SAQA Journal

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Hidden Messages *(detail)*

55 x 46 inches

see page 4

In this issue...

What do you call yourself?.....2

Featured Artist: Mirjam Pet-Jacobs ...4

Creating a conceptual fiber art piece.....8

Variety in your compositions..... 11

Shipping work for a SAQA exhibition..... 14

SAQA member gallery..... 16

Self-publishing a portfolio book.... 18

Pricing your artwork 20

Texas Quilt Museum 22

Promote without apologizing..... 24

Turn your design book into a novel... 26

Thoughts from the president

by Sandra Sider

What do you call yourself?

Artistic identity has become something of a hot topic in the last few years, avidly discussed in workshops, guilds, and the academic community. In her response to my recent survey concerning this subject, Noelle Foye, Education Director of the Fuller Craft Museum, informed me of a series of panel discussions on college campuses facilitated by the Museum. Their title was the "C-Word Road Show," with "C," of course, meaning "craft." These panels prompted lively discussions centered around the idea that "what you choose to call yourself reflects how you perceive your work and your relationship to the world of art."

Of the approximately 250 members of SAQA and the Surface Design Association responding to my survey concerning artistic identity, 122 answered the question, "And what do you do?" (A few individuals gave two answers.) Here's a summary:

Fabric-collage artist (1)
Handweaver (1)
Sculptor (1)
Mixed-media artist (3)
Quilt artist (3)
Visual artist (3)
Designer (3)
Art quilter (4)
Textile artist (6)
Fiber artist (22)
Artist (59)
Other (16)

Mary Ann Tipple commented on her choice of the word "artist" to identify herself. She wrote: "I used to say 'textile artist,' but I realized most people are artists—not painters, sculptors, collagists, etc. I am an artist, and I do more than textiles. Saying 'artist' opens a dialogue: 'What do you make?' If you say quilter or art quilter at the beginning, the response is usually, 'My grandmother made those.' And the door seems to close."

Joanne Mattera also prefers not to insert any adjective in front of the word "artist." As an editor of *Fiberarts Magazine* in the 1980s and a professional artist today, Mattera has nearly 40 years of experience dealing with descriptive terminology for art and aesthetics. Mattera's blog posting of October 26, 2009, was titled "The Adjective Artists: How Do You Define Yourself?" Her summary statement was, "Love the work, hate the adjective." She asked, "Who has the more visible career—'fiber artists,' or others who use fiber but avoid the adjective when describing themselves?" If you think of the dyed-fabric "fallen paintings" of Polly Apfelbaum, or the crocheted sculpture of Oliver Herring, the answer is obvious. These fiber artists—who do not identify themselves as such—are stars in the world of fine art; in so doing, they avoid being compartmentalized by their medium, a strategy that many art venues employ as well.

Merle Axelrad Serlin, best known today for her fabric-collage quilts of landscapes, sent me this in response to the survey: "I identify myself as an artist. If someone asks my medium I say, 'Collage—mainly with fabric.' I've learned the hard way that the 'Q word' is not necessarily the gateway to galleries."

Just by conducting the survey, I may have muddied the water a bit and skewed the statistics. A few people responded quickly to the survey, then weeks later sent me rather frantic emails asserting, "No! I don't want to be identified as a 'fiber artist' (or 'quilt artist'). Is it too late? I am an artist. End of story." This brings us to the question: What is an artist? According to Merriam-Webster, an artist is "a person skilled in one of the fine arts."

It does make sense that someone in the early years of perfecting a fine-art skill might say "quilter" or "hand-dyer" or "fabric printer." But once the skill is firmly in hand, that individual is definitely an artist. She might earn money working for a bank or an insurance company, or be at home raising small children, but once she has that skill, she is an artist—whether in her head or in the studio—and has the right to identify herself as such if she wishes.

Let's consider some of the situations in which you might be asked, "What do you do?" Many of those responding to the survey explained that they tend to give different answers to different audiences—a point well taken. Here are a few scenarios with suggestions as to how you might respond:

A. At a meeting within their quilt or design group, people tend to be more specific when encountering

new members—which makes sense. You are already in familiar territory. You know that all of you are quilters, or textile designers, or whatever. You already know what you are. In this situation, your response to "What do you do?" could well be specific as to process or technique, such as "screen printing" or "hand-dyeing" or "fabric collage" or "machine piecing and long-arm quilting."

B. At a gallery opening where your work is being exhibited in a group show of work in the same medium, why not stand near your work? When someone asks what you do, you can simply point to the piece and say, "I'm one of the artists. This is a good example of my design work in machine piecing (or hand-painted textiles or embellished fabric, etc.)." Then hand the person your business card or a postcard.

C. At a gallery opening of your solo show, the answer is easy: "I am the artist. Please take one of my brochures." (And if you have a solo show, make certain that illustrated brochures are available.)

D. But now let's take the scenario out of the art world and into the home of an acquaintance who has invited you to a party. Here is Patricia Malarcher's account of a hypothetical experience in identifying what she does, when someone asks: "What do you do?"

PM: I'm an artist.

Q: Oh, what sort of artist?

PM: I make abstract or geometric pieces from different materials—fabric, paper, painted canvas, plastic, whatever a needle goes through. I piece them together with a sewing machine.

Q: Are you making quilts?

PM: All my work is made of small units sewn together. Some pieces are quilt-like and are shown in quilt exhibitions. Others are like small collages and hang like paintings. Some are freestanding small sculptures. Sewing is the common denominator."

Note how Malarcher keeps the focus on describing her work in an art context, not on describing herself with an adjective.

I'd like to end with some words of wisdom from Bean Gilsdorf, who recently completed her MFA in Fine Arts at California College of the Arts. She wrote: "To name a thing is to say what it is not. So by saying, 'I am a quilt maker' I am also saying, 'I am not a printmaker, a painter, a photographer, or a sculptor,' whereas 'artist' is a more inclusive and flexible term. For me, there is freedom in that, there is room to move and play. In the last three years I've been making sculptures, videos, textile installations, and collages. The answer now is, 'I'm an artist,' and it is as much for the sake of my own freedom, and the claim I make for it, as it is for brevity's sake. Perhaps it is a function of age, but I'm much less invested in making sure my self-description is being 'properly' perceived than I was when I first started out. Let people understand the term 'artist' as they like, and I will go on making the things that occupy my attention, whatever they may be." ▼

(This text was excerpted from my presentation at SAQA's 2012 annual conference.)

Get a Sneak Peak at some early arrivals for this year's SAQA Benefit Auction.

Auction begins September 10, 2012.

www.saqa.com/gallery-mini-detail.php?ID=2053

Happy Wolf
12 x 12 inches
©Nancy N. Erickson

Featured Artist:

Mirjam Pet-Jacobs

The first art quilts Mirjam Pet-Jacobs saw were part of the premiere ***European Art Quilts*** exhibition at the Dutch Textile Museum, Tilburg, the Netherlands, in 1997: "I had never seen work like this before, not even in publications. I was thrilled and stupefied when I saw the possibilities and freedom with which the artists had made their work and that they really had something to say." Now, Mirjam's own textile artworks convey complex emotions and themes through impeccable use of form and color, augmented by carefully placed stitched lines. She strives to transform her personal experiences and reflections into artwork that speaks to us all.

Mirjam has created designs of her own making for decades, though not always as an art quilter. An avid clothesmaker during her studies of English Literature and Linguistics at her university, she also took classes in drawing, painting, etching, and batik at several free art academies. A few years later, she realized a change was in order. She says, "I discovered that paint and clay didn't go well with babies, so I turned to patchwork to combine color, design, and fabric with clean hands."

In the beginning, Mirjam drew her own designs as blocks based on Jinny Beyer's books. She then took a few classes, and soon her work became more contemporary. It took five more years before she felt she had truly managed to express herself using this art form.

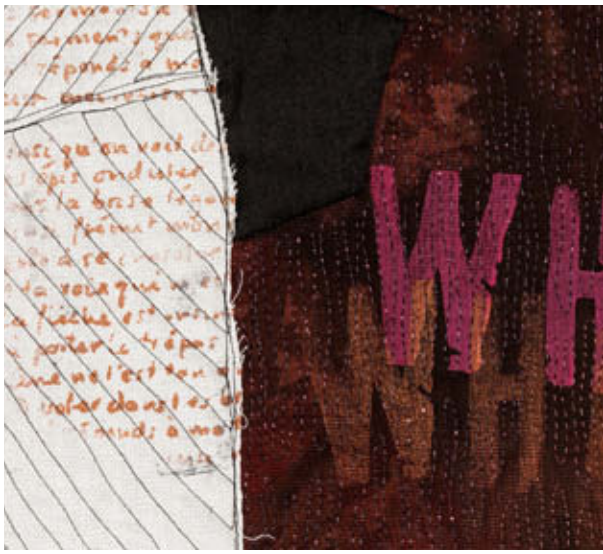
Most of Mirjam's artwork is the result of contemplating what's happening in her own life and in the world. "I always collect newspaper articles and photos that grab my interest. After a while, I notice connections. Slowly the pressure to do something with them, with the theme they present, builds up until something has to be made." Mirjam's personal life is also a good source of inspiration, although she takes great care to translate everything to a more general level, to things everybody experiences. She says, "I do not want to make 'journal' art. My art is a mix of myself and a lot of imagination." She does not consider her work to be private. Instead, she hopes viewers will add their own biases and experiences to the viewing experience.

Mirjam calls her style "sober," but there are many layers of meaning and depth. She is perhaps best known for her work featuring Mimis. Approximately 10 years ago, Mirjam saw an exhibition of hollow-log *Mimis*—carvings of Aboriginal spirits—in the Aboriginal Art Museum in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Inspired by the vertical forms and the Arnhem Land line decoration, she designed a very simple, vertical shape. That first form served as her initial inspiration, but for all the artwork thereafter, Mirjam did not use the Mimis as a reference to Aboriginal spirits themselves; instead she used them as forms to express her own ideas.

"Currently," Mirjam says, "I'm working on several series with different themes: human helplessness, contact and relationships between people, social problems, and the concept of 'time.'" To conceptualize human helplessness, Mirjam often uses the image of the Mimi. The sense of "helplessness" is reinforced because the figures have no arms. By varying the curves of the shapes and their placement in a composition, they also show different kinds of relationships and emotions. She says, "It's amazing that I still can tell so much with that simple shape." Jurors agree; Mirjam's quilt *Mimiquilt IX: Solidarity* was selected to be part of ***Quilt National 2005***.

Lost
49 x 54 inches
©2011

(detail below)



Mirjam's "time" pieces explore her fascination with this concept. Time cannot be held or caught; it simply goes on and on. She says, "We all perceive time differently in different situations. Sometimes it seems to have stopped; other times, you don't notice it at all and it flows past you." She has made several different kinds of artwork dealing with this theme: "normal" quilts, transparent mixed-media work, miniature objects, even a video installation that was awarded first prize at the 2009 4th ***European Quilt Triennial*** in Heidelberg, Germany, the most prestigious art quilt competition in the European Union, comparable to ***Quilt National*** in the United States. She has more creative ideas regarding time than she can manage and says, "I need more time!"

Mirjam's works on social issues are different from her other pieces, often featuring manipulated photo transfers. Though she has no personal experience with the scenes she portrays, the pieces are emotionally and artistically difficult for her to do. She is deeply touched by what she reads and hears in the news. Hungry children in Africa, women dying through illegal abortions, and people with Alzheimer's have all been featured in Mirjam's work.

At the moment, Mirjam is a full-time artist. She spends more time on administrative tasks than she would like, and she says, "What I miss most is the time and freedom just to play." Her busy teaching schedule has taken an enormous amount of time this past year and kept her away from her art. As a result, she is giving herself more studio time in 2012. Her studio is in her house, so it's always accessible. It includes closets for storage of materials, two large tables, and good lighting. In an effort to be less distracted, Mirjam moved her computer to another part of the house. "Now I get more exercise by running up and down the stairs," she says.

She keeps her quilts hanging in a dust-free dark closet; three-dimensional artwork is stored in boxes elsewhere in the house. New work hangs or stands throughout her house so it can be enjoyed for a while. In between projects, Mirjam likes to tidy and organize the studio. This is an important ritual for her, and she says, "I think I need this 'in between' to tidy my mind as well. As a whole, I must be organized to be able to cope with my wonderful, complicated life."

When asked why she works on multiple series concurrently, Mirjam explains, "Although I prefer to create work by work, I like to alternate working on different themes. It enables me to keep a fresh look. Keeping to one kind of style and theme feels boring and dulls my imagination. Sometimes a theme can be so crude and harsh that I need to compensate for it with less emotionally demanding work."

Her process begins with an idea, thought, or theme; occasionally it's something Mirjam has been pondering for a while. She explores several design possibilities by creating mind maps. (A mind map is the visual

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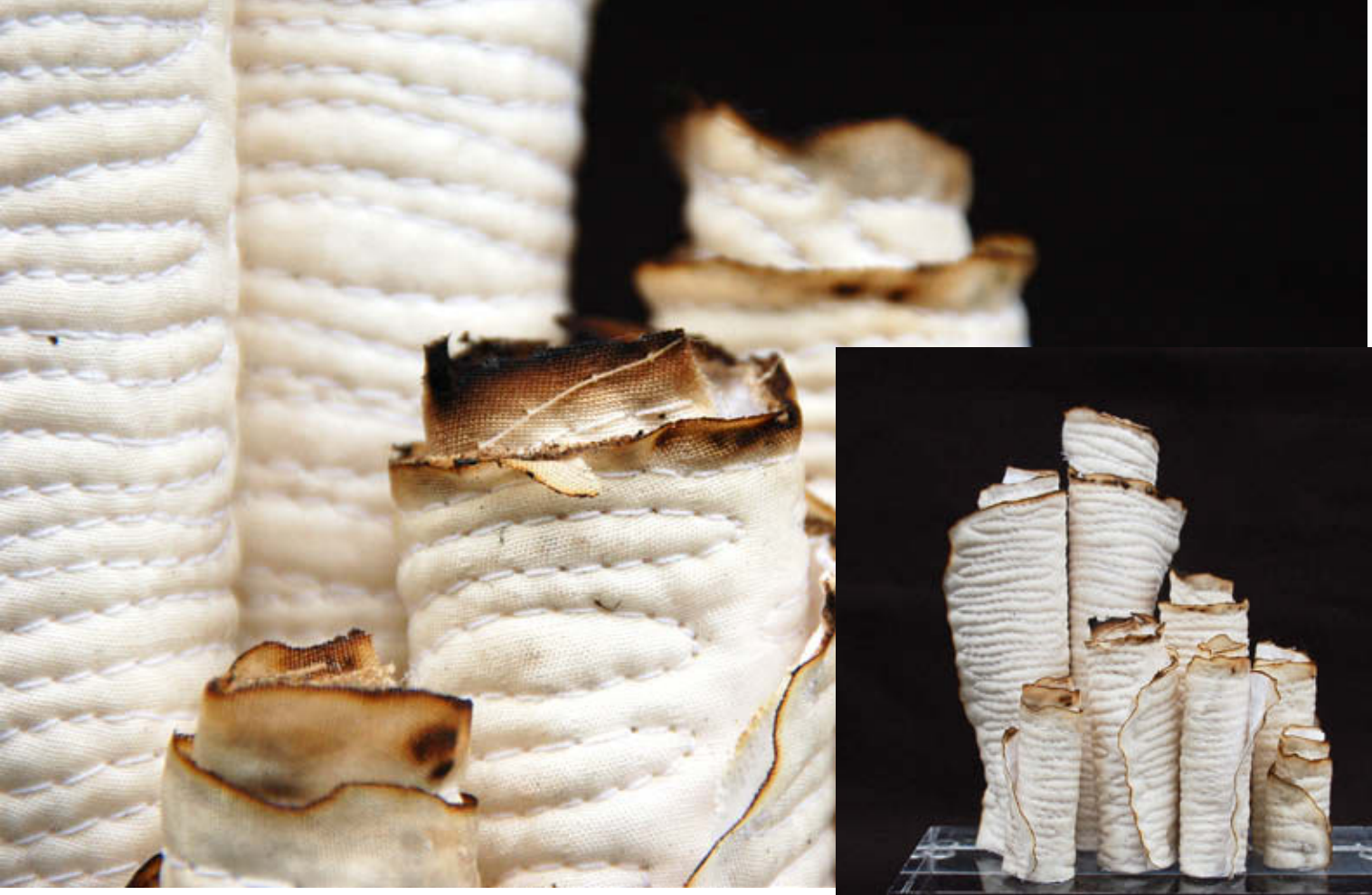


iSociety
7 x 5 x 3 inches
©2011
(detail, above)

result of a brainstorming session, in which one word is surrounded by other related words and drawings.) She looks for unexpected combinations, sketching and trying out several compositions. Sometimes she makes trial paper collages. Then, it's on to the wall, preparing whatever materials and elements the work requires and examining possible compositions. Mirjam says, "I try to think of a working title at an early stage because this keeps me focused on what I want to say. The whole process is a building up of layers, actual and imaginary."

Her process includes a great deal of introspection, making small changes, and taking photos to check composition without distractions. She takes her time on every piece and dislikes working under deadline stress. "Stress and worries are lethal for my concentration," she says. The entire process—finding a theme and pondering over it—might take several months, even years.

Mirjam emphasizes that materials and techniques are only a method of expression for her. After many years of exploring various techniques and materials, she has narrowed down her process to a few methods. She likes to try new things and steps out of her comfort zone at times, as with her video installation *Timeless in Time*, but she doesn't feeI the urge to be at the frontlines of popular new techniques. She finds it important to concentrate on keeping her own voice.

Sometimes, Mirjam will have several tops waiting to be quilted. She tries to quilt during busy periods in her life, those filled with teaching obligations and little time for long quiet hours in her studio. "I don't need to think deeply to quilt; it calms my mind," says Mirjam. She uses as many different threads as possible, matching the colors of the fabrics or selecting colors intuitively. If she has the time and if the work needs it, Mirjam will add hand quilting, which she enjoys as well. She relishes the differences in appearance between machine and hand stitches.

Mirjam's preference is to work in either black/grey/white/sand or monochromatic warm-color schemes. She still has a small collection of

Hidden Messages
55 x 46 inches
©2011
(detail, right)

commercial fabrics, but she usually dyes or paints fabrics herself. "Lately," she says, "I pin white cloths on stretcher bars, place them against a wall, and paint on them directly with big bold movements. This is something I want to explore further." She often incorporates panels of modern crazy patchwork, in combination with large appliqués, enabling her to play with tonal values and achieve a painterly style.

Though perhaps best known for her quilts, Mirjam also makes both 2-D and 3-D abstract and figurative abstract textile and mixed-media artwork. "I love using simple forms, like the square, as a symbol or metaphor for a unit of time; for instance, to express a second, a day, a year, or even an age. Or I may use feathers as metaphors for messages or thoughts." Mirjam is also exploring how to express herself with lightweight, transparent works, since a quilt often feels so heavy and dense.

Mirjam notes that she is fortunate not to have to make a living from her art and, as a result, doesn't take a commercial view of her work. She feels she doesn't need to make more "mainstream" art, meaning art that's easier to sell, although her art is for sale.

She sets prices at a point she's comfortable with, and prices for her pieces are consistent, regardless of where the work is presented. However, Mirjam expresses the same frustration many textile artists do when it comes to pricing her art. "People often don't realize the costs involved, such as Value-Added Tax (VAT), materials, equipment, website maintenance, entry fees, shipping, commissions, and class fees to further artistic development. I'm not even talking about the time needed to make the artwork. In the present situation in the Netherlands, it has become practically impossible to make a living from art, unless you have a real talent for business and presenting yourself."

Mirjam does share her artwork in exhibitions and has earned prize money. However, that's not her goal. "If I feel happy with my work and I would like to share it with others, I enter it for an exhibition I'd like to be in. If I'm not selected, well, *tant pis*. I know it is not due to a lack of quality of the work, but due to circumstances. Of course I'm disappointed for a couple of hours, but it's absolutely not the end of the world; it comes with the job. In fact, the making process itself is the only aspect that really counts." For Mirjam, the most disappointing part of not being selected is not being part of the fun—going to the opening and meeting colleagues and other artists.

"I'm still amazed," she says, "at everything that happens in my art life. It's like a roller coaster, with sometimes too many loops." Her first entry into a prestigious art quilt exhibition was awarded first prize ***(2nd European Quilt Triennial***, Heidelberg,

See "Mirjam Pet-Jacobs" on page 28

Creating a conceptual fiber art piece

by Heidi Field-Alvarez

My work is a visual diary, a direct reflection of my thoughts. Lately I have been contemplating how and why I use material as I do and why my thinking is so often directed toward the ephemeral quality of life.

My *Metamorphosis* series is a body of work I created about marriage. *Features Fade* is a series about aging. As I have worked through my personal situations and come to a semblance of stability in my life, I have begun to look outward. My current project has more of an outward focus and addresses the subject of homelessness, at least from my vantage point.

I want my work to be personal, an outward expression of my inner being. One way I do this is to ask myself, what is going on with me, right here, right now? What do I struggle with on a day-to-day basis? Is there a way to reflect that in my work?

My transition into marriage was a jumping-off point for me. I pondered the difficulties I had with becoming part of a couple. In addition to my personal goals, I now had to relate and compromise with someone else. I chose an obvious visual representation of marriage for women: the wedding dress. I then thought of ways I could create artwork that would manifest this idea of change and what oftentimes for me also involves struggle. When I started thinking in this way, one of my favorite pieces of literature came to mind: Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. The result of combining these two ideas was a video I called *Metamorphosis*. In this video I struggle inside a thrift store wedding dress that does not, nor will ever, fit.

Having contemplated this struggle artistically, I began to think about other personal struggles. This, and the discovery of a product called Ultra Solvy™ by Sulky®, brought me to my next series, called *Features Fade*. I often think about how change and time affect our bodies. As we age, we are changed physically. The varying emotional responses to impermanence also fascinate me. The *Features Fade* series is thematically linked to the Tibetan monk ceremony in which intricate sand mandalas are created and then washed away with water in a symbolic gesture of "letting go." It also conveys the decay of tradition. Thus far I've created four pieces in this series, and each time I began with an image taken from a sketch done by a sixteenth-century artist. The works are hand-stitched embroideries which, when exposed to water,

Blood Line (left) and ***Wings*** (right) – stills from *Metamorphosis* ©2010.

Features Fade Three
Top: **detail, work in progress**
Bottom left: **before melting**
Bottom right: **after melting**
©2011

melt and become misshapen.

To make *Features Fade Three*, I started by stitching the portrait onto Sulky dissolvable fabric. It was then strung with monofilament thread inside a Plexiglas® "waterfall box" of my own design. I strung the piece into the center of the box, leaving the front open-faced. A small water pump was housed in the bottom, with clear tubing rising up and over the embroidery. The pump was attached to a timer, and water flowed through the tubing and down the threads, over the stitching, so that the piece dissolved, or "melted," over a two-hour period.

The final piece gives the appearance of aging. (As a reference point, I also included the same image drawn on hard plastic mounted to the back of the frame so viewers could assess the decomposition.) Because of the timer, the pieces melt very slowly in increments and become almost painfully misshapen. While viewers watch my pieces deteriorate slowly, they wonder how I can do this to my work, but I love it. It is cathartic to me. These works call attention to our impermanent nature and, sometimes, to suffering within ourselves, ultimately forcing us to address and question this process.

The choice of materials is integral to the way that I work, and the success of both *Features Fade* and my upcoming projects. My ideas are generated just as much from my materials and process of working as they are from my life experiences. When I'm working, I find it both stimulating and less confusing to limit myself to two or three materials. For example, with my "melting" pieces I use Sulky's Solvy products as a base for my stitching. These products have some variety in density, and therefore create different effects. The yarn or

cont'd on next page

thread used can also vary according to scale or detail. I've used everything from cotton thread to nylon rope. I experiment with varieties of yarn, so I know how they'll react with both the Solvy and the water I use. I always work methodically with my materials, changing one element at a time, while observing and taking notes on the results. My understanding of my materials grows continually with each project. When you master the medium in which you work, you can instinctively come up with innovative ways to use them.

During the time I was creating *Features Fade*, I began to feel more comfortable with some of my internal struggles and more confident in myself and in my relationships. This is when I began to turn my eye outward. An extension of moving to an outward focus has been looking for ways to work outside the gallery. My current piece is a mural-sized portrait of a homeless person entitled *Still Falling*. It is stitched with nylon rope. A quilted version done in vinyl and polystyrene is placed behind the stitched piece, and both are placed in an open-front Lexan® frame. I have created a trial version that has already been exposed to the elements, but the 8-foot square piece will be hung outside Main Art X Gallery in Richmond, Virginia, in April and May, 2012.

This piece is approximately 20 times larger than my smaller art pieces. *Still Falling* extends my personal explorations on aging and beauty to the homeless population. The homeless portrait is constructed to partially deteriorate with the elements and mimics the experience of those living on the street. What remains is a double image, with a misshapen stitched image layered in front of the unaltered quilted version of the same image. Working in this way also feels like a seamless way for me, as an artist, to raise awareness for more global concerns.

Making my art public and using it as a means of garnering support for the plight of our homeless is a satisfying new direction for me. All the thinking and planning going into making a mural-sized work is helping me to understand the characteristics of a new set of materials. Because it is so large, I had to change the proportions of all the materials being used. Both the increase in scale and the making of a public piece have broadened my scope and opened my mind

See "Conceptual" on page 30

Top left: **Building Ideas for *Still Falling***

Bottom left: **Quilting the plastic**

Above: ***Still Falling*** **prototype before and after rain exposure**

Understand variety to improve your compositions

by Ann Johnston

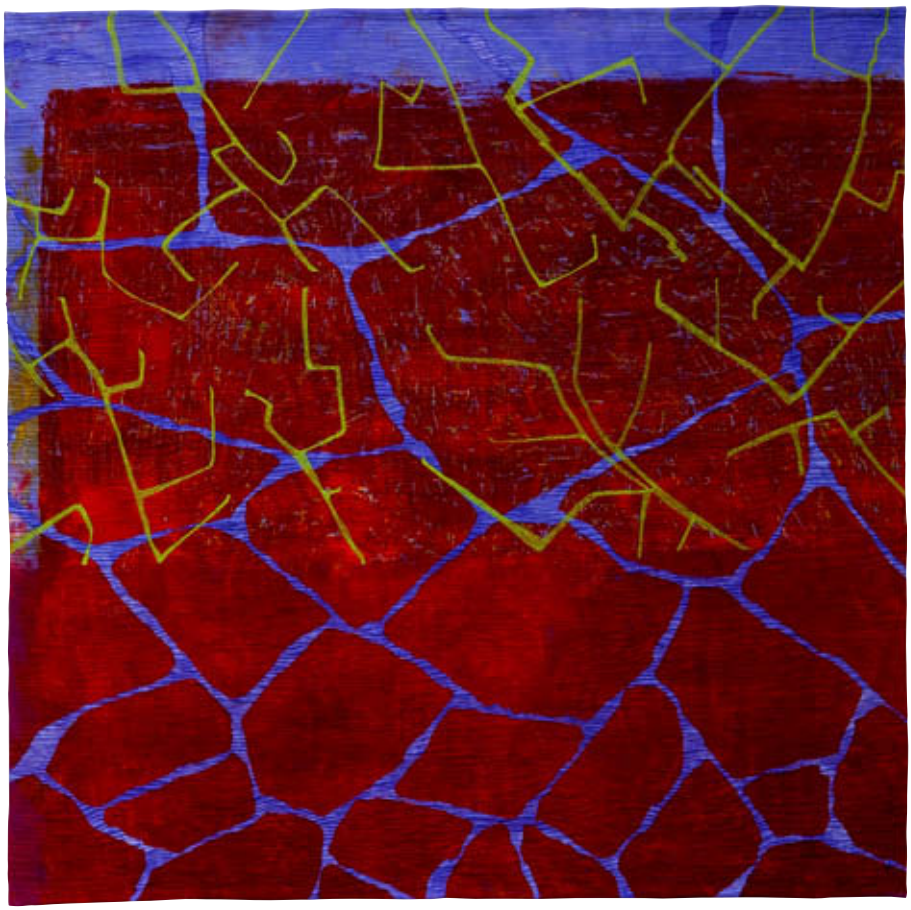
The importance of variety—also called contrast—applies to all the elements of design. A composition may use contrast of line, shape, value, color, pattern, and/or texture to highlight a particular part of the design. Within the element of shape, for example, a design may have variety of scale or placement to create a sense of depth. An element of contrasting pattern might be used to create a focal point, and several could make the eye move around the composition. A tiny bit of variety of color might help unify a piece or unbalance it. A change in line style might suggest movement, express a mood, or even create a shape.

A composition may be high in contrast or low in contrast, and this in itself should contribute to the overall impact of the quilt. As I work, and even after a piece is "finished," I like to check to see if the parts add up as I had intended. I can look at the elements that have contrast and see what they do to the design and make changes accordingly, either to that piece or to one that follows.

Your tastes may or may not lean to high contrast, but whether or not you know it, you are using contrast all the time. The following is a simplified example using the element of color and imagining two right triangles of the same size. When they are the identical color and you place the long sides together, your visual result is a quadrangle. When you place that quadrangle on the same color ground, it disappears. If you vary the color slightly in one of the triangles, then your visual result is a shape made up of two triangles. If you place these on a ground that matches one of the triangles, then your visual

Diminishing **51 x 51 inches** **©2008 Ann Johnston**

Contrast is used to give a sense of depth and dimension.



Line: The style of the light green lines contrasts strongly with the rest of the composition, and their placement emphasizes a division between the upper and lower parts.

Shape: The size of the shapes decreases from top down in the overall design.

Value: Light blue against dark red makes the shapes pop out and the subtle use of darker red, just below center, adds a horizon. Darker quilting thread slightly increases this contrast.

Color: The warm blue recedes behind red shapes. Using the complementary lime green over the red increases their impact.

Texture: Free-motion zigzag embroidery (in lime green) contrasts with the undulating horizontal quilting lines. The textural contrast of raw edge, reverse appliqué emphasizes the spaces between the shapes.

Pattern: The overall pattern of the red ground contrasts with the pattern created by the green lines in the foreground.

All photos by Bill Bachhuber

result is one triangle. Contrast has created the shape we see, and the impact of the triangle in the whole design is determined by whether it is high or low contrast to the background color.

That example is obvious, but in more complicated compositions, it can be harder to actually achieve the visual results you want. Again, using the example of color, subtle differences occur when you use the same color but vary the temperatures from warm to cool. Stronger color contrast is achieved using complementary colors—opposites on the color wheel—than using colors that are more closely related to each other. That strong contrast of complements is lessened if the colors are not the same saturation or purity, one bright and clear and the other toned down and slightly more neutral. Generally, warmer, lighter, clearer colors tend to come forward in the design, and that can create a focal point that was unintended. Or you may choose a warm color so that it will come forward, but if it's a highly unsaturated warm color, it may disappear. Choosing a color by

Countless **34 x 56 inches** **©2009 Ann Johnston**

Contrast is used to give a sense of movement and to create a subject.

Line: Long, thin, reverse appliqué lines become part of the background and contrast with short, thick, surface appliqué lines (that have become shapes) in the foreground.

Shape: The white shapes are all very similar and they loosely create a larger foreground shape which is very high in contrast to the background. Its placement off center allows the low contrast shape in the quilting to show up.

Value: Low value contrast of horizontal lines in the background minimizes their impact. Very light linear shapes stand out more in the foreground. Other light areas are all small and all at the upper edge of the composition adding to the sense of looking up.

Color: The red in the background impacts the mood of the whole piece, and the light gray suggests what the falling shapes may be—they are a very cold contrast to the other colors.

Pattern: The undefined pattern of the colors in the background suggests a setting and contrasts with the fine-detailed pattern in the gray shapes. The quilting pattern is interrupted by the shapes in the foreground adding a subtle emphasis to them.

Texture: The pyramidal shape in the background is created by a change in the real texture of the quilting.

a rule or formula won't help you make the right decision; you need to see it in context, next to its neighbors, and observe if it has contrast or not and whether it accomplishes what you wanted in the design.

My work is often high in contrast because that is what I like. High contrast works to draw the eye and adds emphasis to that portion of the design that I think is important. A lot of the variety I use is less obvious. Some of the contrasting elements simply add visual interest—more complexity— and some of them soften the differences in the parts of the composition. Hopefully, I have made choices that do not detract or distract from the idea I have. I want to be purposeful in my quilt making, and variety, or contrast, is one of the important concepts that I can use to that end. ▼

Ann Johnston is a professional member of SAQA. View her artwork and schedule of workshops on her website: www.AnnJohnston.net. Her book, The Quilter's Book of Design, 2nd Edition, contains the kernels of her approach to design concepts and gives examples using her work in cloth to illustrate them.

Line: The varying width of the lines gives a sense of depth and moves the eye around the composition. The similarity in line style ties the three figures together.

Shape: The shapes vary greatly in size, but have a similarity in freeform curved movement.

Value: Dark blue over pale yellow-green ground makes it a high-contrast composition. Less obviously, the lower border area is a lighter value than the upper border area. Also, small, darker pieces occur in more or less even distribution in border areas, adding pattern and interest.

Color: The royal blue also contrasts in temperature and saturation with the background. The lower border yellow-green is more saturated than the yellow-green of the upper border area.

Pattern: The blue lines have no pattern to distinguish them from each other, tying them together. Some of the yellow-green pieces have a large scale pattern and others have medium, small scale, or no pattern. Some of the larger scale patterns move the eye away from the main figures of the composition.

Texture: Upon close inspection, the texture varies because the quilting pattern changes to a distinctly different pattern in the blue figures. The quilting of the border varies slightly from the quilting of the center background, creating another different texture.

Balance 32 **49 x 93 inches ©2010 Ann Johnston**

Contrast is used to give a sense of balance and of scale.

Shipping work for a SAQA exhibition

by Linda Colsh and Bill Reker

Once jury selections have been made or invitations have gone out for a SAQA exhibition, the curator notifies participants of the requirements for shipping their work to SAQA for the show. SAQA receives and consolidates all of the artwork to ship to the show venues. (*Note: SAQA does not handle shipping for regional exhibitions*.)

In 2011, thanks in large part to members' generous response to a special fundraising appeal, SAQA opened a dedicated shipping and storage facility in Beachwood, Ohio. When researching what facility SAQA would rent, great care was taken to make certain that the facility would be both secure and climate controlled, with special attention to humidity levels. Bill Reker operates and directs this new shipping facility. He receives work from all the artists included in a SAQA show.

Shipping your work to SAQA

Artwork selected for a show makes a number of journeys: first to the shipping facility in Beachwood where all work for a show is inspected, photographed, consolidated, and repacked; then to and from the show venues; and finally, back to the artist (or, if sold, to the new owner).

Before boxing your work to send to SAQA's collection point in Ohio, fold or roll (with crushed acid-free tissue padding) your work to fit your shipping container. Place the folded/rolled artwork in a cloth bag or cover, then bag or seal in plastic so that if the shipping box gets wet or damaged, the artwork will be protected. Include your name on all packing materials. Use clear plastic, *not* a dark plastic bag that could be mistaken as trash.

It is essential that you use a strong box that will withstand more than one shipment—at a minimum, both the journey to SAQA and back. Take precautions against a crushed, poked, or torn-open outer package by using a strong container such as a telescoping box. Seal and reinforce corners and edges with extra tape. SAQA stores your original packaging at the Beachwood, Ohio, facility and returns work to you at the end of a show in that box, provided it is still in good condition. Bill ensures that all return packages carry tracking numbers, require a signature, and are insured.

The cost of "signature required" is well worth the assurance that a package will not be left on an unattended doorstep.

Signature required, tracking, and insurance for artwork in transit

Artists shipping artwork to SAQA should always include the shipper's "signature required" option for their package. This is to ensure that in the event no one can receive a delivery, the work is not just left unattended. Instead, delivery will be attempted again and can be handed to Allison or Bill Reker on the next business day. The security of your packages is of utmost importance to SAQA. The receipt signature provides you with accountability and proof of receipt.

The postal service (USPS or post in the originating country) and individual shipping companies use various terms to describe options for sending packages. It is imperative to research what options, fees, and service levels are available to ensure your package is handed to the recipient in person. For example, USPS "tracking" and "delivery confirmation" options, while showing transit progress of a package, do not ensure that a package is given directly to a person, only that the package was delivered to the address. Only the USPS "signature required" option ensures delivery in person.

Shipping firms like FedEx and UPS offer similar proofs of in-person delivery via a "signature required" option. The cost of "signature required" is well worth the assurance that a package will not be left on an unattended doorstep. Finally, a "restricted delivery" option offers even further security, meaning the package is only delivered to a specific named recipient or agent. If you choose to use this

option, be sure to list both Bill Reker and Allison Reker, so that either one may sign for the package.

When SAQA ships artwork

When packing art quilts for a show or returning them to an artist, SAQA first wraps the quilt in archival-quality, acid-free buffered paper. The buffered paper is ideal for storing and preserving natural fibers. For a discussion on buffered vs. unbuffered paper see talasonline.blogspot.com/2010/01/buffered-vs-unbuffered-tissue.html. When shipping art quilts back to their owners, the quilt is placed inside a plastic bag to protect from moisture only after it is wrapped in the buffered tissue. As noted earlier, SAQA makes every effort to return the work in the sender's original box.

For shipping to exhibition venues and from venue to venue, SAQA uses custom-made shipping crates ranging in size from 48 to 84 inches in length. The inside of each shipping container is lined with a large sheet of heavy plastic to protect the quilts from water as well as from any bolts, splinters, or other elements inside the box. Next, a layer of buffered tissue paper is laid down, and folded quilts are laid on top of the tissue. A layer of tissue separates each folded quilt, and quilts rolled together are separated by tissue as well.

Bill makes every effort to ship items out of the facility on Mondays. "We ship art quilts on Mondays whenever possible, whether to a show or back to an artist. We don't want quilts sitting over a weekend in a carrier's warehouse. This is because the warehouses are not air-conditioned and humidity becomes an issue. Unfortunately, due to shipping times overseas, this is often unavoidable in those instances."

Other shipping information and advice

SAQA has general information, along with three very informative articles, archived from previous issues of the *SAQA Journal*, in the SAQA University area of the website. To find these articles, log in to SAQA U and visit www.saqau.wikispaces.net/Bus+Shipping, or enter "shipping" in the search field.

The SAQA U wiki page also includes a comprehensive list of shipping companies, both general shipping companies such as FedEx, UPS, and USPS, as well as firms that specialize in shipping art or international shipments. In addition to a brief description of carnets (merchandise "passports" for international shipping and customs documentation), there is a brief list of shipping suppliers and an article concerning shipping an entire exhibition.

Air vs. ground and international shipments

Not only is the subject of which company to use complex, but so is the choice of whether to ship via ground or air. Professional photographer Gregory Case, a member of the SAQA exhibition committee, notes that there are mixed opinions concerning whether you have better service via ground or faster overnight or second-day air. He says, "Some UPS/FedEx representatives believe that in bad weather, ground will be better as trucks can still move while airplanes can't; however, your package is handled less with air versus ground, so there might be less chance of error. I've not found statistics on what the loss rate is for ground versus air."

One recent SAQA Yahoo list thread concerned international shipping and asked for suggestions for wording to use on customs forms. There is no universal answer about what description or value to mark on the package to minimize delays or charges. In practice, artists have many opinions about what wording to use on the form and what value to put on the package, and these suggestions often depend on the country. Only a dedicated international shipping and customs broker can provide definitive answers.

We urge those who are shipping or mailing work across international borders to do their own research and consider the ramifications of taking on the legwork and paperwork yourself. Experiences and opinions vary from artist to artist regarding which international shipper to use; the most reasonably priced option is often the international post. Any option other than working with a dedicated international shipping and customs broker requires that the artist assume a degree of risk. The trade-offs are in cost and pre-shipping time and paperwork.

Because countries have differing

See "Shipping" on page 29

Sara Sharp

Cape Cod Window
33 x 25 inches wide
©2009
www.sarasharp.com

This is the view out the kitchen window of the 100-year-old Cape Cod beach house where my family has spent many happy summer vacations. It evokes memories of the smell of ocean breezes, the taste of fresh produce and seafood, and the sharing of wine and heartfelt conversation.

Deborah Fell

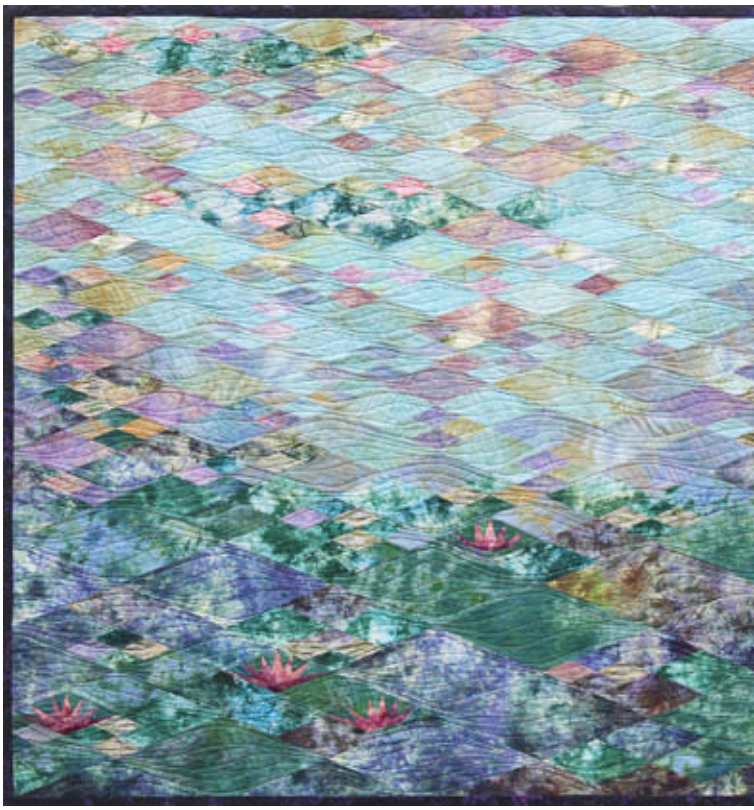
Mauer im Kopf (Wall in the Head)
27 x 19 inches ©2010
www.deborahfell.com

Touching the Berlin Wall changed me. This physical enormity depicts beautiful, tattered, uncensored graffiti that tells a story of oppression during the Cold War. It has been over 20 years since the collapse of the 96-mile-long barrier. The Berlin Wall was the symbolic boundary between democracy and communism; it commemorates an act of shame.

Elena Stokes

Nymphaea
49 x 66 inches ©2011
focusonfiberart.com

Inspired by a trip to Monet's home in Giverny, France, and the many paintings of his pond.

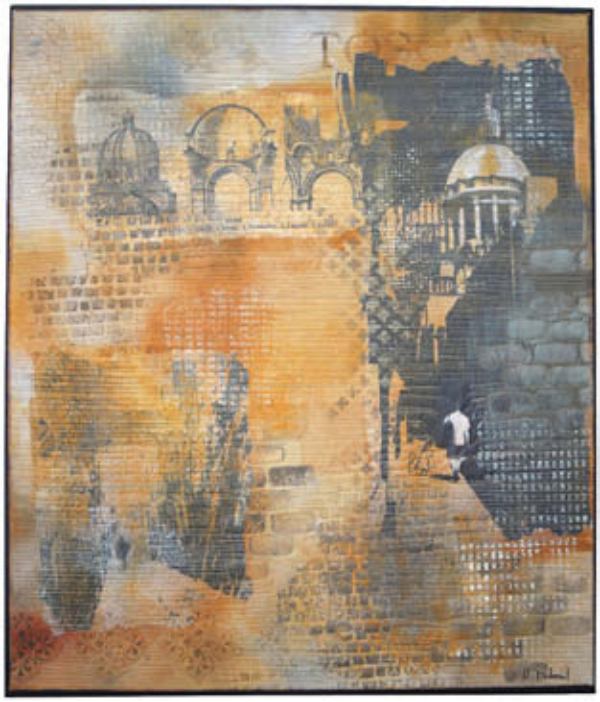


Susan Walen

Memory of Japan

22 x 24 inches ©2010 www.suewalen.blogspot.com

Our honeymoon trip was to Japan in late spring 2004. Everywhere we went, we were approached by groups of kids practicing their English and needing our signatures and photographs to show their teacher that they had spoken to us. Many of my photos were of the little ones. In the height of the "Hello Kitty" fashion, this little girl was posed by her parents in front of giant cardboard figures, so I took her picture too.



B. J. Adams

Traveling From Dawn to Dusk

38 x 25 inches ©2009

www.bjadamsart.com

The second thought that comes to my mind when I'm going on a trip is, how much can I take? After packing my suitcase and donning my red suit and shoes, I am ready to travel the world. From dawn to dusk, I enjoy each beautiful new scene or landscape yet to be discovered.

Heather Dubreuil

Tuscany #5

24 x 20 inches ©2011

www.heatherdubreuil.com

Images from my photos of Tuscany have been collaged onto painted cloth, with stitch used to create textures of brick and stone. I was inspired by the fragmentary nature of experience and memory.

Self-publishing a portfolio book

by Cindy Grisdela

How do you present your art to the world, outside of your website? Over the years I've tried various methods of putting together a portfolio of my work to present at shows or to galleries, from simple photographs inserted in a standard photo album to a large black spiral-bound portfolio with custom pages of my work, to a digital photo frame. None was completely satisfactory.

During the SAQA Visioning Conference in May 2011, I visited Carol Ann Waugh's studio in Denver and saw two portfolio books she had self-published. Maybe that would be the answer. I have used Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com) for many years to create photo books for friends and family—much easier than printing out pictures, keeping them organized, and finding time to put them into photo albums. But I wanted to try something a little different for my portfolio.

Waugh uses Blurb (www.blurb.com) to create her portfolio books and says the process is very easy. The first step is to download the free book-creating software onto your computer. Although it's possible to create your book entirely online, Waugh says the downloaded version has better editing features. There are helpful tutorials available in either version to get you started, ideas for inspiration, page templates, and step-by-step guides.

Virginia Spiegel of Byron, Illinois, used Blurb to create *Wild at the Edges: Inspiration from a Creative Life*, showing images of her work alongside the photographs that inspire her and text about her journey as an artist. "Blurb is easy to use, but I would recommend watching their tutorials once or twice to save time on the learning curve," Spiegel advises. "The first book is the hardest, of course."

Before you begin, Waugh suggests putting the photos you want to use into a separate folder on your computer. "Otherwise the program wants to upload all your photos, and in my case that would be over 10,000!" This is a good exercise because it forces you to consider exactly what you want to include in your portfolio. Recent work only or older pieces as well? Sold work or just work that's currently available? How often will you update your book? Waugh's portfolios for 2010 and 2011 each include several years of work.

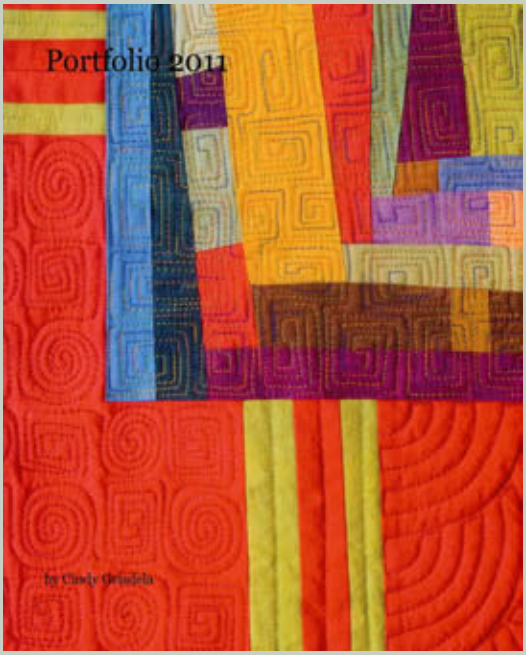
Good photography is essential to show your work to its best advantage. Review the images to make sure the photo quality is what you want it to be, and decide on a uniform presentation. I'm not a photographer, so I have my work shot by a professional, always using a neutral background. If your images have different backgrounds, consider cropping the edges to avoid distracting from your art.

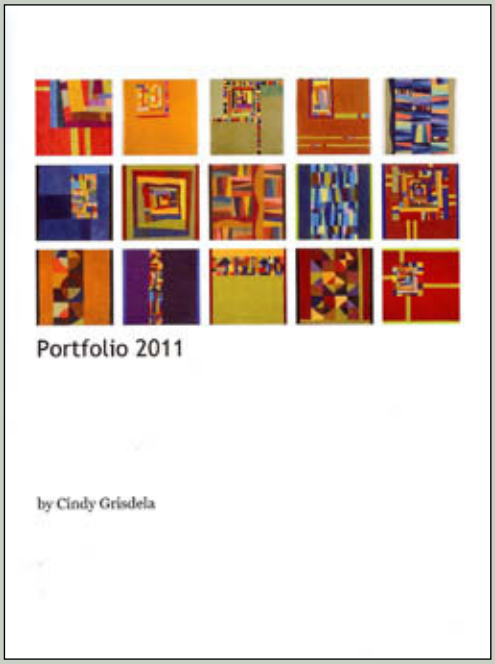
Whether or not to add text is another consideration. Do you want to include information on inspiration or other details with each image, or devote a page or two at the beginning to talk about your creative work and just give titles under each piece? Remember, the more text there is on each page, the smaller the image will have to be. Waugh recommends writing your copy first and saving it without any formatting. Then, after you have used the Blurb software to set up fonts and type size, you can copy and paste the text.

I decided to try Blurb, and following Waugh's advice, I moved high-resolution photos of my work to a separate file on my computer and wrote the text I wanted to include—one page at the beginning of the book describing my art, my inspiration, and my process, plus two pages at the end with resume information. Then I was ready to begin.

The Blurb software walks you through the process of creating your book step by step. First, choose a title and the size of your book—it can range from 7 x 7 inches square to 13 x 11 inches landscape. The size can be changed later if you wish. Next, decide whether you want to use a standard layout, with "Guide Me" choices like portfolio, photo book, or journal, or just "Wing It" (create as you go). Spiegel says she always chooses "Wing It" over "Guide Me." You still get individual page templates, but you can arrange the placement yourself. She says, "I have found that while background colors and other bells and whistles are tempting, plain white really shows off the photos best. Simplicity is good."

The next step is to upload your photos and start arranging the photos and text. Each page has a suggested format, or you can choose other options from the toolbar on the left. If you get stuck, there are good help topics and FAQs to help you resolve the problem or question. For example, if your image resolution isn't





Front cover and title page

high enough for the size photo you want to include, the software will let you know and give you options for fixing it.

Once you've added your photos and text, you'll want to preview your book. A handy option allows you to see one page at a time, a two-page spread, or the entire book laid out in thumbnails on the design wall. This is a good opportunity to make sure the flow of images and text is what you intended. It's also a good time to check the pricing options for the number of pages you have.

Blurb offers a page-range pricing system. Books with up to 20 pages have a set cost, then the price goes up in increments for additional pages, from 21–40, 41–80, 81–120, and so on. If your book is on the lower end of a range, you'll have to decide whether it's worth it to cut a few pages to get the lower price. Other self-publishing services like Lulu (www.lulu.com) offer a per-page pricing system, plus a binding fee. The price per page depends on the size of the book, whether it's in color or black and white, and the paper quality. Shutterfly has a combination system; the first 20 pages are a set price, then there's a per-page price for each additional page. Be sure to read the fine print to avoid surprises at checkout.

Pricing is also dependent on the type of cover and the paper quality you choose. Most services offer a range of cover choices from softcover to hardbound with an image-wrapped cover; some even offer the option of an e-book. These decisions are typically made at the end of the process. It's worthwhile to give some consideration to the use you intend for your book. Is it simply a catalog of your work to show to prospective purchasers or maybe to a gallery? Do you want to give it as a gift to your top clients? Or would you like to try to sell it, either on the publisher's website or on your own at events you participate in?

Blurb and Lulu have a bookstore where you can offer your book for sale. You can allow the book to be sold on the site at the base price, or you can set your own price and keep a portion of the increase over the base price. Read the fine print on the site before choosing this option. Blurb has various mechanisms for promoting your book, like a widget to put on your website, blog, or Facebook page that takes interested visitors to the Blurb bookstore.

Once you've finished adding your images and text and have decided on your book size, the type of cover you want and the paper quality you'd like to use, it's time to proofread your work. Although it may seem like you're finished, don't skimp on this step! "You must be a relentless proofer of your book," warns Robin Kent, a photographer in Virginia who sells a self-published book of his images of Washington, D.C. "You'll be amazed at what can slip through, even with multiple reviews," he adds. Proof the work on the computer, print out a copy and review it again, spellcheck it, and give it to a friend or relative to read for content, Kent advises. Once you're satisfied, order one copy of the book and review it again to make sure you're happy with the cover, layout, and paper quality.

I ordered my book in hardcover with an image wrap and was pleasantly surprised with the crispness of the images on the page. There were a few minor details that I would have changed—the title doesn't show up

See "Self-publishing" on page 30

A guide to pricing your artwork

by Karen Atkinson

Artist/teacher/curator/blogger Karen Atkinson truly understands the art world from different perspectives. She shares her expertise in this guest blog, reprinted with permission from her website at GYST, a company run for artists by artists in California.

Pricing work can be one of the strangest, most nebulous areas of an art practice to navigate. After all, the monetary value of art, unlike car repair, or say, furniture manufacturing, can't really be quantified by any set standard. There is no perfect formula for pricing your work, but here are a few helpful hints.

- Plan ahead. Don't price things at the last minute. This can lead to outrageously high or low prices depending on your mood, current economic situation, or desire for attention.
- Visit galleries, rental spaces and exhibitions, and do some research on comparable artists and artwork. Look at the exhibition checklist for these details.
- Err on the high side. Low pricing often signifies that the artist doesn't have confidence in their work. On the other hand, if you are an emerging artist, asking for $25,000 for a painting might be over the top. Prices can go up, but they should never go down. Getting your work to start selling might be more important than pricing things too high. Use common sense.
- You should compensate yourself fairly for your time and materials. Most artists undervalue their work, often making less money on sales than they spent making work. It is a good idea to keep track of your expenses and the time spent creating the work.
- When calculating your studio expenses, maintain records of the time you spend, and the cost of materials. Include overhead such as rent, utilities, professional fees, fabrication costs, assistants' wages, transportation, postage, and shipping. Divide the total by the number of works you make a year, and average the cost per work. Then, add the sales commission. Make sure you build in a profit margin and room for a discount to notable collectors or collecting institutions.
- Use an hourly wage to calculate how much your art is worth. You are a professional artist and you deserve a professional living wage. Don't go with minimum wage numbers here. The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Labor Statistics lists the mean hourly wage of Fine Artists as $23.22. Use this as a starting point for figuring out your hourly wage.
- Letting dealers and consultants price your work is not always the best way to go. Often a dealer will set the price of your work, but you should be a part of this discussion and it should be a joint decision. If you have your expenses calculated, you have a better chance of getting your share of the total price of the work. Remember that gallery dealers calculate things like rent, salaries for employees, and marketing costs into valuing your work.
- Some excuses you will hear from dealers about pricing the work low is that you are an emerging artist, your resume does not have the right venues, the work is small or derivative, or the dealer needs to spend more time and spend more money to promote the work of emerging artists. Defend your work, show them how much it costs to make your work, refer to your hourly rate. Be negotiable, but don't undervalue your work.
- Artists with gallery experience and consistent sales histories should already have base prices set for their works. If you do not already have a track record of sales, your base price should approximate what artists in your locale (with comparable experience and sales records) charge for similar works of art. Keep in mind that even though your art is unique, experienced art professionals, like dealers, advanced collectors, consultants and agents, make price comparisons from artist to artist all the time. Being able to evaluate your art from a detached standpoint, by comparing it to that of other artists in your area, is necessary in order for your price structure to make sense in the marketplace.
- Keep work that holds special meaning for you or represents critical

moments in your life or career off the market. Make sure this work is not drastically different from your other art in terms of physical criteria. You may want this work as part of your own private collection. Also, the tendency is to overprice such work.

- If you are selling work in your studio or at a studio sale, you might want to price the work a few hundred dollars over the set price so you have space to negotiate. Always have a price list available that states the full retail price. If you are selling the work yourself, always include any discount policy in writing on the price sheet. This will get you out of a bind if a buyer brings it up.
- You should not price your work according to what region of the country or city it is shown in, or what gallery sells it. Consistent pricing is a cornerstone of a sound practice and eventually leads to successful sales.

Commission splits

Usually galleries and art consultants take a 50% commission of all sales. Anything above that is highway robbery. If the commission is less than 50%, do not lower the price. Have a heart-to-heart talk with anyone who wants a higher commission. Often there will be a wide range of excuses for this, including that you are an emerging artist, your work costs more to sell, etc. Do not buy it! Many nonprofit galleries take from 0–30% commission and many leave the negotiation up to the artist.

There are special circumstances in which you may need to receive more than the 50% commission. If your work is very expensive to produce, and the fabrication is very costly (such as foundry work) or you use a specialized process, you will need to negotiate this up front, before the commission split.

Prices too high?

If people like your art enough to ask how much it costs, but do not buy, it may be because your price structure is too high. First, conduct an informal survey by asking dealers, experienced collectors, consultants, fellow artists, and agents what they think. Never arbitrarily cut prices or adjust them on the spur of the moment. Reduce your prices according to the consensus of knowledgeable people. Use your concerned judgment. Avoid having to reduce prices again by making sure your reductions are in line with or even slightly greater than the consensus opinion. Never make your art so inexpensive that people will not take it, or you, seriously.

Price increases

A price increase is in order when demand for your art regularly outstrips demand for your contemporaries' work. The best time to increase prices is when you are experiencing a consistent degree of success and have established a proven track record of sales that has lasted for at least six months and preferably longer. Depending on what you make, and the quantity of your output, you should also be selling at least half of everything that you produce within a six-month time period. As long as sales continue and demand remains high, price increases of 10–25% per year are in order. As with any other price-setting circumstances, be able to justify all increases with facts. Never raise prices based on whimsy, personal feelings or because you feel that they have remained the same for long enough.

Your prices should remain stabilized until you have one or more of the following: increased sales, increases in the number of exhibitions you participate in, increase in the number of galleries that represent you, or inflation.

Online sales

When pricing and selling your work online, you should keep the big picture in mind. Continually compare your prices to available art in your area, as well as on the Internet, and not just among your circle. Have a good selection of reasonably priced works available for purchase. Give the buyer the option of starting small, without having to risk too much money. Remember, people are just beginning to get used to the idea of shopping online for art. Hosting your work on the Internet opens the doors to a different market, which is not necessarily driven by region. Many collectors and patrons visit websites to see new artists who are outside of their area.

See "Pricing" on page 31

The Texas Quilt Museum

by Susan E. Slesinger

Karey Bresenhan and Nancy O'Bryant Puentes graciously took time out from their busy schedules at the International Quilt Festival – Long Beach in July, 2011, to discuss their latest project, the Texas Quilt Museum. The idea of opening a quilt museum has been a dream of theirs for quite a while, and now it is coming to fruition. Their enthusiasm for the museum is contagious.

Karey's ranch near La Grange, Texas, does double-duty as a creativity and retreat center and as the site for the Quilts, Inc. executive meetings. On their way back from dinner during one of these meetings, Karey and Nancy spied a building for sale in the La Grange central business district. "We looked at each other and stopped to peer into the building. As soon as we saw it, we knew that it was the perfect location for a quilt museum, but we didn't think we could afford it." Fortunately, the building was within their museum budget, and the two became owners of the building in July, 2009.

La Grange is within easy driving distance of Austin, Houston, and San Antonio. Though La Grange itself has a population of only about 5,000, it is host to a number of cultural attractions and events throughout the year. In addition, tourists often come to view the wooden churches local immigrants built with trompe l'oeil painting that mimics the marble and stonework of European churches. The museum will now add to La Grange's attraction as a tourist destination. "La Grange lends itself well to a weekend trip," says Nancy.

Renovations began with the replacement of the roof and then moved to reclaiming the exterior and interior spaces. The building is constructed from bricks with a wonderful patina that had been made on a nearby Texas plantation; the mason working on the restoration painted replacement bricks to ensure they matched the originals. Similarly, the floors are made of hand-planed wood and the carpenter worked hard to maintain the antique look. "We were very fortunate that the workers involved in the restoration are craftspeople who take pride in doing

photo by Alex Labry | www.alexlabry.com

A white-gloved docent shows Margaret (Peggy) Fetterhoff's quilt, *Sphere*, to visitors to the new Texas Quilt Museum. The quilt is part of *Texas Quilts Today: Selections from the Book Lone Stars III*, an exhibition presented in three parts at the Museum through summer 2012.

photo by Alex Laby | www.alexlaby.com

things right," shared Karey.

Of particular concern was the fact that the textile collection needed to be displayed in a controlled environment to ensure that there would be no deterioration of the delicate fibers. An architectural firm donated flat files, perfect for storing the fabric samples for the Material Culture Center.

The museum has approximately 10,000 total square feet, including three galleries and a mezzanine hanging space. The acquisition of a second building enables Karey and Nancy to have enough space to house the Pearce Memorial Library and the Material Culture Center, containing fabric collections assembled by Karey and Mary Koval. The center will enable visitors to study historic fabrics, protected in Mylar® envelopes, that they would not otherwise be able to see. The building will also house offices and a workroom to prepare quilts for exhibition.

The museum is called the Texas Quilt Museum because it's located in Texas; it is not a museum devoted exclusively to Texas quilts. It is an exhibition institution rather than a museum with a permanent collection. The first exhibition, curated by Karey and Nancy together, features 70 quilts from their recent book, *Lone Stars III: A Legacy of Texas Quilts, 1986–2011*. Made between the sesquicentennial and the present, these quilts represent a variety of artistic styles, ranging from traditional to avant-garde.

Going forward, the museum plans to offer four exhibitions a year and would like to host some of SAQA's traveling exhibitions; part of the gallery space lends itself to the display of smaller quilts. "We are really proud that Sandra Sider, SAQA's president, is our consulting curator," Karey said.

Hundreds of visitors came to the museum's official opening on November 13, 2011, lining up around the block to wait to get in. Karey and Nancy hope their plan to have four exhibitions a year will encourage visitors to come back to the museum regularly. "We hope that the museum will give La Grange a new lease on life, and we can't wait to introduce more people to quilts and quilters." ▼

SAQA active member Susan E. Slesinger lives in Seal Beach, California, and is a composer, as well as fiber artist and teacher. Her blog is www.californiafiberandmusic.blogspot.com.

Promote your work without apologizing

by Valarie Poitier

Who are you? What do you say when you talk about your work casually at gallery openings, during lectures, or at workshops? At each of these events, whenever you speak, you are promoting yourself and your work—or not. You never know who is sitting or standing next to you. In those first critical moments, are you giving the impression you intend?

Apologies, reasons, excuses, and family drama are often used inappropriately in what should be a one-on-one conversation about your artistic endeavors. You are where you are in your process; wherever that is, it's okay. No apology needed. During a quick conversation, it's not important to note how much time you have spent creating, how many tools you have, how much fabric is in your stash, or even how many quilts you've made. Staying focused creates a good impression about you and your art. This is one of the few times when "I, I, I" really is okay. Try to talk about you—nothing and no one else.

Have you done a self-assessment lately? It's important to note the difference between the perceptions you have of yourself and the perceptions others have of you. Self-awareness is a valuable tool. Whose words do you use to describe yourself and your work? What are they? Do they fit who, what, when, and where you are at this point in your artistic life? Do you find yourself apologizing about your work or yourself? Are the things people say about you true or not? Who gave them this perception of you? Keep in mind that some of the perceptions others have of you come from their life experiences, not your own actions. When you can label who you are and what you do, say it with confidence and without hesitation. There's no reason to apologize.

Using an index card, answer the following questions using only one side of the card: Who are you? What do you do? What medium do you use? Where can I see your work? If you are thinking, "I answer these simple questions all the time about my day job," I can relate. Now, can you do it for your art-related business with the same practiced smoothness and confidence you use for your other jobs, without apologizing? Don't compare where you are in your business, what you've accomplished, or what your studio looks like to those of any other artist. For now, acknowledge where you are and don't let comparisons, wishes, or dreams get in the way. It's important to answer these four questions clearly and concisely. Let's review the importance of each of these questions.

Who are you?

Remember the old movies in which the soldier gave his name, rank, and serial number? He was sharing all his vital information. You can do the same. Introduce yourself, remembering that "Ugh" is not your first name, and then be quiet. Give others a chance to speak. Listen to what they say, ask for their name, swap additional information if appropriate, and then, with style and poise, move on, leaving a good impression.

What do you do?

Please do not give the whole story of your creative life or medical history. You laugh? How many times has it happened to you? When someone is canvassing for new artists or new work to exhibit in a room full of people, no one wants to hear a long tale. You want your response to be short, offered with a smile, and then, be quiet. Why? It invites the other person to ask pertinent questions. Give the other person an opportunity to ask for more information.

What medium do you use?

This is a seeking question, a hunt for additional information. This is an appropriate time to share a postcard-size print of your work and then, again, be quiet.

Silence is one of the most important tools when networking. I know; women finally have a voice. However, at times, we get so excited we start to ramble. Those of us comfortable with talking to strangers are the worst abusers. Those who are uncomfortable hardly get a word in edgewise, or the words get stuck in our throats. And here I am telling you to be quiet—really just hush up, not a peep, not even a whisper, which can sound like a buzz, or a wave, or a roar when 50–200 people are doing it simultaneously.

At an artists' reception or as you move around during breaks, don't get comfortable and stop introducing yourself. Don't latch onto someone and don't let someone else latch onto you. Be gracious, excuse yourself, and keep moving through the room. As

The Youngster
29 x 32 inches
©2009 Valarie Poitier

Valarie used this quilt for her show-and-tell spoof during her workshop at the 2011 SAQA conference.

you approach, listen to the small talk of a group and watch the body language. In the excitement or nervousness of the moment, keep in mind that an introduction of any kind is a two-way interaction. There is as much of an art to listening as there is to speaking. In a crowded room, less is more and patience is a virtue.

Where can I see your work?

We've looked at who you are, what you do, and what medium you use. Now let's take a look at where someone can see your work. Do you want to exhibit, sell, or donate your work to charity? Whatever your answer is, remember, it's okay and just perfect for you. After all, these are your creations and each one is made using your creative gifts. You do not have to apologize for your choices or make excuses.

Now, where can I see your work: at home, in a gallery, online, in a blog, on a website, in a portfolio? Do you have photos or postcards? As we move away from paper and handwritten notes, the Internet and email have become important tools for artists to help get their work seen. Today you can handicap yourself if you do not use the computer and all it offers.

To promote your work without apologizing you must walk the walk, talk the talk, dress for the occasion, and carry your contact information and samples of your work with you at all times. You never know when a break will come from across the table or the chair next to you.

It's okay to take complete charge of your artistic journey. Give yourself permission to do it your way, to create what you want and need, and to purchase more fabric. After all, no one ever told Picasso or Rembrandt he had too many colors of paint. This is our palette. On the other hand, you may have space issues like many of us have at this point in our journey. You may choose to be more selective when purchasing, dyeing, or overdyeing your fabric. That, too, is a choice. Who you are and what works for you has so much to do with being able to express yourself without apologizing.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to all who stepped out of their comfort zone during the mini-workshop, *Promote Your Work without Apologizing* at the 2011 SAQA conference held in Denver, Colorado, in May. The exercises and questions were designed for a general audience to create an environment where participants could become more self-aware, hear themselves talk, and become conscious of general mistakes made during business exchanges. The best part for me was witnessing the breakthroughs and listening to the laughter that rang out around the room during my show-and-tell spoof. When you can laugh at yourself in any area of your life, there has been an awakening and growth is possible. Promote your work, without apologizing. ▼

SAQA professional artist member Valarie Poitier is an art quilter, writer, and workshop teacher. She lives in Natick, Massachusetts, and her website is valariepoitier.com.

How to turn your design book into a novel

by Ann Anastasio and Lani Longshore

Artists push boundaries. They relish the journey from snippet to finished piece, even if the path meanders. This is the story of a journey that jumped off the path entirely.

We had a vision of a design workbook. Our most popular workshops incorporate simple design techniques that inspire even the most timid students to unleash their creative side. Expanding on these workshops, we developed and tested sample projects, polled our colleagues, did our research, and wrote a book proposal. The response? "Great idea, but …" Like many new writers, we discovered that to sell a book, it's best to be well-known already. So, we went to Plan B—make more quilts, attract attention to our work, and shop the book proposal again. Nothing. So, we went to Plan C—make a name some other way.

For many years, we had been performing as Broken Dishes Repertory Theatre. Our programs were hour-long musical comedies about quilts and the women who make them. Since Broken Dishes Repertory Theatre had already established quilting vaudeville as a new performance art, we decided to create a new literary genre: quilting science fiction.

Writing a novel has a lot in common with creating an art quilt—each starts with an idea. For the book that became *Death by Chenille*, the idea was to turn ordinary quilters into heroines who save the world when alien space invaders disguise themselves as bolts of ugly beige fabric and get shipped to quilt stores.

Of course, the act of creation is filled with surprises. We discovered that our characters quickly took their lives into their own hands. Halfway through the first draft, it was obvious that the women we intended to be the heroines were really the sidekicks. A second draft proved that the new heroine needed a family, and by the third draft she had demanded a love interest.

We continued to work on our novel long distance, sending chapters back and forth via email. We finished the manuscript but still did not have an agent. Just as we were getting really discouraged, Lani attended a lecture by Mark Coker, CEO of Smashwords.com, a publishing site for electronic books. The idea of self-publishing hadn't previously appealed to us, since it required printing and storing copies of the book. Not only was it expensive; storage space was limited. Publishing an e-book, on the other hand, was something new and inexpensive, and wouldn't mean finding room for another box in the sewing room. Best of all, Ann could provide the perfect venue for a book launch.

Ann had met another quilter, Gale Oppenheim-Pietrzak, who was interested in producing a quilt retreat. That had always been one of Ann's dreams as well, so together they created Art Quilt Santa Fe in April 2011. At the midweek gala banquet at Art Quilt Santa Fe, Ann and Lani performed once again as Broken Dishes Repertory Theatre and introduced *Death by Chenille*. Now the response was, "Great idea, and I can buy it on Smashwords.com for only $2.99? And I can read it on my Kindle™ or the computer or the smartphone? Wow!"

Now we're often asked, "How do I publish my own books electronically?" When you self-publish, whether electronically or in print, you need to do your homework. Start by researching the competition—what other projects are out there like yours? In the case of *Death by Chenille*, there isn't an exact match. As far as we could find, no one else is writing quilting science fiction, though traditional sci-fi publishers are producing e-books. There are, however, quilting mysteries and romances, so we are confident our novel will find a market.

The next point to research is a publisher. Some companies that specialize in self-publishing (such as Lulu, Lightning Source, or Create Space) also offer e-book publishing. Both versions have cover art, a copyright page, and International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) , but with e-books there is no physical inventory. This latter point appealed to us, as did the lower up-front costs. When we were performing for quilt guilds, our profits had balanced our expenses. As unknown authors, however, we knew that every expense (which we split equally, as we do profits) would have to come from our personal checking accounts. We wanted a publisher we knew we could trust. Lani had attended that lecture by Mark Coker of Smashwords.com and felt comfortable with the company and the process, but there are many options available.

After you make a decision about your publisher, you'll need to acquire an ISBN. An ISBN is unique to both the content and the format, so a separate number is required for print, audio, and electronic versions of the

same book. You can buy a block of ISBNs at isbn.org/standards/home/index.asp. Smashwords.com offered a free ISBN, and we used that service.

Whether you publish in print or electronically, the manuscript must be edited and proofed. We had the advantage of both of us looking at the manuscript, but we also asked other people to read it. The cost for having a professional edit and/or proofread your book varies, but can run into hundreds of dollars for extensive work.

Self-publishers also have to self-format the manuscript. Lani decided to try formatting. The process did not go as smoothly as she had hoped. Lani admits, "While I only spent a couple of days on formatting, I will probably not do it myself for our next book." For those interested, Smashwords.com can provide a list of people who will format the book for a fee.

Smashwords.com also maintains a list of artists who can design book covers; our cover was created for a grand total of $43. The negotiations were conducted entirely by email. The designer can provide a back cover if we decide to produce a print edition. Be aware, however, that a cover for a print book will cost more to design than a cover for an e-book.

One issue that hasn't been solved is how to create an account under two names. "When I created the account at Smashwords.com," says Lani, "I used my name. If you look at the author profile for *Death by Chenille*, the biography is all about Broken Dishes, but if you do a search for our book, you won't find anything under Ann's name. Computer-generated accounts just aren't set up to take two names. It's something we'll have to address later on, perhaps by forming our own corporation."

Marketing an e-book is similar to marketing a print book in that it's up to the author to do most of the work. Even the largest publishing companies have limited marketing budgets and most of that money goes to promote established authors. We've been marketing ourselves as Broken Dishes Repertory Theatre, so starting a publicity campaign for *Death by Chenille* was not difficult. Ann's daughter purchased the very first copy and posted a review on her Facebook page. Using social media to publicize an e-book has the advantage that anyone interested can click one link and download a copy immediately. We printed cards with information about the book that we carry with us at all times and also distributed postcards to friends, family, quilt guilds, and quilt stores.

While getting started with marketing is easy, keeping up the momentum is harder. We have yet to take advantage of the tracking tools available to help us identify where a purchase originates. Smashwords.com notifies us when a book is purchased and we do the correlation ourselves. Word of mouth is our most successful marketing tool, which is common for new authors, whether self-published or working with a traditional publisher.

One of the lessons we learned about marketing is that finding a balance between being the pushy salesperson and the funny pitchwoman is essential. The response to our novel has been positive, but it still takes courage to say out loud, "We've written a book; want to read it?" If you're new to marketing yourself, start small. Rejoice with each success and accept that it takes time to build an audience. Another lesson every author has to learn is how to take criticism. Take suggestions to heart and try to see your work through another's eyes. Even if you decide you were right to begin with, the process of examining every sentence will make you a better writer.

We plan to get back to that design book, but not immediately. We aren't the same artists we were when we pitched that first project, so we can't write the same book. We have the same problem of not being well-known enough for a traditional publisher. While our experience with e-publishing has been positive, there is a lot to learn before we would consider self-publishing an electronic design book. Furthermore, the technology is changing. The resolution on e-readers for photographs and diagrams isn't what we would like for a design book at the moment, but better e-readers are coming in the near future. Still, we've started the sequel to *Death by Chenille*. We're calling it *When Chenille Is Not Enough*. ▼

SAQA New Mexico co-representative Ann Anastasio is a quilter, writer, and workshop teacher. She lives in Santa Fe and her website is annanastasio.com. Lani Longshore is also a quilter, writer, and workshop teacher. She lives in California and her blog is lanilongshore.wordpress.com.

Mirjam Pet-Jacobs from page 7

Germany, 2003). As a result, she felt brave enough to send some CDs with images of her work to a local museum and to one of Europe's largest patchwork quilt festivals. Both venues invited her to exhibit. From those early successes followed invitations to exhibit, jury, publish, and teach. Mirjam continues to enter top-notch textile art exhibitions. She posts announcements of her exhibitions on her website and on Facebook. She has chosen not to have a blog, fearing it would take too much time.

Mirjam maintains her website as an online portfolio. People who are interested in acquiring work can contact her through it. She has made the decision to list prices on only a portion of the small works displayed on the website. Workshops and lectures may be listed on the website; she no longer organizes them herself because of the time involved in doing so.

The income she earns through these engagements enables her to be a member of the international textile art group, Quilt Art. It also provides her with the opportunity to travel and meet wonderful people all over the world. Mirjam enjoys teaching. In fact, she was recently asked to write a book based on one of her workshops designed to guide students towards finding a more personal voice in their work. The book, titled *Textile Adventures*, was released in December 2011 and is available in three languages (English, German, and French). Mirjam has also published her own portfolio book, highlighting a selection of work from the past five years.

A glance through Mirjam's website shows the breadth and artistry of her evocative work. Consider how the shapes and images of her work enter your psyche and give you pause. This, Mirjam says, is what is supposed to happen. ▼

SAQA professional artist member Mirjam Pet-Jacobs is an art quilter living in Waalre, the Netherlands. She currently has work traveling in SAQA's ***Sightlines*** *exhibition. Her website is www.mirjampetjacobs.nl.*

Shipping from page 15

customs laws, it's impossible to make a blanket statement about what value on a package's contents will trigger a customs or duty charge. In the absence of a carnet and the associated paperwork, the customs/duty charge may be appealed for return of the maker's work from exhibition and return of the customs/duty charge (but most likely no handling fees). There is a fee charged for a customs appeal, and often the fee for the appeal may be more than the amount you can recover. It's much better to plan ahead than to have to file an appeal. The appeals processes vary by country and can be lengthy. While in the U.S., the current limit is $200 per individual per day per recipient from a sender, many other countries assess duty for very low values. Some countries also add a handling or "box opening" fee in addition to whatever duty the value of the package is determined to have. Again, anecdotal information can often be individual and, on occasion, unreliable for requirements in your country.

The issues involved in shipping work are complex. There are numerous options and variables that lead to complicated choices. However, to be sure your artwork is handled with security and care, it's vital that you do this research and know all the options, levels of risk, security, and cost that you are willing to accept. ▼

SAQA board member Linda Colsh is a quilt artist living in Belgium. Her website is www.lindacolsh.com. Bill Reker is SAQA's shipping coordinator and lives in Solon, Ohio.

Conceptual from page 10

to new ideas and possiblities.

I like to work conceptually, and these pieces satisfy me in that regard; however, I also do have to think practically. It is a reality that we, as artists, have to make money to support our art. Therefore, I do take into account the salability of my piece. Even though my *Features Fade* pieces are an installation, there is something left of each piece when it has completed its cycle of deterioration. Each is contained within a "frame"; they can be hung on the wall and can be purchased. It has been a slow process getting galleries and exhibition juries to understand what's happening with my pieces. I've found that having professional photographs taken of the works at various angles and including special details has helped. I've also considered lighting and done what I can to capture different stages in the melting process. Short time-lapse videos of my work also help people understand the craft that goes into the work as well as how it unfolds in time and space.

In describing the organic nature of my process, I hope to give a little inspiration to other artists. I believe that the more you reflect and discuss your ideas, the more clearly you understand how your work is experienced by others. Sharing ideas is another way of continuing our journey of creating art. ▼

SAQA active member Heidi Field-Alvarez of Richmond, Virginia, has her Metamorphosis *video online at youtu.be/nGvha2KszUc. Her website is www.heidifieldalvarez.com.*

Self-publishing from page 19

on the cover as well as I would have liked and there are some layouts that I would have done differently. But I can go back in and fix those issues for the next one.

I displayed the portfolio at my open studio in October 2011 and got great feedback from visitors, so I consider my initial foray into self-publishing a success. Perhaps you'll consider self-publishing a portfolio to showcase your art as well. ▼

SAQA professional artist member Cindy Grisdela is a quilt maker who likes to use bold colors. She lives in Great Falls, Virginia, and her artwork is in the Torpedo Factory Art Center and the Chasen Galleries in Richmond, Virginia. Her website is www.cindygrisdela.com.

Pricing from page 21

Discounts

You should not be required to split discounts with the gallery. It is a public relations expense for the dealer and you should not be paying that expense. The gallery is usually awarding the buyer for previous patronage. Exceptions might be when the buyer purchased your work before or they are buying more than one work by you. Always get a bill of sale as a purchase contract between the artist and the collector. Often, a dealer will issue you a purchase order, which states both commissions and the collector who bought your work. Always maintain records of who has purchased you work, including name, mailing address, and email and phone number if possible. Beware of dealers who will not give you the information on a collector, as by law, you are entitled to a copy of the bill of sale and information on who bought the work.

Market fluctuation

No matter how old you are or how long you have been making art, know that art prices fluctuate over time as a result of a variety of factors. Set your initial price structure according to the initial value of your work, your local or regional art market, but be ready to revise those prices at any time (assuming adequate justification). The more you are aware of market forces in general, and how people respond to your art in particular, the better prepared you are to maintain sensible selling prices and to maximize your sales. ▼

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Quick Notes

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