

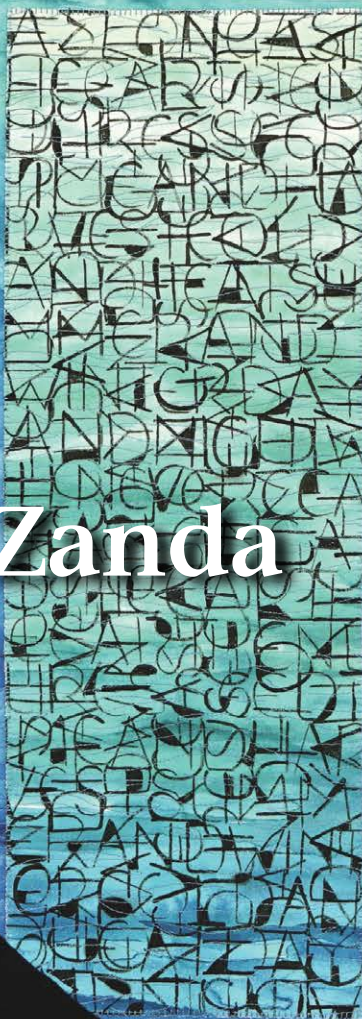
SAQA JOURNAL

STUDIO ART QUILT ASSOCIATES

Vol. 36, No. 2

MEET

Paola Zanda



AI:

ARTISTIC
INTERPRETATIONS

YOUR
Authentic
Voice

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURE ARTICLES:

Soul Stories: International artists.....	5
Follow a dyer's journey.....	10
Featured Artist: Paola Zanda.....	16
Develop your authentic voice.....	24
<i>AI: Artistic Interpretations</i>	28
Stained glass art that sparkles	34

COLUMNS:

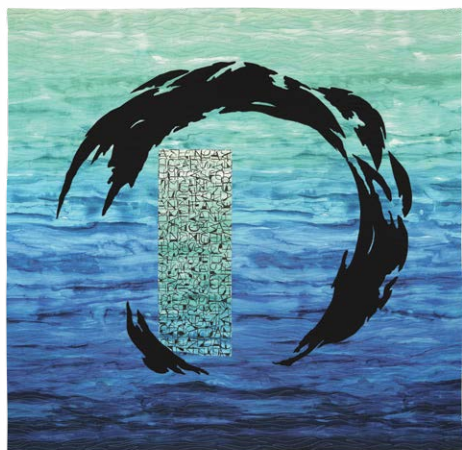
Editor's Notes.....	3
Thoughts from the president.....	4

MEMBER GALLERY:

<i>Around and around</i>	20
--------------------------------	----

SAQA NEWS:

In Memoriam.....	23
------------------	----



ON THE COVER:
Hope Wilmarth

Ebb and Flow

41 x 42 inches | 104 x 107 cm | 2025

QUICK NOTES

For more information on SAQA, contact us by email at info@saqa.art or by phone at 937-912-5009. Explore our varied resources at www.saqa.com. Annual membership is USD \$110.

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.

SAQA Journal is published four times a year. To submit articles or story ideas, contact Diane Howell, *SAQA Journal* editor, at editor@saqa.art. Review submission guidelines at www.saqa.com/journal-submit.

For advertising information, visit www.saqa.com/ads.

BOARD MEMBERS

PRESIDENT

Lilo Bowman
Fort Worth, Texas

VICE PRESIDENTS

Susie Floyd Goodman
Bloomington, Indiana

Carole Rossi
Sacramento, California

SECRETARY

Clara Nartey
West Haven, Connecticut

TREASURER

Kathie Kerler
Portland, Oregon

Jim Arendt

Conway, South Carolina

Brenda Bailey-Hainer
Broomfield, Colorado

Ana Buzzalino
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Shin-hee Chin
McPherson, Kansas

Jette Clover
Lier, Belgium

Sue Cortese
Holland, Michigan

Kestrel Michaud
West Melbourne, Florida

Denise Paglio
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Maggy Rozycki Hiltner
Red Lodge, Montana

Sue Sherman
Newmarket, Ontario, Canada

Melissa Wraalstad
Grafton, Wisconsin

Zara Zannettino
Highbury, Australia

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Martha Sielman
Hebron, Connecticut

SAQA JOURNAL

EDITOR

Diane Howell
Greater Phoenix, Arizona

DESIGNER

YellowDog Design, Print, Marketing
Denver, Colorado



Go Green!

You can choose to read the *SAQA Journal* online only. Log in to mySAQA (www.saqa.com/mySAQA) and select Manage Your Account.



Inspiration is alive and well

by Diane Howell

What is inspiration?

I think it is easy to confuse inspiration with awe. Awe is the feeling I get when I look at a piece with amazing thread painting, such as Leilani Purvis's *Splash*, currently on its journey with the SAQA Global Exhibition *Color in Context: Blue*. How does she do that?

But for something to be inspirational, it must catch my attention for a simpler reason: I have to believe that someday I could do that. Or something like that. Or something totally different but every bit as enjoyable as what you're doing over there with that paint. In other words, while I might not produce the results you see in this issue, I am drawn to the dedicated processes they use to achieve authentic expression. (And in a very short time from writing this message, a class with Purvis is happening in my art quilt group; awe might become inspiration!)

The heart of this issue is inspiration. I hope that something you read strikes your heart when you are ready to embark on a new journey. I see that as the true test of moving from awe to inspiration. You have to be ready to act and you have to be willing to put in the work to achieve. This fact is made clear by Margaret Abramshe, who writes about finding your authentic voice. Her article contains advice about prioritizing regular practice and refusing to let self-criticism hold you back.

In setting boundaries such as these, "I allow my genuine perspective to flourish," Abramshe says in her article beginning on page 24.

Then there is the devoted work of Astrid Hilger Bennett. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she found ways to be curious about many things, including natural and indigo dyes. She embarked on a home art residency, which she details beginning on page 10. You could do this right now! What do you want to study? Do you need mentors or students? They are closer than you think. Bennett started a community dye vat during the pandemic, and people from all walks of life joined her, two at a time wearing masks, to learn about indigo and its history.

Bennett's path involved the same kind of work detailed by Abramshe. In both cases, the results speak for themselves.

But these foundational ideas stretch through the entire issue. Kestrel Michaud gives us insight into creating textile stained-glass windows that sparkle on page 34. Featured artist Paola Zanda's studio provides inspiration with a look out the window and thoughtful studies of nature, which you can admire on page 16.

For pure inspirational enjoyment of our medium, read Deborah Boschert's essay on *AI: Artistic Interpretations*, a SAQA Global Exhibition, starting on page 28. An Marshall gives us a look at the work of Soul Stories, an

see "Editor's Notes" on page 23



Leilani Joy Purvis

Splash

31 x 50 inches | 79 x 127 cm | 2024

Strategic plan to guide SAQA's vibrant future



by Lilo Bowman

At SAQA, we are driven by a shared vision of a vibrant, dynamic future for our organization, our members, and the art quilt medium. Everything we do is guided by the principles that unite and inspire us.

Like many organizations today, we are navigating an evolving membership, the need to reach beyond our current ecosystem, and rising costs that impact experiences we cherish (such as in-person conferences) and essential behind-the-scenes work. Yet these challenges do not define us—they call us to unite. What may seem like an insurmountable mountain is actually an opportunity. As author Mel Robbins reminds us, “We have been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved.”

And move it we will.

To guide this work, we have launched a three-year strategic plan that will drive our growth through 2028. This living, evolving document

equips us to meet complexity with clarity and purpose while strengthening connection and alignment across our entire community. Developed in collaboration with board members, staff, donors, and key stakeholders—and in partnership with Stansbury Consulting of Tallahassee, Florida—the plan sets a clear course forward:

- Diversify and elevate the member experience while enhancing the value of member benefits.
- Strengthen our infrastructure by channeling our core strengths and operational excellence into developing staff, board, volunteers, and regional networks.
- Expand our brand by elevating and promoting the art quilt as an integral part of the contemporary art movement.
- Focus on financial strength by optimizing diverse revenue opportunities and cost effectiveness to ensure long-term sustainability.

The full plan embodies both vision and action. It offers a clear sightline to where SAQA is headed with deep care for the people, resources, and creativity that make our work

possible. It gives us a strong framework to move forward with purpose, while leaving room for the imagination and innovation that define who we are.

We aim to obtain measurable results by 2028. Our goals include:

- Expanding our membership by 15 percent, with particular focus on underrepresented demographics across age, geography, ethnicity, and quilt-adjacent artists.
- Launching three new SAQA exhibitions through strategic partnerships, adding ten new exhibition venues, and forging two new partnerships with an emphasis on diversity.
- Ensuring financial strength with a balanced budget year over year through 2028, while maintaining operating reserves to support long-term stability.

I invite you to explore SAQA's Strategic Plan and see how our collective vision is taking shape. This is more than a plan—it's a call to action for everyone who loves the art quilt, inviting you to contribute, connect, and grow with us as we move into an exciting future. ■

View SAQA strategic plan

SAQA members can view our strategic plan, prepared by Stansbury Consulting of Tallahassee, Florida, by visiting www.SAQA.com/strategicplan.

Soul Stories

IMAGES AS GATEWAYS TO SOUL

By An Marshall

The Power of the Image

Images have always held the capacity to reach into places where words cannot go. Before language was written or spoken, human beings communicated in symbols—archetypal shapes, marks, and visions that invited us to feel rather than analyze. A powerful image still works this way: it opens something in us, creating a bridge between what we consciously know and what we have forgotten.

The twenty-one large-scale art quilts in *Soul Stories: Threads of Existence*, a traveling exhibition, arise from this ancient lineage. Created by international textile artists, these works are not just visual compositions, but immersive environments—spaces where viewers step into narrative and meaning. Their larger scale is deliberate. When a quilt meets the viewer at body height, there is no separation from the experience. These pieces invite engagement that is emotional, physical, and contemplative.

The *Soul Stories* artists are dedicated to exploring the full breadth of the human journey, intentionally weaving together themes of personal significance with global urgency. Their work addresses fundamental inquiries, ranging from myth, story, and spiritual themes to immediate social, cultural, and environmental issues. This is done with the goal of encouraging awareness, reflection, and change. This creative blending becomes a larger tapestry of global voices, calling attention to urgent issues like war, climate disruption, and displacement, while also honoring healing and connection. This



Candice Phelan

Earth's Harmony: Change and Endurance

56 x 54 inches | 142 x 137 cm | 2025

exhibition asks viewers to look closely and to recognize themselves within the threads of existence—a visual language that crosses borders, cultures, and generations.

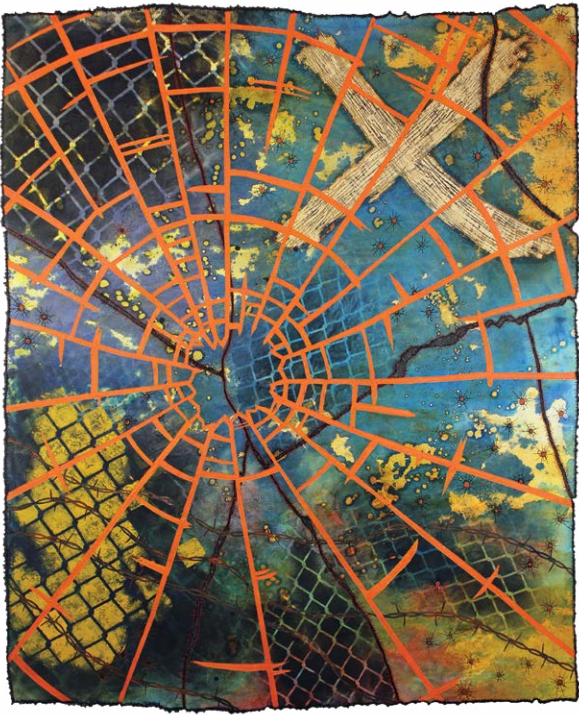
Change and Continuity

Across these works, visual rhythms emerge that echo the continuity of nature and the inevitability of change. In *Earth's Harmony: Change and Endurance*, gently shifting tones evoke the cycles of nature and of

human life. As artist Candice Phelan describes it: The piece invites viewers to sense “life’s ebb and flow as part of humanity’s timeless rhythm—where change and constancy move in harmony throughout the ages.”

Her work is a quiet meditation on the balance between what is shifting and what is sustained.

This stillness contrasts vividly with the visceral landscape of *The Price of War* by artist Betty Busby. She confronts the cost of armed conflict,



Betty Busby
The Price of War

54 x 45 inches | 137 x 114 cm | 2024

using techniques like burned paper, abstracted bullet holes, and torn segments stitched back together to visually depict the destruction left behind. She frames the issue as inescapable: “Armed conflict is a worldwide issue today. Inevitably, innocent civilians and the environment are



Sue Sherman
Fret

50 x 60 inches | 127 x 152 cm | 2025

forced to pay the cost.” She concludes with an unflinching statement: “There are no winners—we are all on the losing side.”

The environmental toll continues with *Fret*, which brings the viewer eye-to-eye with a young polar bear, enlarged far beyond life-size. Sue Sherman was drawn to the honest yearning in the polar bear’s eyes, a feeling that conveys both innocence and warning. Its expression captures a fleeting innocence, emblematic of a world under strain from climate change and asks us to look closer and care more deeply.

These works remind us that images can move us long before meaning is fully formed. They operate in the deep places where recognition and understanding begin.

Compassion and Courage

Compassion anchors many of the works in this exhibition, offering a counterbalance to themes of conflict and loss. These pieces often serve as powerful narratives, turning social

and cultural issues into intimate moments of reflection.

An example is *Give Me Shelter*. This piece by Pamela Mick originated from a photograph captured at the start of the war in Ukraine, depicting a mother carrying her dog in a large backpack with her young son at her side. For Mick, the scene underscored “the themes of perseverance, love, and fortitude that would become central to the artwork.” Translated into fabric, it becomes an intimate portrait of love and endurance under duress.

In a very different visual language, *Invisible Borders* explores compassion through ecology and spiritual symbolism. Luana Rubin’s piece features wolves rendered in earthy tones running across a painted forest. The work addresses the vulnerability of these animals as they cross unseen boundaries into dangerous territory, highlighting the fragile balance of ecosystems and the repercussions of human intervention. As the pack moves forward, the Spirit of the Forest watches from the tree line—an



Pamela Mick
Give Me Shelter

50 x 44 inches | 127 x 112 cm | 2025



Luana Rubin

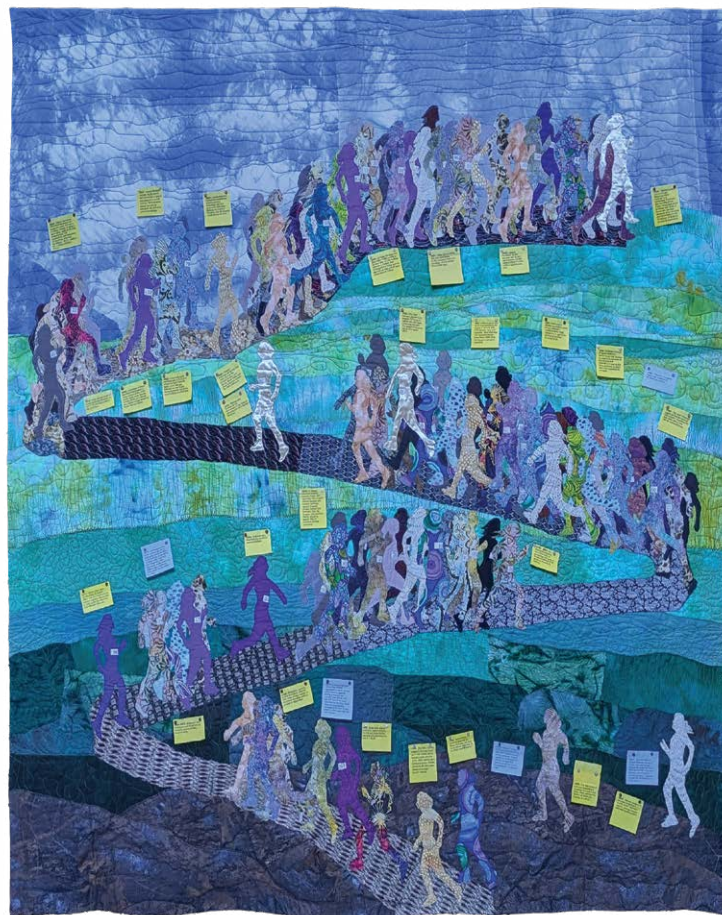
Invisible Borders

38 x 86 inches | 97 x 218 cm | 2025

all-seeing presence that bridges the natural and spiritual worlds. The artist directs our eye specifically to the teardrop falling from the eye of the Spirit of the Forest which aligns directly with the invisible border. The quilt bridges activism, ecology, and spirituality, inviting viewers to consider the interdependence of all living beings.

The exhibition also includes a celebration of human resilience and empowerment. In *We Can, We Did, and We Are*, Marie Welsch honors the history of women in running. The quilt uses a timeline format to record milestones and broken barriers from the late 1800s to the present and emphasizes her process. "I learned that I use improvisational processes that arise as I complete each step of the fabric art." This visual narrative speaks to the ongoing journey toward equality and recognition, celebrating the determination and stories of those who ran despite resistance.

Healing is explored as an act of courage in *Soar Up High and Heal, My Soul!*



Marie Welsch

We Can, We Did, and We Are

69 x 68 inches | 175 x 173 cm | 2025



Katalin Horvath
Soar Up High and Heal, My Soul!
 59 x 51 inches | 150 x 130 cm | 2025

Translucent flames, glowing pigments, and spirit animals rise from the composition. Artist Katalin Horvath, inspired by childhood bonfires and shamanic drumming, chose the subject because, “The uplifting Spirit of the Fire and its healing energy called for a large-scale quilt.” This work is a powerful visual metaphor for the soul’s longing to rise and heal.

Threads That Bind

Other works dwell in quieter, yet equally profound, emotional territory. These pieces address myth and spiritual themes by exploring the enduring nature of human connection and belief.

Spirit Chairs: Where Are You Now? by Maggie Vanderweit explores the complex territory of grief, memory, and presence. The artist uses softened and faded chairs as symbols of home and togetherness. She hopes that viewers take away the idea that, “We will always do life with the ones we



Debra Gluszcak
Casey's Choice

42 x 83 inches | 107 x 211 cm | 2025

loved, even though they are no longer in their physical bodies.”

The psychological landscape deepens with Debra Gluszcak's *Casey's Choice*, a quilt that emerged from a prolonged and painful creative process mirroring the struggle of loving someone who has an addiction. The work holds the tension between despair and compassion, ultimately transforming the difficult process into a visual testament of empathy. Its layered textures and muted palette create a space for viewers to reflect on the complexities of human struggle and the possibility of responding with greater kindness.

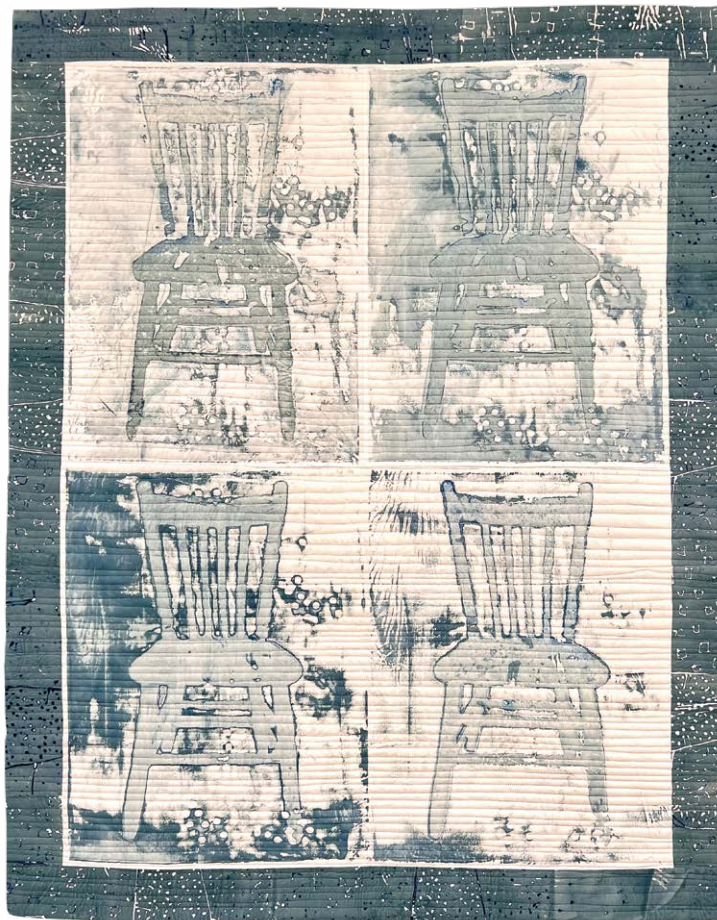
A different kind of inquiry occupies *Awakening: Bridging Science and Spirituality* (page 22), where the stitched form of a tree becomes a metaphor for consciousness itself. Inspired by theories suggesting that awareness may arise from microscopic processes within the brain, the quilt bridges biology and mystery. Karen Kuranda describes her stitched tree—its roots echoing cellular networks and its branches reaching into the unknown—as “a meditation on how awareness might be both embodied and infinite.” It offers a contemplative moment in the exhibition, reminding viewers that knowledge and wonder are not mutually exclusive but interconnected threads of the same fabric.

Together, these works remind us that healing, remembrance, and inquiry are essential parts of the human journey. They affirm that storytelling, whether through grief, science, or spiritual longing, is itself a form of repair.

Return to the Whole

As the full collection is experienced, the quilts begin to form a narrative

see “Soul Stories” on page 22



Maggie Vanderweit

Spirit Chairs: Where Are You Now?

48 x 38 inches |
122 x 97 cm | 2024



**Ann Johnston's
streaming video
lessons bring
decades of
dyeing expertise
to your studio.**



courses.annjohnston.net
Get 15% off with
discount code **SAQA2026**

Wool challis was resist-dyed with marigold, walnut, and indigo in this process photo from 2023; each piece is approximately 56 x 14 inches (142 x 36 cm).

Natural dye home art residency charts new horizons

by Astrid Hilger Bennett



Astrid Hilger Bennett

Most of you know me for my bold, large scale art quilts that only incorporate my own fabrics. My decades-long creative practice has always centered on printing and painting. These fabrics have found their way into scores of art quilts and wall pieces as well as tarps, scrolls, and art for the table. In short, I have always been a maker.

With sustainability becoming an increasingly urgent conversation among artists in the last fifteen years, I decided it was important for me to explore natural dyes, both to understand that concern and to explore how I might incorporate them into my practice. This opportunity came to a head during the Covid-19 pandemic when, after making hundreds of masks, I experienced the need to stay busy, curious, and learn new things as a means of balancing the uncertainty and an unending timetable.

One result of my pandemic angst was making my *Dreaming Quilt* series

in 2021, which were fifteen full-size quilts using thirty years' of my chemically dyed fabrics that were still in my stash. They were quilted by Sarah Yoder Parker of Bee Quilted. I offered them as a fundraiser for cultural nonprofits.

Year One

Then in 2022, I began what I call my *Natural Dye Home Art Residency*. With vaccines a reality, I established the Community Indigo Vat in Iowa City, Iowa, where two vaccinated people at a time could join me outside, playing and dyeing with indigo in my outdoor vat. With indigo, everyone can be a star. In the first two years, I had about forty-five participants from all walks of life—not just artists—and we were so relieved and happy to meet up in person. It continues to be important to me to present not only the magic of indigo, but to respect its troubled cultural history, particularly here in the United States where enslaved



Participants in the Community Indigo Vat included Marty Monick, left, the author, and Becca Vasquez.



The Zinnia Forest

45 x 36 inches | 114 x 91 cm | 2025

This piece uses sumi ink and indigo on soy-milk-soaked cotton.

people were brought for their indigo expertise. They cultivated the crop in the Southeastern U.S. for the British colonial system.

My knowledge of indigo grew daily by sampling and stirring the vat, bringing it inside in winter, and balancing it chemically as needed. This vat consists of organic fermented indigo from supplier Botanical Colors in Seattle, Washington, as well as henna, calcium hydroxide (pickling lime), and fructose for feeding the live microorganisms that keep the vat active on an ongoing basis. Without this balance, the indigo cannot make its way into the cloth. Once I am ready to dispose of the vat, I neutralize the pH with the addition of a little vinegar, then put it on my compost heap or down the drain. Fabrics are green when immersed in the vat and oxidize to blue when they are pulled out to air.

Natural dyeing in the 1970s involved mordants (chemicals that prepare fabric to accept dyes) that were not friendly to the environment and can't easily be disposed of, like chrome and tin, so I didn't continue with that form of dyeing at that time. Mordants are required for natural dyes (except indigo) to



Pattern on Pattern in the Garden

41 x 94 inches | 104 x 239 cm | 2024

This piece features natural dyes (marigold, walnut and indigo) on cotton fabric.



These resist-dyed Indigo banners represent several of many. These later formed the basis of two full-size quilts.



Resist-dyed wool challis was overdyed with indigo.



Hanging on the line in the yard is linen and upcycled cotton runners dyed with cosmos from a friend's garden in California.



Dyer's Chamomile and marigold flowers dry, awaiting their turn to be natural dyes.

bind “permanently” with the fiber. But natural dyeing had been done for millennia before the advent of chemical dyes in the 1860s. Since the 1970s, many artists and researchers such as Michel Garcia, Catharine Ellis and Joy Boutrup, John Marshall, Kathy Hatori of Botanical Colors, Charlotte Kwon (Maiwa Textiles) and Yoshiko Wada have perfected and shared better ways for modern natural dyers. The Slow Fiber movement as well as Fibershed have also contributed to this collective learning and dissemination process. Those newer to the conversation are carrying it further.

Year Two

In 2023, my *Natural Dye Home Art Residency* and Community Indigo Vat continued. I furthered my knowledge through an online *Print & Paint with Natural Dyes* class via Maiwa School of Textiles, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The course was intense but very thorough. Although we used a variety of dyes from far

away, I later decided to focus almost all of my future personal natural dye work to plants I could grow or forage. As a result of the class, I tried mordant printing. As mentioned, mordants are the agents, usually a form of alum, that make the natural dye reaction work; fabric or fiber is preprocessed by placing it in a mordant bath before dyeing. By altering the mordant with different levels of iron, you can get different colors from the same dye bath, which is fascinating. I learned that thickened natural dyes also worked extremely well for screen printing and painting. For me, the adjustment lay in adapting my personal color preferences to the (beautiful but different) color palette of natural dyes, and in the fact that painting was not as spontaneous for me, who relies on it so much.

Year Three

In 2024, having regularly made sumi ink drawings and tried Mokuhanga (Japanese woodcuts), I decided to experiment with homemade soy-milk-soaked fabrics as a substrate for directly painting sumi ink on fabric. Quality sumi ink is also a natural dye, derived from burnt twigs of grape plants. The soy milk acts as a binder for the sumi and other natural dye inks. The fabric is placed in a tub of homemade soy milk and allowed to soak for thirty minutes, then hung to dry. Then the process is repeated. Once dry, it is ready for painting. Painting on this surface preserves all the fine brush work that painting on paper accomplishes. Homemade soy milk is easily made in a blender. One hitch is that the



This example shows natural dyes in use in the author's Scroll series, as background dye color and with sumi ink or natural pigments or inks.



The zinnia lifecycle was drawn on soy-milk-soaked fabrics; an indigo gradation dye was added later.



From the author's Foraged Plants Sketchbook this captures the use of a purple onion from the grocery store.



This page from the author's Foraged Plants Sketchbook features marigold from her garden.

fabric needs to cure for a long time before washing, but the results have been fascinating. In particular, I've found a logical connection with my drawing practice expanded to cloth and gradation dyed in indigo. Oddly, blue is a color I rarely use in my chemical dye practice. With the soy milk, the color palette that inspires me is blue, black, and grey. For information on these techniques, I am indebted to Jorie Johnson, a felter in Japan, and John Marshall, author of *Salvation Through Soy*. Marshall is a celebrated natural dyer based in Japan and the United States.

Year Four

In 2025, the most recent chapter of my *Natural Dye Home Art Residency*, I learned to make natural dye inks using foraged materials. I've been pairing these with soy-soaked fabrics in order to be able to control the brush marks and to use them as inks

instead of immersion dyeing or painting. In autumn 2024, I picked sumac and acorn caps. Following instructions in the book *Make Ink* by Jason Logan, I made my first inks. Exceptional guidance also is available in Natalie Stopka's new book, *From Plant to Pigment: How to Make Your Own Vibrant Inks, Pastels and Paints*.

In spring and summer 2025, I started a sketchbook where I chose and drew a plant, made ink as well as dyed samples of four different mordanted fabric types, and then tested the ink colors on paper. The ink colors were used straight and/or by adding modifiers such as soda ash, iron nails, or vinegar, all of which alter color. Many of these do not work as inks, but do well as dyes. I've saved the good ones in little jars by adding cloves to prevent mold. Documenting is fun! It was a rewarding way to keep drawing throughout the summer, with two to three ink batches per week.

Natural dye inks and dyes are a wonderful connection to my local environment. Through this latest exploration, I've become even more involved with the pollinator garden and landscapes. One of the best ways to get into the mindset of natural dyes and pollinator gardens is to read *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, a celebrated indigenous scientist and botanist. The book's focus on reciprocity created a sea change in my perception of gardens, natural environments, and goals for life. Here in Iowa, the prairie landscape is one of the world's amazing places, although less than .01 percent of native prairie survives in this heavy agricultural landscape. But, prairie plants easily return.

Cotton fabric is second only to tobacco in chemical pesticide use. Dyed fabrics take a great deal of water. Even natural dyes use heat sources, water, and, if foraged, must

be done mindfully in terms of ecological impact. Scaling up is hard, except for indigo. That is a problem for someone who likes to work in a large format. Organic fabrics are available but hard to come by and expensive. They are beyond the means of many artists. Digital dye processes use far less water, but still involve less hands-on manipulation and a flatter visual image.

What's next?

So, where do I go from here with my natural dye odyssey? With all the political changes and national conversations starting in January 2025, I felt an overriding need to return to the robust color of chemical dyes, making large-scale quilts and wall pieces in my *Reclaiming Red* series. Painting, for me, is an expressive medium, and I was bursting. At the same time, during summer and fall, I've been heavily involved with natural dyes and inks, starting to land upon the styles and techniques that fit my own focus and vision as a textile artist. Small scrolls and drawings using my fabric are something I can do throughout my life when big studio projects are no longer manageable. I am continuing to use fiber-reactive dyes, but am adding in natural dyes for about 30 percent of my work. Home art residencies are great. Stay tuned! ■

Astrid Hilger Bennett is a SAQA member who resides in Iowa City, Iowa. She currently serves as board co-chair of the international textile nonprofit Surface Design Association (SDA), and plays violin and Nordic fiddle.



Various tools are used to paint with plant-based inks on soy-milk-soaked fabrics.



VISIONS
MUSEUM OF
TEXTILE ART

My Pacific by Julie Reuben

QUILT

Visions 2026

Visions Museum of Textile Art's 27th international biennial exhibition is juried by Carolyn Ducey, Justin Ming Yong, and David van Buskirk. Save the date to see the selected 2D art quilts featuring innovative techniques and forms from global textile artists.

Also: don't miss the last stop of
Quilt Nihon Japan on display at VMOTA from
June 27 to Oct 10, 2026.

OCT 24, 2026 - JAN 16, 2027

LIBERTY STATION, SAN DIEGO, CA

 @VISIONSMUSEUM

 VMOTA.org

Paola Zanda

International study, nature provide inspiration

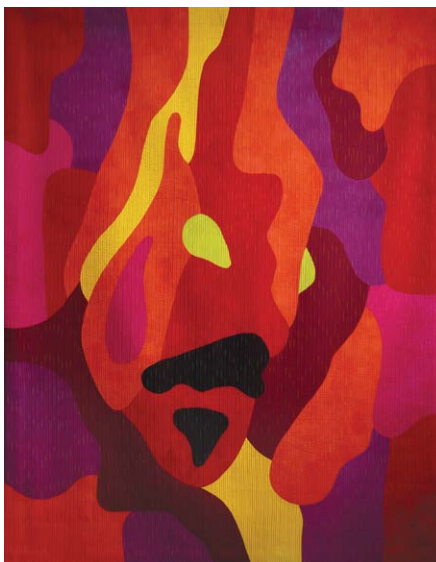
by Cindy Grisdela

When Swiss artist Paola Zanda was growing up, she wanted to be a florist or a seamstress, but which one? After she finished school, her love of fabric tipped the scale to seamstress and today she is a master dressmaker, a visual arts teacher, and quilt artist.

Zanda explored piecing and patchwork as part of her continuing education in visual arts. She didn't realize that there was more to quilting than traditional techniques. "Thanks to my husband Paolo, I started visiting various festivals and discovered that patchwork isn't just traditional; it also offers more categories that are closer to art."

Inspired, she began taking courses with international artists, including a yearlong master class with Linda Colsh of the United States. With Colsh's encouragement, Zanda moved away from her early figurative work and began developing her own style of abstract art.

The Devil is a good example of Zanda's technique. At first glance, the piece seems to be an abstract design using warm colors and engaging curved shapes. But a closer look reveals the face of a devil in the center, with neon yellow eyes, a pointed ear, and a black mouth and goatee—or it could be a mustache and goatee. Another piece is



The Devil

76 x 60 inches | 194 x 153 cm | 2020

Meeting Point, which uses a cool color palette of blues and greens and features a variety of abstract faces that all look like they have something to say.

Zanda's work begins with white cotton fabric and Procion MX dye. She dyes her own fabrics to get the



Meeting Point

75.5 x 59 inches | 191 x 149 cm | 2020

colors she wants. In addition to cotton, Zanda uses satin in her designs. The contrast between the shiny satin and matte cotton allows for different effects and enhances the surface.

All of Zanda's work is pieced, not appliquéd. "It's painstaking work, but



Skull
76 x 54 inches | 195 x 151 cm | 2021



Elf and Gnome
75.5 x 60 inches | 192 x 152 cm | 2021

here the master seamstress develops her skills,” she says.

Starting with a sketch, Zanda chooses her color palette and begins dyeing fabrics.

The format for many of her quilts is roughly 75 x 59 inches (191 x 150 cm), with some finishing slightly larger or smaller. She enlarges the sketch to the size she wants, then creates a pattern for the shapes. At this point, she begins to assemble the shapes into her composition. “I can’t stop; I have to complete them, otherwise the fabric will warp.” This can take almost all day, she says; fortunately, her husband is the cook in the family.

Zanda uses a Bernina sewing machine that is entirely mechanical. She pieces and quilts all her own work on that machine. The stitching lines are usually simple vertical lines to allow the colors and shapes to shine.

Inspiration comes in part from her studio. She lives in Carona,

Switzerland, located in the southeastern part of the country. She and her husband have lived there for twenty years in a renovated family home. “It’s an old house in the heart of the village, and my studio is on the third floor with an open view and plenty of light. These ancient walls are energetic and foster inspiration.”

The artist grew up surrounded by fabric and making. She learned to sew, knit, and crochet as a youngster and enjoyed making clothes for her dolls. She also spent time outdoors in the garden, and that love has stayed with her as well. “Woods surround Carona, and I have no shortage of inspiration. Furthermore, walking in the woods is beneficial; it stimulates the imagination and broadens one’s vision.”

When she first began thinking about working abstractly, Zanda wasn’t sure where to start. On her outdoor walks, she became entranced with the bark of a plane tree, similar to sycamore



Bubbles
76 x 60 inches | 193 x 152 cm | 2022



**Metamorfosi del Fiore Mascherato
(Metamorphosis of the Masked Flower)**
31.5 x 31.5 inches | 80 x 80 cm | 2024



Metamorfosi del Fiore Mascherato 2
31.5 x 31.5 inches | 80 x 80 cm | 2024



Metamorfosi del Fiore Mascherato 3
31.5 x 31.5 inches | 80 x 80 cm | 2025

trees in the United States. "I discovered my own forms, and from there, an in-depth study of bark began."

Her inspiration changes with the seasons, the weather, and the light. Plane trees are planted in many European cities because they are hardy and aren't bothered by pollutants such as car exhaust. The tree regularly sheds its bark in such a way that the trunks can appear mottled while still sporting a variety of colors.

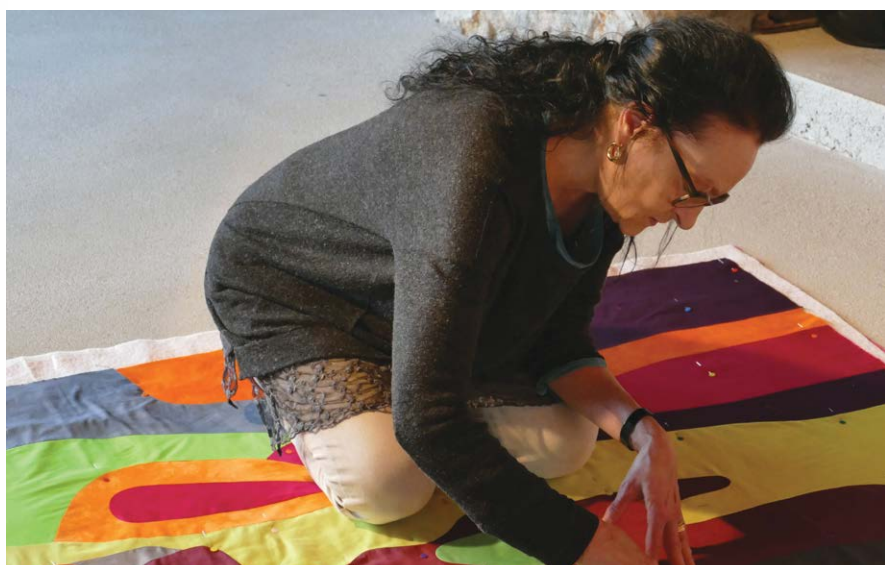
On her website, Zanda expands on how she transformed her fascination with tree bark into her art. "Taking inspiration from nature and the bark of the trees, I created my style by applying the rules of tailoring to patchwork. Challenging the wefts and warps of the fabric, I work with a piecing taken to the extreme by choosing increasingly complicated shapes. It is a painstaking job that requires a lot of patience and precision. If I am not satisfied, I do not continue and [would] rather undo the work and start [over] until I have the desired result."

In her piece *Skull*, one can see the inspiration from bark in the shapes Zanda uses to define the mostly neutral composition. And once we know the source of her inspiration, we can

see those bark forms in other works, such as *Elf and Gnome*, *Bubbles*, and *Nemo*, that exhibit more recognizable elements. Zanda is perhaps developing her use of form, but still reflecting the bark inspiration.

She considers her work to be a continuing series with evolving colors and shapes all based on the original tree bark inspiration. In 2024, she participated in a guild challenge to create a quilt inspired by a painting or sculpture contained in the Kunsthhaus Zurich museum collection. Zanda chose a sculpture titled *Masked Flower* by Meret Oppenheim, who lived and worked in her home village of Carona.

The 31.5-inch square format was smaller than Zanda was used to working and the color palette of the sculpture was all neutral, another challenge for her. She ended up with three related pieces. *Metamorfosi del Fiore Mascherato (The Metamorphosis of the Masked Flower)* was her original art quilt, using the shapes from the sculpture in various interpretations, in neutral tones. Then she made *Metamorfosi del Fiore Mascherato 2*, using colors she preferred, and *Metamorfosi del Fiore Mascherato 3*, isolating one of the shapes as a bud blossoming.



Paola Zanda at work

Il Ballo in Maschera (The Masked Ball) was created for an invitational exhibition at the Cavalcaselle Museum in Italy. It shows Zanda's signature shapes in Mardi Gras colors forming two masked figures facing one another. The shapes and the space they occupy are deliberately placed for visual impact.

Zanda's award-winning work has been exhibited at major European festivals and in magazine articles. She doesn't teach, because her process is involved and complex, and she isn't interested in selling her work, either. "Although I've been asked to sell several quilts, I can't bring myself to part with my work." If a museum were interested, that might be a different story, she adds.

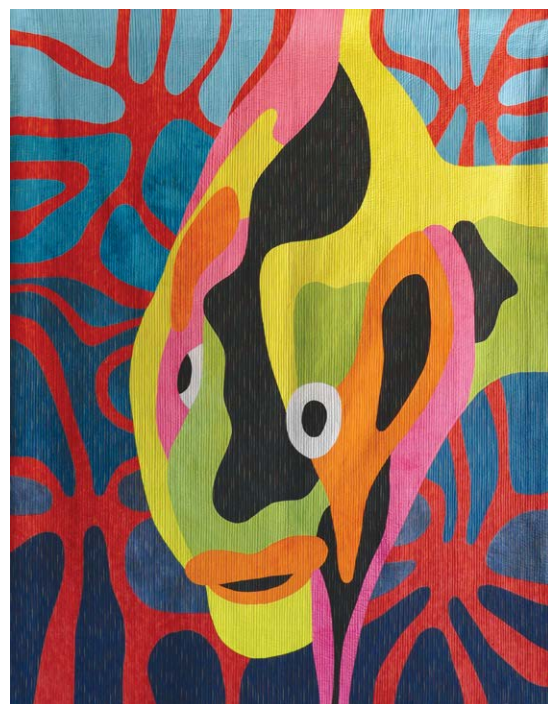
For other artists starting out, Zanda advises learning techniques directly

from artists they admire, if possible. Visiting exhibitions and museums to enrich your cultural background is also important. "However, if you want to follow your own path, the important thing is not to be a copy of the copy."

Zanda sees perhaps one more large exhibition in her future. Her hands, which have served her well over the years, might not allow for more, due to the painstaking nature of her process. "I hope that textile art will be more recognized in the art world and that museums and galleries will open up to this art form."

For more information about Zanda's work, visit www.paolazanda.com. ■

Cindy Grisdela is a SAQA Juried Artist who resides in Reston, Virginia. You can view her work at www.cindygrisdela.com.



Nemo

76 x 59 inches | 194 x 150 cm | 2021



Il Ballo in Maschera (The Masked Ball)

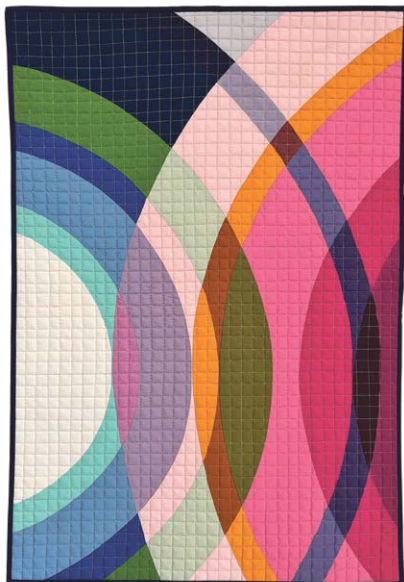
39 x 35 inches | 100 x 90 cm | 2025



Il Ballo in Maschera

Detail

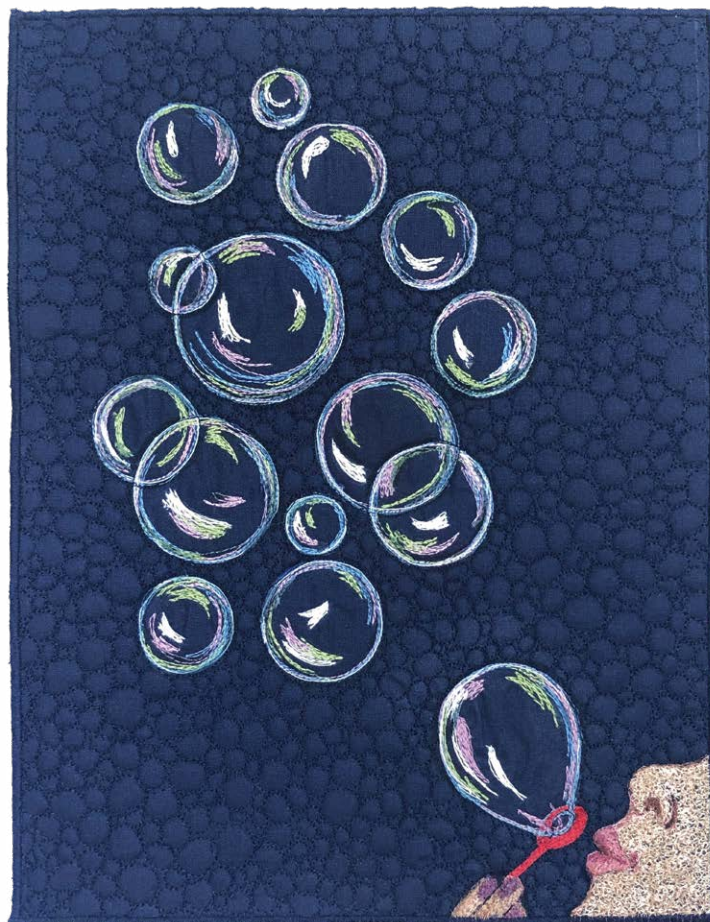
Around and Around



Heather Akerberg
Dialectic No. 4
25 x 18 inches | 64 x 46 cm | 2024



Ann Flaherty
Beyond Blue
45.5 x 37 inches | 110 x 94 cm | 2023



Tracie L. Maryne
Blowing Bubbles
12 x 9 inches | 30 x 23 cm | 2025



Mieko Washio

Chaotic

51 x 51 inches | 130 x 130 cm | 2022



Lynn Hanna

Tree Cookie

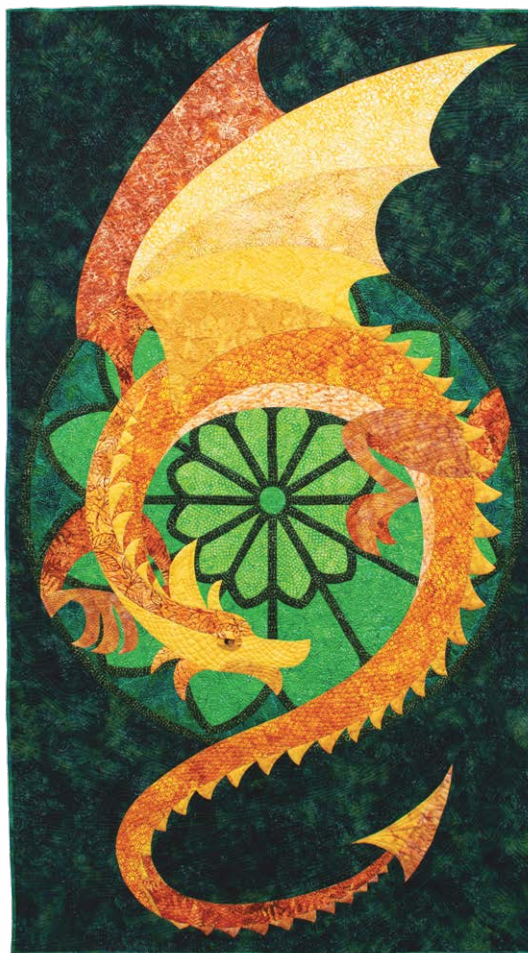
24 x 24 inches | 61 x 61 cm | 2022



Ruthie Snell

Going for a spin

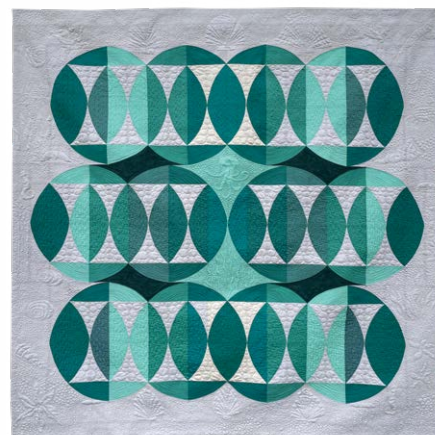
43.5 x 47 inches |
110 x 119 cm | 2025



Lena Pugachova

Secret Keeper

70 x 39 inches | 178 x 99 cm | 2025



Birgitta Jadenfelt

Ocean

63 x 63 inches | 160 x 160 cm | 2024



Abigail Vargas

The Crush

49 x 49 inches | 124 x 124 cm | 2023

Photo by Sibila Savage

Soul Stories

from page 9

greater than the sum of their parts. Some works confront violence, ecological collapse, or displacement. Others offer visions of resilience, transformation, and hope. All of them invite viewers to see themselves reflected in the stories of others—across borders, species, cultures, and time.

This exhibition presents more than artwork; it offers a language of wholeness in a fragmented world. The images are not static; they are living thresholds. They ask us to step inward, to feel, and to remember our shared humanity. In walking among these works, one realizes that each quilt is a gateway, a moment in which an image becomes a catalyst for empathy, reflection, or awakening.

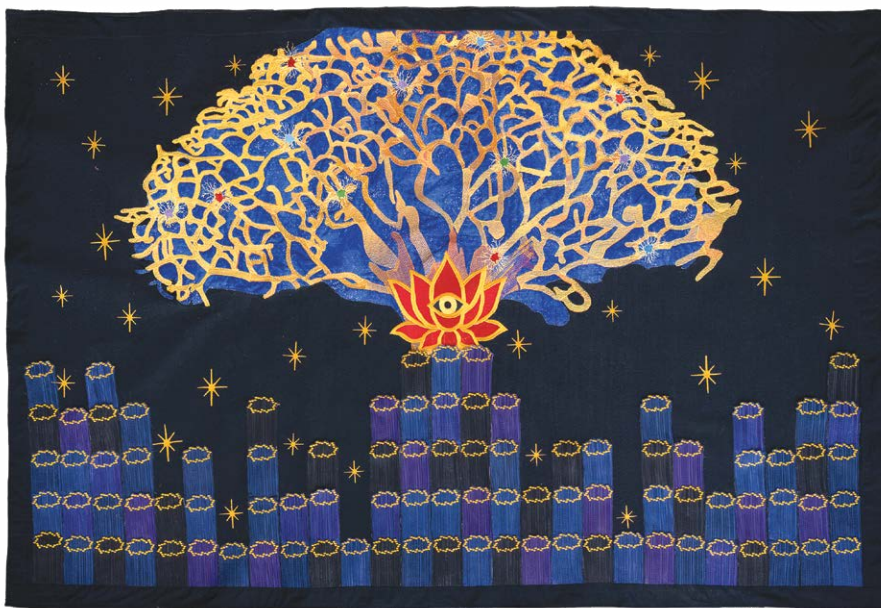
Whether depicting a polar bear, a running woman, a ceremonial ritual fire, a family in flight, or a spirit watching from the forest, these images extend the ancient lineage of textile storytelling into a contemporary global experience. In the end, *Soul Stories: Threads of Existence*, stands as a testament to the enduring power of art to witness, to question, to heal, to connect, and to take action.

The exhibition is scheduled to be at the New England Quilt Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, the Festival of Quilts in Birmingham, U.K., and International Quilt Festival in Houston in 2026. For more information on dates, additional venues, and artists, visit www.soulstoriesart.com. ■

An Marshall is a SAQA member who resides in St. Augustine, Florida. She is founder and organizer of Soul Stories, an international group of twenty-six fiber artists exploring human experience through narrative cloth. She is the author of the forthcoming book Awakening

the Artist Within and the creator of the twelve-week program The Sacred Artist's Journey: Embodying Archetypes to

Transform Your Creative Destiny in 90 Days. You can view Marshall's work at www.anmarshallartist.com.



Karen Kuranda

Awakening: Bridging Science and Spirituality

48 x 71 inches | 122 x 180 cm | 2025

AMAZIGH TEXTILES TOURS

MOROCCO
with guest artists
HEIDI PARKES
11 - 25 April 2027
LORENA URIARTE
1 - 14 May 2027
VALERIE KIRK
12 - 26 Sept 2027
JANE SASSAMAN
24 October- 7 Nov 2027

info@amazighculturaltours.com // amazighculturaltours.com

Editor's Notes

from page 3

international group of artists (page 5); and on page 20 the Member Gallery theme *Around and Around* shows there is no end to creativity and the inspiration that feeds it. Enjoy the read! ■

In Memoriam

Please join us in bidding farewell to members who recently passed away. We offer our condolences to their families and friends. Their creativity and dedication to SAQA will be greatly missed.

Linda Engstrom, of Scottsdale, Arizona

Harue Konishi, of Na Ka No-Ku Tokyo, Japan

Sue Anne Marcotte, of Springville, California

Sonia Martin, of Cincinnati, Ohio

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Submissions due August 14, 2026

Build skills, leverage relationships, and receive support as you undertake studio projects.



SURFACE DESIGN
ASSOCIATION

[www.surfacedesign.org](http://www surfacedesign.org)

SAQA knows art quilts

We share
what we know

Visit saqa.com today

Artwork by Sue Benner



Create an authentic artistic voice

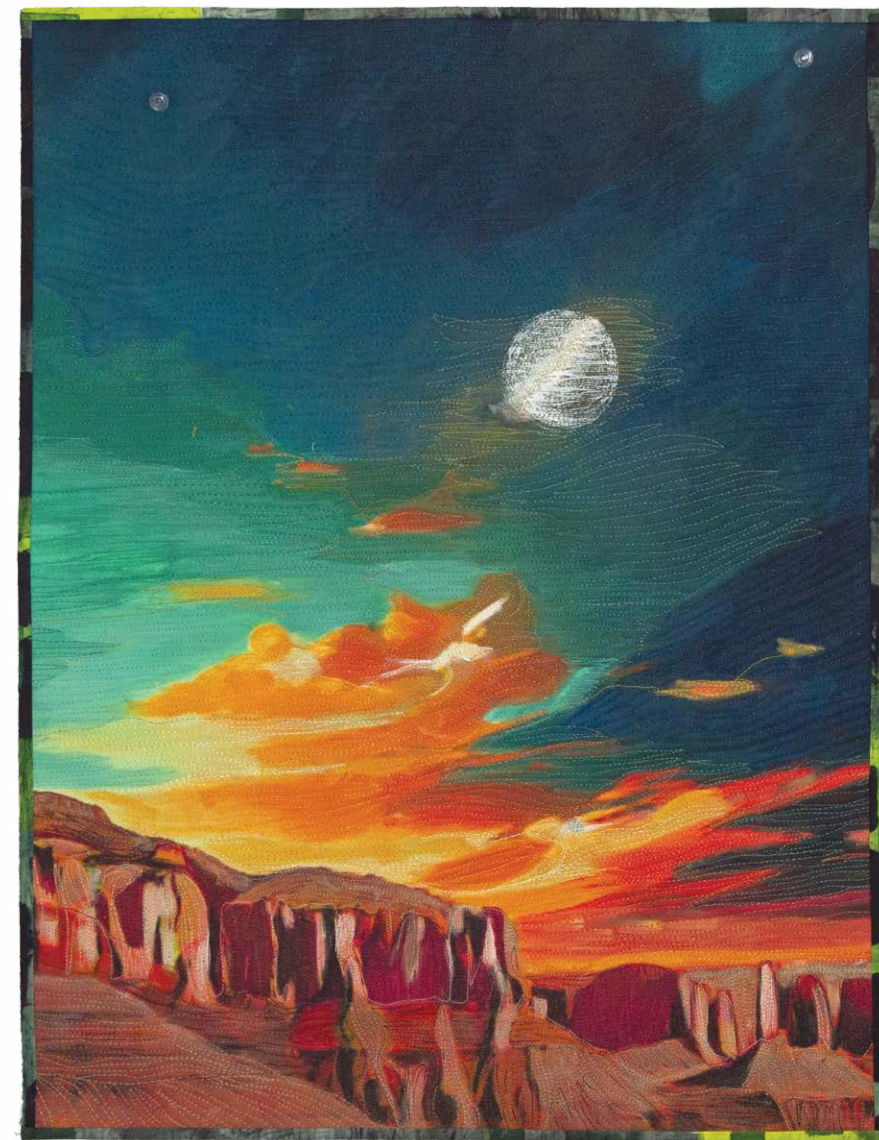
by Margaret Abramshe

Discovering your authentic voice as an art quilter is a deeply personal process that requires both honesty and bravery in how you interpret and express the world through fabric. Instead of focusing on perfect technique, it's about embracing vulnerability—allowing your true perspective and story to shine through in your quilt compositions.

Embracing vulnerability means trying new techniques and sharing your artistic process. For the art quilter transitioning from the traditional quilting world into art quilting, there is a challenge and an opportunity to reimagine a creative process. A background in traditional quilting provides a solid technical foundation from which to grow as a quilt artist. Use those skills as a point of departure and give yourself permission to break rules, make mistakes, and let curiosity lead. Allow yourself to move beyond established patterns by embracing experimentation and creative risk. This freedom opens the door to new approaches, materials, and expressions, ultimately helping you develop a distinct artistic voice that reflects your true interests and vision.

Over time, this practice not only strengthens artistic intuition but also helps you discover a personal style that reflects your unique vision and voice. The journey from traditional quilter to quilt artist is ultimately about creative risk taking. The result is work that is innovative and deeply meaningful.

When I entered the field of art quilting, I possessed no prior quilting or sewing experience. I was a



Margaret Abramshe

Harvest Moon

28 x 21 inches | 71 x 53 cm | 2025

painter with a master's degree in fine art teaching in a public-school setting. Initially, I found the established rules of quilting overwhelming. They seemed to me in conflict with my creative approach. Eventually, by moving away from perfectionism, I significantly altered my path into the art quilting world and allowed myself to create my own authentic portfolio of work.

In my studio I have a well-worn copy of *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg. The book has inspired me as a writer and as a visual artist. She advises artists to use consistent daily practice that emphasizes continuous improvement over perfection. Adhering to her recommendations allowed me to overcome creative obstacles and focus on progress and personal growth.



Margaret Abramshe

Morning

28 x 21 inches | 71 x 53 cm | 2025

From reading *Writing Down the Bones*, I learned three essential lessons that have deeply influenced my creative process. First, I discovered the importance of silencing my inner critic, which means giving myself permission to create freely, embracing mistakes and rough drafts as part of the journey. Second, the book encouraged me to trust my intuition—those spontaneous impulses

that often lead to new ideas and breakthroughs. Lastly, I realized that setting boundaries and accepting limitations can fuel creativity, pushing me to explore more deeply and find innovative solutions within a focused framework. These insights have helped me create work that feels more authentic and meaningful.

I approach my creative space as a dedicated worker, fully immersed

Practical suggestions for finding your voice

- Review recent work and pick pieces that best show your artistic aims. Note any common traits—size, theme, color, or material—and consider expanding them.
- Assess less successful works to spot patterns, such as strong ideas with weak execution or unfamiliar subjects, to identify areas of improvement.
- Have a balance between major submissions and small experiments. Keep these studies visible and organized for easy reference and use them as inspiration for future projects.
- Trusting your first ideas can lead to more authentic, energetic work and boost your productivity; overthinking may dilute your original vision.

in the process of making art. Rather than stopping to judge, edit, or censor my efforts, I commit to being present and engaged in every studio session. Each time I show up, I build my artistic strength and increase my endurance. This regular engagement with my craft not only reinforces my skills but also makes inspiration arrive more naturally and frequently.

For me, consistency in scheduling studio time is essential. I've learned that waiting for fleeting motivation rarely produces results. My authentic artistic voice emerges through the act of creating—not by holding out for the perfect moment. My inner critic often urges me to hesitate and overthink, but I've found it's crucial to ignore these doubts and commit to acting. By prioritizing regular practice and refusing to let self-criticism hold me back, I allow my genuine perspective to flourish.

I've come to understand that intuition isn't random; it feels like an inner guru speaking through me. The more time I spend creating, observing, and responding to my work, the more I begin to sense what feels alive and what falls flat. My intuition grows from experience—from noticing patterns in what truly moves me and what does not. Trusting it means quieting my analytical mind and letting myself follow impulses, even when they don't seem entirely logical. This is how I nurture my creative flow and authentic voice.

Artists develop creative insight by practicing their craft and thoughtfully studying the work they create. Start by focusing on the basics: color,

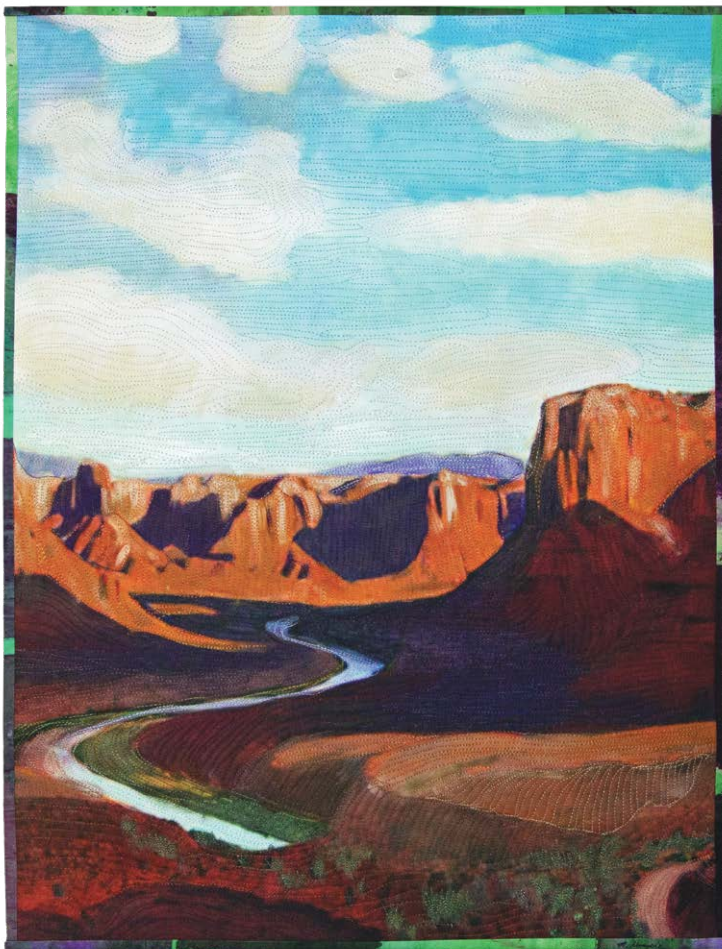
lines, shapes, and values. Writing, taking notes, or documenting the process bridges instinct and understanding, helping to clarify creative choices and support growth. With time, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistakes and experiments, your insight will gradually evolve into a reliable compass that guides your creative journey.

The saying, "a Jack of all trades is the master of none" highlights the importance of focusing on creative work. In the art quilt world, many teachers share techniques and ideas, giving artists plenty to learn from. However, leaning too much on outside guidance may hinder artists from developing their own authentic

style. Constantly seeking new methods can overwhelm or cause the loss of artistic direction.

It is important to recognize when exploration turns into distraction. While learning from others is valuable, it should serve as a foundation for growth rather than a substitute for personal expression. By maintaining a thoughtful balance between external learning and internal reflection, artists can avoid the trap of endless searching and instead focus on cultivating a style that is genuinely their own.

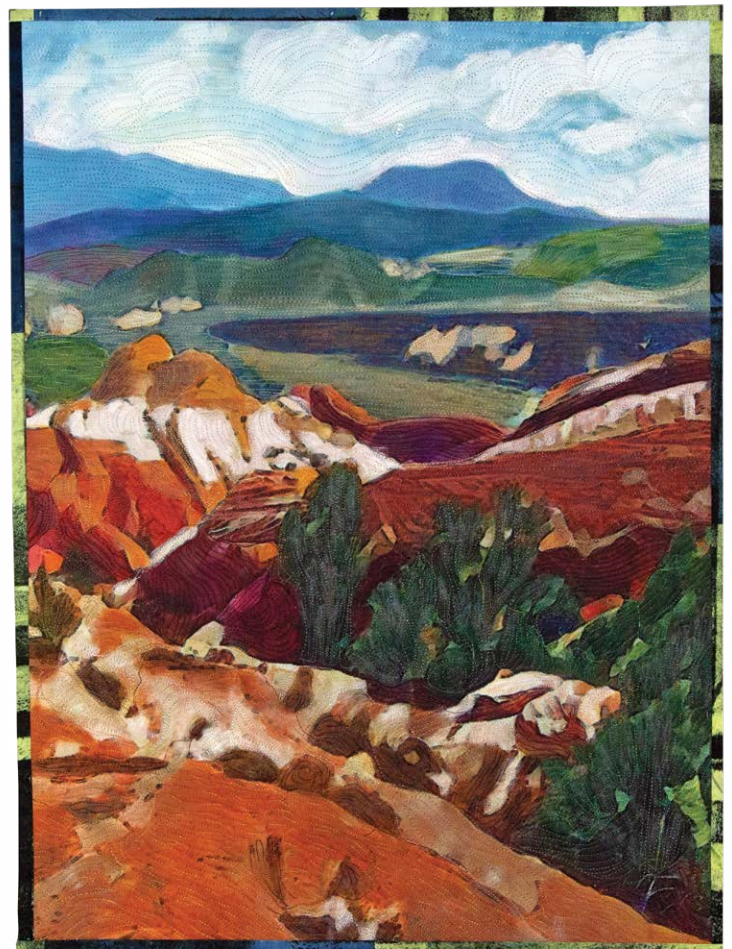
When I first encountered art quilting, I dedicated time to taking various courses and experimenting with different methods. This exploration allowed me to gather valuable



Margaret Abramshe

Vista

28 x 21 inches | 71 x 53 cm | 2025



Margaret Abramshe

Down in the Valley

28 x 21 inches | 71 x 53 cm | 2025

skills and insights. While I continue to take courses periodically and seek new sources of inspiration, my creative process has become well-established. It is a dynamic practice that allows me to refine my craft while honoring the boundaries that propel my artistic growth.

Transitioning from a hobbyist to a true artist is not defined by outside affirmation, but by a fundamental shift in your internal relationship with your creative work. As a hobbyist, creation is often sparked by fleeting moments of inspiration. In contrast, an artist commits to the work even on those days when inspiration is absent. For the artist, the act of creating becomes essential—a necessary part of life rather than an occasional activity.

This transformation is marked by a growing trust in your own instincts. You begin to rely less on external approval and more on an inner sense of truth, intuitively knowing whether a piece resonates or falls short. Materials, time, and ideas take on greater significance; you handle them with a sense of respect and intention. The process evolves from playful experimentation into a deeper inquiry—a way of exploring questions and expressing things that cannot easily be conveyed through words alone.

Another hallmark of this transition is a changing relationship with frustration. While it might once have been a barrier that halted your progress, it now becomes a necessary part of the creative journey—the very friction that fosters deeper understanding. As you persist, a distinct artistic voice begins to emerge, moving beyond imitation and reflecting your unique rhythm and sensibility.

The creative process itself becomes transformative. It teaches

patience and humility, and it requires faith in outcomes that are not immediately visible. As the artist Agnes Martin observed, “The

instincts, embracing vulnerability, and thoughtfully balancing external inspiration with personal reflection, you lay out the foundation for mean-

“ For the artist, the act of creating becomes essential—a necessary part of life rather than an occasional activity. ”

better the work, the more painful it is to make.” Choosing to stay with that discomfort, not for outside validation but because the process compels you, marks the quiet crossing into true artistry.

In the end, cultivating an authentic artistic voice as an art quilter is a journey defined by introspection, perseverance, and a willingness to take creative risks. By honoring your

ingful and original work. Remember, it is through consistent practice and openness to growth that your unique vision will truly flourish, inspiring both yourself and those who experience your art. ■

Margaret Abramshe is a SAQA Juried Artist who resides in St. George, Utah. You can view her work at www.margaretabramshe.com.



www.equilter.com

Quilter.com

6201 Spine Rd, Boulder, CO 80301 TOLL FREE: 877-322-7423

SAQA's *AI: Artistic Interpretations* opens imaginative possibility



Susan V. Polansky
Self Portrait
Detail



Kathy Nida
AI is Not My Friend
Detail



Earamichia Brown
Force of Nature
Detail



Susan V. Polansky
Self Portrait

56 x 58 inches | 142 x 147 cm | 2025

Photo by Boston Photo Imaging

by Deborah Boschert

The SAQA global exhibition, *AI: Artistic Interpretations*, brings together the imaginative vision of fiber artists from around the world with the power of algorithms, data, and machine learning. This exhibition allows human creativity to intersect with the evolving capabilities of artificial intelligence, a combination which allows for limitless possibilities.

Artists were invited to use AI as a tool within their creative process or to respond to its influence, exploring how technology shaped by human input can become a source of inspiration. Whether integrating AI-generated elements or reflecting on its impact, artists created works that highlight the dynamic relationship between art and artificial intelligence.

More than some other SAQA global exhibitions, *AI Artistic Interpretations* fully incorporates and relies on the artists' ideas behind each piece of art. Viewers are given an opportunity to see the vast variety of opinions, interpretations, and applications for AI. The artworks are powerful on their

own, but the exhibition is elevated by the thoughts behind the works.

This exhibition is a collaboration with Louisiana State University Museum of Art. The three jurors are all part of the LSU campus: Michelle Schulte, Chief Curator of Collections and Exhibitions at the museum (who led the juror process); Dr. Golden G. Richard III, an applied computer scientist working in cybersecurity; and Brendan Harmon, an associate professor of landscape architecture with expertise in spatial science, computational design, and robotics.

Picture this

SAQA's *AI: Artistic Interpretations* global exhibition is incredibly varied and complex. The overall themes can be represented by three works that feature dynamic portraits of women. Looking at these profiles side by side is an informative visual reference for the ideas and artwork in the whole exhibition.

Susan V. Polansky's AI-generated *Self Portrait* is surrounded by mechanical, digital, and natural elements swirling among neon lights and flames. Her face is full of fascination and eagerness though Polansky's artist statement also indicates concern and an unsettled feeling. An excerpt from her statement makes this point: "There is no going back, and I can only hope that responsible usage will support a reasonable evolution of this new multi-tool. As an artist, I consider AI a collaborator—one that can spark ideas and push my vision further. But AI cannot feel; it is mathematical algorithms at work. For emotion and humanity, I need to put myself into the artwork."

The figure in Kathy Nida's *AI is Not My Friend* has her mouth agape—just like Polansky's figure. But Nida's figure seems overwhelmed by trying to resist the rising tide of technology

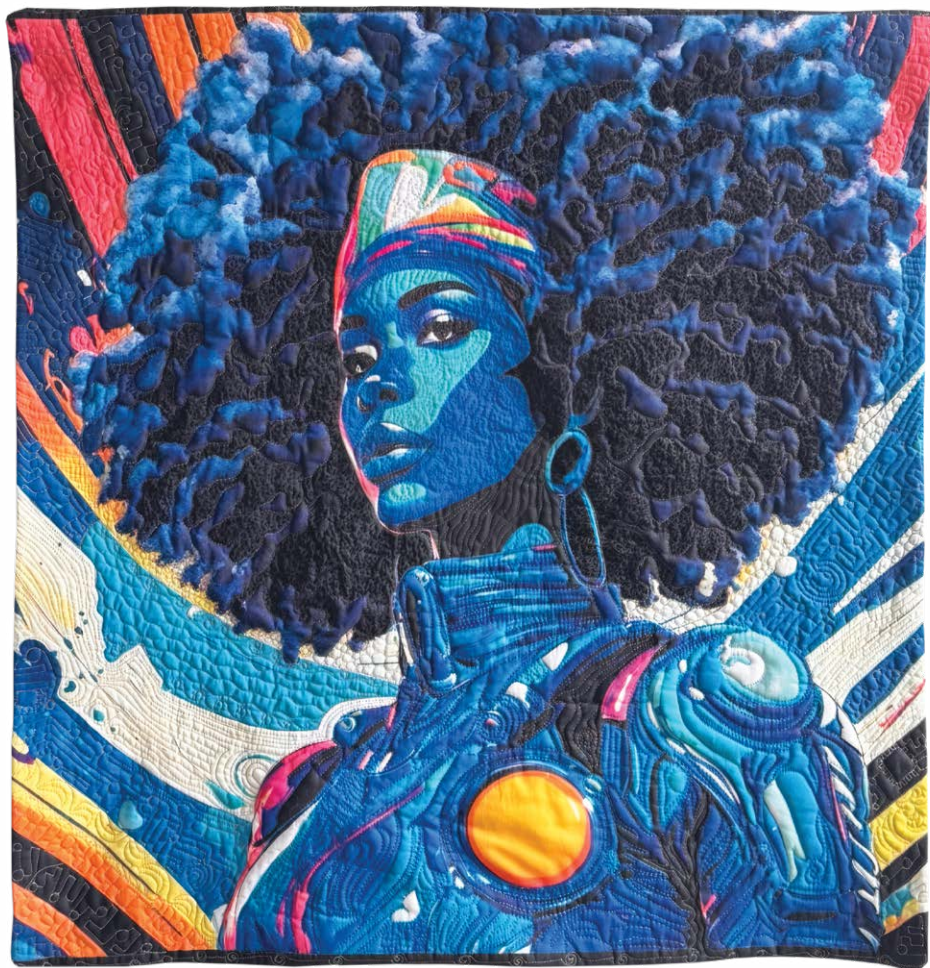


Kathy Nida

AI is Not My Friend

42 x 57 inches | 107 x 145 cm | 2025

Photo by Gary Conaughton



Earamichia Brown

Force of Nature

37 x 36 inches | 94 x 91 cm | 2024



Fuzzy Mall

Doug Van Es2 (composition #1)

70 x 94 inches | 178 x 239 cm | 2025

while holding on to nature and personal identity. Like Polansky, she is also surrounded by flames, but here they take the form of blazing red, orange, and yellow hair.

Earamichia Brown's *Force of Nature* features an image of a black woman and expresses concerns about how AI can be full of inconsistencies and appropriation. Like the other two portraits, Brown's figure also faces left, but she has more of a sense of stillness and power. Brown's quilt uses an AI-generated image to point us toward the importance of allowing a black woman's beauty to be "her own and not one unnaturally forced upon her."

Exploring distortion

Like the three female figures, Fuzzy Mall also explores portraiture in his art quilt *Doug Van Es2 (composition*

#1). He begins by making a quilt based on a photograph of a person. "Once I finish a piece, I punch grommets around the perimeter. I then place screws in my wall at random and hook the grommets onto the screws." Then he photographs the draped quilt and uses it as source material for a new trompe l'oeil quilt.

Like artificial intelligence, Mall is working with billions of possibilities, configurations, and abstractions. Unlike AI, he is working with physical objects, physics, and gravity within the actual walls of his studio rather than digital data in a virtual cloud of information.

We're often confronted with AI-generated images of humans that are clearly wrong, off, or distorted. In his work, Mall makes it clear to viewers that the image is distorted

and challenges them to think about what steps were taken to design and execute the final result.

Karena Nelson's *Haphazard* is full of letterforms cut from discarded clothing, tote bags, and other upcycled materials. In her artist statement, she writes, "Dividing and recombining these marks in the quilting process allows me to observe how they both lose and gain meaning, exploring what a conscious human maker adds to artwork." Just as generative AI relies on existing data, Nelson uses existing printed materials and combines them to create a compelling composition. Some sections are clearly from the same source material, but they are deconstructed, disjointed, and distorted. This gives viewers the opportunity to look for repetition

Karena Nelson

Haphazard

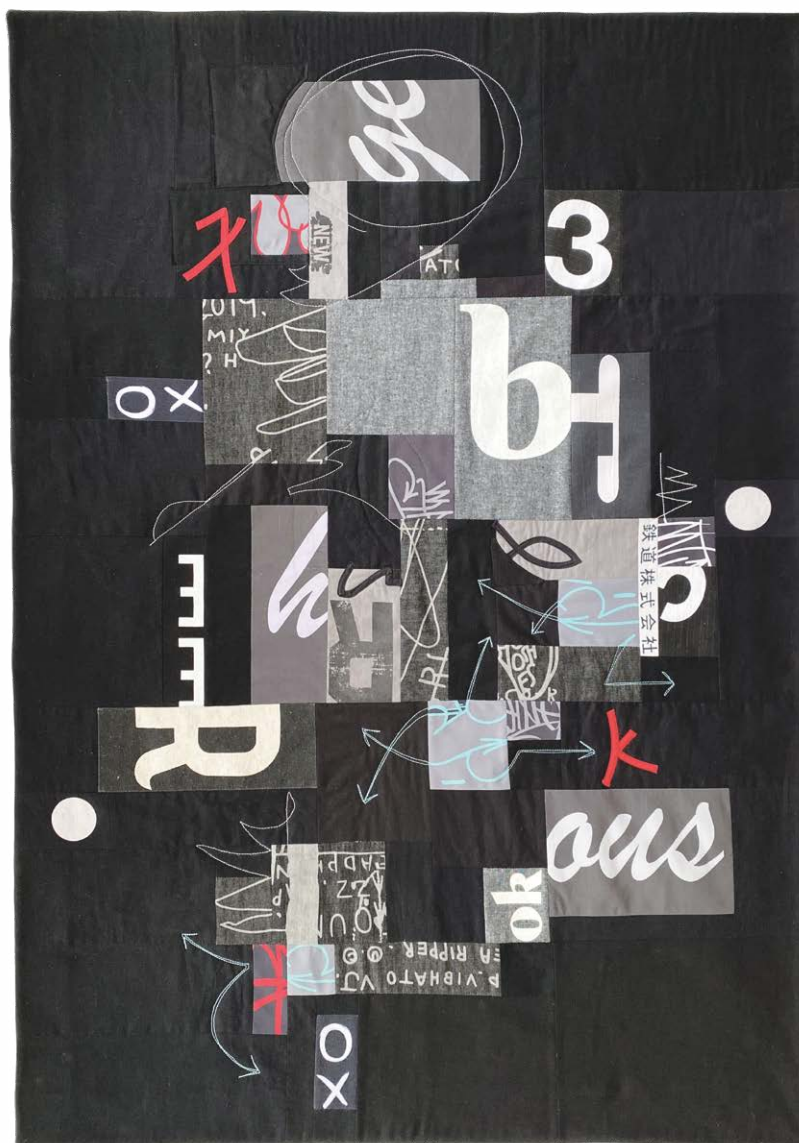
43 x 30 inches | 109 x 76 cm | 2025

and visual connection. Her masterful machine stitching mimics letterforms, encircles blocks, and points to pops of color.

Mechanical and organic

In *Forest Stories 2*, June DaSilva Horwich combines digital imagery with traditional pieced fabric sections. The colors and shapes in the linear background flow into vibrantly colored mushrooms. The mechanical seems to blend into the organic, reminding us that computerized tools can overlap with human imagination. In her artist statement, Horwich comments: "The use of AI in art may flourish and then die along with floppy disks and CDs, and then another electronic tool will provide fresh matter for debate like fungus growing on dead wood." This work is an excellent visual exploration of how differing ideas and ways of working can either complement or contrast with each other. The quilt is full of vibrancy and light but there are also several dark, shadowy, and hidden areas in and around the fungi.

Marjorie Madsen created her art quilt *Artificial Flowers* while "conversing with a large language model." Using some of the AI responses, she composed a botanically inspired, dense, richly textured, and dimensional garden. Madsen converted the AI mathematical functions and algorithms into color ways and numbers of flowers in her composition. Could this design have been created without the back-and-forth "conversation" with AI? Of course. Did the AI offer unexpected structures or spark new ideas for Madsen? Possibly. Her art quilt features upcycled materials



June DaSilva Horwich

Forest Stories 2

25 x 33 inches | 64 x 84 cm | 2025



including denim and other clothing, buttons, lace, and zippers.

There is an interesting parallel between AI using recycled content then configuring it in a new way and an artist using old materials and found objects to create original art. Madsen sewed together clusters of buttons to represent flowers. Some of the buttons are stitched with lines that look like plus signs and some that look like minus signs. Could they point toward the many positives and negatives of artificial intelligence?

Text-generated responses

While several artists used AI to generate images that became source material for their art quilts, Claire M. Voelkel-Sedlmeir asked AI: "Can an AI quilt look better than mine?" She then hand stitched AI's response onto a vintage handkerchief in her quilt, *Meaningful Imperfections*. The response tells us that "AI can generate quilt designs that are highly intricate," but goes on to note that a "handmade quilt often carries emotion, story, and character." Voelkel-Sedlmeir says: "Even AI agrees that a handmade quilt can be more beautiful and meaningful."

Claire Passmore also incorporated AI-generated responses into her three-dimensional work, *AI, Tell Me*

Marjorie Madsen

Artificial Flowers

42 x 16 inches | 107 x 41 cm | 2025

My Fortune. She created a sculpture inspired by the traditional folded paper fortune teller often crafted in childhood. Passmore's piece is 63 x 28 x 28 inches (160 x 71 x 71 cm) and features brightly colored, sparkly, stitched spirals erupting out of the folded base. The images, phrases, and imagined fortunes are printed and stitched into the design, which encourages viewers to examine all the angles. Regular size paper fortune tellers are also available for exhibition attendees to interact with.

Creativity and Technology

In Michelle Schulte's thoughtful juror's statement she writes, "Ultimately, the question isn't whether AI can make art better than a human—it's what we want art to be. This exhibition doesn't offer a definitive answer, but instead invites viewers to reflect on the evolving relationship between creativity and technology. Whether seen as a threat, a tool, or a collaborator, AI challenges us to reconsider the nature of artistic authorship, creativity, intention, and meaning." ■

Deborah Boschert is a SAQA Juried Artist who resides in Lewisville, Texas, and is a past president of the SAQA Board of Directors. You can view her work at www.DeborahsStudio.com.

Claire M. Voelkel-Sedlmeir *Meaningful Imperfections*

13 x 13 inches | 33 x 33 cm | 2025



Claire Passmore
AI, Tell Me My Fortune
63 x 28 x 28 inches
160 x 71 x 71 cm | 2025



Stained glass techniques translate into sparkling fiber art

by Kestrel Michaud

Stained glass is a fascinating art form. It exists as its own style of art, but it's also imitated and recreated in many other mediums. When it comes to fabric, there are three things to think about—some unique to textiles—in order to successfully create the illusion of *real* stained glass: structure, texture, and lighting.

Structure

Stained glass art—such as a window—is formed from pieces of colored glass that are joined together with channeled strips of metal, called *caming*. The connected pieces of glass are then set into a frame, which provides support in a permanent structure.

Glass is delicate, and the pieces incorporated into stained glass art are even more at risk of breaking because of their unusual shapes. Consequently, there are rules when designing the shapes of glass that will make your artwork more believable.

All intersections of caming must join at least three lines. Joints with three and four are common, and sometimes joints with even more lines are possible. But three is the minimum. A joint with only two lines of caming leaves the glass piece on the outside of that joint at greater risk of fracture.

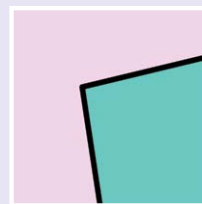
When it comes to circles and curves, the glass on the outside of the curve gets more brittle the longer the curve. Full circles will always have three or more intersections to

support the outer glass. Long curves will also be supported by multiple intersections of caming.

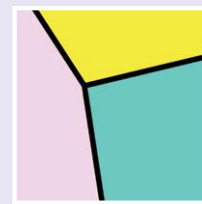
Last but not least, the caming itself does not have to be all the same thickness. The intersections

can sometimes get bulbous with multiples lines all connecting in the same place. And sometimes the stained glass artist wants to use a thicker line of caming just for aesthetic purposes.

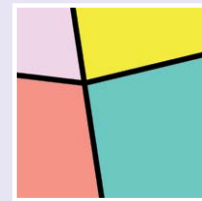
Caming pros and cons



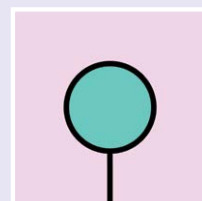
Two-line caming joint



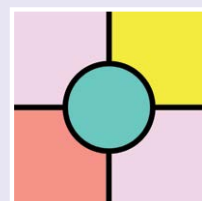
Three-line caming joint



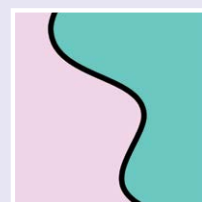
Four-line caming joint



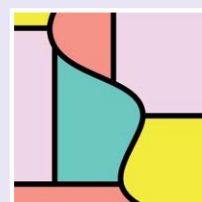
One-line caming joint to circle



Four-line caming joints to circle



Curved caming



Curved caming

Texture

The colored glass used in stained glass art has a ton of texture. One reason is that older glass was created by human hands, without the aid of modern tools. Old glass is uneven, and that varying thickness has a specific look.

Another texture is the result of adding color to glass. One way to make colored glass is to add metallic salts during the manufacturing process. Glass can also be painted after it's been incorporated into a stained glass design. The result is that sometimes, one piece of glass can have several different colors that don't necessarily blend together.

This is particularly exciting when it comes to choosing fabric to represent stained glass because it really opens up the possibilities of what patterns and textures will work to create a believable effect. I can choose fabrics that have multiple colors and multiple values all within the same texture, and it works in a quilt because of the variation in actual stained glass. Batiks are fabulous for this. My favorite fabric that doesn't work for anything else I make—it combines yellow, orange, pink, and purple in a loose cathedral window texture—is just beautiful when used as stained glass.

What about the coming? Caming is made from lead, and while it can be finished with a color, such as oil-rubbed bronze or silver, it doesn't generally make sense to make the coming anything other than dark

grey or black when creating a stained glass style in fabric. Caming is very thin compared to the rest of the window, and with the sun illuminating the window from outside, it's pretty common for coming to look like a solid, black, backlit silhouette.

That brings us to the last, and biggest, concept when it comes to recreating stained glass: the lighting.

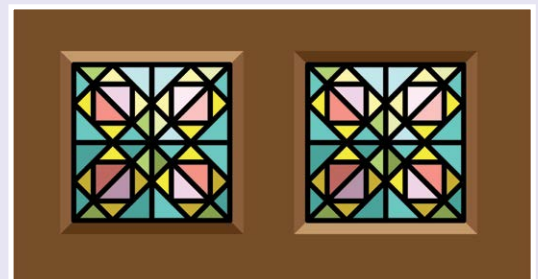
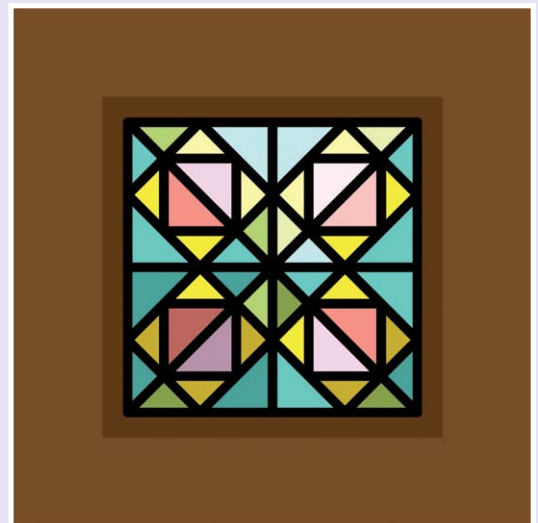
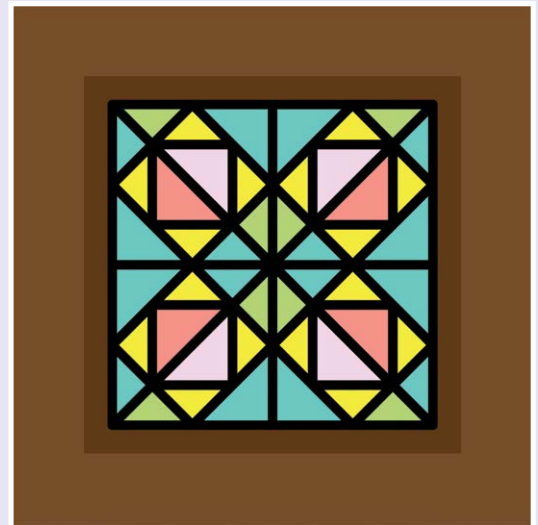
Lighting

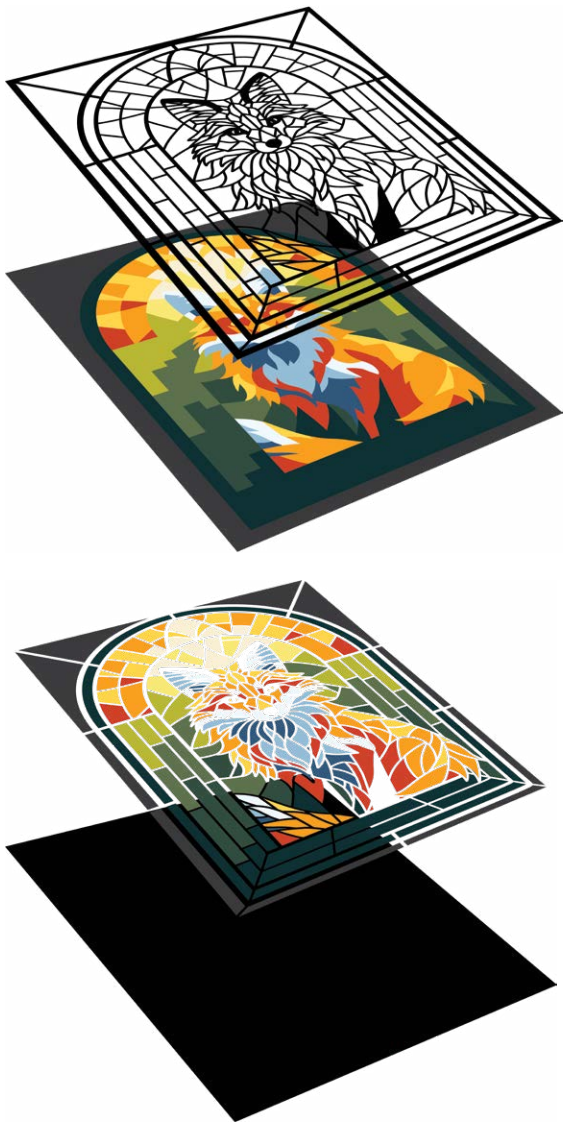
People naturally assume that light comes from above, even without being able to see an obvious light source. The sun is in the sky, and most indoor lighting is hung on the ceiling. Because of this, it feels natural to have the lighter parts of a design at the top of an image while the bottom areas are darker. Stained glass, especially as a window, follows this logic. The natural gradient created by overhead lighting, even if that lighting is behind the window, can be incorporated or even overemphasized dramatically to sell the illusion of backlit illumination.

Look at the simplified stained glass window graphic. With no variation in value, there's no indication of a light source. The window looks flat.

In the second example, I've used three values of each color in the glass to give an indication of light. The lighter values are more or less at the top, and the darker values are mostly at the bottom. It's intentionally not perfect. Remember, glass can have variation within each individual piece, or maybe there's something outside

Paying attention to value enhances a textile stained glass piece. The example on the top is flat, while the one in the middle sparkles because of lighter values at the top. Finally, the value of the "frame" affects whether the window appears to be protruding or recessed.





Stained glass art rendered in fiber involves layering, with the fiber coming either on top or on the bottom of the piece.

the window blocking the light, so it's okay—if not more believable—to mix things up a bit. But although the glass portion looks much better, the rest of the wall feels flat. The light isn't affecting the frame.

In the last example, I've added value to the frame around the window in two ways. If I match the way light was applied to the window (light values on top, dark values on the bottom), the frame looks like a bevel, as though the window is protruding out. In order to make the window look recessed, the values need to be reversed (light on the bottom, dark on the top).

Stained glass and fabric

What does that mean for fabric? In a nutshell, it means adding a wide range of values and making a point to use the lighter values toward the top of the design. Take a look at my *Tressym*, a fictional cat with wings. I created the same design in three colorways. Each colorway uses seventeen fabrics in three color progressions: the sky, the white fur/clouds, the colored fur, and one solid black fabric for the coming.

Look at the arrangement of values. The majority of the lightest values are in the top half of the design, and the majority of the darker values are in the bottom half of the design. There are two really light values that appear on the lower half: the white in the cat's fur and the light pink in the chevron. However, the fabrics used in both of these areas are actually the second value in that color's progression. The absolute lightest values are reserved for the top of the design. Similarly with the darkest values, they only appear on the bottom half of the design even though there are some "darker" values at the top.

Last but not least, there is a very big difference between fabric and glass when it comes to how the artwork is put together. An actual stained glass work of art is more akin to a jigsaw puzzle: Every piece of glass is custom-designed to fit perfectly into its neighbors. That's not necessarily how fabric works, especially when it comes to designing a stained glass look-alike.

The stained glass fabric art I've seen has so far always included some sort of layering. Most common is a method in which the artist cuts small



Tressym, the author's design of a fictional cat with wings, was created in three colorways.

pieces of colored fabric and precisely arranges them onto a large solid black back. The colored pieces are designed to have a small gap between them, allowing the black to show through and imitate the coming.

This is usually the “easier” construction method, because every piece of fabric is fully supported by the black, and there are no super tiny, super thin pieces of fabric to create the coming. However, this method has one major downside: show through (sometimes called shadowing).

Have you ever held a single layer of white fabric on top of a black or other very dark surface? The white fabric dulls in value, just a bit. This is what will happen to every piece of fabric when backed with black, although lighter fabrics are affected more dramatically than darker fabrics. The result is that stained glass fabric art constructed in this fashion tends to be a little bit dull, entirely because of the show through.

The other method is for the black to be on top of the color. The advantage is that the colored fabrics can be backed by white—be it paper, batting, or a piece of white fabric—keeping them nice and vivid. The downside is the coming. It’s potentially going to be made by some very tiny strips of fabric, which could be hard to work with.

My fabric stained glass is made using the second method of construction and raw-edge appliqué. I love how brilliant the colors look, and my cutting machine lets me cut the coming without hassle. For me, the extra effort is worth having a better-looking result. But I will say if I were cutting everything by hand, I might not have that same opinion! ■

Kestrel Michaud is a SAQA Board Member who resides in West Melbourne, Florida. You can view her work at www.kestrelmichaud.com.



National Basketry Organization

JOIN THE WORLD OF BASKETRY

BE INSPIRED
EXPLORE TECHNIQUES + MATERIALS
GET CREATIVE

nationalbasketry.org

ARTWORK BY VALERIA MALDONADO



Want to write for SAQA Journal?

We'd love to hear your ideas.
What does that mean?

- Launching a new series
- Relatable tech
- Artistic musings
- Profiles
- New ways to do old things
- More!

To submit ideas and your writing resume, contact editor@saqa.art

2026 SAQA Benefit Auction

We need you!

Our annual benefit auction is our most-anticipated fundraiser. Bidders vie for 12 x 12-inch art quilts made by our members from around the world. Your vibrant work makes this event a true treasure hunt. Plus, the proceeds benefit SAQA programming, from exhibitions and education to publications and outreach. Last year the Benefit Auction raised \$73,000 for the organization.

Visit the website to learn how to enter and upcoming deadlines.

We can't wait to see what you create!



Top: Geneviève Attinger, *Jazz*; Bottom: Barbara Yates Beasley, *Tatu*

www.saqa.com/auction

SAQATM CALLS FOR ENTRY

GLOBAL EXHIBITIONS

SENSATIONAL!

CALL FOR ENTRY:
JUNE 1-30, 2026

FUNGUS AMONG US

CALL FOR ENTRY:
OCTOBER 1-31, 2026

COLOR IN CONTEXT: GREEN

CALL FOR ENTRY:
NOVEMBER 1-30, 2026

CHILD'S PLAY

CALL FOR ENTRY:
JAN 1-31, 2027

DESERT STORIES

CALL FOR ENTRY:
MAY 1-31, 2027

VIRTUAL GALLERIES

PATHWAYS

CALL FOR ENTRY:
AUGUST 1-31, 2026

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

CALL FOR ENTRY:
NOVEMBER 1-30, 2026

For complete details on all exhibitions, visit www.saqa.com/calls



Fierce Planets exhibition at the Dunedin Fine Art Center in Dunedin, Florida

Aviary

International Museum of Art & Science
McAllen, Texas
March 21 - June 21, 2026

StitchPunk

Grants Pass Museum of Art
Grants Pass, Oregon
May 20 - July 31, 2026

Nature's Canvas

Windgate Museum of Art
Conway, Arkansas
May 29 - August 15, 2026

Fierce Planets

Shafer Art Gallery
Great Bend, Kansas
June 12 - August 15, 2026

Camouflage

Festival of Quilts
Birmingham, United Kingdom
July 30 - August 2, 2026

SAQA is dedicated to bringing thought-provoking, cutting-edge artwork to venues across the globe. Our members continue to challenge the boundaries of art and change perceptions about contemporary fiber art.

For complete
listing:
saqa.com/art

SAQA™

GLOBAL
EXHIBITIONS

TEXTILE TALKS



Cecilia Koppmann, *Grief (Duelo)*

Explore the best in textiles today by tuning into this free weekly webinar. Enjoy in-depth programs by leading artists, curators, historians, and fiber art experts.

**Every Wednesday
on Zoom
2 pm (US/Canada
Eastern time)
and on Youtube
@SAQAArtQuilt.**

Find upcoming Textile Talks and search the recording archive at:

www.SAQA.com/TextileTalks

