



NEWSLETTER

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CONTINUING EDUCATION OR R&R

Michael James

Concluding an interview last summer with quilt artist Jan Myers-Newbury for *Art/Quilt Magazine*, I asked Jan what she thought was the best book she'd read in the past year. I'm always very curious about what people read and how they respond to what they read, and I was pleased to know that her recent favorite, *The Shipping News* by Annie Proulx (New York: Scribner's, 1993), was a novel that I had likewise relished. Proulx' sensitive and bittersweet portrayal of days in the life of a down-at-the-heels newspaperman recovering from lost love and finding new is the fruit of a master wordsmith with a perceptive understanding of people who live their lives close to nature and are bound by its often brutal realities.

I was likewise intrigued to know that in a recent ABC news profile the Republican primary candidate Lamar Alexander cited *The Creators* by Daniel J. Boorstin (New York: Random House, 1992) as the last book he'd read. This "History of Heroes of the Imagination" is an 800-plus page overview of Western artistic thought as expressed in the literature, music, sculpture, painting and architecture of the last three millennia. While necessarily abbreviated in its discussions of a long list of creative "heroes" Boorstin's study is sweeping in scope and serves as a stimulating reminder of the critical civilizing role that the arts serve in human history. That a Republican candidate in a presidential primary would indicate such an interest at a time when support for the arts in our own country is suffering major setbacks, and when his rivals were citing political analysis or popular action novels as their bedtime or airplane reading, revealed to me an idiosyncratic thinker with perhaps an extra measure of imagination himself. Maybe there is some hope after all.

"We read to know we're not alone" and we check up on the reading of colleagues, friends, family, acquaintances, famous names and famous faces to get clues to their personalities and intellectual leanings, to see if we have likes and dislikes in common, and to expand our own reading lists. At least that's what I do. I'm an avid reader and am always looking for new writers and new titles that will fit somewhere on a rather multi-fingered and meandering network of reading interests that are always feeding into how I live my life, how I think my thoughts, how I do my work, and how I relate to the world around me.

Permit me, then, the indulgence of running through the list of books that I read in 1995. It's an eclectic and wide-ranging one that, like every annual reading list I've compiled for each of the last eleven years, grows spontaneously and more-or-less organically. There's no long-range planning involved. I try to balance heavy-duty reading with things lighter, fiction with non-fiction (my usual ratio here averages 1:3), and I let a wide range of interests and a long list of writers dictate the various titles that constitute the numerous piles and shelves of books-in-waiting with which I surround myself.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Yvonne Porcella

For those of you new to SAQA I would like to review how we began. In August, 1989, letters were mailed to about 50 artists asking if there was any interest in an organization. The favorable response led to an Atlanta meeting in October, 1989. At that gathering the focus of a national organization to promote art quilts was established. Volunteers came forward to establish the first nucleus for the board of directors. California non-profit corporation status was acquired through the efforts of pro-bono legal council. Subsequently SAQA was awarded the 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS. SAQA goals were established, seed money was donated for printing and mailing costs, and active membership began in May of 1990.

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PORTFOLIO ROTATION

Dominie Nash and Michele Vernon are doing a great job with the Professional Artist Members (PAM) Portfolio Rotation as you can see from the listing included here for this quarter. They did note that many of the PAM's are confused about where to send which materials resulting in unnecessary mailings. Karen Berkenfeld, who is the new PAM liaison, should receive your slides, résumé, bio, statement, publicity, and other public relations information. This should be sent to her at 150 West 79th Street, New York, NY 10024. Dominie needs to receive only color visuals, such as postcards, xeroxes, and tearsheets for the portfolios. If members send her at least 25 copies (more is fine) this should last about six months and save her from continuous reminders. It would be most helpful if members could keep track and send new ones when they estimate the others have run out. All visuals can be of the same quilt as she only sends one per artist to each portfolio recipient. Forward materials to Dominie at 8612 Rayburn Road, Bethesda, MD 20817.

Mary B. Doornbos, Appalachian Center for Crafts, Smithville, TN
Nancy Margolies Gallery, New York, NY
Allison Alfonso, Ralston Fine Art, Johnson City, TN
Caroline Hanni, Hartnett Gallery, Rochester, NY
Arkansas State University, State University, AR
Bruce Gunther, Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, CA
Greg Knight, Chicago Public Library Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
Olivia Georgia, Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art,
Staten Island, NY
Sybaris Gallery, Royal Oak, MI
Hope Daniels, American Style, Baltimore, MD
Lloyd Herman, Seattle, WA
Joanne Stuhr, Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ
Inez Brooks-Myers, Oakland Museum Oakland, CA
Alexandria Museum of Art, Alexandria, LA
Doshi Center for Contemporary Art, Harrisburg, PA
Art Department, Villa Julie College, Stevenson, MD
The Collective Hand Gallery, Asheville, NC
Robert Shaw, Shelburne, VT

HOUSTON UPDATE

By now you should have heard about the Studio Art Quilt Associates professional one-day seminar to be held at the end of the International Quilt Festival in Houston on November 11, 1996. Since this is going to be a wonderful program, you won't want to miss it by delaying your travel arrangements. Registration materials for the Festival and SAQA seminar will be in the Quilt Festival brochure which you should receive shortly. Houston will be handling all of the registration for the seminar but travel and housing arrangements are up to you.

On the Sunday evening before the seminar, SAQA will host a live auction to raise funds for an oral and visual history of a designated quilt artist. Items to be offered will be teaching services, a guided city tour with a quilt artist, free conference attendance, and anything else you can come up with without having the actual object there. In other words, we are not looking to ship and/or return items. If you are interested in donating any services or items, please contact Cathy Rasmussen.

NEW COLUMN ANNOUNCED

In the Spring 1996 issue of this newsletter we solicited help in putting together what we hope will be an ongoing column devoted to the in's and out's of juried exhibitions and contests. A number of you have expressed interest in articles that would address the pros and cons of particular shows, individual experiences both good and bad, and other relevant information that would help you make judgments about whether a particular show was the right one for you.

We are happy to announce that SAQA member Michael James has offered to take on the responsibility for just such a column. Michael has long-time experience with shows of all kinds, both as an exhibitor and frequent juror, as well as an occasional curator and organizer. He served on the selection committee of the first Quilt National and has exhibited work in five of these biennial shows. His own work was selected for the 1992 Visions exhibition of Quilt San Diego, and he served as sole juror there for the 1994 edition. Michael travels widely and has the opportunity to see many types of shows in many locations.

In order to respond directly to your particular concerns, Michael needs to know what those are. Send your questions about particular shows or shows in general, your personal experiences (both positive and negative) or suggestions for topics that Michael might address. If he doesn't have the answers or information, he'll seek out show organizers to get their responses, explanations, and insights. Address your correspondence to Michael directly at his studio address: 258 Old Colony Avenue, Somerset Village, Massachusetts 02726-5930, or send it to Cathy Rasmussen at the newsletter address on the back of this issue and it will be forwarded to Michael. Let's hear from you!

MEMBERS' NEWS

Cathy Rasmussen

- Sylvia Einstein is on an international tour. She is lecturing in Germany at the annual meeting of the German Patchwork Guild, will teach and lecture in Gif sur Yvette near Paris, France, and will teach in the castle Bechbur in Oensingen, Switzerland, where she will have a solo show.
- Madka Dubrowsky had her work included in the *Hill Country Arts Foundation Invitational*, which was curated by Pamela Studstill, in Ingram, Texas, from May 23 to July 6.
- The *Spirit of Cloth* exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Connecticut mentioned in the last issue should have included member Kyra Hicks as well.
- New member Beth Magnon from Clovis, New Mexico, was recently juried into *Contemporary Arts '96* and will also be the featured artist at the Albuquerque Children's Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, during July and August. Her work can be seen in recent publications of *Art/Quilt Magazine* and *American Quilter*.
- Patty Hawkins and Toot Reid will have their works in the *Innovative Traditions 1996 New Expression in Contemporary Quilting* at the Museums at Stony Brook in Stony Brook, New York, from May 25 through September 19, 1996.
- Patty Hawkins, Jeannette DeNicolis Meyer, Carol Drummond and Midge Hoffmann have been selected for inclusion in the *Crafts National 30th Exhibition* at The Pennsylvania State University's Zoller Gallery, June 2 to July 21, 1996.
- New member Mary Beth Bellah, Charlottesville, Virginia, has coordinated a special exhibit called *Puzzling Perspectives* which will be at the International Quilt Festival in Houston. Twenty-four artists are included and each quilt has a unique jigsaw puzzle shape and these shapes form one large puzzle.
- Dianne S. Hire should also have been included in the *1996 Tactile Architecture Exhibit*. Sorry, and I do hope that's everyone.

APPRAISAL INFORMATION

In the last newsletter, I had asked for information about any appraisal situations you might have encountered whether it be for museum donation, insurance purposes, shipping, etc., and received a response from only one person.

I have spoken to several people in the fine arts field to discuss this as to your rights, what to look for in an appraiser, kinds of fees you would be willing to pay, etc. While there is

great interest in developing something here, possibly even a seminar format, it would take a great deal of time and energy in terms of research. The concern is just to make sure that there is, indeed, a need and interest here before we proceed with this further.

If you could share with me any appraisal problems you may have had, it would be most appreciated.

REGIONAL UPDATES

Central New York

SAQA members Barbara Gaugel, Renee Gentz, Armelle Lefebvre, Susan Sarabasha, and Carol Soderlund are having an exhibition titled, *The Thread Connection*, at the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York, from August 30 through October 27.

Renee Gentz has a solo exhibition at the Black Sheep Gallery in Trumansburg, New York, from May through July.

Susan Sarabasha is included in the Artwalk, an invitational exhibit in Ithaca, New York, from May 22 to June 20.

Both Renee and Susan are included in the Ithaca Textile Guild's juried show at the Upstairs Gallery during August.

Mary Ann Scarborough will have a solo show at the Chapman Art Center at Cazenovia College in Cazenovia, New York, from September 9 to October 4, 1996.

Northwest

OREGON

Marilyn E. Fashbaugh had a one-woman show at the Governor's office in the State Capital Building during March and April. This was the first showing of art quilts in the twenty years the Oregon Arts Commission has curated shows there.

Midge Hoffman has completed an atrium banner for Gateway Financial Center in Springfield, Oregon, and has been included in *Visions '97* as well.

Jeannette DeNicolis Meyer had her work included in *Traditional Methods, New Expressions* at the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery at Southern Utah University in Cedar City, Utah, during April.

WASHINGTON

Several SAQA members were included in *Spur of the Moment, Contemporary Quilt Art*, an exhibition by the Contemporary QuiltArt Association from April through May. They are Stephanie Randall Cooper, Elizabeth Hendricks, Gretchen Echols, Erika Carter, Karen Soma, Joan Colvin, Sally Sellers, Toot Reid, and Cynthia Corbin.

A correction from the last newsletter, the following SAQA members had a show at the Metropolis Contemporary Art Gallery in Seattle: Karen Soma, Beth Cassidy, Stephanie Randall Cooper, Gretchen Echols, and Toot Reid. Wendy Huhn and Melissa Holzinger were not part of the show as stated previously.

Toot Reid was also included in the *3rd Northwest Contemporary Quilt Invitational* and the *Chautauqua Internation for Fiber Art* at the Adams Art Gallery in Dunkirk, New York.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (cont.)

Although it seems like those first letters were sent out yesterday and my volunteering to be president of the board of directors was an "interim" assignment, recently someone pointed out that my involvement with SAQA has been seven years. I am proud to record what we have accomplished. Our archive project continues, Art in Public Places Registry, professional artist portfolios, regional groups, general meetings and conferences have been successful and on and on. Future plans include an oral history project to record early developments which led to the interest in the art quilt.

The vision to direct SAQA into the future to be a viable organization which benefits all is an arduous task. Without the efforts of a very enthusiastic board of directors, I am not sure just where we would be today. This organization is too important to let fade into obscurity. But, it is important after seven years, I step aside as president of the board. SAQA needs new interests and direction. I will not abandon what was started, but it is imperative someone steps forward to take over the job I now perform. Please let us hear from you. I know someone out there is anxious to be involved in planning SAQA's future. Yes, it is work, but the results are great. The world now knows studio art quilt artists are vast in number, great in talent, and professional in the business of art. We are part of the history, let us continue.

We would like to acknowledge the very special relationship to Studio Art Quilt Associates made by retiring board of directors member Holley Junker. When this organization was in the planning stages back in October of 1989, it was Holley who at the first meeting volunteered to be on the board "for a year." Her prior experience as a founding member of Matrix Gallery in Sacramento helped to formulate this organization's policy.

For many years Holley was the voice on the end of the phone, answering your inquiry calls. She has resigned as a board member to spend more time on her art. We wish her well and thank her for what turned out to be much more than "just one year"!

We announced Jonathan Shannon as a new board member in the January newsletter and now we regret to announce that Jonathan is moving to England and will not be able to perform the duties of liaison with the professional artist members. Jonathan sent out a wonderful letter to all the PAM's after the Arrowmont Conference. We are sorry to see Jonathan leave our shores, but he plans to attend the SAQA conference in Houston this November.

We are happy to welcome Karen Berkenfeld and Marilyn Henrion who recently accepted positions on the board. Karen will be taking over the role of liaison for the professional artist members from Jonathan and will also continue the PAM newsletter he started. Karen will also be a panel member at the fall meeting in Houston. Marilyn has taken on the job of international contact. With a special interest in international artists and exhibitions, Marilyn organized a recent exhibition in Moscow for American quilt artists. As interest in the art quilt grows all over the world, Marilyn will be in contact with these new members.

As you all know, SAQA is largely a volunteer organization. All members of the board are volunteering their time and energy to propel this organization on an upward future path. Other duties, the newsletter, the web site, portfolio rotation, to name a few, are also done by volunteers. Most of our membership is made up of practicing artists who have little time for volunteerism to every organization they support. This is why your membership dues are so important to SAQA. Dues help to defray the expenses of having Cathy Rasmussen perform the duties of executive director. As Cathy's introduction in the last newsletter mentioned, she is a professional in her field and we are grateful she is here to help SAQA.

This is the yearly request for more input from you our members. Unless we hear from you about the future of SAQA, you will miss the opportunity of helping direct your organization. We always need volunteers to take on important jobs and Cathy would be happy to hear from you.

We look forward to seeing you in Houston in November for our fall meeting. We are joining the International Quilt Festival at the end of their conference so our members will have an opportunity to come to Houston to see the *SAQA Diversity!* exhibition as well as the other outstanding exhibits. Plan to attend on November 11, 1996.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Marcia Johnson

Promotional Tools for Artists: Résumés

It is hard to imagine the time and effort that went into résumé writing before the advent of computers and desktop publishing. I regularly use a résumé as part of my portfolio, and have put all my information onto the computer. Each time an occasion calls for a résumé, I move my information around into a format that suits that particular occasion. In other words, each résumé produced is custom-made. And it only takes a minute or two.

There is no one prescription for writing a résumé. As with other pieces you put in your portfolio, you must ultimately make decisions as to what is best for you. The following is designed to give you structural and tactical information about résumés and then give you the opportunity to make some decisions for yourself. The objective is to develop résumé writing skills that will allow you to target a résumé and change it when your needs change. Résumé writings is like anything else; you get better the more you do it, and as time goes on, you will find your refinements second nature and target oriented.

Before you start drafting, please consider the following suggestions:

- Two résumés, a short form and a long form, are probably the best approach for most artists. One is more concise, the other shows your growth. Some artists may have another job; it is probably best not to combine jobs on one résumé unless they are interrelated.
- No one likes to read résumé novels. Keep it clear and simply stated. Don't create a biography of everything you have done. (This is a good idea, however, to have on file from which to take excerpts.)
- Be creative if it suits you. One that is devoted to creative pursuits should not suddenly lose this ability when it comes to self-presentation in a résumé or other portfolio materials.
- For the individual just starting in the field, a biographical or paragraph form is a good approach. "Bio" paragraphs are also useful if you give lectures and need an introduction.
- A reverse chronological order is most easily understood by a reader.
- It may be convenient to omit your address and phone number from your résumé so that it is "gallery proof." You can always attach a business card for the situations requiring this information, or add/delete on the computer.
- Make sure you are using art terms and language.
- Keep the font style simple and not too small. Consider coordinating with your letterhead and other portfolio materials.
- Do a thumbnail sketch first of your layout. Consider (very carefully) using color, photography, color Xeroxes, or a technique you use in your work on your creative résumé. Hand stamps and cut-outs also can be used, but any of these creative applications should be tempered by professionalism. Remember, a résumé is just a piece of your promotional package – be creative, but don't concentrate all of your efforts on this one item.
- The purpose of a résumé is to introduce yourself and/or establish your credentials and proven record of growth. With that in mind, it is good to show a record of success. Most résumés that are long and document years of venues induce the impression of plodding. Keep your complete history on the computer and pull out only what you need to show your growth or expertise.
- Some categories and groupings of information you may consider:

Current Work

Selected Exhibitions – On a long form this might include title, producer, juror, name of artwork, dates.

Shows – Could be grouped by category: juried, invitational, group, multimedia, solo.

Education and Professional Training

Membership – Besides some of the obvious ones, you may find it useful to be the only quilt artist in a local art group.

Teaching/Lectures

Commissions

Collections

Affiliations

Published Reviews

Ask several people with different points of view to proof your résumé for spelling and content. What are their reactions? Are you accomplishing what you set out to do?

Your golden rule with résumés should be, REVISE periodically.

INTRODUCTIONS

Yvonne mentioned in her letter that Jonathan Shannon has resigned as liaison for the professional artists' members. Karen Berkenfeld has accepted that position. Welcome aboard, Karen.



I was raised in Ohio and Pennsylvania in a family that had a few really talented artists. The rest of us were devoted amateurs, and as I recall someone was always painting, hammering, sewing, building, or drawing, most of all drawing. In that respect I seem to have had a typical artist's upbringing because what was impressed upon me early was that creating was good. Art was respected, and not only respected, but necessary. My brother went to Carnegie Tech to study design, my older sister came to New York to study acting, and my younger sister has been making "things" her whole life.

There wasn't a lot of money to send us all to school so when I followed my sister Sylvia to New York after high school it was with the idea that I would work and go to art school. Just living in New York took up most of my earnings so art school was hit or miss, night classes and workshops when I could afford it. But New York City in the sixties was a kind of art school itself, and although we were hardly part of the "in crowd," my sister and I were often in the Village (it was actually safe for a nineteen year old in those days), hanging out with third- and fourth-level artists and actors. The art that was being made there seemed a little remote, but it made an impression.

I married my husband in 1969. We began collecting American folk art and I continued doing what I was doing. Part of that was making things out of cloth. By the early seventies those things were quilts. They were mostly traditional quilts but were made out the funky fabrics that were around then and feed sack fabrics from my childhood. Today they would look a lot better than they did then. My sister and I were making and selling dresses, but in 1975 she died of cancer. That was when I began making quilts more or less full time.

For some reason I had no trouble selling those early quilts of mine. I took commissions and frequently did craft shows. At one show a woman came up to me and invited me to join her and a few other women who met occasionally to quilt together. It turned out to be a significant meeting. However, soon after I joined the group it broke up due to divorces and people moving away, until there were only two other women and me who decided to keep meeting. That was the beginning of The Manhattan Quilters Guild which grew into a group of people who have had a great influence on my work and life.

By the mid-eighties I had abandoned traditional quilting and with it most of my commissions. I explored tradition-grounded abstraction with heavily textured wool. I taught quilting and puzzled over the direction I wanted to take. In 1989 Janet Page-Kessler asked me to help her and Dee Danley Brown to form a New York chapter of The Art Quilt Network. This group not only influenced me, it kicked me over the edge.

Within weeks after our first meeting I had begun taking printmaking classes, and within weeks after that I was dragging fabric to class and printing on it while the rest of the class printed on paper. My study of printmaking marked a turning point for me by exposing me to the techniques by which I could create the images, patterns and textures that now permeate my work. Most of my study of printmaking has taken place at The New School in New York.

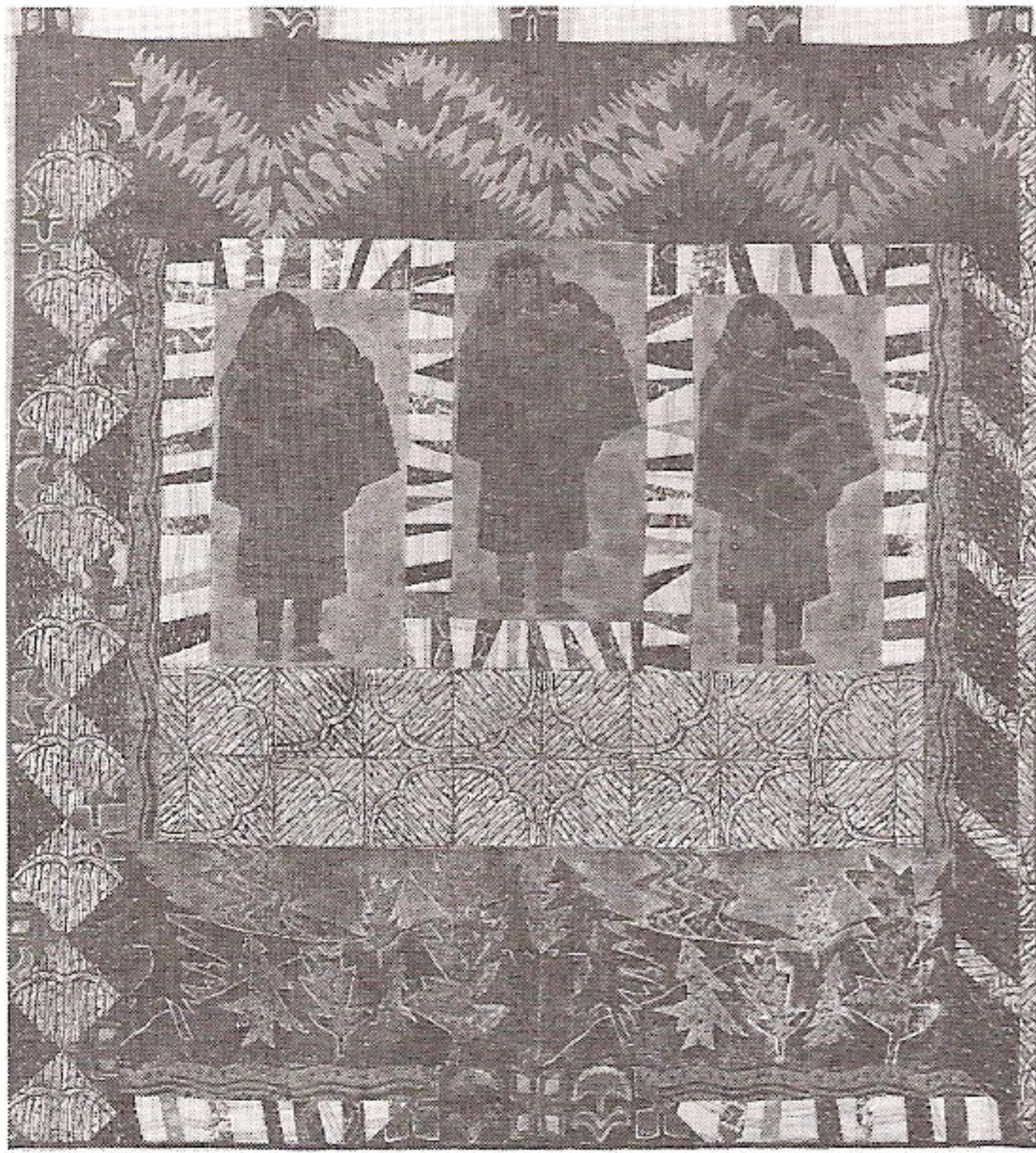
My major concern with printmaking was the safety issue. While I didn't mind working with toxic materials and solvents in the printshops set up to handle it safely, I knew I wouldn't be able to build myself a studio like that at home. In 1993 I received a small grant for the study of non-toxic printmaking on fabric from the Empire State Crafts Alliance. I bought an etching press and began experimenting with water-based textile paints and inks. By the end of the year I had found materials and methods that worked for me and that I could safely teach to others. The printing methods I use run the gamut from monoprints to linoleum cuts to collograph etching.

My primary artistic goal comes down to making each piece the best I know how and having it judged on its visual and technical merits, which I hope transcend medium. The process of making each quilt is important to me because in the work I do I combine two very old traditions in a new way, and that encourages people to see my quilts in a new way. I draw influences from all parts of my life; childhood memories, nature, life in New York City. My principal visual influences come from the folk art and antique quilts I collect as well as the art and craft of traditional cultures. I use the symbolism and emotional content of color to add another layer of meaning to the subjects of my quilts.

I want my work to reflect a point of view but not necessarily tell a story. If messages appear there the viewer is free to interpret them for herself. Sometimes the title says it all. While I am not continually aware of a historic link in my quilts, I do see them as primarily traditional in construction. The quilt structure is the only means I can imagine for doing the work I do now, although my current work brings the printmaking aspect forward by incorporating a parallel series on paper.

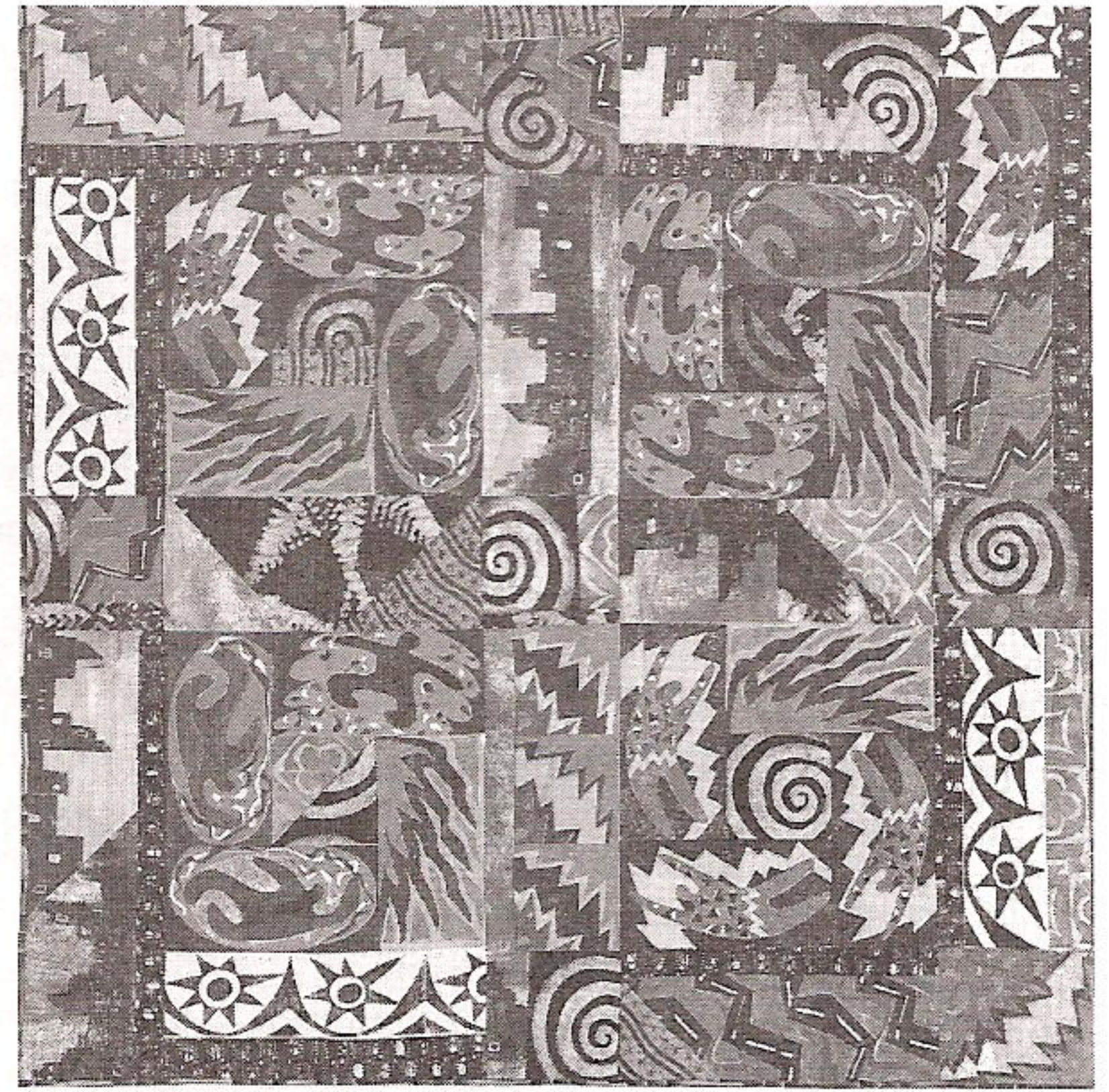
I have been fortunate enough to have my quilts accepted in Visions, Quilt National, and many other prominent exhibitions. I have been a part of some exciting projects, like The Full Deck, and had my work featured in several books and magazines. I've had the opportunity to teach at Quilt/Surface Design Symposium and the Houston Quilt Festival. But the most exciting day I can remember is the day I opened the letter saying I had received the little grant that would allow me to buy my etching press. That is why I believe so strongly in arts organizations like SAQA, which work directly for the artist.

I am looking forward to my responsibilities as "over-seer" of the artist-member archive. I hope you will all do your part to help me keep it up to date and won't hesitate to contact me if you have a question.



"Three Rivers," 48" x 53", © Karen Felecity Berkenfeld, 1994.

Photo by Karen Bell



"I Am Living a Quiet Life on the Upper West Side," 40" x 40", © Karen Felecity Berkenfeld, 1995.

Photo by Karen Bell

AMERICAN QUILT STUDY GROUP SEMINAR

The American Quilt Study Group's seventeenth national conference on quilt research, hosted by the SouthWest Quilt Council of Arizona, is an outstanding educational opportunity for people who love quilts. This weekend gathering to be held October 4-6, 1996, in Scottsdale, Arizona, offers participants a unique forum through which to view quilts from new perspectives, learn from scholars as they present their latest research, and enjoy networking and meeting with professionals in the field.

The seminar features juried papers focusing on the history of quilts, quiltmakers, and related topics. Other activities include pre-conference tours and workshops; a keynote address by Curator Emeritus of the Denver Art Museum, Imelda DeGraw; roundtable discussions; a silent auction of quilt-related collectables; and a collectors' sale of quilts and quilt tops to benefit AQSG's educational programs.

AQSG is currently calling for the submission of papers for the eighteenth annual seminar in Lawrence, Kansas, from October 10-12, 1997. Papers must represent original and previously unpublished research pertaining to quilts, quilting, quiltmakers, the textiles of quilts, and related topics and be 4,500 to 9,000 words. Accepted papers will be presented at the seminar and published in the American Quilt Study Group's annual journal, *Uncoverings*.

Submitters must request submission and manuscript guidelines from the American Quilt Study Group, 660 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94105-4007, (415) 495-0163, FAX (415) 495-3516. Submissions must be postmarked no later than December 31, 1996.

The American Quilt Study Group is a national membership organization dedicated to encouraging, presenting, and preserving research on quilts, quilting, and related textiles. AQSG maintains a quilt and textile research library and facilitates the sharing of research findings through the membership network, seminars, publications, and scholarships.

ART CONCEPTS GALLERY SHOW

MATERIAL EXPRESSIONS, *Sculptures and Fibers* also, *COLLECTION STARTERS*, *Small Works* will be held at Art Concepts Gallery, Walnut Creek, California, September 1 to November 30, 1996.

MATERIAL EXPRESSIONS features the work of sculptors Lea Bartneck, Maj Britt Hilstrom, Ben Bullock, Carol Setterlund, and quilt artists Wendy Huhn, Judith Larzelere, Joan Schulze, Kathleen Sharp, and David Walker.

These artists represent a diversity of materials, techniques, and styles. The exhibit design focuses on the complementary and harmonious relationships created by the hard surfaces of free-standing sculptures and the soft edges of contemporary wall quilts.

The objective of the current *COLLECTION STARTER* is to encourage people, especially the young and the novices, to collect. It will feature smaller works of the artists in *Material Expressions* as well as other collectible sculptors and quilt artists.

The Opening Reception will feature a performance by the Young Artists Symphony Orchestra, as well as a raffle of works donated by artists to raise funds for the orchestra.

Contact:

Jacquelyn Smith, Art Concepts
(510) 930-0157
Penny Nii, Penny Nii Quilt Art
(415) 493-5618

Having already mentioned *The Shipping News* with which I opened my reading year, I'll get the rest of the fiction out of the way here. Because this discussion won't follow the chronological sequence that my reading took, I'll append a list of the same titles at the end of this article, in the order in which they were read. Those passionate readers among you will, I feel certain, appreciate this detail. I know I would.

The Inferno of Dante translated by Robert Pinsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994) is epic poetry heavily grounded in greco-roman mythology, Christian theology, and the politics of late Medieval Florence. This translation was widely praised with good reason: it's vivid and fluid with words carefully crafted to heighten the drama of Dante's descent into Hell, and it's well annotated which is important since many of Dante's references are very obscure today. Michael Mazur's monoprints illustrate each Canto and reflect the foreboding and gloom that pervade Dante's verse. I found myself frequently irritated by Dante's biased judgements and his believer's sense of being among the Chosen, but in that respect it provides fine insights into the medieval intellectual mind.

Because I travel regularly in France or Switzerland where I teach and lecture in French, I try to read at least a few titles in that language each year, not only because it's good practice but because there's a huge body of contemporary literature that's never translated. Two titles by a writer named Isabelle Jarry, *Twenty-Three Letters from America* (Paris: Fayard, 1995) and *The Lost Archangel* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1994) spoke to my interest in Isabelle as a friend and former artist-in-residence colleague (La Napoule Art Foundation, 1990); in the American Southwest; and in monastic life, respectively. The Letters aren't actually fiction, but travel writing presented in the form of letters written to a fictional lover from the absent narrator (Isabelle travelled in the American Southwest for three months in 1994 under the auspices of the French government).

These were complimented by Frédéric Vitoux' *The Comedy of Terracina* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), a fictional account of an undocumented but conceivable encounter between the young poet Stendhal and the composer Gioacchino Rossini on the coach route between Naples and Rome. A prize-winning comedy of manners with its share of drawing room comings and goings, it's a period piece that I ultimately found disappointing.

Much more satisfying, if elliptical and elusive, was Marta Morazzoni's novel *The Invention of Truth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993). A peculiar juxtaposition of two stories, one concerned with the making of the Bayeux Tapestry, and the other with the introspective musings of the famous art critic John Ruskin as he visits the cathedral city of Amiens, it is written in a spare, soulful style and constructed as a series of alternating vignettes that only very slowly reveal their interconnections. Textile artist Barbara Lee Smith, a kindred spirit when it comes to the love of books and reading, recommended this slim

volume to me and I knew that with her seal of approval it must be special. It is.

Whenever I travel I'm faced with the dilemma of choosing which books to bring along. It's rare that I don't pack more than I actually get through over the course of the trip ('but suppose I don't feel like reading that particular title on a particular day?') and so I'm usually a bit more weighed down than I'd like to be. This was the case on a recent trip to Scandinavia, to which I brought one volume of a Norwegian epic by Sigrid Undset, *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1993) by Peter Hoeg, and Suzi Gablik's latest book (see below). I managed the Hoeg and the Gablik and have set aside the Undset for a return trip later this year. *Smilla* is a very sleek and sinister mystery with an unlikely and not particularly endearing heroine involved in an unlikely smuggling operation. I read it for the ambience of Copenhagen, a city that I love, and to get a sense of what is happening in popular contemporary fiction there, but the violence got too graphic and too frequent and so I finished the book less enthralled than when I began it. I understand that it's being made into a movie, not surprising since it's written in a cinematic style with vivid descriptions that set up each scene in a very visual way.

I closed out my reading year in December in part with Oscar Hijuelos' wonderful *Mr. Ives' Christmas* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995). An author I wasn't aware of before hearing reviews of this book on National Public Radio and reading about it in the New York Times, Hijuelos won the Pulitzer Prize for an earlier novel (*The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*). His writing style brings to mind the similarly straightforward and uncomplicated writing of John Cheever who managed in very simple and unfussy descriptions to illuminate the universality of his characters' situations. *Mr. Ives' Christmas* is a love story, a family narrative, and a remarkably vivid social history that despite the bitter tragedy at its center manages to find for its characters both forgiveness and transcendence. I was totally unprepared for the depth of feeling this book would elicit in me, and read its final thirty odd pages through a stream of tears. I recommend it highly, and look forward to re-reading it often.

The historian and Anglophile in me was attracted to Richard Holmes' *Dr. Johnson & Mr. Savage* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993) a literary history/biography that details the unlikely friendship between the young Samuel Johnson and the bizarre Richard Savage, a poet, playwright, and convicted murderer. I'd read and very much enjoyed Holmes' earlier *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (Viking, 1985) and while I didn't get as involved in this latest book, the picture it painted of mid-eighteenth century London vividly brought that time and place to life.

Ina Caro's *The Road from the Past: Traveling Through History in France* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) is both travel guide and history. A region-by-region tour of the

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country, it views entire cities, significant sites, and the French landscape through the defining historic episodes that molded French society. Her approach to tourism suggests a meaningful way of looking at the monuments of the past that would make any traveler's experience rich and rewarding. I experienced moments of impatience with Caro's narrative only when she checked into some luxury Michelin hostel or starred restaurant and sang its praises. I'm basically a budget traveller and prefer to seek out 'la vraie France.'

Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) is history in the broadest sense: personal, social, cultural, artistic, and natural. This sweeping volume was published to widespread and deserved praise and is a reflection of a virtuoso sensibility interested in fascinating esoterica that he manages to interconnect with a magician's deftness. As I determinedly progressed through its 600+ pages I found myself more than once wondering who besides myself would actually read this (who needed to read this?) but in the end felt enriched by Schama's intellect and perceptions.

While a few of the titles I've already listed might fit into the travel-writing category, the following do unquestionably, and I enjoyed each one of them. *Learning French: The Philosopher's Demise* by Richard Watson (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1995) is an amusing and sometimes harrowing tale of this scholar's experiences in a Paris-based Alliance Française crash course (just what I needed to keep me from letting my own French get rusty.) Bill Bryson's *Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe* (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1992) is, in a word, hilarious. I chuckled to myself, and laughed out loud intermittently, as I relived many of my own overseas experiences through Bryson's adventures and misadventures. Anyone who's traveled in Europe will feel that sense of recognition at every turn of the page.

I began *The Coast of Summer* by Anthony Bailey (New York: Harper Collins, 1994) while spending a few mid-August days on a small island just off the southeast coast of Massachusetts, an hour and a half by boat and car from where I live. While I don't sail, I found this writer's account of a season spent yachting between Long Island and Cape Cod as seductive and relaxing as the breezes it conjured up. While I know the same coast pretty well from the landlubber's point of view, it was interesting to be re-oriented by the sailor's perspective. I've pledged, come next summer, to enlist a sailor friend myself so I can get a real experience of Bailey's New England waters.

Whenever I travel to Japan as I did last September, I bring along books that will complement my visit in some way. Two books by Americans, Cathy N. Davison's *36 Views of Mount Fuji* (New York: Dutton, 1993) and John Elder's *Following the Brush* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993) engagingly recounted these *gaijin's* experiences living, working, and studying in Japan. What struck me especially in both narratives was the depth of emotion that each author experienced in interpersonal relationships with Japanese hosts and friends and in some instances with strangers. Japanese society has been criticized in the West

for being 'closed' but as with all stereotypes it's an inaccurate and incomplete description. These writer's stories prove, as my own experiences in the country have shown me, that what is most valuable in human relationships transcends the superficial variables of race, nationality, politics, gender, or age.

A friend who is something of an epicure and gourmet passed along a copy of Joan Reardon's *M.F.K. Fischer, Julia Child, and Alice Waters: Celebrating the Pleasures of the Table* (New York: Harmony Books, 1994) with the proposal that I pass it along to any other epicurean I might know once I'd finished it. While probably not a book I'd have chosen to read otherwise, I did find it intriguing on several counts. The interesting history of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and the description of Alice Water's rise to prominence as foremost exemplar of the new California cuisine left me with a much better appreciation of the whys and wherefores of the great changes that have occurred in American cooking in the last thirty years.

While in other years a major focus of my reading has centered on artist's biographies, in 1995 I read fewer than usual although they continued to pile up on tables, bedroom floor, and the odd vacant tabletop. *Derek Jarman's Garden* with photographs by Howard Sooley (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1996 – but yes, it was available in '95) is a gardener's journal with numerous autobiographical entries by one of England's foremost contemporary filmmakers. Jarman, who died of AIDS in February 1994 at the age of 52, was a multi-talented visual artist and an engaging writer who brought immense imagination as well as a provocative edge to all that he did. His garden was no exception. Patiently nurtured on the windswept and rocky southeast coast of England in the shadows of a nuclear power plant and a simple black cottage, it is a fitting reflection of the iconoclast who created it. *Garden*, his last book, is interplanted with Jarman's poetry, with close observations of the plants and materials that found their way into the artist's small plot, and with occasional references to the disease that was slowly stealing the author's life.

This volume formed a nice counterpoint to my earlier reading of Jarman's *Chroma* (London: Random House UK Ltd., 1994), a notebook-style meditation on the colors of the spectrum, their meanings and uses through history, and the expressive value they held for this artist-poet. I especially like to read about color when it's not scientific or theoretical, and this collection of ephemera and Jarman's gleanings from a wide range of sources is often amusing, sometimes surprising, and now and then bitingly clever and acid. The chapter that he called "Into the Blue" was expanded into the screenplay of his last movie *Blue*, a moving reverie on blindness and death.

Another writer who documented her confrontation with the inevitability of death through a continuing series of journals that described both the highs and lows of aging and its effects on the creative spirit was May Sarton. Sarton, who died on July 16, 1995, enjoyed a devoted following for her poetry and fiction but a much wider one for her journals, the first of which, *Journal of a Solitude* (Norton, 1977) set the tone of uncompromising honesty

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and directness mixed with tender and appreciative observation of the everyday world that has characterized all of her journals since. In December Norton published Sarton's final journal, *At Eighty-Two*. By the time she made these entries, May Sarton was keeping her journal by means of a tape recorder and having the entries transcribed periodically by an assistant. Most of the time in *At Eighty-Two* she is bitter and frustrated about her fragile health and makes no bones about it, but it's her capacity to appreciate her life nevertheless that I find endearing. Her final entry recaptures some of the optimism absent from the last few journals and reaffirms the diarist's indomitable spirit. I'll miss the excitement I always felt when discovering that a new Sarton journal had appeared, but will enjoy going back to this particular body of her work whenever I need to be reminded that the day-to-day can have as much resonance as the once-in-a-lifetime.

Since reading Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994) I've recommended it to a list of friends I knew would appreciate her matter-of-fact sense of humor and her sane, simple, and smart approach to writing and the writer's craft. Much of what she says has practical relevance for artists in other disciplines beside the printed word, and her stories of the everyday foibles of the struggling writer/single mom will strike a familiar chord for many artist-parents. Like Brenda Uelands' *If You Want to Write* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1938) before it, *Bird by Bird* illuminates both the life of Art and the art of life.

I read Suzi Gablik's earlier books *Has Modernism Failed?* and *The Reenchantment of Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1984 and 1991, respectively) in 1992 and found them both challenging, disturbing, and provocative. I was unprepared for how valid and relevant I felt her message in those books to be, and how far afield from my own artistic concerns and preoccupations her vision seemed to lead. In a Providence Journal-Bulletin newspaper interview dated February 13, 1996 the novelist and Genet biographer Edmund White said that "We look to books to confirm our identity rather than challenge it," and looking back on my own reading patterns I see the general truth of that statement. Not so with the Gabliks, and her most recent book, *Conversations Before the End of Time* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995) continued to shake up my thinking about art and art's place in contemporary society more than anything else I've read on the subject since my days in art school.

While Gablik occasionally gets carried away by her sense of urgency and doom, this collection of dialogues with a brilliant cast of artists, writers, philosophers, critics, psychotherapists, and educators is an exceptionally well-constructed and evenly-paced set of transcripts of conversations centered on some of the big questions of Art today: What is its function? Is the "art world" obsolete or irrelevant in the face of the major ecological problems facing the planet? Should all art be political? How can artists reclaim communal roles, and how can art contribute to building community? These encounters with the likes of James Hillman, Ellen Dissanayake, Carol Becker, Theodore Roszak, Thomas Moore, the Guerrilla Girls, Hilton Kramer, and Leo Castelli, among others, serve to approach the problems from many different orientations

and viewpoints, and underscore Gablik's sincere efforts to bridge intellectual, emotional, and artistic gaps that impede the metamorphosis in how we think about Art that Gablik feels must be effected.

For me personally, this is one of the most important books I've read as an artist and as a person, and I sense that this is one of the most important books on Art of this half of the century. Every word is valuable. Additional books by Gablik's guests, cited in the dialogues or their introductions and again in the bibliography, are providing me with my 1996 "reading list" and more. In fact, it was her discussion with Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992) that turned me to that book in the final weeks of 1995. We all sense that there's something fundamentally wrong with the Western paradigms that have brought us to the end of this millennium, and that they need fixing. Visionaries like Gablik and her subjects are pointing the way, and if it's possible to yet save ourselves, their early warning calls will deserve a good measure of the credit.

You might justifiably ask how a full-time studio artist and itinerant workshop leader finds enough time to satisfy his appetite for stimulating reading. You'd be surprised how much reading you can get done in fifteen or twenty-minute blocks of time here and there, in that half hour or so before sleep and the same at the opposite end of that nightly cycle, and especially in those long stretches of time in an aisle seat coach class 17,000 feet above sea level. Readers find the time, and if it's not always enough, we make the most of what we have.

Michael James' 1995 Reading List (Chronological Order*)

THE SHIPPING NEWS / Annie Proulx
 DR. JOHNSON & MR. SAVAGE / Richard Holmes
 THE INFERNO OF DANTE / translated by Robert Pinsky
 BIRD BY BIRD / Anne Lamott
 CHROMA / Derek Jarman
 THE PHILOSOPHER'S DEMISE: LEARNING FRENCH /
 Richard Watson
 THE ROAD FROM THE PAST / Ina Caro
 NEITHER HERE NOR THERE / Bill Bryson
 LA COMÉDIE DE TERRACINA / Frédéric Vitoux
 VINGT-TROIS LETTRES D'AMÉRIQUE / Isabelle Jarry
 ARCHANGE PERDU / Isabelle Jarry
 CELEBRATING THE PLEASURES OF THE TABLE /
 Joan Reardon
 THE INVENTION OF TRUTH / Marta Morazzoni
 THE COAST OF SUMMER / Anthony Bailey
 36 VIEWS OF MOUNT FUJI / Cathy N. Davidson
 FOLLOWING THE BRUSH / John Elder
 SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW / Peter Høeg
 CONVERSATIONS BEFORE THE END OF TIME /
 Suzi Gablik
 LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY / Simon Schama
 DEREK JARMAN'S GARDEN / Derek Jarman
 MR. IVES' CHRISTMAS / Oscar Hijuelos
 AT EIGHTY-TWO / May Sarton
 CARE OF THE SOUL / Thomas Moore

*I overlapped the reading of many of these books, so the chronological order is actually the order in which they were finished.

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Some Practical Thoughts About Artists, Reading Lists, and Books

Artists need to stoke the fires of imagination, and reading is one of many ways to do that. Carol Becker, Dean of the Art Institute of Chicago, in a conversation with Suzi Gablik, pointed out that "Often students complain that they have to do all these other courses in humanities and art history, but what they don't realize is that they're developing themselves, and that without that, there's little to make art about."¹ That development continues throughout the artist's lifetime, and the progress of an artist's work is dependent on it.

Reading should be pleasurable, something you do for enjoyment as much as enlightenment and inspiration. Choose subjects, titles or authors you're interested in, and let them in turn suggest others to follow up with.² Act on the recommendations of friends or colleagues by searching out titles they've suggested and testing those waters. If a book doesn't appeal to you, there's no obligation or duty to finish it. Life's too short, and there's too much out there to waste time on something you feel is less than satisfying.

Budget readers should take advantage of interlibrary loan programs to get the titles that their own public library may not have. Computer access has made this process efficient and effortless, and many libraries will take your requests by phone.

Paperback editions now often appear simultaneously with the hardcover, or within a period of a few months to a year. These usually cut the cost of a new book by up to a

half or more. Used book shops often stock recent or current titles in both hard and soft covers at reduced prices, and the bibliophile will frequent these sources for bargains.

If you want to build a personal library that will maintain maximum value over time, purchase new books in hardbound first editions whenever possible, get them autographed when the opportunity arises, protect the dust-jackets, and keep them away from sunlight. Keep in mind that a first printing will be more sought after than a second or later printing, even when both are technically 'first edition.' For example, Bookman's Price Index, a guide to current market values of rare books, lists the first edition of Myron and Patsy Orlofsky's *Quilts in America* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1974) at \$250, not insignificant at all for a book that was published less than twenty-five years ago.

¹Gablik, Suzi. *Conversations Before the End of Time*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995, p. 372.

²Bibliographies and lists of suggested reading are often overlooked but, especially when they're annotated, serve as valuable sources for further material.

Michael James is a SAQA member who designs and makes quilts in his Somerset Village, Massachusetts studio. A three-time NEA Fellow, his work is the subject of the monograph MICHAEL JAMES STUDIO QUILTS published in 1995 by Whetstone Hill Publications.

CENTER ANNOUNCES QUILT SHOW

The 1996 "QUILTS=ART=QUILTS" will be exhibited at the Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center from November 9, 1996, through January 5, 1997. This is a juried exhibition of quilts and quilted wall hangings in a contemporary museum setting. There are categories for traditional, nontraditional/innovative and pictorial categories in two divisions. Selection is based on design, creativity, and workmanship. There is a limit of two entries per person and the fee is \$15 for the first entry and \$12 for the second. Entry forms are available in mid-July and forms must be postmarked on or before October 7, 1996. Actual work must arrive on or before October 16, 1996, for judging purposes. Send a SASE to: Quilt Show Coordinator, Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, 205 Genesee Street, Auburn, New York 13021. Mary Ann Scarborough, central New York regional rep, notes that a lot of SAQA members have exhibited in previous exhibitions. She points out, in case you missed it in the above statement, that the show is juried with the actual work and not slides. The drawbacks seem to be poor display and jurors who are not totally familiar with art quilts. The exhibition is reviewed by the Auburn and Syracuse papers.

COMMUNICATION (Lightning)

Upon the deck, come see the sight.
A show or nature's art.
Strange patterns etch the clouds in light.
Their messages impart.

The language of a thousand days
To speak in dots and dashes.
Surprise, don't blink, or miss the ways
Of thunder clouds to ashes.

(Cindy Rinne, a new SAQA member who does poetry art quilts, wanted to share this with the membership.)

SAQA NEWSLETTER

Summer 1996

Volume 6, Number 3

The SAQA newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Studio Art Quilt Associates, a non-profit organization founded to promote the importance of the studio art quilt.

To submit information to the newsletter, write Cathy Rasmussen, Executive Director, 1199 East Broadway, Hewlett, NY 11557, 516-374-5924 (telephone and FAX). (Deadlines for information are December 1, March 1, June 1, and September 1.)

The newsletter editor is Sharon Heidingsfelder, P. O. Box 391, 2301 S. University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72203-0391; 501-671-2102; 501-671-2185 (FAX); sheidingsfelder@uaex.edu (e-mail).

For information on SAQA, write P. O. Box 287, Salida, CA 95368. (Membership is \$35 per year, \$100 per year for artist members.)

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SAQA ON WORLDWIDE WEB

Yes, the Studio Art Quilt Associates Worldwide Web Page is up and running! If you are interested in showcasing your work on the SAQA page just send one slide or photograph accompanied with an artist's statement or whatever text you want to include to: High Tech Quilting, P.O. Box 21307, Columbus, OH 43221. Include a check for \$25 and a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of the slide or photograph. Content should fit on one 8.5" x 11" page.

Remember, you don't even need to own a computer to have your work on the worldwide web. This is your opportunity to benefit from this existing format and technology without doing it on your own. So take advantage of this offer today.

The SAQA WWW address is:

<http://isis.infinet.com/saqa/>

(This newsletter was typeset by Gloria Mayhugh, Little Rock, Arkansas.)

STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES

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