

SAQA *Journal*

Studio Art Quilt Associates, Inc.



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Lingering Image, Japan

44 x 46 inches

by Patty Hawkins

see page 8

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Thoughts from the president

by Sandra Sider



As I travel around the U.S. to meet our members and offer critique sessions, many of them ask similar questions and voice some of the same concerns about juried competitions. I would like to address three of these issues.

One concern pertains to restricted formats for juried competitions, for which artists must submit quilts within a specific range of measurements, often with 40 to 44 inches being the maximum dimension on any one side. For those accustomed to creating compositions of moderate size, this requirement presents no problem. Those who normally work in larger formats, however, may feel frustrated. One solution would be simply to avoid such competitions, rather than struggle against your own

artistic vision. Another approach would be to accept the challenge of changing one's focus and use this opportunity to experiment with new techniques and processes or to undertake new subject matter. Rather than delineating the maximum measurements on a design wall, the artist might concentrate on the minimum allowable format, gradually building outwards from that pictorial space. With this more relaxed method, the artist would not feel "boxed in" by outer edges while in creative mode.

"What makes a quilt stand out in the jurying process?" is a question I am asked at almost every critique session. As you may know, the initial images for jurying are thumbnail versions. While jurors, of course, study the details and larger images, the first impression of all the work submitted is made during the first foray through the thumbnail images. Quilts containing saturated color and significant contrast (combinations of light and

dark) immediately stand out in small images. These effects, which catch the jurors' eyes, are only enhanced in larger images. In an actual exhibition, delicate tonal shifts and more subtle, textured surfaces appeal to viewers and critics alike. But quilts with these aspects can be overlooked when juried unless they were photographed with close attention to their unique qualities.

"How should I deal with rejection?" is another question I hear often. Well, you are asking the right person; I have been trying to get a quilt into *Quilt National* since the 1980s and into *Visions* since its second exhibition. The fact is, after a dozen major rejections, it has become a game rather than a heartbreak. My best advice is: Believe in yourself. Never stop learning, experimenting, and maturing your style. Life might surprise you.

Meet your new board member: Nancy Bavor



Although I made my first quilt in 1971 after visiting the historic exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, it took me another fifteen years to finish the second one. I spent the intervening years working in art museums as a curator and collections manager and taking on additional roles in membership development, strategic planning, and fundraising. Since the mid-1980s, I have been a quilt maker, teacher, collector, and exhibition curator.

Several years ago, I decided to completely unleash my long-suppressed passion for

quilts. Since then, I completed the master's degree program in the History of Textiles, with a Quilt Studies Emphasis, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My long-standing interest in studio quilts led to my thesis on the early years of the art quilt movement in California. Also, I am an American Quilter's Society Certified Appraiser of Quilted Textiles.

I look forward to using my expertise as a quilt historian, appraiser, and curator to further SAQA's goals. I am honored to be a part of such a dynamic extended community.

Report from the SAQA executive director

by Martha Sielman



It's a question we all seem to wrestle with—who am I as an artist? Come to the 2012 SAQA/SDA conference “Identity: Context and Reflection” and

explore a variety of approaches to creating an answer for yourself.

This joint conference with the Surface Design Association will be held March 30–April 1, 2012 at the Marriott Philadelphia West in West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia and easily accessible by plane, bus, train, or car. Special conference rate accommodations are available at the hotel.

The opening keynote speaker for “Identity: Context and Reflection” will be Bruce Pepich, Executive Director and Curator of Collections of the Racine Art Museum.

Panel discussions will include “Artistic Identity,” moderated by Elizabeth Barton with Lorraine

Glessner, Dominie Nash, and Emily Richardson, and “Jurying Art Quilt Elements,” with the *Art Quilt Elements* jurors, moderated by Cindy Friedman.

A highlight of the conference will be the opening of *Art Quilt Elements* at the Wayne Art Center on Friday evening. Other networking opportunities will include an opening icebreaker event and a luncheon on Friday.

A preview of the *FiberPhiladelphia 2012* exhibits Friday afternoon will be followed by an all-day bus tour of various fiber hot spots on Saturday.

The lineup of lectures includes talks by Ed Johnetta Fowler Miller on her work with artists in Côte d'Ivoire and by Sandra Sider on how we use our artistic identities to promote our work. The closing keynote speaker will be Bruce D. Hoffman, curatorial consultant for *Outside/Inside the Box* and *FiberPhiladelphia 2012* and former director of the Snyderman-Works Gallery and their *International Fiber Biennial*.

Post-conference three-day workshops will be offered with Lorraine Glessner (*Mark-Making Explorations for Surface Design*), Judy Langille (*Cut, Tear and Slash Your Way into Innovative Fabric Design*), Cameron Anne Mason (*Beyond the Surface: Sculptural Explorations with Soft Materials*), Jan Myers-Newbury (*A Pole and a Piece of Fabric*), Laura Sapelly (*The Stitched Journal*), Adrienne Sloane (*Knitting Anything: Not Clothing*), and Ann Vickrey Evans (*Hybrid Felt for Artistic Yardage*).

SAQA members at our last conference in Denver said, “I learned so much and enjoyed meeting everyone for the first time.” “My expectations were exceeded. I really learned a lot and loved the chance to meet other artists.” “I left feeling inspired and learned a lot that will help me move my textile art career forward. I loved the ability to network with some of the foremost artists in America.”

Come to Philadelphia and experience the energy and inspiration for yourself!

Board report by Linda Colsh, secretary



The SAQA board is undergoing a few membership changes in 2010–2011. First, we welcome new board member Nancy Bavor.

Nancy is a quilt appraiser from California who recently received her master's degree in the history of textiles from the University of

Nebraska–Lincoln. She is currently the managing curator for SAQA's *Sense of Adventure* exhibition.

At the same time, we say goodbye to Pokey Bolton. Pokey has been an active member of the board for five years. Pokey served on a number of SAQA committees, including the nominating committee and finance committee. We will miss her!

A while ago, there was a discussion about seeking more board representation from the wider art community,

particularly among art museum curators, directors, art critics, and gallery owners. The nominating committee has been actively exploring these options, because bringing in new members from outside the quilt art world encourages commitment to our medium.

The nominating committee always looks first within our own SAQA membership when researching

see “Board report” on page 36

Letter from the editor

by Carolyn Lee Vehslage



In the seven years I've been editor of the *SAQA Journal*, Martha Sielman and I have implemented many changes to improve it.

When I took over in the fall of 2004, the *Journal* was a black-and-white newsletter with very limited graphics, no photographs, and minimal content. There wasn't any overall direction for the publication.

My goal was to transform the *Journal* into a publication that would support the membership and further SAQA's mission of documenting exhibitions. I wanted to have articles that were pertinent to an art quilter's career, so I've put a strong emphasis on the business side of being an artist. We've published articles on the mechanics of how to present and market your art, how to write an artist statement, how to photograph your work for jurying and publication, how to price your art, how to handle taxes arising from your art business, how to secure venues for exhibiting, and how to insure your work and your business. To cover these important topics and others, I reached out to the SAQA community

and beyond to find artists who were successfully exhibiting and selling their work, or who had a special expertise, and I asked them to write about their experiences.

As editor, I have wanted to document as many SAQA and national exhibitions as possible. Sometimes I've been able to arrange reviews or critiques by outside critics. Other times, I've asked the curator or a juror to write about a few of the pieces in the exhibition and to explain the design principles used in those pieces.

Another thing I've implemented is the inclusion of a featured artist article in each issue so you can learn what your peers are doing, both domestically and internationally. I try to alternate between U.S. artists and artists from other regions of the world in every other issue. What I look for in their stories is a teachable moment—how something that has worked for them can benefit the rest of us. This month's artist is Patty Hawkins, and we learn how a trip to Japan has influenced her artwork.

The recent Spring issue received high praise for being "the best issue so far." There must have been some magic when the articles came together. It included SAQA's requirements for PAM membership, pointers to help prepare for tax season,

thoughts on what to do about your art after you're gone, raw-edge collage technique, the process of mounting your work on Plexiglas, a discussion of teaching contracts, and Valerie Goodwin's article on how she designed her piece *Lay of the Land II*.

To successfully produce a journal that makes most members read it cover to cover, I'd like to continue to put business articles into the mix while also including pieces on the design of artwork and cutting-edge techniques. So I rely on you, the reader, to let me know if you, or someone you know, is working in a new way and wants to share that technique. I'm also looking for artists to write about one specific quilt they have made, from concept through design process to completion, and then share why they think this piece is successful in terms of the elements of design.

You can reach me at clvquilts@yahoo.com or 856-693-4140 to discuss your ideas. They are truly welcome. I also want to express my personal gratitude to all the hundreds of authors who have agreed to write when I asked or who have volunteered a topic or an article. Thank you.

Find back issues of the *SAQA Journal* at

<http://www.saqau.wikispaces.net/Res+SAQA+Journal+Back+Issues>

The McMinn collection of contemporary quilt art

by Sandra Sider

Ted McMinn began purchasing studio quilts in 2000. He first learned about contemporary quilt art around 1979 as an undergraduate at Iowa State University, when he accompanied a friend to a fiber exhibition at Brunnier Art Museum in Ames, Iowa. The show left a lasting impression, but McMinn did not see art quilts again until more than a decade later, after moving to St. Louis. It was then that McMinn read a newspaper notice announcing that the touring exhibition of *Quilt National 1991* would be displayed nearby. McMinn explains, "Seeing the *Quilt National* exhibition allowed me

to reconnect with how much I loved this art form. Going to see the *Quilt National* exhibitions every few years, when its tour included St. Louis, became a regular and anticipated event for me."

McMinn credits Hilary Fletcher, former director of *Quilt National*, as the greatest influence on his vision as a quilt collector, since she was the force behind the pivotal show reconnecting him with his passion.

Between 2001 and 2006, McMinn also worked extensively with Jennifer Moore and Janice Johnson of Thirteen Moons Gallery in Santa Fe to source potential acquisitions.

McMinn collects art glass as well as studio quilts, appreciative of the abstract and decorative aspects of both genres. Today, he usually looks at gallery collections online to determine if there is a piece of particular interest. However, he continues to identify special artwork by going to the *Quilt National* exhibition when it stops in St. Louis. He also attends the annual AQS show in Paducah,

continued on next page



Wanderlust III

46 x 41 inches ©1998 Libby Lehman



Cymbalism

95 x 48 inches ©2001 Carol Taylor



The Red Pagoda
72 x 50 inches ©2002 Sue Gilgren



Feather Study #14
56 x 56 inches ©2000 Caryl Bryer Fallert

Kentucky, and peruses *SAQA Journals* and fiber art books.

The McMinn collection currently includes 84 quilts by 32 artists. The collector is in the process of renovating his home to create additional exhibition space, including one large room with a high ceiling and professional lighting. One unique challenge McMinn faces in the renovation is to create display options that will discourage his two cats from interacting with the quilts. With such a large collection, rotating pieces for display can be an effort. "Rotating pieces is a project that can take a few days' time between taking down and cleaning (light vacuuming) the pieces before storage, and then figuring out what new pieces to put up where," he says. While the renovation is underway, McMinn has found it difficult to identify locations for each quilt. However, he plans to return to his system of logging the measurement for each hanging location, along with

a list of which pieces might fit in that space, into a spreadsheet. When not on display, his quilts are stored on polypropylene tubes.

The works of nine artists make up nearly half of Ted McMinn's collection. Included in the collection are four or more studio quilts by Elizabeth Busch, Erika Carter, Judith Content, Caryl Bryer Fallert, Michele Hardy, Libby Lehman, Jean Neblett, Emily Richardson, and Carol Taylor. Since 2004, McMinn has purchased single quilts by several artists, rather than focusing on an individual artist.

McMinn is drawn to a piece for a variety of reasons, including color palette, a technique not currently represented in the collection, or a good example of an artist's particular style. "The main thing," McMinn says, "is just aesthetic, which is a hard thing to define." And although McMinn says he has an affinity for bright, saturated colors, he also has many pieces with more muted colors. Regardless

of style, technique, or color, all the quilts in the collection "demonstrate different parts of the quilt universe."

Price per square foot is one factor McMinn considers prior to purchasing a piece. McMinn has collected artwork in a wide range of sizes from a small piece just over one square foot to large pieces measuring more than 40 square feet. Approximately 25 of the pieces in the collection are small to medium (less than 10 square feet), though McMinn acknowledges he prefers larger quilts because of their dramatic impact. Because of this wide range in size, McMinn considers the price per square foot as a metric that enables him to compare artwork of different sizes. The average cost per square foot for the entire collection is currently in the neighborhood of \$250 per square foot. However, a more detailed analysis of the price per square foot data shows two pricing peaks, one at \$180 and another at \$300 per square foot, within a broad



Lace
25 x 55 inches
©2001 Jane Kenyon



Nest II
62 x 62 inches
©2002 Sue Benner

range of purchase prices. To date, no quilt in the collection has cost more than \$500 per square foot, although McMinn does not expect that record to stand as the collection grows.

There have been occasions when price has deterred McMinn from purchasing a piece. "The collection would be two or three times larger right now if I had limitless resources," he says. Economics is the limiting

factor in making a decision, so when McMinn visits a large show, he pares his possible purchase choices down to no more than four pieces. That approach forces thoughtful consideration of every piece. There have been times when a piece he has been interested in has already been sold, but McMinn is reluctant to commission an artist to make a replica. "As Joni Mitchell commented, it's kind of

like asking Van Gogh to paint *Starry Night* again," McMinn explains. However, he expects that some day he will engage an artist on commission, either to make a piece similar to one already made or one based on specific subject matter.

The quilts shown here document the range of styles in the McMinn collection. Libby Lehman, the first quilt artist McMinn collected, explored depth and tonality in her *Wanderlust* series, a signature style in which she worked for several years. The luminosity of Lehman's quilt is similar to that of Carol Taylor's work, *Cymbalism*. It is not surprising that a collector of studio glass would be attracted to this effect in quilts as well. Taylor's quilt belongs to her *Gong Motif* series, with the quilting lines indicating reverberations from

see "McMinn collection" on page 37

Featured Artist:

Patty Hawkins

by Vivien Zepf

From her home studio in the high country of Estes Park, Colorado, Patty Hawkins looks out over a majestic vista of mountains and forest. The quiet solitude of her surroundings provides a nurturing environment perfect for contemplating nature and all its gifts. Her love of the Colorado landscape fuels Patty's imagination and provides the inspiration for much of her artwork. A strong sense of place is evident in her work, which reflects her reverence for nature in themes of landscapes, mountains, streams, rocks, and her beloved aspen trees.

Patty and her husband, Wes, met in Shreveport, Louisiana, where they both grew up. Wes's job with an aerospace company eventually brought the family to Brigham City, Utah.



While their children were very young, Patty found the perfect creative outlet in making braided-wool rugs. She worked on the floor while the children played and crawled about. From local artisans, Patty learned how to dye old wool coats to be used in her rugs, and this was her introduction to dyeing fiber.

In 1967 the family settled in Boulder, Colorado. By then, all the children were school age. Patty had

always wanted to be an artist, and in 1970 she began taking drawing and painting classes taught by well-known local artists at the local YWCA. "We had a magnificent time unlocking the mysteries of watercolor, which now adds to my dye markings. I still enjoy monthly lunches with my cherished watercolor friends," she says. Helen Davis, an art educator, was the leader of a local informal design group which included weavers, sculptors,

Aspen Solace 40 x 76 inches (diptych) ©2007–2008



and painters. The Wednesday Critique Group, as they were called, encouraged artists of all media to come share their artwork, and Patty attended the monthly meetings regularly. Patty says, "Critiquing works was the best eye training and color education I could ever have received." At the time, Patty participated in the group as a watercolorist. "I struggled for fifteen years to be a watercolor painter. I could paint great skies, but not the foreground. We learned how different artists work within their chosen medium. This education was a gift." Though no longer a painter, Patty is still a member of the group and is invigorated by the company of other artists, relishing the artistic inspiration derived from the diverse membership.

While taking art classes and raising her children, Patty also became interested in making quilts, limiting herself to buying remnants from a local fabric store. Her first quilt was a "Quilt In A Day" log cabin made from a pattern found in a magazine. Construction techniques came easily to Patty since she had learned to sew from her mother and had started sewing clothes in junior high. She enjoyed hunting for fabrics. "I got the wildest pleasure in taking scraps of dresses I had made for my girls and including them in my Cathedral Window quilt, which I worked on for five summers while sitting at swimming lessons for the kids." These early quilts satisfied her passion for playing with color.

In 1987, Patty and Wes went to see an exhibition of contemporary craft at the Denver Art Museum. *Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical*, a traveling Smithsonian exhibition, included the work of established quilt artists

Nancy Crow, Michael James, Pamela Studstill, and Risë Nagin. "These quilts were hanging in a tall atrium, and the experience was so profound I couldn't even speak. I told my husband I could make quilts—they were just a larger canvas to play with color and shapes." Viewing this exhibition and realizing that quilts could be art was a pivotal moment for Patty. She came home from the exhibition and started piecing, working with a new sense of freedom and boldness.

Complex piecing and an adventurous combination of color with black-

*"It's a privilege to
teach and share
what we know —
we don't want to
keep it to ourselves."*

and-white prints were the elements of Patty's first series. Geometric patterns were important in her second series, *Colorwash/Brushstrokes*. She says, "I was thrilled to realize a way to feature all my newly created stacks of hand-dyed fabrics in this series, inspired by an old floor tile pattern." Her third series consisted of mountain-themed quilts, inspired by the love of rock formations instilled by her geologist father.

Though new to art quilting, Patty kept abreast of events. A teacher at the local quilt store, Lynn Mattingly, and a newly formed critique group kept her apprised and encouraged her

to submit her work to *Quilt National*. Just a year after seeing the exhibit at the Denver Art Museum, Patty's submission to *Quilt National 1989* was accepted. The piece was a Drunkard's Path quilt with very large cactus people populating the surface. Patty was inspired by a cardboard standup of a cactus wearing sunglasses, holding a summer drink. This was followed by an acceptance to the American Folk Art Museum's *Memories of Childhood* exhibition shortly thereafter.

A class with Nancy Crow at the Houston Quilt Festival set the tone for Patty's quilt career. Nancy challenged Patty with diverse questions, such as "Are you competing with yourself now?" Nancy's questions planted the seed in Patty's mind that she needed to continue to pursue new directions and not rest on her success. "I don't think we should live on our laurels. I'm only as good as my next quilt," Patty still says.

While in Houston, Patty met the Houston Contemporary Quilters' Group. This group of art quilters offered an opportunity to meet like-minded artists and to learn about new ways to express creativity in quilting. When she returned home, Patty founded the Front Range Contemporary Quilters (FRCQ) group with five other quilters. Like the Houston model, FRCQ differentiates itself from a traditional quilting guild. They offer surface design and composition classes, contracting with teachers worldwide, as well as pulling from within their own accomplished membership. They have a goal to "broaden the realm of art quilting and to explore new possibilities for creativity."

When they first began, FRCQ met

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Basically Scribbles

60 x 48

©1998



Lingering Image, Japan

44 x 46 inches

©2010

as a special-interest group of the Boulder Handweavers Guild, but there simply weren't enough members to justify being a separate entity. However, in two years, the group grew large enough to be on their own. Now 22 years strong, the group has more than 250 members. As in the beginning, the group continues to teach its members how to enter juried exhibitions and to encourage them to follow their own muse. The members of the group have been innovators in art quilting. FRCQ has a long-standing relationship with the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum and the Longmont Colorado Museum, where recent juried exhibitions were held in the spring and summer of 2011.

Since her first inclusion in *Quilt National*, Patty has continued to grow as an artist and has been a part of *Quilt National* an additional six times, as well as exhibiting in *Quilt Visions* three times.

Patty credits a number of teachers with helping her develop her skills.

Nancy Crow urged Patty to continue to question what she did and why. Ann Johnston and Jane Dunnewold helped to transform Patty's knowledge of fiber dyeing into a passion. Sue Benner gave Patty the freedom to fuse, and, Patty says, "It changed the world for me." Sue Benner also encouraged Patty to include commercial fabrics with high-contrast patterning to punch up the look of her own hand-dyed fabrics. Kerr Grabowski guided Patty to refine her deconstructed screenprinting skills, showing her how to add visual texture to her printed surfaces. All this input has helped Patty develop three more recent series of art quilts: *Window Scribbles*, *Aspen Trees*, and *Memories of Japan*. She believes in the importance of developing an idea by working in series and she develops

multiple interpretations of a theme.

The *Window Scribbles* series began after a visit to one of her daughters in San Francisco. Patty was fascinated by the wavy reflections in the windows of skyscrapers. The quilts in the *Window Scribbles* series have pieced backgrounds and scribbles fused to the surface. This series occupied Patty through much of the 1990s.

When Wes and Patty moved to Estes Park, Colorado, approximately 10 years ago, Patty began her *Aspen* series. "I'm passionate about the regal, majestic, and stately white-and-black patterning of the aspen trees, scarred by elk's antlers. Trees represent longevity, stability, rootedness; a life metaphor for me."

The *Aspen* series quilts are created mostly with fabrics of her own making. She works to build a large



The Light of Day 39 x 84 inches (diptych) 2005

Winner of the Quilts Japan Prize, *Quilt Visions* 2006

inventory of these fabrics so that she always has a rich palette of options to choose from when designing. Many of the fabrics she dyed 20 years ago are now being reinvented with techniques like shibori over dyeing, monoprinting, and thermofax screen-printing to add more visual texture.

Patty creates her fabrics and quilts in her stunning studio specially built and designed by Wes. The studio has five separate tables, each used for different parts of Patty's creative process, and an 8x16-foot design wall. She also has a dedicated dyeing space. The studio has windows on three walls, letting in a great deal of natural light and affording Patty with a view of the mountains. "I would have put windows on all the walls, but I needed space for pin walls," she says.

For years, Patty loved working with her Bernina 1630, acquiring a machine of her own after using one on loan from Bernina for a year. She recently purchased a Bernina 820 because the bobbin is larger, the throat is bigger, and "the Bernina Stitch Regulator is awesome." Patty's

excited to become more inventive in her quilting using the new machine, but admits "I'm still in kindergarten with it."

Intricate piecing techniques were hallmarks of Patty's earlier quilts, but in the last 10 years, her quilts have been primarily constructed using fusible web and collage. An idea can come from anywhere—patterns of light and shadow on a tree trunk, reflections in a window, rocks in a streambed, the changing colors of the seasons. Patty initially references photographs, but most of her work is based on the emotional inspiration created by a place. "When I look through my fabric stash, I'm drawn to pieces I want to use as a background. Then the fabric nudges me to a certain focus. Should there be a group of trees? A few focal trees? I labor over it, too." When in doubt, Patty turns to Wes for feedback. "He's my invited critic. He's always right on with his comments; he's not burdened by what he thinks it has to be."

In her *Aspen* series, Patty uses strong vertical quilting lines to enunciate tree

lines, adding sheers for shadowed areas, then more stitching for foliage areas. She experiments with the placement of the stitched line in each quilt. She makes organic markings for her tree fabrics using shibori pole-wrap dyeing and silkscreen techniques. Through the use of color, placement, and size, Patty creates depth in her pieces, harkening back to the advice she received from Helen Davis long ago: "It's an artist's responsibility to draw viewers in and to create a figurative path for the eye to wander in and around a work to create visual interest."

A friend introduced Patty to the Japanese idea of *wabi-sabi*, or finding beauty in imperfection. Wabi-sabi is an important concept in Patty's work. In 2006, Patty was the recipient of the Quilts Japan prize at *Quilt Visions* 2006, a great honor which includes traveling to Japan to tour the sites and to teach. The opportunity to teach and visit Japan was the realization of a dream of a lifetime. Wes and their youngest daughter, Melissa, joined Patty in 2007 on her trip. For a week, Patty taught classes in Tokyo

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Discover the ancient art of katazome

by Karen Illman Miller

Art quilters today use many surface design techniques to produce patterned fabrics. Discharge, silk screen, and shibori are techniques recognized by most artists and their customers. I, however, am the happy practitioner of a much less well-known process: the art of Japanese stencil dyeing known as *katazome*.

Katazome is an ancient textile art that has been practiced in Japan for hundreds of years. Originally made for summer kimono or for futon covers and other household items, katazome fabrics were dyed in indigo. Traditional katazome have repeating patterns, often of great delicacy. Before the advent of synthetic dyes, all fabrics in Japan were produced using natural dyes or mineral pigments with a soy milk binder. Although synthetic dyes are now the norm for katazome

in Tokyo and Kyoto, the Okinawans continue to use the old techniques to produce their own form of katazome, called *bingata*. This process, using natural dyes and pigments, has become my passion.

As a beginning quilter 17 years ago, I found katazome when I had the good fortune to take a local workshop given by a Japanese indigo dyer. He taught us how to cut a stencil, and from that moment I knew that this was what I was meant to do. I have been finding my own voice as a katazome artist since studying with American katazome master John Marshall.

Katazome is no longer limited to traditional indigos. It can be used in a fairly easy one-step process to produce multicolored cottons, linens, and silks, using a variety of fabric dyes and textile

paints. By protecting dyed areas with paste and then layering stencils, artists can produce fabrics of increasing complexity. Stencil-dyed images can also be combined with other techniques to produce fabrics of great depth and beauty. It is a hugely versatile technique for the limited production of patterned fabrics at home, without fancy equipment or bulky machinery. There is virtually no fabric I can imagine that I cannot produce myself. The only art quilt I've seen using katazome besides my own is *Gaia* by M. Joan Lintault. This piece still takes my breath away. Seeing it in the 1992 *Quilt Visions* show catalog gave me the courage to strike out on my own and find the imagery that speaks most deeply to me.

The term katazome is made up of two Japanese words: *kata* (pattern) and *zome* (dyeing). The fabric design



Winterlight

Each panel 35 x 15 inches

©2008 Karen Miller



left: The rice paste is formed into donuts to help the steam penetrate evenly, then steamed for 30 minutes.



right: The paste is spread through the stencil with a spatula or *hera*.

is made with a rice paste resist called *nori*, which is applied through a paper stencil. Once the paste is dry, the fabric can be dyed or painted. Washing off the resist reveals the protected fabric underneath. This is rather like the batik process, but rice paste is much less toxic and troublesome to remove than wax, and *katazome* creates a crisp-edged stencil, whereas batik does not. Collectors have preserved antique stencils which reveal the amazing virtuosity of the Japanese stencil carvers. In fact, it was a book of antique stencil patterns, bought years before I started quilting, which fueled my desire to master

this ancient craft and produce fabrics for my own use as an art quilter and surface designer.

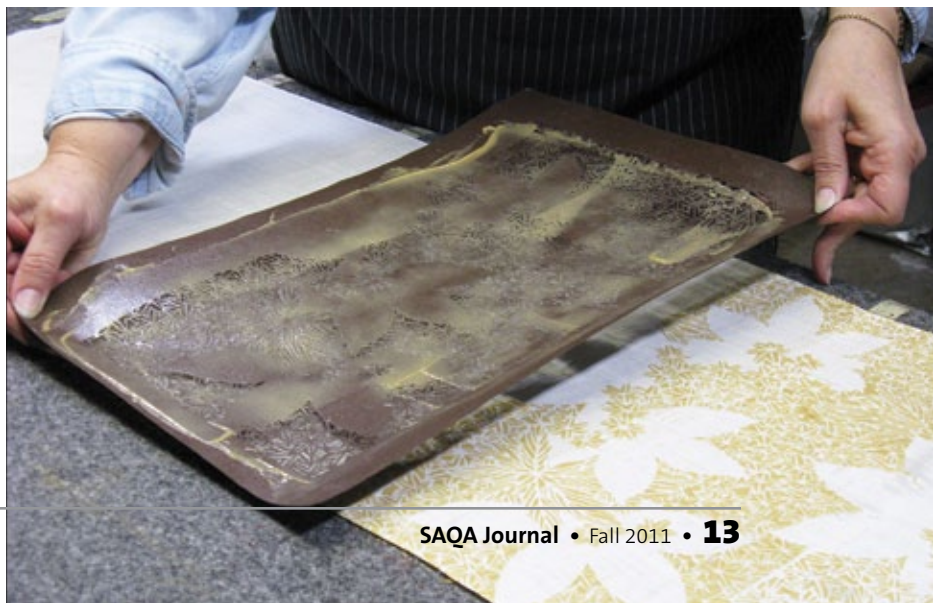
The stencil-making process starts with a handmade Japanese paper called *shibugami*. This paper is made from two or three layers of thin white mulberry fiber paper laminated with fermented persimmon juice, and then smoked. The persimmon tannins strengthen and waterproof the paper in the same way tanning preserves leather. It is chestnut-brown in color and smells like incense. Once dry, the paper is brittle, and even extremely delicate patterns are easy to cut. An image can be drawn on

the paper, photocopied on it, or, for larger stencils, printed onto sheets of tracing paper, which is attached with spray adhesive. An X-ACTO™ knife and a soft vinyl mat underneath are all that are needed to cut a stencil. Typical stencils cut from traditional Japanese patterns are 11x17 inches, so the 22x36-inch shibugami sheets can accommodate four stencils. Once it's cut, I attach a layer of silk mesh to the top of the stencil to hold all the little parts together. This also makes the stencil strong enough to stand up to repeated use. The Japanese use a lacquer product to attach the silk,

continued on next page

left: The stencil is lifted off, revealing the pasted image on the fabric.

right: One edge of the stencil is carefully aligned to paste a repeat pattern.





left: Background color is applied first with a soft Japanese brush, allowing even blending of colors. The paints are powdered watercolor pigments in freshly prepared soy milk.

center: Detail colors are added once the first colors and the paste are dry. Then the dyes cure for a few days.

right: Soaking off the paste takes 20 minutes in warm water, without scrubbing, revealing the pattern.

but latex gloss enamel works just as well. The characteristics of shibugami enable me to cut much finer patterns than are possible with plastic stencils.

Before a stencil is used, it's soaked in water, and the brittle paper becomes tough, leathery, and waterproof. It clings to the fabric, unlike plastic stencils, making the rice paste much less likely to creep under the stencil. Nori paste is made from sticky rice flour, rice bran, and water. The rice bran, a by-product of polished white rice, is finely milled just for dyeing. It helps reduce the stickiness of the cooked rice flour, which otherwise would be difficult to handle and to remove from the fabric.

The resulting dough is formed into small balls or donut shapes, wrapped in a damp cloth, and steamed for half an hour. The uncooked dough is a pasty tan, with a slightly gritty texture. Cooked paste looks like warm peanut butter, smells like brown rice, is elastic and velvety smooth. Because it's non-toxic, I can safely use my kitchen equipment to make the paste. A little builder's lime (calcium carbonate, sometimes called Calx) toughens and preserves the paste. Salt or glycerin keeps dry paste from cracking. The Japanese use salt, which absorbs moisture from the air, but because humidity varies so widely in

this country, I prefer glycerin.

To successfully apply the resist paste, fabric must be laid on a firm or very slightly padded surface; a springy print table is too soft. The finished nori is spread through the stencil with a spatula and allowed to dry. Japanese spreaders are made of hinoki cedar, but my students find plastic drywall spatulas work well. If the piece is to be painted later, it's best to stretch the fabric while the paste dries so it stays smooth. For small pieces, simple frames made from ½-inch PVC pipe and big binder clips are suitable. If larger pieces are being made, the Japanese system of end clamps with side-to-side bamboo stretchers, called *shinshi*, is ideal. Shinshi are sometimes tricky to find outside of Japan, but this system allows me to paste and dye very long lengths (8 to 10 yards) of fabric, or fabrics as wide as 60 inches, wonderful for garments or wholecloth quilt tops. The stretched fabric looks vaguely like a hammock, which has tempted passersby more than once when I've been working outdoors.

The dry paste is durable enough to be dipped into an indigo vat for a minute or two without dissolving. Since indigo requires repeated dips to build up stable deep blues, the fabric must dry between dips. I use plastic skirt

hangers to hold my fabric panels and weight the corners with lead fishing weights, so the fabric slides easily into the vat without folding back on itself and smearing the softened paste. It only takes 20 minutes in warm water to soak off the paste, and it's just magical to watch the pattern appear.

Rice paste is not durable enough for other vat dyes due to their longer immersion times. But pasted and stretched fabric can be painted with any dye that can be thickened enough so that it doesn't soak under the resist paste. Fiber-reactive, acid, or direct dyes, transparent Setacolor textile paint, and watercolor pigments mixed with fresh soy milk are all equally successful. I have grown accustomed to soy-based pigment dyes and use them almost exclusively in my work. Dry soybeans, soaked overnight in water, are blended with enough water and strained through a cloth to make a liquid that is approximately the consistency of 2% milk. A cup of soaked beans makes about a half gallon of soy milk.

I pretreat fabric with a layer of the soy milk to size it, improving how the dye binds to the fabric and reducing the likelihood of color bleeding under the paste. This step also stiffens the cloth a little and makes it easier to handle on the pasting surface.

Using soft Japanese brushes, I apply powdered watercolor pigments that have been stirred into the soy milk, taking care not to flood the fabric with too much dye, and working the color well into the weave of the fabric before the paste starts to soften. Some lightweight cottons tend to wick the dyes under the paste, but working with thicker soy milk and a relatively dry brush can be helpful. These dyes work very well on silks of any weight, linens, and natural fiber blends.

The background is usually dyed first, and darker detail colors are added later. The colors are transparent and additive, enabling me to work the color on the fabric, blending, feathering, and shading to develop perfect graded transitions between one color and the next, a property I find especially wonderful. After the

first colors are applied and the paste is allowed to dry, I can go back and add subtle shading, change the color slightly by adding a different color on top, or cover areas with plain paste to protect them before dyeing the background a competing color. Sometimes as many as 10 different pasting and dyeing steps are made before the fabric is finished.

The dyed fabrics need to cure a few days before the paste is soaked off, giving the soy proteins time to denature and attach the colors to the fabric well. Because they are technically water-based paints, the pigments are not as wash-fast as fiber-reactive dyes. However, they are appropriately lightfast and durable for art quilts and art garments.

When I first started katazome, I cut many, many stencils using the wealth of copyright-free sources for

traditional Japanese patterns. I love stencil cutting—the feel of the paper, the rhythm of the knife, and the meditative quality of the process. As I became more technically proficient, I began to look at the world differently, seeing pattern everywhere I went. My own work now bears little resemblance to the traditional Japanese patterns, but my respect for the natural world parallels that of the Japanese stencil designers. From bare trees and skeleton leaves, to starfish and the delicate abstractions produced by natural forms, there is nowhere in nature I cannot find inspiration for the work I do, supported by a technique I love. ▼

SAQA professional artist member Karen Illman Miller is a fiber artist living in Corvallis, Oregon. Her website is www.nautilus-fiberarts.com.

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What to say in your artist statement

Why and how you make your art, what that says about you—and nothing more

by Leni Levenson Wiener

For many artists, writing an artist statement can be as painful as a trip to the dentist for a root canal, but an artist statement is a powerful and important tool. It's your opportunity to explain your work to those viewing it, as if you were standing next to them and engaging in conversation. It's your platform to discuss why you make your art, how you make your art, and what your art says about you.

It helps to think about the function of an artist statement. Imagine your work is hanging in a show, and a stranger who has never seen your work is taken by your piece and wants to know more. This interested stranger may ultimately become a buyer or even a collector of your work, so the short three or four paragraph representation of you on the wall next to your artwork must say a lot, in only a few words.

First and foremost, an artist statement should tell the person reading it what you do and why you do it. Your opening paragraph should be a simple description of your work ("hand appliqué with beading," "raw-edge machine appliqué," "printing and stamping on canvas with stitching and found objects," etc.) and what themes or techniques most attract you.

Next, talk about how you work, the techniques you employ, and how you make your artistic decisions along the way. Explain to the reader why you use particular materials or working methods. Talk about whether you plan your work first or progress more intuitively. Remember that the person reading your artist statement may or

may not be an artist, so don't get too technical. Explain only the basics, and don't include, for instance, the size needles you use or how you dye your fabric. Your artist statement is like lingerie—showing a little skin is intriguing; too much might just be, well, too much.

Finish your artist statement by explaining how your work reflects you and your life experiences, what you're trying to say, or what influ-

ences you—and be specific. If you say you're exploring the time/space continuum, explain exactly how you've done that in your work. What about you, your life, and your unique personal experiences led you to choose a particular theme? Is there a statement you want your work to make? This is your chance to tell the viewer what you want them to take away from seeing your work.

artist statement so it sounds the way you speak—no flowery language, no trendy artspeak, no technical jargon, no haiku (please, no haiku). Too many artists think their artist statement should be art all by itself. You only get someone's attention for a few seconds; don't scare them away because they have to figure out both the art and the artist statement.

A good rule of thumb for writing an artist statement is to keep it short and simple so you don't lose your audience. Your finished artist statement should be shorter than this article, much shorter. If you can't explain something succinctly, don't include it. This is also not the place to give your life history. If I only want to understand the artwork in front of me, I don't need to know that you first took a crayon to the living room walls when you were only three or that your mother encouraged you to make shapes with the soapsuds in the bathtub. I also don't need to know what other media you work in, or have worked in, throughout your artistic career—unless it speaks directly to the work I'm looking at right now.

Lots of artists make the mistake of including other information that has no place in an artist statement. This is not a resume. An artist statement is meant to help someone understand what motivates you to do the work you do. Your education should not be included unless it's directly relevant and speaks specifically to something in your work. Just because you have a degree in art doesn't necessarily mean it belongs in your artist statement. If

*An artist statement
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ences you—and be specific. If you say you're exploring the time/space continuum, explain exactly how you've done that in your work. What about you, your life, and your unique personal experiences led you to choose a particular theme? Is there a statement you want your work to make? This is your chance to tell the viewer what you want them to take away from seeing your work.

An artist statement is just what it sounds like: a statement by the artist. You are the artist, so it should be in your voice, in your words, and, therefore, it should always be written in the first person. Write your

you're a professional ninja and your work centers on martial arts themes, then by all means include it. If you have a Ph.D. in biology and explore cell structure in your work, then that's relevant. Otherwise, no one is really interested in your degree in animal psychiatry or comparative Nordic literature.

An artist statement is also not the place to discuss your job, your married life, your children, or your pets—even if they are the cutest things in the world. And if you enjoy collecting mismatched saucepan covers or performing kabuki in your kitchen for the neighborhood cats, please don't tell us. We really don't want to know.

Unfortunately, this is also not the place for reviews and raves. If a gallery or a magazine has said something nice about you, that's great, but don't put it in your artist statement. Save it for your website, your blog, or your next movie poster. *The New York Times* says "best use of color in an art quilt this season... a must see..." An artist statement should not include where your work has been shown or what awards you have won. Remember that you are only describing why and how you make art; you are not listing your accomplishments (too bad; I know).

Your artist statement is about your art, so don't waste valuable real estate discussing who has inspired you or comparing yourself to other artists. Besides, even though you may have been highly influenced by another artist's work or workshop, or think you're the next Picasso, sharing that

only makes the reader want to go see *their* work instead of yours.

Spend some time thinking about what you want to say before you start writing your artist statement. Make notes and jot down new ideas as they come to you. Write down any phrases or words that you find particularly descriptive—but don't get too attached to them. If they don't work in the finished statement, be willing to let them go. Use a dictionary and a thesaurus so you can convey what you want with the fewest number of words and in the clearest possible format. Think about why you are drawn to certain colors, themes, or methods of working. Try to include anything that will help the reader understand who you are as a person and how that impacts your work. Write the artist statement for a stranger; your friends and family already know about your work and how it reflects who you are.

It's a good idea to write two artist statements at the same time: a long version (less than one page) and a short version (one paragraph). Some exhibitions will ask for a longer artist statement and some for a shorter one. The shorter version is a very quick overview of what you do and why. It does not give you much room to elaborate. If you have these two versions already written, you'll have one ready to go whenever you need it or you'll be able to easily tweak it to fit the specific request of the show venue.

There are situations when the venue will ask for an artist statement for the particular work they are exhibiting. In this case, the foundation is

the same, but you need to add information specific to that piece—why you chose this theme or these colors, why you created it using specific techniques, or how you approached the subject or challenge.

Once your artist statements have been written, bounce them off of other people, both people who know you and your artwork, and those who don't. Refrain from accosting people in the parking lot of the supermarket and asking for their opinions, but do ask someone who might not be familiar with your art or the art world in general.

In the business world, salesmen develop an elevator speech. In essence, an elevator speech is an explanation that would take no longer than the time you would have while riding the elevator with someone. An artist statement is not all that different. It is an artist's elevator speech—a chance to explain your work before that glazed-over look appears in someone's eyes and you know you've reached your floor. In a gallery setting, when they lose interest, they walk away.

When you learn to keep it short, simple, and sounding like you do when you speak, you will see that writing an artist statement is not nearly as challenging as you may have thought. And I promise you that in the end, it's much easier than a root canal. ▼

SAQA professional artist member Leni Levenson Wiener is a fiber artist and book author living in New Rochelle, New York. Her website is www.leniwiener.com.

Do I *have* to journal?

by Vivien Zepf

My first foray into creating quilts not generated from traditional patterns began in 2004 with an “Introduction to Art Quilting” class. Just the thought of making a quilt that didn’t have a border, or a repeating pattern, or a set of instructions was staggering. With an inspired nudge, my teacher challenged me to supplement what I was learning in class by participating in the Journal Quilt Project. At the time, the quilt world was abuzz with the notion of creating journal quilts on a regular basis. Karey Bresenhan introduced the *Journal Quilt Project* — *A Page from My Book* exhibition at the International Quilt Festival in Houston in 2002. She was inspired by the weekly journals created by artist Jeanne Williamson, and she felt such an exhibition would inspire creativity, experimentation, and growth among quilt artists. Journal quilts “personify the quilt artist’s search for creativity and self-expression.”¹ Okay, then; who was I to argue with my teacher or Karey Bresenhan?

As a result, in 2004, I created an 8½ x11-inch quilt every month as outlined by the rules of the exhibition. However, instead of the little moments of “joyful playfulness” reported by other artists, I agonized over every decision in my little journal quilts, and they were the only pieces I created that year. After taking a year off, I participated in the project again in 2006 and 2007, but again, created very little artwork outside of the project requirements. It was clear I hadn’t yet managed to incorporate the notion of monthly journaling

into my creative life.

I decided to change things up a bit in 2008 and follow the example of Jeanne Williamson herself to create small weekly projects. Spurred on by my friend Natalya Aikens, a champion journalist for a year already, I filled the year with 52 6x6-inch journals. These little pieces finally became the experiments I had hoped they would be, playing with materials and techniques, often chronicling events in my life and the world. I even gave titles to most of them. But yet again, these were virtually the only artwork I made during the year. For some reason, I couldn’t fold journaling into my creative process. After creating only three journal pieces at the start of 2009, I gave up on the idea and moved on.

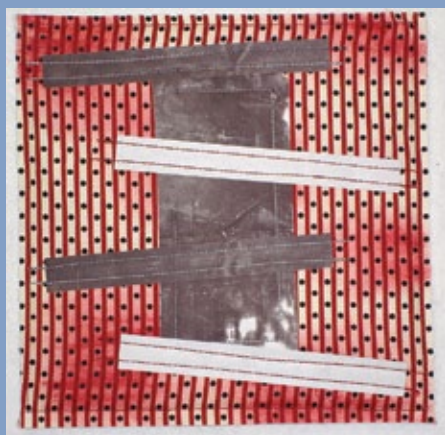
I had been comfortable with my decision not to have journaling be a part of my artistic path until recently, when once again the idea of journaling is front and center in the quilt art psyche, this time in the form of sketchbooking. The Art House Co-op presented the Sketchbook Project, sending small sketchbooks around the world for a small fee to any interested artist willing to return the completed book for exhibition and inclusion in the permanent collection of the Brooklyn Art Library. I signed up, selected a theme: “This is Not a Sketchbook,” and barely managed to fill in ten pages. Then the incredibly talented Melanie Testa and 11 of her friends began the Sketchbook Challenge at the start of 2011, encouraging artists to play along as they created journal artwork based

on monthly themes. With hopeful resolve, I plunged in again ... and have created only a few pages of dismal art thus far.

What am I missing?

As it turns out, nothing. Though many believe that journaling in one form or another is critical to the advancement of an artist and her artwork, it isn’t an absolute. There are lots of widely respected artists whose work I admire for whom journaling is not part of their creative process. Actually, there are more artists out there who don’t journal than I thought. It really all comes down to how we each individually work as artists.

For example, many rely on their journals to track ideas and inspiration. Laura Cater-Woods acknowledges, “For me, sketchbooks and journals are a place to put ideas and observations and get them out of my head.” Rayna Gillman, on the other hand, says “I don’t keep track of ideas; they keep track of me.” Sue Reno agrees. “Like many artists, I generate a lot of ideas on a daily basis. There’s no need to keep track of or remember them all. The really good ones will stick with me and keep resurfacing.” That sounds very similar to what I personally experience as I also tend to work through things in my head. Though I keep one journal at my bedside, one at my desk, and another in my studio, I rarely write my ideas down on the page. In fact, once my concept is on paper, my lack of drawing skills will actually diffuse my enthusiasm for an idea. On the other hand, many artists use their journaling to experiment



Journal quilts, each 6 x 6 inches, ©2008 Vivien Zepf

with techniques or to develop ideas. Natalya Aikens says, “Through my journaling, I’ve tested enough techniques to have an understanding of whether or not I enjoy them. Less time is spent on deciding what I want to use in my current work.”

To see if that was also the case for me, I flipped through my portfolio of little journals. Nope, my journals didn’t lead me to a better understanding of a technique I wanted to pursue further in my work. I didn’t feel compelled to focus on any technique long enough. And none of my journals led to similar pieces in a larger format. Sue Reno had a similar experience when she tried to journal regularly, realizing that she didn’t find it to be a useful adjunct to her broader artistic endeavors. Jane Davila admits to finding inspiration and then researching “the heck out of it,” even playing word-association games with herself to strike an artistic chord. However, she feels that disciplined journaling would interrupt her own creative flow. I can relate to that.

Many artists feel that the self-control involved with journaling is critical to a disciplined approach to making art. I think about art every day, but sometimes I find that taking photographs or reading an art magazine is a more productive way for me to be artistic rather than journaling.

During my weekly project year of 2008, I would often sit in my studio, wondering what to do, staring at my machine. Despite the imposed routine, journaling never became anything other than an obligation. Mary Pal concedes that she understands the notion of developing a routine that includes making art every day, but she doesn’t like to create on command. She is a spontaneous sketcher and creates when the spirit moves her. Rayna dislikes the idea as well, saying, “Journaling takes discipline and structure—neither of which I have or care to have. I work and create spontaneously and this ‘every day’ thing was too artificial for me.” Jane felt the same way when she tried to create a small mixed-media piece on a weekly basis, finding that she was quickly chafing at the self-imposed weekly deadline.

Deadline-driven in order to finish a piece when necessary? I can do that. But it’s good to know I’m not the only one who finds the routine of regularly scheduled output to be outside my creative psyche.

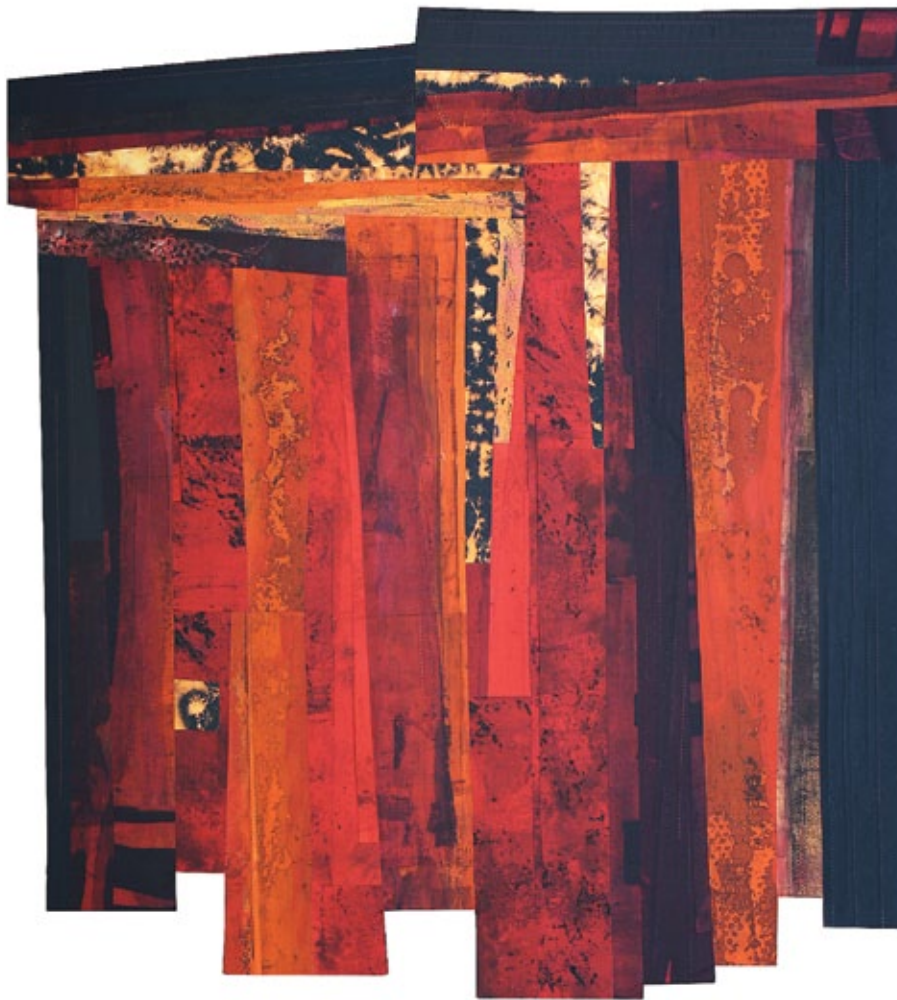
Despite all my attempts at journaling, I admit I still look longingly and wistfully at some of the sketchbooks and journal projects so many artists share online. I agree with Mary, who says, “I love to see the journals of others—Jan Beaney and

Jean Littlejohn’s journals are works of art in themselves.” And I share Jane’s sentiment as well: “Sometimes, especially around the first of January every year, I start to feel like I should journal every day when there’s some sort of weird peer pressure thing happening on the Internet and everyone is declaring their intention to journal and starting projects and blogging and posting.” Yes—been there, done that. You’d think I would have learned by now. Perhaps I need to take a cue from Rayna, who professes to no such longing and says, “As it turns out, my fiber work is also my journal.”

Journaling can be a wonderful artistic tool to develop ideas, nurture inspiration, and fine-tune techniques. I admire those artists who successfully merge journaling with art-making and find time to do both. But as Sue says so succinctly, “It’s not relevant to my particular and idiosyncratic creative process—which is not to say that it couldn’t be incredibly valuable for someone else.” Right now, journaling isn’t working for me. I wonder if it ever will. We’ll see if I still feel the same at the start of the new year. ▼

SAQA active member Vivien Zepf is the associate editor of the SAQA Journal. Her website is www.vivienzepf.com.

¹*Creative Quilting: The Journal Quilt Project*; Bresenhan, Karey Patterson, editor; 2006.



Carol Coohy

Shadow Self

51 x 46 inches | ©2010
carolcoohy.com

The “shadow” is a concept developed by Carl Jung to describe the unconscious, repressed, and denied parts of the self that we hide from others. It also includes a positive underdeveloped potential. In the lower left-hand corner of *Shadow Self*, a bright star-like shape depicts the outer self; directly above that is the shadow. Cracks of light at the top provide an entrée to the hidden self.

Norma Schlager

Poppies

24 x 24 inches | ©2008
www.normaschlager.com

This quilt was inspired by a visit to an area in Oregon where flowers are grown for seeds.



Ruan Robertson

Red Letter Day (Empty Nest)

25 x 35 inches | © 2010

Using letterforms, the composition started as an design. In process, the evolution of the subject matter was a surprise!



abstract
matter was a



Roberta Baker

Painted Geisha

36 x 23 inches | ©2007
artquiltsbyrobertabaker.com

I envisioned a red quilt with rainbow-colored figures. Starting with a Geisha-print fabric, I bleached and repainted the women.



Jeanette Thompson

Red Chair

30 x 23 inches | ©2010
afterschoolartclub.blogspot.com

This piece focuses on how we can reformulate and recommit in response to change or loss. It represents how our faith helps us maintain balance through challenging times. It was made with repurposed fabric from men's shirts.

Mind, body, and spirit

Boys gain new skills and pride of accomplishment through school fiber art installation

By Susan Cujes

My adventure started when my husband, headmaster of Trinity Grammar School, a boys' school in Sydney, Australia, came walking into the house where I was recuperating from recent back surgery. He was in a state of excitement. He had spent the morning at a site meeting with the school architects, discussing the new library extension to be built at the preparatory campus. While on site, he realized there would be a sizable foyer area with very high ceilings, perfect for a significant artwork. He wondered if the Trinity Quilters group could make some banners to hang from the ceilings and if the boys could help.

My brain went into overdrive. I suggested that this artwork should be a fiber art installation to which every boy would contribute, and I foolishly offered to spearhead the effort. My husband agreed. His only suggestion was that the piece should

represent the ideals shown on the three sides of the school's triangular crest: mind, body, and spirit. In addition, he wanted the themes to tie into the school's Primary Years Program curriculum, integrating art and music with traditional subjects. On the surface, these were not difficult requests, but I soon learned it was far more complicated than I had imagined.

I was unable to go and view the site, so I studied the building plans and came up with an idea. There were 545 boys at the prep school; I thought each boy could make one section to represent each category of the crest, for a total of three pieces. I was hoping we had enough room to make each piece 15 centimeters square. The architect then came to a meeting to help determine exactly how much space we had for the installation and to hear my ideas. He drew up plans showing the walls covered in 15-centimeter squares so that

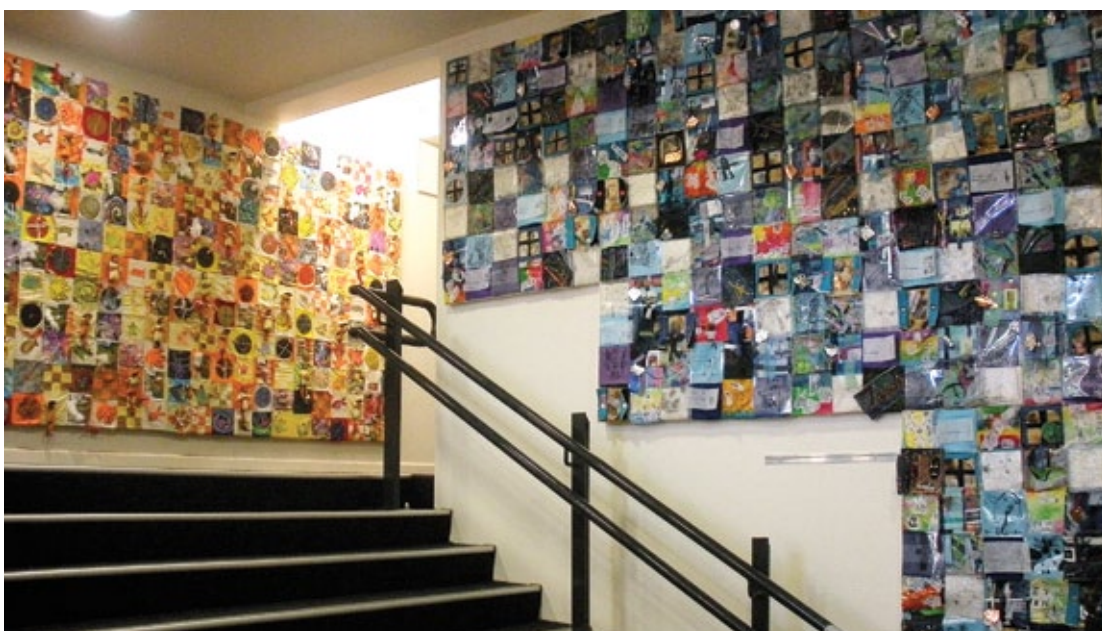
I could see exactly how many squares would fit. Miracle of miracles, 15 centimeters was exactly the right size.

I realized I needed help in understanding the curriculum and stretching the concepts to fit into our theme. Ronnie Pratt, the primary visual arts coordinator, came to my rescue. Ronnie is an experienced art teacher who has taught worldwide. We had collaborated on school projects before, and we also had enjoyed a joint exhibition of our own works in Brisbane.

We pored over the curriculum, generating ideas on how to best represent our theme. Uniform size and color would make the units form a cohesive whole, despite having 545 individual pieces. We decided the "mind" unit would be done in cool blue colors, "body" in browns and greens, and "spirit" in warm colors, from darkest of reds to yellows and creams.

How do you set a budget for such

Completed artworks installed at Trinity Grammar School in Sydney, Australia.





The boys enjoyed learning new skills.

a project? Ronnie's expertise came in handy here as well. She estimated a per-boy cost, determining the total expense. After talking to the architect, we realized the installation was going to send us over budget. He kindly agreed to take it out of the building costs.

Sewing machines also presented a problem. Fortunately, we found a firm to rent us machines for the year, including servicing the machines after each term.

Before implementing the project, I spent the summer holidays with my grandchildren, who very happily experimented with my ideas. I was amazed by what the children could accomplish. The boys at the school range in age from 3½ to 12, and I thought that if our grandchildren

could cope with the project, then I would have no trouble with the prep boys. I discovered that my ideas were indeed feasible, as long as I had parent volunteers to work one-on-one with the children to manage the more dangerous tools. I knew that once I mentioned "tools," I would have the boys' attention and eager cooperation.

Pre-kindergarten (PK) students were my first group. On the first week of the new school year, I came to the PK class with a sewing machine, an iron, and a wood-burning tool. I had a good giggle as the poor teachers went pale. "You do realize that some of these boys are only three and a half?" they asked. I assured them I had done this with children before, and that all activities would be closely supervised.

The PK school topic was "Wonderful Me," which I thought fit perfectly with the "spirit" theme. Taking two boys at a time, parent volunteers and I moved the boys from one station to the next: first, tracing around their hands on wool felt, and then cutting them out with a burning tool. It was much easier to burn through the felt than it would have been for them to use scissors; besides, it was far more exciting. From there they moved on to the ironing board, set up at small-boy height, to use a bonding agent to press their felt hands onto a 15-centimeter background square of calico. Though the hands were firmly fused to the background, I wanted to stitch things down to make sure, so we moved on to the sewing machine.

continued on next page



Clockwise from top left:

Blocks by William McIntosh, Oliver Moffat, Nathan Giang, Oliver Ashton, and Jason Quach.

Unfortunately, this is where my perfect plan hit a glitch: The young mothers didn't know how to use sewing machines. But after a quick lesson peppered with lots of encouragement, they were sitting behind the machines. Each boy sat on a volunteer's lap at a sewing machine. The boys placed their hands on their work, and then the volunteers covered the boys' hands with their own. The volunteers controlled the foot pedal, but the boys were allowed to move the presser foot lever up and down when needed. They loved using the "magic" backwards button. As far as the boys were concerned, they were sewing and loving it.

The pride in the boys' faces as they showed off their work gave me great encouragement. I knew that I was on the right path, bringing an exciting art form to these boys. Already, it was an incredibly rewarding experience. There was no stopping now.

As I progressed through each year level, the boys were able to take more control of the sewing machines. By their second and third pieces, the third- and fourth-year boys had moved on to using the foot pedals. The sixth-year boys quickly learned the mechanics of the sewing machine and were able to help those who were not as confident with threading and loading bobbins. The heat guns and the burning tools were a firm favorite for them.

I had planned to use as many varied techniques and "awesome" machines as could possibly be brought into the classroom and capture the boys' interest. Who would have guessed that at every year level where I had included hand sewing in the process, it would bring so much enjoyment and satisfaction from the boys? One comment from a fourth-year boy said it all. "I thought this

was going to be stupid, but this is really fun." Along with tools and techniques, I tried to teach the boys how texture, light, and color would give their pieces movement and interest.

Some of the most successful pieces were created by the fifth-year students. They were studying body language and how the body can show emotion. Their task, then, was to make a wire sculpture of the human form and then twist it into a shape to display their chosen emotion. For the background, we chose to rust-dye plain cotton fabric. This was an exercise in discovery as the boys had to bring in things they thought would rust; many learned that stainless steel teaspoons don't rust. They then printed off a word for their chosen emotion and heat-sealed it to their background fabric. The boys then wired their figures in place.



The blocks were organized on the floor of the gym.

It took the whole year to complete the three units with each of the grade levels. I found we were much more successful if I started our project shortly after they had begun the topic in class. Their knowledge of the curriculum often taught me a lesson as well. For example, the fourth-year students were studying the brain. I thought that topic could call for making bonded plastic webs to represent the workings of the brain, with some Angelina fibers to represent thoughts. Well, one boy had pieces of plastic strips radiating out in his square, but not one piece was touching another. I explained that they needed to cross because when the fibers were heated with the iron, they would not bond together if they didn't touch. He very patiently explained to me that neurons don't actually cross one another. We came to a compromise and he chose another colored plastic to represent the blood vessels.

Because all the work was going to

be joined into a major piece, I wanted each boy's effort to be acknowledged, so I arranged for one mother to photograph each piece. Thankfully, she didn't realize at first what a mammoth task she had taken on. The photographs were then published in eight books, with each boy having his own page.

Once all the individual pieces were completed, they needed to be assembled. The plan was to sew the 15-centimeter squares onto a square of plain cotton and then stretch the whole piece over a 90-centimeter wooden frame. I asked the Trinity Quilters to help me sew the sections together. I knew they were willing to help me assemble the "body" unit, which included wire figures and X-rays to sew around. I was thankful they turned up to sew the following two theme units as well. For assembly, we requisitioned the small gym. We arranged for a cherry picker to be placed in the room so we could raise

ourselves up and look down on the squares. We made sure we didn't have two of the same topic touching one another and that the colors moved well around each 90-centimeter square. I was truly in awe of these ladies.

I was moved to tears when the final frames went up on the walls of the foyer. All these individual pieces of work had combined and become something special. The greatest reward for me came when I was praising a sixth-year boy for the fine work he had done. Now, this boy was a bit awkward and had big hands; he had found it difficult to keep his needle threaded and to control his hand sewing. His reply—"I always thought I was no good at art, but now I know I'm good"—was all I needed to hear to make this mammoth task worthwhile. ▼

SAQA active member Susan Cujes lives in Summer Hill, NSW, Australia.

Stay in touch with Constant Contact

by Therese May

I sent my first e-newsletters using my regular email server. The purpose of my newsletter is to share my art and to reach out and spread the word about art quilts. By sending out a monthly email, I have the opportunity to promote myself and other artists (especially quilt artists), to express my thoughts, and to show my latest work. Unfortunately, in the beginning, I could only send out about 25 copies at a time because the server couldn't accommodate any more than that. I also wasn't aware I could blind-copy my whole mailing list so all of the addresses wouldn't be visible to everyone.

Then I met a webmaster who recommended using Constant Contact (constantcontact.com) to create and distribute my newsletter. I decided to give it a try; I wanted to challenge myself technically and to learn something new. I'm now happy to report I've been using Constant Contact to send a monthly e-zine since August of 2008, and I love doing it. There are several feature and price categories available, and you can send unlimited emails to a list of up to 50,000 contacts. The software is fairly easy and straightforward to use. You can call for technical help at almost any time and get very friendly assistance. Constant Contact makes it possible for me to convey my spiritual point of view and to share my art quilts. I like the feedback I get from my e-zine. I've even sold a few quilts as a direct result.

Before you begin designing your e-newsletter, it's a good idea to look at several other artists' newsletters for

inspiration. Subscribe to some that you like and get a feel for different styles and ways of communicating ideas about art. Read about the process and how it can help your business so you can make an informed decision about your own direction. Remember, this is a gradual and evolving process and you will learn as you go. Your first edition may be a bit awkward, but it gets easier and more fun.

Constant Contact has several layout templates to choose from, and it does take some time to create your design. You may choose to hire someone to help you get started, or you can do as I did. Though I had limited technical knowledge, I simply played around with templates until I had something I liked. Today, now that I have my basic layout set, I can block out a whole year's worth of newsletters—one per month—at the beginning of the year. I simply make 12 copies of one completed newsletter and replace the current content with new information in the appropriate places.

I begin each newsletter with a picture of my featured quilt for the month and a short article. I include one of my inspiration quilts, highlighting an affirmative word and uplifting message. And I honor an Artist of the Month. I usually write about someone whose work I admire, though I do occasionally write about events, like the SAQA Auction, that I want to support and promote in this segment.

My newsletter layout includes a column on the right side with links

to different parts of my website and to feature articles. Lately, I've been using this space a bit differently; I've inserted a small picture and a website link where I offer small quilts at special prices. I also use the sidebar to provide a link to articles referencing my work or to show a picture of myself enjoying an art event with others.

Inserting links and images into text is very easy with Constant Contact. Links can be created in the same way many bloggers insert links into their posts. You can even make PayPal™ buttons. It's just as easy to insert images into your newsletter. Low-resolution images are perfect to use and you can resize them to fit into the available space simply by clicking the "resize" button. If you have difficulties, the system has lots of online tutorials.

Once you complete the copy you're working on (but before you click "finish"), Constant Contact gives an opportunity to preview your newsletter and take a peek at how it's going to look. This is your chance to check all of your links; it can be embarrassing to have links going to places that don't make sense. You can also send a test email to yourself and to a friend to get feedback and to double-check that everything looks good when it's received. After you've checked, proofed, and tested your copy, you can schedule the time it will be sent, even several weeks in advance. I usually like to have my newsletter transmitted so it's received first thing in the morning. In addition to setting the time your email will be sent, you

also need to choose which of your mailing lists to use. I have several lists for various groups and I usually send my newsletter to them all. You can, however, choose to send to some and not to others, depending on the message.

Building your contact list is an important part of your email campaign and is central to your business. Sending out postcards via snail mail is wonderful, but if you can do a beautiful email, you can reach more contacts for much less expense. Whenever I add someone to my contact list, I do so only with permission and the addresses are never displayed online.

When I first started my newsletter, I transferred my email address book into Constant Contact because these were addresses of people I already knew and was associating with. After that, people could sign up for my newsletter on the home page of my website. I continue to offer a downloadable e-book of my *Power Patch Coloring Book* as thanks for their interest. I think it's a good idea to give something away for free, especially if it's something your readers can get online and you don't need to ship.

Another way to add contacts to your mailing list is to ask people to sign up after you've given a lecture or workshop. If participants are interested, they can add their names and contact information to your list on the spot. Facebook is a wonderful device for collecting the email addresses of those who like your work. Constant Contact



provides a way to create a sign-up tab; readers simply click on the tab to provide their email addresses.

Creating a fan page or business page on Facebook—separate from your profile—helps too, providing yet another way for your fans to find you and sign up. Having a sign-up sheet at events such as open studio and gallery receptions is also a good method of adding names of collectors and others interested in your work.

I send my newsletter every month. The schedule provides a structure for my business and brings me back to the core of communicating with the world about my art. It shows that I'm serious about advancing my work and enables me to support other artists. My list of contacts has been slowly growing and there's no limit to the number it can reach. I'm increasing

my opportunities to sell my work because of the monthly exposure to an expanding audience.

Constant Contact provides all the information and assistance you need to develop your newsletter. I can send out a professional-looking newsletter that my readers enjoy and that helps me with the business aspects of my art. I can use reports generated from the system to track what topics generate the most interest. Constant Contact is a great way to market and spread the word about art quilts. I hope my experience will inspire you to send out your own your message on a regular basis. ▼

*SAQA professional artist member
Therese May is a quilt artist living in
San Jose, California. Her website is
www.theresemay.com.*

French impressions

Wide Horizons 2010 in Sainte-Marie aux Mines

by Elisabeth Wassermann

Taking the road from Geneva to Ste-Marie aux Mines in Alsace, France, last September with Elisabeth Nacenta was quite an adventure. Elisabeth was curating the second edition of the SAQA exhibition *Wide Horizons*. The journey took about four hours, and it was a wonderful opportunity to share our lives and talk about SAQA. We traveled carefully, because in the back of our car we had a selection of the precious textiles to be displayed on the walls of the Carrefour Européen du Patchwork for the exhibition.

At the time, Linda Colsh was in charge of exhibitions in Europe. Her focus was to encourage European artists to become SAQA members and to offer them a window into the European art world by exhibiting their work at the Carrefour. The organization committee of the Carrefour had offered a large space to show the selected pieces. More than 20,000 visitors from 50 different countries were expected during the four days of the exhibition.

The artwork was selected by jurors Eric Jacob, Manager of the Musée de Wesserling, Alsace, France, Maria Luisa Sponga, a SAQA member from Italy, and Ita Ziv, a SAQA member from Israel. Fifty-eight artists from 15 countries registered and submitted 111 pieces of art to the jury. Ultimately, 30 pieces were selected to be part of the second edition of *Wide Horizons of the Carrefour Européen*, representing SAQA Europe and Israel.

A day before the opening, Linda Colsh, Elisabeth Nacenta, Jette Clover, and I started to unpack the pieces

which had travelled from 11 different countries to be part of the exhibition. Every work was carefully placed along the walls, making sure each piece would find its place in harmony with the others. Once the right place was found, technicians hung them. A table with information about SAQA was set at the entrance of our space for the visitors.

From the moment the visitors arrived, they were curious about our art form. SAQA members from 15 different countries came to the exhibit, as did our two very active regional representatives: Lynne Seaman from the United Kingdom and Annedore Neumann from Germany.

Visitors asked a number of questions about the artists and their techniques. They were impressed with the quality and diversity of artistic expression. People were eager to know about SAQA and many asked how they could join the organization. English and French were spoken most often, but we also heard German, Danish, Arabic, Romanian, Hungarian, and Hebrew.

Several visitors asked for a catalog; unfortunately, we didn't have a catalog to give them. But the most exciting feedback we received came from the great number of visitors asking when they would be able to see the next textile exhibition as part of a future Carrefour. This was a clear indication that *Wide Horizons II* was a success.

Judith Mundwiler's work *Schön Wieder* (Again) received a great deal of



Schön Wieder

69 x 39 inches

©2010 Judith Mundwiler

attention from visitors to the exhibition. The piece combines subtle layers of transparent fabrics in subdued grays. Mundwiler draws embroidered figures on the sheer fabrics with black thread. Walking or standing, in crowds or alone, the figures call to mind a street scene, emphasized further by the pavement-like patterning. The layers of transparent fabrics and Mundwiler's play with scale give this piece tremendous depth.

Other pieces were show favorites as well. Geneviève Attinger is known for her heavily textured and stitched figurative fiber art. In her three-dimensional work *Eden 1* (not pictured), she depicts two torsos within a highly decorative and ambiguous space. The figures dissolve into the surrounding embroidered panels.

By using mysterious dark and light planes and severely cropping the figures, the artist raises more questions than she answers, thus holding the viewer's attention.

Jette Clover continued her investigation with monochromatic schemes in the first piece from her *White Wall* (not pictured) series. Inspired by old walls, the painted surface of this art quilt, hiding and revealing bits of color, turns partial words and phrases into the international message of the street.

Maya Chaimovic's *The Desert* reflects the environment where she lives in Israel. This work shows surprising structure and movement, created by the small pieces of fabric applied to the surface. The variety of pattern and the way the individual pieces are arrayed to maximize color value makes it appear that bands of light and dark form in the haze of barren land. The textiles she has used to create her imagery give the illusion of a three-dimensional landscape.

Fenella Davies' *Shadows 2* is from her series based on the old walls of Venice. Here, small fragments of thread and cloth, laid on rough base fabrics, create the illusion of movement coupled with the shimmering play of sunlight on water and stucco. The boundaries between pen drawings, painted textile, and stitched thread blur.

It was very exciting for us and for the visitors to see such a fabulous collection of fiber art at Carrefour. The next SAQA exhibition is scheduled for 2012, and we hope that, with the help of new sponsors, we can produce a catalog. If so, we can share this beauty worldwide. ▼

Elisabeth Wassermann is from Switzerland.



The Desert
47 x 57 inches
©2007 Maya Chaimovic



Shadows 2
28 x 31 inches
©2009 Fenella Davies

Two new contemporary fiber arts galleries open in Manhattan

by Carolyn Lee Vehslage

For many years, Cathy Izzo and Dale Riehl, owners of The City Quilter on West 25th Street in the Chelsea Section of New York City, dreamed of opening a gallery dedicated to art quilts. When their landlord offered them the adjacent space just east of their store, they decided to expand beyond their fabric offerings and create a white-walled gallery with its own entrance. Opened on April 5, 2011, they've named it The ArtQuilt Gallery NYC, and their plan is to showcase the best art quilts from around the world, thereby giving this artistic medium the respect it deserves.

"As 30-year New York residents, we've long lamented the fact that the art world hasn't given quilting its due as an art form," said Izzo. "We believe our gallery will serve a need, showcasing the extraordinary range of quilt art and demonstrating how compelling quilts can be." To this end, their marketing plan goes beyond exposing their large existing client base to wonderful international fiber art. They are also contacting interior designers, architects, and corporate art buyers. And the world is taking note: they've been featured in *Now Chelsea*, a publication covering many galleries in New York City, and have recently been featured on Chelsea News Net.

When I visited the gallery on their second day, several other people had seen Daphne Taylor's zen-like *Line Drawings* in the large windows of the space and come in to see the artwork up close. The exhibition of Taylor's work is a retrospective from the last

15 years. Although Taylor pieces her art quilts by machine, she covers them extensively with meticulous hand quilting and embroidery.

The second exhibit from June 15 to August 6 was of Japanese artist Noriko Endo's art quilts. Endo creates large-scale impressionistic landscapes from tiny scraps of fabric that she traps under tulle while thread painting in the shadows and highlights.

Carol Taylor will have an exhibition from September 29 to October 29. Afterwards, the Manhattan Quilters Guild will have their newest

The City Quilter, is the co-curator in charge of selecting artists to exhibit.

Just a bit further north in Manhattan, ArtsEcho Galleria recently opened in the trendy Hell's Kitchen area on 43rd Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues. Executive Director Sandra Bendor uses the space to exhibit many types of fiber arts, including paper sculpture and contemporary art quilts. In addition, the Galleria presents and sells an impressive collection of high-quality vintage clothing from the 1920s through the 1980s.

Bendor is a quilt artist who works only with vintage and recycled fabric. She is currently promoting the Sustainable Couture project of the Galleria: working with several emerging designers and providing them with existing designer fabric culled from vintage clothing to create new works of wearable art that can then be sold in the gallery. Another upcoming project at ArtsEcho Galleria is the Human Jeans Project contest in which high school students are challenged to use seven-inch squares of denim to create a work of art. The pieces will then be judged, awarded prizes, and sewn into a quilt that will be exhibited at ArtsEcho Galleria.

ArtEcho Galleria exhibits artwork made from all manner of fiber. Among the artists exhibited at the Galleria is paper sculptor Gerardo Latino. His work incorporates extremely complex paper-bending, cutting, and folding techniques, many of which he has developed. Much of Latino's work is based on images of nature from his native

"We believe our gallery will serve a need, showcasing the extraordinary range of quilt art and demonstrating how compelling quilts can be."

collection on display from November 15 through January 7, 2012.

Artists interested in exhibiting in the gallery can send an email through the gallery website. Be sure to note your website in the email. Judy Doenias, a long-time employee of

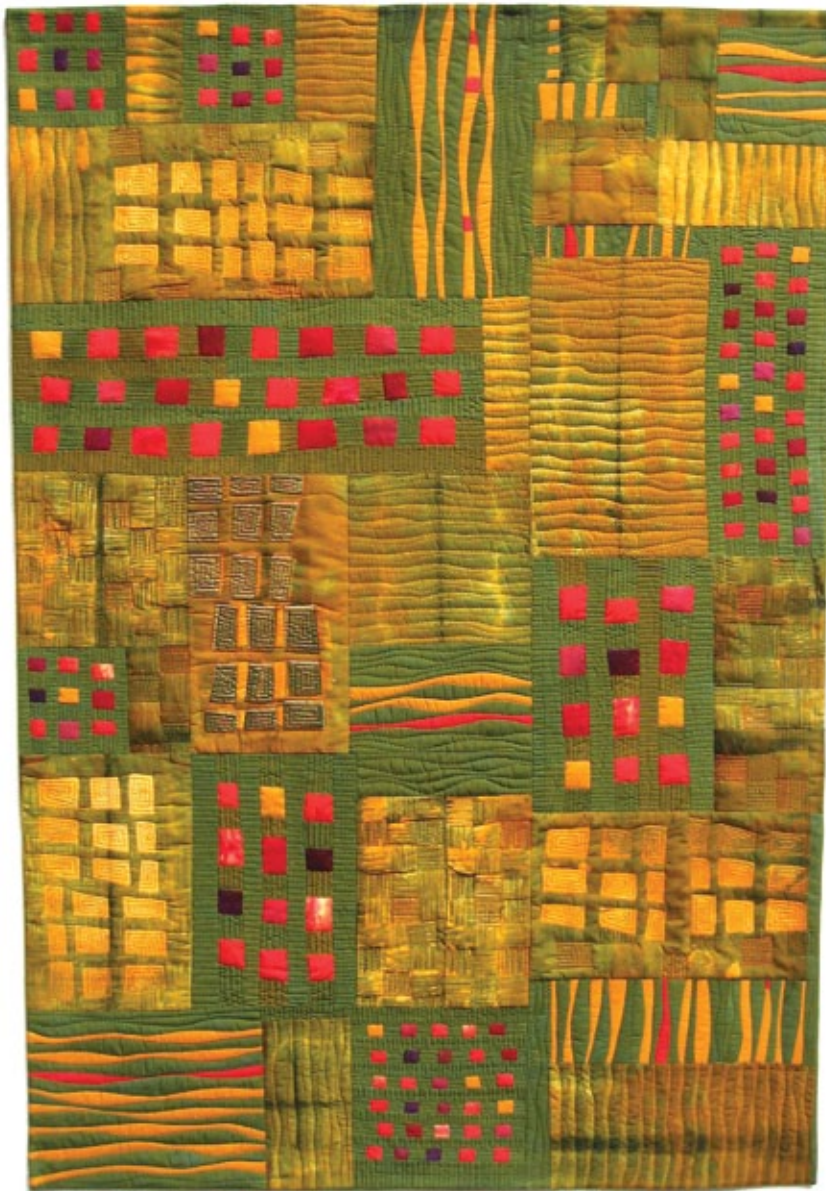
Nicaragua, as well as Mayan and Japanese masks.

I met Sandra Bendor through my artwork. She asked me to participate in the ArtsEcho Galleria grand opening exhibition in December, during which I presented works from my latest series, *Archaeology of the Mind*. The series, which focuses on neurology and how the brain works, fits in with Bendor's curatorial philosophy to present sophisticated and unusual subject matter in fiber art media. The gallery has also exhibited former SAQA President Lisa Chipetine's art quilts and SAQA professional artist member Virginia Abrams' hand-dyed *Reflections* series.

Bendor uses the space creatively and hosts small performances, a mime troupe, fashion shows, and writers' groups. The best way to introduce yourself as a potential exhibitor is to send an email through the ArtsEcho Galleria website, with a link to your website.

It's wonderful that New York finally has two places dedicated to promoting art quilts. Show your support and stop by for a visit. ▼

SAQA Journal Editor Carolyn Lee Vehslage is a fiber artist. She splits her studio time during the week between her house in Sicklerville, New Jersey, and sailboat in New York Harbor. She's on her power boat at the Jersey Shore on the weekends. Her new Archaeology Series can be seen at www.clvquilts.com.



Duplicity
46 x 31 inches
©2009 Carol Taylor

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Tuesday – Saturday, noon to 8 pm
Sunday, noon to 6 pm

SAQA provides curating experience

No Place to Call Home exhibition made possible through Curator-in-Training program

by Kathleen McCabe

Some time ago I considered putting together an exhibition focusing on the issue of U.S. homelessness, but I knew finding venues would be a daunting task. Time has always been an issue in my life: do I want to spend my time making art or promoting art?

The Curator-in-Training opportunity posted in the January 2010 SAQA e.Bulletin provided the impetus I needed. I was immediately attracted to it; the venues had already been established as part of the process. I looked closely at the call and wrote a proposal. I ran it by a friend first to see if I was on the right track, and she encouraged me to submit.

The exhibition committee accepted my proposal and offered suggestions to help me fine-tune it prior to publishing it. The committee reminded me that SAQA is an international organization and that homelessness is a global issue. I moved the “made by” requirement back five years so the occurrence of several natural disasters would be included in the timeline, thereby making the call more accessible to previously made and international entries. I named the exhibit *No Place to Call Home*, and the call for entries was ready to be included in the March 2010 e.Bulletin.

Shortly after the call was released, I received an email from an artist whose question may have represented



One Paycheck 38 x 38 inches ©2010 Kathy Nida

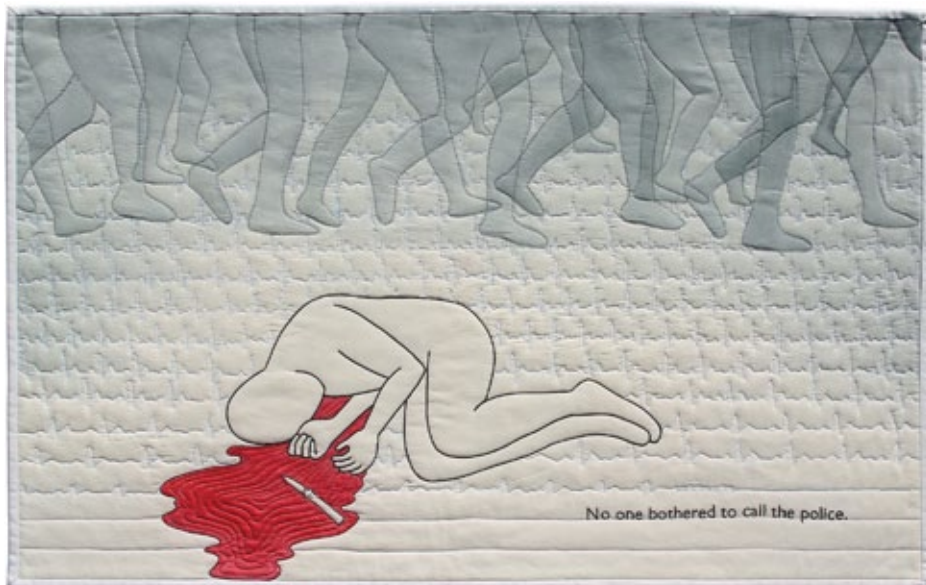
many people’s reaction to the call for entries: “With the theme of homelessness, won’t the quilts all be so depressing?”

I had given this a lot of thought before submitting the proposal. I knew the concept *No Place to Call Home* would be depressing to some. Most people turn their heads and choose not to look at homelessness. I wanted people to become aware of this and find it unacceptable that our society turns its head and tries to pretend the issue does not exist. It was my hope that through this exhibition the viewer would engage, notice, and perhaps even make some effort to help these unfortunate people who are living on the streets all around us.

As part of the call for entries, I had many interesting conversations with

people who, because of this call for entry, began to notice that the homeless woman they hardly glanced at near their grocery store was pregnant, or that their bank collects food for homeless animals but not for people, or that their sister is homeless now because of a foreclosure. Homelessness is all around us—sometimes only a job loss or an earthquake away.

Usually the curator chooses a juror; part of the curator training is learning to work with one. However, I was permitted to jury the exhibit myself because of time constraints and because I felt so strongly about what I wanted to say with this collection of work. The submissions were made through SAQA’s online system. Having worked with *Quilt Visions* back in the days of slides, I appreciated the



Leaving

19 x 30 inches

©2010 Tanya Brown

Leaving garnered the most attention from the viewers in Santa Clara. The piece depicts a person lying unnoticed on the ground in a pool of blood as pedestrians walk by. The quilting lines imitate EKG waveforms of a heartbeat—going, going, gone.

From Santa Clara, the exhibition traveled to West Palm Beach, Florida, and then on to Hampton, Virginia, in late February 2011. No one was prepared for the drama the Virginia exhibition would bring.

A woman at the Hampton show was extremely offended upon viewing Kathy Nida's quilt in the exhibition. Kathy's piece, *One Paycheck*, depicts a homeless and pregnant woman crouching without clothing in a cardboard box. This attendee, unsuccessful at getting other viewers to join in her indignation, called the local news station to complain. The station, in turn, broadcast a story about the piece on local television. The quilt became an overnight sensation, and many other works in *No Place To Call Home* were also visible during the short news broadcast.

There was a flurry of comments at the station for the next few days, and the incident also became a topic on various online digests: Quilting Art Digest, SAQA Digest, and Quilters Home (QNM). Kathy Nida had approximately 7,000 hits to her web page, and *No Place To Call Home* (now on a SAQA link) had over 6,000 hits in one day. Commenters shared various points of view. Some felt that exposing children to nudity in art invites a discussion with them on how art can be used to express

efficiency of this system. You literally cannot make a mistake.

My task, then, was to choose quilts that would fit within the well-defined exhibition space provided by Mancuso Show Management, and to arrange them to hang cohesively to most effectively depict the various tragedies that lead to and/or result in homelessness. Most of the work submitted was consistent with my vision. Because I chose to focus on human homelessness, I rejected some pieces about rescuing animals or loss of habitat for wildlife. Other pieces seemed too abstract to be understood without reading the artist statement.

Of the pieces remaining, the selection was very difficult. Some quilts were expressive, but the workmanship was lacking. Others had excellent workmanship but not as clear a message. I will say that knowing or recognizing an artist's work only made it more difficult. Separating myself from preconceived ideas about the worthiness of a certain artist or friend, to look at the work solely for its message, was probably the most difficult part of this whole process. Having a separate juror would have removed that responsibility, but I would also have given up control of my original vision.

After the selection process, artists contacted me to thank me for the opportunity to express their feelings through this exhibition. Some expressed a sense of sadness while working on their piece; others described a personal experience or shared a fear that homelessness might happen to them. One artist pointed out how easy it is to see ourselves or our loved ones in the faces of the homeless around us, making the line between "okay" and "scary" very thin.

SAQA's arrangement with Mancuso specified the exhibition would travel to their seven venues across the United States. *No Place To Call Home* debuted in Manchester, New Hampshire, in August 2010, and then traveled to the Philadelphia area in September. My first opportunity to see the exhibition was at the Pacific International Quilt Festival in Santa Clara, California, in October.

It was interesting to observe the viewers. One visitor noticed the exhibit theme and immediately said to her friend, "I don't have time to think about this!" and walked on by. Others spent time with each piece, reading the statements and taking a closer look. Another thanked me for putting together such a thought-provoking show. Tanya A. Brown's

see "Curating" on page 39

Organizing quilt critiques

by Georgia French and Laura Jaszowski

When we learned that SAQA President Sandra Sider would volunteer her time to give quilt critiques to small groups, we knew it was a perfect opportunity for Oregon's SAQA members. We certainly don't believe that everything we create is absolutely beautiful and that all we need to do is look happy while the compliments pour in. We want to grow as artists, and that requires thorough and honest feedback.

We contacted Sandra and arranged to host critique sessions for two days in April 2011. We originally hoped to offer four sessions but weren't able to do so due to lack of space availability. Instead, when we put the word out to the regional SAQA membership, extending the invitation to a large Portland area fiber art guild as well, we offered three-, two-, and half-hour sessions. Each session would comfortably accommodate 10-12 people, each showing one quilt during the session. We asked participants to pay \$30 for the day to cover Sandra's travel expenses and meals. We did not need to charge for Sandra's accommodations, since one of our members graciously hosted Sandra for the three nights she was in Portland.

When registration closed, we had 33 paying participants. A few people asked if they could attend a session without bringing a quilt, but Sandra discourages observers. The reason is a good one: each session is predicated on respectful dialogue among the participants, and that can be hampered if everyone doesn't bring work for critique. Since all of us in the room

were submitting quilts for review, we were equals in the process, thereby making for a great, cooperative atmosphere. Observers can't fully participate in the experience, and that can lead to some frustration for everyone involved.

Our sessions were held in the classroom of a local quilt shop whose owner is a great SAQA supporter. We arranged 6-foot tables into three rows of two tables each. We expected two participants to sit at each table. The tables were large enough to give each participant a place for water, a notebook, and personal items. Most people took notes throughout the day. We placed a quilt stand in the front of the room to display each of the larger pieces in turn. For smaller pieces, we threw a black sheet over the display and pinned the quilts to the sheet. We set the stand four feet in front of the first row of tables so everyone could easily see the quilts. From our experience, the quilt stand

is a must for this process. We could have pinned all the quilts on the wall, but it was better to keep the quilts isolated while they were under consideration.

The critiquing experience was fascinating and enlightening. Sandra began by distributing a handout on the principles of art and design to each of us. Each person presented her work, either finished or in progress, and Sandra always began by asking the artist what the motivation and intent for the piece was. She shared her own comments from that starting point and then moved into pointing out the strengths and weaknesses as they related to the principles of art and design. Sandra walked to the back of the room to get the longer, compositional view, then to the front to see the stitching, which was very important to her. During the conversational part of the process, a number of the participants walked around, too. As it turned out, this was another



Sandra Sider leads a critique of *We are Stardust; We are Golden* by Anne Daughtry.



Jean Wells French
with her piece
After the Rain.

good reason not to have observers, as they might have crowded or impeded Sandra's mobility.

After she shared her thoughts about a quilt, Sandra opened the discussion to the group and we brainstormed about what might be done to improve the piece. Although we spent about 10 minutes on each piece, it seemed like longer, as there was so much to digest from the critique and the discussion. During the discussion portion, all the participants quickly caught on to the important questions: "What makes this piece work; what holds it back; what aspects might be addressed to improve it?" It's important to approach a critique session with the attitude "What aspects might be addressed to improve a quilt?" We offered participants quite a few specific suggestions about what to change, and on some quilts, there were just as many occasions when we challenged the artists to approach their art from a new perspective. One participant might say, "Give some thought to value contrasts," or "The balance seems a bit off in the upper

right quadrant." All of this input was invaluable.

Sandra noticed the influence of our regional Oregon landscape in several quilts, with rock formations and mountains creating volumetric mass that played against the linear effects of trees, grasses, and geological strata. In each session, a couple of quilts provided the opportunity to understand the concepts of contrast and color theory as applied to visual art. For example, bright, warm colors "pop" out of a cool, dark background to produce a lively sense of movement. We learned how to analyze our quilts in terms of the art elements—texture, color, mass, and line—and two or more principles of design, such as repetition, focus, balance, and depth.

The verbal feedback we received as people left the sessions was very positive, and we're still getting written feedback. Almost everyone has told us they now see something in their work they hadn't noticed before. SAQA member Ila McCallum wrote that she appreciated the warm and welcoming atmosphere, and that

she learned from watching all the critiques, not just from her own. And SAQA member Jean Wells Keenan wrote that she was impressed with Sandra's ability to capture the essence of a piece and formulate her thoughts so quickly. She said, "Since I work very intuitively, Sandra's comment on how the light moved around in my piece was affirming, as that was a goal for me in this piece."

We highly recommend that other regions work with Sandra to make this experience available to their members. In our group, everyone really wanted Sandra to "speak some truth," and Sandra did not disappoint. We thank Sandra for giving us the benefit of her experience and expertise in critiquing quilt art, and we're all excited to discover the impact her suggestions will have on our creations going forward. ▼

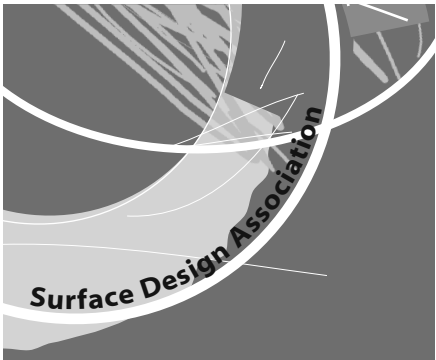
SAQA Oregon co-representatives Georgia French and Laura Jaszowski live in Roseburg and Eugene, respectively. Laura's blog is www.joyincloth.blogspot.com.

Board report from page 3

potential board candidates. Unfortunately, SAQA's membership currently doesn't include very many people with these types of credentials. We'd like to grow this demographic within our membership to broaden the field of potential board candidates. This is where *you* can help.

As you work with art galleries and museums, remember to take along a few SAQA membership brochures. Pass them on to directors and curators. Tell them about the organization and stress that membership is not limited to artists. Refer them to our website and professional artist member *Portfolio*. The online version is easily accessible via www.saqa.com under the Collectors pull-down menu (clicking the image of the portfolio loads the complete current version).

If you are contacted, as part of your personal PR efforts, by art critics or feature writers interested in covering your artwork, please think of the long-term and far-reaching benefits of bringing such art world contacts into the SAQA membership. Again, point them in the direction of saqa.com and the *Portfolio*. If they would like information about a specific SAQA exhibition, encourage them to contact any board member or the executive director, Martha Sielman. They can also click "contact" in the upper left-hand corner of any SAQA website page to bring up our contact email form. The nominating committee thanks you for your help and welcomes your suggestions for names to add to our list of potential candidates. ▼



The Surface Design Association is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to education, research, critical thinking and promotion in the field of Surface Design. Members receive the Surface Design Journal and SDA Newsletter.

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McMinn collection from page 7

the cymbals. Susan Gilgen's *The Red Pagoda* is one of the few representational quilts in the collection. McMinn notes that its "beauty is very accessible." Executed in appliqué, the quilt interprets the artist's photographs of a scene in Washington, D.C.

Developed from hundreds of sketches and realized through her gradated hand-dyed fabric, Caryl Bryer Fallert's *Feather Study #14* represents a brilliant feather fantasy. *Nest II*, by Sue Benner, symbolizes maternal feelings, as elements of the composition define and protect the central core. The artist dye-painted fabrics, then assembled each 16-inch section by fusing narrow strips and monoprinting the textured surface. Jane Kenyon's *Lace*, a monochromatic trompe-l'oeil, references vintage

textiles in a monumental mixed-media fiber collage featuring elaborate free-style machine embroidery.

McMinn owns 24 quilts produced in the 1990s, and Joan Schulze's 1990 quilt *Morning Music* is the oldest quilt in the collection. Most of the artists represented in the collection are working in the United States, and all but the piece by Tim Harding were created by women.

McMinn's collection spans nearly two decades of contemporary quilt art and is an important reference to the evolution of the art form. He has adhered to Joseph Campbell's advice to "follow your bliss" and has created a very personal collection. He encourages each of us to support the arts in any manner we can afford—to purchase art that speaks to us. Though

there are no plans currently in place for an exhibition, the McMinn collection includes multiple pieces by several artists, and any future exhibition of these quilts would provide viewers with the opportunity to study not only quilt artists working in a series, but also how artists develop their styles over a period of time. I would like to thank Mr. McMinn for this rare glimpse into the collection of one of today's top 10 collectors of the studio art quilt. ▼

SAQA President Sandra Sider is an artist, critic, and curator of fiber art. Her website is www.sandrasider.com.

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Patty Hawkins from page 11

and Osaka, always accompanied by Japanese quilters who spoke English and with whom Patty enjoyed many conversations. "Sharing," Patty says, "is half the fun." She loved the cultural exchange she enjoyed while in Japan. After the prize week was over, Patty, Wes, and Melissa stayed for another week, traveling to Kyoto to see other sites. It was here that Patty fell in love with the 10,000 torii gates at the Fushimi Inari Shrine. "It was like walking through a red tunnel with sun slanting through the gates." The images stayed with her long after she returned home and became the basis of her third quilt series, devoted to memories of the trip. Patty's quilt *Lingering Image, Japan*, which recreates her impression of walking through

the tall, wooden, red torii gates was her most recent acceptance into *Quilt National 2011*. Patty's excited about the possibilities of this series and has already made three pieces. She will continue to make these pieces while also continuing with her *Aspen* series.

Patty firmly believes that we learn something from everything we do, so she continues to take workshops. She loves the camaraderie. But as much as Patty enjoys learning, she also believes in giving back. She says, "It's a privilege to teach and share what we know — we don't want to keep it to ourselves. When I teach, it's to encourage people in different ways to create the images they have in their heads." As a teacher, Patty's goal is to help each student to see and interpret

the world in a meaningful way. "I consider it most important that students' work does not parrot my own."

Patty urges each of us to be passionate about our art and to work with what is in our hearts. "Work in your own individual style—it's who you are. We can love other's work, but we can only do our own work!"

You can view Patty's work and learn about workshop opportunities at www.pattyhawkins.com. ▼

SAQA active member Vivien Zepf lives in Thornwood, New York. Her blog is www.sevenpinesdesigns.blogspot.com and her website is www.VivienZepf.com.



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feelings about unpleasant things in the world. Many congratulated the Mancuso brothers for their willingness to show the controversial quilt and thanked Kathy Nida for her artistic exploration of this subject. We often heard the sentiment that such a "controversy" created the opportunity to join in an important discussion about homelessness. One commenter said, "If art is supposed to make us think, then this is truly art."

As is often the case, public attention moved on to other things within a few days. However, it's my hope that because of the publicity surrounding the exhibition and the ensuing conversations, more than just the quilt show attendees were touched by the exhibition. Hopefully, members of the general public

were made a little more aware and thoughtful about homelessness and all its implications.

My experience as a Curator-in-Training has been very rewarding. I've been able to overcome my apprehensions because I had a great team to back me up. I had wonderful support and encouragement from Peg Keeney, Kathy Lichtendahl, and the SAQA Exhibition Committee; from Mary Claire Moyer, the Mancuso show liaison; and from Lisa Ellis; and of course from all of the artists who participated, even those whose work was not selected. Through this exhibition I succeeded in personal goals, too: to put together a show about homelessness and, through it, to touch people's lives, provoke thoughtful discussion, and perhaps

even move someone into action. And now, as part of the exhibition committee team, I look forward to working with future Curators-in-Training. I also hope to curate or jury more exhibitions myself. I encourage everyone to consider taking advantage of the opportunity available through the Curator-in-Training program. ▼

For more information regarding the Curator-in-Training program, contact Kathleen at kathmccabe@gmail.com.

*SAQA professional artist member Kathleen McCabe lives in Coronado, California. You can view her art quilts and images of the **No Place to Call Home** exhibition on her website: www.kathleenmccabecoronado.com.*

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