



## NEWSLETTER

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## A REMEMBRANCE OF BARB MORTENSON

*Karen Berkenfeld*

During the summer of 1993, Barb Mortenson came to spend a few days with me at my house in upstate New York. We laughed, played in my studio, and took adventurous rides seeking out places to see art. After I got back to New York City, I walked into my building one day to find my doorman with a puzzled expression. "There's a shoe for you." Specifically, a pale blue satin high heel with a big yellow postage label attached. Barb had written and tamped various messages such as, "High heels sap your strength and stifle your stride," and dropped it in the mail. Another time she used the album cover of an obscure 60's rock band as an envelope for a letter. One of my prizes is a book she made – stitched with her own haikus – and mailed in a beautiful cloth envelope. I came to discover that her friends were accustomed to receiving these treasures from Barb. It was one of her trademarks to mail letters in bottles, bags, and other things that were never meant to hold letters.

Like me, many quilters first met Barb in Ohio at the Quilt Surface Design Symposium, where she worked as a coordinator for a couple of years. She seemed to be everywhere – in the office answering questions, in the classrooms taking a class or solving problems, at the pool in the early morning when she took her swim. Late at night she could be found in one of the studios working. The art quilt movement was close to Barb's heart, of course, and she gave much of her tremendous energy to advancing it. She organized conferences such as Art Quilt Network/New York. She was putting her talents as a librarian to work on developing a bibliography for SAQA when she became ill.

Barb was a natural teacher. The kind who can teach without your knowing you are being taught. I learned to pay close attention to her observations and comments because there was always truth in them. She was creative in the way she handled her students and involved their parents. Anyone who met her son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughters could see what a great parent she was. The love and support flowed

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## SAQA UPDATES

*Cathy Rasmussen*

■ **Membership Drive** – Thanks to everyone who has contacted me about suggestions for increasing membership. I am encouraged by the number of new members that have joined since the last newsletter. Let's keep up the good work. A membership form is included on page 19 for you to copy and pass on to friends, colleagues, and business associates. The membership drive will be extended through the end of next year so if you haven't recruited anyone yet, there is still time. As a reminder, for each active member you bring, in your membership will be extended by three months. If you are a PAM and bring in a member at the PAM level your membership will be extended by three months as well. Make sure your name is noted somewhere on the new member's application so that proper credit can be given.

■ **Newsletter** – Please contact me if you have any ideas for newsletter articles or particular subjects you believe should be explored, have found a noteworthy article in another publication you think would be appropriate for this newsletter, or would be interested in doing a column. The more input I have from you benefits all of the membership. Please note that my address has changed to 1203 East Broadway, #G-14, Hewlett, NY 11557.

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# A REMEMBRANCE OF BARB MORTENSON (cont.)

both ways. Somehow she was able to take on all of these roles and still make art. Art which continued to evolve and grow from her essential self. Her essential self might have been "Red Josie," a name Barb gave herself, her alter-ego, the part of her that imagined, dared, overcame, and stamped "conform, go crazy, or become an artist!" on a blue satin shoe. When Barb bought her house after looking for several years, her first goal was to set up her studio where she could do the work she loved in a creative setting. And, Red Josie got a listing in the phone book.

When Barb died last April after a bravely-fought battle with cancer, we lost someone very valuable far too soon. But we can know that she accomplished much while she was here. I am just one woman who knew Barb Mortenson for barely a decade, yet she had a tremendous positive influence on my life. She touched many lives both personally and with her art, and she found personal happiness in her family, friends, and work. Barb finally decided it was time to "go over to the other side, to see what's there." Red Josie moves on.

## SAQA UPDATES (cont.)

- **Help Wanted** – I am searching for anyone who has had experience with arts organizations or non-profits from the administrative side, as I need your help in developing an administrative handbook for SAQA. This would outline responsibilities for the various positions and include the goals of the organization. The bibliography is an important area that definitely needs to continue to be developed. If anyone is interested in taking this project on (whether alone or as a group), please let me know.
- **Quilt National** – A reminder that SAQA will have a seminar in conjunction with the Quilt National opening weekend celebration at the end of May, 1999. Everyone had a such a wonderful time last year so next year will be even better. Further details and registration information will be in the next

newsletter, but mark your calendars now. The seminar topic is "Art Quilt Markets," and we will have an impressive panel of experts covering all of the avenues available so you can decide what works best for you. Plan to take advantage of this great opportunity!

- **Santa Fe 2000** – The SAQA multi-event creative conference will be held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, during the first week of November. This is a beautiful time of year in Santa Fe and plans are underway to ensure a memorable experience for all. As part of SAQA's organizational plan in the year 2000, we are scheduled to sponsor an exhibition (which would travel primarily in 2001) and a catalog. More details about this will be available shortly, but to start your creative juices flowing, the selected title is *Exit/Entrance*.

## SAQA REGIONAL REPORT

*Louise Thompson*

A small, and extremely productive, group of SAQA members in Northern California have fused together their first-ever group challenge with finished products that will "knock your socks off." While discussing ideas for a project the entire group could work on together, someone mentioned the Bull's Eye Swap documented in "Inspiration Odyssey" by Diana Swim Wessel. The group was instantly sold and the project began. Choosing a pallet of color, the group's assignment was to return with a 36" circle of color and embellishments. Eleven members returned with their circle, photos were taken, and the pie cutting process began. While painful for all to have their circle cut like a pie, the pain subsided once everyone saw the end results – eleven pie-shaped triangles to use for the next step of the project. Now the project changed course for the final products – create another piece using the triangles any way they wanted. The only rule was size restriction. Why? Because the entire ensemble of wall quilts was a special display at the River City Quilt Show in Sacramento, California, on October 16-18 and space was limited. At the July quarterly meeting, participants shared their progress, and ideas, and critiqued those who had finished. Although they all had the same base triangles, the end results surprised everyone. Participants in the challenge were Emma Allebes, Valerie Anderson, Marcy Brower, Phyllis Day, Debra Hosler, Patt Hull, Betty Kisby, Nancy MacDonald, Charlotte Patera, Louise Thompson, and Sandy Wagner.

# ART QUILT ALLIANCE OF ST. LOUIS

Pat Owoc

Art Quilt Alliance of St. Louis (AQA) grew out of a need for a supportive, collaborative organization for a small group of art quilters in the greater St. Louis, Missouri, area. While there are at least 25 quilt guilds in the area, none emphasized the quilt as art and provided critique sessions, show opportunities, and information specific to the art quilt movement. Current members include Marianne Axboe, Drew Donnelly Benage, Carole Braig, Pat Owoc, Ricky Tims, and Sonja Tugend.

## Organization

AQA was organized on August 8, 1996. Decisions made at that meeting included naming the group; limiting the group to eight members so that in-depth discussion could take place; agreeing that membership in the group would be invitational to insure seriousness of intent; selecting a monthly meeting day, time, and location; including critique of work in a supportive atmosphere; insuring educational opportunities through readings, discussion, demonstrations, and workshops; and providing for exhibition of member's work. Members would be assessed periodically to support group projects.

The organizing members include a design major who began as a painter and then switched to fiber; a business education and administration major from Denmark who taught preschool and art to children and who now designs and makes liturgical art quilts; a textiles and design major who graduated in English literature; an interior designer who is an educational representative for a sewing machine company; a piano major who composes and directs choral music and draws parallels between the creative processes inherent in music and art quilts; and a home economics teacher turned high school counselor whose work often contains a note of humor or irony. Most members have taught quilting in community education or quilt shops and have lectured and led workshops. Most have appeared in international publications and have been juried into national and international shows.

## Information Sharing/Education

Design issues were explored during the first meetings with readings in handouts from design texts. Members brought examples of line, form, shape, and mass to meetings and discussed design elements and ways to use good design in art quilts.

## Field Trips

AQA members have traveled to Paducah, Kentucky, to see *On The Edge*, the Contemporary QuiltArt Association's show; *Quilt National* at St. Louis Centre; *Herstory* at Midtown Arts Center; and paintings from Australian Aboriginal artists at St. Louis University's Museum of Contemporary Religious Art. Visits provoked discussion of art principles and techniques for interpreting ideas in personal works.

Eunice Farmer, a local fabric shop owner, presented a demonstration/discussion on needle types and uses. AQA

members provided show and tell and discussed problems that they had and how they had solved them or asked for suggestions.

## Demonstrations/Workshops

Workshops on fabric dyeing (presented by Carole Braig and Ricky Tims) and cyanotype (Pat Owoc) have provided hands-on experiences. Demonstrations have included setacolor painting (Sonja Tugend), fabric manipulation/sewing techniques (Carole Braig and Pat Owoc), fabric marbling (Drew Donnelly Benage), and devore (Pat Owoc). Other techniques which have been discussed have included bobbin outline appliqué (Ricky Tims) and machine appliqué (Carole Braig).

## Challenge Projects

Following the MOCRA visit, AQA members challenged themselves to create a quilt using the Aboriginal art as a catalyst, to use images and techniques from a different culture in their work. Discussion of a Nancy Crow workshop on improvisation led to another challenge with several quilts being produced.

## Group Shows

Planning began in March, 1997, for a show to be held within one to two years. Telephone calls, site visits, and discussions with gallery directors led to the selection of Maryville University's Morton J. May Foundation Gallery as a show site for *Steppin' Out: The Premier Show of the Art Quilt Alliance of St. Louis*. Approximately two dozen art quilts were shown at the exhibition that opened on September 9, 1998. Nancy Rice, Professor of Art and Director of the May Gallery, was most helpful. Funding was provided by Maryville University and the Regional Arts Commission. Each AQA member decorated a tennis shoe which was used on announcement cards. Using six shoes in a grid format side-stepped the issue of whose individual work might appear on the announcement card. The group also planned a cooperative work using six large puzzle pieces drawn within a large rectangle. A roughly oval, light-colored path bisects each of the six pieces and provides an avenue for eye movement within the overall composition. AQA members drew for gallery space with a common area set aside for the display of the puzzle piece quilt and the decorated shoes. While much of the process has been smooth, lessons learned in this show will help make the next show easier.

Small exhibitions of members' work also have been held at a local library and at St. Mark's Episcopal Church's *A Celebration of Art, Music & Architecture*.

## Concluding Remarks

AQA's initial goals of providing support, education, and collaboration are being met. The six-member group works well without elected leadership as members take responsibility for tasks in which they have expertise or take on a job because it is "my turn."

# ART QUILT MAKERS AND THEIR CRITIQUE GROUPS (Part II)

Barbara Carow

## Format of Meetings

Most groups have seen a format evolve that includes some personal conversation followed by art-related business such as show entries and recent exhibits. This is followed by presentations of members' works, which is the longest and most important aspect of the meeting. Writing for *Art/Quilt Magazine*, Ann Fahl described FACET meetings.

After some initial chit-chat, the structured portion of the FACET meeting begins. A portion of time at every meeting is devoted to "brags." We go around the room and each person has a few moments to tell what has happened in their professional life since the last meeting. Things such as the sale of a quilt, a show acceptance, or book and magazine exposure are all important bits of news. Brag time eventually becomes a networking session, as we share professional information, opportunities for exhibitions, and discuss new books and products. Most helpful is when a member finds a new source of thread or fabric, where we can purchase supplies at a good price.

When the business, brags, and ideas are fully discussed, we move on to the critique portion of the evening. Each quilt has time devoted solely to viewing and discussion of it. The maker starts by giving a few details about the quilt, and the floor is opened to comments and discussions.<sup>30</sup>

The Weston group tends toward a more intellectual and aesthetic approach, reading from a novel, perhaps showing photographs taken during travel, or discussing issues in the art world, such as funding for the NEA.<sup>31</sup> One meeting began with a discussion of *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years* by Elizabeth Wayland Barber. A salon atmosphere is established before the discussion of work begins.

It is energizing and stimulating to have work by each person on display throughout the meeting, but few meeting spaces have enough wall space for this. If the hostess has work already on the wall she is a logical person to begin. After that, a sort of Quaker "sense of the meeting" prevails with other members speaking when they feel ready. This procedure is sometimes "a little chaotic" in the New Image group.<sup>32</sup>

The Wrentham group became concerned about the amount of casual conversation that was extending the length of the meetings so it established a rotating system of facilitators, proceeding in alphabetical order. The facilitator for the night is responsible for keeping the discussion on subject, and invites the next person to show work.<sup>33</sup> PAQA also uses a facilitator who volunteers, sometimes "at gun point," to decide in which part of the room the showing of work will begin.<sup>34</sup>

In all but the smallest and largest groups the members sit as close as possible in a circle, an arrangement which is compatible with the conditions of having no formal leader and making decisions by consensus. In the Greenwich group, the three members sit in front of the work wall where they display their

quilts. PAQA members, with a much larger group, sit in rows before a small stage. After their work is shown and discussed they place the quilts on tables around the edge of the room for closer examination after the formal meeting. Open communication between all members, however, is more important than seating arrangements.<sup>35</sup>

## Offering and Receiving Criticism

These critique groups differ from critiques in the academic setting of an art school where the instructor is the primary source of authority as well as the source of a grade. Students are inevitably competing for grades and for the approval of the instructor, although they may be supportive outside the critique atmosphere. Most of the members of these art quilt critique groups had art training in college (in fact, a considerable number are, or were, art teachers themselves, from the elementary to college level), or have taken continuing education classes. They are familiar with a formal academic critique situation although they do not want to duplicate it. Teachers give criticism because they are paid to do so. It is a part of their job. Within a critique group composed of peers, giving criticism is a more sensitive matter.

Many of the critique group members share memories of the time when in law school, architecture school, and ironically, in art classes, male professors ignored, or denigrated, their women students. Nancy Halpern remembered being told to go home and build a doll house.<sup>36</sup> Barbara Crane remembered an instructor literally ripping a woman student's work to pieces, asking her if it was "that time of the month."<sup>37</sup> With no desire to repeat such experiences, contemporary quiltmakers still seek informed reactions to their work; indeed, that is the primary reason for belonging to such a group.

As I studied the reactions to my questions, I began to doubt my original assumption that the most rigorous criticism would result in greater productivity and more innovative work. PAQA, for example, began with the idea that it would not be a critical group. Ann Fahl said:

We have a showcase where members show a recent work and talk about it. The floor is open for discussion. This was set-up purposefully because the founding members believed that critique could be negative and destructive to members creative progress. Our philosophy is positive and supportive toward all members; personal growth is encouraged. The term "critique" means to criticize. This alone has a strong negative connotation. Along with this comes the tearing down or destruction of the fragile ego of the artist that created the quilt. Nothing positive will ever be gained through critical comments.<sup>38</sup>

I turned to the renowned psychologist Carl Rogers, who lists psychological safety and psychological freedom as the requisites for an environment in which creativity will flourish. Psychological safety includes accepting the other person of unconditional worth. Rogers stated:

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# EDGE TO EDGE: SELECTIONS FROM SAQA

Stacy C. Hollander

Quiltmaking is an art that is rediscovered by every generation. Historically, it has provided a voice and creative platform for women when they had no other. In the second half of the twentieth century, the quilt construct has provided a singular wellspring of creativity for artists across boundaries of gender and training. This summer, the Museum of American Folk Art presented, *Edge to Edge: Selections from Studio Art Quilt Associates*, an exhibition that featured the work of eighteen artists who have chosen fabric, thread, dye, and paint as their medium, and the quilt as their expressive format. As the works on display demonstrate, the quilt continues to offer new possibilities for artistic experimentation and, because of its cultural and emotional associations, the potential for surprise.

In organizing the exhibition, the Museum worked with Studio Art Quilt Associates, a nonprofit organization founded in 1989, that functions as an advocacy group for studio quiltmakers. With more than 400 members, SAQA offered a microcosm of contemporary art-quilting trends, and the Museum's invitation to its membership yielded more than 600 submissions in the form of slides. It was interesting that in many cases respondents did not send their most recent work, but examples that were as much as ten years old. Decades after the inception of the art quilt, this seems to suggest a sense of artistic review on the part of the artists themselves, and a coming full-circle in appreciation of their own artistic journeys.

Today it is almost de rigueur to think of quilts in complex terms, but the concept of "art quilt" raises a new set of issues, both aesthetic and philosophic. Penny McMorris and Michael Kile coined the term in 1986, and offered a comprehensive discussion of the transition from bedcover to wall art in their book of the same name. More recently, the history has been related by Bets Ramsey in *Uncoverings 1993* and by Robert Shaw in his new book, *The Art Quilt*. It is, however, a movement that has been on the defensive since the 1960s, when it first began to flourish. Rooted in the appreciation of fiber arts that emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, contemporary quilts have been called variously "nontraditional," "studio," and "art" to distinguish them from historical bedcoverings, but to some observers these works nevertheless remain imprinted with the notion of applied art or craft. Although many contemporary quiltmakers acknowledge the influence of historical examples, their work has consistently demonstrated an informed and sensitive response to contemporary art methods and issues.

For twenty years, the Museum of American Folk Art has recognized the importance of the contemporary art quilt movement. During these two decades, there has been an enormous change in the visual approach to the quilt tradition. Although the Museum has supported contemporary quiltmakers through its educational programming, quilt festivals, and contests, exhibitions of art quilts at the Museum itself have been rare. Indeed, the proposal to organize and host an exhibition of contemporary quilts sparked one of the more spirited internal debates in my memory about the Museum's identity and mission. Those in favor of the exhibition argued that American quilts and their history have long been a major aspect of the Museum's focus in terms of collecting, exhibiting, and scholarship, and that studio

quilts represented the contemporary extension of this tradition. Those resistant to the idea felt that nontraditional quilts were too far removed in technique, conception, and aesthetics from their historical antecedents, and they were now outside the sphere of our inquiry.

Interestingly, this conversation paralleled one that has been occurring with increasing frequency as the Museum continues to enter the contemporary arena through the work of self-taught artists. "But is it folk art?" is the recurring question that we are asked to consider as comfortable parameters and clear-cut borders shift, with contemporary art makers inside and outside the mainstream art world using similar materials and strategies. Complicating the matter is the fact that studio quilters, unlike self-taught artists, are often highly-trained technicians who have rejected the constrictions of traditional art materials in favor of fabric. While the fabric medium may seem to impose its own limitations, for many of these artists, working with textiles has been a freeing experience that allows them to intensively manipulate a medium both visually and dimensionally. Some artists have also expressed a sense of liberation from art-historical impositions, feeling that they can, instead, invent their own references. While the degree of studio training among the artists would seem to support the Museum's hesitance to exhibit art quilts, one might argue that quiltmaking represents one of the single unbroken lines of tradition in American folk arts, whatever its current manifestation engenders

If art quilts faced some resistance from a museum that supported the movement's growth over a period of many years, how have they been received in the art world? The answer, not surprisingly, is that the studio quilt has not been welcomed by the art world, but has been forced to form its own consumer circle: the quilt world. The idea of "worlds," with their rules of exclusion and inclusion, is especially germane to a discussion of studio quilts. The quilt world has successfully generated many venues for its constituents whose desire is to see a large cross-section of work by their peers. This world is primarily female, and its organization is more democratic than the elitist art world, with some level of membership available to virtually anyone who can ply a needle and thread. But it is also a world that is constantly judging itself and which has established a hierarchical structure that, to some degree, parallels the art world - instead of the *Whitney Biennial*, for instance, a quilt artist might aspire to *Quilt National*. Even with the imposition of strict artistic standards, quilt venues have generated a busy, fair-like atmosphere, complete with themed contests, quilt challenges, juries, and prizes, that diminishes the perceived seriousness of the art in the outside world. Although it is making important strides in breaking out into a larger world, the art quilt remains largely confined to its own, principally female, audience.

This dichotomy between spheres of consumption is not lost on quilters, who themselves refer to the "quilt world" versus the "real world" (read: art world). A discussion of the exhibition *Diversity!* by Lynn Lewis Young in the Spring, 1996, issue of *Art/Quilt Magazine*, highlights some of the issues facing the art quilter.

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# MEMBERS' NEWS

- Lauren Camp will have an exhibition at Stonehorse Gallery in Cedar Crest, New Mexico, from October 1 through 31. In addition, her quilt "A Light Sort of Rain" recently won top honors for innovative design at the *National Quilting Association Show* in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It will be on display for the month of November at *Vehicle: Art and Transportation in New Mexico*, a major bi-city collaborative project designed to bring attention to transportation issues and bridge the gap between Albuquerque and Santa Fe.
- Nancy Erickson had her work included in *Studies from the Figure*, a two-day exhibit from The Pattee Canyon Ladies' Salon in August at the Brunswick Building Gallery in Missoula, Montana.
- Barbara Schulman presented a lecture and workshop at the Convergence '98 Weaver's Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. She has recently exhibited in the following venues – *Squared Off*, Phoenix Gallery, NYC; *Women in Art*, an invitational exhibit by women artists who teach in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, at Northampton Community College; *Rising to the Surface*, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; *Invitational Salon of Small Works: at New Arts Program*, Kutztown, Pennsylvania. She won a Juror's First Choice Award in *Surface: New Form/New Function* at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.
- *Character Traits: More Art Quilts from the Midwest* will be at the Leman Gallery in Golden, Colorado, from November 3 through December 31, 1998.
- Sue Benner is the juror for the *10th Anniversary Juried Exhibition of the Front Range Contemporary Quilters*, a group of Colorado artists. The exhibition will take place at the College Hill Library on the campus of the Front Range Community College from October 19 through December 3, 1998.
- Katy Widger has a solo exhibition at the Harwood Art Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, from October 5 through 30.
- Mary Gattis will have her work, "Don't Drink the Water," in the Tactile Architecture exhibition at this year's *International Quilt Festival* in Houston and will travel from there.
- *Spirit of Place: Art Quilts by Melody Crust and Heather W. Jewell*, an exhibition which highlights the artist's capacity to be inspired by both the ordinary and the commonplace, is at the Appalachian Center for Crafts in Smithville, Tennessee, from October 2 through 30.
- Nancy Forrest has had work purchased by the Public Art Trust of California and is currently working on a commission for Bittman, Vammen & Taylor Architects of Bellevue, Washington. Nancy also has had work accepted into *Fantastic Fibers '99* at the Yeiser Art Center in Paducah, Kentucky.
- Lisa Leutenegger had her quilt, "Flight," juried into the Bristol Art Museum's National Juried Competition in June. It won third place and was the only fiber piece accepted into the show. From November 11 through December 9, she will be part of a two-person show at the Andrew J. Macky Gallery in Boulder, Colorado.
- Virginia A. Spiegel had two works, "Evolution #3: Power" and "Pregnant Pause (Monument)," juried into the Innovative Quilts International Competition at *Quilts at the Crossroads* in Flint, Michigan.
- Michael James will be teaching an advanced level workshop at the North County Studio Conference in Bennington College, Vermont, from February 3 through 7, 1999. Other workshops include baskets, clay, collage, drawing, glass, metal, paper, and surface design. The application deadline is December 1, 1998. For information, call (802) 387-5986.
- Dominic Nash had an exhibition of her art quilts at the Mansion Art Gallery of Rockville in Rockville, Maryland, during the month of July.
- Stephanie Randall Cooper's work was at the Wiseman Gallery at Rogue Community College during July in an exhibition entitled, *Navigating a Life*.
- That Patchwork Place published this past spring the book, *Machine Quilting with Decorative Threads*, which was co-authored by Maurine Noble and SAQA member, Elizabeth Hendricks.
- Adrienne Yorinks had her work, "June Bugs," accepted into the *12th Biennial Northeast Regional Exhibit of the Susquehanna Art Society*, in Hummels Wharf, Pennsylvania, this past summer. She received third prize in the All Other Mediums Category.
- New member, Alan D. Webb, owns and operates an architectural stained glass studio. After a project is completed there is always an ample amount of scrap glass left over so he plans to create a series of autonomous panels of quilts (art quilts) in glass. He feels the parallels between the two mediums is great and would like your help in identifying galleries that support the art quilt medium. If you have a source for him, contact him at P. O. Box 1296, Greenville, Texas 75403-1296, (903) 455-1020.
- Mary Beth Bellah was awarded a commission from Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia. This public installation is a collaborative work of Mary Beth and silk painter, Cynthia Harrison. Mary Beth presently has a piece in the *Red Clay Survey: Sixth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary Southern Art* at the Huntsville Art Museum in Huntsville, Alabama. It was the only fiber piece included in this all media venue. Her work has also been selected for the *Quilts at Crossroads* in Flint, Michigan, and the *Fantastic Fibers '99* exhibit at the Yeiser Art Center in Paducah, Kentucky.
- Violet Cavazos and Constance Norton had work included this summer in the third annual *Juried Regional Art Exhibit*, an all-media show at the Staunton August Art Center in Staunton, Virginia.
- Rachel Brumer has an exhibition entitled, *Cover Them*, at the Yeshiva University Museum in New York City. The exhibit is a quilt installation for the French children of the Holocaust.
- Maureen Bardusk had a busy summer with her work included in *The Cliff Dwellers/Ragdale Alumni*, at the Borg Warner

# MEMBERS' NEWS (cont.)

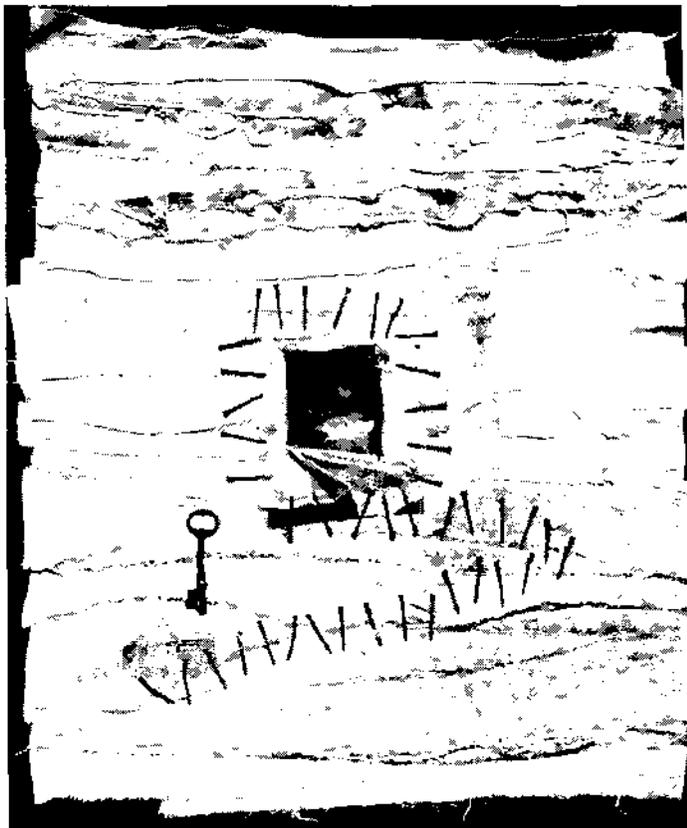
Building in Chicago, Illinois; a faculty exhibit at the Hinsdale Center for the Arts in Hinsdale, Illinois; and *Illinois Crossroads* at the Southern Illinois Art Gallery in Whittington, Illinois, and which travels to the Illinois State Museum in Springfield from September 20 through January 3, 1999.

• *Four Artists, More Quilts* included the work of members Sarah Gindel, Beatriz Grayson, Carol Anne Grotrian, and Sylvia Einstein at the CAA University Place Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts, from October 6 through 31.

• SAQA members Karen Berkenfeld, Niki Bonnett, Margaret Cusack, Marilyn Henrion, Joy Saville, Robin Schwalb, and Florence Suerig had their work included in an exhibition of The Textile Study Group of New York entitled, *9 x 9 x 3*, at the American Craft Museum in New York City from September 19 through October 18.

• Apologies to Charlotte Patera who was included in *Visions, Quilt San Diego* but was omitted from the listing of SAQA members in the last issue of this newsletter.

• In the last issue of this newsletter, David Walker's web site, which was included in Marcia Johnson's article, was incorrectly listed. Find him at "<http://w3.one.net/~davidix>."



"Boundaries," 18" x 20", Pat Owoc  
(See article on page 3.)

## SAQA CLASSIFIEDS

If you are interested in submitting ads for the next newsletter, the deadline is December 1. Please include a check for \$10.00 for thirty (30) words and send to SAQA, P. O. Box 287, Dexter, OR 97431.

• "Wheel of Wonder" postcards by Marilyn Pilkey, two each of six designs, set of 12, \$5.00 + \$1.00 shipping. Send check to Postcards, P. O. Box 1622, Canyon Country, CA 91386-1622.

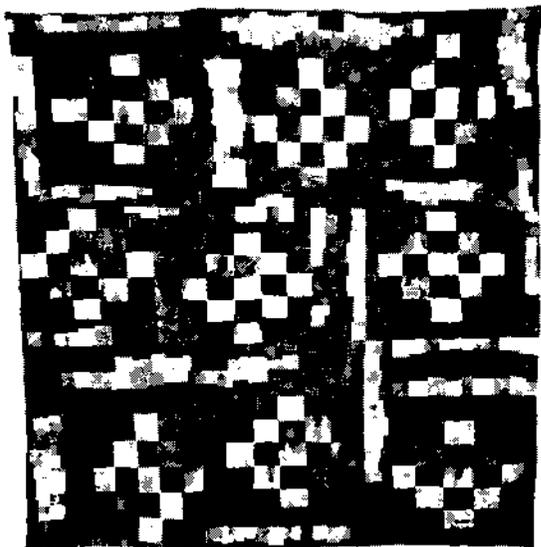
• Limited supply of SAQA T-shirts with logo and name – size X-large only. Send check for \$15.00 postpaid to SAQA, P. O. Box 287, Dexter, OR 97431.

• "Tips for Travelling Teachers," a guide for teachers to make the best arrangements with sponsoring groups, revised by Florence Feldman-Wood and Sylvia Einstein. \$10.00 to Feldman-Wood, P. O. Box 422, Andover, MA 01810.

• SAQA exhibition catalogs available for *Diversity!* (\$14.00 postpaid) and *Edge to Edge* (\$6.45 postpaid). Send check to SAQA, P. O. Box 287, Dexter, OR 97431.

• "Wheel of Wonder" ecology shopping bags. Terrific 60's fabrics in wheel design with roomy outer pockets. \$15.00, or 3 for \$40.00 + \$3.00 shipping. Send check to Tote Bags, P. O. Box 1622, Canyon, Country, CA 91386-1622.

• Support SAQA and spread the word with SAQA pens which include our logo, name, and address. Only available by the dozen, these are the perfect give-away for workshop students, lecture attendees, or prospective members. Send check for \$5.00 postpaid to SAQA, P. O. Box 287, Dexter, OR 97431.



"Dancing Blocks," 50.5" x 52", Sonja Tugend  
(See article on page 3.)

# AMERICAN MUSEUM OF QUILTS & TEXTILES MOVES TO NEW QUARTERS

The Board of Trustees of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles has announced the Museum has moved to a new and temporary location. This news comes shortly after the Board announced a name change for the Museum (from American to San Jose). The new home is at 110 Paseo de San Antonio, a pedestrian mall in downtown San Jose.

The high rent of the current Market Street location made it difficult to hire additional staff and produce as many exhibitions, publications, and programs for the public as the Board and staff wished. In addition, the building management offered a financial incentive for the Museum to terminate its lease early, thus providing money to renovate the temporary space on the Paseo Mall to suit the needs of the Museum.

This opportunity to move to temporary quarters in a convenient, central location with heavy foot traffic allows the Board to continue seeking a suitable building in downtown San Jose for a permanent museum. One that will be owned either by the City of San Jose or by the Museum itself. The Board is currently in active discussion with the City of San Jose about this possibility and is encouraged by their interest and support to date.

## CALL FOR ENTRIES

- The Fiberarts Guild of Pittsburgh, Inc., announces a call for entries for the *Fiberart International '99* exhibition which will be on display at The Society for Contemporary Crafts and The Pittsburgh Center for the Arts from September 9 through October 30, 1999. There is a \$28 entry fee for up to three entries and slides are due by February 12, 1999. Cash prizes are awarded for the top three works. The jurors for this year are Jason Pollen, Chairman of the Fiber Department at the Kansas City Art Institute and President of the Surface Design Association; Rebecca Stevens, Consulting Curator, Contemporary Textiles at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.; and Bhakti Ziek, Associate Professor of Woven Design at the Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science. For more information contact Millie Barner, 7 Center Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15215, millieb@prodigy.net, or Sally Yunis, 145 Penham Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15208, (412) 363-0204.

- Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts announces a call for entries for the *Arrowmont National 1999 Juried Exhibition* which will be shown in the Main Gallery at Arrowmont in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, from February 26 through May 15, 1999. The *Arrowmont National* is an all media, visual arts competition open to all visual artists, 21 years of age or older, who reside in the United States. Artists may submit up to three artworks and there is a \$20 entry fee. Cash awards and merit awards will be given. Slides and entry materials are due at Arrowmont by November 6, 1998. The show will be juried by Joanne Rapp, owner and director, The Hand & The Spirit Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona. For an entry form, please send SASE to Billi R. S. Rothove, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, P. O. Box 567, Gatlinburg, TN 37738, (423) 436-5860.



*"Personal View of Yellow Cat Drinking From Bathtub,"  
18" x 21", Pat Owoc  
(See article on page 3.)*

# BOOK REVIEW

## ***Michael James: Art & Inspirations***

Michael James, C & T Publishing, Inc., 1998

Bets Ramsey

It is rare to be able to review an artist's well-documented body of work and find commentary which delineates its development and progression in a thorough and sensitive manner. Such a case is to be found in *Michael James: Art & Inspirations*.

I first became aware of Michael James' work at a national conference of the American Crafts Council in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 1977 when "Night Sky II" was included in the exhibition, *Young Americans: Wood, Plastic, Fiber, Leather*. "Here is a fresh, new talent, someone to watch," I told myself, hardly anticipating the impact he would make in the world of quilts. As an artist, lecturer, and teacher, Michael James has been generous with his gifts and talents to reach an audience worldwide, to challenge, encourage, and lead new exploration in the fiber arts.

Without excessive adulation, that life is carefully recorded in *Michael James: Art & Inspirations*, beginning with his years as an art student that culminated with a Master of Fine Arts degree at the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1973. Somewhat accidentally, a few years earlier, he had slipped Marguerite Ickis' *The Standard Book of Quilt Making and Collecting* into his library and the seed was planted. (My own quilting activities began with the same book and about that time.) Needle and thread soon replaced brushes and paint, but the fine arts foundation served him well in entering a new arena. Being acquainted with the craftmakers at RIT gave James a heightened regard for excellence in workmanship, a position he steadfastly maintains in his own work.

In their splendid text on the maturing person and work of Michael James, Patricia Harris and David Lyon move through James' career from transition to transition, from discovery and exploration to significant points of departure and those periods of persistent refinement. In the process they create an accurate and viable rendering of a person and a career in harmonious union.

"When I look over this body of work that I'm still in the process of producing, one thing strikes a recurring note – this work is part of a life, my life," says Michael James, and that is what this book is all about. It is about a person who opens himself to varied experiences and to literature, music, art, theater, nature, religion, politics, and all conditions of people. Thus the senses and the intellect are fed from an abundant source of influences which, in turn, become the substance from which art is made, the art of the quilt.

An interview with Patricia Malarcher further elucidates the artist's thoughts and working processes, attitudes, and philosophies. Comments are straight-forward and lacking in egotistic reflection. Malarcher asks, "At this point in your career, are you aware of any acquired wisdom, or insight, realized through the process of working?" and I treasure the answer.

"I guess it would be that ultimately you're the only person that you have to answer to . . . the only way you can produce work that has integrity is by turning inward and acknowledging the truth of who you are as a person and of establishing what your relationship to the process of artmaking is, or what you want it to be, and then work toward that. Despite what anyone else brings to your work you're the ultimate judge, and you have to be loyal to that inner voice that is the best guide you're likely to have."

*Michael James: Art & Inspirations* is the affirmation of an artist's work and life. It will nourish any artist who seeks identity and sense of worth in her, or his, own work.

**SAQA member, Bets Ramsey, was an early exhibitor of Michael James' work at the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga where, for seventeen years, she curated an annual exhibition and directed the Southern Quilt Symposium with the underlying theme, quilts as art. She is co-author of a recently published book, *Southern Quilts: Surviving Relics of the Civil War*.**



# SAFETY IN QUILTING

*Monona Rossol*

Quilting is not a highly-dangerous pursuit. However, it is not without health and safety hazards. Included are exposure to fabric dust, fabric treatment chemicals, molds, paints and decorative materials, and dyes; bodily damage from repetitive strain injuries; and needle stick injuries and other potential blood-borne diseases.

How can we take care of ourselves while continuing to produce the work that feeds our bodies and minds? How do we decipher technical product labeling and make decisions about their use and disposal? What kinds of ventilation works? Let's discuss some of these questions.

## Fabric Dust Hazards

For centuries, textile workers and weavers have been subject to occupational diseases such as dermatitis and respiratory problems. Quilters are only at risk from developing these diseases if they also weave or incorporate handwoven fabrics, yarns, or raw fibers into their quilts.

- **Vegetable fibers** cause well-known illnesses as the result of breathing the natural fibers themselves, such as bysionosis (brown lung) from cotton, flax, hemp and sisal fibers. Years of chronic exposure to hemp, sisal, jute, and flax dusts is associated with chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and various allergic conditions.
- **Animal fibers**, such as silk, hair from goats, horses, rabbit, dogs, and other animals may cause allergies in some artists. They also may carry disease organisms even after processing such as anthrax, Q fever, and mange. Failure to detect a shipment of anthrax-contaminated Pakistani wool yarn in the United States resulted in the death of an artist-weaver in 1976.
- **Synthetic fibers**, such as rayon, acetate, nylon, and acrylics, have hazards which are only now coming to light. Dusts from synthetic fibers have been reported to cause irritation when inhaled. Now a serious and debilitating disease called interstitial lung disease (ILD) has been associated with nylon flocking. Whether other serious diseases are caused by synthetic fibers will not be known until years of data from industrial experience has been gathered. In the meantime, prudence dictates minimizing exposure to them.
- **Fiber treatments**, like permanent press, sizing, mothproofing, or fire retardant chemicals, also are associated with disease in textile workers. Most significant are the effects of cancer-and-allergy-causing formaldehyde which is emitted by urea formaldehyde permanent press treatment chemicals. The complex, organic, chemical fire retardant, called "tris," was not found to be a carcinogen until years after it was in common use in children's sleepwear. It is still used in other fabrics.

Mothproofing chemicals are usually pesticides and require care when they are used. Two chemicals commonly used for mothproofing and mothballs are paradichlorobenzene (PDB) and naphthalene.

Threshold Limit Values for PDB and Naphthalene are both 10 parts per million. This confirms that both are very toxic.

PDB is moderately toxic and has been shown to be an animal carcinogen in United States National Toxicology Program tests. Naphthalene's data is not as clear, but it probably is not a carcinogen. However, it is moderately toxic causing anemia, liver, and kidney damage. To certain people of Black, Mediterranean, and Semitic origins with genetic glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiencies, naphthalene is highly toxic causing severe anemia. Overall, naphthalene should be the preferred treatment chemical.

- **Molds** are another hazard to watch for. All types of textiles may produce dusts contaminated with fungus. Molds can cause four major effects which include:

Irritation is experienced if exposure is greatly excessive.

Allergies will only affect people who have developed an allergy to the particular mold. The levels of exposure at which allergic symptoms occurs is highly individual.

Toxicity can only be caused by certain of the molds and will effect almost anyone if exposure is excessive. The worst of these is the nerve toxic *stachybotres chartarum* which was used in germ warfare.

Infections of the lungs, or other organs, usually only affect people with compromised immune systems, such as people with AIDS.

## Dyes and Pigments

**Colorants** also may be present in fabric dusts. But in addition, quilters may be exposed to them in fabric paints and colorants used on textiles. Dyes and pigments are among most toxic chemicals used by textile artists. They exist in the following categories:

- **Inorganic pigments** come from the earth (ochres, for example), or they are manufactured from metals or mineral (like lead white or cerulean blue). Those containing cadmium, lead, chrome, nickel, manganese, mercury, and similarly toxic metals are most hazardous.
- **Organic pigments** are either from natural sources such as Alizarin crimson from madder root, or they are synthesized from organic chemicals. Examples of synthetic pigments include phthalo (phthalocyanine) blues and the fluorescent colors. The hazards of organic pigments are similar to synthetic dyes (see below).
- **Very few natural organic dyes**, such as plant and insect extracts, are still in use. Today, natural dye materials are more likely to be harvested from plant materials by textile artists who prefer the colors. Some

natural dyes are safe enough even for children to use, especially those obtained from food products tea, onion skins, and the like. However, many poisonous and cancer-causing colorants can be extracted from natural materials as well.

- The very first **synthetic dyes** were made from a chemical called aniline which was derived from coal tar. Some manufacturers still call their dyes "aniline" dyes. However, aniline has been replaced for the most part with other chemicals in dye manufacture and the term "aniline" is often misused to refer to many types of dyes. It is more correct to refer to these dyes by "use" or "chemical" classes. There are more than 2,000 different synthetic dyes. It is no accident that only six of these are approved for use in food. Most dyes are based on highly-toxic, or cancer-causing, chemicals. These same, or very similar, chemicals are usually released when dyes are metabolized by the body, or when they fade, age, or are bleached.

### Dyed Textile Hazards

Even the small amounts of dye on fabrics can present a hazard to users. Recently, Germany banned imported products colored with certain azo dyes when these dyes are used on items intended for "longer than temporary contact with the human body," such as textiles, bed linens, and eyeglass frames. The ban became effective April 1, 1996. Other European countries are passing similar laws.

There are currently about 120 dyes on the banned list. The dyes are those which are expected to break down (reduce) to any of a series of chemicals that are carcinogens.<sup>1</sup> Artists and craftspeople whose work is sold in Germany are affected by the new rule. The burden of compliance is on importers who can be required to provide written confirmation from sellers that no prohibited dyes have been used. Out-of-compliance goods will be destroyed as toxic waste.

In the United States, these potentially cancer-causing dyes are not banned. Worse, our craft dyers usually cannot even find out if they are using them. Most craft dye suppliers consider the identity of the dyes they sell to be trade secrets! Clearly, at this time it is impossible for U.S. quilters to find out what dyes are present in the materials they use, or how hazardous they are.

### Paint Hazards

Today, textile artists use a vast array of different paints, however, these products have many properties in common because almost all of them contain pigments suspended in vehicles or bases.

Vehicles usually contain a liquid such as an oil, a solvent, or water. Cleaners and thinners for most paints are these same liquids, or liquids which are compatible with them. For example, turpentine will thin and clean oil paints. Some common types of paints which can be adapted to textile work include the following:

- **Acrylic paints (water-based emulsions)** are composed of synthetic acrylic resins and pigments with many additives usually including an ammonia-containing stabilizer and formaldehyde preservatives. The small amounts of ammonia and formaldehyde released during drying can cause respiratory irritation and allergies.

- **Acrylic paints (solvent-based)** are synthetic acrylic resins and pigments dissolved in solvents. See "Solvent Hazards" below.
- **Alkyd paints** are alkyd resins and pigments dissolved in solvents. See "Solvent Hazards" below.
- **Artists' oils** are pigments mullied into oils such as pre-polymerized linseed oil. There usually are no volatile ingredients, but oil paints are commonly thinned and cleaned up with solvents such as paint thinner.
- **Caseins** are made from dried milk, pigments, and preservatives. Some contain ammonium hydroxide which can be irritating to the skin and eyes. And, dust from the powdered paint should not be inhaled. There are usually very strong preservatives added because the casein is a good source of food for microorganisms.
- **Crayons** are pigments in wax. Most have no significant hazards because the pigments are contained. Techniques which involve melting crayons may produce irritating wax decomposition products which would require exhaust ventilation.
- **Drawing inks** may contain hazardous dyes and solvents. Skin contact should be avoided.
- **Epoxy paints** are two parts epoxy resin systems and contain highly toxic and sensitizing organic chemicals and solvents. Some contain especially toxic glycidyl ether solvents.
- **Gouache** is an opaque water color which contains pigments, gums, water, preservatives, glycerin, opacifiers, such as chalk, talc, and other substances. Formaldehyde may be used as a preservative.
- **Marking pens** contain pigments or dyes in a liquid. The liquid may be water or a solvent. Water-based markers are safest. Of the solvent-based markers, those containing ethyl alcohol are the safest. Others may contain very toxic solvents.

### Solvent Hazards

Organic solvents may be found in paints and inks, or may be used to thin and clean up materials. Solvents are also found in products used with painting and drawing, such as varnishes, shellacs, lacquers, and fixatives. These products include resins such as damar, mastic, copal, lac, shellac, acrylic, and other plastic resins dissolved in solvents. (Some of these resins have been known to cause allergies.)

Solvents commonly used in paints and thinners include turpentine, paint thinner, mineral spirits, methyl alcohol, ethyl alcohol, acetone, toluene, xylene, ethyl and other acetates, and petroleum distillates. Solvents are all known to cause nervous system and reproductive system damage as well as many other effects.

### New Disease Associated with Acrylic Paint

A new disease has been identified among textile workers who spray-applied textile paints. The disease was named "the

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# SAFETY IN QUILTING (cont.)

Ardystil Syndrome," after one of the eight textile plants in Spain where it occurred. After one year of treatment, most of the 71 workers affected had recovered, or were clinically stable, except for 12. Of these, six died, one received a lung transplant, and five still need treatment.

Now it appears that "the Ardystil Syndrome" is actually a rare deadly disease called "Organizing Pneumonia." It has stumped physicians for years. Some patients with this pneumonia also had connective tissue diseases such as arthritis. Others are drug users. In England, a few people suffer episodes every spring. The Ardystil outbreak was the first time that this mysterious pneumonia was linked to exposure to chemicals in the workplace. Later, a similar outbreak occurred in Oran, Algeria, where one worker died and five others developed respiratory diseases.

The paints used at the Spanish and Algerian factories were acrylic textile paints manufactured in Germany by Bayer. They are called Acramin FWR and Acramin FWN. The paints were meant to be applied by brush or sponge, but local factories modified them by adding white spirits and sprayed them.

## Planning Safe Studios

Consider the following as you plan your studio:

- **Floors and surfaces** should be made of materials which are easily sponged clean and which are stain-resistant. Sealed concrete or non-slip vinyl tile are good choices. Plan enough space around equipment, furniture, and fixtures to facilitate easy mopping.
- Install **ventilation systems** appropriate for the work done. If you expect to spray, or air brush, provide a spray booth. If you plan to do processes which release toxic substances into the air such as using solvent-containing products, or reverse dyeing, provide ventilation systems such as range hoods, exhaust fans at table level, or slot hoods. If dryers are used, vent them.
- Provide **make up air** in an amount equal to the total amount of air removed by all the ventilation systems. Make up air can be as simple as an open door or window (climate permitting), or as complex as a mechanical make up unit which heats or cools incoming air at a specific rate.
- **Heating and air-conditioning** needs should be considered. Do not plan a studio in a room whose ventilation system takes air from each room and distributes it throughout the building. Do not expect air-conditioners to reduce toxic air contaminants. Purchase air-conditioners and heating systems that do not create air currents that will raise dust. Get professional assurance that your local ventilation systems will not back draft fuel-fired appliances causing release of carbon monoxide.
- Plan for **electrical outlets**. Place ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) on all outlets within 10 feet of a water source as required by code. GFCIs also are recommended on all outlets routinely used for small tools and power equipment.

- Obtain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) on all **safety equipment** products that you plan to use and follow their specific recommendations for:

- Protective clothing and eyewear
- Respiratory protection
- Eye wash fountains
- First aid supplies
- Appropriate fire extinguishers
- Absorbents or cleaners for spills and cleanup

Once you have all of this basic work done, the rest is easier. You can design a space where you can leave your smock and other protective clothing to prevent taking dusts home. Plan a place to keep your chemical splash goggles so you will automatically put them on when you are working. Mount the fire extinguisher on a wall near the door. Locate the eye wash near paint and chemical handling areas, or on a sink faucet. Install lighting sufficient for safety and for seeing colors properly.

If your studio is used as a classroom, or is shared with other quilters, prepare for needle stick injuries by providing a "sharps" container into which items that have contacted blood can be discarded. Needles and knives can transmit a host of disease including hepatitis A, B, and C, HIV, and more.

## Work Habits

The best studio in the world will not be safe unless you maintain the most important piece of equipment you own – your body. Get enough rest, food, and exercise. Don't stay at the computer, sewing, or other tasks until muscles cramp or strain. If hands or arms tingle or ache for prolonged periods, consult a physician.

There is nothing more womb-like and satisfying than a safe, well-organized studio. If you have questions about yours, write or call, Arts, Crafts & Theater Safety, Inc. (ACTS), 181 Thompson Street, #23, New York, NY 10012-2586, (212) 777-0062, e-mail 75054.2542@compuserve.com, or <http://www.caseweb.com/acts/>

<sup>1</sup>The cancer-causing chemicals released by the dyes banned by Germany on reduction or breakdown include:

o-aminoazotoluene	p-aminoazobenzene	2-methoxyaniline
2-amino-4-nitrotoluene	benzidine	4-chlor-o-toluidine
3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine	dichlorobenzidine	2-naphthylamine
o-toluidine	3,3'-dimethylbenzidine	4-methyl-1,3-phenylenediamine

An aminoanthraquinone dye (C.I. Disperse Blue 1-64500) is also listed among the 120 banned dyes. It is not an azo dye and doesn't seem to reduce to any of the above, but it is demonstrably an experimental carcinogen. This dye is not only not banned in the United States it is still used in Clairol hair dyes. The U.S. National Toxicology Program is having trouble getting it declared a carcinogen over industry's objections.

© January 15, 1998; revised August 4, 1998

*Monona Rossol, M.S., M.F.A., is an industrial hygienist who is president of the organization, Arts, Crafts and Theater Safety, which is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to promoting health and safety services to the arts. They offer a variety of publications, including a newsletter. Contact them for more information.*

# EDGE TO EDGE: SELECTIONS FROM SAQA (cont.)

*Diversity!* was juried to present current quilts which approach the medium in a unique and innovative way. Much was said at the conference of who (or whose quilt) was left out of the exhibit . . . In her juror's statement [Yoshiko Iwamoto] Wada discussed dividing the entries into two categories, one based on traditional structure and style and exploring contemporary design and composition, which she rejected for the show, instead focusing on those she described as "very unconventional in design as well as in theme and structure." Selection on the basis of unusual [for quilts] techniques, approaches, and themes made me wonder if the quilts were truly innovative or just pushing the edge of being called a quilt? Would these works be considered innovative as general fiber art, or as general art? While teabags and X-Acto blades are different materials to make patterns on quilts, would they make it in the real world?"

*Edge to Edge* represents my personal, aesthetic response to the hundreds of art works submitted by members of SAQA. The exhibition was not chosen on the basis of famous names in the field, nor was the selection of twenty works based on innovation or unconventionality. Instead, I sought quilts that were expressive of an individual artistic vision that was rationally realized through a fiber and/or quilt-inspired medium. Only twenty examples were included because of space limitations, and more importantly, because the exhibition is intended as a showcase for works of art, rather than an opportunity to display as many quilts as possible. By chance, rather than by design, *Edge to Edge* included artists who have been working since the studio quilt gained real momentum in the 1970s, as well as quilt-makers who are relatively new to the field. The artworks themselves reveal a variety of approaches and techniques that draw upon popular culture, social commentary, and art theory, and belie the supposed limitations of the format.

The passage from traditional quilt to art quilt is beautifully expressed through Betsy Nimock's "Americana," which provides a visual and physical link between the past and the present. Incorporating pieced fragments from several nineteenth-century quilt tops into her assemblage, Nimock pays tribute to the generations of women with whom she feels connected through the metaphor of the quilt. The most prominent element is a lithograph portrait of a nineteenth-century woman who stares solemnly from her position before a lone star. Her iconic image is repeated in many of the diamonds that form additional stars, and according to Nimock, "she is a collective image of all women."

Some of the artists use the labor-intensive process of quilt-making to understand, control, and preserve an experience. In "Driving through the Snow," Judith Dierkes captures the dual emotions of fear at being trapped in a blinding snowstorm and the sense of awe at the beauty of nature's fury. The structural levels of the artwork – layers of fabric covered with paint, quilted, varnished, and spatter-painted – lends depth to the visual field and places the viewer in the middle of the storm. In "Hex on

Venus," Patricia Autenrieth alludes to women's health issues in the photo-transferred image of Venus, embroidered with an abdominal scar, juxtaposed with pieced hexagons containing clippings from women's magazines. The three-dimensional retablos of Judith Trager – who spent her childhood in Mexico, and later studied there – are personal shadow boxes with quilted interiors that hold meaningful tokens. The series is a tender memorial to her love of Mexican art and culture. "Break the Silence," by Bonnie Peterson, uses the assumptions of domesticity implicit in the quilt to make a strong statement about domestic violence.

Gayle Fraas and Duncan Slade (the only male artist in the exhibition) are known for their realistic painting and screen-printing with dyes. Their experimental work with dyeing techniques has had a profound influence on other quilt artists. Fraas-Slade (as they sign their work) have been collaborating since the 1970s, when both were undergraduates at the University of Southern Connecticut in New Haven. They began with oil-based inks, but were dissatisfied with the way the inks affected the fabric surface. This led to experimentation with new fiber-reactive dyes that bonded with the molecular structure of the fabric, leaving the texture unchanged. In 1979, they began to use brushes to paint with the dyes, creating a variety of impressions.

According to Frass-Slade, "Seguin," "addresses the subject of water literally and symbolically." It is the image of an island with a lighthouse on the Maine coast, and it captures a particular moment in time when the artists were caught in an unexpected and intense squall. "Seguin" expresses their gratitude at sighting a safe harbor, but also acknowledges the power of the sea. Fraas-Slade describe their process as follows:

As collaborators for twenty-three years, our work has involved the quilted textile surface. We have developed a process of painting (sometimes combined with screen-printing) with permanent fiber-reactive dyes on cotton fabric. A single piece of cloth is painted, then layered with cotton batting and muslin backing, stitched and mounted on linen and framed. The quilt format is an integral part of our visual communication, a montage of landscape, objects, and pattern alluding to the collaged method of quilting. The quilt surface can add to the emotional response of the viewer. It is our intent to play off the rich heritage of the quilt and connect it with the perception of a particular place.

While Fraas-Slade were pioneers of dye painting, Barbara Barrick McKie is intrigued by today's new techniques – she uses computer imaging to fuse the real and the unreal. "An Orange for Lunch" started as a conventional still-life exercise in a drawing class. Struck by the composition of an orange, a paper bag, and a napkin, McKie began to experiment with scanning real objects into her computer and reproducing the images onto fabric. The knife and the inside of the orange were created using this technique, while the bag, orange peel, and background are

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made from hand-dyed fabrics. The piece led to a whole series of food-related compositions explored through computer-manipulated images.

Drunell Levinson is the only artist in the exhibition who uses unorthodox materials to bring real-world references into the realm of the artwork. Levinson is intrigued by the tactile and visual qualities of the quilt format, particularly the possibilities posed by repetitive patterning. She uses nontraditional materials to mimic the structure of a quilt, while making ironic statements about "women's work." "Baby Blanket" is composed of brightly-colored and eye-catching aluminum condom wrappers that are tied together in rows. Levinson began using condoms to "degender" quilts, which are still seen as essentially feminine objects.

Paula Nadelstern and Robin Schwalb are two artists who have developed personal idioms that are beautifully expressed through their quilts. Although their visions are dissimilar, each brings a classicism and intensely focused exploration of a unique visual theme into her work. Schwalb is seduced by words – both the qualities of the marks that constitute language and their meaning. She describes her use of language as a balance between "an appreciation of their abstract beauty [and] the desire to include the 'found art' of relevant texts." She is sensitive to the impulse to read a text, thereby disrupting the viewer's response to the art itself, and employs several devices to circumvent this reaction: "using individual letters or ideograms from exotic or obsolete languages; by using the text decoratively as a repeating pattern in the background; by so cropping and chopping the text that it becomes illegible; or by concealing the text in the quilting." Although Schwalb denies that she is a linguistic deconstructivist, the narrative in "Lost in Translation" is decoded one letter at a time per each two-inch block across the entire surface of the quilt. "First Dream," an evocative and monochromatic study of consciousness versus unconsciousness, features a line of poetry by Alice Meynell trailing like smoke across its surface.

Paula Nadelstern is mesmerized by the fractured images produced by kaleidoscopes. She pieces hundreds of slivers of fabric into jewel-like, faceted, and patterned wheels. Nadelstern revels in the sensuousness of the fabric, cutting it into minute pieces only to reconstruct it in kaleidoscopic images that have grown increasingly complex and subtle over the years. Ironically, the results of her profoundly meditative, introspective work are oversized, crystalline structures. The Museum was first introduced to Paula Nadelstern and Robin Schwalb in 1991, when the former organized the exhibition, *Citiquilts*, as part of the Museum's The Great American Quilt Festival. At that time, Nadelstern discussed the challenges of quilting in a New York City apartment ("The Clarion," Spring, 1991). She wrote that her "non-existent long-distance viewing space has shaped the direction of [my] kaleidoscopic work, causing [me] to rely on intricate detail and inherent symmetry." Today the detail is even

more refined, but she can play with an "asymmetrical symmetry," as in "Eccentric Circles."

In contrast, Nancy Erickson's large-scale work demands distance to comprehend the narrative offered in a graphic, almost pop style. Erickson's messages derive from her concerns about maintaining – or perhaps creating – a balance between man's and beast's claims upon nature. "Exodus" is an older work based on what has become a recurring theme in Erickson's vision. The cartoonlike construction from 1987 reveals a lion prowling through an apocalyptic scene of decay and destruction. According to Erickson, "The works from 1986 to 1987 involve large lions in a protective mode amid the detritus of previous human occupation." Erickson holds degrees in zoology and nutrition, lending intellectual underpinnings to her activism regarding environmental and preservationist issues. She is also a figural painter with an MFA in painting from the University of Montana. She started working with fabric during the 1960s, finding greater textural variety and expressivity in this medium. Erickson takes a formal approach to her fabric paintings, working from drawings before transferring the image to fabric. She is not afraid to work outside the imposed geometry of the quilt. The discrete forms are a hybrid of painting and appliqué, and they shape the actual silhouette of the finished piece. The irregular outline intensifies the muscularity of the inherently powerful images of articulated lions and architectural elements.

Upon considering these and other studio "quilts," it quickly becomes evident that contemporary quilt artists feel a latitude, indeed a mandate, to push the idea of the quilt in extreme directions, sometimes through imagery, other times through materials, and most frequently through technical innovations. What comes through is a sense that the art quilt is most successful when it is being truest to its own nature and history. Much of the quilt construct that was viable in the nineteenth century remains equally relevant today: artistic intention; political, social, or personal sentiment; and, response to contemporary aesthetic movements. Quilts, as women have always known, are more than they are purported to be, and as these twenty artworks eloquently show, they are still very much here to prove it.

**Author's Note:** Although I could not discuss each of the artists whose work is represented in the exhibition I would like to acknowledge their contribution: Patricia Autenrieth, Eliza Brewster, Judith Dierkes, Nancy N. Erickson, Gayle Fraas and Duncan Slade, Rosemary Hoffenberg, Ann Johnston, Debra Kam, Drunell Levinson, Eleanor McCain, Barbara Barrick McKie, Paula Nadelstern, Betsy Nimock, Emily Parson, Bonnie Peterson, Robin Schwalb, and Judith Trager.

*Stacy C. Hollander is the curator of the Museum of American Folk Art. She lectures widely on folk art and has written for The Magazine Antiques and Country Living magazine, as well as for the Museum's publication, Folk Art magazine. Hollander is the author of Harry Lieberman: A Journey of Remembrance (Dutton Studio Books). This article first appeared in Folk Art magazine (Summer, 1998) and is reprinted with permission from the Museum of American Folk Art.*

# ART QUILT MAKERS (cont.)

The effect on the individual as he apprehends this attitude is to sense a climate of safety. He gradually learns that he can be whatever he is, without sham or facade, since he seems to be regarded as of worth no matter what he does. Hence he has less need of rigidity, can discover what it means to be himself, can try to actualize himself in new and spontaneous ways. He is, in other words, moving toward creativity.<sup>39</sup>

The next process is providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent. Rogers continues:

For the individual to find himself in an atmosphere where he is not being evaluated, not being measured by some external standard, is enormously freeing. Evaluation is always a threat, always creates a need for defensiveness, always means that some portion of experience must be denied to awareness.<sup>40</sup>

An artist who anticipates harsh criticism will second-guess each decision, trying to avoid the negative comments that exist only in her imagination. Ann Fahl agreed that supportive comments are more conducive to growth. She stressed:

Positive statements and encouraging words about the strong attributes of a quilt will build the self esteem and confidence of the artist/creator. This is how we grow as artists and individuals. As we take a small step forward, trying something new, experimenting, if we're encouraged by others we will have the confidence to take the next step, and then another and another.<sup>41</sup>

## Learning How to Offer Criticism

It may be necessary for people who wish to increase their effectiveness in the group to consciously monitor their own behavior. Shaw found that "the socially-sensitive group member is more effective than the less sensitive member. It is at least theoretically possible for an individual to deliberately attend to the moods, feelings, and emotions of others and therefore become more sensitive to them."<sup>42</sup>

It takes time and experience to develop the ability to give helpful criticism in a constructive, non-judgmental way. "I think it is important to take a cue from the person's presentation," Barbara Crane said, "whether they state

they are very happy with a piece, or are wondering if more work is justified." She appreciates that members of the Newton group feel free to show work that is not serious or a major opus.<sup>43</sup>

Judy Becker, also of the Newton group, described how the group reacts to work that seems lacking. "We would start out being quiet and seeing where the work is going for a time. We all need some experimental failures to grow or change direction. Then we might comment on older work we liked better, or we might offer suggestions on directions the new work might take."<sup>44</sup> Marge Malwitz said, "We are very gentle with each other and encourage each other but do not go heavy." Commenting on her own response to criticism, she realized, "Usually if I honestly ponder what's been said about my work, I can come to the point of using the advice or going my own route to the design problem. I have done both."<sup>45</sup> Even premier quilter Ruth McDowell, now writing a fourth book about her unique methods, reached for her seam ripper after Rhoda Cohen demonstrated how a scrap of coral-colored fabric gave spark to a nearly complete and very large landscape quilt.<sup>46</sup>

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*"Pink Flower Prelude," Ricky Tims  
(See article on page 3.)*

# ART QUILT MAKERS (cont.)

The giving of criticism can be learned by listening to others who are more skilled, and by analyzing the comments which are helpful to oneself. If members of the group make an effort to look at another's work through the eyes of its creator, they will bring a quality of empathic understanding to the discussion, which Rogers lists as the third characteristic of psychological safety. He demonstrated his knowledge of the creative process when he stated:

*If I understand you, empathically, see you and what you are feeling and doing from your point of view, enter your private world and see it as it appears to you – and still accept you – then this is safety indeed. In this climate you can permit your real self to emerge, and to express itself in varied and novel formings as it relates itself to the world. This is a basic fostering of creativity.<sup>47</sup>*

Rogers believed psychological freedom results when an individual is permitted complete freedom of symbolic (not physical) expression:

*The permissiveness which is being described is not softness or indulgence or encouragement. It is permission to be free, which also means that one is responsible. The individual is as free to be afraid of a new venture as to be eager for it; free to beat the consequences of his mistakes as well as of his achievements. It is this type of freedom responsibly to be oneself which fosters the development of a secure locus of evaluation within oneself, and hence tends to bring about the inner conditions of constructive creativity.<sup>48</sup>*

If one has reservations about a piece, or does not understand it, that is a personal reaction, not a global judgment about the worth of the person and their work. The creator is entitled to express herself in whatever way she feels is appropriate.

## Level of Artistic Development

In order for optimal conditions to be realized, it is important that members of the group be equally committed to their work, and have reached a somewhat similar point in their artistic development.<sup>49</sup> If each person has found her voice and can verbalize what she is trying to do, there is less likelihood of any one person exerting undo influence on the group.<sup>50</sup> When this is not the case, Sylvia Einstein has found that less-experienced quilters are better served by being in a group where

others are also at an exploratory and experimental stage. If too much energy is used in promoting harmony and cohesion among disparate members of the group, there will be less energy remaining for the fulfillment of individual professional and artistic goals.

Apart from the question of artistic development, however, the group will benefit greatly if the members possess a wide range of skills and experience. Shaw pointed out that "the more heterogeneous the group, the more likely the necessary abilities and information will be available and the more effective the group is likely to be."<sup>51</sup> There are times when talent for organizational tasks or the ability to defuse tense situations are appreciated as much as aesthetic judgment.

## Lack of Production

None of the groups respond negatively to members who do not bring current work to the meeting. Those people contribute through their reactions to the others' work, and perhaps through information about books, shows, products, or classes taken. Judy Becker insisted, "We are there to share our ideas as well as our work, so no one should ever feel like a shirker."<sup>52</sup> The person who does not bring work to show may feel guilty for not producing, and is often under stress from family or health problems that preclude her doing creative work for a time. Patricia Autenrieth, speaking for the New Image group, stated:

*We have not set performance requirements. And most of us are very self-motivated to produce. However, there are some who are less likely to and who sometimes frustrate the others enough to occasionally raise the issue of performance requirements. But we always end up agreeing that differing level of performance ambition, etc. are valid.<sup>53</sup>*

If the member is going through a dry spell she is "treated with sympathy and cautious encouragement," according to Nancy Halpern. This stage is painful for an artist who wants to be productive. Judy Becker, says, "you're allowed to be dry. We talk about strategies to overcome inertia." Sometimes this is a transition stage between one series of pieces and the evolution of a new approach.

The reason for not having work may be pleasant. Marge Malwitz reported, "Many times one of us has traveled and then there is a wonderful sharing of places and inspirations and gathering of fabrics and found objects and design images in photos to share." Wrentham group member, Marie Saulnier, returned from a trip to Ireland with assorted spools of green thread from which each member could choose. Another member, Lynne Stewart, brought back tiny handmade lace motifs for each person from The Netherlands.

## Presentation

Each individual must consider the question of when her work is ready to show. If technical problems are blocking progress on a piece, showing it to the group and asking for advice can be very useful. A garmentmaker may benefit from seeing the article worn by a different person. Sometimes, "Have you tried rayon thread in the bobbin?", or "What happens if you give it a quarter turn to the right?", is enough to invigorate the creative process. Group members need to give some thought to when a piece is ready for public response. Showing the work before it has completely evolved may subject it to premature criticism that will interfere with its full realization. Peter London, an art therapist and professor of art education, noted:

Ample time must be given to evaluation, but not at the beginning. When the enterprise has had sufficient time to run its course and display the mature phase of its potential, only then should the critical eye be cast.

Every new creative enterprise – as it unfolds, probes unknown terrain and tests newly-acquired strengths – is initially fragile. If the shadow of judgment falls too early and too heavily on barely emergent newness, it invariably finds it deficient. We must protect the emergent from the too-wise, too-informed eye of critical judgment. If not we risk squashing awkward but promising shoots before they can develop to maturity.<sup>54</sup>

The group may make its best contribution by simply listening to the quiltmaker as she explains what she hopes to do, understanding the risks involved.

## Competitiveness

Many of the quiltmakers in these groups have international reputations for originality and technical innovation. They exhibit, publish, teach, and sell their work around the world. Within the supportiveness, there is surely an element of competition, but it was not evident in either the questionnaires or my interviews. Each group professed happiness for those members whose quilts were accepted into prestigious shows, and sympathy for those whose works were not chosen. Nancy Halpern mentioned the "lottery-like" nature of such shows. Like many of these artists, she has served as curator, or juror, for regional and international shows, and knows how many fine pieces of work must be rejected from any single exhibit.

Within the New Image group, "Members who are accepted into competitions that others were not

accepted into do announce their success, though do not usually dwell on it out of sensitivity to those not accepted. If the unaccepted are upset, jealous, etc., they may talk about their feelings. We often speculate on the judges involved, compare decisions to other competitions, or share experiences on both rejection and acceptance."<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps because members of these groups have watched the creation of the accepted works, they take an almost maternal pride in their success. Judy Becker, herself a frequent Quilt National exhibitor, said, "We've all had our good and bad times and don't seem to feel resentful. It's loosened up in terms of being able to crow a little." In other words, sometimes it is easier to celebrate someone else's success than one's own.

Eric Maisal, a psychotherapist who specializes in matters unique to artist and performers, noted, "Although artist hunger for a large audience, it must be remembered that they are *not* creating for a crowd. They are creating first for themselves and then for another person like themselves, an artist alter ego, a like-minded witness, a person with whom exchanging work for praise is worth the effort."<sup>56</sup> He expressed very well the bond between members of these critique groups.

The diligence with which each person responded to my list of questions was mentioned earlier. The longevity of these groups is also telling. The Weston, Newton, FACET, and New Image groups have been in existence for more than fifteen years, with a basically stable membership. Another indication of the high regard which members have for each other is their gift giving and the making of birthday quilts.

The art quilt makers critique groups that I studied are characterized by the absence of a formally chosen leader, decision-making by consensus, similarity of goals and values, and the willingness to engage in collaborative activities. Their shared preference for positive reinforcement rather than negative criticism insures that each group will be an empathetic audience. The members understand the trials of inertia and isolation, and the likelihood of rejection in a creative arena where the work they have chosen to do involve risk, originality, and technical innovation. In that informed and affirming climate, they can serve as "like-minded witnesses" as each artist presents her work.

## Notes and References

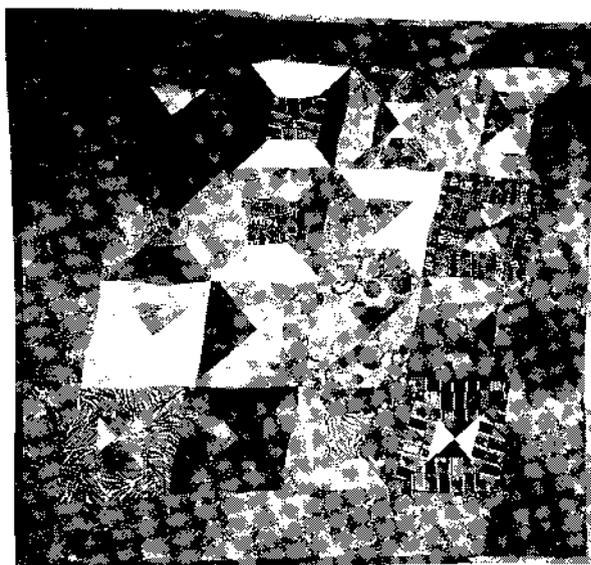
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continued on page 18

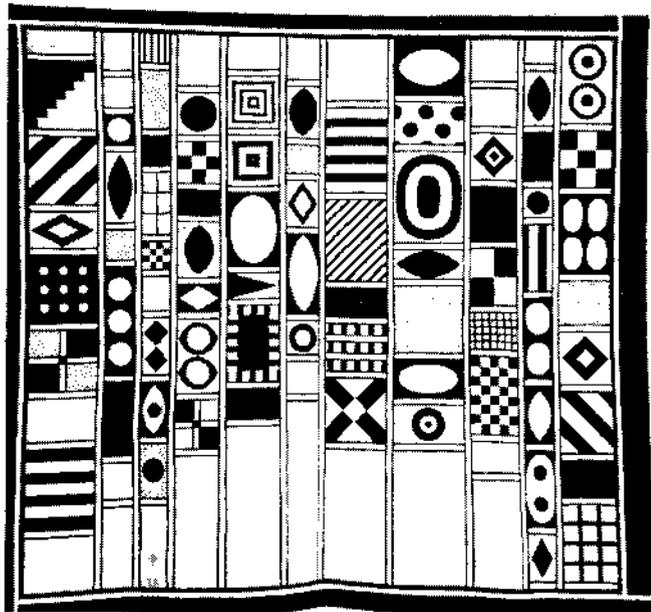
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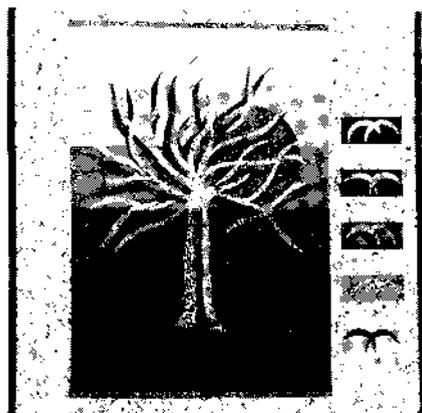
SAQA member, Barbara Carow, presented this paper at the 1997 American Quilt Study Group conference. The paper was published in AQSG's publication, *Uncoverings*. This research and presentation helps to bring the art quilt to the forefront in the field of quilt history. It is presented here to inspire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



"Improvisational Mosaic," 32" x 29",  
Drew Donnelly Benage (see article on page 3).



"Dominos," Carole Braig  
(See article on page 3.)



"Solar Eclipse," 29" x 34", Marianne Axboe  
(See article on page 3.)

# SAQA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES**, a non-profit national organization, was founded to serve artists working in a quilt medium whose work deserves this kind of recognition, as well as dealers, teachers, curators, and collectors who recognize the importance of the emerging Art Quilt, but need to know more about the field's depth and range.

## Join Us!

### Goals of Studio Art Quilt Associates

To encourage and facilitate research, critical writing, and the publication of papers and articles on the history and present of the Art Quilt, in the art press, popular press, and in scholarly and historical journals. It will do this by acting as a resource and clearing house of information on the movement, its teachers and its artists, and by circulating a revolving file of slide portfolios of outstanding work by its artist members.

To make "enabling" materials available to curators, to teachers and students of studio art and art history, and to dealers, gallery owners, and art consultants. These materials would include bibliographies and reprints (where available) of the best critical writings in the field, member artists' slide and resumé portfolios, and information about teachers or speakers available for workshops, seminars or symposia.

To publish a newsletter addressing the professional needs of the Quilt Artist and providing a forum for the exchange of views and information among artists, dealers, and collectors.

To identify collectors and patrons of Art Quilts to SAQA members and to each other, and to foster their interest in the movement by sponsoring regional symposia and studio visits with member artists.

To encourage quality exhibitions, with documentary catalogues and critical review.

### Active Members

All members will receive the SAQA Newsletter, as well as information on SAQA meetings and educational symposia. The newsletter is an open forum. It will address professional issues of the artist, such matters as pricing art work, developing a portfolio, and entering the marketplace. It will also include articles by dealers, conservators, teachers, and historians, and interviews with outstanding persons in the field.

Members will access on site to the archives and artist members' portfolio registry, and through SAQA, can reach each other for private exchanges of slides and information.

SAQA has future plans for biannual juried member exhibitions to be held in conjunction with general meetings.

### Professional Artist Members

This is a special category for professional artists. There are certain specific requirements for members who upgrade to this category; there is also an additional annual fee. Artists are expected to submit their portfolios and slides to the SAQA registry and to update them annually. This archive will be used to promote the Studio Art Quilt movement as well as the work of individual artist members. These archives will be available to periodicals, museums, galleries, consultants and art historians. Monthly promotional packets which include color reproductions of artists work will be sent to the art public to generate publicity. SAQA will not arrange the sale of any piece, but will act to educate the marketplace about the best work being done in the field SAQA will also act as a clearing house through which artists and interested collectors can reach each other. SAQA also consults with art institutions on specific exhibitions and available work.

Requirements for Professional Artist Member can be found in the SAQA Resource Directory which will be mailed upon receipt of your Active Member annual dues.



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

### Active Member

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

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

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- portfolio in SAQA rotating archives
- slide registry

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## SAQA NEWSLETTER

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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, 1203 East Broadway, #G-14, 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.)

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Please contact Dominie Nash if you have any sources that would be interested in receiving a portfolio of work the professional artist members.