



NEWSLETTER

Contents

Over the Edge in New York	1
SAQA Membership Drive	1
Appraising Quilts	3
SAQA at International Quilt Festival	4
Professional Development	5
The Artist-in-Residence Experience	6
Introductions	7
American Quilt Study Group Announces Move	8
SAQA Announces "Rookie Awards"	8
Members' News	9
Book Reviews	10
Art Quilt Makers and Their Critique Groups (Part I)	12
Conference Scheduled	15
SAQA Newsletter Now Accepting Ads	16

OVER THE EDGE IN NEW YORK

Maureen Bardusk

"Wanna go to New York with me?" "Sure." Of course, being desperate for a change of scenery, I probably would have replied, "Yes," to an invitation to Peoria. And despite Peoria's charms, I still prefer New York City with its Central Park, five-star museums, Broadway theatre, magnificent architecture, and a personal look at great works of art I had only seen in reproductions.

The occasion for this four-day, three-night pavement-pounding excursion was the June 15, 1998 opening for *Edge to Edge: Selections from Studio Art Quilt Associates*, at the Museum of American Folk Art. In its temporary location near Lincoln Center, the Museum provided an intimate gallery space that showcased the work of 18 SAQA members. The exhibit included several familiar images, some new works, and others that only seemed familiar because they reflect a recognized style.

continued on page 2



Opening of SAQA Exhibit at MAFA

SAQA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Cathy Rasmussen

I wish I could happily report that the Studio Art Quilt Associates membership drive underway this year has been a huge, rip-roaring success; however, that is not the case. Only a very small number of members have brought in a new SAQA member and this, quite frankly, distresses me.

Every single person working in fiber today needs to belong to this organization. The whole purpose and function of Studio Art Quilt Associates is to be an advocate for the art quilt. This is a national organization devoted to the promotion of the art quilt as an art form. This is not an easy task to accomplish since in order to do this we must increase awareness and help change preconceived ideas of what art is.

I am well acquainted with the power of advocacy groups and what they can accomplish by calling attention to the needs of a large number of people. As a cancer survivor, I have personally benefitted from others acting as a voice to increase awareness – and ultimately financial support – to help realize an incredible goal. The squeakiest wheel does get the most grease, especially if it has the numbers to back it up.

continued on page 2

OVER THE EDGE IN NEW YORK (cont.)

The opening was a gala affair, with more than half of the artists in the exhibition in attendance. (Nancy Erickson receives an award for traveling the farthest – Missoula, Montana.) The rooms were comfortably filled with friends, museum members, staff, and invited guests. Much of the buzz was about the art, the artists, and introductions. The exhibit is accompanied by a handsome full-color catalog, which devotes a half-page to each image and provides an exhibition checklist.

The exhibit was well presented, with each piece given a respectful amount of space in which to view it. After several days of peering at work in the Whitney, Metropolitan, Guggenheim, Cooper Hewitt, Museum of Modern Art, and the American Craft Museum, I felt the art quilt was well treated. Erickson's "Exodus" visually leapt off a deep purple wall, designed to be viewed long-distance through the street front windows. Several pieces were displayed in the front gallery, and the others were grouped in a large, well-lit space a few steps up from the main floor.

The curator, Stacy C. Hollander, states that she "sought quilts that were expressive of an individual artistic vision that was rationally realized through a fiber and/or quilt inspired medium," and that the exhibit "represents my personal, aesthetic response to the artworks submitted by members of SAQA." Given that rationale, the exhibit certainly presents a diverse view of personal statements, be they overtly political, beautifully rendered, or just plain, humorous.

There is no substitute for actually seeing an exhibit, although the catalog is a worthwhile investment to document the art quilt movement and SAQA's large contribution to recognition

of the art quilt. It was not until we were all nicely settled over dinner that I was made aware of just how important this event actually is. An art quilt exhibit in New York simply does not happen, and the prestigious venue of the Museum of American Folk Art cannot be underestimated. Kudos to Cathy Rasmussen for making this exhibit possible.

I can only hope that SAQA is invited back to exhibit in the Museum's new home on 53rd Street, currently under construction. See you there? I'll be the one wearing comfortable shoes.

Maureen Bardusk is a fiber artist in Hinsdale, Illinois. In addition to exhibiting her work, she writes and lectures about the current state of fiber.

Note from Cathy Rasmussen concerning this exhibit:

- This ground-breaking exhibition at the Museum of American Folk Art was made possible by the financial support of Studio Art Quilt Associates and its corporate sponsors – C & T Publishing, Inc.; Fairfield/Maker of Poly-Fil® Brand Products; P & B Fabrics, Inc.; Quilter's Newsletter Magazine; Quilters Only from Springs Industries, Inc.; and Quilts, Inc. Thank you all for making the dream a reality.

- The exhibition catalog includes a thought-provoking article by Stacy C. Hollander on the art quilt and the works selected. This is a "must-have" for your library and can be ordered from SAQA at P. O. Box 287, Dexter, Oregon 97431. The cost is \$4.95 plus \$1.50 for shipping and handling.

SAQA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE (cont.)

Your local, or regional, group provides you with the creative support and feedback you need as an artist. These small gatherings are a vital part of the creative process for many members. Localized groups play a very important role in the encouragement of artists and increasing public awareness of the art quilt. The role of Studio Art Quilt Associates is that of an umbrella organization devoted to the advocacy of this art form. Ideally, these local groups would be regional members of SAQA who would be called upon to act as SAQA emissaries and host the annual SAQA conference in their area. This vision would provide us with a dual forum for a single purpose.

I urge you to enlist every artist, collector, dealer, curator, and supporter you know to become a member to help us achieve the recognition we need and desire to survive. If every current member brings in just one person, we have doubled our ranks, and our bank account, overnight. I can assure you that a far

greater number of closed doors will open if we have the numbers and dollars to get people's attention. The exhibition at the Museum of American Folk Art in New York City would never have been possible without the financial support of Studio Art Quilt Associates and its corporate sponsors. Any straying from a set course in the museum world (and the art world as well) is a much easier task if the funding is already in place. While we all feel that the material should stand on its own, it is far more realistic to realize that a roomful of skeptical museum staff members will be more receptive to even considering the work if there is financial support behind it. We are all ruled by the bottom line.

Studio Art Quilt Associates has very ambitious goals for you and your art, but we need your help in accomplishing them. These efforts cannot be completed by a handful of people but only through the efforts of the entire organization. Please sign someone up today!

APPRAISING QUILTS

Shelly Zegart

This is Part Two of an article which originally appeared in the Journal of The International Quilt Association and is used here with permission from the author.

Are You Thinking About Becoming an Appraiser?

If you are thinking about becoming an appraiser, ask yourself these questions:

- ❖ How many years have I been handling, studying, and working with quilts and other objects?
- ❖ Do I have a good visual memory stocked with infinite images of ordinary, fine, and superior objects?
- ❖ Do I have a broad network of people who are willing to serve as resources for me?
- ❖ Can I write descriptions of objects concisely and cogently so there will be no mistaking them for others when defending my appraisals in a court of law?
- ❖ Will I be able to defend my work in a court of law, if necessary?

What is "Connoisseurship"?

Appraisers of all types should have a highly-developed level of connoisseurship. In May of 1993, at The Great American Quilt Festival in New York City, a seminar entitled, "Appraising Quilts – from Antique Quilts to Art Quilts," was moderated by Hammer Johnson, past president of the Appraisers Association of America. I was among the panelists, which included Helxine Fendelman, president of the Appraisers Association of America, Inc., Penny McMorris, member of the Advisory Council of the Alliance for American Quilts; Yvonne Porcella, founder of Studio Art Quilt Associates; and Gerald Roy of the American Quilter's Society. I was asked to discuss how to establish value and how to develop connoisseurship.

Value is a combination of factors which determine price. A list of factors which determine prices in relation to antique quilts include the following. (This information was extracted from a course, "Appraisal and Valuation of Art," offered by New York University and taught by Helaine Fendelman.)

- ❖ The piece itself – its intrinsic, artistic merit, pattern, form, color execution, and craftsmanship (i.e., the quality of the design and its workmanship);
- ❖ Condition – condition counts;

- ❖ Authenticity – age, for example, new Amish quilts are authentic but the aesthetic/fabric does not meet the standards of Amish quilts made in years past;
- ❖ Size – small in quilts is often more valuable than very large; however, large Indian pottery might be more valuable than smaller pieces;
- ❖ Provenance – history of ownership;
- ❖ Rarity – how many there are;
- ❖ Historic importance; and,
- ❖ Marketplace – timing, economic conditions, what is selling.

Real value cannot be established without connoisseurship. A "connoisseur" is defined as "an informed and astute judge in the matters of taste – an expert." (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd College Ed., c.1983).

The development of connoisseurship is a lifelong pursuit. Every year one learns more. This is the one area in which age and experience has value; the older you get, the better you get. Knowledge is accumulated by constant looking and reading.

According to Charles Montgomery in his excellent chapter on connoisseurship in *A History of American Pewter*, the primary personal attribute of a connoisseur is a good visual memory stocked with an infinite image of ordinary, fine, and superior objects. The connoisseur remembers especially those objects he or she has personally examined, but also has in mind published photographs of objects and facts connected with them. Invaluable to the student are photographic files that can be shuffled and rearranged for comparison.

Each connoisseur consciously and unconsciously looks at an object from many points of view to gather the data necessary to identify an object, to evaluate its condition and quality, and to determine its comparative success as a work of art. He or she judges the excellence of workmanship and the condition, proceeds cautiously, asks questions, considers answers carefully, and is objective.

A connoisseur of antique quilts studies master Dyers' books and other fabric resources, the beds on which they were placed, and the decorative arts and culture of each time period. He or she attends every possible show and exhibition, talks to colleagues in the field across the country on a daily basis, looks at a lot of quilts, and is familiar with all the literature (good and bad).

continued on page 4

APPRAISING QUILTS (cont.)

How does connoisseurship apply to appraisals of antique quilts? In a difficult call, scholarship and connoisseurship enable the appraiser to set precisely the worth of a Baltimore Album quilt at \$150,000 or \$250,000. Appraising is not only the identification of the category and the act of gathering information, it is knowing how to analyze it. If you are not able to make that kind of distinction, and you are preparing an appraisal of a quilt for donation to a museum, you are doing your client a disservice.

As another example, if you cannot look from across the room at two great Lancaster County Amish diamond quilts made during the same period, similarly quilted, both being the same size and using the same colors, and tell which is a \$10,000 quilt and which is a \$20,000 one, you should not be appraising Amish quilts.

With that example in mind, let's take a look at contemporary art quilts. As more and more quilt artists look to the history of painting and painterly representations as inspiration, their quilts may fly in the face of the traditional quilt and might possess inferior fabrics, peculiar shapes. If you cannot see them in relation to modern painting because you do not have the historical art background to judge, then you cannot appraise contemporary art quilts.

Appraising is not a question of personal preference for a particular kind of quilt. Regardless of the aesthetic, the history and the workmanship must be measured against the wisdom of the marketplace which sets new values daily on everything in the world, including art objects. After the connoisseurship is considered, if an appraiser is not linked to the material personally or through contact in the field on a daily basis, one has no business appraising.

Most quilts, as well as other art objects, are sold privately, although some are offered publicly through auctions. An appraiser must have access to that information. It is absurd to assume that an appraiser of houses can appraise if he or she does not know what other houses have sold for in your neighborhood, your city, your region. It is easier to find out the value of a house than a quilt, of course, because house prices are posted in realtors' windows and newspapers every day across the country.

A Future Conference

At the International Quilt Festival '98 in Houston, The Alliance for American Quilts, the International Quilt Association, and Studio Art Quilt Associates will sponsor a seminar on appraising quilts. This seminar will incorporate representation from major appraisal organizations, artists, collectors, and others active in the areas of quilt art appraising. I will be a presenter at this seminar which will take place on Saturday, October 31, 1998, at the George Brown Convention Center.

If you have other questions about appraisals, please send them to Shelly Zegart, P. O. Box 6251, Louisville, KY 40206, or e-mail me at "zegrtquilt@aol.com."

SAQA member Shelly Zegart was a founding director in 1981 of The Kentucky Quilt Project, the first state documentation project. In 1993 she co-founded the Alliance for American Quilts. She lectures on all aspects of quilt history and aesthetics, and has built quilt collections around the world. A member of the Appraisers Association of America, Zegart appraises antique and contemporary quilts.

SAQA AT INTERNATIONAL QUILT FESTIVAL

If you haven't made your travel plans to Houston by now, don't delay another minute. The Quilt Festival is going to be great this year and you won't want to miss it. The seminar, *Appraising Your Quilts - From Antique to Art Quilts*, on Saturday, October 31, 1998, at the George Brown Convention Center, is a must for anyone who is donating or selling his or her work. This incredible panel of experts who have been assembled just for this seminar will provide you with all the information you need to make intelligent decisions. Part Two of Shelly Zegart's article on appraising is included in this newsletter and will give you a good idea of what will follow at the seminar.

The SAQA auction on Friday night, October 30, 1998, at the Four Seasons Hotel (just across from the convention center) will prove to be an unforgettable evening. Auction chairs, Sue Benner and Barb Hartman, have been working very hard at coordinating the items for bidding. Let your imagination run wild as you think of something to donate. You can contact either Sue or Barb if you have any questions but all donations should be sent to Barb Hartman. Wendy Huhn has graciously volunteered to once again be the auctioneer. Since the auction is the day before Halloween, outlandish attire is encouraged. Our auction chairpersons and auctioneer are opting for a decorated "Birk and Doc" display but creative headgear and imaginative jewelry are equally encouraged. Please contribute to the auction even if you are not attending Houston this year. Your participation and support are paramount to the financial success of this event which is our only fund raiser for the year. If we want to expand and improve the services to our members, but still keep conference costs and membership fees at an affordable level, we need other sources of income. So, don't waste a minute more and send an item off as soon as possible!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Marcia Hewitt Johnson

Searching For a Place on The WWW

The mail continues to come in and, as usual, there are many points of view on the merits, and demerits, of the Internet as a marketplace for your art.

There seems to be a quiet groan about the style of presentation on some sites. Writes member Sally Sellers, "I have to admit to being turned off by some of the personal web sites I've seen. They seem so, well, self-aggrandizing. I guess I feel if praises are to be sung, they sound better coming from my gallery or SAQA. So, is it a matter of style?"

Yes, self-presentation styles can vary, not only on the web, but in other materials as well. As with any promotion, remember what your goals are in presenting your work and then "stylize" your presentation to suit that goal.

There does seem to be a consensus about presenting work in a group site that is art oriented and linked to other art sites. Perhaps for some this is the first way to test the usefulness of your presence on the Internet. It allows you to have a more conservative presentation and can be as straightforward as a well-written artist statement.

Many of you on the SAQA web site have noted inquiries, or the opening of doors, as a result of your presence there. I agree with you that the site should be finer tuned and offer opportunities for updating and expanding your listings. Discussions for further expansion are underway. I refer my own contacts to the site in my written materials and have received a number of inquiries, as have other members.

My original search into the Net began with reading an article in *American Style* (Winter, 1996), "Collectors from Cyberspace." My eyes were opened when I read that one gallery found 50% of its clients had e-mail. After that I started to connect the reasons I as a consumer used the Internet and how I could make an opportunity for my work. Lately, I have become more of a user when it comes to gathering information for planning my photo travel trips. I can do it at my leisure and find current information. It follows that other consumers (collectors, galleries, art institutions) might behave in much the same way. Once someone is informed through the Internet of your work, you can customize your presentation and follow-up specifically for them.

If you have not been looking, I would recommend you do so. If you do not have the capability in your home, you could try services at your public library, ask a friend or neighbor (surfers love to show off), or try the "rent a teenager" approach. Start with David Walker at "<http://www.one.net/~davidxix/QuiltLinks.html>." The links will allow you to go in your own direction. (Editor's note: I tried this site and it is no longer available.)

I also contacted Barb Dougherty from *Art Calendar, the Business Magazine for Visual Artists* and asked her for some guidance on what an artist should be looking for when seeking a place on the Internet. Her response was that "the Internet is yellow pages for artists – you need to be there but you need to control cost. A web site should be an alternate for slide viewing and sending. You should not expect a fancy home page to do much more than a listing unless you make it work for you. We know companies are searching the web for images. I suggest the more time you spend looking at what is there, the more you will understand." You may want to visit Art Calendar's registry at "<http://www.artcalendar.com>." The registration and scanning charges to appear on their page are listed in the magazine and are minimal.

Once you start looking around you will be better able to access where you fit into this picture. You may decide to join a registry or do your own page, but you will be informed of what others are doing and who is looking. The key here is that you let people know what you are doing and why it is important. Whether or not you are looking for sales, you should be seeking opportunities.

This is Marcia's last column for a while as she is taking a "sabbatical" to concentrate on her work. We are certainly grateful for the amount of time she has spent on this column and for her sharing her expertise with us. She will continue to answer your questions and will pass along the answers if relevant for the newsletter. Contact her by e-mail at marhewhjohn@aol.com, or write her at 71 Llanfair Circle, Ardmore, PA 19003, Telephone/FAX (610) 649-7282.

THE ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE EXPERIENCE

Bonnie Peterson

Last year I was an artist-in-residence at Yosemite National Park in California. I learned of this program from the entry form for their annual juried exhibit, *Yosemite Renaissance*, at the Yosemite Museum. The purpose of the program is to give professional artists time to become intimately acquainted with Yosemite and was administered by the Yosemite Museum from 1986 through 1994 and now by Yosemite Renaissance, Inc., a nonprofit organization for the support of the arts of Yosemite.

I was familiar with Yosemite since I had backpacked in the park and the surrounding mountains several times. Over the years, I had amassed a large collection of history books and writings about Yosemite by John Muir and others. It is not an exaggeration for me to say it is my most favorite place on earth. I applied in 1996 for the year 1997 and submitted slides of my work relating to Yosemite and other backpacking experiences. Eight to ten artists are selected per year. In January 1997, a "100-year" flood hit the park causing the evacuation of most humans and closing the park for three months. After that, I obtained scant information on the situation from a Yosemite Valley web site. The residency dates weren't determined until the spring. The deal was that they would offer three-weeks residencies in either a studio apartment or a three-bedroom house located in the National Forest near Glacier Point Road, which is about five minutes outside of the park and thirty minutes from the valley. In return, I would meet with local artists and donate a piece of artwork reflecting the residency at a later date.

I packed for four weeks – three in Yosemite and another one backpacking in the Hoover Wilderness north of Yosemite. When I flew from Chicago to Reno, I still hadn't figured out exactly how I was going to make quilts and hike. The postal service delivered five huge boxes of clothing, fabric, and hiking food to my parking space. The space was about sixty vertical feet below the house on the side of a hill looking west over the foothills and surrounded by huge sugar pines. After carrying all that stuff up fifty steps to the door (it wasn't so easy at 7,000-foot elevation!), I realized I might not need fabric at all.

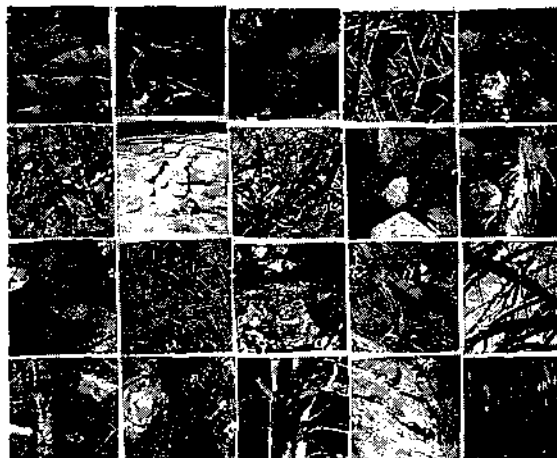
A car was essential, the distances were vast, and travel was slow and time consuming which made advanced planned itineraries an important necessity. Mountain driving in a rental sports car was a thrilling contrast to my matronly suburban minivan excursions. Every time I rounded a bend and saw Half Dome, I felt like I was seeing it for the first time. As someone who admits having dreamed of living in Yosemite, you can tell that I am pretty much a nerd about it, and the lack of time pressure was extremely enjoyable.

My main objective was to go backpacking as much as possible, take pictures, and think about what I might make out of the experience. I was determined to see trails and parts of the park which were new to me. So I spent my time on several two-or-three-night backpacking trips and day hikes each week. The effects of flooding were just as interesting as the geological anomalies. I spent a lot of time at higher elevations near Tuolumne Meadows, away from the crowds. There is a section of the park called Hetch Hetchy which is a remote and important piece of the park's history and I was extremely pleased to see it. My most important tools were my Nikon; three lenses; forty rolls of black and white, color print, and slide film; and a point-and-shoot 35mm Olympus which made it possible for me to take slides and prints simultaneously. I hauled both cameras on all my trips, jotting notes, ideas, and drawings. Since then I have been using these images to make quilts, primarily using photocopy transfer techniques.

The Yosemite Museum is located in the Valley and I was able to look at a fascinating old collection of preserved animals which are used even today by scientists studying the disappearance of certain frogs. Native American baskets and artifacts, paintings, a huge hotel registry book in which John Muir wrote about a thunderstorm, and other artworks are stored in the back rooms. The classic drawings and paintings of the late 1800's made during the first explorations by White people, depict the valley in a heavenly spiritual mist with huge walls and waterfalls, pastel skies or deep fiery sunsets behind Half Dome. Several of these were displayed in the public gallery. Seeing the same subject depicted in such a rich variety of ways both old and modern, was fascinating. The catalogues of the Yosemite Renaissance exhibitions are a good source of comparative artwork, as well as numerous titles in the park's bookstores.

This year I am going to do a residency at Rocky Mountain National Park near Denver. This program is administered by the National Park Service in order to provide artists, writers, composers, journalists, and other performing artists the opportunity to pursue their art form while being surrounded by the unique landscape. The park offers housing in a cabin built in 1887, and occupied for thirty-one years by the editor and author, William Allen White. I am scheduled to talk about my work at Moraine Park on August 3.

An excellent source for general information about National Park residencies is GO WILD! (Lucky Dog Communications, P. O. Box 65552, Studio #3, St. Paul, MN 55165, or the 24-hour hotline, 612-290-9421). Most of the National Parks listed in GO WILD! offer a place to stay in the park for one to four weeks usually without a stipend. You provide your own transportation and food, and perhaps a lecture or other interaction with the public. You donate to the park a piece of artwork reflecting your residency. Most of the National Parks do not have residency programs. For specific information, contact the park for a prospectus.



"Walking Away #1," 27" x 33",
phototransfers on cotton © Bonnie Peterson

INTRODUCTIONS

Wen Ross

I joined SAQA a year ago as a professional member. Because I live so close to Athens, Ohio, it was great to be able to attend the conference scheduled at the time as the opening of Quilt National. A new face, work, and name unknown within the genre, I still spoke like an old artist. Since this group is so small, I'm sure some wondered what planet I'd fallen from. Yvonne Porcella, though, made me feel wonderfully welcomed, conversing with me as a peer.

I began to work seriously in fabric (big appliquéd and surface designed hangings) my senior year at Rhode Island School of Design in 1972. As Nancy Crow has said, quilting was just "in the air" in those days. As a feminist artist, it was a logical, matriarchal medium to choose.

Accepted for graduate studies in printmaking at Washington University, I put off getting my MFA for the marriage/money thing, studied weaving at night, and continued to quilt. My first year in St. Louis culminated in a three-person "Young Professionals" show at a respected fine crafts gallery, Craft Alliance. The newspaper review of my first show began with the glorious lines, "The textile works of Wendy Ross far outstripped the other two designers featured in . . ."

I got a few commissions, sold pieces here and there, had a one-woman show in Chicago, and my work was published in one of the earliest books on art quilts (*The Contemporary Quilt: New American Quilts and Fiber Arts*, Chase, E.P. Dutton, 1978). In my gypsying around the country, I discovered I could make any regional museum crafts show but never made it to my goal of getting into the Nationals, including Quilt National, which I only entered once many years ago. I became distracted and looked about for more meaningful rewards.

Sometimes I wonder if I had kept at the quilting – and the marketing – I'd be considered one of the "old girls" of the movement. But I stopped for a couple of reasons, money and men.

Professionalism in our culture is connected to money or men's work. With a degree in art, I wanted to be considered a professional. And although my work sold a little, all the fiber artists I knew were married women who lived in the suburbs and were supported by their husbands. No matter how wonderful it was, it was still "women's work" and not to be taken seriously. Single by this time, I couldn't relate to these women, most of whom didn't have my art background. We were certainly not as organized as we are now.

Switching to stained glass just as the art glass movement is heating up (pun intended) was a natural. It made no change at all in my style or controlled step-by-step method of design. Lots of men in the field to talk shop and party with and most of all, SALES! Glass is a much more "magical" medium than sewn art which our female customers have had to learn in junior high home economics. They figured they can just go home and replicate a quilt! If they only knew how easy it is to solder!

I attended a Pilchuck workshop (the well-known glass art school in Washington state) to study with German designer, Ludwig Shaffrath. His influence and approach to designing for architecture were not lost on me as I currently strive for a more commercial style for the large scale textile works I like to create now. I also studied with Italian glass artist, Narcissus Quagliata, whose use of the human figure as a symbol to express emotion and connections to Zen are so very much like my own. I find my inspiration in places other than the art quilt movement, which seems to me, too trendy and far too cluttered and chaotic in style.

As a craftsperson, I have never been successful at becoming a one-person production factory which could create a low-cost item with the public taste in mind. I discovered other ways artists have survived as full-time creators besides having supporting spouses – the TRUST FUND and the GRANT. I didn't have the trust fund and the grants disappeared with the coming of "Reaganomics." Where to go for legal tender at the close of the 70's? I silkscreened T-shirts and signs (skills I still use when money is tight) and will never forget approaching a fellow RISD alumnus who had started an architectural banner company. "We like your quilts (when you can't afford glass, you can always afford fabric) but what we really need is a graphic designer. We need brochures and marketing materials and none of us know how to do that. If you had those skills . . ." My skills were hardly fresh – that's how I had started out after high school, at an ad agency. Sometimes I've felt as if I'm moving backwards!

I never went back to the banner company but I learned that graphics, although hardly high paying, would always cover the rent. An MFA and a college teaching job would have been more temperamentally suitable, but who had the tuition to gamble on a career that is so competitive? For fifteen years I mastered paste-ups, lovely rapidograph lines (other designers brought their work to me to make perfect!) and stat cameras. Eventually I was forced to learn the computer technology that totally removed us from high touch – something that has always been the essence of being an artist/craftsperson to me.

I ran a print shop with a second husband who had given up the idea of becoming a jazz pianist. It was expected that I should also give up the illusion of being an artist, or even trying to be one. With the stress of business and babies, anything but mere survival was forgotten anyway. Prophetically, the first small art quilt I'd done in fifteen years was begun just before I left him. "Emerger," a portrait of my then five-year-old daughter, depicted a child emerging from darkness into light.

Amid the depression of divorce, I returned with my children to the place I'd grown up, Western Appalachia. The West Virginia flag should be a quilt as it is such a symbol of the culture here. Indeed, both the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and our beloved Southeast Ohio Dairy Barn use a piecework pattern as their logos. And yet there is no local market. This northernmost portion of the South (or is it the eastern Midwest or the Mid-Atlantic?) is so conservative and uneducated that there is very little interest in contemporary art of any kind much less

continued on page 8

INTRODUCTIONS (cont.)

something that is neither a traditional craft or realistic art. I've come back to a 1960's time warp where the Women's Movement never happened. Of course, an art form that for the most part grew out of that movement is also unknown despite the rich ethnic heritage of quilting. It's incredibly ironic that the "Mother of All Art Quilt Exhibitions" should exist in the part of the country which I had to flee in order to survive as a feminist or an artist!

Approaching fifty, I am returning to myself. My first year out I started exhibiting in regionals in the spring. By summer I had a few quilts in national exhibitions and by fall I had been juried into an international competition. I at least have the nerve now to enter the next Quilt National. Still, instead of sewing as much as I know I should, I find myself coming up with ideas that use grant

writing, marketing, and curatorial savvy. Judging from the SAQA newsletter, this is an activity that is "in the air" these days. So, after all these years I guess I'm back on the bus. (Woolf, "The Electric Koolaid Acid Test" in reference to Ken Kesey's bus full of psychedelic "pranksters" who stated "you're either on the bus or off the bus" meaning you're involved or not involved.) I hope to remain there.

Wen Ross is currently involved in a project called "Honoring the Source: Artists and Ecologists Celebrate the River" which will be a juried exhibition of the work of artists who live along, or are influenced by, the Ohio River. The show can be seen at Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, from September 5 through October 9, 1998.

AMERICAN QUILT STUDY GROUP ANNOUNCES MOVE

The American Quilt Study Group, a nearly twenty-year-old membership organization dedicated to the study of the quilt, announced that it will be moving its headquarters and research library from San Francisco, California, to Lincoln, Nebraska, as of June 1, 1998.

The AQSG Research Library is currently a non-circulating reference collection on quilts, textiles, and women's and textile history. The Sally Jeter Garoutte Core Collection makes up the majority of the library and includes many rare first edition books and exhibition catalogs. Additional holdings in the collection have been donated by authors, publishers, and others.

AQSG board members cited many reasons for the library transfer. Included were low patronage of the library in its San Francisco location; inadequate staffing and security; and budget constraints. Board members also cited a 1996 survey which found that the library was a low priority for the organization's members. The University of Nebraska's site is especially attractive, members say because of the library's proximity to the Ardis and Robert James Quilt Collection and the International Quilt Study Center.

In addition to the library transfer, AQSG's administrative office will be relocating to a building on the campus of the University of Nebraska. Judy Brott Buss, a doctoral candidate in Human Resources and Family Sciences at the University of Nebraska, who also holds an M.A. in museum studies, has become AQSG's new executive director. AQSG's new address is 35th and Holdrege Street, East Campus Loop, P. O. Box 4737, Lincoln, NE 68504-4737, (402) 472-5361, e-mail AQSG@juno.com.

SAQA ANNOUNCES "ROOKIE AWARDS"

Studio Art Quilt Associates is pleased to announce its sponsorship of "The Rookie Award" to be given at 1998 *Quilt San Diego* and *Quilt National '99* art quilt exhibitions. This award will be offered to a first-time entrant in each of these competitions. The award is based on artistic merit, technique, and overall impression. It is meant to recognize the efforts of "the new kid on the block" and to provide encouragement and support for future efforts.

The Board of Directors of *Quilt San Diego* made this year's selection from forty-seven artists (out of a total of eighty) who were entering for the first time. Our congratulations are extended to Vita Marie Lovett of Marietta, Georgia, who was selected to receive the award for her work, "Primitive Door Series VI - Mary's Barn." Wendy Huhn, SAQA board member, will present the award to Vita Marie at the opening celebration of *Quilt San Diego* on November 6, 1998.

Congratulations to all of our SAQA members in *Quilt San Diego* this year. They include Deborah Melton Anderson, Patricia Autenreith, Roxana Bartlett, Sue Benner, Charlotte Bird, Erika Carter, Violet O. Cavazos, Hollis Chatelain, Jane Burch Cochran, Sharon M. Commins, Judith Content, Sandi Cummings, Judy B. Dales, Deanna M. Davis, Catherine Dawson, Nancy N. Erickson, Britt Friedman, Beatriz Grayson, Michele Hardy, Patty Hawkins, Marilyn Henrion, Nancy Herman, Wendy Hill, Sue Holdaway-Heys, Wendy Huhn, Crane Johnson, Natasha Kempers-Cullen, Beth T. Kennedy, M. Joan Lintault, Mary Mashuta, Paula Nadelstern, Miriam Nathan-Roberts, Constance Norton, Katie Pasquini-Masopust, Wendy Richardson, Bernie Rowell, Fran Skiles, Heather W. Tewell, Michele Vernon, Neida Warkentin, and Susan K. Willen.

MEMBERS' NEWS

- Patricia Autenrieth is working on two collaborations for the faculty show at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in September, 1998. One is with poet Beth Joselow and the other an installation with artist Nancy Palmer.
- Virginia A. Spiegel had her work, "As Roses Dream," included at the *Quilt Expo VI* in Innsbruck, Austria, and it will be seen at the *International Quilt Festival* in Houston this fall.
- Darcy Falk had a solo exhibition at the Northland Graphics Viewing Gallery in Flagstaff, Arizona, from June 1 through July 10. Darcy is spearheading an effort to establish the Flagstaff Children's Museum. This display kicked off the first official fund raiser for the museum as a portion of the proceeds from the sales were earmarked to benefit the development of the museum.
- Robin Cowley has a solo exhibition, *Robin Cowley = Flying Colors*, on display at the Veterans Building in San Francisco, May 6 through August 21, 1998.
- SAQA members, Pat Owoc, Ricky Tims, and Sonja Tugend, who are also members of Art Quilt Alliance of St. Louis, will be included in the groups' exhibition, *Steppin' Out: The Premiere of Art Quilt Alliance of St. Louis*, from September 9 through October, 9, 1998, at Maryville University in St. Louis, Missouri.
- Congratulations to Beth Gutcheon on her new novel, *Five Fortunes*, available from Harper Collins/Cliff Street Books.
- Patricia Autenrieth, Donna Leigh Jackins, Marilyn Johnson Pilkey, and Laura Wasilowski all had work included in the American Museum of Quilts and Textiles exhibition, *It Seems Funny to Me*, in San Jose, California, from March 12 through May 3, 1998.
- Connie Hester's latest book, *Improvisational Design in Quilts*, which uses paper foundations, has just been released. In order to have absolute control over the accuracy and quality of the work, she did the computer graphics, text, and photographs herself.
- Jeannette DeNicolis Meyer's solo exhibition, *Windows and Storylines*, will feature her latest series of hand-dyed quilts dealing with the theme of points of view and personal narratives. This exhibition, at The Living Gallery in Ashland, Oregon, is part of the Southern Oregon celebration, *The Whole Cloth*.
- Evita Schvallbe has a solo exhibition at The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto, Canada, from June 25 through July 23, 1998.
- Nancy Forrest recently had a piece purchased by the Field Medicine Research Institute in San Francisco. Her work was juried into *Crossed Connections* at the TLD Design Gallery in Chicago.
- Sharon Meares Commins' work, "Swelter," received a bronze award from the Fifth Quilt Nihon in Tokyo in June.
- Wendy Hill will be appearing on the Carol Duvall Home Show to promote her C & T book, *On the Surface*.
- Heather Tewell is participating in *Points of View*, a show and sale of contemporary art quilts at the Edison Eye Gallery in Edison, Washington, from October 2 through 11. The exhibition, co-curated by Heather, features works by 22 artists from Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties in the state of Washington.
- A retrospective exhibition of quilts by Gayle Fraas and Duncan Slade will be on view at the New England Quilt Museum from August 21 through November 8, 1998.
- Jean Ray Laury will be teaching at the quilters' retreat, *Sea Visions - Quilting at The Cove*, in La Jolla, California, from November 7 through 11, 1998. Contact Sea Visions for more information at P. O. Box 675105, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067.
- Marilyn Johnson Pilkey has a solo exhibition from July 28 through August 31, at Barnes & Noble Books in Valencia, California. The show, *Circular Reasoning*, features works from her Wheel of Wonder series including four WWII quilts and several new pieces created for the show.
- Ann Fahl will have an exhibition of her work, "Stories from Life; the Art Quilts of Ann Fahl," at The New Visions Gallery Inc. in Marshfield, Wisconsin, from October 25 through November 30, 1998.
- *Marjorie Crane's Contemporary Quilts* can be viewed from October 6 through December 24, 1998, at Meloy & Company Gallery in Bellingham, Washington.
- An exhibition of recent works by Lauren Camp will be at the Tapestry Gallery in Madrid, New Mexico, from July 1 through July 31, 1998.
- Dianne Hire's quilt, "Hurricane Barb Hits the Coast," recently won third place at the Mid Atlantic Quilt Festival in Williamsburg and was juried into Quilter's Heritage Celebration in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
- Liese Bronfenbrenner, Jill Le Croisette, and Marilyn Johnson Pilkey had their works included in the Aullwood Audubon Center's *All Creatures Great & Small*, in Dayton, Ohio, from March 7 through April 5, 1998.
- The Firelands Association for the Visual Arts of Oberlin, Ohio, presented *The Artist as Quiltmaker VIII* from May 10 through July 26, 1998. SAQA members included in this exhibition are Eliza Brewster, Rachel Brumer, Hollis Chatelain, Marilyn Henrion, Natasha Kempers-Cullen, Deborah Kruger, Emily Parson, and Laura Wasilowski.

continued on page 10

MEMBERS' NEWS (cont.)

• The 4th Northwest Contemporary Quilt Invitational was at The American Art Company in Tacoma, Washington, from April 15 through May 16, 1998. It featured 39 works from 21 artists. SAQA members included were Racehl Brumer, Erika Carter, Stephanie Cooper, Melody Crust, Nancy Forrest, Elizabeth Hendricks, Wendy Huhn, Jean Liitschwager, Jeannette Meyer, Toot Reid, Sally Sellers, and Janet Steadman.

• The *Fantastic Fibers '98* exhibition at the Yeiser Art Center in Paducah, Kentucky, included the following members in this year's invitational fiber exhibit – B.J. Adams, Deborah Anderson, Maureen Bardusk, Laura Wasilowski, Joan Lintault, Mary Bellah, Hollis Chatelain, June Underwood, Marilyn Fashbaugh, Judith Trager, Patty Hawkins, Sandra Sider, Joan Schulze, Dianne Hire, and Ree Nancarrow. The show moved to the Tri-Art Gallery in Louisville where it was exhibited from June 12 through July 25 under the sponsorship of the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation.

BOOK REVIEWS

Imagery on Fabric, 2nd Edition

Jean Ray Laury, C & T Publishing, 1997, 176 pages, paperback.

Marcia Hewitt Johnson

The world of surface design continues to encourage quilters to new creative heights so it is not surprising that they will welcome this 2nd edition of Laury's *Imagery on Fabric*. Although classes abound on various surface techniques and methods, the purposeful artist will need a reference on her or his book shelf as a guide.

Imagery on Fabric is an all-inclusive, up-to-the-minute, expanded edition of surface design techniques for printing images on fabric including copiers, printers, drawing and painting, light-sensitive printing, stamps, discharge, and Polaroid transfers. Each section addresses these processes and gives full instructions, needed supplies, and many good examples to help one instantly visualize the possibilities.

I particularly like the chart of methods in the front of the book which helps the artist to determine what is involved in any of surface design methods, assuming you have a particular image in mind. There are many processes for people with different ideas and skills. Obviously, you will not use them all, but will zero in on what suits your purpose. I recognized many of the featured art quilts and was captivated by the descriptions of how they were created. So, in addition to the technical and useful nature of this book, I found it entertaining as well.

Many of the artists whose works are displayed on the colorful pages have developed careers from their involvement with one or more of these processes, so don't expect a masterpiece by Tuesday. As with all artwork, consistently applying an approach over time leads to mastery, but it helps to start with as much information as possible.

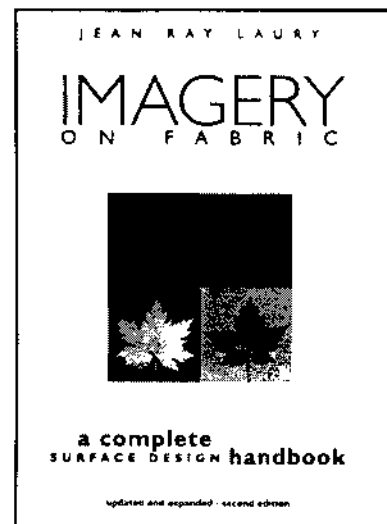
Be prepared and forewarned, these techniques are seductive and Laury has good visuals and instructions. You will be at the store shopping for supplies by Monday.

The Art Quilt

Robert Shaw, Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1997, 304 pages, \$85 hardcover.

Bets Ramsey

Robert Shaw's monumental book, *The Art Quilt*, places textile arts firmly beside paintings, sculptures, and graphics in the mainstream of fine arts. Through much of this century the recognition has been delayed by the controversy surrounding crafts and their relationship to art. "How can such mundane items as quilts be considered suitable for a museum exhibition?"



BOOK REVIEWS (cont.)

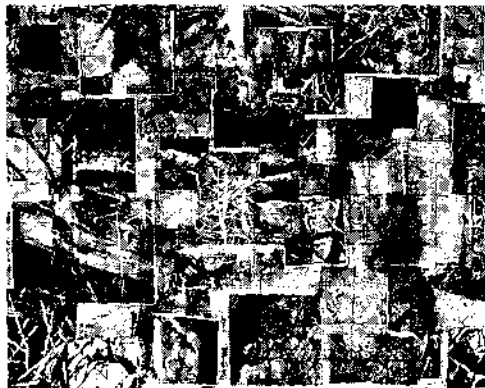
the skeptics asked. The question was answered, in part, by the Whitney Museum's quilt exhibition in 1971 organized by Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoof. While not the first by a major museum, it fostered a new awareness of quilts as objects of visual delight and increased their validity as art. The Museum of Contemporary Crafts followed with a landmark exhibition of contemporary quilts made by artists who were stretching the parameters of the traditional form.

As the ideals of the Arts and Crafts and Bauhaus movements evolved, regard for fine handcrafts increased, providing an arena for artists to experiment with textile compositions and surface design. They tried a variety of approaches, applying the same standards and criteria to their work as to any art form. It seems that the essence of the fabric – the fibers, the color, the tactile quality – heightened the creative experience and opened new ways of expression.

In that remarkable decade, the 1960's, quiltmaking began to sweep across the country, perhaps in part reflecting the nostalgia for the simpler life and as a counterbalance to machines, and thousands of women, and men, took up the needle and began making quilts. Paralleling the grassroots phenomenon, artists followed a similar rout by adding fiber art to their vocabulary. There were pioneers: Jean Ray Laury, Joan Lintault, Alma Lesch, Katherine Westphal, Therese May, Radka Donnell, and Charles Counts, to name a few. Then came Miriam Schapiro, Robert Rauschenbery, Lenore Davis, and others, but the way was not easy. The opportunity to exhibit was rare until Quilt National, which began in Ohio in 1979 as a showcase solely for contemporary art quilts. In 1987 Quilt San Diego was established to alternate with Quilt National. Other venues became available and the ranks of the quilt artists grew.

Today the names of Michael James, Nancy Crow, Judi Warren, Jan Myers-Newbury, Nancy Halpern, Yvonne Porcella, Pamela Studstill, and many others are familiar to quilt enthusiasts. They teach, they exhibit, and they produce work that exemplifies the best forms of craftsmanship. Robert Shaw treats these and many others lovingly in his thoroughly-researched treatise on the quilt as art. He has established once and for all that there are quilts which do have a place in the world of art. He takes care to delineate the difference between a quilt that is a quilt and a quilt that is art, even though the boundaries may seem somewhat ambivalent.

Shaw says, "The richness and diversity of today's approaches to art quiltmaking and the infusion of ideas and techniques from outside the quilt tradition assure that the art quilt will not be a passing fad. Some of the avenues opened by contemporary art quilters will continue to bear fruit; others, undoubtedly, will not. But whatever the path art quilters choose to take, we may be sure that the ongoing evolution of this remarkable new art form and the explorations of its creative possibilities will be worth following."



*"Break on Through," 19" x 23",
phototransfers on cotton © Bonnie Peterson
(See article on page 6.)*

By recording their names in his impressive study, Shaw has given these artists and their works a definition which cannot be ignored. The book is lavishly illustrated with excellent color reproductions in generous proportions. The text is graceful, informative, and clear. Any omission or inaccuracies are offset by the quantity of material the author presents. Perhaps, because of his vantage point from New England, he is less familiar with artists in other parts of the country. A bibliography, including the sources of references, would have been helpful to those desiring further exploration of the subject.

SAQA member Bets Ramsey has been the director of the Southern Quilt Symposium since 1974 and is the co-author of The Quilts of Tennessee and Southern Quilts: A New View. She has curated many quilt exhibitions and wrote a weekly quilt column in the Chattanooga Times for 17 years. This review will be in a future issue of Folk Art Magazine, a publication of the Museum of American Folk Art, and we thank them and Bets for allowing us to preview it here.

ART QUILT MAKERS AND THEIR CRITIQUE GROUPS (Part I)

Barbara Carow

This study investigated nine critique groups formed by fiber artists who define themselves as art quilters. Information from two questionnaires and from published articles supplemented telephone interviews. The research focused on the balance between support and criticism. Other issues addressed were decision making and leadership, the format and procedure of meetings, the perceived benefits of membership, and activities undertaken as a group. The responses were analyzed and compared to research on both small group dynamics and the creative process. While many of the quilters in these groups experienced rigorously, demanding critiques as part of their formal education, they did not wish to repeat that experience. Instead they expressed a strong preference for a positive and supportive atmosphere, in agreement with psychotherapist Carl R. Rogers's theory that an atmosphere of psychological safety, psychological freedom, and empathic understanding is necessary to promote creativity. In such a climate, fiber artists whose works involve originality, risk, and technical innovations find an informed and responsive audience.

My interest in critique groups is an outgrowth of my own experiences in art school where I found monthly critiques to be stressful, sometimes painful, but supremely motivating. After completing graduate school in 1988, I came to miss that intense period of time when peers and instructors focused entirely on my current work.¹ I also missed the stimulation and energy of seeing what different people were doing. Several other fiber artists felt the same way, and we became a critique group, meeting once a month to discuss our work. We often discussed the possible value of becoming more rigorous in our criticism of each other's work.

In addition, as I interviewed quilters for profiles in quilt publications, several of those artists stressed the importance of their critique groups.² Thus, memories of academic critiques, the evolution of my own group, and comments of quilters whom I interviewed led me to analyze these groups. I define the focus of these quilters as innovative textile compositions that have some reference to the traditional concept of a quilt. Some artists use dyes, ink, paint, elaborate machine quilting, embellishment, photo transfer, or screen printing. Others use seemingly traditional materials and techniques, that is, commercial fabric and hand quilting, and they work within the familiar block and/or grid format to develop their own distinctive expression. Some make garments, some embroider. Styles range from geometric to whimsical, from abstract to representational. Most importantly, these people define themselves as contemporary, art, or studio quilters.

Methodology

I began my research by sending a list of questions to one person from each group, and they returned the answers with alacrity, immediate evidence of the value of the groups. I found strong similarities and some differences among the groups, and mutual interest in the subject. Some of the questions I provided seemed to be irrelevant, and others produced more reaction than

I had expected. A second list of questions was more focused. The questions pertained to leadership and decision making, the format of the meeting, group activities, and particularly the offering and receiving of criticism.

Group Descriptions

The seven members of the Newton, Massachusetts, group have been meeting since at least 1986, when the first members responded to a suggestion from Judy Becker. They usually meet every three weeks, in the evening, at Judy's home in Newton.³

The five members of the Weston, Massachusetts, group began meeting in the early 1980s at the suggestion of Rhoda Cohen. They meet once a month, in the evening, usually at her studio in Weston, sometimes at others' homes.⁴

The six members of the Wrentham, Massachusetts, group began meeting in 1991. They currently meet once a month, in the evening, at Rosemary Hoffenberg's studio in Wrentham.⁵

The members of The Capital District Art Quilt Network were brought together by Anita Rabinoff-Goldman, who organized the group in 1993. They meet in the evening, every six to eight weeks, rotating between the members' homes and Anita's studio in the greater Albany, New York, area.⁶

The thirteen members of the New Image Group, founded in 1980, meet monthly in the Washington, DC, area. Three members take turns acting as hostess to limit confusion about locations. They define themselves as a support group, rather than a critique group.⁷

The twenty-four members of FACET began meeting in 1987. They hold monthly evening meetings in Evanston, Illinois.⁸

Through my correspondence with Ann Fahl, I learned of a newer and much larger group with a slightly different focus. The Professional Art Quilters Alliance (PAQA) meets on the campus of the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.⁹ It has ninety members, and meets once a month, beginning at 10:00 a.m. PAQA provides a "showcase" rather than a critique, that is, an informed audience for completed works, rather than comments on works-in-progress.

A ninth group of three members which met on Long Island disbanded between the first and second questionnaires. Not all the members were able to maintain a commitment to the priorities of the group.¹⁰

Definition of a Group

Social scientists list several factors that determine whether an assortment of individuals truly is a group. According to psychologist A. Paul Hare, "The group must have a set of *values* to give meaning to its activity, a set of *norms* that specify the role relationships between members, some form of *leadership* to

carry out specific tasks, and some means of providing resources that is needed to reach the group's goal."¹¹

This paper will demonstrate how quiltmakers' critique groups fit these criteria.

Decision Making

Each group in this study, with the exception of PAQA and sometimes New Image, makes its decisions by consensus, a method which women find comfortable. Social scientist Marvin Shaw found, "women more often than men adopt an anti-competitive norm and attempt to operate so that everyone will benefit."¹² Research shows that the consensus method is usually used by a group of members who have a feeling of affection for each other and above all it involves agreement on common values. It is a powerful method of decision making, but it can also require a great deal of time.¹³

When the question is a simple one, for instance, whether to invite an outsider to a meeting, any one negative opinion will prevent that from happening. In more complicated situations, such as planning for a group show, questions must be discussed thoroughly so that each person has an opportunity to voice her opinion. In the Greenwich group one member noted, "I think we all have to feel okay about a decision to make it a go. This came up when we did a group show and needed to work together on aspects of it."¹⁴ Members of the Wrentham group realized they were more honest in talking one on one than they were in the group meeting, where no one wanted to be the negative voice.¹⁵ It is essential that each person has an equal opportunity to speak, although she may choose not to use her time.

While it is accepted wisdom that a group has a leader, acknowledged or not, these critique groups all made a conscious decision not to have a permanent leader. (It might be more accurate to say that no member wanted to be that leader.) Indeed, there was more agreement on this question than on any other. Members of the Weston group did report they especially value suggestions from Rhoda Cohen, and they wonder what her response would have been when she does not attend the meeting.¹⁶ In the Capitol District Art Quilt Network, Anita Rabinoff-Goldman sends out meeting announcements, keeps records for the group, and has suggested group projects and discussion topics. PAQA chose a treasurer and a newsletter editor in 1997.

While decisions about serving refreshments may seem trivial, they are one of the first and most obvious ways in which the group exercises its values, norms, leadership, and resources. The usual reasons given for not serving refreshments are that it takes energy and time away from the real purpose of the group, and that eating together causes the meeting to become more social. If members travel some distance for a lengthy meeting; however, it is reasonable to bring a lunch, as the Greenwich group and New Image do. Each hostess serves coffee and pastry when the members arrive. The Weston group serves coffee and something prepared by the hostess, but the Wrentham group has decided, "we do not bring food to our critiques for two reasons. First food and quilts do not mix.

Secondly, food also tends to make it a more 'social' gathering. We want to stay focused."¹⁷ The Newton group limits refreshments to coffee that the members serve themselves, "it is one less womanly chore!"¹⁸

The PAQA group is able to use the DuPage campus food service. A member noted that "one of the best parts of this group is after the meeting we all go to the huge college cafeteria and have lunch together. This is when real networking is accomplished. New friendships develop there."¹⁹

Group Size

The size of the groups ranged from three members in the Greenwich group to twenty-four members in FACET (with twelve to fifteen present at each meeting), to the ninety members in PAQA. Marvin Shaw described the effects of larger group membership.

The range of abilities, knowledge, and skills that are available to the group increases with increasing group size, as well as the sheer number of "hands" that are available for acquiring and processing information. The advantages of these added resources for problem solving are obvious. The larger group also provides a greater opportunity to meet interesting and attractive others with whom interaction may be rewarding. For shy persons, the larger group provides greater anonymity and so may be more attractive to them. On the other hand, as group size increases, organizational problems become difficult. The potential number of interpersonal relationships between group members increases rapidly with size; subgroups are more likely to form in larger groups, and the potential for conflict is correspondingly greater.²⁰

Certainly there is less opportunity for each person to play a vital role in a large group, but that may be appealing to some people. The advantages and disadvantages of large and small groups will vary according to the task that the group is trying to accomplish. Shaw suggested that optimum group size is five persons. If the group is smaller than that it is likely to dissolve when the first person leaves the group, as happened to the Long Island group that was originally included in this study. The three-member Greenwich group has continued because of the very strong commitment of each member to her work.

The most common reason for someone leaving a group is because of family relocation. Full-time employment, often to pay children's college tuition bills, may be too demanding to permit active membership, although many critique group members work full-time, or hold several part-time jobs. Ann Fahl left the FACET group for PAQA meetings because a daytime meeting was more compatible with her family situation.

Sylvia Einstein of Belmont, Massachusetts, belongs to both the Weston and Newton groups, which is an unusual circumstance. She finds them very different, with the Newton group more "nuts-and-bolts" oriented, and the Weston group more interested in analysis. "I couldn't give up either one," she says.

Although she brings the same quilts to each group, the reactions are sometimes totally different. Sylvia does not discuss one group with the other, but she sometimes serves as a liaison between them. She is also meeting temporarily with a group of emerging artists who have founded a new group.²¹ All the members of these critique groups belong to the Quilter's Connection, a large (250) and well-established guild that meets in Arlington, Massachusetts.

Qualities of Creative People

Some of the traits associated with creative people include high ego strength, a strong need for independence and autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-direction. Researcher Frank Barron found creative people often had "a liking for abstract thinking and a special interest in the kind of 'wagering' that involves pitting oneself against the unknown, so long as one's own effort can be the deciding factor," as well as "a liking for order, method and exactness, together with excited interest in the challenge presented by contradictions, exceptions, and apparent disorder."²²

Benefits of Critique Group Membership

For people with such high expectations to invest energy in the maintenance of a group, they must receive something that is perceived to be beneficial to both their own self-image and to the progress and promotion of their work. Niki Bonnett of the Greenwich group described the immediacy of that benefit.

The greatest thing about our monthly meetings is the burst of inspiration that comes from being in another artist's studio. Including the raw energy of a work in progress; a great quote scribbled on a scrap of paper; the mention of a hitherto unknown artist or author; or an unexpected combination of colors pinned to the wall. I always rush home with some enticing new idea buzzing around in my mind just waiting to be considered more closely and expanded upon.²³

Women who are balancing the needs of children with the demands of paid employment and their own strong desire for creative activity often feel that their critique group is the only place where they feel like themselves, rather than existing to meet someone else's needs. When the Newton group began, four of the five members were working and raising families. The critique time was and still is too valuable to be squandered in sociability.²⁴ There are few women with young children in these groups now; most of the artists in this study have raised their families.

People who work by themselves all day usually come to feel isolated. Then the anxiety inherent in the creative process increases the sense of isolation. Psychotherapist Carl Rogers wrote, "I do not believe that many significantly creative products are formed without the feeling, 'I am alone. No one has ever done just this before. I have ventured into territory where no one has been. Perhaps I am foolish, or wrong, or lost or abnormal.'"²⁵ Receiving support and affirmation from other artists with similar interests is like finding water in the desert, although many members of these groups also insure enough feedback on one's work so that family members are not pressured into making well-meaning but less than satisfactory comments.²⁶

Members who join the group for those reasons are attempting to meet their own psychological needs for affirmation, support, and helpful criticism. The networking aspect of the meetings is valuable for their professional development, as they share information about slide duplication, postcard suppliers, and art consultants as well as venues for teaching and publishing.

Group Projects

Group projects include "challenges" and collaborative quilts. Challenges typically are design exercises, or the use of a new technique or material. The Capital District Art Quilt Network has done a number of challenges, including choosing an artist and creating a piece in her or his style; designing a small self-portrait doll; creating a small "fetish" for exchange within the group; and bringing a small, unfinished unresolved design for exchange. Notes on the last exercise mentioned, "These were passed to another worker each month for about four months until we felt they were complete. Good design exercises. Reworking a piece very different from your own was 'mind-stretching.'"²⁷

A member of the Wrentham group challenged the others to compose a small fabric composition with no finished seams, only raw edges and based on a newspaper photograph. Another challenge, proposed by Jan Fujio who uses the technique in garment making, was to make a pieced strip using the Afghanistani "flying geese" technique. In the Wrentham group, challenges are often resisted for several meetings, and then become a source of pleasure when the "Eureka" or "Aha" moment occurs and the artist can enjoy her awareness of the creative process during a short-term project. PAQA challenged members to create a "statement" quilt, with a deadline of six months. The subject matter ranged from comical to serious, from "What's for dinner?" to the Holocaust.

Some groups do collaborative work. The New Image group has created ten quilts together, with varying degrees of success according to their own judgment.²⁸ Their best-known effort, "Never Done," featured images of ironing boards and was accepted into the Quilt National exhibit in Athens, Ohio. Some of their quilts are composed of discrete blocks that are eventually assembled, and others are progressive pieces that are passed from one member to the next.

Birthday quilts are another type of group undertaking. The Newton group has established a tradition of making a progressive quilt for each member's fiftieth birthday. The first person pieces fabrics together and passes that raw material, so to speak, on to the next. Each participant decides how to add, alter, or embellish as a personal contribution, depending upon her position in the order of work. After the group ceremonially presents the quilt to the recipient, each person can see the complete quilt for the first time and explain the part for which she was responsible.²⁹

These progressive or collaborative quilts differ from the group quilts often prepared by traditional guilds. After a theme has been chosen, each person works in her own style and with her own interpretation of the imagery.

Group Shows

The most demanding cooperative activity is planning a group show. It requires artists who have joined a group to meet their individual needs, to give attention and energy to a group goal. Decision making becomes much more complicated. Planning usually involves meetings with a curator or gallery manager. And someone must write publicity pieces. People with specific responsibilities need to keep the membership informed of their activities. Just putting together a mailing list can be a strain on the relationships within a relatively new group. Making plans for the show takes time away from the consideration of new work, although most groups are adamant about not wanting to schedule extra meetings.

Group shows are exciting and rewarding, nevertheless. The Greenwich group had a show, "Fiber Collage Quilts: 3 Artists: Insights" at the Bruce S. Kershner Gallery in the Fairfield Public Library in the Spring of 1996. The Wrentham group showed, "Pieced Impressions" at the Sarah Doyle Gallery at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, in October 1995. The Weston group had a group show at the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury, Massachusetts, in 1991, which included work by then-member Danae Kouretas. The Capital District Art Quilt Network exhibited, "The Quilt as Fine Art," at the Albany Center Galleries in the Autumn of 1995. New Image members have exhibited as a group since 1982, in addition to showing their collaborative quilts. The group even has its own New Image résumé. The most recent exhibit of the New Image group was held at the Rockville Mansion Gallery in Rockville, Maryland, during the Summer of 1996. That show included two new collaborative works.

Notes and References

1. The Program in Artisanry at Boston University moved to the Swain School of Design in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and is now at the University of Massachusetts, North Dartmouth, campus.
2. Barbara Carow, "Ruth B McDowell - Fine Art Quilts," *Art/Quilt Magazine* #3, 12 - 13, 50, and "Nancy Halpern: I am Artist!" *Art/Quilt Magazine* #6, 10 - 12. A profile of Judy Becker is forthcoming.
3. Judy Becker, Linda Behar, Barbara Crane, Nancy Crasco, Sandra Donabed, Sylvia Einstein, and Carol Grotrain comprise the Newton group. Judy Becker answered the questionnaire.
4. The members of this group are Rhoda Cohen, Sylvia Einstein, Beatrice Grayson, Nancy Halpern, and Ruth McDowell. Nancy Halpern answered the questionnaire.
5. Barbara Carow, Jean Fujio, Rosemary Hoffenberg, Marie Sauinier, Louisa Smith, and Lynne Stewart are the members of this writer's critique group. Rosemary Hoffenberg answered the questionnaire.
6. Peg Foley, Kathryn Greenwold, Barbara Meilinger, Linda O'Connor, Jo Ott, Lori Lupe Pelish, Anita Rabinoff-Goldman, Diane Kollow Segal, Nancy Schlegel, and Estelle Yarinsky comprise this group. Estelle Yarinsky answered the questionnaire.

7. Patricia Autenrieth, Barbara Bockman, Michele Duell, Carol Gersen, Pam Grammer, Lesly-Claire Greenberg, Dorothy Holden, Dominic Nash, Sue Pierce, Mary Ann Rush, Judy Spahn, Linda Tilton, and Michele Vernon are the members. Patricia Autenrieth answered the questions and also wrote "Collaborating with New Image Group: a Personal Critique" in *Art/Quilt Magazine* #6, 20 - 23.
8. Bonnie Benson, Cindy Carroll, Ellen Anne Eddy, Ann Fahl, Caryl Bryer Fallert, Cathy Grafton, Lucy Johns, Marjorie E. Johnson, Marcia Karlin, Donna J. Katz, Pat Kroth, Judy Zoelzer Levine, Linda LoBianco, Karen Maguire, Ann Pastucha, Judith H. Perry, Ruth Reynolds, Jane A. Sassaman, Mary Stori, Bonnie Peterson, Justine Vaughn, Judy Anne Waller, Ann Wasserman, and Kathy Weaver were the members when Ann Fahl wrote "FACET: An Invitational Fiber Artists Group," *Art/Quilt Magazine* #2, 24 - 25.
9. Barb Albrecht, Maureen Bardusk, Melody Johnson, and Laura Wasilowski originated PAQA, and Ann Fahl answered the questionnaire.
10. The members of this group were Judy Harman, Judith Herwitz, and Dorothy Lazara. Judy Harman answered the questionnaire.
11. A. Paul Hare, *Creativity in Small Groups* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 20.
12. Marvin E. Shaw, *Group Dynamics: the Psychology of Small Group Behavior*, 3rd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 183.
13. Hare, 174.
14. Marguerite Malwitz, response to questionnaire.
15. Rosemary Hoffenberg, response to questionnaire.
16. Nancy Halpern, response to questionnaire.
17. Hoffenberg, questionnaire.
18. Barbara Crane, telephone interview by author, 4 December 1996.
19. Ann Fahl, response to questionnaire.
20. Shaw, 169.
21. Sylvia Einstein, telephone interview by author, 4 December 1996.
22. Frank Barron, *Creative Person and Creative Process* (New York: Holt Reinhart & Winston, 1969), 102.
23. Niki Bonnett, "My Thoughts on Our Group," n.d.
24. Judy Becker, response to questionnaire.
25. Carl R. Rogers, "Toward a Theory of Creativity," in *Creativity and Its Cultivation*, ed. Harold H. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 77.
26. Eric Maisal, *Fearless Creating* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 210.
27. Estelle Yansky, response to questionnaire.
28. Autenrieth, Issue #6, 20-23.
29. Crane, telephone interview.

SAQA member, Barbara Carow, presented this paper at the 1997 American Quilt Study Group conference. The paper was published in AQSG's publication, *Uncoverings*. This research and presentation helps to bring the art quilt to the forefront in the field of quilt history. It is presented here to inspire and motivate others in this direction. Thank you to the author for her permission to share it with this audience.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULED

The second conference sponsored by the Contemporary QuiltArt Association will take place at Bastyr University on the North Shore of Lake Washington near metropolitan Seattle from October 10-11, 1998. Speakers at the conference, entitled *Bridging Two Worlds: Taking Our Private Art Public*, are Penny McMorris, corporate art curator, author and juror; Lou Cabeen, textile artist, historian and professor at the University of Washington Art Department; and Penny Sisto, activist and quiltmaker. There will be panels, individual conversations, and group discussions all addressing issues of art making and promotion. Contact the Contemporary QuiltArt Association, P.O. Box 95685, Seattle, WA 98145-2685, for a brochure.

STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES

c/o Sharon Heidingsfelder
P. O. Box 391
Little Rock, AR 72203-0391

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LITTLE ROCK, AR
PERMIT NO. 1632

SAQA NEWSLETTER

Summer 1998 Volume 8, 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 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, Dexter, OR 97431. (Membership is \$35 per year, \$100 per year for artist members.)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jacqueline Atkins – Editor (New York, NY)
- Karen Berkenfeld – Quilt Artist (New York, NY)
- Marilyn Henrion – Quilt Artist (New York, NY)
- Wendy Huhn – Quilt Artist (Dexter, OR)
- Marcia Johnson – Quilt Artist/Teacher (Ardmore, PA)
- Sue Pierce – Quilt Artist/Curator (Rockville, MD)
- Yvonne Porcella – Quilt Artist/Author/Teacher (Modesto, CA)

BOARD OF ADVISORS

- Constance Bird – Certified Public Accountant, Clendenin, Bird, & Billington (Modesto, CA)
- Martha Connell – Owner of Connell Gallery/Great American Gallery (Atlanta, GA)
- Hilary Fletcher – Coordinator, Quilt National (Athens, OH)
- Sandi Fox – Quilt Historian/Curator (Los Angeles, CA)
- Beth Gutcheon – Author/Teacher/Novelist/Quilt Artist/Screen Writer (San Francisco, CA)
- Jonathan Shannon – Quilt Artist/Judge (London, England)
- Rebecca A. T. Stevens – Consulting Curator, Contemporary Textiles, The Textile Museum (Washington, DC)

SAQA NEWSLETTER NOW ACCEPTING ADS

Cathy Rasmussen

With the next issue of the SAQA newsletter, we will introduce print ads for members only. I have been very impressed with the various projects I have seen developed by our members. Many of the items fall under the "Members' News" category, but I believe there should be another forum for these commercial ventures. If you are leading a tour group, doing note cards and paper goods, providing consultation services, selling fabrics or supplies, self-published a book, or are interested in a house-swap, this would be the place to advertise. The maximum number of words is thirty (30) at a cost of ten dollars (\$10). Payment must accompany your ad which I must receive by September 1, 1998, for the next issue. Remember, the Fall Issue is the only one received before the holidays so don't miss out.

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