

# SAQQA *Journal*

Studio Art Quilt Associates, Inc.  
2017 | Volume 27, No. 4



**Serene Eileen**  
by Bodil Gardner  
See page 6

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# What colors inspire you?

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## Thoughts from the president

### Time for Reflection

by Lisa Ellis



It is tempting to look back at 2017 and list accomplishments. I am proud that we have done a lot this year. For example, we have: delivered our second SAQA Seminar; rebranded our collector-oriented publication, *Art Quilt Quarterly*; neared completion of a major book, *Art Quilts Unfolding: 50 Years of Innovation*; continued to ship new exhibitions to more museums; and watched more and more local connections happen in our regions.

I could go on and on with details. Rather than present an exhaustive list, I think it is more beneficial to seek perspective on the year. By referencing our starting point, we can fully appreciate how far we have come. Our perspective is enhanced when we see how a series of small steps over a long period have advanced us a great distance toward fulfilling our mission.

This approach is evident in my art practice, too. When I work on an artwork with a complex design, it can seem completely overwhelming — and let's not even mention deadlines! But if I sew one small piece to the next, I can enjoy small increments of progress. If I am deliberate in the feeling of joy that comes from handling the fabric, and from spending precious time in my studio, the stress melts away. With this approach, I enjoy the process, not just the gratification of reaching the end.

How does this translate to SAQA?

As president, I attend a lot of meetings. I also have had the pleasure of traveling to events to meet with you, our members. Each conversation I have with a staff member, fellow volunteer, or member might seem small. But when I look back, I see the progress. More importantly, if I am mindful of experiencing the joy of working together, I feel tremendous gratitude for the privilege of serving SAQA in this capacity.

It is this journey that matters. I have come to know so many of you along the way. We care for each other. We share a common goal. We talk endlessly about SAQA. I have learned to be intentional in experiencing special moments.

What I also appreciate about this small-step perspective is that all of us have an opportunity to be a part of something great. We don't have to be a big player to make a difference. Small contributions matter. Just as each piece of fabric adds depth to a work, every member's action becomes part of something bigger.

How about you? Do you find joy in the process? Do you find small steps gratifying even when the overall goal seems daunting? For all of you who contribute your time, talents, and treasure to SAQA, I can tell you that each act makes a big difference. We see your accomplishments as we look

back over the year and take stock of how far we have come.

I am grateful to each of you. I hope our paths have crossed. But if not, I still have a few more months as president. I hope I will see you in San Antonio at our annual conference in April 2018. In the meantime, I have a few more steps to take in my journey as your president and in doing my best to serve you.

### In Memoriam

We are saddened to say goodbye to several SAQA members who have passed away. Their presence helped fill our lives with color and creativity, and we will miss them.

Those members were: **Lynne Dearing** of the Arizona region, who had served SAQA as a regional rep; **Marka Harwell-Bentley**, who passed away at 72 (you can see her *Arizona Henge* work on pg. 11); **Aina Muze**, who made extraordinary abstracts; **Dee Danley-Brown**, who was part of the SAQA Northern California/Northern Nevada region; and **Michele Hardman**, whose love of art quilts was a bolster to us all. Read about the Collector's Auction inspired by Hardman on pg. 10.

We express our condolences to their families and friends.

## When to step up to the plate

by Diane Howell



The phone rang. “What are you doing?” my great aunt Lela asked. “Nothing.” “Then why don’t you do something?”

I was a kid. I generally shrugged my shoulders in answer to this oft-asked question.

Today, I have great motivation to finish this column. It is called freedom to do what I want once I am finished. But, I am frozen in nothingness, hearing my long-departed aunt’s voice gaily prodding me. She has been gone for around 40 years, yet we are still connected.

All day I have pondered a column about the connections artists have with each other, their audiences, and even the universe. Our entire issue

is filled with news about connections. Allison Reker’s piece on writing effective artist statements is a prime example of the need to engage in a two-way conversation with viewers. Nancy Bavor’s piece on museum exhibition plans gives insight into how artists and organizations such as SAQA work with venues to secure a spot on their exhibition schedules. Our announcement of the upcoming Collector’s Auction beginning on February 14 brings the concept full circle. In that article, executive director Martha Sielman tells us about the late Michele Hardman and her donation of 32 Benefit Auction quilts back to SAQA.

We all benefit from creating ties with each other. We learn from each other. We grow. The connections fostered in SAQA regions, conferences,

and our Facebook – Members Only page are wondrous to watch. These activities create a worldwide community. During the last few weeks from my home in Arizona, I have worked with artists in Germany, Australia, and the United States. I saw my days expand to catch people in almost all the time zones so we could discuss a shared love of the art quilt.

And now sitting quietly with my laptop, I see more connections, although they began as unconscious ones. The image I chose in advance of writing this column is of the artist’s aunt. The gentle admonition by my great aunt was on my mind. The knowledge that I can usually write this column in 20 minutes if I apply fingers to keyboard nagged at me.

And then, finally, I did something.

### Margaret Abramshe

*Aunt Gin*

32 x 34 inches | 2016

[www.metaphysicalquilter.com](http://www.metaphysicalquilter.com)

This photo of a moment captured in time brings to the surface stories and emotional connections. It was submitted for consideration as part of this issue’s *Member Gallery*, which carries the theme *Plus or Minus*. View this gallery on page 20.

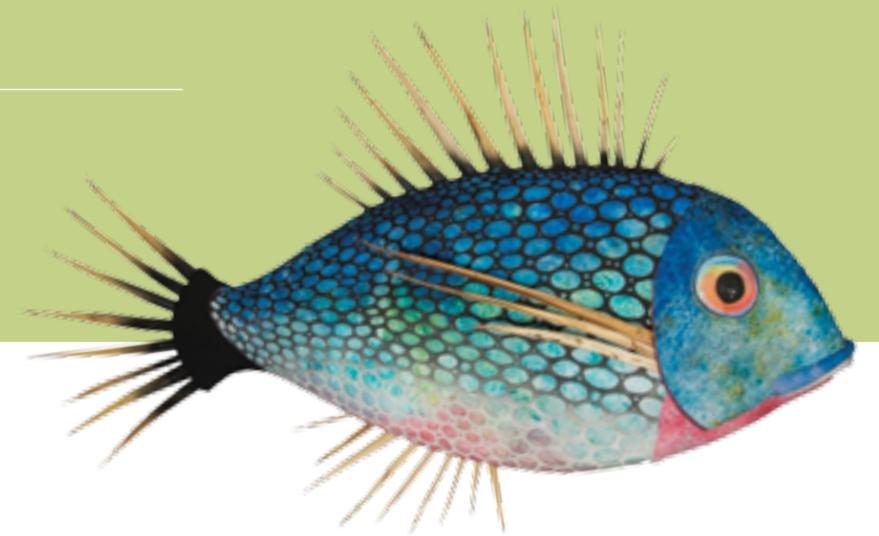


## Event wrap-up

### NEXT: The Art Quilt

Symposium explored state of the medium

by Greg Katz



*Spike the Yucca Fish*, a 3-D work by New Mexico artist Betty Busby, was part of an art-quilt exhibition installed at the Dairy Arts Center during *NEXT: The Art Quilt*. This newly finished work is 66 x 44 x 6 inches.

Photo by Mark Hollingsworth

*NEXT: The Art Quilt*, a joint symposium by SAQA and the Dairy Arts Center in Boulder, Colorado, focused on the future direction of the medium. Held in late August, the event brought together artists, curators, collectors, and historians who formed a creative think tank to share ideas, challenge stereotypes, and foster a sense of community among art quilters.

Speaker Alice Zrebiec, retired textiles curator at the Denver Art Museum, made the observation that art quilts have evolved over the last 50 years, with their emergence grounded in the “perfection versus expression” trend. This change manifests itself as the difference between making sure the binding is right compared to ensuring the artist’s meaning is clear.

Attendees were asked to consider what responsibilities art quilters have to the medium. Art quilters were challenged to take on the role of being creative artists and educators about the medium. They also were cast as commentator and innovator when they discuss work with collectors, galleries, and museums. Nancy Bavor, executive director at the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, in San Jose, California, drew a line in the sand when she said: “It (the art quilt) will be mainstream when we don’t call it an *art quilt*, but just call it art!”

Another discussion topic was whether art quilts are not considered mainstream because of the art community or because of how we view and present them. Do we, by the mere identification of our work as art quilts, dilute their relevance in

the greater art community? It may be that our beginnings, rooted in items that were utilitarian or craft in nature, inhibit our greater acceptance. In other media, a change in self-identification has created a new perception of the fields. Potters elevated themselves to ceramic artists. Collage artists now practice the art of assemblage.

How do artists know when they are considered mainstream? Jennifer Tansey, from Tansey Contemporary (with gallery locations in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Denver, Colorado), shared her perspective as a gallerist. She referenced the desire to exhibit work where the artist has mastered the physical skill of their art or craft and seeks to innovate. She emphasized the importance for artists to participate in their own art community via groups such as SAQA, showing a commitment to the medium and an ambition for growth.

One panel looked at fiber work beyond the art quilt. An idea from that panel was that when an artist has a clear point of view, it engages the viewer, the audience, and exhibitors to say, “I get it!” Artist Mary McCauley expressed her work with a simple eight-word tagline: old subjects, new

forms...old skills, new materials. Her 3-D works are puzzles and engage the viewer with their interactive construction.

Artist Susan Else’s talk, titled *Leap of Faith*, elevated not only the importance of fiber and quilt art, but their relevance in the greater creative context. She conveyed the unique qualities of fiber as a medium, and the advantages fiber and quilt artists have to express their creativity and message. “We use soft materials to convey a hard message,” she said.

Else’s remarks demonstrated the relevance of fiber and quilt art in today’s world. “Because we use fiber, we can make unique marks that can’t be done with other media.” This quality differentiates fiber artists from other art forms. It provides us with the impetus to revel in the freedom to use mark making on fiber to express a thought, action, or emotion.

Overall, the daylong symposium was a catalyst for many to explore what’s next for the medium.

Greg Katz, Ph.D., is a member of the SAQA Colorado/Wyoming/Utah region. He is a visual anthropologist focused on art and medicine. His website is [www.timetolivecreatively.com](http://www.timetolivecreatively.com).



## Featured Artist

# Bodil Gardner

Patchwork pictures create serious fun

by Cindy Grisdelo

Danish artist Bodil Gardner's art is populated by figurative characters who possess a lighthearted, whimsical air, a trait that leads the artist to describe them as patchwork pictures rather than quilts.

In a recent piece, *Patchwork is Fun*, a quilter with fuchsia hair, red leggings, and green shoes dances with joy. The free spirit is machine appliquéd onto its background in multiple layers. It represents Gardner's signature style that makes bold use of color and shape to create iconic images.

"I've been making patchwork pictures since the beginning of the 1980s," Gardner, a SAQA JAM, says in a statement on her website. "Whether it's art or not — that doesn't worry me. I make them for my own sake, hoping of course that you will like them and that they may



***Patchwork is Fun***  
48 x 32 inches | 2017

give you courage to exploit your own creativity."

Gardner's pieces are often inspired by something she read or heard. Their impetus also comes from a picture or a call-for-entry theme. She doesn't sketch her pieces. She prefers to plan the images in her head as she is falling asleep at night.

Once the image is set in her mind, she searches for the right fabrics to express her idea. Most of Gardner's fabrics are recycled materials from clothing or linens. She cuts directly into the fabric to create the shapes she wants and pins them onto the background.

The base for each piece is often an old sheet, roughly cut to the right size. If it is a figurative picture, Gardner adds a background fabric on which to build the image, using lots of pins to secure each shape.

Sometimes she ends up with five or six layers of fabric in a single picture.

"I never start sewing straight away but leave it and look at it, sometimes for days, sometimes for weeks. I stand on all sides of it to see it from all angles, and on a chair to see it from a distance," Gardner explains. This design-review phase is important to the final work, since it is difficult to make changes once she begins satin stitching the edges down.

*Serene Eileen*, from 2016, features several of Gardner's favorite motifs — a woman, a cat, and a coffee cup — as well as signature cherry red cheeks. The woman is lounging on a bed, with a cat in her lap, a book partly opened on the floor, and a coffee cup balanced precariously on the edge of the footboard. Her red shoes are kicked off her feet onto the floor.

Gardner's studio is in her living room, a location preference formed when her four children were at home. Her materials live in one corner, finished or nearly finished quilts hang from the ceiling, and her sewing machine is on the dining table. Working this way has both positive and negative points. "It is good because I can look at my work frequently, alter it a bit when I feel like it, and the whole family can judge and comment," she says. On the other hand, it is annoying to clear the work if the space is needed for something else or when it is time to eat, Gardner says.

Gardner learned to sew as a child in Denmark. Sewing, knitting, and crocheting were taught as early as the first year of school, she says. Small, even stitches were expected, and mistakes were frowned upon. "I hated it and decided that when I was a grown-up I would never hold a needle in my hand again," she remembers. All that changed when she decided to stay at home with her children as a new mother. She made children's clothes



***My First Bedspread***  
79 x 79 inches | Circa 1984



***On the Path of Dreams***  
47 x 48 inches | 2006

to contribute to the family income. This time, “Nobody was controlling the size of my stitches or how I followed the pattern.” Gradually she began to add her signature style to the clothes she made for her own children, having fun covering spots or holes with pictures.

Her artistic journey began as she used the leftovers from the children’s clothes to make bed coverings, but they were made of picture blocks rather than traditional quilt patterns. *My First Bedspread* from 1984 is a wonderful example of Gardner’s emerging style.

“One day I decided that I didn’t always have to make useful things and made my first picture, a little quilt called *The Lucia procession’s rearguard*,” Gardner remembers. She returned to that theme in 2013 with the patchwork picture *Santa Lucia*, which was exhibited at the 2014 International Quilt Festival/Houston.

Using recycled materials grew out of the necessity to use what she had on hand, which were scraps from

garment making and outgrown or damaged clothing. These materials became a design choice. “Why waste recycled materials when they have nice textures, don’t shrink, and have more unexpected colors?” she asks. Flea markets are a good resource for her building blocks. Perhaps, not surprisingly, putting the word out that she takes old clothes has resulted in friends and acquaintances delivering bulging plastic bags to her doorstep. The range of Gardner’s creative use of fabrics is evident in *Trees of Green* from 2009, particularly in the different materials that make up the faces of the musicians.

When she creates a new picture, Gardner begins in the middle of the piece, satin stitching the pinned shapes onto the background by machine. “Choice of thread is very important,” she says. With a satin stitch, the thread makes a dense line.

Usually it is being used to secure a shape and should be the same color as the material. “Often the thread is used to draw with, so to speak, and has to be seen. The thread changes the quilt!” Sometimes for teaching demonstrations, she makes the same small picture using different color threads; the results are quite different quilts.

Gardner’s father and sister were both talented painters, and she spent time as a child visiting galleries and art exhibitions. She was attracted to art that was abstract, impressionistic, and colorful. She also appreciated humor and a certain naïve style in some of the artwork she was exposed to.

That early influence is seen in *On the Path of Dreams* from 2006, with its central motif of a blonde woman surrounded by different picture-block vignettes delineated with black lines. Gardner uses her own sense of scale in this work. The sheep are the same

size as the houses in some of the picture blocks. This piece was exhibited at The Festival of Quilts in Birmingham, United Kingdom, in 2014.

Gardner enjoys working in series, sometimes staying with the same theme for months at a time. Her series’ themes include young lovers, angels, and clowns. *Roses for Rosie*, from 2014, is part of her young lovers series. She also has explored the idea of mother and child, as seen in *Two Mothers, Two Daughters and a Dog*, from 2013. This is a depiction of Gardner, her daughter and granddaughter, and was part of the SAQA exhibition *Metaphors on Aging*.

For the 2007 SAQA exhibition *The Sky’s the Limit*, Gardner entered three quilts and began a “long sequence of quilts with the sun as the theme,” she says. One of these is *Heavenly Bodies* from 2007. Here she has placed a blonde woman standing on the round Earth with her arms upraised toward the sun and a white duck at her feet. The duck lends a bit of humor and comes from an old German folk tale that puts a white duck at the middle of the Earth, Gardner says.

Gardner isn’t known as an artist in Denmark, “where quilting is not really regarded as an art form,” she notes. “I don’t work to become well-known or to impress, but rather to express for my own pleasure,” she adds.

Opportunities continue to come to her, however, since her husband created a website for her as a birthday gift in 2001. “I had a permanent exhibition and people were emailing me from all over the world. I got in contact with others who shared my love of textiles, who regarded quilting as something more important than a mere pastime for a housewife,” she says. Connecting via the Internet

see “Gardner” on page 33



**Heavenly Bodies**  
48 x 48 inches | 2007



**Two Mothers, Two Daughters and a Dog**  
33 x 34 inches | 2013



**Roses for Rosie**  
47 x 49 inches | 2014



**Trees of Green**  
43 x 47 inches | 2009

# Collector's Choice Auction Feb. 14

Bid on art quilts from Michele Hardman's Benefit Auction collection

by Martha Sielman

Michele Hardman LOVED the SAQA Benefit Auction, so much so that when she knew she might not survive her battle with cancer, she donated many of her purchases back to SAQA. She wanted to share them with others through a whole new auction that will open for bidding on Feb. 14.

I met Michele in 2007. She was frustrated because she couldn't find art-quilt events. The problem turned out to be that she had learned about art quilts in England where they are referred to as "patchwork"; that search term didn't work now that she had moved back to the United States. She was so excited to have found SAQA that she immediately signed up to come to our conference, which that year was in Athens, Ohio, in conjunction with *Quilt National*.

Michele loved art quilts and became an avid supporter of SAQA. She was one of our best advocates, particularly interested in helping our artists find new markets. She even hung art quilts in the Barack Obama election headquarters in Chicago where she volunteered.

Each year, she and I would have a private competition to see which of us could best guess which SAQA Benefit Auction pieces would sell first. Of course, Michele had an edge as she purchased many of them herself! The



**Susan Shie**  
**Orange Hat Nellie or Feisty Women Shake Up the World #5**  
12 x 12 inches

Nellie Bly was a very feisty reporter and a feminist. Inge Lehmann was a very early female seismologist, who made incredibly useful discoveries in her field.

pieces that drew her eye appealed for a variety of reasons: she knew the artist or was moved by the art; she was inspired by the message or title; or she needed the perfect gift for a friend or family member. Over the years, she moved frequently and decorated all her homes with Benefit Auction pieces.

When she received her cancer diagnosis, she called and told me that she wanted to donate her collection to SAQA so that the pieces which she had enjoyed so much could give joy to others. She hoped that their sale

would help to promote the work that SAQA does. After she packed them up, she said that her walls looked very forlorn. Then, in typical Michele fashion, she added: "Well, if I beat the cancer, then I can buy more!"

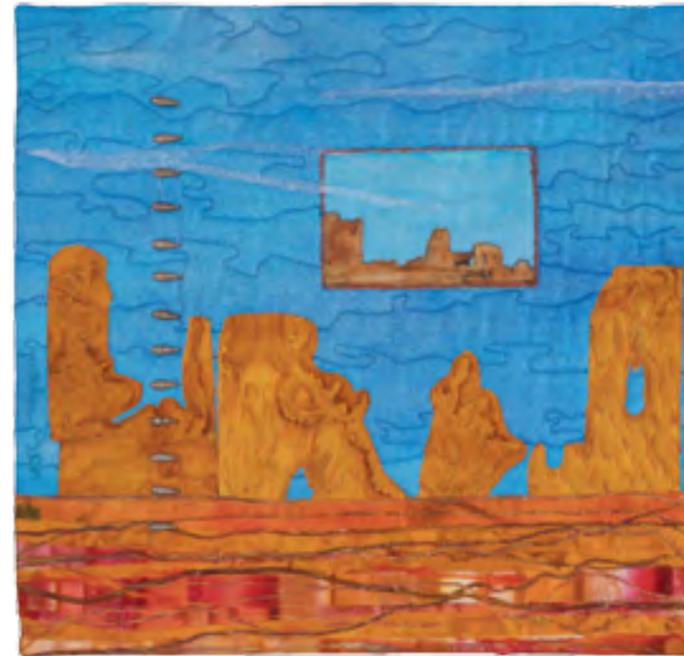
Michele died on September 21, 2017.

Our online event will follow the same reverse-auction format as SAQA's annual Benefit Auction, but there will only be 32 pieces up for bid. Images and descriptions of all the available works are posted on the SAQA website at: [www.saqa.com/collectorauction](http://www.saqa.com/collectorauction).

### Collector's Auction Pricing Schedule\*

\$750	\$550	\$350	\$250	\$150	\$100
Feb. 14	Feb. 15	Feb. 16	Feb. 17	Feb. 18	Feb. 19

\*Prices change at 2 p.m. EST (GMT/UTC - 5); bids not accepted between 1:45-2 p.m.



**Marka Harwell-Bentley**  
**Arizona Henge**  
14 x 14 inches

Note: We were not able to contact the artist for a statement, as she has passed away.



**Noriko Endo**  
**Fall Color #12**  
12 x 12 inches

The play of light through the leaves, the changing color through the seasons, all intrigue me.



**Lisa Ellis**  
**Almost Winter**  
12 x 12 inches

The stark neutral background, with few remaining leaves on the trees, remind us that winter is near.



**Shelly Burge**  
**Under the Willow Tree**  
12 x 12 inches

As a child I thought of willows as magical places ... I'd spread a sheet under the tree and read or daydream for hours.

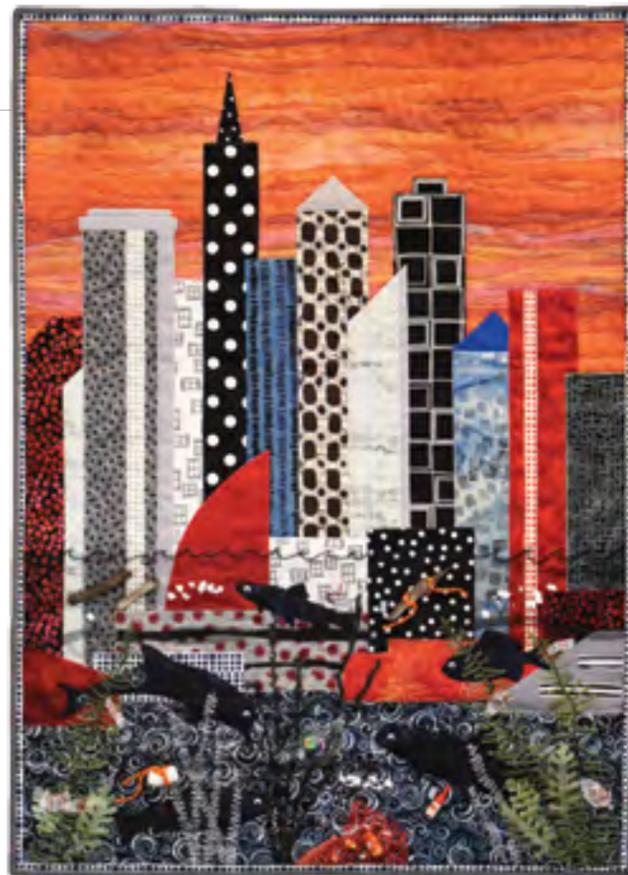
# Our Changing Landscape

*Our Changing Landscape*, a regional exhibition from the SAQA Kansas/Missouri/Oklahoma region, features 32 pieces made by 21 artists. Artists were encouraged to create their own changing landscape whether their works were abstract, graphic, or representational. The response yielded everything from representational pieces to those that used the theme's broader interpretation to address the political landscape.

The exhibition premiered this past summer at the Leedy-Voulkos Art Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

Juror: Judith Trager

Curators: Karen Hansen and Mary Kay Fosnacht



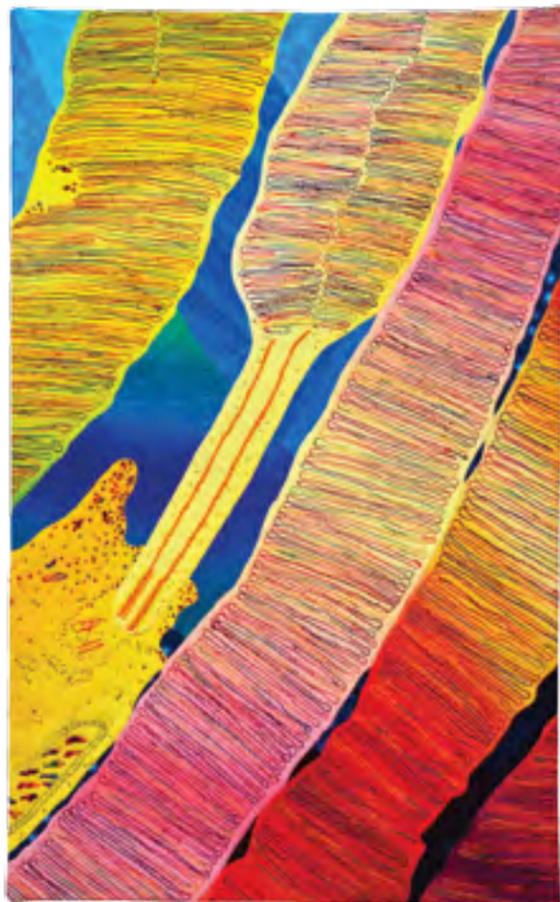
Karen M. Hansen  
*How High's the Water Mama? (Johnny Cash, 1959)*  
34 x 24.5 inches



James R. Brown  
*Fall Transitions*  
36 x 24 inches



Mary Kay Fosnacht  
*Aspen Overload*  
27.5 x 33.5 inches



Shannon M. Conley  
*Do You See What I See?*  
37 x 24 inches



Linda Frost  
*Broken Pipeline*  
28 x 29 inches



Shin-hee Chin  
*Lakescape*  
30 x 38 inches



Linda Filby-Fisher  
*From the Outside in 6: A Seeing Way Series*  
27.5 x 24 inches



Ben Venom stands in front of *Don't Tread on Me!* at the Museum of Craft and Design's 2016 *Constructed Communication* exhibition in San Francisco.

Photo by Randy Dodson.

# Ben Venom

**'Collision' art that's edgy, controversial, disturbing**

by ZJ Humbach

Legally, he's known as Ben Baumgartner. Growing up just outside of Atlanta, Georgia, his friends who were into heavy-metal music tagged him with the nickname Venom, and he's been Ben Venom ever since. "Nicknames are given, you don't choose them, and besides, it's easier to spell than Baumgartner!" he says. Little did his friends know how that nickname would set their friend apart in the art world.

"I always loved to draw. Even though I participated in sports, I always kept coming back to art," Venom says. "I loved to make things. I would open a Lego® box and immediately throw out the instructions. I wanted to do it my way. It was only natural to pursue my love of art in college."

After receiving his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Georgia State University in Atlanta in 2001, Venom focused on painting and printmaking. While working on his Master of Fine Arts degree at the San Francisco Art Institute in San Francisco, California, he gravitated toward textile-based work and taught himself to sew.

"I wanted to go beyond putting a picture on the wall. I wanted to do art from the conceptual level and combine it with functionality," Venom says. In 2008, he was asked to participate in a group exhibition in Berlin, Germany. He decided to do something new and big. "I had seen an exhibition of the Gee's Bend quilts and decided to push the boundaries of my art and attempt to make a quilt out of my collection of heavy-metal

band shirts," Venom recalls. "For years I had amassed a large pile of torn up and threadbare band shirts that I could never throw away. It's not cool when your Slayer shirt turns to mesh." From there his work progressed to include all types of material, including donated and recycled shirts, fabric, and denim. His favorites are leather and canvas as they are less likely to stretch or wrinkle.

His work is edgy, controversial, even disturbing, and definitely passionate. "If I had to sum up my work in one word, it would be 'collision' because I contrast the often menacing and aggressive counterculture components of gangs, punk and metal music, and the occult with the comforts of domesticity," explains Venom. "This collision of traditional quilting techniques with elements tied to the fringes of society re-visions the story of the material through a softer lens.

"The reclaimed fabrics in my work contain a multitude of personal histories, and everyone's unexplained stain, tear, or rip is included. These salvaged pieces are sewn into a larger narrative and become a part of a collective history of memories, dreams, and past experiences within the work. The fragility of the materials and their assaulting imagery are brought together in the form of a functional piece of art."

As he sees it, his work operates in three different worlds: fine art, crafting, and the counterculture scene, which in turn brings different people to his exhibitions. Viewers are met with images of soaring eagles, charging tigers, whips and chains, and more inspired by vintage tattoos, folklore, mythology, gang insignias, motorcycle clubs, and the occult. "Art and function fuse together in



*No More Tears*  
79 x 75 inches | 2013

each piece to create a dynamic experience for the viewer. All bets are off wherever you may roam. Art lovers, crafters, and metalheads alike can get something out of my work. Even if you do not like what you see aesthetically, my art still serves a distinct purpose in the world. You can wear it, and it keeps you warm."

Venom works both in series and on individual pieces, depending on whether he is working toward a solo or group exhibition. He selects pieces for a show by looking for those that have similarities and builds each show from there. His advice for others wishing to exhibit their work is simple: "In order to succeed in life, be prepared to fail in public."

His quilts contain messages, but the message may not be the same

for each viewer. "*No More Tears* was inspired by a song of the same name by Ozzy Osborne, but it also was the slogan for Johnson & Johnson's Baby Shampoo that my parents used to wash our hair growing up. A metalhead will instantly think of Ozzy Osborne while someone not into that type of music will relate to the quilt in a different way," Venom says. "Likewise, *Nothing Else Matters*, while a Metallica song, well, how many other things can that phrase apply to? I'm very particular about the slogans. I want them to live on outside of the context of music. I



*Monument to Thieve*  
67 x 95 inches | 2016

want viewers to come up with their own meanings.”

Those two quilts also stand out in their simplicity. “I want the viewer to focus on the words. That’s why I chose only denims for *No More Tears*,” Venom says. “The rest of the work surrounding *Nothing Else Matters* at an exhibition was extremely colorful. I wanted to mix it up and challenged myself to strip this quilt down to simply black and white and frame it.”

Challenging himself is nothing new. He made *See You on the Other Side* specifically for a 2011 exhibition at San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, a venue with very high ceilings. “There were 16 or 17 artists featured, and I wanted everyone to see my work. I thought no one would miss seeing my quilt if it was bigger than big. The quilt took on a life of its own and ended up being almost 13 x 15 feet,” Venom says. “The gallery in San Francisco that represented me at the time had a large area in the back, and they gave me a key so I could work on the quilt at night after work.

I’d sweep and mop the floor, spread out the quilt, piece it, and then roll it up and put it in the closet.”

The quilt took a solid five months from design to completion, and Venom sewed it entirely on his Juki F-600 machine. “Lots of foul language and anger eventually led to the fabric being shoved through the machine for quilting at my apartment,” laughs Venom. “There was nowhere to hang it, so the first time I saw it in its entirety was when they were putting it up 20 feet in the air at the venue. It was a nail-biter to see if my math worked and it actually would hang straight.”

His philosophy is to always push himself to do better — to never settle. He’s never let a lack of knowledge or skills stop him. “I taught myself to use a sewing machine and bought a Quilting 101 type of book to learn the basics. My mom helped me a lot when I’d call home or visit, as did my sister who is a quilter,” Venom says. “I don’t consider myself a professional quilter — maybe a top-seeded

amateur. There are always different, better, quicker ways to do things. That’s why I always ask questions.”

One of his favorite places to get answers is in his neighborhood at Mendel’s. “It’s an art store, but it has tons of crazy fabric and quilting supplies,” he says. “After talking with the staff, I found that 100 percent Poly-fil batting works best in my work. It’s more forgiving and doesn’t bunch as much as cotton batting. I can quilt more than eight inches apart and not have to worry.” He also likes to use Gütermann thread in high-contrast colors for his appliqué. “In my early work, I used more of an open zigzag stitch, and now I’ve moved to a tight satin stitch to give the appliqué an embroidered look. This makes the stitching an integral design element,” explains Venom. “My favorite technique is appliqué all day long! It’s the best for pushing boundaries with my designs and recycled fabrics.”

Everything he does begins with research into a particular topic or interest. “I come up with a general idea in my sketchbook by taking notes and do some quick drawings to work out my idea. From there I move the design into Photoshop or Illustrator and refine the design to its final size. The next step involves cutting all the shirts, denim, leather, and other

recycled materials into predetermined shapes that fit into the overall design, much like a puzzle,” he says. If shirts are involved, he sprays them before cutting with 505 Basting Spray, and then sprays the individual pieces before placing them on the background fabric. “I prefer 505 primarily because it’s acid-free,” says Venom. He then sews or appliques the pieces together and finishes by machine quilting the three layers together with large open quilting designs, such as grids, spirals, or spider webs.

The design and timeframe determine the overall size of each piece. Larger pieces take roughly three to four weeks to complete, while smaller ones may only take a week. His preference is to work on a much larger scale. Sometimes he plans all the details up front; other times the quilt evolves as he works on it. “I have the sketch that I work off of, but I frequently make edits as I work on the piece. I always allow room for adjustments.”

His studio is located in the back room of the apartment he shares with his wife Megan Gorham and a Norwegian Forest cat named Ted in the Haight/Ashbury district of San Francisco. His wife is a fine-art photographer whose work is exhibited

see “Venom” on page 28



Photo by Randy Dodson.



*Strategic Planning*  
57 x 45 inches | 2016

April 2016

# ABM International does it again!

## With AutoPilot® Mach 3!

ABM International rolls out it's new computerized robotics system with exciting new features and capabilities only imagined until now!

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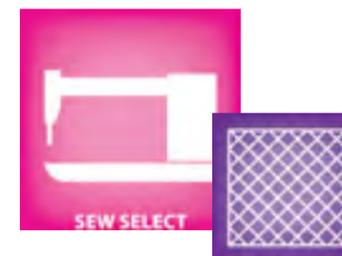


- Undo unintended do's
- See improved features in **Edge to Edge** like our super cool automatic multiple row gap and offset adjustment!
- Personalize or optimize pattern stitch sequence based on preference or area, and preview your stitchout onscreen.
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- Eight point morph allows you to tweak single patterns, grouped, or individual patterns within a group, for a perfect fit.
- Autofit to create perfect length borders or sashings.
- Draw with your finger onscreen and stitch instantly, or save as a pattern for future use. Split, divide, flip, rotate, and resize to your heart's content.
- Make fine adjustments with new customizable increment settings for nudge and rotate.



New **Lightning Stitch** features conveniently allow you to work directly at the sewhead when tools call for precision placement or stitchout action. Place and morph patterns perfectly using the boundary tool with sewhead. Place pushpins, pause, stop and resume sewing right at the sewhead. Sewing time display, stitch count and pattern data interface contribute to improved project management.

**AutoPilot Mach 3** increases speed and improves accuracy. The possibilities are endless with the tools provided in AutoPilot Mach 3! You've seen ABM International introduce many new patented specialty items such as **PantoVision** (9,267,222), **Sequin Stitcher** (9,074,309), and **Innova Sketch** (9,010,259 B2).



Watch as ABM International continues on its innovative journey and enjoy the rewarding results brought to Innova and longarm quilters around the world!

www.innovalongarm.com  
1888-99Quilt





Elizabeth Barton

*Boy on a Bicycle*

48 x 30 inches | 2014

[www.elizabethbarton.com](http://www.elizabethbarton.com)

Memories fade until we are minus the details, but the outline remains a plus. This represents my first and best-beloved boyfriend.

Janis Doucette

*Five Degrees of Freedom*

36 x 32.5 inches | 2016

[www.turtlemoonimpressions.wordpress.com](http://www.turtlemoonimpressions.wordpress.com)

This piece is part of a series using the Earth's ellipse.



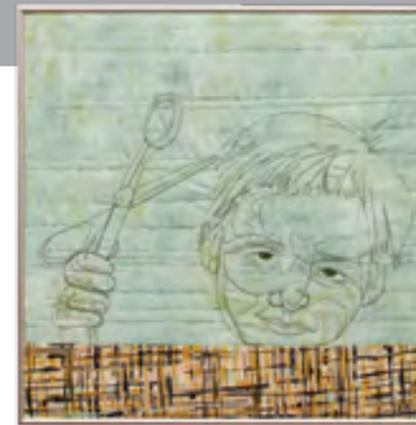
Debra Goley

*Cells*

26 x 27 inches | 2016

[www.debragoleyart.com](http://www.debragoleyart.com)

The warm colors of red-blood cells are overlaid with a cool color that emulates the plus of breath.



Lora Rocke

*The Haircut*

18 x 54 x 1 inches | 2014

[www.lorarocke.com](http://www.lorarocke.com)

A piece inspired not by the actions of a little boy, but by memories of myself. My use of scissors and tape yielded bangs too short to lay flat.



Maria Shell

*To Agnes Martin, with Color*

44 x 44 inches | 2014

[www.mariashell.com](http://www.mariashell.com)

This block goes by many names, including Crossed Square. It is akin to an uneven nine-patch block that looks like a plus sign.



Rose Legge

*Through the Fractures, Comes Light*

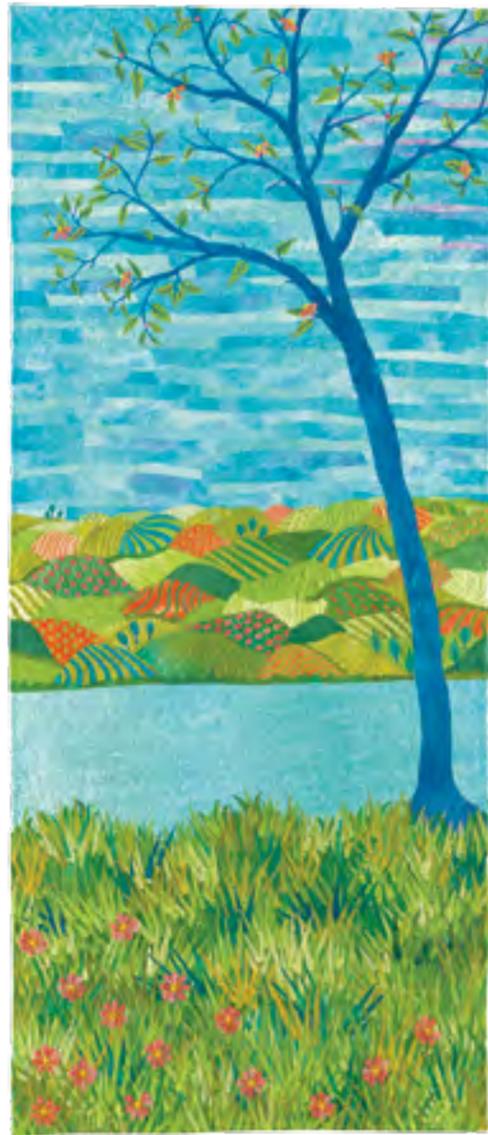
12 x 14 inches | 2017

[www.rosehips1.blogspot.com](http://www.rosehips1.blogspot.com)

The cathedral with a separation down the middle represents organized religion with its many imperfections. The sun represents a satisfying spiritual life to those who seek it.

# Craft an amazing artist statement in less than 60 words

by Allison Reker



Laura Wasilowski  
*Young Forest*  
78 x 32 inches

Imagine a viewer standing in front of your impressive art quilt. The piece overwhelms with mysterious lines and gleeful colors. The viewer draws closer to learn the essence of your piece by reading your artist statement.

To continue the dialogue already in play, your artist statement should leave room for the viewer to connect thoughts, emotions, and experiences to you. A strong statement will make your piece memorable long after the viewer has walked away from your artwork or turned the page in the exhibition catalog.

## Focus on brevity

The importance of an artist statement can make it intimidating to write. Often the temptation is to make it long and complicated. You might feel you have a lot to say, and that you are going to cram everything into this communication. Big words and lengthy sentences sound smart and professional, right? The last thing you want to do is come across like a droning art history professor. That will just put distance between you and the viewer. What you are really trying to do is create a sense of intimacy to draw viewers into your world. If viewers don't immediately know what your statement is trying to say, they will move on. Complexity is a distraction.

There is an added temptation to fill your statement with the nitty-gritty details about how your piece was made, the materials used, and how it was assembled. When you

have a limited amount of space — a curb that exhibition organizers frequently set — this type of information is unwanted clutter. To dissect the artwork in your statement is like revealing how a magic trick is done while it is being performed. You want to keep the sense of wonder alive.

For SAQA exhibitions and catalogs, there is a separate materials and techniques section set aside specifically for this purpose. Those viewers who want to know more can read this section, while those who prefer to preserve the mystery can enjoy your piece without interruption.

## Reality check

There is another reality to consider when writing artist statements for SAQA-specific publications and display labels. All long statements are edited to a specific size requirement, usually to a maximum of 50-80 words. This is due to space constraints. Like any other piece of writing, crafting an artist statement is a process. Don't expect to get it perfect on the first draft. Write that wordy statement to get all your ideas out on paper, but don't stop there. Revise it, revise it again, and then again. Hone it until all the extraneous information is cut away, and you are left with the points you really want to say.

## Emotional response

Remember, your artist statement is an opportunity to make a deeper connection with a viewer, and to extend the dialogue your piece visually started. Remember that you are trying

to evoke an emotional response. There are three questions your artist statement should answer to ensure that outcome:

- What was the inspiration for your piece?
- What does it mean to you personally?
- What do you hope the viewer will take away from it?

Most likely you won't be present when viewers linger at your artwork to take in its nuances and ponder its meaning. Your statement may have less than a minute to answer their questions, so every word must count! I cannot emphasize that enough, so I'll say it again: Every word must count. That is why this isn't the place to detail the kinds of thread you used or to tell your life story. Reflect on the three questions to help get to the core of what you want to express.

To illustrate good artist statements, I reviewed a variety of SAQA catalogs to find those that grabbed my attention. There were many great examples, but I narrowed my choices down to just a few that range in length from a mere 25-55 words. All of them paint a vivid picture in and of themselves, or inspire further reflection in dialogue with the image.

## From Text Messages:

"In an age of ubiquitous communication, are we really getting through to one another? The tiny fragments of words in my quilts hint at stories and substance, but whatever they are

about remains a mystery.

What did we lose when we traded instantaneous connection for the more leisurely, more thoughtful letters and books of the past?"

— Kathleen Loomis

This statement, about the piece *Crazed 20: Print on the Dotted Line*, literally converses with the viewer.

It asks direct questions that both reveal the artist's point of view and offer a space for a viewer to consider her or his own. The artist refers to a visual element in her work (tiny fragments of words) without getting into detail about the materials and techniques. Her inspiration is clear, as is the personal meaning behind it.

## From Seasonal Palette:

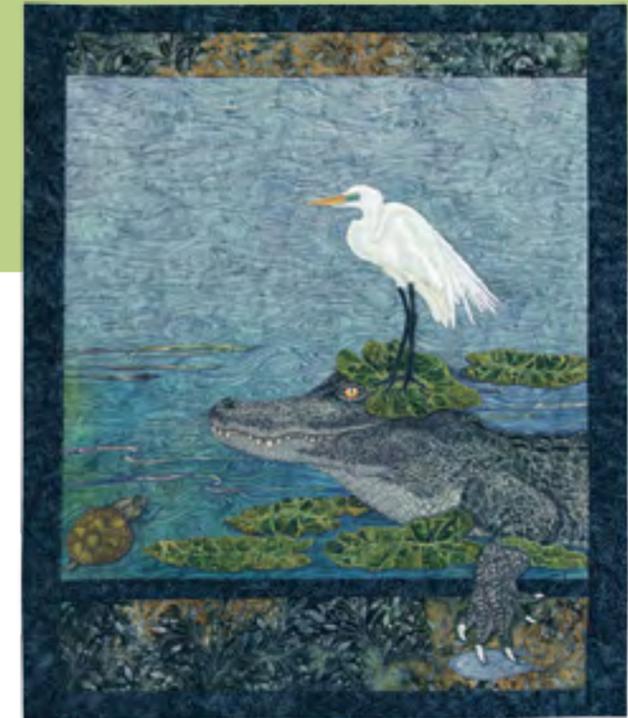
"There is nothing like a warm spring day. It glows with fresh colors and all they promise: new beginnings, sweet potential, hope for the future."

— Laura Wasilowski

This statement is short and sweet, but leaves no question as to what the artist hopes the viewer will take away from her piece. The writing evokes emotions that complement the work itself, drawing on a viewer's experiences: the sense of renewal inherent to spring, and the warmth and color that contrasts winter's cold, drab grays.

## From Wild Fabrications:

"What 'wild' things happen in the swamp when no one is watching? I



Christine Holden  
*What Happens in the Swamp?*  
30 x 26 inches

imagined an alligator and an egret surreptitiously hanging out among the lily pads while a passing turtle gets quite a surprise."

— Christine Holden

Not all statements need to be serious. This statement's playful whimsy engages the viewer's imagination and invites that person to come up with their own answer to the artist's question. What does happen in the swamp when no one is watching? When you're creating a piece of artwork, anything is possible! What sort of surprise does the passing turtle get, anyway? You'll have to experience the artwork itself to find out.

## Heart of the matter

Artwork is personal. When writing your statement, take some time to really think about the significance of your piece. What emotional spark

see "Statement" on page 32

# The mystery of museum exhibitions explained

by Nancy Bavor

This is the second of two SAQA Journal articles about museum policies and practices. The first article on museum acquisitions appeared in Vol. 27, Issue 3.

Have you ever wondered how museums decide which exhibitions to present, or artists to exhibit?

Museums may vary in their policies, but the basic procedures to decide which exhibitions and artists to present are relatively similar. Most exhibition schedules are planned at least a year ahead and it is not unusual to have contracts signed for exhibitions three years into the future. Because museums often rely on grants or other funding for exhibitions, which take time to arrange, some museums maintain a five-year plan. While there may be schedule flexibility to allow for cancelled exhibitions or additional space becoming available, museums are not well-known for nimbleness.

Although most of the policies and procedures discussed in this article also apply to non-textile museums, this article focuses on museums that exhibit art quilts. Only museums with permanent collections were surveyed, except for the Texas Quilt Museum, a non-collecting institution that occasionally exhibits quilts from the International Quilt Festival Collection. Having a permanent quilt collection to draw on can significantly affect an exhibition program.

It is not always clear from a museum's name what it exhibits. All of these museums have the word quilt(s) in their names: San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles; Visions



The San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles exhibited SAQA's *Earth Stories*, including works by Noriko Endo, Cynthia St. Charles, and Patty Hawkins.

Art Museum: Contemporary Quilts + Textiles; New England Quilt Museum; Texas Quilt Museum; and International Quilt Study Center & Museum. But what kind of quilts (or textiles) do they exhibit, and how frequently?

To form a cohesive exhibition program, these museums have an exhibition plan that outlines what they exhibit and a group or committee that reviews proposals from curators, artists, or other institutions. The plan may be in writing, or it may exist as a less formal policy or practice. However formal or informal the exhibition plan might be, museums are constantly re-evaluating their program, reacting to world events, changes in the art world, and expectations of attendees. All museums constantly look to present high-quality, relevant, and meaningful exhibitions that will attract and engage visitors.

Even with a well-defined plan, there are lots of possibilities for exhibits: historic or contemporary quilts, other textiles, or fiber art. Generally, each institution attempts

to strike a balance in its exhibition program. San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles (SJMQT) has an approximately 18-month cycle and tries to schedule exhibitions showing costumes or clothing, contemporary quilts and textiles, world textiles, and works from the collection. Recently, there has been more focus on exhibiting contemporary fiber art, especially by California artists, and developing exhibits with social-justice themes. Visions Art Museum: Contemporary Quilts + Textiles (Visions) exhibits exclusively contemporary art quilts and textiles created since 2000. It occasionally exhibits work made before 2000 from its permanent collection. It has two biennial juried exhibitions — *Quilt Visions* and *Interpretations* — with each exhibition running from October through mid-January.

The practice at New England Quilt Museum (NEQM) had been to mount two historical/antique quilts shows a year and two art/contemporary innovative quilt exhibitions. However, attendance figures indicate that

the contemporary shows are better attended, so in the future there will be a greater focus on displaying contemporary innovative and art quilts. Thematic exhibitions that explore a 200-year history of a specific aspect of quilting, such as silk or embroidery, have been popular and will continue.

The Texas Quilt Museum (TQM) exhibits quilts of all types. It also exhibits quilt-related works, such as quilted kimonos, and in conjunction with an exhibition may include journals by quilt artists. Nebraska's International Quilt Study Center & Museum (IQSCM) makes an effort to balance the work shown at any given time among American and international quilts, historical and contemporary quilts, and traditional and studio art quilts. It also presents several non-juried *Community Showcase* exhibitions each year in its auxiliary spaces.

Even with a well-defined plan, the exhibition program often reflects geography or curatorial interest. For example, Pamela Weeks, curator at NEQM, has been researching early quilt artists from New England, notably Molly Upton and Susan Hoffman. Upcoming exhibitions scheduled for the next several years will feature these artists. Assistant curator of exhibitions Jonathan Gregory curated an IQSCM exhibit based on the subject of his dissertation: Ernest Haight, a Nebraska engineer and quiltmaker. IQSCM recently mounted *The California Art Quilt Revolution: From the Summer of Love to the New Millennium*, an exhibition based on this author's master's thesis.

## The decision makers

Each organization has a different method to evaluate proposed exhibitions and develop its exhibition program. SJMQT has an exhibition committee, chaired by the curator

of exhibitions, that includes the director, a board liaison, artists, and other staff and community members. The curator is the first screener for submitted proposals; the committee sees less than 10 percent of what is submitted for consideration. The curator also researches and proposes exhibition concepts and artists.

Visions has a curatorial committee of nine members, all of whom are quilt or textile artists. Some members also have advanced degrees in art or design, teach or lecture in the field, and all attend quilt, fiber, and textile exhibitions nationally and internationally. The committee creates the mix of exhibitions and decides which artists will be invited to exhibit. Each member of the committee acts as the managing curator for one or two exhibitions each year.

The curator at NEQM gathers proposals and with the executive director and collections manager, makes the final decisions. Similarly, the curator at TQM suggests exhibitions and exhibition concepts to the co-directors, who make the final decision about which shows to have at TQM. IQSCM recently revised its exhibitions proposal process and is standardizing its approach to considering which exhibitions to mount. A committee consisting of the museum's director, curators, and head of exhibitions makes the final decisions.

When evaluating exhibitions, all committees ask themselves: Does it meet the mission and exhibition plan? Is the work of the highest quality and aesthetic? Is there a compelling theme? Who is the audience for the exhibit?

## Number of exhibitions

The number of exhibitions each museum presents each year varies. It is dictated by museum size, number of exhibition spaces or galleries, and

staff time. SJMQT presents between 16 and 20 exhibitions in five exhibit spaces; the main exhibitions change every 12 weeks and the FiberSpace community exhibitions change every six weeks.

Visions presents approximately 16 exhibitions at 12-week intervals; it has four new juried online exhibitions every year on the museum's website. NEQM mounts four major exhibitions each year in the Main Gallery, and four smaller ones in a classroom gallery. In addition, they exhibit six to 10 quilts to complement other exhibitions in the Donahue Permanent Collection Gallery. TQM has three gallery spaces where they present two or three different exhibitions every three months. With its new expanded facilities, IQSCM mounts approximately 30 exhibitions per year, not including traveling shows.

## Solo shows

There is a wide range of policies about single-artist exhibitions. Some museums (NEQM and SJMQT) have had policies that discouraged or rarely presented solo shows. However, this policy seems to be changing everywhere. At SJMQT, there is an increasing focus on hosting single fiber artists in one-gallery exhibitions and commissioning site-specific installations. The 2017 schedule at Visions includes eight solo shows, and in 2018 six solo shows are planned. NEQM is planning a series of exhibitions to highlight the New England art quilt pioneers like Molly Upton and Susan Hoffman. TQM presents two or three single-artist shows per year. IQSCM's current calendar contains up to 50 percent single-artist exhibitions.

## Antique vs. art quilts

With the exception of Visions, which exhibits quilts made before 2000 only

## SAQA Museum Partners

In addition to museums detailed in this article, many highly respected venues welcome SAQA exhibitions. They include:

**Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum,**  
Tucson, Arizona

**Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences,** Washington, D.C.

**Erie Art Museum,** Erie, Pennsylvania

**Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science & Art,** Scranton, Pennsylvania

**George A. Spiva Center for the Arts**  
Joplin, Missouri

**The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum,** Washington, D.C.

**Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum,** Ann Arbor, Michigan

**Grants Pass Museum of Art,**  
Grants Pass, Oregon

**National Quilt Museum,** Paducah, Kentucky

**Ruth Funk Center for Textile Arts,**  
Melbourne, Florida

**J. Wayne Stark Galleries at Texas A&M University,** College Station, Texas

if they are part of the permanent collection, quilt artists compete with historical and antique quilts.

While the permanent collection at SJMQT will continue to play a role in the exhibition plan, the museum is trending toward presenting a greater number of contemporary art quilt and fiber-art exhibitions. Although NEQM traditionally presented an even split between antique quilts and contemporary quilts, lower attendance for the former has caused the organization to shift its focus to more contemporary and art quilts. The TQM endeavors to balance

exhibitions among antique quilts, traditional contemporary, and art quilts. The IQSCM also seeks a balance among historical, traditional contemporary, and art quilts.

### Pre-curated exhibitions

Some museums rely heavily on exhibitions organized by other institutions such as SAQA, Quilt National, or companies that create exhibitions, educational collateral, and signage. These services can be attractive for museums that do not have a permanent collection or have limited staff to develop an exhibition concept, research potential artists and objects, and produce related educational materials.

Although pre-curated exhibitions can save staff time and stress, they come at a financial cost. Loan fees can range from \$500 to \$50,000, with the majority between \$5,000 and \$20,000. In addition, there are shipping costs that can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand dollars for an international exhibition.

In the past, more than 75 percent of SJMQT's exhibitions were curated in-house. Currently, SJMQT relies more on guest curators, pre-curated exhibitions, and collaborations with others (SAQA, *Fiber Art Now*, and Surface Design Association) to develop exhibitions. This model allows the museum to present visitors with different points of view and curatorial styles, and exhibit a broad range of fiber art.

Both NEQM and TQM originate about half of their exhibits and rely on pre-curated exhibitions for the other half. With its extensive permanent collection to draw from, IQSCM organizes about 80 percent of its exhibitions. Visions curatorial committee originates all its exhibitions, except for the two biennial juried exhibitions. Visions is the only museum included in this article that doesn't rely on pre-curated exhibitions.

All museums in this article (except Visions) have hosted at least one SAQA exhibition in the last few years. Due to staff changes and a need to incorporate more pre-curated exhibitions in the schedule, SJMQT presented its first SAQA show, *Earth Stories*, in late 2015. The museum is currently collaborating with SAQA to present *Guns: Loaded Conversations* in 2018; the SJMQT curator of exhibits will choose 10 additional artworks to include with the SAQA works juried into the exhibition. SAQA's *H2Oh!* will be at SJMQT in 2019 during the SAQA Conference in San Jose.

NEQM exhibited SAQA's exhibition *Seasonal Palette* and will host *H2Oh!*. Since opening, TQM has presented several international SAQA exhibits, including *Seasonal Palette* (2013), *People and Portraits* (2014), *Wild Fabrications* (2016), and *Tranquility* (2017), as well as *On the Fringe* from SAQA's Northern California/Northern Nevada region (2016). IQSCM presented *Layered Voices* in conjunction with SAQA's Conference there in 2017.

### Follow the money

While some curators won't admit it, their directors want a financial blockbuster. Museums are focusing on what brings in visitors without compromising exhibition quality. They depend heavily on income from attendance to earn admission fees, store shoppers, and potential donors and members. Exhibition choices often reflect this need.

### Space considerations

Museums are different sizes and shapes. Not all can gracefully handle a pre-curated exhibition with lots of artworks, large artworks, or three-dimensional pieces. A museum may be unable to host some pre-curated exhibitions or to hang all the selected works.

### SAQA artist involvement

The SAQA exhibition committee and the director of global exhibitions work with museums all over the world to develop themes that appeal to those institutions and meet their missions and exhibition plans. Not all the themes may appeal to you, but getting SAQA members' works exhibited in museums is an important part of the organization's mission.

SAQA's global exhibitions travel for three years. If your work is juried into one of these exhibitions, you may not see it again for that time period while it makes the rounds. Space limitations in some museums mean that there must be limits on the size of individual works and the number of pieces in each SAQA exhibition. Both issues are challenges for the artists; the latter is also a challenge for jurors who must select from a large pool of entries.

Not all SAQA exhibitions are appropriate for all museum spaces or their missions. The next time you receive a SAQA call for entry or read about the various venues hosting SAQA exhibitions, hopefully you will understand a little more about why certain themes are selected or the sizes and number of works are limited.▼

[Author's Note: I am deeply grateful to my colleagues Beth Smith, executive director, Visions Art Museum: Contemporary Quilts + Textiles; Pamela Weeks, curator, New England Quilt Museum; Sandra Sider, Texas Quilt Museum; and Lydia Neuman, head of exhibitions, International Quilt Study Center & Museum, for the valuable information they provided for this article.]

*Nancy Bavor was recently appointed executive director of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles. Since 2013, she was the museum's curator of collections, also serving as exhibits coordinator from 2014-2016.*

**Mistyfuse as Muse**  
**2 Artists**  
**2 Techniques**

Laurie Russman manipulates Mistyfuse fabric to create texture and dimension.  
Allie Aller uses bits of Mistyfuse to tack layers of slippery silk—keeping her process fluid as she composes a quilt.  
2 very different techniques, among many.  
Mistyfuse. Tool. Technique. And muse.

Mistyfuse is the ultra sheer fusible for a strong bond with a soft hand. Suitable for a wide variety of fabrics—from delicate to sturdy.

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# Sacred Threads

spirituality  
healing  
joy  
inspiration  
grief  
peace

**2019 Exhibit:**  
July 11-28, 2019

**Call for entries:**  
Oct. 1, 2018 – Jan. 10, 2019

**2017 Traveling Exhibit:**  
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North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, California, Michigan, Connecticut

*Marafiki by Barbara Allen*

[www.sacredthreadsquilts.com](http://www.sacredthreadsquilts.com)

**Venom** from page 17

internationally, and her studio is in the front. This arrangement makes for interesting logistics. “We both enjoy working and do our best to assist each other when needed. What makes my studio special is I am able to work all the time since it is located in my home. My studio has lots of natural light, and I am surrounded by large bins of fabric scraps and my sewing table. Some of my favorite tools are my seam ripper, handmade scissors, and a lint roller.” He listens to heavy metal, punk rock, and occasionally jazz as he works.

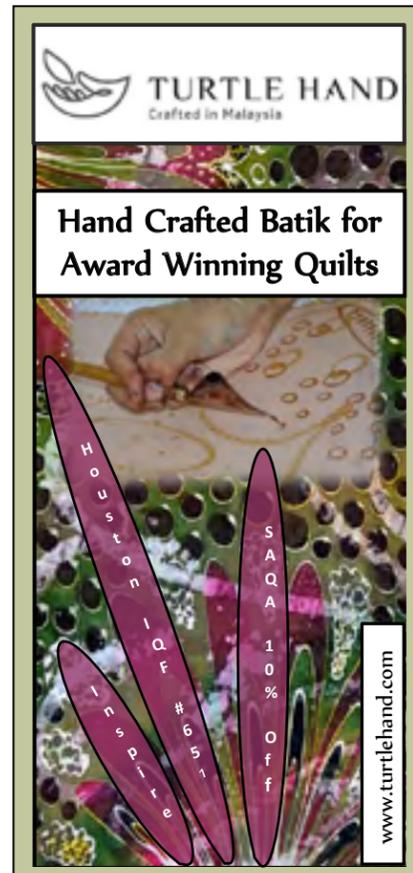
When Venom isn’t in the studio, he teaches art-critique classes for the San Francisco Art Institute’s Masters of Fine Arts program as visiting faculty and occasionally teaches

quilting workshops in the Bay Area and out of state.

He hates deadlines more than anything. “I tend to not take any days off, especially when I am producing new work for an upcoming exhibition. I do my best to stay on track and work toward getting one thing done at a time. Coffee helps,” he laughs.

Venom’s works will be exhibited at Taubman Museum in the *Tangled: Fiber Art Now!* exhibition through February 11.▼

*ZJ Humbach is a freelance writer, quilting and sewing teacher, and professional longarm quilter. She owns and operates Dream Stitcher Quilt Studio in Thornton, Colorado.*



Inspired by  
*experimentation*  
by N.K. Quan

A desire to experiment with mixed media was the inspiration behind Britta Ankenbauer’s haunting *Figur 1* quilt.

“I have questions about mixed media when it involves fabrics: What are the characteristics of textile artwork? How should it be approached? How does working in mixed media affect the cultural meaning and significance of a work of art?” Ankenbauer asks. While she expects no definitive answers, she continues to search for personal resolutions.

Ankenbauer’s usual modus operandi is to pick a subject and then select the appropriate materials and techniques to express an idea, usually focused on social themes and characteristics of time. Indeed, centered in this piece is an imposing Egyptian-pharaoh-like shape. However, with *Figur 1*, the SAQA JAM investigated multimedia techniques, dabbing paint onto fabric to find out how much was enough and when the piece transitioned from textile to painting. Her fondness for abstract art was a secondary, unconscious inspiration.

Ankenbauer works and lives in Leipzig, Germany, where the Leipziger Schule form of representational art flourishes. She missed the inspiration of having abstract art in her environment, but was unaware of that gap while she was working on the quilt.

She started the work with the selection of old motifs and familiar ways of working with textiles. The background incorporates printing and using dyes.



Britta Ankenbauer

*Figur 1*  
55 x 47 inches

Elements are combined and overlapped to symbolize the passing of time. Colors are often a little washed out.

“As I continued painting, the quilt became more complex, and I struggled with balancing proportions. As a result, the figure became distorted and in some ways disturbing.”

As she added more layers, experimenting with mixed-media techniques, the edges of the once recognizable human figure decayed and ultimately produced the final otherworldly image seemingly surrounded in a dense mist. Is it human or not?

When the piece was first exhibited in a large space, Ankenbauer was

excited to see the effect of its perspective. From a distance, the figure seemed to float over the background.

*Figur 1* did answer a basic question for Ankenbauer: The integration of a painting in a textile piece changes the character of the work, especially at the meeting points. But as her piece proves, the “background” can hold its own against a painted focus of a piece without losing its textile character.

*N.K. Quan is a Phoenix-based writer and editor.*

## Modern Inspirations

*Modern Inspirations* — Art quilts from 1970s through today will document the rich history of the art-quilt movement as it relates to the development of a new modern quilt aesthetic. This exhibition of 30 iconic historical and contemporary quilts by master artists from around the world is a feast for the eyes, filled with gorgeous art. This engaging chronological presentation demonstrates the development and continuing power of the art-quilt movement.

The art-quilt movement started in the mid-1960s and has exploded over the past five decades. With the advent of the Internet, email communications, and social media, an ever-increasing expansion of the global art-quilt community has developed since the turn of the 21st century.

Pieces for this exhibition were selected from images submitted for the *Art Quilts Unfolding* project, which will be recorded in a new book entitled *Art Quilts Unfolding: 50 Years of Innovation*. Jurors were Alissa Haight Carlton, executive director of The Modern Quilt Guild, and Heather Grant, the guild's director of marketing and programming.

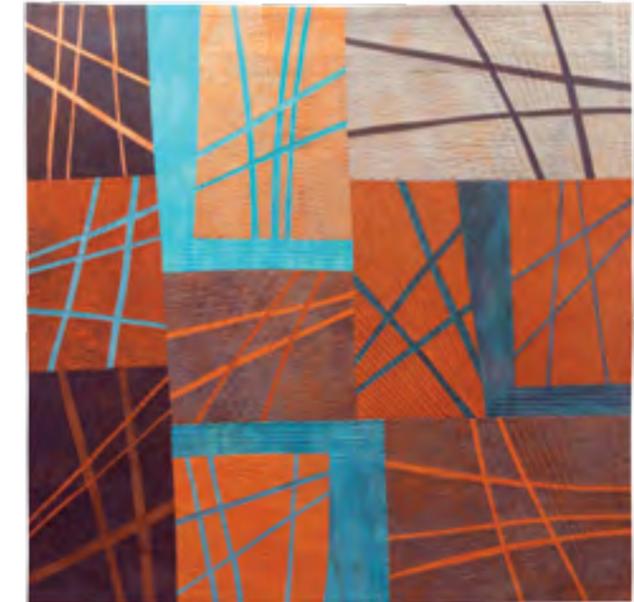
This exhibition premieres in February at The Modern Quilt Guild's QuiltCon in Pasadena, California.



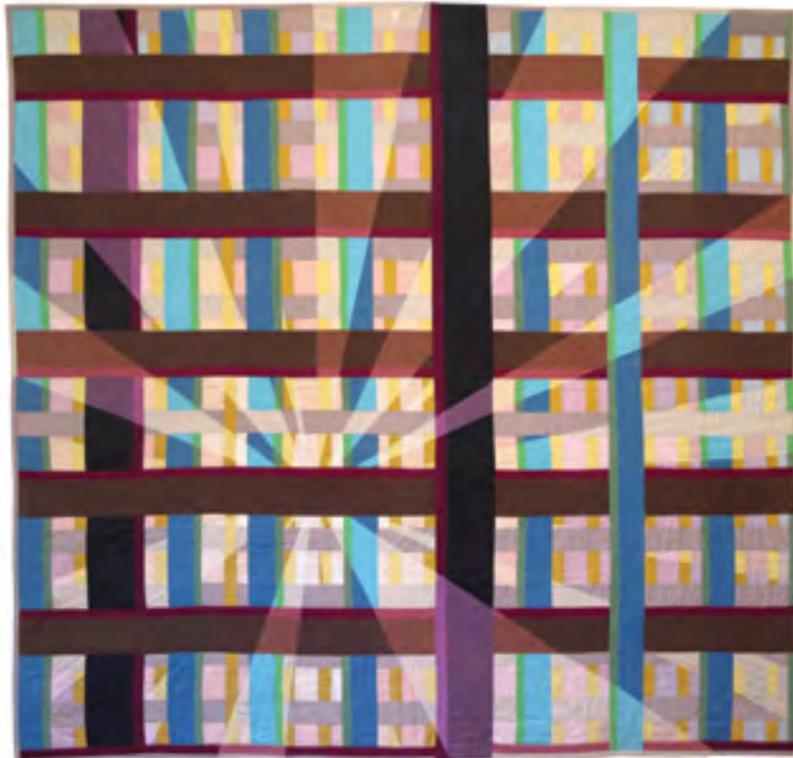
Etsuko Takahashi  
*Waves 4*  
78 x 78 inches | Decade: 2000s  
Collection of Marvin Fletcher



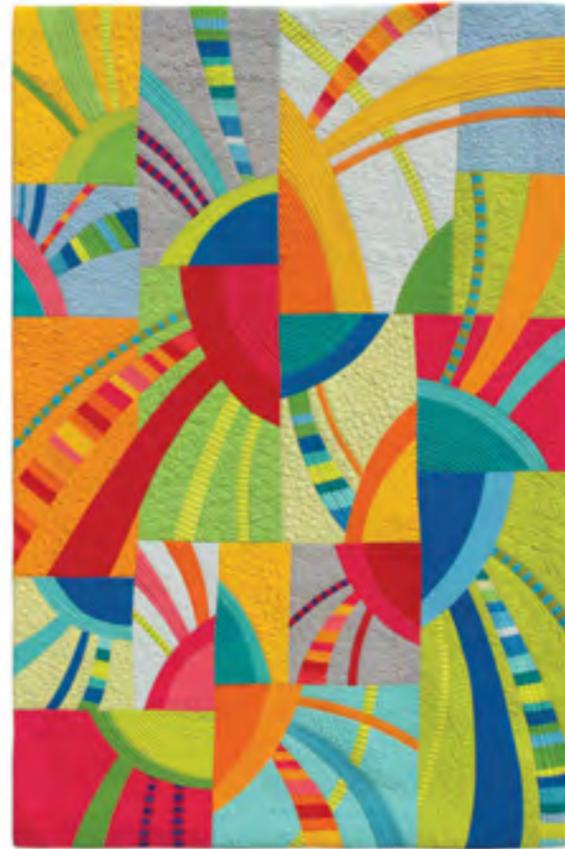
Jill Ault  
*Word Play*  
60 x 51 inches | Decade: 1990s



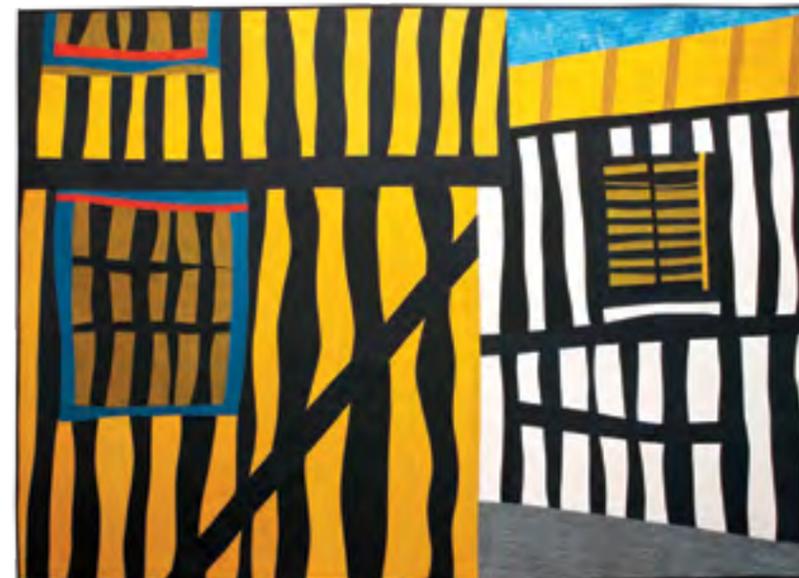
Marcia DeCamp  
*Jet Trails #8*  
47 x 47 inches | Decade: 2000s



Carol Ann Grotrian  
*Lacrimosa ... Gloriam*  
65 x 65 inches | Decade: 1980s



Diane Melms  
*Jublio*  
48 x 32 inches | Decade: 2010s



Amelia Leigh  
*Elizabethan 2*  
45 x 64 inches | Decade: 2010s



Alison Schwabe  
*Ebb & Flow 8*  
55 x 41 inches | Decade: 2000s  
Photo by Eduardo Baldizan

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### Statement

from page 23

inspired its conception? What deeper meaning did you find as you engaged in the creative process? How can you strip away all of the unnecessary words until only the heartbeat of your message remains? Vulnerability has its risks, but it is also a point of connection between artists and viewers. You have something to say, and they are eagerly listening.

Take some time to step out of your shoes and slip on those of the viewer. What does your brief statement reveal about you and your art? What do you want it to reveal?

Let the conversation begin. ▼

*Allison Reker is the SAQA membership coordinator. She also is the author of three fictional books and a freelance editor for various publications. She resides in Beavercreek, Ohio.*

### Gardner

from page 9

gave her options for exhibiting her work more widely, as well as for teaching and lecturing.

“Yes you can,” is Gardner’s advice for new art quilters. “Just do it the way it suits you. There are no rules. Ignore the quilt police!”

As for the future, Gardner says she’s not much of a planner. At 73, her quilts are getting smaller. “I can’t imagine I shall ever stop sewing pictures. It’s part of my life,” she says. “Whenever I am given a bag of scraps I feel I’ve been given a treasure and just the color of a bit of cloth sparks my imagination — just right for a dog or a cat, and I start wondering about what to do next,” she says.

See more of Gardner’s work at [www.bodilgardner.dk](http://www.bodilgardner.dk). ▼

*Cindy Grisdela is a SAQA JAM based in Reston, Virginia. See her work at [cindygrisdela.com](http://cindygrisdela.com).*

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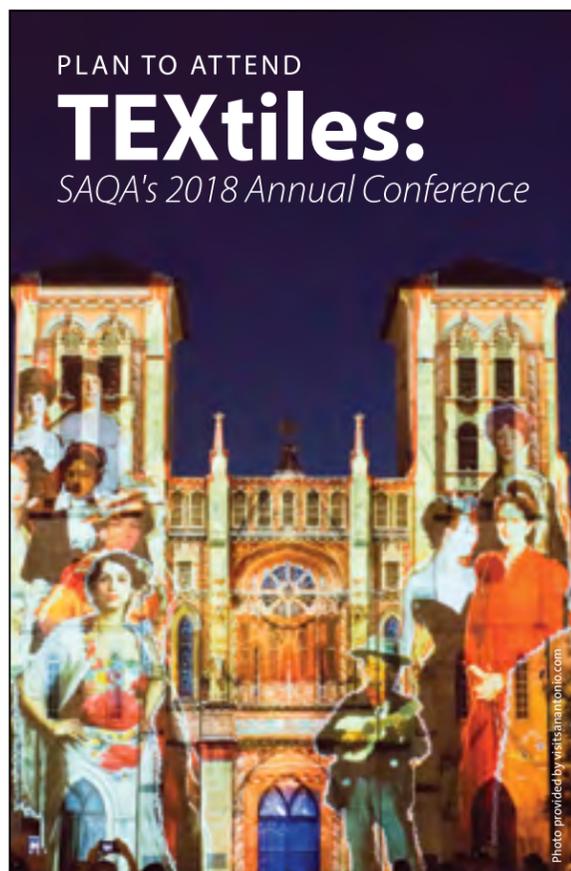
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Detail: KALEIDOSCOPIIC CALAMITY by Margaret Solomon Gunn

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# Quick Notes

To find out more about SAQA, contact Martha Sielman, executive director, at 860-530-1551 or [execdirector@saqa.com](mailto:execdirector@saqa.com). Visit our website at [www.saqa.com](http://www.saqa.com). Annual membership (U.S. and international): artist/associate member, \$70; juried artist, \$135; student (full time with copy of ID), \$35. On January 1, 2018, dues will increase by \$10 in all categories.

Studio Art Quilt Associates, Inc. (SAQA) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the art quilt through education, exhibitions, professional development, documentation and publications.

The *SAQA Journal* is published four times a year. To submit articles, contact the *SAQA Journal* editor at [editor@saqa.com](mailto:editor@saqa.com). See the submission guidelines at [www.saqa.com/journal-submit](http://www.saqa.com/journal-submit).

### Deadlines for articles:

**2018 Issue 2** January 15, 2018

**2018 Issue 3** February 15, 2018

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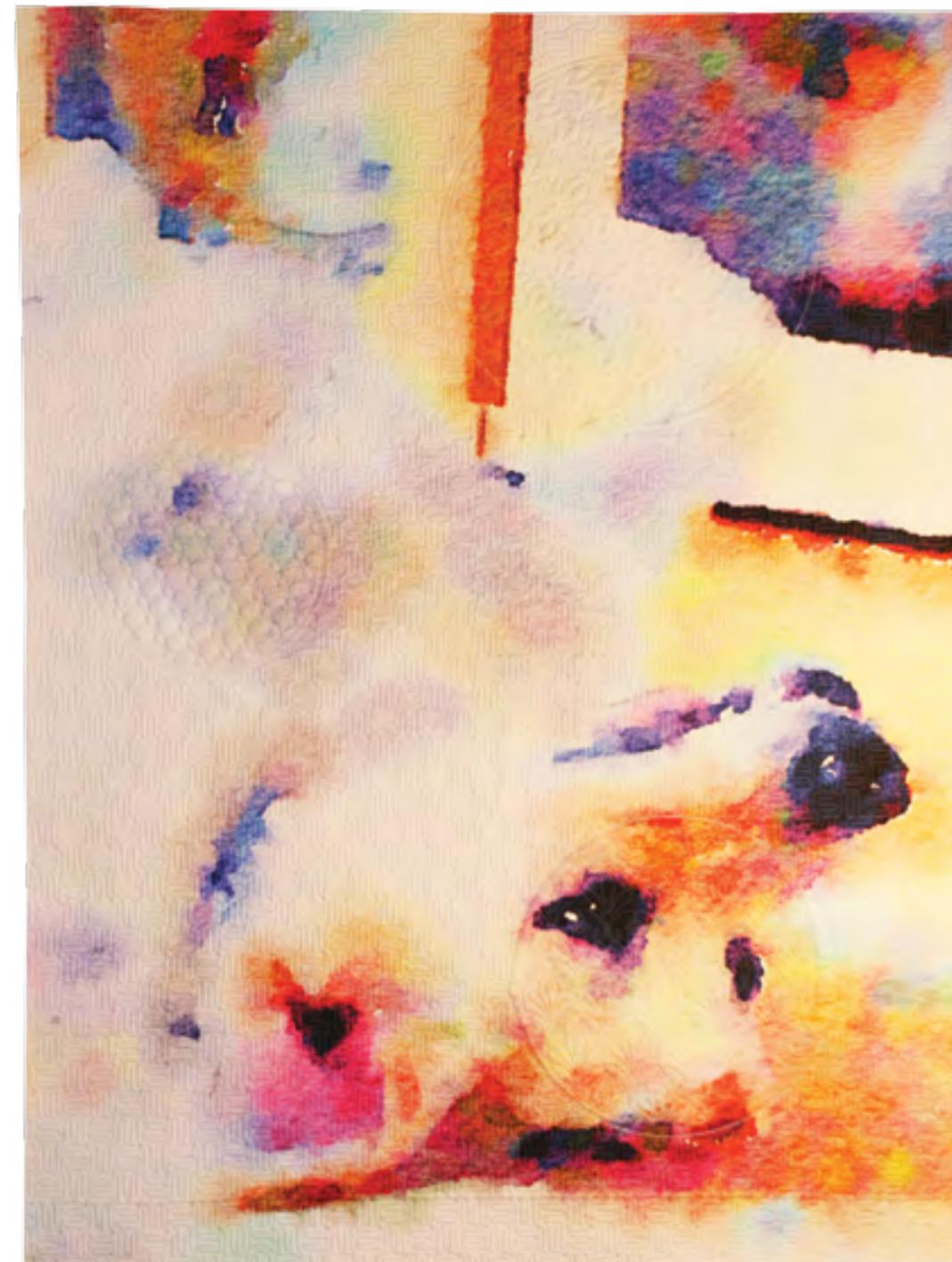
Legacy funding helps ensure the future of SAQA, an organization supporting artists and promoting the art quilt medium internationally. The gift is also an easy way for me to say 'thank you' for facilitating my growth as an artist.

— Nelda Warkentin



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# JAM SHOWCASE



**Julie S. Brandon**  
*Flying in My Dreams*  
45 x 35 inches

The inspiration for this piece was my dog, Lola. On her back, she looks like she is flying while she sleeps. The three quilted circles represent the places I imagine she visits in her dream flights. Composition created using Adobe Photoshop and Waterlogue. Image printed on bleached Fuji Silk broadcloth.

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