STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES

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NEWSLETTER

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PIECING A QUILT OF LIFE

Dottie Moore

"Piecing a Quilt of Life" is a project I began this summer involving women art quilters over the age of fifty. I am interested in our creative processes, how we bring creative ideas into form, why we spend so much time and energy doing it, and how it shapes and molds our lives. In February, I mailed packets of information to quilt guilds and every art quilter on the SAQA membership list in six states. With teaching plans already on the calendar for Albuquerque, I headed to the Southwest, making New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado the beginning of a journey I plan to continue for the next couple of years. I requested three things – a place to stay, connections with women art quilters over the age of fifty, and teaching and lecturing opportunities to finance my travels.

My purpose was to travel to these areas and interview the women personally. I imagined spending a full day with each one, interacting and listening to their stories. I wanted an opportunity to meet them beneath the surface of everyday thoughts and to look for clues to the mystery of creativity. Fifteen interviews were anticipated. I ended up doing thirty-five with the possibility of more!

Some have asked why I am focusing on women art quilters over the age of fifty. The answer is simple – it defines who I am. At fifty-six, my children are grown and I have been through enough life experiences to be a little bit wiser and I'm eager to accept new challenges. I see this zest in any women over the age of fifty. We are healthy, full of knowledge, and have a lot to give. However, I have already made exceptions to this narrow focus and I am open to intuitively following the path wherever it leads.

The experience was overwhelming. In my usual fashion of acting on impulse and not analyzing the particulars, I found myself on a journey that lasted over two months. I traveled alone in a mini-van equipped with teaching supplies, camping gear, cameras, tape recorder, clothes, and food. After sixteen years of intense studio work, I was traveling alone, touching the earth, looking at the beautiful Southwest sky, and connecting with other quilters. Everywhere I went, I gathered the stories of creative women. Over and over, I witnessed the power of *process* as the quilters being interviewed realized the insights that were coming through simply by committing to several hours of reflective dialog. We all benefited. I cherished each moment that I spent in the individual studios hearing about the joys and frustrations of being an artist.

Just as a quilt in my studio takes on a life of its own, so has this project. It's about connections. As I travel, doors open. One person leads me to another. In Sedona, where I arrived with no contact in the quilt world, I simply walked into the quilt shop and Marge Elson, the owner, lined up two interviews in a few hours and opened her home to me – and the use of her washing machine! Every time I feel beyond my capabilities someone walks into my studio, calls, or sends a message through a friend with a solution.

Dottie Moore mails packets of information to quilt guilds and every art quilter on the SAQA membership list in six states.

Now that I am home, I'm sorting through the slides and listening to tapes. I've collected stories as I might collect fabric. I will arrange and rearrange the material until it begins to speak. I'm looking for the essence of what I've been gathering and new forms to arrange it in before sending it back out in the world. At the moment I am focusing on a book and perhaps an interactive CD/ROM. Where will this lead? I have no clue. I'm simply staying in the moment and *trusting the process*!

The next step is to connect with art quilters in other geographic regions. If you or your quilt guild is interested in being a part of this project, or if you would like to volunteer to transcribe tapes, please contact me at 1134 Charlotte Avenue, Rock Hill, SC 29732, (803) 327-5088.

INTRODUCTIONS

Marilyn Henrion, of New York City, recently accepted the position of International Contact on SAQA's board. Thanks, Marilyn.

A love of fabric and color is present from my earliest childhood memories. Although I cannot pinpoint exactly when my interest in quilts began, my training in graphic design in college contributed to my appreciation of the quilt as an art form. Old quilts have always held a strong attraction for me – both in terms of their visual impact and also their historical importance as a form of creative expression among women. Of particular interest were the Amish quilts, with their use of minimal geometric elements and extraordinary color combinations to create powerful aesthetic statements. When I started making quilts in 1975, my motivation was two-fold. One, to satisfy a hunger for a form of visual expression which had been bottled up for many years while juggling a full-time job and raising four children in a crowded New York apartment. The other motivation, which, I believe, is shared by other quiltmakers, past and present, was the quest for a small measure of immortality: to say I once existed when I am no longer here.

Using the quilt as a canvas for artistic expression, I convey my responses to personal experiences as well as world and cosmic events. Transforming geometric elements into abstract metaphorical images, I use color, line, and form much as a poet uses words to convey a particular emotion or idea. The quilt form supports my ideas by providing a medium for expression that is both very personal and historically significant. Enhancing the creative process for me are the tactile qualities of the fabrics, the serendipitous effects that can be achieved by "chance encounters" between found materials, and the mathematical challenges of piecing geometric forms.

Poetry, which I was drawn to even as a child, greatly influences my work. As in poetry, the metaphorical images are meant to resonate, being both themselves and something else that they suggest to the viewer. As personal statements, reflecting my thoughts and feelings, my work is important as an autobiographical legacy for my children and future generations of my family. Beyond that, I can see its value as an historical document providing insights into one woman's life in the last half of the twentieth century. The following lines from a poem by T. S. Eliot, which I embroidered on the back of my very first quilt, conjure up much of what quiltmaking means to me:

> *"Here between the hither and farther shore*
> *While time is withdrawn, consider the future*
> *And the past with an equal mind."*[1]

These lines bring to mind two aspects of quiltmaking, (1) both the meditative state of being suspended in time that accompanies the process of quiltmaking for me, and (2) the bridge that the quilts themselves form between past, present, and future.

My evolution as a quiltmaker has gone through three phases. Initially, I was quite content to be one in a long line of traditional quiltmakers, copying traditional designs which I admired. I learned much from these experiences and drew satisfaction in following in the footsteps of my predecessors. I looked upon these quilts as legacies for my children and future generations . . . products of my own hands. The second phase began when I realized that this legacy could be enriched by creating original designs, thus being not only a product of my hands but a reflection of my own aesthetic sensibilities as well. It also served to enhance the quiltmaking experience for me. The third phase came shortly thereafter when I realized that the quilt could serve, not only as a product of my hands and eyes, but as a canvas for expressing my thoughts and feelings . . . could, in a sense, become an autobiography. This would enrich the legacy even further and become a completely fulfilling creative experience for me. Although included in the "art quilt" genre, my work maintains the traditional craft of fine quiltmaking in its form – three layers, hand quilted together by the artist. Thus, the quilts pay homage to the past while making statements about the present and offering a legacy for the future.

Regarding my background, I am a graduate of Cooper Union and a life-long New Yorker and have been making quilt since 1975, bringing to the craft a strong background in graphic design. After twenty years on the faculty of the Fashion Institute of Technology, I retired in 1989 to devote full time to quiltmaking activities. My award-winning quilts have been exhibited internationally and are included in museum, corporate, and private collections. Articles about my work have appeared in *The New York Times, The New Jersey Star Ledger, Art Quilt Magazine, The American Quilter, Quilters Newsletter Magazine, Quilting International, Quilting Today, American Style*, as well as in Japanese and French publications. I, along with my work, was featured in a segment of the TV program, "Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt," in May, 1991. During that same year, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the ground-breaking Whitney exhibition, I organized a symposium in New York entitled "Q & A: Quilts & Art: Questions & Answers" held at The Fashion Institute of Technology and featuring a panel of noted figures from the mainstream art world and the quilt world. Other activities I have been involved with include hosting receptions and providing fabric shopping tours in New York for many groups of visiting quiltmakers from around the world. In 1993, I was invited to exhibit my work and lecture at the All-Russia Museum of Decorative, Applied & Folk Art in Moscow, Russia, at their first international textile symposium. Subsequently, at their invitation, I curated an exhibition of contemporary American quilts for the museum in April, 1996, which included my own work as well as four other artists. I also curated the first U.S. exhibition of the works of Russian quiltmaker, Ludmila Uspenskava, for The Museum of The American Quilters Society in 1995. I was among 37 artists from ten states and more than a dozen disciplines, including visual and performing arts and literature, to receive a Collaborative Projects Grant from ArtsLink for 1995/96. Partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, ArtsLink was created in 1992 to advocate artistic excellence and build individual and institutional relationships between arts communities and to support projects that benefit artists and audiences both in the United States and in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and the Baltics. My most recent solo exhibition was held at The American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, DC, in 1996.

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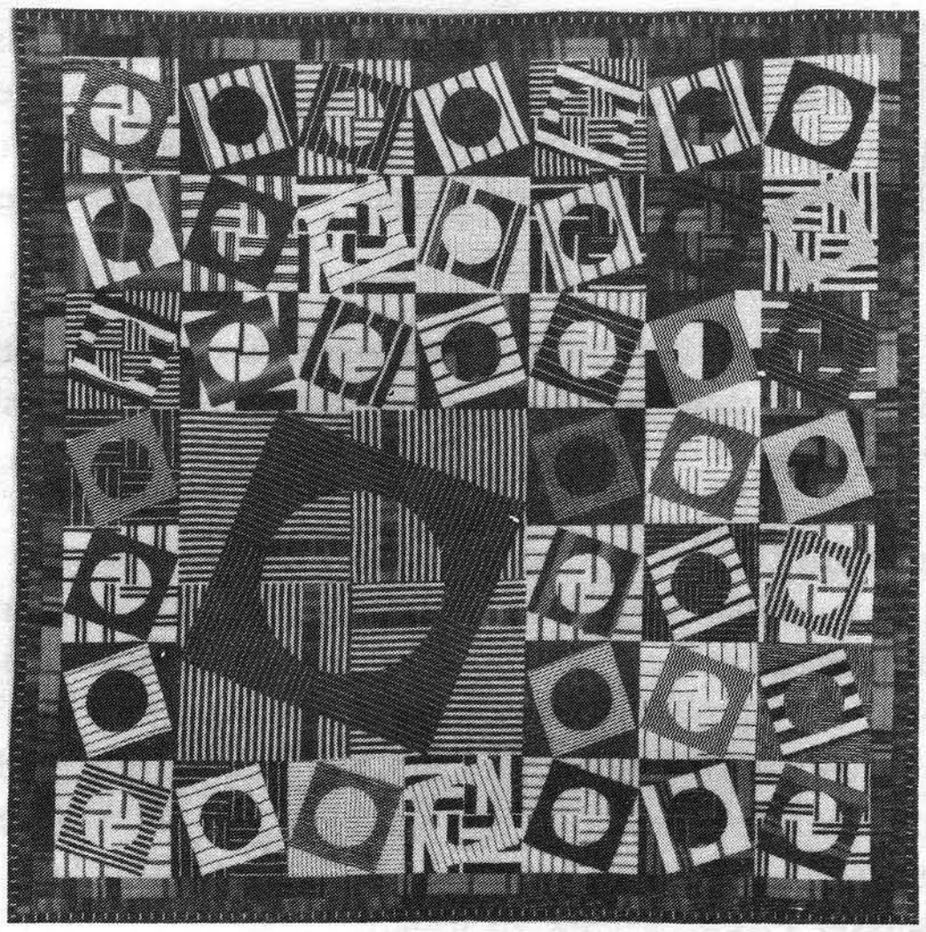
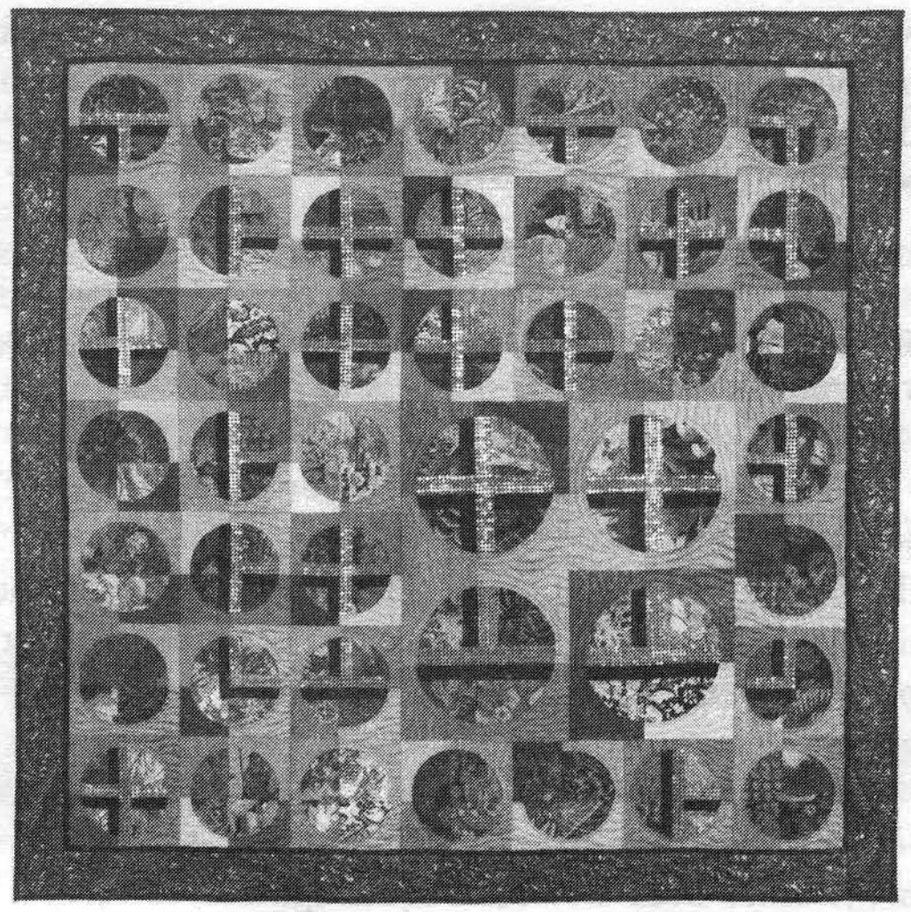
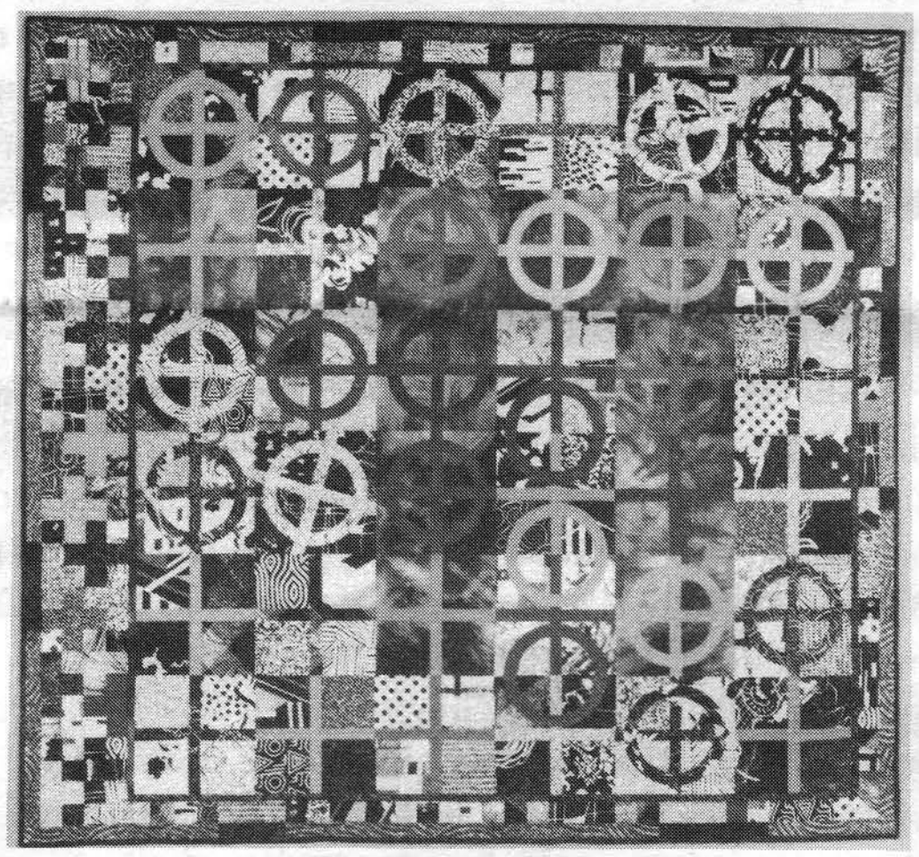
[1]T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets (Burnt Norton).



"Newton's Law," 61" x 61", © Marilyn Henrion, 1995.
Photo by Karen Bell



"Look Again," 66" x 66", © Marilyn Henrion, 1995.
Photo by Karen Bell



"Unless Something Happens," 68" x 63.5", © Marilyn Henrion, 1996.
Photo by Judy Smith-Kressley

> *You won't do anything until the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change.*
>
> – Emory Austin

MEMBERS' NEWS

Cathy Rasmussen

• The corporate gallery for the Nabisco Corporation in East Hanover, New Jersey, will be exhibiting 40 quilts from 14 of SAQA's professional artist members. The works will be on display from October 21 through December 4, 1996. The artists selected are Judy Becker, Marilyn Henrion, Chris Kleppe, Dottie Moore, Velda Newman, Natasha Kempers-Cullen, Margaret Cusack, Carol Drumond, Nancy Erickson, Wendy Hill, Holley Junker, Judy Levine, Karen Perrine, and Patricia Malarcher.

• Nancy Beckerman had two works, "What's Black and White and Red All Over?" and "Different Srokes for Different Folks," accepted into "Imaginations" at Quilt America in Indianapolis, Indiana.

• Debra Kam's work, "Almost Heaven II," was selected by Beth Venn, Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, for inclusion in the "2nd Annual International Exhibition of Women's Art" which was held August 17 through September 7, 1996, at the SOHO20 Gallery in New York City. The field included entries from 621 artists in the United States and five foreign countries.

• Mary Allen Chaisson had her work included in the "Chautauqua International for Fiber Art" at the Adams Art Gallery in Dunkirk, New York, from June 29 through August 1, 1996.

• Lois Ericson states that "after a lifetime of collecting buckles, buttons and fasteners of every description, it was time

to write *Opening and Closing*." This 200-page book includes numerous pages of color and black-and-white photos and illustrations. It is available for $28 plus $3 postage from Lois at Box 5222, Salem, Oregon 97304.

• Mary Ann Scarborough had a solo exhibition at the Chapman Art Center at Cazenovia College, Cazenovia, New York, from September 9 through October 4, 1996.

• Patty Hawkins was the featured artist at the Fort Collins Lincoln Art Center from August 3 through September 19. Her quilt, "Alpenglow," was in the "Materials: Hard and Soft," a multi-media art show, at the Denton, Texas Art Center from September 15 through October 25, 1996.

• Nancy Herman has a one-woman showing of her recent paintings at the Zone One Gallery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from October 30 through November 24, 1996. She recently took first prize in the craft category for the "Art of the State" exhibit at the State Museum in Harrisburg and also had four wall hangings commissioned from Beth Israel Hospital in New York City.

• Mary Hackett will have her new works exhibited under the title, "The Crippled Heart," at the Hickory Lodge in Carbondale, Illinois, next year from April 1 through April 30, 1997.

• Ann Fahl will be featured at a solo exhibition of her work at Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin, from November 1 through December 5, 1996. Among the quilts on display will included one made especially for the permanent collection at the college.

• Janet Shore had an exhibition of her work, "Kaleidoscope of Quilts," shown at the New Pieces Gallery in Berkeley, California, from August 2 through September 3, 1996.

• An exhibition, "Four Artists, Recent Quilts," was exhibited at the University Place Gallery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was sponsored by the Cambridge Art Association. SAQA members Sylvia Einstein, Beatriz Grayson, and Carol Anne Grotrian were included.

• Sandra Sider completed "A Better Bronx, No. 1," a photo quilt commissioned for a new clinic of Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx. The piece incorporates the artist's photographs of neighborhoods and landmarks near the clinic. The hospital has also purchased another of Sandra's works, "No. 5," from the series "Women at Work and Play."

• The "New Quilts of Northern California," an exhibit sponsored by the Northern California Quilt Council, is shown at the Pacific International Quilt Festival in Palm Springs, California, from October 10 through 13. It will then travel to the American Museum of Quilts and Textiles in San Jose and be shown from November 12 through January 5, 1997. SAQA members included are Kristina Becker, Vicki Johnson, Jean Neblett, Janet Shore, and Heather Urquhart.

• Ruth McDowell has a new release from C&T Publishing entitled *Art and Inspirations: Ruth B. McDowell*. She shares her inspirations and ideas, methods of working, construction tips, quiltmaking philosophy, and images of quilts made over the past 25 years.

• The works of Dominie Nash, Natasha Kempers-Cullen, and B. J. Adams were included in the September/October issue of *Fiberarts*.

• Judith Tomlinson Trager is featured in a one-woman show of her quilts and embroideries, October 24 through November 20 at the Mind's Eye Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona. The exhibition, "Plastic Flowers in a Mexican Graveyard," was first shown in Bethesda, Maryland, in January, 1996 (and subsequently snowed out). Judith's work has also recently been in "Crafts National '96," "The Artist as Quiltmaker," and "Fantastic Fibers."

• "VISION/REVISION: Fibers in Transition," an exhibition of fiberart from eight western states opened October 5 at the Loveland Museum/Gallery in Loveland, Colorado, and will run through January 5, 1997. SAQA members included in this show are Roxana Bartlett, Nancy Erickson, Ruth Garrison, Judith Tomlinson Trager, Patty Hawkins, and Beth Magnon. An extensive schedule of workshop classes and a free symposium featuring Nancy Erickson, Wilcke Smith, Rachel Brown, Jan Janeiro, and Ray Tomasso. Organized by the Handweavers Guild of Boulder and the Loveland Museum/Gallery the show is jointly curated by Judith Trager and Lynn Verschoor.

• "Innovative Traditions 1996 New Expressions in Contemporary Quiltmaking" is a juried show of quilts and quilted clothing presented at the Museums of Stony Brook in Stony Brook, New York. SAQA members included in this recent exhibition are Judy Becker, Nancy Beckerman, Nancy Crasco, Nancy Stanford Davis, Sandra Townsend Donabed, Britt Lagerquist Friedan, Beatriz Grayson, Patty Hawkins, Elizabeth Hendricks, Marilyn Henrion, Rosemary Hoffenberg, Ruth McDowell, Toot Reid, Sally Sellers, and Jan Brashears in the quilted garment category.

• Congratulations to all our members who were included in Quilt San Diego's *VISIONS: QuiltArt* which will be shown from November 2, 1996, through January 26, 1997, at the Museum of San Diego History in Balboa Park. SAQA members are Ann Adams, Patricia Autenrieth, Roxana Bartlett, Sue Benner, Rachel Brumer, Elizabeh Busch, Erika Carter, Mary Allen Chaisson, Gerry Chase, Cynthia Corbin, Carol Hemphill Gersen, Helen Giddens, Sharon Heidingsfelder, Jane Herbst, Midge Hoffman, Wendy Huhn, Vicki Johnson, Ann Johnston, Patricia Kennedy-Zafred, M. Joan Lintault, Paula Nadelstern, Ellen Oppenheimer, Toot Reid, Joan Schulze, Robin Schwalb, Sally Sellers, Jonathan Shannon, Susan Shie and James Acord, Fran Skiles, Laura Wasilowski, Kathy Weaver, and Angie Dawson Woolman.

SHOW BIZ

Michael James

With Quilt San Diego's fifth biennial quilt exhibition, *VISIONS: QuiltArt*, taking place at the Museum of San Diego History from November 2, 1996, through January 26, 1997, it seems appropriate to respond to several questions received related to this competition and its policies.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

One of our members wrote:

> *I was accepted into VISIONS 1996 and I sent my quilt to be photographed for their book. I also had to send them money to return my quilt. Then in the fall I will have to send it again and pay for shipping to and fro. I spent $25 to enter the show and $15 each way to ship the quilt. That totals $85 of my money so they can have a show. They supposedly had about 1,000 entries. That would be $25,000[1] working capital from entry fees alone. I know they have corporate sponsors as well, and they will be generating income from the catalogue. What expenses are there to a show? What prevents them from paying the shipping of the quilts especially the shipping for the photography session?*

I contacted Thayes Hower, Executive Director of Quilt San Diego, and asked her to address the fact that exhibitors must pay for two rounds of shipping.

Her response was, "As anyone can imagine, the cost of shipping 80 quilts is quite costly. If we were to absorb that cost, we would have to make it up somewhere, and that would probably be in the entry fees."

She went on, "Another important point about the shipping of the quilts is that if we paid for the shipping, then we would dictate exactly how the quilts were to be packed, what type of containers would be required, and what shipping service would be used. Quite frankly, I am not at all sure that the artists would care for our shipping requirements.

"I have found the variety of packaging methods used by the artists to be totally amazing! We have received quilts in boxes that have obviously been used many times and are battered and taped all over. Yet, these artists want the quilts insured for thousands of dollars. We have received large quilts in small boxes, small quilts in large boxes, quilts in tubes, furnace ducts, and wooden crates. As you can imagine, the cost of shipping some of these containers due to unusual shape or size or excessive weight can be exorbitant. In order to control the cost, we would have to make stipulations concerning the type and size of containers and refuse to pay costs over a certain amount. Logistically and financially, it really is not feasible for us to absorb the shipping costs."

PROFIT MARGINS

On the subject of the income generated by entry fees, corporate sponsorship, and catalogue sales, Hower had a bit more to say.

"First of all, I wish to stress the point that Quilt San Diego is a nonprofit organization. Most guilds and quilt shows are nonprofit, but there are also many that are not[2] and the distinction, I believe, is important.

"Because of the resurgence of interest in quilts and quilting in the last 20 years, many companies have found quilts to be extremely profitable and their main concern is not necessarily for the art form or for the artists. Quilt San Diego, on the other hand, was formed by a group of women in San Diego who believed that quilting and quiltmakers were not receiving the recognition they deserved. They decided to produce a forum in which the best of the art of quilting could be seen and through which the artists could receive widespread exposure for their works and talent. That forum evolved into the *VISIONS* exhibitions.

"Producing an exhibition of this size and caliber on a biennial basis is not a Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland movie," Hower continued. "You don't just say 'Let's put on a show!' ,and miraculously have a major event in two weeks! It involves years of work, dozens of volunteers[3] and

thousands of dollars. The entry fees don't even come close to covering the cost of the exhibition. Among the major expenses we have are advertising[4], public relations, printing, salaries, photography, and postage.

"With the number of quilt exhibitions now in existence and the number of new ones being created annually, the public and the artists have many venues to attend and in which to submit their work. They have only so much time and money and can't attend or submit work for all of them. We must ensure that our exhibition is one for which they make time and money; therefore, advertising and printing become extremely costly. Our ad must compete visually with other ads. Our entry forms, brochures, and flyers must look professional and must stand out among all of the others, so we have to pay graphic designers to produce memorable and striking materials for these purposes.

"As for income, entry fees and sponsorship do make up the largest percentage of what we take in. However, quilt and textile-related corporations are receiving requests from more and more organizations every year. This means they have to decide whether to choose just one or two venues to sponsor, or to spread their sponsorship funds among more than one venue, thus giving less to each. So, those dollars are becoming more of a challenge for us to obtain. We have a gift shop at the museum which is an additional income source, and we share the admission fees with the museum although that income percentage is not great. Nor are the royalties from the exhibition catalog."

The Executive Director of Quilt San Diego concluded by saying, "We are honored that so many talented and acclaimed artists wish to enter their works in our exhibition. We believe, however, that the international exposure they receive through the exhibition and the catalog justify the nominal expenses they incur by way of entry fees and shipping costs."

THE FINAL CUT

We also asked Mrs. Hower to respond to this question:

> *If I already have top-quality professional 4 x 5 color transparencies of my entry, why can't I just provide this and save myself the expense and trouble of sending my quilt twice?*

She answered that "the photography session also serves as our *final selection* process. In our entry form, we explain that the jurying from slides is the *preliminary selection* phase and that we reserve the right to refuse a quilt after we have viewed it in person during the photography session. This protects us from having to include a quilt in our exhibition that was misrepresented by the slide.

"Due to the fact that we do have a full-color catalog published, we have to ascertain months before the exhibition the quilts that will be in it and consequently in the catalog. This is why we can't wait until the quilts are sent for the actual exhibition to conduct our final selection. As for the artists' providing their own transparencies, we prefer to have total control over the photography for the catalog. Having one photographer for all of the quilts ensures continuity in quality, and in that C&T Publishing Company and various magazines that have used our transparencies have expressed considerable praise for our photographer's work, we believe we are justified in our policy."

In our next column we'll hear from Hilary Fletcher, Director of *Quilt National*, with her input on these same issues relative to *QN*.

If you have questions related to specific shows or exhibiting in general, send them to Michael James Studio Quilts, 258 Old Colony Avenue, Somerset Village, MA 02726-5930, or by FAX to (508) 676-8601. *This article is copyrighted by Michael James, 1996.*

[1] The actual entry fee for *VISIONS: QuiltArt* was $12.50 per quilt submitted. Each entrant could submit up to three quilts. This exhibitor apparently submitted two. At $12.50 per quilt, 1,000 entries would total $12,500 and not double that.

[2] For example, exhibitions organized in conjunction with such sponsors as *The Mid-Atlantic Quilt Festival, The Pacific International Quilt Festival, The International Quilt Festival, The Vermont Quilt Festival*, and similar events are for-profit ventures.

[3] Nearly all of the board members and staff of Quilt San Diego and of the *VISIONS* exhibition are unpaid volunteers.

[4] To give readers some idea of how expensive advertising can be, a 1/4 page black-and-white ad in a small publication such as *American Quilter* runs for about $400 an issue. There are usually small discounts for multiple issue runs. And, in *Quilters Newsletter Magazine*, the 1995 rate was $675. Multiply these rates for monthly or bi-monthly placement over the course of a year, normal for these shows such as *VISIONS* and *QUILT NATIONAL*, and you have some pretty hefty figures.

REBUTTALS TO RECENT ARTICLE

The following are responses to Lorre Weidlich's article, "Quilts and Art: Value Systems in Conflict," as printed in the SAQA's Newsletter, Spring, 1996, Volume 6, Number 2, Page 1.

SALLY SELLERS' REMARKS

There are so many flaws in the reasoning of Lorre Weidlich's recent article that I hardly know where to begin.

Her conclusion, that we as women (and artist) have once again been controlled by men, is puzzling. While I certainly don't dispute that male dominance is unfortunately prevalent in our society, it doesn't seem to be the case here. In presenting the evidence for this conclusion, Weidlich ignores the contributions of the many women who have had a strong influence in the quilt art field. For example, she states, "Quilters had, in effect, been welcomed into the Garden of Eden by Jonathan Holstein, and then ejected from it by Michael James. The striking thing about quilters' brief sojourn in paradise is that both of the gatekeepers were male." Preceding this statement by a few paragraphs was the mention of the publication of the book *The Art Quilt*, by Penny McMorris and Michael Kile. However, the acknowledgment ended there. Why was McMorris' contribution to the status of the art quilt so briefly noted but then discarded? Surely the publication of such a definitive volume has an impact. Is she not equally prominent in defining the genre? Why are Holstein and James the only "gatekeepers"?

Another curious omission is that in the very article by Michael James considered to be so "controversial" was a reference to a previous article by Gayle Pritchard, also published in *The American Quilter*, titled "The Future of Quilts as Art." I'm confused as to why it is that Pritchard's thoughts of the education of viewers were not of interest, yet when James commented on some of the same issues, he is criticized.

I am also puzzled by the statement, "After the Whitney exhibit, women could be dead folk artists or living fine artists, but that category in between – living popular artists – is left in limbo." Limbo? What about Nancy Crow? Pauline Burbidge? Therese May? Jan Myers-Newbury? Are these not popular living artists? What is Weidlich talking about? How can these women be ignored?

Additionally, any definitive study of the art quilt movement must acknowledge the efforts of Nancy Crow in promoting quilting as an art form. Her effect on the field has been undeniably powerful. The fact that Crow's efforts were not even mentioned in Weidlich's article undermines most of Weidlich's conclusions about who, precisely, has been defining the quilt as art.

All this being said, the point where I truly realized Weidlich was off-base was when she purported to define for me why I am quilting. Evidently I have bought into some sort of male-defined stereotype of "a solitary iconoclast who pushes the boundaries" because I like to work alone in my studio for hours on end, instead of joining a group of other women. The fact that I, like many other female artists I know, want my work to be successful and of high quality puts me, by Weidlich's definition, (or perhaps by Carol Gilligan's definition), squarely into the realm of "male self-definition through separation." Horse pucky! I just want to make good quilts. OF COURSE it's a bonus that I'm involved in a long tradition of women's work. OF COURSE I support the artistic endeavors of other women. OF COURSE I enjoy connecting on an emotional and spiritual level with other women. But this is NOT what drew me to quilting, and I resent Weidlich's patronizing generalization of the nature of women. It smacks of the very sexism of which she accuses Holstein and James.

In stating that Michael James' comments "plunge quilters into an ambiguous, consequently uncomfortable state," I think Weidlich's intent was to present an unflattering picture of James. However, in my view, it presents a far more unflattering picture of women quilters, first by awarding James a dubious level of power over them, and second by presenting them as a group so insecure that they could be thrown into a tizzy over such a simple pronouncement that not all quilts are successful artistically. (Why is this so horrifying? Is not the same thing true of paintings?) Personally, I give women quilters more credit than that.

We are all fully aware that there is enough difficulty in this world with genuine male dominance. There are enough real issues to exhaust even the most dedicated feminists. This is not one of them. Let us appreciate the efforts of ALL individuals who are helping to promote and elevate the status of the art quilt. The desire for quality has no gender.

MICHAEL JAMES' REMARKS

This article was evidently a very serious and considered attempt to come to terms with the perplexing problem of "what is art?," and more specifically, "what is quilt art?" Surely, there are no single answers to these questions, and no answers that will satisfy *all of the people all of the time*. As an artist, my basic feeling is that time spent trying to define what it is and what it isn't is time better spent doing the work itself. Future generations will make those determinations anyway.

Questions of what is and isn't art aside, I would like to address myself to several concerns prompted by Weidlich's article. I found her portrayal of me as the bogeyman of the quilt world, arousing the animosity of a large number of quilt "amateurs" (i.e., in the French sense, as individuals who love something and cultivate an appreciation of it through participation, research, etc.) very long sobering and saddening. Her unfortunate but repeated use of the inflammatory terms "violates" and "violating" in regard to my aesthetic and philosophical orientations and to definitions of art that she ascribes to me gave me a profound understanding of just what those words mean. ("What is it about his definition that women find *violating*?"[italics mine] and ". . . fitting the solitary iconoclast image of the artist is an ideal way for a man to define himself, while it totally *violates* women's modes of self-definition" and yet again "The male, Jamesian model of 'quilt art' *violates* the very qualities that initially attracted

women to quilting . . .") To me the word *violate* implies all that is the worst that a man can do to a woman. That an allusion to rape should enter into a discussion of art, quilts, and quilt art, simply because one of the principals happens to be a man, speaks volumes about just how far we have moved, as a culture, to the limits of cynicism, bad taste, and hysteria.

I have never intended to offend anyone with my commentaries on quilts and art. I acknowledge, however, that in expressing my viewpoints honestly and forthrightly, I have risked appearing opinionated or arrogant or both, and have risked being misread or misinterpreted. This is unfortunate, as my intent has always been to encourage serious thought and reflection, discussion and dialogue, and individual fulfillment through this medium. I have always recognized that fulfillment comes to different individuals in different ways, and have never proposed that my points of view were the only legitimate ones nor that they applied across all facets of quilt world activity. When I wrote early on that "in the coexistence and mutual give-and-take of conventional and innovative quilt forms . . . lies the full flowering of the art"[1] I acknowledged that individuals approach quiltmaking with different intentions and goals, that all deserve to be respected, but that not everyone works by the same sets of guidelines or with the same purposes.

Weidlich describes at length what she called the "male, Jamesian model of quilt art." I would choose a less divisive label, perhaps something along the lines of the "post-industrial, modernist model." My orientation has admittedly been conditioned in part by my formal art school training, but the values of the quilt world have also had a significant impact on my feelings about quilts. The emphasis on high standards of design and technique is indisputably one of the key values held by quiltmakers, including the most traditional and conservative. However, excellence as a value is compromised when one argues that everything is equally good, that everything is art.[2] This in fact renders the idea of quality irrelevant. It amounts to the same thing as saying that every piano player is an artist, that an Alfred Brendel or an Alicia de Larrocha is no more an artist than one's Suzuki-method-student daughter or son.

Curiously, Weidlich considers me a "gatekeeper" with the power, evidently, to keep quilters out of some imagined territory, "the art world." Here Weidlich betrays just how little she understands about that art world and about the quilter's place relative to it, and how little she knows about my own work as a teacher and workshop leader.

Having worked at the making of quilts for nearly twenty-five years, I can vouch for the fact that "the art world" is largely ignorant of or indifferent to what we as makers are up to. Quilts have long been dismissed by the critical establishment and, Holstein and the Whitney Museum notwithstanding, the art world is with rare exception neither interested in nor supportive of the work of hands when it comes out of craft or popular traditions.[3] Textile artists, male and female, know full well that the domestic association of their chosen media has hindered their individual and collective progress in fine art venues. When it comes to credibility, I know as well as any woman in the field how easily dismissed one's response to the question, "What do you do?" ("I make quilts") often is. Seeking the stamp of approval of the art world is a dubious goal for any craftmaker, and, as I recently pointed out in an article entitled *The "C" Word*[4], "it just might be the kiss of death."

I believe that I've never been less than fully encouraging in urging quiltmakers to pursue their creative goals, and over the years I've worked with many hundreds of students to nurture and expand their innate sense of creativity and to help them find the means to give visual form to those creative impulses. Creativity is not an exclusive property of the "artist"; it is a characteristic human trait, a tool for living that can be accessed by both non-professional and professional alike. Its exercise is as necessary for a healthful life as eating and sleeping, and the last thing I'd want to do as an artist would be to discourage anyone from exploiting it to the full measure of their capabilities.

Weidlich's critique isn't the first time I've been upbraided in print for speaking openly about issues that concern me, and I'm sure it won't be the last. I hope, however, that it's the last time that the fact of my gender is used in an attempt to discredit what I've said. No art form can flourish that remains gender-, race-, or class-specific, because all art forms depend on borrowings, cross-fertilizations, and interweavings. Likewise, no art form can flourish that does not subject itself to honest and probing self-questioning and self-criticism. In any discipline, when standards of excellence are jettisoned integrity loses its foundation. The identity of weaknesses and strengths in art should be independent of sexual, racial, or social prerequisites. I don't have to be black to know that Savion Glover's choreography for "Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk" is a virtuosity of the highest order, nor do I have to be female to know that Nancy Halpern's "Archipelago," is one of the great quilts of the 1980's.

Gender stereotypes including the notions of "male self-definition through separation" and "women's self-definition through connection" are just that – stereotypes, based on idealistic profiles that have at best a tentative basis in everyday reality. To define men and women in these terms is to deny the great complexities and contradictions inherent in human nature.

I do think that as quiltmakers and as artists we owe it to ourselves and to our discipline to embrace the notion of criticism as a constructive enterprise in which we examine our work and our motivations, and through which we reach out to one another with the goal of nurturing our artistic integrity. If we aren't willing to do that, then we are in effect lowering our standards as well as our expectations.

[1] Michael James, *The Quiltmaker's Handbook* (Leone Publications, Mt. View, California, 1993), p. 2.

[2] In *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1995) the ethologist Ellen Dissanayake points out on page 224, "To suggest that art is more common and ubiquitous than has usually been supposed does not have to mean that all standards fly out the window and anything goes . . . To make something special generally implies taking care and doing one's best so as to produce a result that is – to a greater or lesser extent – accessible, striking, resonant, and satisfying are biologically endowed as well as culturally acquired; they are not merely a matter of playful and shifting interpretations."

[3] One of those rare exceptions recently manifested itself in the form of a detailed critique of several recent international textile expositions by Janet Koplos in the February 1996 issue of *Art in America*, under the title of "World Wide Web." This analysis is to my knowledge the first of its kind by a magazine of this stature, and came as a result of direct support by the Chicago-based organization Friends of Fiber Art International, one of the few advocacy groups for the textile arts to have succeeded in stimulating art world notice.

[4] *ArtQuilt Magazine*, Issue #5, Spring, 1996, pp. 10-11.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Marcia Johnson

Promotional Tools for Artists: Portfolios

"I always wanted to be somebody, but I should have been more specific."

– Lily Tomlin

Many artists think of their portfolios as a collection and history of their work, but in reality it is a self-presentation tool. If you think of your portfolio in terms of PROMOTION, you will be better prepared to assemble an effective and results-getting package. The goal is to open doors, not win an award for detailing your activities.

Take a positive approach to presenting your work with confidence and include in any one portfolio only the materials that apply to its recipient (target market). It makes good use of your time, effort, and expense in assembling a portfolio to customize it as much as possible. Recipients will have different points of view. Even if they all are gallery managers, for example, each will have different clientele.

The physical format of your portfolio will also vary with your target market. Step back and review your market and the type of work you are presenting so as to create a portfolio package that fits. Start to think in terms of repetition and continuity. These are sound artistic principles that apply as well to business presentation. There should be the use of repeated visuals: your logo, letterhead, or other creative visuals throughout all of your materials. Use consistent graphics and fonts in order to develop a uniform appearance. This would include items such as business cards, stationery, covers, postcards, and notebooks. Coordinate stationery and other paper products.

A portfolio may contain some or all of the following items:

- Cover letter
- Résumé, short or long form
- Artist's statement
- Business cards
- Publicity/reviews of you and your work
  - Color xeroxes
  - Tear sheets
  - Postcards
  - Reprinted media articles
  - Catalogues
  - Announcements
- Slides and slide list
- Retail prices
- Installation shots or work in progress

When you assemble a portfolio, think of it in terms of an advertising budget. Assess the value of including an item on the basis of whether it will meet one or more of the following objectives:

- Create a public awareness of you and/or your work.
- Reach a new client or customer.
- Increase sales opportunities or open a new market.
- Most cost effective and timely method.

Because artists sell their work to many different targets, customizing each portfolio is the best marketing approach. Some customized portfolios include the following:

- Targeted – Use a style and materials suitable only to the particular recipient.
- Series – Contains photos or color copies of a particular series of work with corresponding artist statement.
- Promotion and Publicity – Contains media publications and other promotions documenting the recognition of you and/or your work.
- Publications – Include articles you have published.
- Artwork – Include enlarged reprints of work contained in a leather portfolio.
- Lectures and Teaching.
- Historical/Diary.

These are but a few ideas for customizing your portfolio. Stop and think about the purpose of your portfolio before you assemble it for a particular client and be creative in your marketing. Have a variety of materials on hand and select only those appropriate to each custom portfolio. If you stop and ask yourself the goal for sending a particular portfolio, you are more likely to hit the mark.

TARGET! CUSTOMIZE! These should be your golden rules for portfolios.

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SAQA NEWSLETTER
Fall 1996 *Volume 6, Number 4*

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 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72203-0391; (501) 671-2102; (501) 671-2294 (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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DIRECTORY CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

Enclosed are two sheets to include in the General Membership Roster, Section III, of your membership directory. In addition, mail has been returned with one of the following notices – forwarding order has expired, no new address, or insufficient address – for the following people: Armelle Czuy, Martha Dreesen, Sharon Marie Weinraub, and L. K. Wood. You may want to delete their addresses from your directory. (If you know their current address, send it to Cathy or Sharon.) And, finally, you may want to paste the following substitution over the last listing in Regional Representatives, Section II, Page 2.

CENTRAL NEW YORK ● Barbara Conte Gaugel
North Syracuse, New York
(315) 458-9604

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