

# SAQQA<sup>TM</sup> JOURNAL

STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES

2020 | Volume 30, No. 2

Special Digital-Only Issue



**IN THIS ISSUE:** HOPE WILMARTH • JIM ARENDT • moSAiQA •  
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*Obscured Meaning*  
 35 x 35 inches | 2019  
 Photo by Joe Offria

## QUICK NOTES

To find out more about SAQA, contact Martha Sielman, executive director, by phone at 860.530.1551, or by email at [execdirector@sqa.com](mailto:execdirector@sqa.com).

Explore varied resources on our website at [www.sqa.com](http://www.sqa.com). Annual membership levels for U.S. and international members, listed in USD, are: Artist/Associate, \$80; Juried Artist, \$145; and Student, \$45 (must present full-time student ID).

Studio Art Quilt Associates, Inc. (SAQA) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the art quilt. Through exhibitions, resources, publications, and membership, we seek to increase appreciation for the art quilt as a fine art medium and to support our members in their artistic and professional growth.

The SAQA Journal is published four times a year. To submit articles or story ideas, contact Diane Howell, SAQA Journal editor, at [editor@sqa.com](mailto:editor@sqa.com). Review submission guidelines at [www.sqa.com/journal-submit](http://www.sqa.com/journal-submit).

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# SAQA's momentum continues to grow

by Deborah Boschert

As I'm writing this column, we've just wrapped up an amazing virtual conference. In the face of a frightening global pandemic, there was something comforting and inspiring about being together even on our computer screens. Lisa Walton and I have been to many video-conference meetings together during her term as president, so maybe it was fitting that we passed the symbolic crown across our virtual screens.

This moment in our world feels full of uncertainty, but I'm still eager to think about SAQA's exciting future. It's an honor to be SAQA's new president. I'm grateful that our board of directors elected me to lead us for the next two years. I'm thankful for Lisa's leadership and for all the dedicated board members who have served over the years. It's a pleasure to work with extraordinary staff members who expertly juggle all the exciting projects we're working on—and the less exciting, but equally important, day-to-day tasks that keep our organization on track.

I'm an artist and a quilter, just like many of you. In the mid 1990s, I made my first quilt using a Quilt in a Day pattern. After that first quilt, I made more pieced quilts, explored original block compositions, learned paper piecing, and experimented with surface design. Then I took a workshop from Melody Johnson, and my creative world was blown open by the possibilities of raw-edge fused appliqué. In the last ten years or so, I've developed a personal style of layering fabric, paint, and stitching. My art quilt collages incorporate personal

symbols like bowls, ladders, stones, or trees. I love combining commercial prints with my original surface-designed cloth, and mixing machine stitching with hand embroidery.

At some point during my creative explorations, I joined SAQA. When we lived in Maryland, I loved the local meetings; I became the regional rep and learned how rewarding it can be to volunteer.

After attending one of SAQA's first live-webinars, I volunteered to join the Education Committee. Soon, I was chair of the Education Committee, and in 2016 I was elected to the SAQA Board of Directors.

As president, I'm eager to seize the momentum that SAQA has generated. Our membership is growing. We've introduced new programs. Our exhibitions tour the world. We've launched successful fundraising efforts. Members connect with each other in all kinds of ways. There's a buzz of excitement, don't you think?

My quilt, *Day Break*, is inspired by looking out to the horizon and feeling full of potential. It's a good metaphor for SAQA in this moment. We've got a solid foundation of programs, dedicated members, and a skilled staff—like a line of big trees that provide stability and shade. The color palette is energetic, bright, and fresh, like the energy you feel when you spend time with SAQA members and talk about favorite materials and techniques.



All the small details work together. Just as every member makes an impact on our organization, each stitch is important to the design. The bouncy line at the top may appear loose and improvisational, but it was carefully designed. I tested different lines and redrew the pattern many times. In the same way, SAQA's growth is a balance of intentional planning and embracing spontaneity.

I'm eager to share this buzz of excitement. Let's connect. I'll be representing SAQA at several upcoming events and you can find me on SAQA's social media channels. I am so excited to see where this momentum takes us. ■

## *Daybreak*

40 x 40 inches | 2019



INSPIRED BY

# Instinct

by N.K. Quan

**Regina Marzlin**  
***A Rare Bird***

12 x 12 inches | 2016



An innate ability to create is the foundation for *A Rare Bird* by SAQA Juried Artist member Regina Marzlin.

With no set design in mind, Marzlin used a technique that incorporated gesso, aluminum foil, and white cotton fabric to build this quilt. Using a brayer, she spread a thin layer of gesso onto the foil, let it dry slightly, and then flipped the painted foil onto the fabric. Working quickly before the gesso completely dried, she used a blunt tool to draw lines and circles on the foil, guided only by instinct. With a flick of her wrist, she drew a line here, a circle there, and then pulled off the aluminum foil to reveal black marks on the white fabric.

"This technique is a spontaneous, dynamic process that transfers creative energy in an immediate way, and prevents me from overthinking," Marzlin says. "Once I have the subconscious

foundation for the design, I stand back, trust my abilities, and let the simple lines and circles tell me a story."

The image that emerged from this particular monoprint was an exotic, stork-like bird set in an environment that could be read as a river, a swamp, or an otherworldly dream. She painted the fabric using ink and Derwent Inktense pencils. The predominant colors in the piece are her favorites, orange and blue. A row of stitching is run on top of the black lines.

"My art seems to be impressionistic in that I like unplanned, spontaneous mark making and trying to work in a loose and energetic way. Most of my inspiration comes from nature, as that is what surrounds me every day. While I see many interesting structures and compositions, I'm not interested in reproducing them in a realistic fashion."

Marzlin's move from Germany to Canada helped to inform her work as a textile artist. She did not learn to sew as a child and was unfamiliar with art quilts. She was influenced by European culture and the great art she experienced in museums there. The first time she saw art quilts was in 2003. Fascinated with the art form, she taught herself how to sew and the basics of quilting. Within a year, she had started to create her own designs.

"The piece was titled *A Rare Bird* because that is what it is. I would not be able to reproduce it. I can't draw it again in the same fashion as it was the result of 'seeing' a structure in the random lines."

Regina Marzlin is based in Nova Scotia, Canada. ■

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

# Love in the time of Covid-19

by Diane Howell

Yes, the headline is supposed to sound like the book written by Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (I highly recommend reading it if you have not done so—at least watch the movie!). And, yes, I was going to put it on Steve Dingman's essay about being Susan Lenz's artist manager. But I couldn't resist saving it for myself, despite the support this husband-and-wife team give each other. I saved the pun for me because I feel that we long for one giant group hug.

Since I can only sit here in Arizona and write, aided by two fluffy dogs, I hope this special digital-only issue finds you well, and even more that it provides you with much-needed connection. This second installment for 2020 is, after all, about us, the SAQA community, and our community is resilient. Our new approach this month is a temporary change to ensure you receive

your *SAQA Journal* with no delays due to factors beyond our control.

In this issue, we have a new president and five new board members to welcome. Each one brings a background to our organization that will support our mission well into the future.

We also look back at our March moSAiQA conference, originally scheduled to take place in Toronto; it was converted in only two weeks' time to a virtual event due to COVID-19 concerns. Amazingly, the online format still allowed participants far and wide to fall in love with Canada, because we were able to see it through the eyes of our Canadian members.

I invite you to enjoy the update on our new SAQA Global Exhibition management center, a facility that was made possible by your donations. From its first open day in January, it has been the hub for our exhibition



and other shipping needs. It is versatile, efficient, and designed with quilt conservation in mind.

Speaking of exhibitions, alongside our regular gallery departments, selected works from *Colour with a U* are included. This regional exhibition from Canada was installed at the Homer Watson House & Gallery in Kitchener, Ontario, just prior to our conference. Thanks to the moSAiQA local organizing committee's quick work, conference attendees were able to see it as a virtual tour.

There is plenty to reflect on as you read the articles on artists Hope Wilmarth, Jim Arendt, and Regina Marzlin. What's more, Dingman's article sums up how the pandemic has affected his job as an artist manager who suddenly has no exhibitions to shepherd. Instead, he sees a renewed period of creativity for Lenz and undertakes a search for future exhibition opportunities. His essay shows us, with good humor, how to have hope.

My wish for all of you is that your hope for certainty quickly turns to reality. ■

## Paula Gron *Crotalaria*

34 x 30 inches | 2019

*This work was submitted as part of Member Gallery: Climate Control. More selections are found on page 8.*



# SAQA is here for you.

Can This Really Be Me? (detail)  
Bodil Gardner



From storing exhibition quilts to writing the *SAQA Journal*, our work for you continues. We support your creative spirit with live Zoom chats, art on Facebook and Instagram, and virtual artist panels. Our new exhibition management center is up and running, and our new website is nearing completion.

You make SAQA possible. A gift from you now will allow us to stay the course and to move forward when COVID-19 has passed.

*Let's get through this together.*

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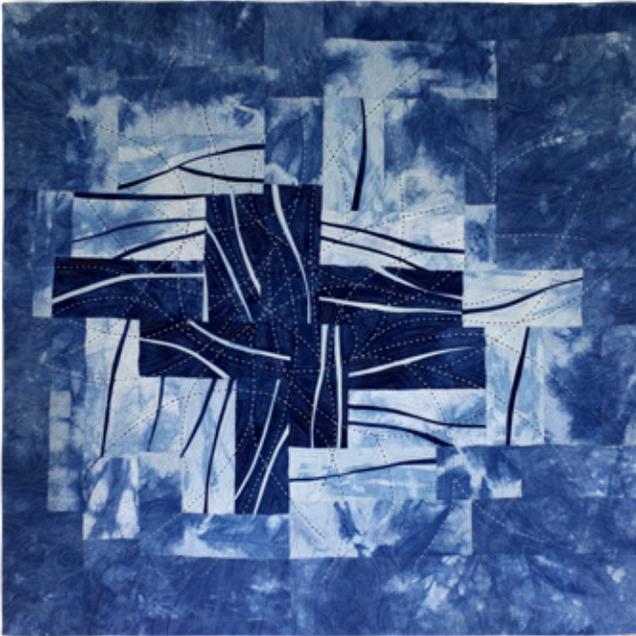
To make a gift, visit [www.saqa.com/together](http://www.saqa.com/together).

# Climate Control

Maryte Collard

*Cracked Ice*

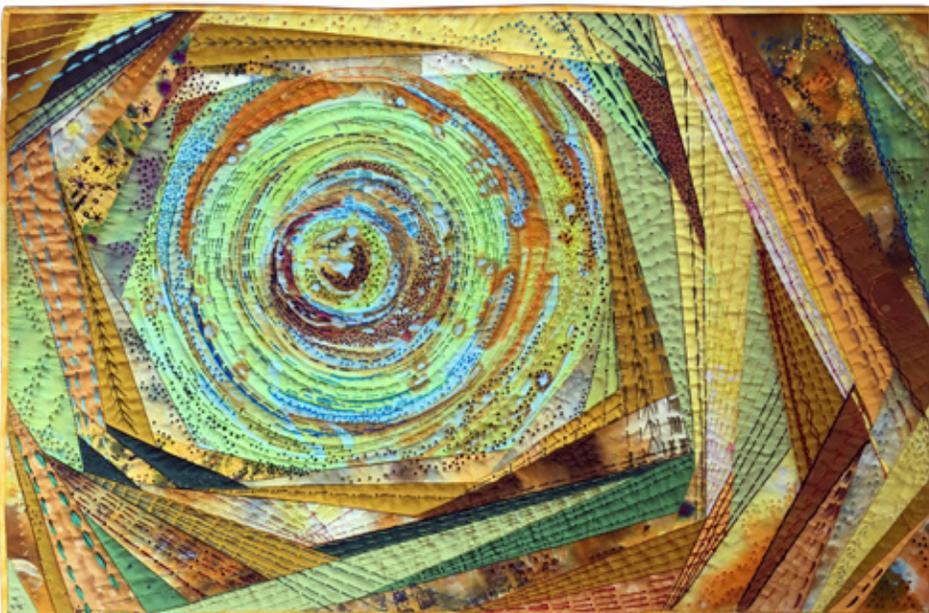
36 x 36 inches | 2019



Rickie Seifried

*Coastal Kelp*

24 x 36 inches | 2018



Suzanne Evenson

*Rising Tide:*

*We Have Been Warned*

52 x 20 inches | 2014

Sam Milford

*Eco Fish*

37 x 10 x 3 inches | 2018



Jancy McClellan

*Climate Crisis*

17.75 x 18.5 inches | 2019



Elaine Filyk

*On Thin Ice*

19 x 25 inches | 2018

Photo by Susan Greenwell



Beth Schnellenberger

*Scorched Earth*

26 x 71 inches | 2016

Photo by Larry Hampton



Maggie Vanderweit

*Melting*

30 x 37 inches | 2019

# Hope Wilmarth

Fine lines define abstract style

by Cindy Grisdela



Hope Wilmarth



*Debris*

51 x 48 inches | 2018

Hope Wilmarth, of Spring, Texas, is known for her fine line series of abstract art quilts, with two pieces earning a place in the prestigious *Quilt National* exhibitions.

*Debris*, her *Quilt National* '19 entry, is a great example of Wilmarth's style. She cuts strips three-fourths of an inch wide from her fabrics, sews them together, and then recuts them. The new "fabric" is sewn intuitively into a new construction. *Debris* is "dedicated to the good people from around the country who helped Houston clean up" after Hurricane Harvey, Wilmarth says.

She describes herself as an intuitive artist without an art background. She spent her professional life as a registered nurse helping psychiatric patients. "I draw on life experiences whatever they might be," she says while considering a question about whether her professional work influences her art. Everything she's ever done can come into play, even if she doesn't know exactly how it's related, she adds.

Her mother taught her to sew on a 1948 Singer Featherweight, which she still owns. Eventually, Wilmarth joined a neighborhood group that made traditional quilts, but became restless as she followed patterns designed by others. In 2009, she turned her attention toward art quilts, taking classes with Jeannette De Nicolis Meyer, Katie Pasquini



**Asylum**

41 x 55 inches | 2018

Masopust, Claire Benn, Elizabeth Busch, Melody Randol, and others.

Her first class was a weeklong retreat with Meyer, and her goal was simple: to abstract a real image. “My image was a photo taken by my cousin of a colorful row of house fronts in Provence. I have that little piece hanging on the wall to remind me how challenged I was, and often still am, to abstract a real image either in my head or from a photo.”

Her years of traditional quilting served her well when she transitioned to art quilts. Working from one of Jean Wells Keenan’s intuitive piecing books, “I found that breaking the rules of cutting, sewing, color, and design required knowing the rules to make work that holds together.” Abstract work can be good or bad, just like any other art. The good pieces have a foundation of cohesive design and technique, she says.

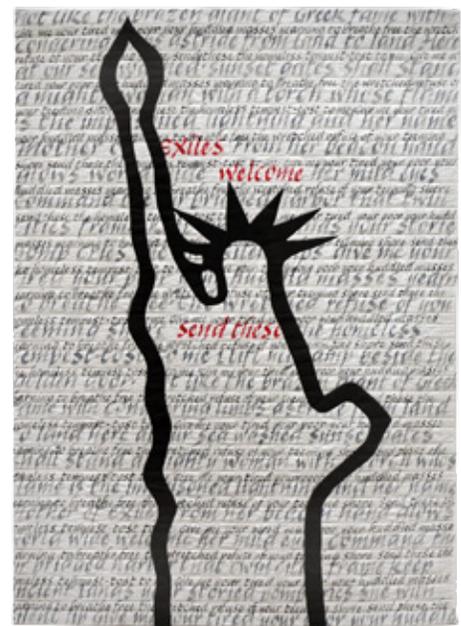
In addition to fine line piecing, Wilmarth enjoys surface design techniques, including painting onto fabric with dye or acrylics, deconstructed screen printing, stamping, and other mark making. She also

has experimented with a technique taught by Melody Randol, where the components of the design are fused and quilted as you go.

*Asylum* is a mixed-media piece created using some of these techniques. Wilmarth designed the letters and the figure on nonwoven material, then painted them with acrylic paint and appliquéd them to a whole cloth background. The background is quilted with a barbed wire pattern. This quilt is part of a new series inspired by current events that Wilmarth calls “perspective art.” Another piece in this series is *Mother of Exiles*, depicting an outline of the Statue of Liberty on a background of text, including the words from the statue’s inscription: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses... ”

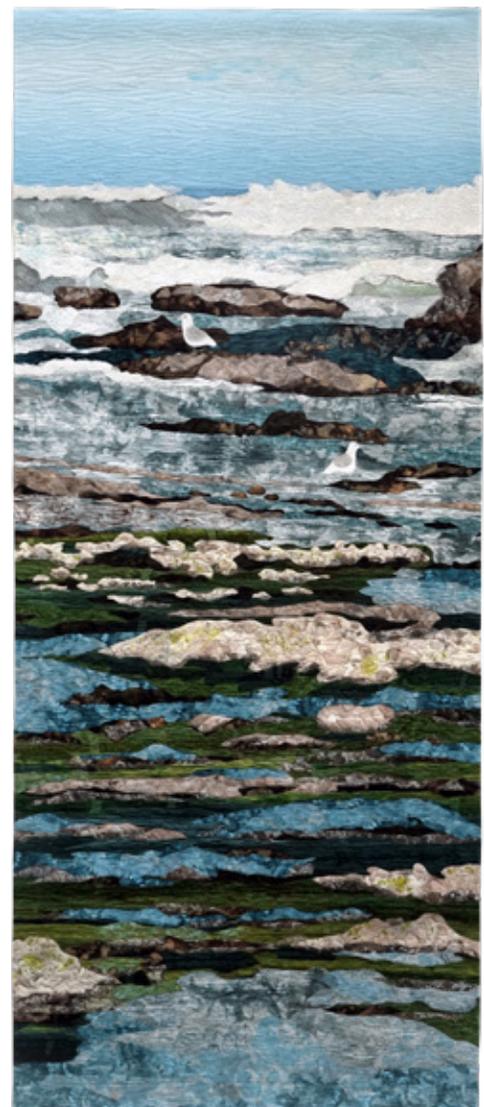
Wilmarth’s intuitive style means she rarely draws out an idea in advance. “I just dive in and sew pieces together to see where they lead me. If I am making material, I pull out paint and brushes and stamps, silk, organza, fabric. I play a lot first before settling on a path.”

She pieces and quilts on a Bernina 710 sewing machine. While she



**Mother of Exiles**

46 x 33 inches | 2018



**Shoreline Serenade**

72 x 30 inches | 2018



**Wings**  
55 x 43 inches | 2019



**Signs of Spring**  
42 x 38 inches | 2019

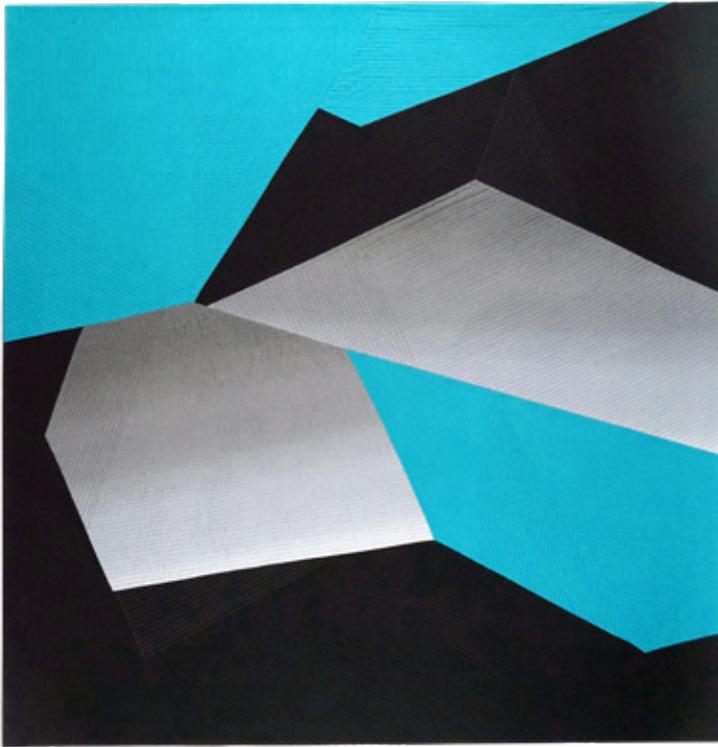


**Explocean**  
50 x 30 inches | 2018

owns a longarm machine, she uses it primarily for charity work and family quilts. "I was sure the longarm would enhance my art quilts, but personally I find the time [required] to build that skill better spent creating the surface design of the art."

Inspiration comes from a variety of sources. Sometimes it's from a call for entry theme, or materials that have caught her eye, or her personal experiences. One of these personal pieces is *Explocean*. Wilmarth used a photo transfer of a photograph she took traveling on the Oregon coast. She compares the waves crashing on the shoreline to "champagne uncorked in an explosion of bubbles." She used embellishments such as felted wool on the rocks and painted organza and tulle for the blowing water.

Wilmarth doesn't have a focus on selling or teaching. "I am not driven to sell my work. I am delighted when it does. My art is a response to my



**Edge of Space**  
43 x 42 inches | 2019



**Hope Wilmarth at work in her studio**

own need to create." She believes having a good website is important, and she has made some sales that way, as well as selling images of her work for reproduction to outlets as varied as a hotel in Houston and a medical text.

She also has a passion for charity sewing for homeless children in her community, and she teaches other quilters at her church who want to contribute to that effort.

Wilmarth recently began a new series that focuses on large shapes of color. One of these, *Signs of Spring*, was juried in to *Quilt Visions 2020* at Visions Art Museum in San Diego, California. It makes use of a controlled palette of green, black, gray, and off-white stitched into large angular shapes that move the eye around the composition. Straight line stitching adds movement to the design.

Another piece in the new series is *Edge of Space*, which explores lines

and large shapes in a muted color palette of blue, gray, and black.

Wilmarth advises other art quilters to take classes to learn the rules. "Then do the work. Just do the work. Make bad stuff and improve it. You can get discouraged, but you have to fail. You have to do bad

work before you can do good work." Through failure, you will grow as an artist and learn about yourself, she says.

She finds belonging to a critique group very helpful to discovering how to do her best work. Wilmarth participated in a critique led by Michael

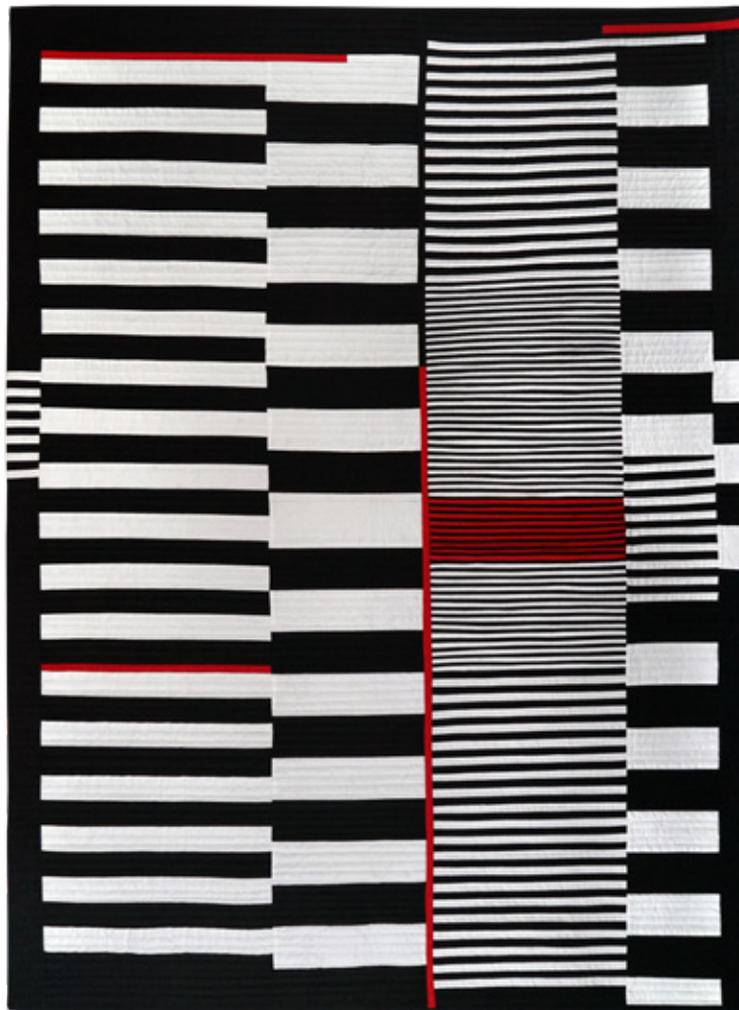


**Broken Promises**  
33 x 50 inches | 2018



### ***Unending Rhythm***

47 x 20 inches | 2018



### ***Metronome***

57 x 42 inches | 2019

James in 2014 during a symposium at the Renwick Museum in Washington, D.C. He taught participants how to critique the work of others—focusing on discussing both strengths and weaknesses in a positive way, not just giving compliments. Wilmarth’s small critique group includes artists whose work is very different, which reduces feelings of competition and allows

artists to bring their own perspective to bear on the work being discussed.

“I find that over time I visit museums, galleries, and the internet more frequently to view art. Having made art, I find I can appreciate and understand art in new ways now.”

Today, she is primarily interested in gallery and museum shows. She enjoys her abstract work, and that means

more piecing is likely in her future. A potential new direction is three-dimensional work, and she is interested in creating wall art that is more dimensional and stands out from the wall. ■

*Cindy Grisdela is a SAQA Juried Artist member residing in Reston, Virginia. You can view her work at [www.cindygrisdela.com](http://www.cindygrisdela.com).*



# 2020 SAQA BENEFIT AUCTION



**SEPTEMBER 14-OCTOBER 4, 2020**

Make your art the center of attention! Donate a 12 x 12-inch quilt to support SAQA's mission to promote the art quilt. Every year, these small works typically raise \$60,000+ to support our exhibitions, education, outreach, and more.

**It starts with you!**

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS JULY 1.**

(Due to the current health situation, we have extended the deadline, but please complete the online donation form by June 20.)

**For details on how to donate, visit [www.saqa.com/auction](http://www.saqa.com/auction)**

# Meet SAQA's new board members

We welcome five members to the SAQA Board of Directors: Mel Beach, Earamichia Brown, Shannon Conley, Sara Trail, and Maggie Vanderweit. Their experience with SAQA and other non-profit organizations provides a range of expertise to grow our many initiatives, from exhibitions to education.

We are proud to introduce our new board members to you.



**Mel Beach**



**Earamichia Brown**

## **Mel Beach**

Mel Beach is a quilt artist, teacher, and lecturer based in San José, California. Her work breaks from tradition with the addition of her own modern, beautifully textured, and vibrant twists. To date, she has completed more than eighty quilt projects. All of them draw on her inquisitive nature, series work, comedy improv studies, and a love of nature and photography. Her award-winning quilts have been exhibited internationally and published in books and magazines. She has been featured on *Quilting Arts TV* and *The Quilt Show*.

## **Earamichia Brown**

Earamichia “Encyclopedia” Brown began her love of fiber arts and craft as a child. Her family had two fascinating book sets: *World Book Encyclopedia* and *Childcraft: The How and Why Library*. The *Childcraft* series contained a volume entitled *Make and Do*, which she did plenty of.

Earamichia wanted to be a fashion designer, and attended the High

School of Fashion Industries in New York City. But she opted for Plan B and became an attorney by day, which allowed her to support her love of fiber. She graduated from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, with a BA in Government and Politics and from Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C., with a JD.

Earamichia’s love of crafts and fiber flourished. She became an avid knitter, designed and made garments as gifts and commissions, and taught knitting. In 2000 she was introduced to quilting. Her fiber resumé includes teaching various subjects in eHow videos and being published in a number of quilt-related books. Her work has been exhibited at International Quilt Festival/Houston and other venues across the country.

Earamichia serves on several professional boards and is a board member of Quilt Alliance.

## **Shannon Conley**

Shannon Conley is an art quilter and fiber artist from Moore, Oklahoma,

whose work is informed by her experience as a cell biologist and biochemist. She runs a biomedical research lab at a large university and ideas for her pieces often arise from scientific research performed by her or others.

She has been artistic her whole life, and art quilts have been her primary medium since 2009. She explores the connections between science and religion, and between the physical world and the way it is colored by our varying perspectives. Much of her recent work has focused on interpreting the diversity and interconnectedness of various ecosystems using fabric and stitch.

She grew up in southern New Mexico and retains a strong connection to the dry mountains and high desert, areas that frequently appear in her ecology and nature-inspired pieces. Though her practice originated with traditional quilting techniques, these approaches are often expanded to include the use of nontraditional fibers and fiber-like materials, as well as other media and



**Shannon Conley**



**Sara Trail**



**Maggie Vanderweit**

design approaches, including surface design, sculpting, and cutwork.

### **Sara Trail**

Sara Trail learned to sew at the age of 4, and is now a successful author, sewing teacher, and pattern and fabric designer. At age 13, she wrote a book for C&T Publishing, *Sew with Sara*, which teaches teens and tweens how to sew cute clothes and accessories for fun and profit. At 15, she starred in *Cool Stuff to Sew with Sara*, a DVD project with C&T Publishing. She has designed two fabric collections for Fabri-Quilt, *Folk Heart* and *Biology 101*, and a pattern collection for Simplicity, *Designed with Love by Sara*.

While attending the University of California, Berkeley, Sara created a quilt in memory of Trayvon Martin, and her love for sewing and passion for social justice intertwined. After graduating from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, she founded the Social Justice

Sewing Academy (SJSA) in Antioch, California, to be a platform where youth creates art that engages and educates communities.

### **Maggie Vanderweit**

Maggie Vanderweit's work is exhibited and sold in galleries, shops, museums, and art quilt exhibitions around the world.

She is a Juried Artist member of SAQA, a professional member of Canadian Quilters' Association (CQA), and belongs to Connections Fibre Artists. She has won numerous awards, including the 2013 Award for Excellence in Innovation at the at the CQA National Juried Show, the Grand Prize at *Threadworks 2016*, and the Shirley Hastedt Award at *Quilts=Art=Quilts* at the Schweinfurth Museum in Auburn New York.

Since joining SAQA in 2013, Maggie has had thirteen pieces juried into eight SAQA global exhibitions. Her book *Stone Threads* was released in June 2016, and her work is included

in many publications, including *Quilting Arts Magazine*.

Maggie has operated Stone Threads Fibre Art since 2000. She creates original contemporary art with hand-painted, hand-dyed, rust-dyed, and botanically dyed fabrics; hand embroidery; beading; collage; and intricately machine quilted surfaces. Maggie, now retired, presented a variety of talks, lectures, retreats, and workshops for SAQA conferences, galleries, museums, guilds, the Haliburton School of Art and Design, Elora Art Workshops, quilt stores, CQA, and Creativ Festival.

Maggie chaired the Local Organizing Committee for the 2020 moSAiQA Conference in Toronto, which became a virtual experience.

# Jim Arendt:

## Work-hardened stories told in denim

by ZJ Humbach



**Mom**

61 x 30 inches | 2012

Jim Arendt's art is rooted in the lives of laborers. He wants to develop and share a true understanding of the people, their craft, and the impact economic change has on their lives and communities.

His firsthand knowledge of the labor force comes from growing up outside Flint, Michigan, in the 1980s, when he saw workers who had endured a farm crisis and auto manufacturing plant closures. "Through portraiture, I try to make the scale and complexity of these economic shifts easier to comprehend. The cultural practices that unfurl as a result of those relationships taught me strategies to craft a working life that embraces wholeness and integrity

as antidotes to estrangement from objects and one another."

Arendt's life revolves around art. "My hobbies include being an associate professor of visual arts at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina, and directing its Rebecca Randall Bryan Art Gallery. I also make art," he laughs, noting he is not a full-time artist. "I enjoy being a teacher, preparing students and future artists for success in creative fields, and still feel that I am learning."

He lives near the university in a quiet area draped in Spanish moss and frequented by beachgoers. "Our home consists of two artists, three kids, five undocumented chickens,



*Jim Arendt takes the long view of works in progress.*

two dwarf rabbits, one black dog, nine antiquated sewing machines, bikes, equipment, crates, and other necessities. It's a work in progress."

Finding time for his art is a challenge. "Tag-team parenting and late nights are what I use to get the work done. My partner and I try to help each other as much as possible, but you simply have to let go of the illusion that other things are going to happen if you want to do the work of making art," explains Arendt. "That means dishes, laundry, and lawn care are neglected or delegated to children old enough to handle the responsibility. Oh, and we admire other people's vacations on social media!"

His studio is a one-car garage located near the house, which allows him to efficiently circulate between his family and his work. The studio itself is systematically unkempt and rife with unfinished false starts. "Since my studio is so small, each piece of equipment has to earn its place or it has to go," Arendt says. "This pragmatic attitude reassures me that I have not developed a hoarding disorder, and am, in fact, making things that could be dangerous or beautiful."

He usually rolls up the garage door and works in the sun at one of the industrial machines he has restored and mounted on casters. "Beyond the donated denim is a collection of machines I've bought cheap, inherited, or liberated. I call it adventures in sewing-machine stewardship. Some, such as my 100-year-old Singer 29-4 'patcher', I like because they are pretty. Others hold a place in my heart, like my grandmother's Kenmore 158 whose light bulb still warms the machine oil. The workhorse of my studio is a Singer 111W155 that I purchased



**Logan: Totemic Figures**  
78 x 48 x 48 inches | 2014



**Logan, detail**



**Logan, detail**

## Totemic Figures (Seven)

74 x 48 x 48 inches (each) | 2014

Work in situ at Mississippi Valley Textile Museum  
Almonte, Ontario, Canada, July-September 2019



at auction for \$59 and can sew through anything I can get under [its presser] foot.”

What usually goes under the presser foot is denim. “I’m a

materialist at heart. I am always looking for material that has an inherent metaphoric quality. What other material could bring me closer to the lived experiences of

the people I know and love? Denim seems created to be abused, worn out, patched, stained, and burnt through. Its characteristics are mirrored in the individuals I choose to represent. Yet, jeans remain supple, and, with the right pair of boots, can still go to the ball. I like that.”

While denim is his medium of choice, Arendt also incorporates very unusual materials into his art. “Most recently I learned that if you ask real nicely, the guy at the tire shop lets you take all the truck inner tubes you want. Then you can sew them into unusual shapes, and with enough luck, the whole thing will hold air. I also negotiated for four months with the local power company to get them to loan some of their coal for an installation project titled *Repose*.”

Arendt uses a variety of springboards to start a project. On occasion



*Jim Arendt's favorite material is denim.*

Photo by Yvette Cummings



*Sarah & Augustus*

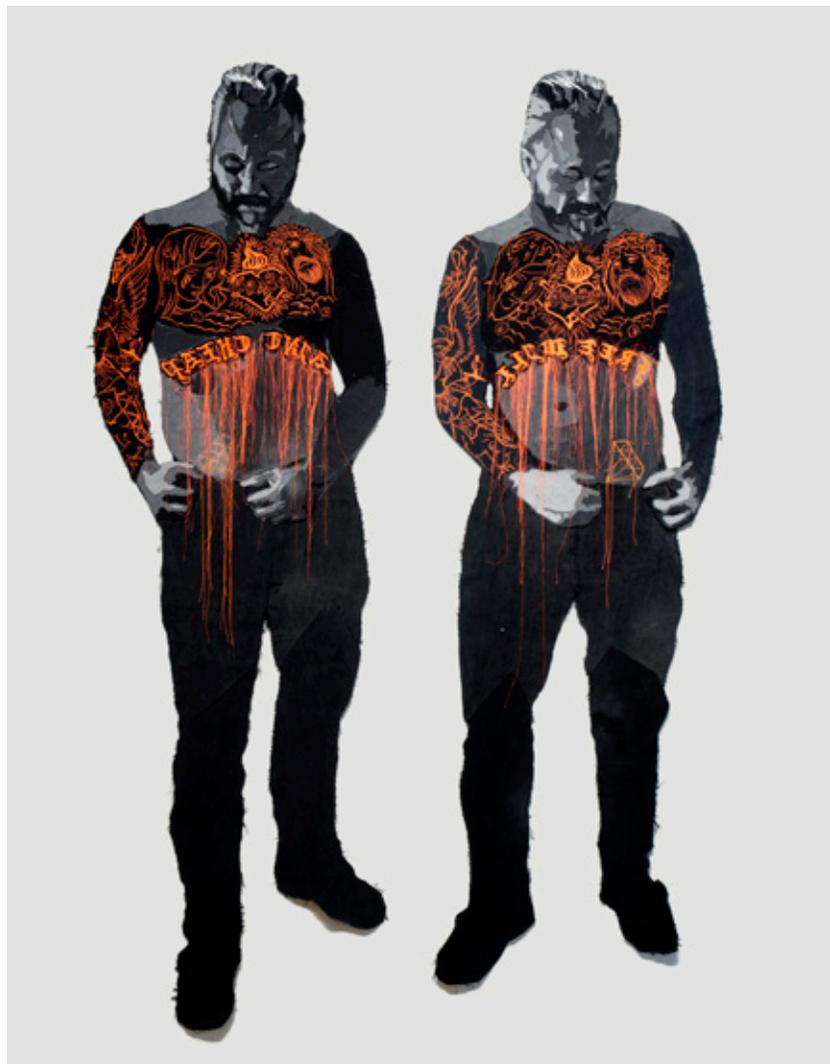
66 x 66 x 3 inches | 2016

he builds models. Other times he gathers reference photos. “Mostly, I ruminate: Sometimes for days, generally for years. I try to figure out how to get at the best iteration of an idea, and I am usually wrong,” he confesses. “I carry a pocket-sized notebook to jot down a rough doodle and text, and promptly forget about it until I reopen that page a year or two later and discover that I know how to make it better.

“When I am completely lost, I organize the studio. I usually get bored and set something aside to pursue another project. I like to leave the work up so it can stare at me reproachfully until I can’t leave it half-done anymore. I cut and I sew, blocking in large areas and fussing over details. I mess it up. I’ll excise a section and start over. It’s very important to stand in the driveway at night and squint and ask yourself if it’s done. It usually isn’t!”

One of Arendt’s “hobbies” leads him to build a certain practicality into his creative process. “As a gallerist myself, I attempt to design my work with the people who will have to eventually move it, install it, and handle it in mind. My work must be durable enough to survive transportation, and simple enough to assemble and hang so that it doesn’t require heroic efforts to mount a display. I imagine the work existing in a museum, the effect I want it to have on the viewer, and then run the camera backward, imagining each step of its journey. Then, I design the work to run as simply as possible through those steps.”

He uses donated and reclaimed denim to make portraits of family and friends. “They model my worries and desires. For me, representation is still a form of magical power. Even



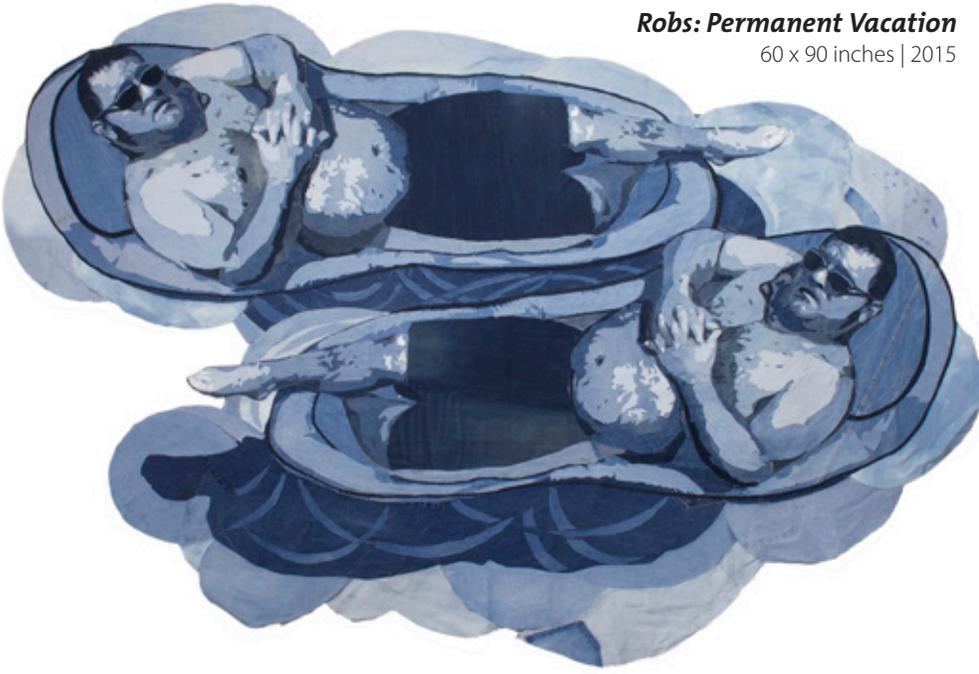
**Cat: Free Will Ain't Cheap**  
85 x 60 inches | 2017



**Eryks**  
70 x 93 inches | 2015

**Rob's: Permanent Vacation**

60 x 90 inches | 2015



though I know how all the tricks work, I never tire of watching someone appear from bits of Wrangler blue and acid-wash white."

One portrait especially near to his heart is *Meghann* (page 18). "She's my niece who was born prematurely and weighed approximately two pounds. "She's now in her thirties and has known more than her fair share of adversity. I wanted to make an image of her that provided some of the love and protection I could do from a distance. So, my partner helped me cut out the rivets from all the jeans I had on hand. It took three days. I turned those rivets into a chainmail-like shirt

**Adrian: Lies**

144 x 66 x 48 inches | 2018



for her to wear forever. She looks tough.”

Another portrait gives a glimpse into the artist himself. “Jim is a self-portrait inspired by shed cicada shells and the vernacular of denim,” says Arendt. “It shows my transformation process from farm boy to artist and professor. I built a career on

others’ images and decided that I’d make my own the most vulnerable to compensate.”

His view on creating art is simple: Reflect on what brings you pleasure about your work and value that reality. “Prestigious exhibitions, sales, and awards are usually how we gauge success. I find more value and

pleasure in talking about my work with third graders. They understand me better than most critics.” ■

*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.*



**Meghann**  
69 x 30 inches | 2012



**Jim**  
96 x 60 inches | 2013

# SAQA global exhibition management center becomes reality

by Allison Reker

One major benefit of being a SAQA member is the ability to enter artwork into our global exhibitions program. Many museums are impressed to learn that a membership organization runs one of the most prolific and well-traveled exhibition programs in the world. Ten years ago, SAQA produced two new exhibitions per year. In 2019, we premiered six new exhibitions, and we are premiering six more in 2020. With seventeen exhibitions on tour, we are currently promoting the work of more than 600 artist members to more than thirty venues on four continents.

The exponential growth of SAQA Global Exhibitions, including the acceptance of more and more three-dimensional art, made it impractical to continue running the program from a spare bedroom. In January, after years of planning and tremendous support from our board, donors, and membership, SAQA opened its very first global

exhibition management center. It took three trips with a 27-foot long truck to get all of the artwork, crates, supplies, catalogs, and other stored items moved into the new facility. Here are some telling statistics from the first month of operation:

- More than two tons of quilts and materials were shipped and received.
- There were fifteen semi-truck shipments.
- Three to four different couriers arrived for small package deliveries and shipments every business day.
- 584 individual quilts were opened, inspected, documented, and packaged.
- Nine exhibitions were shipped to and from venues.
- Seventy-two quilts were sent back to artists.
- Twelve quilts were shipped to buyers. SAQA's new facility comprises
- Approximately 2,500 square feet of workspace that includes room for offices, collection management, shipping, and storage.

A loading area with overhead doors is configured to ship and receive large deliveries. It includes a lift that eliminates the need for SAQA to pay extra for trucks equipped with liftgates.

One of the offices has been set aside to house inventory such as catalogs, back issues of *SAQA Journal and Art Quilt Quarterly* magazines, note cards, rack cards, envelopes, conference supplies, booth supplies, and other items. Just outside that room is a designated space for shipping and receiving individual quilts, catalogs, and smaller items, separate from the loading and quilt work areas.

The new global exhibition management center is more than simply a warehouse for processing and shipping artwork and materials. It is an immaculate facility that is devoted to the highest standards of collection care. William Reker, SAQA's director of global exhibitions, interviewed museum professionals and major collectors about a variety of issues, including lighting, insect prevention, temperature, humidity, fire protection, safe cleaning methods, and the most ideal systems for quilt storage between venues. "With the new global exhibition management center, every quilt receives the highest quality of care. The center was designed and configured specifically for collection management. The new center gives us the space and flexibility to analyze and improve our procedures and workflow, whereas before we were lucky to have sufficient space to complete all of our necessary tasks. Not only can SAQA



*William Reker, director of global exhibitions, works in his office, which features an art quilt portrait of SAQA founder Yvonne Porcella, created by SAQA member Kathleen McCabe.*

All photos by Dan Cleary



*William Reker operates the lift that allows shipping crates to be loaded and unloaded into any transport truck, regardless of its height. The lift eliminates the need for shipping companies to dispatch a truck with a liftgate, which reduces SAQA's shipping costs.*

provide museum-quality care for all of the artwork, now there is also room to expand our popular exhibition program.”

At the heart of the facility are a large work room and the quilt storage vault. The workroom has two raised 32-square-foot tables which provide ample space for examining and rolling quilts, while also holding all of the supplies needed to work with them. Exhibitions can be easily brought in through the connected loading area, then unpacked, inspected, inventoried, documented, and prepared for shipment to the next venue. As part of the workroom, there is a space to photograph works and to place them into our rolling shipping crates. The storage vault is a separate, lockable room which will soon have a custom-built, museum grade textile storage system installed. The vault, like the rest of the global exhibition management center, is monitored several times each day for humidity and temperature fluctuations.

Reker says SAQA sends a special thank you to Carolyn Ducey, curator of collections, and Jamie Swartz, collections assistant, at the International Quilt Museum; Laura

Hendrickson, registrar and collections manager, at The National Quilt Museum; and collector Jack Walsh. “Their willingness to share their expertise and years of collection management experience was invaluable in setting up the global exhibition management center.”

Aside from the increased quality of care and improved workflow, there are additional benefits to having the center. The cost to ship to a business address is less than to a residential one. By not having to pay for residential pickup or delivery, a liftgate, and

other fees, SAQA saves \$300 each time an exhibition is shipped to or from a venue. This helps us to be a better steward of our membership’s funds. Members who are juried into SAQA Global Exhibitions save on their shipping costs as well—up to \$10 per shipment.

As SAQA continues to work hard to promote our members’ art to museums, and more of those museums are partnering with us, the new global exhibition management center gives us the resources to meet that demand and grow into the future. ■

*Allison Reker is SAQA's membership coordinator and catalog editor. She has authored five books of fiction and is a freelance editor for various publications. She resides in Beavercreek, Ohio.*



*The workroom features tables to carefully process quilts for an entire exhibition and also has an area for photography.*

## Selections from *Upcycle!*

Fiber art has a rich tradition of incorporating elements that would otherwise be discarded by turning them into compelling compositions. Repurposing materials is one of the most effective solutions to deal with today's environmentally devastating waste issues. Full of creative energy, *Upcycle!* offers artwork with intriguing details and unusual materials, and will surely spark conversations from viewers.

The juror for this exhibition is Katie Pasquini Masopust; the exhibition benefactor is Lisa Ellis.

For more information, visit [www.saqa.com/upcycle](http://www.saqa.com/upcycle).



Carol Larson

***Keeping Up Appearances 4***

48 x 27 inches | 2012

The text is used with permission of the Amy Vanderbilt Kellar Literary Property Trust.



Laura Wasilowski

***Painting the Town #1***

47 x 33 inches | 2014



Karen M. Balos

***Thank You Holly***

51 x 34.5 x 2 inches | 2018

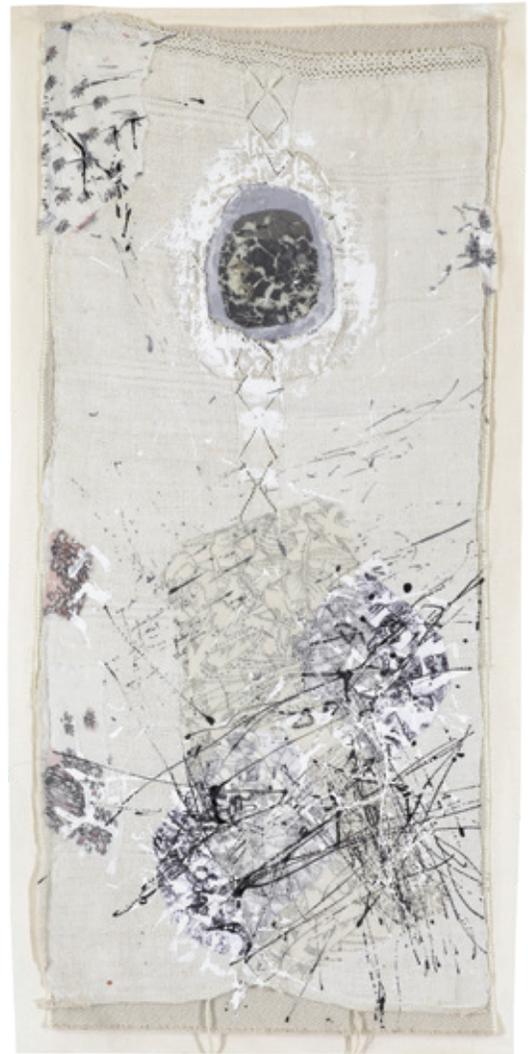


Stephanie Shore

***Obscured Meaning***

35 x 35 inches | 2019

Photo by Joe Ofria



Yael David-Cohen

***Mirrors 1***

48 x 24 inches | 2018

Photo by Max Alexander



Laurie Bucher

***Planet Earth***

40 x 38 inches | 2019



Laurie McCown

***The Seven Sisters and  
Their Ghosts***

48 x 42 inches | 2018

# The life of an artist manager during COVID-19

by Steve Dingman

It's me, Steve Dingman. I have a PhD in civil engineering, although I left that career decades ago to join my wife, Susan Lenz, in a little business endeavor we called Mouse House. It was supposed to be a mom-and-pop custom picture framing shop. By 2001, there were fourteen people on payroll and we averaged 250 finished pieces per week. I was in charge of ordering supplies, building frames, paying bills and taxes, and keeping up with business paperwork.

Then Susan declared that she "wanted to be an artist when she grew up." She was forty-two years old at

the time; I was forty-six and about to be transformed into a rather reluctant artist manager. Over the past nineteen years, I've learned plenty in my new job, from navigating cross-country deliveries to box building, from proof-reading to psychotherapy, and from tactful ways to give artistic feedback to being a storage system specialist—and I'm still doing the books.

Earlier this year, the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe and right into Susan's studio. Doom and gloom descended on busy March and April calendar pages. *Art Quilt Elements* was postponed, and is now scheduled

for 2021. While I didn't have to drive a forty pound, 46 x 57-inch piece to the Wayne Art Center in Wayne, Pennsylvania (614 miles one way), Susan was really disappointed that *Second Marriage* wouldn't be seen in this international exhibition.

*ArtFields*, an art competition and festival that celebrates artists from the U.S. Southeast—and has more than \$145,000 in award money up for grabs—was cancelled. So I didn't have to drive to Lake City, South Carolina, to help install an 8 x 15 x 15-foot installation called *The Cocoon*, but Susan didn't get better images of the piece or enjoy it being seen by more than twenty people.

And the hits just kept on coming. Within a week, two solo shows were sitting in silent venues. Next, Columbia Open Studios announced a postponement and a refund check came from the statewide fine craft show. Susan's *Red Carpet Dress* was present at the opening of *Castaways: Art From The Material World* at the Bateman Foundation in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. But the museum had to shut its doors after that first night, although you can still see the dress online at [www.batemanfoundation.org](http://www.batemanfoundation.org).

Four venues where Susan had work in group shows closed to the public. A touring exhibition co-curated by Sandra Sider and Pamela Weeks, "*Deeds not Words*": Celebrating 100



Susan Lenz and Steve Dingman

*Years of Women's Suffrage*, was scheduled to premier at the National Quilt Museum in Paducah this April, but was postponed due to coronavirus. The exhibition is currently scheduled to be in late October at the International Quilt Festival/Houston. As for me, I didn't have to drive to any of these locations or ship any artwork. The solo shows were, in a sense, put into storage—just not in our house. My only task became to deal with a single artist's depression.

If looks could kill, I wouldn't be writing this article. Saying things such as, "Aren't you glad you got rejected from the Smithsonian Craft Show this year because it just got postponed?" or "It could always be worse" were not appreciated, but did lead to conversations about positive thinking. After all, the artwork wasn't damaged. FedEx or UPS hadn't lost an art quilt (that has happened). The sewing machines were in perfect working order and surely there were enough fabric and thread inventories on hand to last a lifetime.

It didn't take long for me to remind Susan that being deemed "non-essential" by the City of Columbia meant more than going broke. It meant "studio time." In a very real sense, "sheltering in place" was an unintentional, at-home art residency. For Susan, this also meant an art residency with a personal cook and housekeeper, as domestic tasks are also part of my job description.

As an artist's manager, it fell to me to keep up with the pace of a productive, full-time artist. I spent the better part of one afternoon researching and ordering slating/roofing nails because Susan insisted that the "pretty" three-quarter-inch copper ones were absolutely necessary for the edges of eleven art quilts mounted on the stretcher



Steve Dingman and Susan Lenz use a propane torch to remove air bubbles from a UV-filtering epoxy on one of her works.

bars that I already cut and built. Many afternoons found us in the garage pouring UV-filtering epoxy. We did this after I set everything up, and in the morning there was clean-up too. Workhorses were installed in the living room so that Susan could stitch hundreds of keys into a piece called *Lock Down 2020*. Vacuuming the studio became impossible. In a state of total exhilaration, Susan paper-pieced a crazy quilt using found fabric wall covering from the South Carolina State House renovations of the late 1990s. Itty-bitty pieces of paper were everywhere while *Stir Crazy in SC* was under construction.

The more positive reinforcement I provided, the more ideas seemed to pop into Susan's head. I'm not even sure how many projects were going on at any one time, but I was asked for my thoughts on each of them.

Critiquing artwork in progress is always tricky, especially when using technical terms like "doodad" and "thingamajig." I couldn't really help it if I saw faces where there weren't supposed to be any. It didn't seem to help when I wired a framed piece upside down either. Thankfully, Susan generally knitted her eyebrows at all my suggestions and said, "I'll put in a little more time on that one."

She sure put in time! Every evening when I was about ready to serve dinner, I heard Susan say, "One more minute." Time during this pandemic has seemed to stand still because one minute always lasted at least fifteen. But I guess that should have been expected because "one more stitch" before bed also seemed to take fifteen minutes.

As Susan's new artwork piled up, another problem appeared. Everything created during these stay-at-home weeks was going immediately into storage. I was the only person who could admire the finished pieces by saying, "Wow! That's worth at least twenty bucks." So, I rehung our walls in tighter arrangements and cleared a few shelves. Susan wrote blog posts and shared images to social media platforms, trying to make sense out of so much production in the face of so few opportunities.

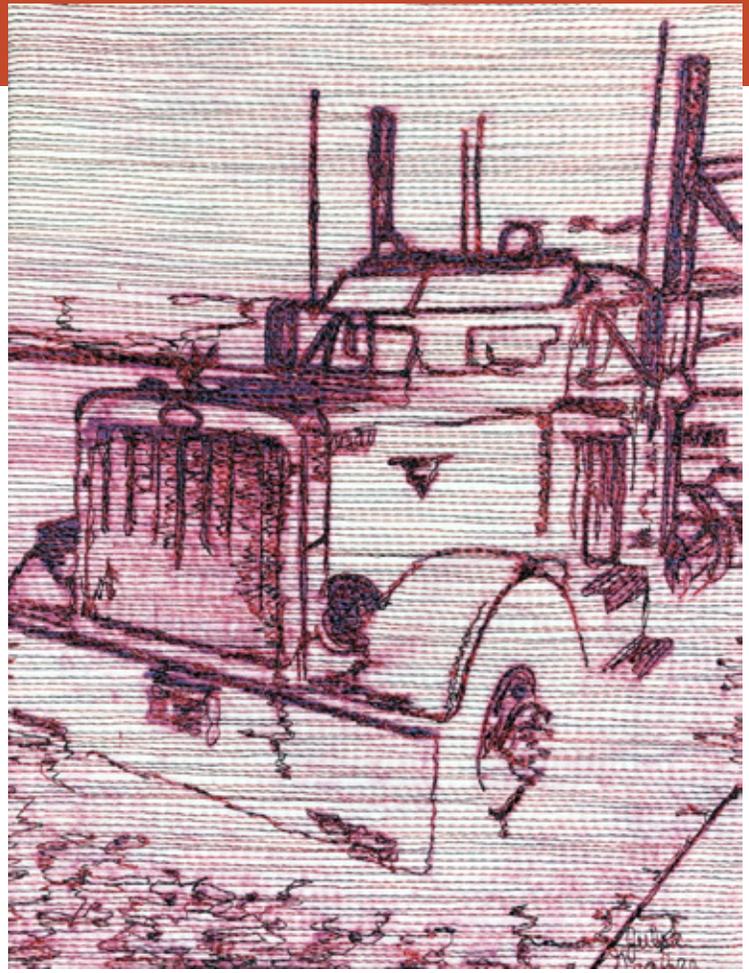
As this artist's manager, it is now my job to scour the internet for new calls for entry and for venues booking exhibits in 2021 and beyond. It is my job to bolster confidence with enlightened hope. To do this, I constantly remind Susan that she's not dead yet and that a new normal is just around the corner. ■

*Juried Artist Showcase* is a gallery of work produced by artists who have each been named a Juried Artist member of SAQA. A Juried Artist is an artist who has successfully presented a portfolio to the Juried Artist Review Panel. This portfolio includes a selected body of work and documentation showing a professional approach to art.

**Julia Graber**

*The '93 Pete*

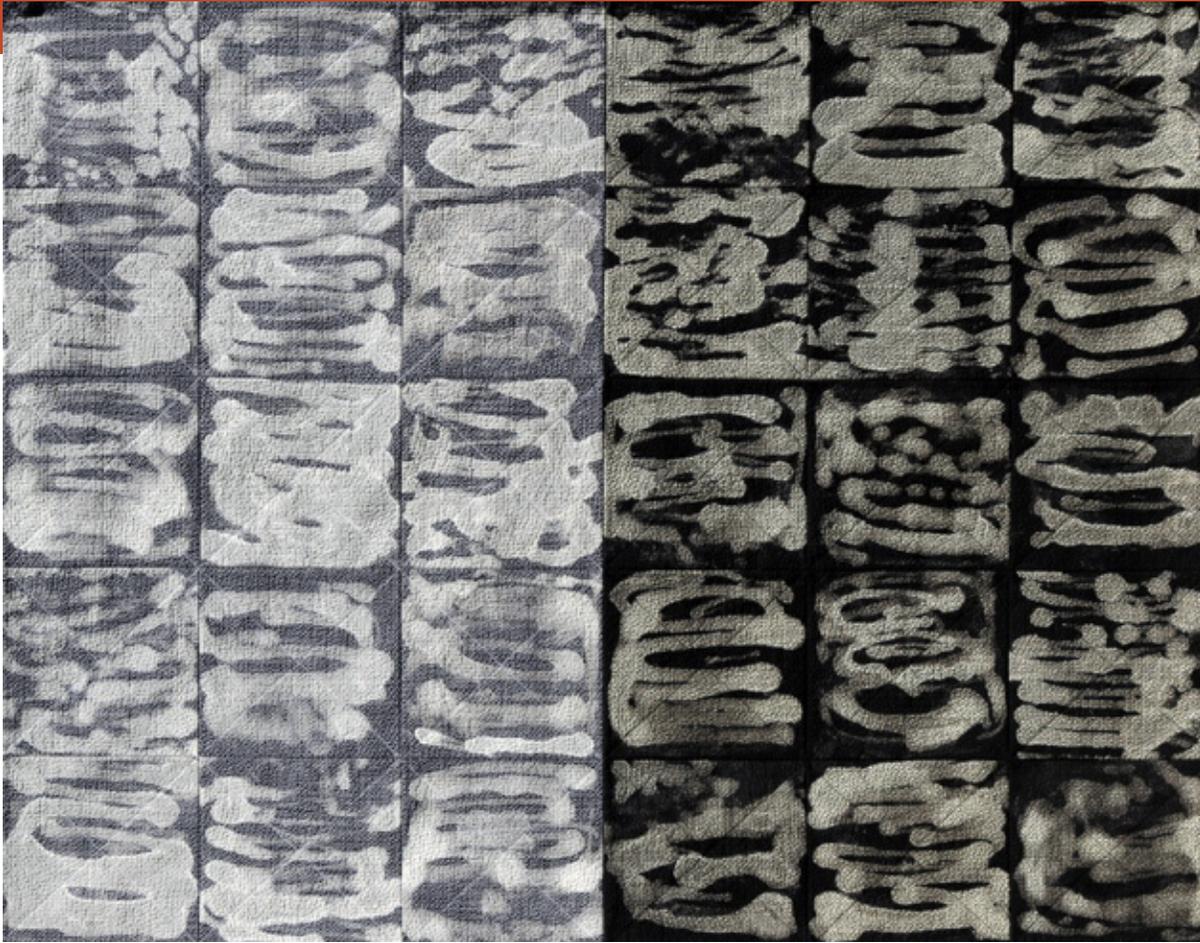
10 x 7 inches | 2017



**Jennifer Day**

*Long Hard Day*

32 x 36 inches | 2018



**Judy Hooworth**

*Chinese Whispers*

49 x 64 inches | 2017



**Paula Kovarik**

*Beastie Boy and His Pals*

39.5 x 41 inches | 2018

Photo by Allen Mims



**Catherine Kleeman**

*Seeing Red*

44 x 44 inches | 2018

# Connectivity emerges as core conference message



The moSAiQA conference demonstrated the value of connections. From effectively branding your work to recognizing why handmade work makes us human, our speakers set an inclusive tone that was perfect for SAQA's first virtual conference.



## Shin-hee Chin

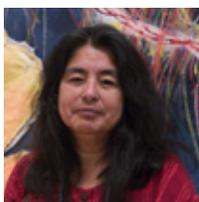
Kansas-based artist Shin-hee Chin's opening keynote presentation explored many interrelated themes, from the use of recycled materials to motherhood. Chin's address, titled *Mother Tongue, Motherhood, and Transculturation*, traced her artistic journey through a career that answers "yes" to this question: Can a diasporic artist find creative expression? To do so, however, Chin had to let go of her mother tongue to speak with a new voice.

Early in Chin's career, fiber became her voice, and she worked with a material she could afford: old clothes. Her love of upcycled materials continues today. She used clothing labels to create a large installation work titled *Behind the Labels*, which showed how the world is interconnected through the stratified world of fashion. Today, the planet is interconnected with Covid-19, she said.

Chin is a professor of art at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas. Her portfolio includes string-covered recycled

fabric, fiber sculptures, and art quilts made with yo-yos—sewn circles of fabric—that form portraits. Her goal is to elevate traditional women's work to a place of power for women.

Her work is time-consuming, a purposeful act. It re-enacts the creative process of birthing. Her process testifies that transculturation has always been part of our lives as seen through varied culinary and musical practices. You can learn more about Chin at [www.shinheechin.com](http://www.shinheechin.com).



## Consuelo Jimenez Underwood

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood discussed how threads have helped define her life's journey. Her work merges politics, spirit, and thread, and her guiding principles are based in Zen Samadhi, considered by practitioners to be the ultimate understanding of reality. Some key takeaways from her presentation were:

- Mindfulness is required as well as a true understanding of materials and tools.
- Run don't walk, and if possible drive; you don't have that much time on the planet.
- Have a clear image of yourself.

At a young age, Underwood wanted to be part of the society that wove with threads, but she was picking tomatoes. She found her way into the art world,

first by making art with hard materials such as plywood, nails, and wire, and then moving on to embroidery. She earned BA, MA, and MFA degrees from San Diego State University in San Diego, California, before accepting various professor positions at San José State University in San José, California, where she ultimately led the Fiber/Textile Area in the university's School of Art and Design. She also served as an adjunct professor at California College of the Arts in Berkeley.

Her themes include the division of people and nations and harm being done to natural flora and fauna. Her biography notes that Underwood's work "is a reflection of personal border experiences: the interconnectedness of societies, insisting on beauty in struggle, and celebrating the notion of 'seeing' this world through my tri-cultural lens." You can learn more about her at [www.consuelojunderwood.com](http://www.consuelojunderwood.com).



## Judy Martin Miranda Bouchard Penny Berens

Good friends make good art partners, as a collaboration started in 2016 by Canadian artists Judy Martin and Penny Berens attests. The duo engaged emerging curator Miranda Bouchard to co-develop an exhibition of their new work, scheduled to debut in 2021. The intergenerational project is

productive and filled with camaraderie although they live in different cities.

“Penny and I are passionate about getting our work out of us. The curator keeps us focused and writes things down. The results of our work will be felt and understood by a new generation, some not yet born. They will feel the love in our stitches,” Martin said.

They generally convene remotely every four to six weeks and rely on each other for success. Martin points out that it is understood that they have to do their best work because other careers are involved. Early on, the two artists gave Bouchard a reading list which enhanced her research and led her to more resources. The curator’s training broadens and encourages the established artists’ practices.

Because both artists work in natural dyes, their palettes work well together, Martin said. Berens adds that coincidence, or perhaps their similar viewpoints, also allows their work to flow.

The project includes writing, a task they hope adds depth even though it is “work we don’t like,” Berens said. “Miranda’s questions make us think deeper and recognize what’s inside us.”

To learn more about the artists’ work, visit [www.judithmartinart.com](http://www.judithmartinart.com) and [www.tanglewoodthreads.blogspot.com](http://www.tanglewoodthreads.blogspot.com).



### Bridget O'Flaherty

Sustainability consultant Bridget O'Flaherty gave attendees insight into how to be a green fiber artist. Since all textiles are toxic to make, she reduces her impact by seeking out natural, organic, recycled, and wool materials. She uses cotton and organic threads

as well as Gutermann’s rPET thread, which is made from recycled polyester in a limited range of colors.

Other green choices are natural dyes and sustainable packaging. “Be the change you want to be; small actions matter. Choose one thing you’ll change.”

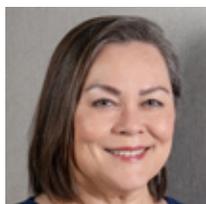


### Dan Mariani

Marketing consultant Dan Mariani helped moSAiQA attendees discover their brand image through a series of insightful exercises. Attendees answered questions such as, “If you were an actor, who would you be?” and selected personal colors based on a list of attributes associated with those hues. The work yielded eye-opening surprises.

As Mariani explained in class materials, color communicates at a subconscious level. What you believe your personal color is may not be present in your art, and that can create a dichotomy. “Make sure [your color] is who you want to communicate. Connect your art to your brand; you can’t be all things to all people.”

To complete the exercises, download them at [www.saq.com/conference](http://www.saq.com/conference) from the schedule of events link.



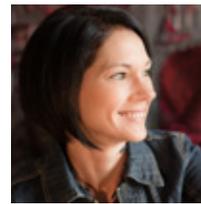
### Kris Sazaki

Kris Sazaki of Pixeladies shared the importance of tracking your art inventory in a database. By organizing the

details of the work she creates with art partner Deb Cashatt, the information is accessible for multiple uses, including exhibition entries and sales.

Sazaki demonstrated the software program GYST, short for Getting Your Sh\*t Together. She uses GYST to document Pixeladies’ artwork with size, date, price, and other information, such as availability.

Another software program to explore is Artwork Archive, which allows users to post a gallery for others to explore.



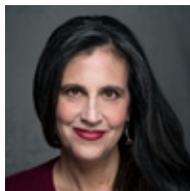
### Purposeful Quilting

Four activist artists shared their experiences in creating meaningful community projects. Pictured clockwise from upper left, the artists were Berene Campbell (Toronto Love Project), Andrea Tsang Jackson (The Here and Elsewhere Bee), Tina Struthers (Indompté/Untamed), and Laurie Swim (Hope and Survival Memorial Quilt). Each artist walked attendees through their approaches to public art.

They offered some tips into creating successful community art projects:

- Find a skill level for your participants
- Find a way for participants to attach themselves to the project, such as by signing their names.

- Ask for support letters from members of the communities you work with to help secure funding.
- The process is as important as the end result.
- Set guidelines to ensure project cohesion.
- Seek sponsors who can provide materials, such as fabric companies or vendors.
- Collaborate with a partner or organization.
- Have an original concept that is easy to work with from construction to installation.
- Employ social media.



**Melanie Falick**

Melanie Falick detailed her journey to write her latest book, *Making a*

*Life: Working by Hand and Discovering the Life You Are Meant to Live*. After a successful career at Abrams Books in New York, Falick left the company to follow her own path. She realized she had never directly answered the question of why making things by hand is experiencing a renaissance. As she researched her book, she discovered a truth: “Making things by hand is our evolutionary birthright; [it] makes us human.” That fact is something makers need to own, not be marginalized by, she said. You can read more about her book at [www.melaniefalick.com](http://www.melaniefalick.com).



**Shannon Conley**

Oklahoma-based artist Shannon Conley uses kirigami, a Japanese paper art that combines folding and cutting, to create some of her three-dimensional

art quilts. She shared the progression that led her to this process, and confided that she loves cutting into things. Kirigami presents challenges, as it relies on the folds holding their shape, but she has created some interesting structures using it. You can see these quilts when you explore her blog, found at [www.shannonconleyartquilts.com](http://www.shannonconleyartquilts.com).

### Conference bonus videos

moSAiQA attendees were also given access to extra presentations. They were:

- Selections from *HERstory: A Celebration of Strong Women* by Susanne Jones.
- *Art Quilt Elements History* by Cindy Friedman.
- New Acquisitions at the International Quilt Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska by Carolyn Ducey. ■

*This article was compiled by Diane Howell, SAQA Journal editor.*

## Lightning Talks

Lightning Talks are a highlight of every SAQA conference, but what are they? They are focused presentations where each speaker has twenty seconds to enliven each of twenty slides. This format provides for just less than seven minutes per speech.

Our 2020 Lightning Talks featured six prerecorded speakers who addressed topics from embracing imperfection to finding your artistic voice. Our moSAiQA presenters and topics were:

**Gunnel Hag:** *Extraordinary Prints from Ordinary Objects*

**Christine Hager-Braun:** *The Alchemy of Resilience: From Personal Growth to Artistic Voice*

**Maggie Rozycki Hiltner:** *Every Stitch Counts/Count Every Stitch*

**Jenny K. Lyon:** *The Quiet Beauty of the Imperfect*

**Regina Marzlin:** *The Dress (de)Code Project: Empowering Young Women through Textile Art.*

**Sue Sherman:** *Penguins!*

**Nancy Turbitt:** *Hanging by a Thread: Using Art to Advocate*

Hag and Sherman shared insight into their creative process. Lyon, a recovering perfectionist, reminded us of how our approach does not need to be perfect to be effective. “Only when I embrace imperfection does it release my own creativity,” she said.

Hager-Braun said that all experiences challenge you and give you opportunities to define your creative voice. To capture the benefits, you should be committed to your art practice, be true to yourself as you choose subject matter, and be open to authentic change. She uses her artistic voice

to talk about self-care.

Marzlin traced her work on a project in Nova Scotia that introduced girls to textile art. Young artists returned week after week to work in a small room where they learned everything from how to operate a sewing machine to how to design on the fly. When they finished, each young artist received \$100 and a place in an exhibition.

Turbitt’s love of nature led her to create four 12 x 12-inch quilts focused on endangered habitats. Creatures represented in her work included bees, the pygmy owl, and marine life. She will continue this series, and one subject in her next set of four quilts will be a koala.

Hiltner noted that fiber artists have many places to be heard. “Art makes statements,” she said. “This is SAQA: We make art.” ■



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*Conversations with the Boss, detail by Kerri Green*

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# From IRL to virtual

## How moSAiQA became an online experience

by Diane Howell



In late February, moSAiQA was a go for Toronto, Canada, the culmination of three years' planning. In a few short days, SAQA's first conference outside the United States was cancelled due to growing concern over SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

SAQA volunteers and staff, having put the safety of attendees first, saw the potential to still host the conference as a virtual event using Zoom, an online webinar and meeting platform. Beginning the first week of March, they began to convert everything from the plenary sessions to the Spotlight Auction into an online experience. Two weeks later, they opened the three-day conference on March 19, right on time.

SAQA was the first quilting event of the year to switch to a virtual format because of the pandemic, and the benefits were immediate and impactful. As events worldwide were cancelled, our attendees were together, sharing a love of art quilts and healing concern for the future. They viewed the regional exhibition *Colour With a U* via an online tour. They heard stories of collaboration and community art in Canada. The professional development speakers, many based in Canada, enriched them with their viewpoints. Virtual meeting rooms allowed attendees from Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and more countries to meet together in real time, if not real life. Registered attendees who couldn't join live took in the plenary sessions later via recordings. "We loved

that people around the world could participate, especially in the meeting rooms, where great content from the Special Events Committee (SEC) helped," says Jennifer Solon, SAQA assistant executive director.

### SAQA at work

What did it take to get to that point? The first step was openness to the idea. SAQA, itself a virtual operation, has a corporate culture that encourages long-distance collaboration and had discussed the possibility of a virtual conference. "We were already familiar with Zoom, which helped, but we did have to upgrade our account and test all the new features. We also have a staff that is technically proficient," says Martha Sielman, SAQA executive director.

The steps taken to turn moSAiQA into a successful online event started with technology. Solon and Lucy Shaiken, SAQA communications coordinator, handled most of the technical requirements. Solon researched Zoom capabilities for webinars, small meeting rooms, and large meetings. She implemented necessary changes and tested the results with staff and volunteers.

Staff members also ran practice Zoom sessions with conference presenters and provided documentation and technical support before and during moSAiQA. This included having backup presentations in case of a technical glitch during a session.

As Solon continued to address technology concerns, Shaiken reached out to membership. "My role was to inform our members about the conference and get them excited to sign up." She also worked with Tracey Lawko and Arja Speelman in Canada to create a virtual tour of the 35-piece regional exhibition, *Colour with a U*, installed at the Homer Watson House & Gallery in Kitchener, Ontario.

On another track, conference coordinator Desi Vaughn contacted all of the speakers. Vaughn worked out details with them, and found two replacements for presenters who were unable to take part in the new format. The schedule became fluid due to the change in speakers and the elimination of live events. SEC co-chairs Georgia French and Sue Bianchi maintained up-to-date changes to it and developed a question-and-answer format for the virtual breakout rooms to help participants break the ice. In Toronto, the moSAiQA local organizing committee led by Maggie Vanderweit was busy too, with one of its main tasks being to cancel in-person activities that ranged from dinners to the *Colour with a U* tour.

While this crucial work occurred in the background, updates were made to the website and emails about the new online opportunity were sent out. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were created about the conference to explain the virtual event and to publish the finalized schedule.

A new fee schedule was established and options for donations were publicized. Solon notes that careful accounting was a key to the change-over, and she set up a system to track refunds, donations, and other book-keeping tasks.

### Spotlight Auction

For the Spotlight Auction, a sea change had to occur. The event is typically an in-person silent auction during the Saturday evening banquet. To move forward, online bidding platforms were researched. BiddingOwl was selected as the host site to sell the 266 small quilts, which meant images of all of the quilts had to be templated and a database set up to track their progress through the auction. Patricia Gould, special projects coordinator, ensured that all of the images were prepped and Shaiken, who had taken receipt of the auction quilts at her home in Toronto, took pictures of the quilts as needed.

Another set of FAQs was created to help bidders—who would now include anyone who visited BiddingOwl’s site—understand how everything from bidding to shipping would work. Bidding opened Thursday evening, and auction updates were provided by Solon, who facilitated the discussion groups.

After expenses, the Spotlight Auction raised \$26,911, a record-breaking total.

### Wrapping up

But the work wasn’t over just yet. After the conference, Shaiken led the team dedicated to processing more than twelve hours of video. “An advantage of the online format is that attendees can go back and watch everything again if they missed a session or didn’t take notes,” she says.

And, there was the final paperwork. Thanks to the generosity of so many, and all of our sponsors supporting our virtual event, the SAQA conference was a financial success. The final tally was in the black by \$19,207.

The positive tone that reverberated from moSAiQA means more virtual conferences may be in the organization’s future. “We are exploring similar virtual experiences so that more members around the world can participate. These would be in addition to our annual physical conference, but shorter in duration at perhaps a day and a half. We hope to capture the regional flavor we experienced in Canada in other locations, such as Europe or Oceania,” Solon says.

Another takeaway from the conference is that SAQA now offers more live chats utilizing Zoom’s small meeting room feature. “They are a tremendous tool to bring our members closer together. Our president, Deborah Boschert, is doing more live chats, and encourages individual

## Thank you to our sponsors and volunteers!

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We also want to thank all of the volunteers and staff members who planned moSAiQA—and then planned it again as a virtual conference. Our Special Events Committee members are Georgia French, co-chair, Sue Bianchi, co-chair, Jayne Gaskins, Jackie Heupel, Sherri McCauley, Diane Nunez, Carrie Payne, Marika Pinedal, Jennifer Solon, and Desi Vaughn. The Toronto Local Committee liaisons were Maggie Vanderweit and June Robertson, assisted by a host of people involved with everything from the *Colour With a U* exhibition to providing event support.

To everyone who attended, your flexibility to come along with us on this journey was immensely appreciated.

regions to do the same,” Sielman says. “While we wish we could have been together in person in Toronto, overall we established a pathway for SAQA and others to take during this time. We still had our conference, and it was wonderful!” ■

*Diane Howell is the editor of the SAQA Journal.*

# Colour with a U

This juried exhibition of 35 art quilts created by Canadian SAQA members reflects on the theme of diversity and inclusion to give “colourful” representations of Canadian cultural identity. Each work offers an individual perspective on how Canadians see themselves in their social, historical, and physical landscapes.

Scheduled to be showcased during the 2020 moSAiQA annual conference in Toronto, it was installed at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, but enjoyed as a virtual tour by participants when the conference became a virtual event.

For more details about this exhibition, visit [www.saqa.com/colour](http://www.saqa.com/colour).



Lorraine Roy  
*Sassafras Mandala*  
35 x 35 x 1 inches | 2019



Krista Zeghers  
*Powwow Power*  
28 x 26 inches | 2020



Dawn Piasta  
*Eh, Eutopian Sky*  
26.25 x 25 inches | 2020



Catherine Ugrin

*The Dancer*

24 x 36 inches | 2019



Valerie Wilson

*The Hockey Boys*

65.5 x 42 inches | 2019



Mary Pal

*Peggy*

24 x 40 inches | 2019



Joan Kilpatrick

*Colour in Transit*

41 x 60 inches | 2019



## We are grateful to our SAQA family for making our 2020 Annual Conference a smashing success!

Your support allowed us to reinvent moSAiQA as a virtual experience enjoyed by members around the world, and ensured that it was a financial success as well.

**Thank you to everyone who made this outcome a reality!**

### *The following individuals made cash donations:*

Margaret Abramshe, Rhonda Baldwin, Elizabeth Bamberger, Diana Bartelings, Nancy Bavor, Stephen Berkenfeld, Margaret Blank, Julie Bohnsack, Esther Brabec, Judith Content, Sherri Culver, Lisa Ellis, Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry, Marvin Fletcher, Cynthia Fowler, Judith Quinn Garnett, Cindy Grisdela, Jackie Heupel, Tina Hilton, Cathie Hoover, Leslie Tucker Jenison, Jenny K. Lyon, Therese May, Shirley Neary, Candice Phelan, Dorothy Raymond, Barbara Schneider, Martha Sielman, Jennifer Solon, Katie Stiassni, Marianne R. Williamson

### *These conference attendees chose to donate all or a portion of their registration fee:*

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## In Memoriam

### Susanne Woods

Susanne Woods, 47, passed away in February at her home in Pleasanton, California, from complications associated with metastatic breast cancer. Susanne was well-known in the quilting and crafting industries. After working for various publishers, she founded Lucky Spool Media, which publishes books by some of today's best-known quilt designers.

Susanne was a mentor to many quilters who became authors and teachers. Susanne also served on the Modern Quilt Guild board of directors from 2012 through 2018, and then joined the organization's advisory board.

We send our deepest condolences to Susanne's family and friends. We will miss her passionate energy, laughter, and constant support of those who love making quilts.



### Gail Elizabeth Thomas

Gail Elizabeth Thomas, 66, passed away in early May. Last summer, she learned her cancer had returned, and she made the difficult decision to decline further treatment. Her family cherished this special time with her.

Born in Saskatchewan, Canada, and raised in Alberta, Gail ultimately found her home in British Columbia. She was an artist and in more recent years discovered quilting, which allowed her to unite her painting talent with her love of fabric.

SAQA extends condolences to Gail's family and friends. We will miss her enthusiasm for life and seeing her artwork that was so rich with love and color.



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Fabrics, threads, and sewing machines have always been a big part of my life. I started with garment construction, then moved to traditional quilting. Finally, I combined artistic skills and quilting fabrics and have found my home in art quilting! SAQA has been a big part of this journey. I have enjoyed the conferences, the amazing online information, and encouragement of like-minded folks. Most of all, I cherish the connections and lifelong friendships that have come through SAQA. I want to see SAQA continue long into the future, inspiring the next generation of art quilters. That's why I've chosen to donate to SAQA and have left instructions in my will. I hope many others choose to do the same.

—Beth Schillig



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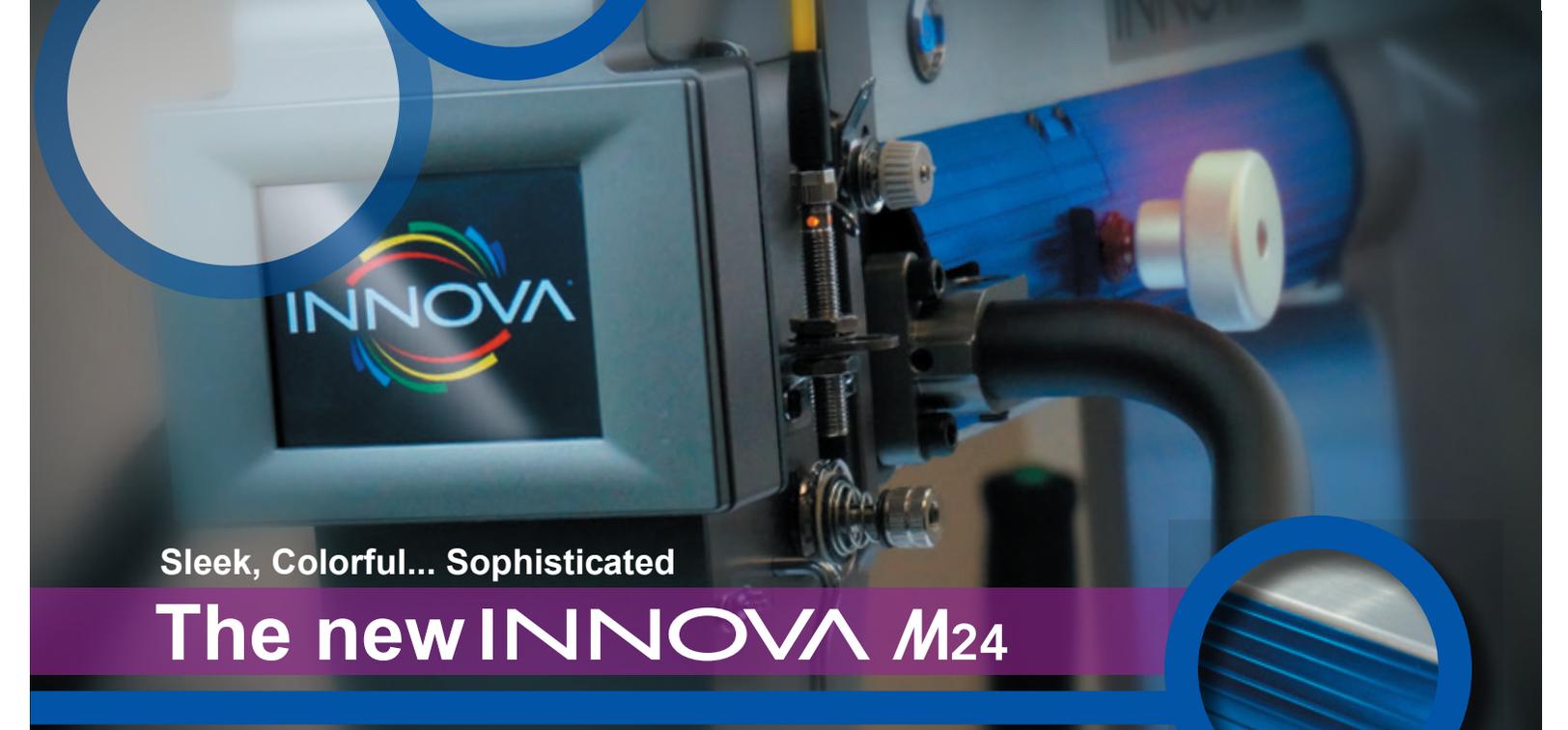
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