



# NEWSLETTER

September 1991

Issue 1

## STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Studio Art Quilt Associates** is a new organization founded to promote art quilts as a professional art form. In August 1989 a letter was sent to artists asking if there was an interest in founding such a group. The response was positive, and work was begun on the founding of such an organization.

The need for a promotional organization for art quilts is evident in the relative lack of presence of art quilts in major art publications, exhibits in museums and galleries, the lack of critical writing about art quilts, and the lack of awareness on the part of the potential purchasing public. Self-promotional organizations for other media, notably glass and wood artists, have done the job of bringing their art to the attention of the art world and the general public, resulting in more frequent exhibitions and articles and, ultimately, an increased market for works of art in these media. The inherent appeal of quilts suggests that promotional and educational activities by a similar organization for art quilts would be at least as successful.

The initial group of quilt artists (over 50) contributed seed money and volunteer time to implement founding SAQA. Legal papers were filed to establish SAQA as a non-profit, tax exempt, educational corporation promoting studio art quilts as a professional art form. A Board of Directors was formed, along with an Advisory Board of art quilt experts. The Board established the goals of SAQA, and contributed the essential secretarial work, bookkeeping, office space & equipment, telephone & electricity, and hard work to get the organization rolling. Membership brochures were prepared and sent to over 1500 interested artists. Formal membership with annual dues began May 1.

The organization name, **Studio Art Quilt Associates**, was selected to define our group in a precise manner. To the average person, the word "quilt" denotes a bedcovering with all sorts of cultural connotations. "Studio artist" is a term which identifies a person as an individual working in a serious and professional manner. "Studio quilt artist" will become a term to denote an artist working in the quilt medium in a serious manner. "Associates" is used to denote our feelings of community and to specify legally the type of organization we will be. We are not a trade organization or one which sells works of art, but instead an organization which will promote studio quilt artists and their works.

To promote the studio art quilt, SAQA has specific goals and actions to accomplish them. To encourage and facilitate research, critical writing, and publication of articles in the art & popular press as well as scholarly & historical journals, SAQA will act as a resource and clearing house for information on the movement and its artists. SAQA will actively circulate a revolving file of slide portfolios of works by its artist members. Informational materials will be made available by SAQA to curators, teachers, students, gallery owners, art dealers, and art consultants. These materials will include bibliographies and reprints of critical writings, artists portfolios, and information on speakers and teachers available for workshops and symposia. SAQA will also publish a quarterly newsletter which will address the professional needs of the studio quilt artist and provide a forum for the exchange of views & information among artists, dealers, and collectors. Future plans include biennial juried member shows held in conjunction with general meetings, and regional symposia.

Anyone interested in the studio art quilt movement will benefit from the activities of SAQA, whether they are members or not. Members, of course, will gain much more. Your membership support of SAQA will not only benefit you personally, but will enable all the above goals and programs to be carried out.

In the future, SAQA will apply for grants to expand our agenda, but right now we need grass roots support from you. A membership form is on the back of this newsletter. If you have not joined, do so today. If you have joined, get your artist portfolio organized and send it in to us. Also, contribute your time & talents to help in the work. We have all types of jobs, and everyone's contributions will help us to do so much more. You can start by spreading the word about SAQA. Tell artists and collectors you know, talk to the curator of that next exhibit you're in, send a letter to the board of the museum that has shown quilts in the past. Talk to gallery owners in your area, no matter what media they show. Send a letter to your local

### NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The SAQA Board of Directors reports the following progress:

- Archive files have been prepared.
- Work has begun on the first mailings of artist portfolios (thanks to Kathleen Sharp & Therese May)
- Membership cards have been printed & mailed.
- As of July 30, SAQA had 116 paid memberships & 14 artist members with portfolios on file.
- We are right on target of our goal of 200 members by the end of 1991.
- Membership brochures have been distributed at Quilt National, OH; Great American Quilt Festival, NY; & Arrowmont School for the Arts, TN.
- 1500 membership brochures have been mailed.
- Membership files have been computerized.
- Our first newsletter has been published & mailed.
- Compilation of an Art Quilt Bibliography has begun (see related article).
- A list of museums, galleries, publications, organizations, & individuals to receive mailings is being prepared.



## LETTERS

**LETTERS TO THE EDITORS:** We welcome your letters with comments, suggestions, questions, and information of interest to SAQA members. Send your letters to: SAQA Newsletter, P.O.Box 287, Salida, CA, 95368.

This month, Therese May shares her experiences at the Quilt National '91 opening and Kathleen Sharp has a warning about quilt thefts:

### AN OPENING EVENT

Dear SAQA,

Going to Quilt National 91 in Athens, Ohio was quite an experience, considering it was my first time to visit the biennial show. I met Yvonne Porcella & Holley Junker, both QN 91 exhibitors and fellow Californians, at O'Hare and we flew to Columbus together. We then rented a car and drove to Athens.

I wasn't expecting such hot weather- it was steamy! It's kind of wonderful how that hot, humid, tropical-like weather makes everything so lush and green.

Going to the reception Friday night was great because I got to put together names I associate with certain quilts with faces I hadn't seen before except, perhaps, in photos. All the exhibitors received their copies of **The New Quilt I**, the show's catalogue (which, by the way, is of exceptional quality). The quiltmakers immediately started exchanging autographs--just like signing yearbooks! Later Robert and Ardis James, quilt collectors & supporters of quilt artists, hosted a dinner for all QN participants, which was a delight.

Saturday, we had lunch and a meeting regarding the Studio Art Quilt Associates. Yvonne Porcella explained the purpose of SAQA and answered questions.

That evening we were all invited to Hilary and Marv Fletcher's house for pizza and cheesecake and, of course, more socializing and comparing notes. It was nice to meet Hilary, the person who for so long has put so much of her energy into Quilt National. She is also very good at making cheesecake--about 10 different kinds--incredible! Lovely!

Quilt National was a rich experience for me--I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys art, quilts, the Midwest, and friendly people.

Therese May

### BEWARE! NOTICE OF QUILT THEFTS

**VIGIL** was the only artwork taken on August 2, 1991, from a gallery exhibition space in the Showplace Design Center, San Francisco. The building has a 24-hour security patrol and door check. I have learned that a gallery in Idaho had nine quilts stolen this summer. There are "quilt scoundrels" out there! I want to encourage SAQA members to **INSIST ON INSURANCE** (the piece was insured) in addition to carefully evaluating security. I wish I had sewn basic care instructions on the back of the quilt because I want the work to survive this chapter in its life.

Please help disseminate information about this quilt. It is signed & copyrighted and also registered (and tagged) as a Green Quilt. The piece is published in **The Guild 6** and will be featured in the **Fiberarts Design Book IV** this fall. Its highly distinctive and simple design makes it easily recognizable. Let's use our many eyes and ears to make things difficult for quilt thieves. If you see or hear of the quilt, please call collect:

Kathleen Sharp (408)395-3014  
Monte Sereno, CA

## EDITORS' NOTES

Dear Readers,

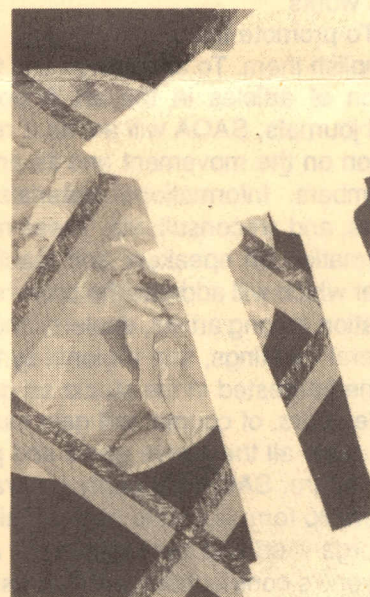
Welcome to the first issue of the SAQA Newsletter! As the communication arm of the Association, the newsletter will bring you news of its activities & actions. We will keep you abreast of important events & publications in the art quilt world, and bring you professional information you need to know.

Yvonne Porcella's **President's Message** & the **News from the Board** will be featured each issue to keep you current on the news of SAQA. **Introductions** will introduce you to members of the Board and then to member artists. Quilt collectors & their ideas will be featured in the **Collector's Forum**. **Business of Art** will address practical concerns of being a quilt artist in a professional manner. **Listings & In Print** will be your calendar of events & shows featuring art quilts, plus a list of articles, catalogs, & books of interest. We want to hear from you in **Letters to the Editors**, and welcome your contributions to **Articles of Interest**, a series of articles of particular interest to studio quilt artists.

As your Editors, we will do everything we can to make the newsletter an important part of your membership in SAQA. As quilt artists ourselves, we understand the vital importance of the work SAQA will perform for the art quilt community. But for the newsletter to work at its best, we need your ideas, input, & written words. We welcome your letters & suggestions, but also need ace reporters. We are especially interested in reviews of shows you attend; presentations of problems you encounter in your professional life & solutions which make your professional life easier (how you keep your records, what should be in a resume, how to approach a gallery, etc). We're all interested in learning from each other's successes as well as mistakes. Send your writings to the SAQA address, attention Newsletter Editors.

We look forward to hearing from all of you!

*Lynn Young*  
*Libby Lehman*



**VIGIL 82 x 55**  
©1990 Kathleen Sharp



## ARTICLES OF INTEREST

### Q&A-QUILTS & ART-QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q&A-Quilts & Art-Questions & Answers** was a critical symposium held last January as a means of opening up dialogue in a public forum on the aesthetic value of quilts. The panel discussion was sponsored by ThreadEvents, a special events & resource guide company owned by Marilyn Henrion & Diane Rode Schneck. The distinguished panel was composed of Helen W. Drutt English, Director of Helen Drutt Gallery, Philadelphia; Jonathan Holstein, collector, author, & curator of the 1971 Whitney quilt exhibit; Richard Martin, art historian & critic; Bernice Steinbaum, director, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York; and Theodore Wolff, art critic, Christian Science Monitor. Robin Schwalb, studio art quiltmaker, was moderator.

For almost a quarter of a century, focus has been shifting to the aesthetic value of quilts from merely the functional & historical. This shift has informed & inspired both quiltmakers and other artists. Has the art world failed to keep up?

In 1971, a groundbreaking exhibition at the Whitney Museum, **Abstract Design in American Quilts**, presented quilts on the wall, focusing on their aesthetic rather than historic value (That exhibit will be re-hung at the Museum of History & Science in Louisville, KY--see Exhibitions for details). The exhibit travelled nationally & internationally for 4 years, generating unprecedented respect for the quilt as art. Yet in 1990, when Marilyn & Diane were organizing the Symposium, calls to the Whitney and the Museum of Modern Art for a panel participant were fruitless. They were told there was no one on staff knowledgeable enough about quilts to participate. Also, only one major New York art gallery (Bernice Steinbaum) regularly exhibits quilts.

Obviously, the art quilt movement has grown & flourished outside the mainstream of the art world. It has its own rich heritage and tradition, independent of traditional painting, drawing, and sculpture. There has been much cross-pollination between the two worlds. Many quilt artists have formal art training and are knowledgeable about current art trends, and many artists, Miriam Schapiro to Robert Rauschenberg, have used design elements from quilts. However, there is a lack of general recognition of quilts as a fine art form.

Against this backdrop, each panelist gave their thoughts on the art quilt movement, and each brought a different perspective to the discussion. Richard Martin stated that the quilt artist possibly should not try to mainstream in the art world, maintaining separate but equal status parallel to it. His point was that the art quilt movement has nurtured itself as it developed from the traditions of quilting and, as a result, has something special to offer. He felt that the art quilt might lose certain qualities in the mainstream of art. Signs were noted that quilts are becoming increasingly accepted and making a slow but imminent entrance in the art world. Each of the other speakers had their own positions, and no conclusions were resolved. However, the dialogue was opened, and all agreed that it should continue.

ThreadEvents also sponsors guided shopping tours of NYC geared specifically toward studio art quiltmakers. For info call 212-982-8949 or 212-249-5094.

## ARTIST PORTFOLIOS

### ARTIST MEMBERSHIP QUERIES ANSWERED

Multiple questions have been asked about the Artist Membership and the slide portfolios which artist members send to SAQA. Here is a basic explanation:

- Artist membership is a separate category of membership in SAQA. An info sheet, which you can request by writing SAQA, outlines the requirements & correct format. Artist members submit a portfolio of their work, including slides & written material that is utilized by SAQA for two functions. A complete set of slides and copies of written materials are kept on file in the archives. This will become a permanent record of the artist's work. The other set of slides & materials is used in publicity efforts of SAQA. This is why you must send two sets of slides.

- Artist members must meet specified criteria. As stated on the information sheet, they are as follows:

- be an active member of SAQA
- pay the annual fee of an additional \$65 (covers slide dupes, photocopying, & postage)
- must have evidence of a cohesive body of work
- must have developed a personal style
- must be an established & exhibiting artist
- must produce work which is primarily related to the quilt-stitched, pieced, layered, stuffed fabric

Artist member candidates will decide themselves if they meet the above criteria (After serious consideration, the Board decided that an elitist system would not work, and that associates should not have to judge each other).

- All portfolios submitted in the correct format will be accepted into the SAQA registry. They will not be evaluated. This is to encourage the submission of a wide variety of works. This variety is important to emphasize the diversity of art quilts. An art representative who met with SAQA Board members said she got much more response when she sent information out about 10 artists rather than just one artist with more in-depth coverage. There is power in numbers - the more members we have, the more attention we will get. The bottom line for publicity & education is numbers, numbers, and more numbers, repeatedly exposed.

- To become an artist member, you need to submit an initial portfolio & yearly updates of the following:

- 35mm slides of work. Duplicate copies of 10 slides (total of 20 slides sent), marked correctly & arranged in a plastic file page. This can include detail shots.
- Current resume.
- 5 black & white 8"x10" photos of current work.
- Reprints of articles, press releases, & show announcements on 8½"x11" paper and presented in an orderly manner.
- Slide information sheet. All info must follow the guidelines presented on the SAQA Artist Membership form.
- Optional: brief statements about the submitted works.

Slides should be representative of your work, but do not have to be works for sale. Ten slides is the required number of initial submissions, but yearly updates may be fewer. Prior slides will be kept in your file unless deleted at your request. Portfolios will be sent out on a rotating basis so that all artists will receive equal exposure.

We are all set to begin sending promotional materials, including artist's packets. To be included in the first mailings, get your portfolio together & send it to us NOW! We're counting on you to make SAQA a success!



## CAMILLE AND ALEX COOK--FIBER ACTIVISTS

Their zeal for collecting contemporary fiber art and the frustrations of finding it in today's marketplace have led Camille and Alex Cook to hunt out the best in today's fiber with sleuth-like methods. It has also led them to form an advocate organization, **Friends of Fiberart International**, dedicated to promoting contemporary fiber arts.

Camille and Alex Cook developed their love of fiber in their childhoods. Alex grew up surrounded by the imaginative designs of handmade quilts while Camille developed her appreciation of skilled construction by watching her mother create finely tailored garments. While they did not start out originally to collect fiber works, one day they looked around their Chicago area home to discover that the majority of their artwork was fiber. Their collection holds over 80 pieces by many of the best known (and some of the soon to be best known) artists working in fiber today. They discussed their collection and their methods of collecting in a recent issue of **Surface Design Journal** (Spring, 1991, p.8).

As they began to form their collection, the Cooks discovered they would not have space for everything they saw and liked, so they decided to shape their collection around certain artists. They wanted their collection to follow an artist throughout his career, selecting works which represent the various styles of the artist. Instinctively they know if a work will become part of their collection, especially if it demands to be made of fiber--no other media would express the artist's ideas. Overall design solution, appropriate color selection, fine workmanship, and subtle humor are also important considerations.

The Cooks are frustrated by the relative inaccessibility of fiber art to the collector. They search out new works in magazines, museum exhibitions, local shows & fairs, and international competitions. Luckily for them, they live in the locale of the Art Institute of Chicago, which has an active fiber department with educational opportunities, including visiting artists. The Textile Arts Center in Chicago also has exhibitions and programs, and the Cooks are in touch with guilds of weavers and needle-artists. They attend the American Craft Museum exhibits, the New Art Forms Expo in Chicago (which will be the site of the first FFI meeting in September), and the Tapestry Biennale in Lausanne, Switzerland.

When they locate an artist they are interested in, they request slides of works to view, then visit the artist's studio or gallery for in-person examination of the works. Slides just can't show the texture, color, weight, and reflectiveness of fiber art. They especially like to work with galleries that will send a work on approval so that they can see the piece in their home with the appropriate lighting and surroundings.

Artists in the Cook collection include Olga deAmaral, Mary Bero, Maria Teresa Chojnacka, Lillian Elliot, Pat Hickman, Sheila Hicks, Kiyomi Iwata, Candace Kling, Patti Lechman, Kay Sekimachi, Blair Tate, Lenore Tawney, and Claire Zeisler. They are not actively adding artists.

Potential collectors of fiber art are advised by the Cooks to learn as much as they can about the field of fiber. Study magazines, attend shows, take art appreciation classes, and join a museum affiliate group that will expose the collector to a wide range of art (including studio visits and guided tours of exhibits). The learning experience will assist the collector in developing a set of artistic criteria and an appreciation of textiles. Museums

that the Cooks mention as having fiber collections include the American Craft Museum in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cooper-Hewitt, and the Art Institute of Chicago. However, the Cooks feel that there is yet to be a museum with a curatorial staff committed to exhibiting contemporary fiber art on an ongoing basis. At least, not enough for them to designate a museum that will eventually receive their collection.

One point they make about museums (which should be remembered by all of us when we discuss our local museum's lack of interest in fiber, especially art quilts) came from a conversation with a curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. They asked if the museum was considering beginning a collection of contemporary fiber. He indicated that would be influenced by member support groups; if they came up with the donations, it would influence policy. "It all boils down to a need for enthusiastic support!", say the Cooks. Attendance at fiber shows of all types is also vital.

When asked about the future of fiber art, the Cooks despaired at the stagnation in the marketplace. "If we do not keep buying our best fiber artists' work, we cannot expect them to be able to continue producing. Collectors must do everything they can to present a high profile, so galleries and museums will show more fiber".

To this end, the Cooks have started **Friends of Fiberart International**. The impetus to form such a group for fiber art collectors came while viewing the 1990 New Art Forms Expo. The Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass, a similar collectors' organization for art glass, was actively present at the Expo, with 200 members attending their Saturday Night dinner function. At the Expo, over one third of the exhibitors showed glass, while less than a handful showed fiber. When the relative youth of the studio art glass movement (since about 1962) is considered, this dominance of the marketplace by glass reveals the extreme importance of the Art Alliance to the emergence of glass artists. A similar fiber collectors' group could do much to assist the fiber art movement.

**Friends of Fiberart International** aims to increase the appreciation and understanding of contemporary art in fiber media by:

- disseminating information about and encouraging collection of fiber art
- supporting museum shows of fiber art
- encouraging scholarship and critical writing about art constructed in fibrous materials
- stimulating fiber art exhibition in galleries
- educating collectors and potential collectors through seminars, tours, and visits to fiber art collections

A registry of contemporary fiber art collections will be organized and maintained by FFI. This registry will release information to curators organizing exhibits of fiber and to members of the organization. Annual meetings are planned to coincide with major fiber events. Seminars and tours will also be planned. The first meeting will be held concurrent with the New Art Forms Expo in Chicago September 19-22, 1991. The group is also planning to meet next April in Lausanne, Switzerland during the 15th International Contemporary Fiberart Biennial.

Three distinguished professionals have already agreed to serve on the international Advisory Board: Paul Smith, Director Emeritus of the American Craft Museum, NY; Lloyd Herman, Director 1971-1986 of the Renwick Gallery, Washington, DC; and Patrick Ela, Director of the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

If you would like further information on *Friends of Fiberart International*, send SASE to: FFI, P.O.Box 468, Western Springs, IL 60558.



## INTRODUCTIONS

**SAQA is proud to introduce you to two members of our Board of Directors, Judith Larzelere of Belmont, MA, and Beth Gutcheon of San Francisco, CA.**

### JUDITH LARZELERE

My Experience with needle & thread began when I started an embroidered sampler at the age of 7. I learned to knit from my fifth grade teacher, and I still make a sweater or two each year. Sewing and thinking about fabric have always been pleasurable to me, and it seemed very natural to turn this skill into a career. I was trained as a painter at Rutgers University where I learned to develop my love of color. Since 1978, I have combined my artistic training and my childhood love of fiber to make studio art quilts full-time.

I am stubborn and given to biting off big chunks whenever I start something new. My first quilt was a Lone Star. The only technique I had seen was English paper piecing and that's how I made my star, all by hand, quilted by hand with stitches ¼" long using embroidery thread and needle. Some of the fabrics were cheaply made Indian bedspread scraps and these have long ago faded and rotted.

I made that first quilt for me, but each one after that has been for sale, since I took up quiltmaking to work as an artist. I sell my work in craft galleries, at the best craft shows, and with the help of art consultants. I have perfected strip-piecing and string quilting because they allow me to produce several quilts each year without dangerous stress on my body.

The second most pleasurable aspect of being a studio quilt artist (after the joy of creating) is the chance I now have to travel to teach workshops. I was a high school exchange student to Kiel, Germany and decided then that one life goal was travel. It was not until 22 years later that I was able to realize that goal. By then my two children were old enough to be on their own at college and my reputation had grown enough for me to be desired for quilt workshops. I teach an average of 4 times each year, lately longer workshops at craft schools like Haystack, Penland, and Arrowmont, and abroad in Germany and Switzerland where my rusty German has helped bridge the language barrier. I still see my primary focus as a creative artist in my studio, so I limit the number of teaching trips. I treat my career as a full-time job and am involved in some aspect of it 6 to 10 hours each weekday and often weekends as well.

One of the first juried shows I entered was Quilt National 81 and my quilt **Marriage of Blue and Orange** was chosen. Since then I have had uneven success being included in juried shows, and in books of collected contemporary quilts. My philosophy is that there is always another show, another book, and plenty of time to make a mark in this field.

I like to work abstractly and non-geometrically and do not rely on a block/grid structure. I am fascinated by the flicker of light on moving water, the shimmer of the Northern Lights, the drift of clouds, and the pattern of pebbles washed up on a beach. My images may resemble patterns found when leafy branches intersect or when flowers bloom in my garden. I have studied Japanese design to see how it combines structure and natural forms.

My work gives me a way to communicate feelings without using words. My inspiration is emotional and internal, more about symbolic imagery. I use color

interaction to help create mood. I begin a new piece because I want to express my reaction to the world of nature, or to communicate an emotion that is too strong to keep inside myself. I use colors to gain a mood response from the viewer. Moving color is important to my flat surfaced work. In the new textured work, color does not move about the piece in the same way. I am more concerned how one color surrounds another and makes it glow.

The technique I use is machine strip-piecing. I recut the pieced fabric and then machine string quilt it as I assemble the image and complete the wall hanging. When I start designing, I jot down a rough sketch. Although my images are planned and color choices are very deliberate, I work with a great deal of looseness as I begin to sew the quilt together. I can improve my original design and, because of this flexibility, I discover unexpected visual events which may give me ideas to try out in the next piece.

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**I am fascinated by the flicker of light on moving water, the shimmer of the Northern Lights, the drift of clouds, and the pattern of pebbles washed up on the beach.**

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I have been particularly influenced by the Abstract Expressionist painters who used color, texture, and gesture to represent emotional states. In my quilts I feel that I am exploring the same problems and expressing the same inspirations as if I were a painter using oils or acrylics. Instead, I choose colored cloth as a medium because I like the collage aspect of designing with fabric; I like selecting from available color rather than mixing paints, and I love the tactile pleasure of handling cloth. I also find quilts easy to store, to ship, and to install.

### BETH GUTCHEON

I saw my first art quilts in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1970 in the studio of a RISD-trained painter named Phyllis Palmer. They may have been the first quilts of any kind that I'd seen; certainly they were the first that got my attention. Phyllis knew her traditional quilts and I think she had a copy of a quilt block book, probably Ruby McKim. Phyllis was taking the blocks and blowing them up so that perhaps one 8-pointed star block would take up two-thirds of a quilt surface, then working in fabrics like gold lame and wool plaid. Her quilts were exciting and crammed with ideas, and they weren't even trying to be pretty. She was selling them as coverlets, priced somewhere between craft and art, through a dealer on Nantucket with a sophisticated clientele and a good sense of humor.

Years later, Lucas Samaras, and then Holly Solomon's gallery of Pattern Painters, would use fabric like that in Art, and the Art world exclaimed, "How original, how droll". I confess that it was years before I got the point of Phyllis' fabrics (and she had long since gone back to oils). What I learned from her was that patchwork was a graphic design form and that quilts had ideas in them. What I figured out on my own was, you could design and sew when you were home alone with a baby and no day care, even though you couldn't write under those conditions.

For a year, maybe two, I made quilts in every spare moment. I used very traditional fabrics, and I generally began with traditional design elements, but I altered, or rearranged, or juxtaposed those elements in every new way I could think of. I took ideas from all kinds



of graphic design forms other than quilts--photography, mosaic, op-art--not the images, the ideas behind them, and adapted them to patchwork.

For a year or two I believed that I was the only person in New York City and probably the world who was interested in making quilts that were not simply reproductions of heritage designs. I learned that someone in California named Jean Ray Laury had written a wonderfully inventive book showing quilts and coverlets made with many traditional skills but to modern, non-traditional effect. I supposed it was a fluke. People were beginning to take a fairly aggressive interest in my work too--giving commissions and paying me green money--but I assumed that was a fluke, too. Then a neighbor persuaded me that if she wanted to study with me others might too. I invested in a tiny classified ad in the back of **New York Magazine**, and to my perfect astonishment, strangers signed up in droves. Soon I had a regular cycle of classes going and the **New York Times** decided to do an article about me and the renaissance (if that's what it was) of this dormant woman's art form. The morning the piece came out, half the publishers in New York called wanting to know if I would write a book. Did I want to write a book? Well, yes. Writing was what I was trained to do, and what I had longed to do, before quiltmaking seized me and addled my brain. I was ready.

**The Perfect Patchwork Primer** came out in 1973, and it is still in print, used as a text by teachers of beginning design and quiltmaking. In 1974 some enterprising women in Ithaca, New York, mounted what I believe was the first conference of quiltmakers, inviting Patsy and Myron Orlofsky to talk about antique quilts and Jean Ray Laury and me to show slides of our work and discuss contemporary quiltmaking. I think the conference was a revelation to many...it certainly was for me. It was the first chance we had to see how many passionate quiltmakers there were, how many teachers, how many artists. At that conference it became possible to see what the scope of the movement might be, far beyond the hobbyists who would make one crib quilt before moving on to decoupage, beyond the heritage quilters whose focus would always be on replicas of 19th century art.

There was a second major conference later that year in Toronto, this time with Jinny Avery and Michael James on the faculty along with Jean and me and several exciting Canadian artists and historians. After that, conferences and workshops proliferated. In 1976 I brought out a second book, **The Quilt Design Workbook**, with Jeffrey Gutcheon. The quilt movement was growing fast!

**For a year or two I believed that I was the only person in New York City and probably the world who was interested in making quilts that were not simply reproductions of heritage designs.**

In 1977, I managed to carve out enough time alone at home to finish a novel, **The New Girls**, which came out in 1978. By that time, I had been travelling to teach quilt design for so long that I began to long for more time to do my own work, but after all those years of teaching in Sheboygan and Indianapolis (both of which I loved) I was being invited to teach in places like Paris and the Cotswolds and it seemed mad to stop travelling at a point like that.

In 1980 my second novel, **Still Missing**, was published, and it had a great success. By 1983 it had

been made into a movie, for which I wrote the screenplay, and I decided, finally, to stop teaching. There were many reasons. The first was personal. The second was that I had always been homesick on the road; I missed my son, and my books and my piano, and I missed time alone to do my own work. The third had to do with learning. You always learn when you teach, but as a screenwriter who had actually had a movie made, a class B miracle, I had the chance to learn a whole new field from some of the best people in that industry, and it seemed wrong not to seize it. The fourth was economic. I was by then a single mother with a big mortgage and a son to raise, and screenwriters have a union. They actually get paid a living wage, and when the studio wants to talk to you they have to fly you First Class, a definite first for me.

I lived for 19 years in New York's SoHo, the east coast capitol of the Business of Art. Knowing that world well from the point of view of painters, dealers, and artists in other craft media, I have felt strongly for a great many years that quilt artists are with few exceptions in a glass box much more confining than most of them understand. First, there is in the Art world a prejudice amounting almost to contempt against work that descends from Decorative Arts. There is additional prejudice against an art form that is traditionally feminine and domestic. That is, a painter or a dealer believes that a glass blower or ceramic sculptor is a lesser being than a painter by virtue of the medium he works in, but at least those guys have special equipment. Kilns and wheels and things. A quilt artist works with tools found around the house. Tools that Mom can use.

The Art world is a right little tight little island, and those on the inside do not particularly want outsiders climbing aboard. Finally, any artist who is self-trained or trained outside the Academy, as most quiltmakers are, is at a disadvantage because he or she has learned how to make the art, but nothing about how the Art world works, and has none of the contacts that a graduate of RISD or Yale or the painting department of Sarah Lawrence has. I am very glad that SAQA has decided to address these problems, and I look forward to seeing the Studio Art Quilt Movement achieve the recognition it deserves.

## IN PRINT

### ART QUILT BIBLIOGRAPHY TO BE PART OF SAQA ARCHIVES

Barbara Mortensen is compiling an extensive bibliography of information sources on art quilts and their makers for the SAQA archives. Besides books, it will also include articles from magazines, exhibit catalogues, newspapers, and other publications of limited circulation. This bibliography will be available for writers, researchers, and others wanting to know more about art quilts. Marvin Fletcher is helping Barbara copy this information onto computer disks, making accessibility easier to handle.

Barbara is using her librarian's training to track down references in such sources as the Art Index & Reader's Index. But we need your help, too. Please let her know anything you find in print, especially things that do not have a wide circulation (catalogues from local shows, newspaper articles, hometown magazine features, etc.). She needs; Title, author, publication name & date, and a brief description of content. Be as complete as possible, and include your name & address. Send Barbara anything you find, even if you think someone else will send it, too--THEY WON'T!

Send your listings to: **Barbara Mortensen, Lakeside Apts 11D, Melrose Park, PA 19126.**



## COMPETITIONS

### NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

**THE ARTIST AS QUILTMAKER V**, May 17-July 17, 1992. Cash prizes, Nancy Crow, juror. SASE for entry form to: Firelands Assoc. for the Arts, 80 S. Main St., Oberlin, OH 44074. Info 216/774-7158. **Deadline 9/25.**

**QUILT COMPETITION**, Dec.8-Jan.19, 1992. 3rd Annual, sponsored by Hill Country Arts Foundation, Kathleen McCrady, juror. Awards totalling \$1200. Entry fee \$22. For prospectus, send SASE to: HCAF, Box 176, Ingram, TX 78025. **Deadline 9/26.**

**QUILTS=ART=QUILTS 91**, Nov.2-Jan.5. Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center. Eligible: traditional & contemporary works, juried. Prizes. Fee: \$8 1st entry, \$6 2nd. Limit 2 entries. Send SASE to: Quilt Show, SAC, Box 916, 205 Genesee St., Auburn, NY 13021. **Deadline 10/1.**

**GREATER MIDWEST INTERNATIONAL VII**, Jan. 20-Feb. 14. All media, entry fee \$20 for 3 entries, 2 slides per entry, \$1500 in awards. Send SASE to: Bill Rothove, Gallery Director, Central Missouri State Univ. Art Center Gallery, Warrensburg, MO 64093. 816/429/4481. **Deadline 10/18.**

**SPEAKING IN TONGUES:ETHNIC INFLUENCES IN CONTEMPORARY TAPESTRY & FIBER ART**, June 25-Aug. 1. Sponsored by Center for Tapestry Arts. Open to all tapestry & fiber artists. Jurors: Ursula McCracken, Lotus Stack, Yoshiko Wada, Consuelo Underwood. No entry fee. Send SASE to: CTA, 167 Spring St., New York, NY 10012. **Deadline 11/30.**

**VISIONS:THE ART OF THE QUILT**, Oct. 3, 1992-Jan. 3, 1993. Juried international exhibit. Send LSASE to: Quilt San Diego, Dept. F1, P.O. Box 26902, San Diego, CA 92196. **Deadline 1/11/92.**

### REGIONAL

**KANSAS FIBER DIRECTIONS 92**, Residents or former residents of KS, OK, MO, CO, NE. Functional, non-functional categories, cash prizes. Entry Form: Kathy Losee, 2424 Gouverneur, Wichita, KS 67226. 316/683-8514. **Deadline 9/26.**

**FIBER CONCEPTS NOW**, Nov.3-24. Residents or former residents of OH, MI, IN, KY, WV, PA. Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH. Send SASE to: Liz Andraso, 1888 Brookfield Rd., S.E., Hubbard, OH 44425. **Deadline 9/30.**

## EXHIBITIONS

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| AL    | HUNTSVILLE. <b>Southern Quilts:A New View</b> , Huntsville Museum of Art, 9/8-11/3.  |
| CA    | ESCONDIDO. <b>Definitive Contemporary American Quilt</b> , Felicita Foundation for the Arts, 8/28- 10/31.  |
| IN    | INDIANAPOLIS. <b>Marie Webster Quilts</b> , Museum of Art, 1200 W. 38th, thru 9/30.  |
| KY    | LOUISVILLE. <b>Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt</b> , 11/1991-3/1992. <b>Abstract Design in American Quilts</b> (recreation of the Whitney Museum of Art's 1971 show), Museum of History & Science, 11/15-3/31. Six other quilt shows in Feb. & Mar. 1992. For info: The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc., 727 W. Main St., Louisville KY 40202. |
| MI    | DETROIT. <b>Quilts by Ann Brauer</b> , Detroit Gallery of Contemporary Crafts, 9/7-10/5.   |
| MO    | ST. LOUIS. <b>Quilt National 91</b> , St. Louis Center Gallery, 11/18-12/31.   |
| NY    | PURCHASE. <b>Essences &amp; Presences: Art Quilts</b> , Bronson Art Gallery, Manhattanville College, 11/25-12/30.  |
| OR    | CORVALLIS. <b>The Quilt as Art</b> , Corvallis Art Center, 9/4-26.   |
| TN    | CHATTANOOGA. <b>Southern Quilts: A New View</b> , Hunter Museum, 10 Bluff View, 11/24-1/5.   |
| TX    | HOUSTON. <b>International Quilt Festival</b> . Multiple exhibits, Astorhall, 10/24-27.   |
| DC    | <b>Improvisations in African-American Quiltmaking</b> , Smithsonian Institution, Renwick Gallery, 9/27-1/4.  |
| JAPAN | <b>New Wave Quilt Collection</b> . OHITA CITY, KYUSHU, Tokiwa Dept. Store, 9/19-10/1; YOKOHAMA CITY, Yokohama Sogo, 10/16-21; KASHIWA CITY, Kashiwa Sogo, 10/23-27.  |

Send info on art quilt exhibits & competitions to:

Jane Burch Cochran  
6830 Rabbit Hash Hill Rd.  
Rabbit Hash, KY 41005

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: October 15, 1991.

## SHOW REVIEW

**Quilt National' 91**, the seventh biennial juried international competition for contemporary art quilts,opened triumphantly at the Dairy Barn in Athens, Ohio last June. Crowds were eager to view the quilts chosen for the exhibit which has come to be regarded as the pinnacle of achievement for quilt artists. Since its founding in 1979, QN has grown not only in numbers of quilts and countries represented, but has become a much awaited showing of the best of the world's art quilts, of innovations in design & technique, of exciting new artists, of the newest works by established artists,the state of the art.

Jurors Tafi Brown, Esther Parkhurst, and Rebecca Stevens elected 76 works from over 1100 submitted for this year's show. Special awards were presented to 3 quilts: **Exile: House and Mountain**, by Rise Nagin, received Best of Show; **Quilt #91**, by Pamela Studstill, was given the Award of Excellence, and **Squares and Bars**, by Carol Gersen, received the Domini McCarthy Award for Exceptional Craftsmanship.

In their statement, the jurors declared the exhibit "an affirmation, a joyous celebration of quilts as art". They saw the exhibit as a turning point in the history of the art quilt, as a period of consolidation and expressive of a new maturity of style. While there were no radical departures in experimental use of the media or in the quilter's vocabulary, the quilts showed a dialogue with historical precedents in the use of traditional formats, patterns, and techniques. There was also a strong use of surface design techniques (photo transfers, silkscreen, dyes, paints) and a continuation of the tradition of non-functional 19th Century quilts. Strong color and design was emphasized, along with a return to the rectilinear plane. The artists show a clear desire to work within the quilt vernacular.

The Dairy Barn showing is over, but part of the show will tour for two years. The tour will include:

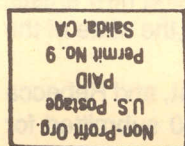
- Nov.18-Dec.31, 1991 St. Louis, MO, the Gallery at St. Louis Center
- Spring 1992 tour of various sites in Japan
- Sept. & Oct., 1992 Anchorage,AK, Anchorage Museum of History and Art
- April 16-May 28, 1993 Pueblo, CO, Sangre de Cristo Arts Center

If you can't travel to see Quilt National '91, you can have an armchair tour by studying the show's catalogue. All quilts are shown in glorious color photos, with artist's statements and other information. **The New Quilt 1: Dairy Barn Quilt National** was published by Taunton Press. If you can't find a copy locally, you can order one from: The Dairy Barn Cultural Arts Center, P.O.Box 747, Athens, OH 45701.

The next Quilt National competition will be held next year. Write the above address for entry information.

*Quilt National is sponsored and organized by The Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Center. Additional sponsors are the Ohio Arts Council, Ohio Department of Development Office of Travel & Tourism, Fairfield Processing Corporation, and the City of Athens, OH.*





Studio Art Quilt Associates  
P.O. Box 287, Salida, CA 95368



## M E M B E R S H I P C A T E G O R I E S A N D B E N E F I T S

### Active Member

one year \$35.00    two years \$65.00    three years \$95.00

- quarterly newsletter
- membership card
- on site use of archive materials
- notice of exhibitions
- notice of meetings

### Artist Member

\$65.00 per year in addition to active membership

- portfolio in SAQA rotating archives
- slide registry

### Sponsor

\$100.00 or more per year

- same as active plus invitation to special sponsors event at meetings.

### Patron

\$500.00 or more per year

- same as active and sponsor member including SAQA commemorative item
- recognition as Patron member of SAQA

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### Studio Art Quilt Associates

P.O. Box 287, Salida, CA 95368

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Junker (916) 488-5660