be found by clicking on the Application Guidelines

tab at saqa.com/jams. You may find the mentoring process helpful, but it's not necessary.

to approach new venues, to explain your work, and be taken seriously as an artist.

Well-experienced and prepared JAMs reflect well on SAQA among the professional art world. Successful JAMs have the potential to lift the organization.

The JAM Review Panel meets in January, March, May, July, September and November; applications are due by the first day of those months. At each meeting, we review the applicants who have applied since the previous meeting, and accept those whose applications meet our criteria.

Why not check out the guidelines at saqa.com/jams and start your application today? ■

Dorothy Raymond is a SAQA JAM residing in Loveland, Colorado. You can view her work at dorothyraymond.com.

Reaching the goal of JAM was a great exercise in focusing my artistic style as well as becoming more organized. The most meaningful thing was being accepted as an artist by my peers, giving me more confidence as I develop as an artist. — Vicki Conley

The intangible benefits of becoming a JAM are no less real than those listed on the SAQA website. Many current JAMs believe that just going through the application process helped them develop a professional practice. Indeed, the resumé and artist's statement you prepare for the Review Panel can be shared with collectors, galleries, publishers, and museums along with your new credential as a JAM. Being a JAM provides you with the confidence

Vicki Conley
Time Illuminated
48 x 32 inches | 2020

