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THE ART
QUILT NOW



acrylic paint and made an impression on the fabric. I used one-point perspective (which disappears through the doors of San Marcos Basilica) to create the sense of depth in the grid of the piazza. The gray squares in the grid are reverse appliqué. The buildings in the background I made as dye drawings. The birds are dye drawings that I heavily machine embroidered. I employed some piecework in the sky.

How do you see your work relating to the traditional definition of a quilt? Was making a "quilt" rather than a "wall hanging" significant to you?

AZ: Making a "quilt" rather than a "painting" was significant to me. As a female artist confronted with largely male-dominated Western art history, I wanted to appropriate this history and put it in the context of feminine achievement. Quilting feels more personal to me because the fabric is not pulled taut as in a painting. One can recognize printed fabrics and relate to the softness of the medium the way we are all intimately familiar with clothing and bedding. I feel like this familiarity makes quilts more accessible than traditional painting. Accessibility to a wider audience is something I strive for in my work.

Below: Annemarie Zwack, *Artist's First Trip to Venice*; hand-dyed printed commercial fabrics; 78 by 51 inches.

QN ON TOUR

Each Quilt National collection goes on tour for approximately two years following the close of the exhibition at the Dairy Barn Cultural Arts Center in Athens, Ohio. The Dairy Barn is the only venue that shows the entire collection. Most of the quilts travel to St. Louis; then three smaller groupings from the show travel simultaneously (which explains the overlapping dates below). More information and updates are posted on www.quiltnational.com.

Confirmed venues for QN '03:

- Oct. 22–Nov. 30, 2003: City Museum, St. Louis, MO
- Jan. 17–Apr. 4, 2004: Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville, NC
- Apr. 1–4, 2004: Quilters' Heritage Celebration, Lancaster, PA
- June 7–Aug. 15, 2004: William King Regional Art Center, Abingdon, VA
- June 3–Sep. 12, 2004: Cornell Museum of Art and History, Delray Beach, FL
- Sep. 4–Oct. 16, 2004: Bloomingdale Park District Museum, Bloomingdale, IL
- Mar. 31–Apr. 3, 2005: Quilters' Heritage Celebration, Lancaster, PA
- May–June 2005: Blanden Memorial Art Museum, Fort Dodge, IA

Remaining venues for QN '01:

- Oct. 4–Nov. 23, 2003: Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Laurel, MS
- Oct. 30–Nov. 2, 2003: International Quilt Festival, Houston, TX



was the stones that blanket our city beach in combination with the formal gardens there.

How did you make Nocturne in G?

CP: With discharge dyed cotton, machine reverse appliqué (the insets), and free-motion machine quilting.

How do you see your work relating to the traditional definition of a quilt? Was making a "quilt" rather than a "wall hanging" significant to you?

CP: In theory, my work completely matches the traditional definition of a quilt. It is assembled, albeit by sewing machine, using standard quilting materials and techniques. The only difference is I create the surface design on the fabrics myself.

I am passionate about the quilt and have been ever since I began doing patchwork (English piecing over papers) 30 years ago. Then, as now, I was drawn to its visual and design qualities, rather than its tradition as a domestic textile art.

But I no longer think of what I make as "quilts" in any functional or traditional sense. Rather, I make artworks that I envisage will

be hung on a wall—just in my case they are made using the quilt medium.

I continue to use this medium because this is where I have my greatest depth and breadth of knowledge, skills, and understanding of history. I can do things here that I could not achieve in any other artistic medium. But most important, I feel a tremendous empathy for its numerous unique properties.

Annemarie Zwack Ithaca, New York

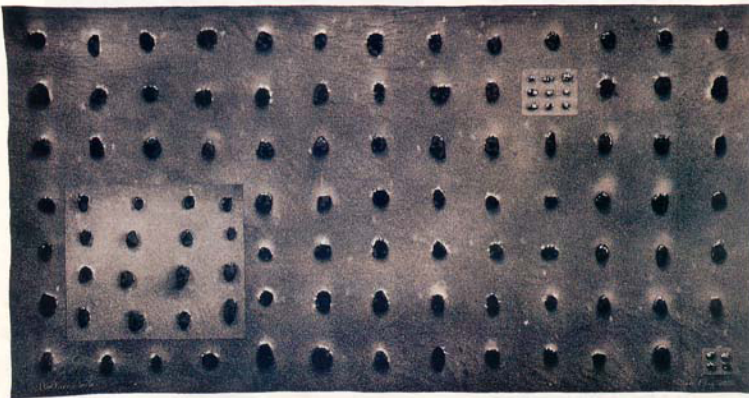
What inspired this piece?

AZ: *Artist's First Trip to Venice* was inspired by my feeling of euphoria at walking in the same piazza that so many artists had visited before me. I wanted to make an X-ray snapshot of myself at this turning point in my life. I wanted to make a portrait in which you see me right down to the bones. The birds taking flight represent the soaring feeling in my heart.

How did you make it?

AZ: I made the skeleton, a large appliqué, by doing a body print. I covered my body in

Below: *Clare Plug, Nocturne in G*; 39 by 74 inches. This quilt received the Lynn Goodwin Borgman Memorial Award for Surface Design.



Catalogues have been published for each Quilt National since 1983. The quilts from the 1979 show can be seen on the exhibition's web site, www.quiltnational.com; eventually, the 1981 quilts will also be put online. See Resources on page 78 for information on ordering this year's catalogue.

rors the *Kuba* patterns, and also includes the old quilt pattern Grandmother's Flower Garden. The stitching originally started as a reference to the traditional running stitch used to hold the layers of quilts together but has become in later work more dense, closer to embroidery than quilting.

How do you see your work relating to the traditional definition of a quilt? Was making a "quilt" rather than a "wall hanging" significant to you?

CBP: While they're not traditional (i.e., functional) quilts, they still incorporate familiar quilt patterns. I intentionally use the intimate scale (12 by 9 inches rather than 6 by 6 feet) to subvert whatever inclination the viewer would have to see them as functional. Because I use so many of the aspects of traditional quilting—the patterns and the use of reclaimed fabrics—I have always seen them as being more connected to the history of quilting rather than as just wall hangings.

Valerie S. Goodwin
Tallahassee, Florida

What inspired this piece?

VSG: As an artist and an architect, my work is inspired by architectural elements such as built form, city grid, and mapping. My work is part of a continuing investigation of ideas that focus on the geometrical relationships, patterns, and ordering principles found in architecture. My work tends to convey these concepts abstractly through the use of collage, layering, transparency, density, and improvisation.

How did you make Riverside Settlement?

VSG: For me, this is a very significant question. My design process has evolved since I started making quilts. At one time, I used a very structured approach. I used to work much like an architect. I would start with conceptual drawings that became "working drawings" that in turn became my personal contract for making my quilts. Now, while I still make many sketches, I allow myself the freedom to improvise. I enjoy the unmapped journey inherent in improvisation. It allows me to use fabric, paint, and thread as an artist uses paint on canvas.

How do you see your work relating to the traditional definition of a quilt? Was making a "quilt" rather than a "wall hanging" significant to you?

VSG: Like many quilters, I started with traditional quilting patterns, materials, and techniques. I eventually learned to use contemporary materials and techniques that enabled me to really push beyond the perimeters of what I think of as the traditional quilt. I consider myself an artist/architect who values and incorporates the elements of traditional quiltmaking and who tries to move the definition of "work of art" beyond its previous boundaries. For me, the term "quilt" is as likely to denote a wall hanging as it is a bed covering.

Clare Plug
Napier, New Zealand

What inspired this piece?

CP: My current work is created in response to the coastline where I live: the rhythms, patterns, and textures and its limited color schemes all excite me. Here, in particular, it

Below: Valerie Goodwin, Riverside Settlement; cotton, silk, and blend materials; machine pieced, direct appliquéd, and fused; 49 by 35 inches.



which drapery, costumes, and textile surfaces are featured. In effect, this places these women and textiles in the world of fabric. *Woman Still Seated* was inspired by Jan Vermeer's *A Lady Seated at the Virgin*.

How did you make it?

AMN: In all of my textile work, structure is combined with imagery. In this body of work, the visual structure is made through a pattern of stripes and squares contained within two layers of cloth that intermix. The imagery both abides by the conventions of the structure and defies them.

My quilts are designed using a computer. In *Woman Still Seated*, I began by looking at the Vermeer painting and selecting the major dynamics to convert into striped squares for the two layers of cloth. I then created the shapes that would be cut from the top layer and would reveal the essence of the imagery in the painting. The bottom layer was pieced by machine

onto another piece of whole cloth. The top layer of appliqué was done by hand.

How do you see your work relating to the traditional definition of a quilt? Was making a "quilt" rather than a "wall hanging" significant to you?

AMN: My work technically fits the definition of a quilt by being composed of physical layers—a whole-cloth backing, a pieced layer, and a discontinuous top layer (the appliqué strips of cloth). All of the layers are connected by the hand stitching that attaches the appliques. It visually appears to be a quilt because of the structure. It is important to me that form follows idea and not the other way around. In this body of work, the idea was about layering and the merging of layers. It was natural for the form to resolve itself as a quilt. I did not develop the work out of a traditional quilt pattern; I do not add batting or follow other conventions. I seek a certain elegance of construction in which the elements of imagery also serve a structural purpose. The appliqué strips complete the image and at the same time complete the quilting process.

Camilla Brent Pearce Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

What inspired this piece?

CBP: I live in Pittsburgh. Prior to moving here, I spent a year in Brooklyn, New York, in a neighborhood called Lefferts Gardens, in which predominantly Caribbean and African immigrants live. I was influenced by the African textiles—especially the raffia velvets (*Kuba* cloth)—sold by street vendors whose impromptu sidewalk bazaars I passed on my daily walk to work. The graphic quality of the ornate geometric patterns, as well as the complicated process involved in making the *Kuba*, attracted me. I wanted the formal challenge of juxtaposing the graphic quality of *Kuba* with more "traditional" American quilt patterns that I was already incorporating in my work.

How did you make this quilt?

CBP: The piece is made up of three layers of fabric, combined with hand stitching. The top layer is pieced together from salvaged materials, including commercially embroidered cotton organdy from an old hostess apron and flowered silk fragments from a nightgown that belonged to my grandmother. The middle layer is a patterned cotton that has African-inspired patterns (black and white) that reminded me of *Kuba*. I have added an additional layer of hand stitching on top that mir-

Below: Camilla Brent Pearce, Lefferts Avenue Kuba I, 12 by 9 inches. Collection of Ellen Berger.



I sketched thumbnail after thumbnail, and soon my quilts became nests. In *Nest III*, I thought about the strings and dried leaves that birds incorporate into their nests.

How did you make it?

SB: The background of each 16-inch-square unit is cut from a silk that I have dye-painted (these silks begin as white crepe de chine, jacquard, or charmeuse). I create more direction with strips of other silks, which are fused to the surface. To unify and add more motion, I print and paint the surface with textile paints. Sometimes I add other fused details and more paint. Each unit is layered, machine quilted, and bound, and finally the units are assembled into a larger quilt and stitched together. I try to make each square unit lovely in itself, but still fitting together with others as part of an overall composition.

How do you see your work relating to the traditional definition of a quilt? Was making a "quilt" rather than a "wall hanging" significant to you?

SB: I make quilts. It is my chosen form of expression. My work relates to the traditional definition of a quilt in that it has three layers—back, batting, and top—connected by stitching. I see my work as part of a tradition of quilts, of works in fiber, of women's work, that intersects with contemporary art. I am an artist working in a quilt medium.

The term "wall hanging" has very little meaning for me, or maybe I just don't like it. I think of my work as art and as quilts; when I am trying to communicate more information, I call them "contemporary art quilts." Occasionally, someone will say, "Oh, they are wall hangings!" And I say, "Yes, they are." Then it occurs to me that most people still think quilt=bed.

Anne McKenzie Nickolson
Indianapolis, Indiana

What inspired this piece?

AMN: I have been making a series of quilts that are inspired by great classic paintings in



Anne McKenzie Nickolson, *Woman Still Seated*; commercially dyed cottons; 57 by 57 inches.

Quilt National '03

A sampling of works from the 13th biennial exhibition at the Dairy Barn Cultural Arts Center

From blazing cacophonies of riotous color to monochromatic works of subtlest gradation, from scenes and stories to geometric flights of fancy, from a thousand hand stitches to layered dye and printing processes—when Quilt National '03 opened on Memorial Day weekend, visitors surveyed quilts spanning the spectrum of contemporary practice.

The 84 quilts in the exhibition were selected by three jurors—artists Liz Asford and Wendy Huhn and author/curator Robert Shaw—from 1,452 entries from around the world. Writes Project Director Hilary Morrow Fletcher, "If one were to compare the images in this [year's catalogue] with the documentation of earlier Quilt Nationals, the increasing distance between the center of the quilt world and the boundaries of the art form would be obvious; and yet, there is still a connection between them. There has always been a symbiotic relationship between the classic quilted bedcover and the nonfunctional art quilt."

Here, we offer a look at six quilts from the show that seem to be stretching traditional approaches to quilting in intriguing ways. When I interviewed the artists by email, I was fascinated by the varied ideas and technical approaches behind these quilts.

—Sumita Patterson

Sue Benner Dallas, Texas

What inspired this piece?

SB: Our home is on a big, tree-shaded lot. Last winter, my two sons found a bird's nest that had fallen from a tree. This nest joined the other on my studio shelf that I had found the year before. I saw these nests every day and contemplated their structure.

I loved the layers of fiber in the nests, one dense and solid, the other more light and airy.



Sue Benner, Nest III;
62 by 77 inches.

All images courtesy
of the Dairy Barn
Cultural Arts Center,
Athens, Ohio. Photos:
Brian Blauser.