

The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for Online Quilters

Issue 13 • January, 1997



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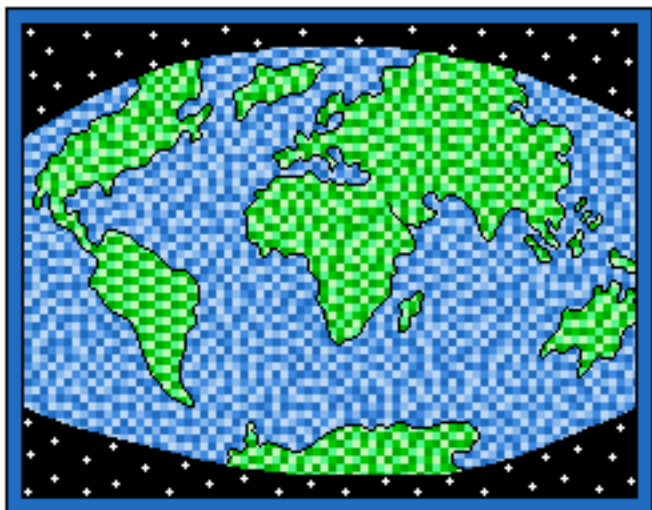
Catherine Jones examines the "less is more" axiom and its place in fashion, quilting, and art in this issue's TVQ Essay,

[“Barbaric Splendour”](#)

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Also inside this issue:

- [Multimedia Review: Interactive Escher](#)
- [Quilter Profile: Judy Smith](#)
- [Profile: Quilt Restoration Conference](#)
- [Quilting in New Zealand](#)
- [Charms & Schnibbles: News Notes from All Over](#)



THE PATCHWORK PLANET:

QUILTING IN NEW ZEALAND

by Marge Hurst

[New Zealand](#) and [Australia](#) are often lumped together or confused by people elsewhere. Although there are some similarities, since both countries have a population of predominantly British Isles stock, there are many environmental differences along with differences in “native” peoples. There is also a strong tradition of rivalry between the countries, especially in sport! Most important, 1200 miles of the Tasman sea separate New Zealand and Australia. New Zealand is definitely **NOT** an outer island of “Oz”!

Quilting in New Zealand was not a craft widely practised until the recent worldwide “explosion” in the 1970s. The same would probably hold in Australia. Some early quilts are known in both countries, having been brought from Great Britain, and some early “waggas” (haps, rough quilts) and other quilts were made here. As



New Zealand has mostly a temperate climate, quilts were not as necessary for warmth as in parts of the United States. Also, sheep have been a mainstay here for both wool and meat from very early on so wool was being

spun for clothing and covering from early days.

Since the quilt revolution of recent years, the number of quilters has multiplied. The October 1996 issue of “New Zealand Quilter” listed membership in the 110 or so groups and guilds throughout the country at 4100+. Although there is no doubt some duplication in listed membership, there are probably at least another 2-3000 quilters who do not belong to listed groups. For a population of about 3.3 million, approximately the size of Colorado, USA, I think 6-7000 is probably quite a large number of quilters.

Guilds in New Zealand are similar to those all over the world. There are large ones and small ones. The large ones tend to have more formal programmes and structure. The small groups usually have a less formal structure and perhaps fewer outside speakers or programmes, as everywhere because of monetary constraints. Small groups often form within a large guild and offer more intimate settings for friendship. Most of the groups of any size hold displays or exhibitions, some yearly, some biennially, some on a less regular basis. The larger groups tend to have more classes and hold “open days” and retreats. The smaller groups meet more frequently, usually in members’ homes.

New Zealand quilters have had biennial symposia since late 1984. The first one was held in Auckland, in the North Island, in December 1984, the second in Christchurch, in the South Island, in February 1987 and they have alternated between the north and south Islands every odd-numbered year since.

Until 1994 there was no National Organisation in New Zealand and symposia were, and still are, run by either one or a group of guilds in an area. The locality

decision seems to be arranged by “gentleman’s agreement” and this works very well.

Symposia have traditionally had 4-6 days of classes. At the first one, there was one teacher from the United States, Helen Kelly, the remaining 24 being New Zealanders.

At the upcoming Symposium in Hamilton, in January, 1997, there will be 7 teachers from the United States, one from England, one from Japan, 4 from Australia and 24 from New Zealand. There will be five days of classes with about 30 classes each day. Enrollments reached 750 by mid December and by the opening day, the 5th of January, will no doubt surpass 800.

Symposia also have lectures by overseas and local quilters, various exhibitions, including a “suitcase” exhibition which tours for up to a year after the event, a merchants’ mall, and other attractions which tend to be different with each one. They are high points in the lives of New Zealand quilters and often the saving for the next begins with the arrival home from the most recent!

Although symposia are being run successfully by local groups, a National organisation, the National Association of New Zealand Quilters (NANZQ) has recently been formed. The National organisation has a membership of over 450 quilters from all over New Zealand but this represents less than 10% of all the quilters in the country. Membership is on an individual basis (not like the Association of New Zealand Embroiderer’s Guilds which automatically includes members of local groups in the National organisation) and there is probably a higher membership proportionately from smaller towns and outlying areas than from the larger cities. The National Association has a quarterly newsletter, the last issue of which consisted of 20 pages. It also produces quarterly Workshops by mail which are available only to members. It has published a Directory of New Zealand Patchwork and Quilting Tu-

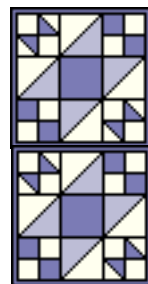


tors which has been distributed to guilds and other interested parties and produces a yearly Shop Directory for members. This year it sponsored a National Challenge for the first time and has also sponsored Quilter’s Newsletter Features Editor Jeannie Spears’ tour of New Zealand to meet quilters.

It is not the intention to have the NANZQ take over the running of symposia. Its committee structure is too small for this and local groups have a much better knowledge of local venues and amenities. However, the National organisation will probably eventually help in collating a booklet of hints for guidance in running symposia so that each group doesn’t have to start from scratch.

The exhibition is always a high point of a symposium. Each symposium so far has had the usual traditional categories with fine tuning of selection and awards. In 1993 selection by slides was initiated. This was resisted a bit at the time, but has been accepted now, with groups holding “photography” days where quilts are photographed by a professional at group rates.

At the last symposium a new category was included, A Feel of New Zealand. An award for the best in this category was sponsored by our own quilting magazine, New Zealand Quilter. This is being continued at the up-



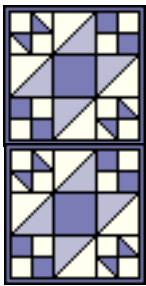
There is not a particular New Zealand style but there may be a particular use of colour. The air is so clear here that colours seem particularly bright and clean.

coming Hamilton Symposium. Even before there was such a category, each symposium had quilts in the exhibition which were influenced by New Zealand countryside, by New Zealand sport, by New Zealand politics, or some other “homegrown” topic.

There is not a particular New Zealand style but there may be a particular use of colour. The air is so clear here that colours seem particularly bright and clean. I think this is reflected in the “original” quilts which are being made, and to a lesser extent in the more traditional ones as well. New Zealanders who have lived in Australia tell me that the Australians seem to be much quieter in

their colour choices but I can't report evidence of this myself. New Zealanders have always had a strong tradition in embroidery and I think that some of those influences are beginning to appear, especially in the machine quilted/embroidered quilts. I have seen some quilts in recent years which would more easily be classified as textile art rather than quilting, mainly because of the extensive incorporation of machine embroidery in their construction. Scenic quilts especially seem to make extensive use of free stitching and textural work.

New Zealand quilters seem to "do their own thing" more readily than American quilters. It may be because



New Zealand quilters seem to "do their own thing" more readily than American quilters. It may be because this is a nation of do-it-yourselfers.

this is a nation of do-it-yourselfers. For many years, cotton fabrics were not easily available and quilters made do with scraps from garment sewing. Many of these scraps were not pure cotton, or if they were, they were not the little "calico" prints which were traditional in the US. (BTW calico in New Zealand is the same fabric that is called muslin in the US. Muslin in New Zealand is what you might call cheese cloth in the US!) The "furnishing fabric" shops were and still are a great source for unusual fabrics, especially large prints. They carry fabrics from all over the world and sell off their "samples" at low cost. Many of the "curtaining" fabrics are excellent quality, similar weight to "patchwork" fabrics, and best of all, are far more resistant to fading than the usual patchwork cottons. New Zealand sun is notorious for fading fabrics so this is certainly a plus. Furnishing fabrics seem to be dyed with dyes which are more fadeproof than fabrics produced for patchwork and clothing. "Op" shops also continue to be a source of interesting fabrics for many.

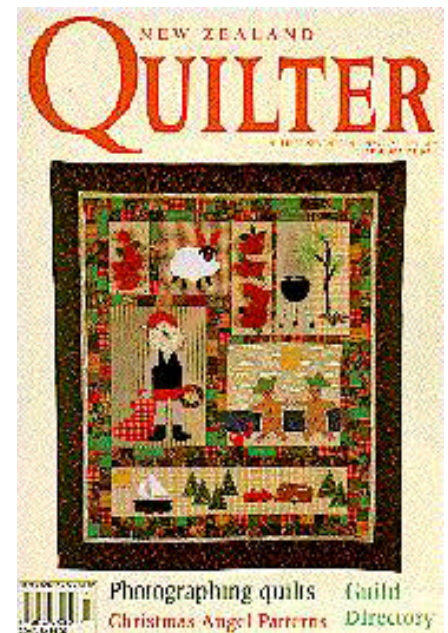
Although New Zealand produces no commercial cotton fabrics, over the past two or three years a number of New Zealand quilters have begun to make their own hand-dyed, printed, painted or marbled fabrics. Many

quilters buy these and some produce their own.

Over the past 15 years or so quilt shops have proliferated throughout the country. American patchwork cottons seem to be everywhere, along with cottons from England, Japan and Indonesia. Patchwork shops tend to stock similar things to what shops in the US stock but at much greater expense. There is the cost of shipping such long distances and probably a few more middle men! However, fabrics from countries other than the US tend to be cheaper than the same fabrics are in the US (allowing for the exchange rate), due probably to lower import duties. Olfa cutters and blades, for example, have always been cheaper here.

Possibly because of the feeling that New Zealand is so far away from everything, there has been strong communication amongst New Zealand quilters and with quilters elsewhere. In the very early 80s, Anne Patrick put out one or two newsletters for quilters. In October 1984 Julia O'Connell and Val Cuthbert began "Quilttalk." After the first three or four issues Val carried this on herself. It started as a cyclostyled bi-monthly newsletter and before she gave it up because of family commitments, it had grown to a glossy, colour quarterly magazine called "Pacific Quilts." The last issue of this appeared in August 1991. There wasn't much of a gap before a new magazine, "[New Zealand Quilter](#)," a quarterly edited and published by Anne Scott, appeared in October 1992. This magazine has grown from 24 to 48 pages and about six months ago doubled its output and is now being marketed in North America as well through Stonehouse Publications.

Over the past two or three years New Zealand quilters have begun to use computers to a greater and greater extent, both for designing quilts and for communicating with other quilters. At the symposium in Wellington, in 1993, we tried to incorporate a computer class or demonstration but couldn't interest



any computer firms in offering anything. At the upcoming symposium in Hamilton the computer design class being offered proved so popular that a second class has been added. More and more quilters are buying and using the commercial quilting design programmes available and not just a few are also using Corel Draw for the flexibility it offers.

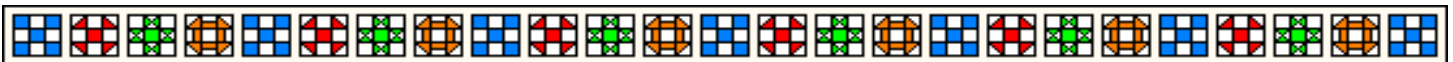
There is an online quilting group, Southern Cross Quilters, otherwise known as squilters which consists of mainly Australian and New Zealand members. Many New Zealand Quilters also belong to various American online groups — Quiltart, Quiltnet, Interquilt, Notrad and others. The National Association newsletter and New Zealand Quilter are beginning to feature articles and information directed especially toward those quilters with an interest in computers and online communication. The Internet in general is growing by leaps and bounds in New Zealand and quilters are taking advantage of the opportunities this growth offers.

New Zealand quilters are quick to take on new things. They are not afraid to experiment. In recent years they have entered and been successful in more and more overseas competitions and exhibitions. Articles and books written by New Zealand quilters are appearing

more frequently. There have been a number of entries accepted and several award winners in the last two contests run by Quilter's Newsletter Magazine, "Celebrating the Tradition" and "Artistic Expressions." New Zealand quilts are appearing in Paducah and there was a New Zealand quilt in the 1995 Quilt National and another has been juried into the 1997 show. Both of these quilters (Marge Hurst and Clare Smith), strangely enough, belong to the same local group, Coastal Quilters, near Wellington!

This is only the beginning; New Zealand quilts will be seen more and more in international shows. They will be at World Quilt and Textile in Pasadena in April 1997 and at Quilt Canada in May 1998! Watch for them! —

Marge Hurst is a transplanted American who has been living in New Zealand for more than 20 years. She has quilted and taught quilting classes for the last 13 years and has exhibited her work widely in New Zealand, the U.S., and Germany. She founded her local quild, Coastal Quilters, and is currently the convenor and newsletter editor of the National Association of New Zealand Quilters. Marge can be reached by e-mail at: mhurst@wn.planet.gen.nz.



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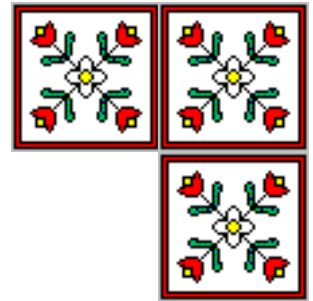
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QUILTER PROFILE

JUDY SMITH



If you're an online quilter, it seems that everywhere you look you see the name of Judy Smith. On [GEnie](#), on the [Microsoft Network](#), on the Web, on the QuiltArt list, Judy is a constant presence working to bring good things to quilters on the net.

She is the founder of one of the most interesting and articulate of the quilting maillists, QuiltArt, though she professes not to be a particularly "arty" quilter. She began, as many do, with a very traditional approach: "My first quilts were machine-made one-patches constructed from kits I bought on one of our summer vacations to Nantucket. I followed that with a 'Trip Around the World' made from an early Blanche Young book and a HUGE 1000 Pyramid that I think attracted me mostly because I decided that every triangle had to be a different fabric...

age, and when my mother got hooked on needlepoint in the early 70s, I followed suit. Around this time, I took a course in needlepoint design at a local college, and the instructor, who liked my style, hooked me up with a local shop, "The Elegant Needle", where I began painting needlepoint canvases in 1974. Three owners, two locations and 22+ years later, I am still doing custom needlepoint canvases for the SAME shop.)



"Always looking for new design ideas, sometime in the late 70s I came across a book of quilting patterns, and realized how easily they translated to needlepoint canvas. I also discovered QNM around this time. . . and being the compulsive person I am, started reading everything I could about quilting.

"Around 1982, one of the mothers at my son's school, Laurie Sieminski, asked me if I would be interested in joining a quilting group. The two of us were the only ones in a group of 10 who knew anything about quilting and compared to Laurie, I didn't know much! She would give quilting lessons and we would make a raffle quilt for the scholarship fund of the school. That began a 10-year association with the Beauvoir Quilters. Our little group ended up making masterpiece quality quilts. . . STRICTLY traditional. . . which we raffled every year and, at the same time, I was churning out my own quilts at home. All were of traditional patterns, were hand pieced and hand quilted."

Eventually, as children grew up and members of this group dispersed, online quilting entered Judy's life, and changed it considerably: "In 1991, trying to find something to interest my adolescent son, I bought a modem for our PC. He wasn't in the least bit interested in it but I saw an ad in a magazine for GEnie. . . \$4.95 a



(and we KNOW how much fabric shopping that takes!)"

There was no known tradition of quilting in Judy's family, though needlework of other kinds was everywhere: "I came to quilting in a round-about way. All the women in my family have always done needlework, although none, that I know of, have quilted. My grandmother was an accomplished knitter who had a knitting shop in Nashville, Tennessee. She taught me to knit when I was around eight years old and by the time I was in junior high school, I was knitting all of my own sweaters (with the prerequisite dyed-to match skirts made by my mother's dressmaker!)

"In addition to knitting, I learned to sew in junior high school home ec, I learned embroidery at an early

month. . . all sorts of hobbies!

“Being on a real knitting binge at that time, I went cruising for knitters. There weren’t very many knitters on GENie, but there were LOTS of quilters!

“The enthusiasm of the Online Quilters on GENie was contagious and I was quickly hooked! Around the same time, we were going through adolescent turbulence in our household, and the Online Quilters offered me support and refuge that I really needed at that time!

“In early 1992, the quilters on GENie finished up a challenge that had been started before I joined, a group of Desert Storm Quilts, called ‘I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends,’ and a bunch of us proposed a show of the quilts in Washington, D.C. [where Judy lives] over July 4th that year. I didn’t have a quilt in the challenge, but I was involved in organizing the show, which ended up being shown at [Decatur House](#) on Lafayette Square, right across the street from [The White House](#).

“When we put on the Decatur House Show, there was much more involved than the show. Along with a few other local Onliners, we arranged an entire weekend. Over 50 Online Quilters and their families came to Washington, DC, for July 4th Weekend, 1992. Most of us had never met before in person — only online — and it was truly a magical weekend! We all bonded like we had known each other forever. . . such a cohesive group we were! Over the course of the weekend, we arranged for the out-of-towners to see D.C. and all it had to offer and had a private tour of G Street Fabrics! They had a tour of White House, enjoyed a July 4th feast complete with fireworks, and the weekend finished up with everyone coming to my house (which I note was under complete renovation at the time) for dinner and the first public demo of The Electric Quilt!”

Judy’s online connections eventually led to her being asked to join the NeedleArts Forum staff at GENie. Besides how to be an assistant Sysop, she learned from the quilters there how to move beyond some of her traditional quilting techniques: “Up until this time, (at least since I started quilting with the Beauvoir Quilters), I had

done everything in a strictly traditional way. I cut out all pieces — one by one — with a template. I pieced and quilted by hand. I really didn’t know much about machine quilting at all (except to seam up a backing or make a bias binding!)

“It wasn’t long after I was online, and thoroughly enmeshed in swaps, that I realized that I couldn’t do all these blocks by hand anymore. From the quilters on GENie, I learned all about rotary cutting, machine piecing and quilting. In the years since then, I have had to reassess my time, and I now send out all my large quilts to be quilted by others, while I do the small ones by machine.

“I thoroughly enjoy the study of quilt and fabric history, and love antiques, but have, in the past few years, veered off to watercolor and more painterly types of quilts. My strong suit is the use of color and I felt that I had finally found my niche when I began doing watercolor bargello (after a series of classes with

Donna Radner). I go back and forth between turn-of-the-century repro fabrics (the colors of which do have a certain contemporary flair to them, IMHO!) and more contemporary florals. I don’t have ONE style. . . and I’m certainly not as artistic as many of the quilters on our list. I love color! You’ll never see a muted or dusty colored quilt on my design wall! I don’t like country, but I do like pretty. . . and I love pansies, as everyone who visits my home page knows.”

Like many quilters who began their online journey from within an online service, Judy eventually began to venture into the world outside the walls: “Always trying to explore and learn new things, I was soon cruising the Internet, and found myself on QuiltNet (before it was QuiltNet) and several other listservs related to quilting and textiles. It seemed to me that most of the lists were geared to beginners, were too chatty or were geared to people who took themselves very seriously as art quilters. After an unfortunate experience on a list, where I felt that everyone was trying too hard to be too serious about what they were doing, I figured I’d start my own list.



“Waves of Memory” (1994) by Judy Smith.

“While I had no desire to start another chat-type list, I still felt that our everyday experience does fit into our quilting lives to a great degree, so I thought there must be a way to strike a happy medium. Besides, starting a list was something I didn’t know how to do, and I’m always up for a new challenge! So off I went to find

but that hasn’t happened often. With the number of people we have on the list, there are always going to be times when someone doesn’t like the current topic of conversation. Some of our most controversial topic threads have turned into challenge quilts that will soon be appearing in our gallery! The first of these will be a Baby Boomer Challenge, which Maxine Farkas has led, called ‘Boomerang!’”



"Audrey's Sister's Choice" (1996, unfinished) by Judy Smith and various GENie quilters.

The QuiltArt list has expanded into a web presence as well, and due to Judy’s talents it is one of the nicest on the web. (See review in TVQ #11). It can be found at: <http://www.his.com/~judy/quiltart.html>.

When not at her computer or her sewing machine, Judy works part-time for the Washington Post in the Obituary Department. She lives with her lawyer-lobbyist husband, Russell, in a 1905 rowhouse in downtown D.C. They’ve been married 25 years and their son, Harris, is a film student at the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

“Russell and I enjoy antiquing on the weekends,” Judy says, “and are currently obsessed with Depression-era kitchen glass . . . most notably, juicers and reamers. You can see photos of these on my home page, too! We also collect Nantucket lightship baskets.

“I’m certainly busy these days, but I am enjoying all my activities immensely! All of my online/Internet activities have been great avenues of growth for me. My online quilting activities have been educational in both the worlds of quilting and computing and have brought me great friendships, which I will always treasure.

“Someone wrote to me last week to thank me for ‘hanging’ her quilt in our gallery and asked me what I could possibly be getting out of all this!

“The knowledge that I am giving a quilter the ability to learn something new, to commune with others who are just as passionate about quilting, and to show a quilt when she (or he) may not have had the opportunity to do so before, offers great satisfaction to me. QuiltArt is truly a labor of love and I’m having a great time with it!”

Judy can be reached by e-mail at: judy@quilt.net

a place to do a list!”

After an unsatisfactory experience with one list provider, Judy eventually discovered her current server at quilt.net through an online connection. QuiltArt is now the happy home of some 900 online quilters who, despite taking their art seriously, have some fun along the way.

“I have never wanted to turn QuiltArt into a commercial venture,” Judy says. “I strongly feel that the beauty of the Internet is the sharing of knowledge with others and that it be available to everyone. One of the beauties of QuiltArt is that all levels of quilters can come together and interact with each other. We have beginners on our list, as well as some of the most well-known names in the quilting world, and every level in between.

“Just about the only limits I put on the list are that we not discuss politics or religion and that we treat each other with respect. Occasionally, the chat aspect gets out of hand and I have to remind folks to get back on topic,



BARBARIC SPLENDOUR

By Catherine Jones



Last month, in a moment of general self-doubt, I asked my daughter, who's twenty and knows about fashion trends, what she thought I should do about my appearance. She tilted her head to one side, reflectively, like a merchant appraising a shipment of slow-moving goods. "Well," she said at last, "you could buy some

new clothes. Something tighter-fitting, plainer, and more compact."

This was not I'd been hoping to hear. I like scarves and flowing skirts; I like florals, paisleys, plaids, fifties-style abstractions, and roller-printed imitation Javanese batiks. I like prints derived from graffiti, from [Aboriginal paintings](#), from Victorian-era wallpaper or [Yoruba adire cloth](#). I love the crazy mix of styles and plunder of art history that goes by the name of textile design. I've wished I could wear it all at once on my back. In any case, I didn't relish the prospect of becoming plainer and more compact. That sounded too much like becoming the kind of painting that's acceptable because it fits in the blank spot over the sofa and doesn't displace any furniture.

Really I wanted my daughter to fling open the closet door, yank all my clothes off their hangers, and assemble out of this thrift-shop jumble of textile history some combination of colors, textures, and patterns that looked more or less in style. This didn't happen, because it wasn't possible. The raw materials just weren't there. As my daughter laid out her own observations on fashion I realized that for years I'd been choosing what I wore mostly on the basis



of whether I liked the cloth. And telling myself that what didn't work out as clothing might eventually get cut up into patches and reassembled in some more interesting way.

I saw how stubbornly I'd resisted anything that looked high-tech, hard-to-maintain, athletic, or possibly militaristic. No big expanses of solid, bright color that might develop hard-to-remove stains. No sharp creases or pleats that might look funny if other parts of the garment sagged or stretched. No braid, no rip-stop nylon, no metal buttons, and very few zippers, eyelets, or snaps. My wardrobe seemed poised between ornamental excess and some frugal Depression-era gestalt, some view of life in which zippers always jam, knits always snag or run, fabric always develops worn spots that need to be camouflaged, and anything resembling a sailor in dress whites either gets doused with spaghetti sauce or else goes abruptly out of style.



It struck me too that my own middle-aged fashion dilemma was not unrelated either to choices in quilt-design or to the perennial conflict in art between the advocates of classic simplicity and those who prefer "barbaric splendour." I came across this second term in a book by E. H. Gombrich, an art historian who, among other things, has written the most thorough and interesting book I've seen on the subject of decorative art. It's called **The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art** and apparently originated in a series of lectures given at New York University Institute of Fine Arts sometime in the late seventies.

Gombrich fascinates me for at least two reasons. First, he's too secure personally — with all his academic credentials — and too immersed in pre-Modernist art history to belabor the distinction between decorative and other, ostensibly more serious, art. Second, he dredges up and presents for the reader's inspection, startling passages from unexpected sources, many relevant to the recurrent simplicity-versus-excess debate.



Most of us have heard the slogan, “Less is more.” (Gombrich quotes it as “attributed to” the architect Mies Van der Rohe.) And many of us have marveled at — and maybe felt both chilled and inspired by — the austere beauty of traditional Amish quilts. Their big expanses of densely quilted solid color can look both dramatic and terribly unforgiving — unforgiving of dirt and stains, unforgiving of shoddy workmanship, and unforgiving too of those who fled to the secular world from rigors of Amish community life. I’ve wondered about connections between the stark appeal of Amish quilts and the work of some severely Modern painters (Kline, Mondrian, Motherwell, and so on). I’ve also wondered whether the acceptance of quilts as art may entail their passing through some stage of stern simplicity, some phase of bold design and less-is-more style.

But it didn’t occur to me till I started in on Gombrich’s book that arguments over simplicity and the pared-down manner go back for millennia in European history. Gombrich quotes Cicero, the Roman politician, on the pros and cons of a plain oratorical style. Cicero was contending with the aesthetics of the Atticists, language purists from Attica who objected to ornate speech, referred to as “Asiatic” oratory.

The xenophobia implicit in that word “Asiatic” — the linking of foreigners with a style considered gaudy, irrational, and unsound — doesn’t end, of course, with the ancient Greeks. Gombrich goes on to quote from [Adolf Loos](#), the Austrian architect and pioneer of the Modern functional style. Writing in 1898, in an article that would now be considered spectacularly racist, Loos argues that “The less civilized a people is, the more prodigal it will be with ornament and decoration. The Red Indian covers every object, every boat, every oar, every arrow over and over with ornament. To regard decoration as an advantage is tantamount to remaining on the level of a Red Indian.” Loos then urges his



presumably European audience to overcome “the Red Indian within us.”

However lunatic that advice may sound today, after the reevaluation of Native American art, after the demotion of Modernism into one art movement among many, and after two world wars conducted by civilizations that had risen to the “level” of not decorating their weapons, Loos was not quite lone crank he seems. The ideals of functionalism and understatement are still potent and visible in the art world today. A look at the ads in glossy art magazines — the pictures of track lighting, white walls, and bare hardwood floors, the full-page display ads consisting only of white-on-black text announcing upcoming shows by artists whose names say it all — should convince anyone that the notion of Attic restraint has not gone out of fashion. What’s less clear is just who, right now, has been cast in the role of the “Asiatic.” Maybe people who cover up hardwood floors.

Another puzzling question is how a gaudy art like patchwork — one that combines, at least potentially, hundreds of different patterns and motifs in each finished work — will fare as it penetrates an art world that’s at least intermittently in love with restraint. What will happen as quilt-making attracts more people imbued with the values of that world?



At this point many quilt-makers have taken to dyeing and painting their own fabric. Or at least to overdyeing printed goods and thus subduing the pattern. Many have also used Van Dyck and cyanotype processes to add monochrome images to the finished product. It’s hard to say in general whether these manipulations have arisen because quilt-makers have wanted more control over their raw materials and imagery or because they’ve been striving, maybe even unconsciously, toward a less busy, less multi-colored result. Looking, for example, at Nancy Crow’s recent work (and at the fabrics for quilting issued under her name), I wonder if part of the quilting world may not be heading for some fashion of simplicity, some equivalent of the Chicago School in archi-

texture. Maybe that's a necessary rite of passage for quilts if they're going to escape disparagement as some kind of barbarian curiosity.

On the other hand, not all art gets placed on the classic-versus-barbaric or Neo-Classic-versus-Rococo (or maybe Modern-versus-post-Modern) continuum. Gombrich himself points out that such paired opposite labels have been applied mostly to European art. Certain kinds of African-American quilts, for example, (those with bold irregular piecing and large-scale prints) may manage to defy that classification. The irregularity of the piecing places such quilts outside the classic category; the balance they achieve depends on arrangement of light and dark patches, not on exact measurement. But at the same time these quilts don't look ornate; the scale of some of the prints is just too big for a lot of fussy detail to build up.

I'd like to find a similarly category-jumping approach to the problem of clothing myself. A fondness for patterned fabric is hard to manage in a time when, as my daughter pointed out, the sought-after look is plain and compact. Hoping that she might have overstated the case, I went to the newsstand and browsed through several fashion magazines. Page after page showed snug-fitting clothes just waiting to stretch or wrinkle out of shape in solid colors just waiting for someone to spill



the soup. Occasionally I'd come across a print: either a floral in a low-cut evening dress or else a hard-edged geometric design. Since the clothes looked so fragile, I imagined them a year from now, damaged beyond further wear and being recycled into a quilt.

The quilt in my mind's eye looked unexpectedly good — reflective of current taste and a refreshing break from the all the barbaric splendor accumulated in my closet. Since I couldn't wear the quilt, I went to the Goodwill store and there found a pair of dark gray jeans and a plain black coat. I shortened the coat — less is more — and then recycled two old skirts of mine into a pieced neckscarf that went with the coat and looked more subdued than either skirt ever had. I stopped at that point lest I wind up cutting my whole wardrobe into patches. The pursuit of Attic restraint seemed to call for restraint. Besides, I'm waiting for fashions to change.



Catherine Jones lives in Berkeley, California. An artist, quilter, and mathematician, she is a regular contributor to TVQ. She can be reached at cathjone@netcom.com



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CHARMS & SCHNIBBLES

QUILT CHALLENGE.

The Los Angeles Romance Authors, a chapter of the Romance Writers of America, is sponsoring a challenge quilt contest with the theme "Isn't It Romantic?"

The challenge is to create a 30" X 30" wall hanging using fabrics donated by RJR and MM. Any design or technique, from traditional to contemporary, is acceptable.

The entry deadline is May 15, 1996. More information about this contest is available from Cathy Yardley at cyardley@earthlink.net.

NEW MAILLIST.

A new maillist for crazy quilters has been established through the Quiltropolis website. The list is for discussion of all aspects of crazy quilting, including construction, surface embellishment, embroidery, etc. To subscribe, point your browser to <http://www.quiltropolis.com> and pick the mail lists item. There are also a lot of other mail lists available at Quiltropolis.

JAPAN CONNECTION.

One of the most gratifying things about doing TVQ is being able to bring quilters from around the world together. After our [profile of quilting in Japan](#) last summer, I was contacted by TVQ subscriber Barbara Elfman, from Sudbury, Massachusetts, about how to get in touch with Japanese quilters. She wanted to start a quilt-related exchange between children from the two countries. A couple of days before Christmas I received the following update from Barbara:

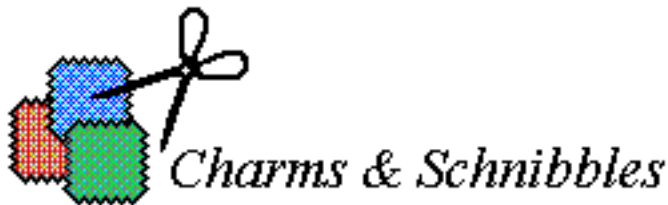
"I wanted to update you on the connection I made through you on the Japanese quilt project with Sumi Manabe. Through Sumi I made contact with a woman in Osaka named Saori Konobe. The three of us did a lot of e-mailing back and forth . . . I sent 20 freezer-paper-backed muslin squares and gifts to Saori and she took them into her daughter's class and each child decorated a square. At the same time, I went into my son's first grade class and did the same.

"My kids used permanent markers and drew things about their lives, like seasons in New England, the American flag, money, teacher, parents, playground, etc. I then boxed the squares up and sent them off with letters from the kids and more gifts. Saori received them and is now hand-piecing them and then will hand-quilt them with a group of Japanese friends. She has sent me the completed squares from her daughter's class which I am now anxiously waiting for.

"It has been a wonderful process. When I receive the squares, I will put them together and then we are going to try and get both quilts together in Japan and here with me, so the kids can see both quilts. My son's teacher, Mrs. Betsy Whitney, has loved this and we did a literature search which then created a whole curriculum on quilts for the children. We will share the whole unit with the entire school at the end of the year.

"I also sent children's quilt books to Sumie which she translated for Saori. I got a Christmas card from Sumie and I really feel like I have two lovely Japanese friends now. I hope you will share this thru TVQ. The children got so much from this experience. They really thought about how they wanted to present themselves to their Japanese friends. Mrs. Whitney took pictures through the whole process, so part of the presentation to the school will be a slide show."

TVQ thanks Barbara for sharing her experience with our readers!



PROFILE: QUILT RESTORATION CONFERENCE

By Kris Driessen

This year's Quilt Restoration Conference was held in my hometown of Albany, NY, and I found it to be a tremendous learning experience. Although the lectures covered many topics, I learned as much from the other participants as I did from the formal lectures.

I opted to attend the Textile Identification Course, which was offered both pre- and post-session. In this class, we learned how to identify a thread from four kinds of cloth: linen, wool, cotton, and silk, by looking at it under a microscope. We also learned to identify the weaves of both hand and machine woven textiles by using a pic glass (linen tester). This information plus a simple tape measure can help you determine how and why a piece of cloth was likely made. We examined an actual piece of linsey woolsey, and an actual piece of shoddy. I found the hands-on aspect of this workshop to be invaluable.

The conference began with Becky Hertle, author of ["Time Span Quilts."](#) She gave a slide presentation on the challenges in finishing old quilt tops. Sharon Newman gave a presentation based on her books "Treasures from Yesteryear." She discussed the different styles and techniques of various time periods, and offered suggestions for restoring quilts from these time periods. Both presenters brought quilts for us to examine.

Nancy Kirk treated us to a slide presentation on her first restoration piece. It was absolutely fascinating to watch both Nancy and her talent evolve. If you weren't enthusiastic about the challenges of quilt restoration before attending this session, you were afterwards. Inge Stockton gave an information-packed lecture helpful for those in the business of professional restoration.

Shirleen McElderry gave a lecture on what a color photocopier can do for you. I was surprised by the true color of a color copier. Shirleen talked about different methods of getting a color copy on the fabric and how to use it. Several people in the audience, who had tried different techniques, offered their advice as well.

Camille Cognac gave a presentation on what makes a Victorian quilt Victorian, and she demonstrated various methods of fusing fabrics. She also provided a "No



White Gloves" exhibit of touchable textiles. Beverly Dunivent also gave a brief lecture on foundation piecing.

The evenings were show and share sessions, often lasting until midnight. Betty Keiser ("The Path Less Traveled") talked about the drunkards path block and how she used her pieced curve technique when doing restoration. Lynn Gorges Lancaster gave a presentation on a Palampore she had found, and the research she had done on it. Virginia Vis spoke on how to clean the various stains on quilts. A number of people showed the pieces they were restoring, including one woman who was reproducing a quilt which had been passed down from father to son since the Civil War. Another showed

us a signature quilt she purchased in California and research in New York.

It was hard to say good-bye after the week of camaraderie. Because we all shared the same interest, we all became instant friends and often stayed up half the night sharing our tips and techniques. The next Quilt Restoration Conference will be held in Omaha, Nebraska in September next year, and I can't wait to go!

For more information on the Quilt Restoration Society, visit their web pages at <http://www.albany.net/~oldquilt/grs.htm>, or write to The Quilt Restoration Society at P. O. Box 337, Hillsdale NY 12529. For more information on the next Quilt Restoration Conference, E-mail Nancy Kirk at kirkcoll@aol.com or visit her web pages at <http://www.auntie.com/kirk/>. You can also call at 1-800-398-2542, or write to 1513 Military Avenue, Omaha NE 68111-3924.

Kris Driessen lives in Albany, New York, and runs Hickory Hill Antique Quilts. She can be reached at

oldquilt@albany.net and her website is at <http://www.albany.net/~oldquilt/>

Kris has also started a new maillist for discussion of old quilts and their restoration. She has provided us the following information for those who might be interested in subscribing: "The Quilting Heritage ListServ was created to give quilters a forum to discuss the historical aspects of quilting. We discuss all aspects of antique quilts - fabrics, design, color, etc. - as well as the stories behind them. We also share our experiences with the more practical aspect of antique quilts - finding, washing, dating and researching, restoring and even reproducing. Some buying, selling and swapping is allowed, but our primary focus is on learning from each other by exchanging stories, research, tips and techniques. Subscribe requests (the word subscribe in the body of the message) should be sent to: QHL-request@cuenet.com. Subscribe requests for the digest version should be sent to: QHL-Digest-request@cuenet.com.



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Look for patterns by applique patterns by Jeana Kimball, template-free patterns by Gretchen McKenzie-Clarke, paper-pieced Mariner's Compasses by Lori Nixon, and paper piecing patterns by Jan Engan on the home page: <http://quilt.com/Pinetree>, where you can also check out the rest of the catalog. PineTree will send you a hard copy of the catalog if you e-mail your name/address/city/state/zip to pinetree@quiltworks.com! If you are on AOL and prefer to contact someone on AOL, Donna, whose e-mail address is QuiltQtrs, has joined the PineTree team! Visa, MasterCard, and Discover are all welcome. PineTree is online to answer questions about quilting products at pinetree@quiltworks.com



ESCHER INTERACTIVE

M.C. Escher was during his lifetime and today remains an outsider to the mainstream of world art. The Dutch creator of linoleum and woodcuts known for his pioneering work with spatial illusion, tessellations and morphing (long before computers) went his own way both in the media he chose and in his theoretical approach to his art. He found himself criticized for being too intellectual and methodical (i.e. not spontaneous), a practitioner of a craft rather than an art, an artisan rather than an artiste. His approach aligned him more with mathematics and science than with art, and his writings are full of plaintive defenses of the methods which he seems to have been destined by temperament to employ.

These criticisms may strike a chord with contemporary quilters, who have suffered the same rejection or, at best, ambivalence, about the validity of quilting as “fine art.” Quilting’s grounding in domestic craft and its historical roots in geometric patchwork are both its greatest strengths and its worst handicaps when it comes to acceptance by the art world.

Ironically Escher has now become something of a cult figure, complete with a line of products featuring his art, sold by museum stores and on the web (<http://www.texas.net/escher/>). One of the latest of these products is a new CD-ROM called Escher Interactive (Byron Preiss Multimedia Company) that offers a fresh way to become familiar with his life and work and to employ his techniques to create your own designs.

The CD-ROM, which is offered only in a Windows version, is divided into nine major categories, including a biographical section, a gallery of Escher’s works, a tessellations workshop, a morphing module, and several other areas that allow the user to play with Escher’s designs using a variety of optical “toys.”

The biographical and gallery sections provide an excellent overview of the artist’s life and work. Still photographs and audio narration are nicely integrated into an elegant presentation of his childhood, his marriage, his travels, and his activity in his studio. More than 600 of Escher’s works are included in the gallery, which is organized chronologically. You can proceed an

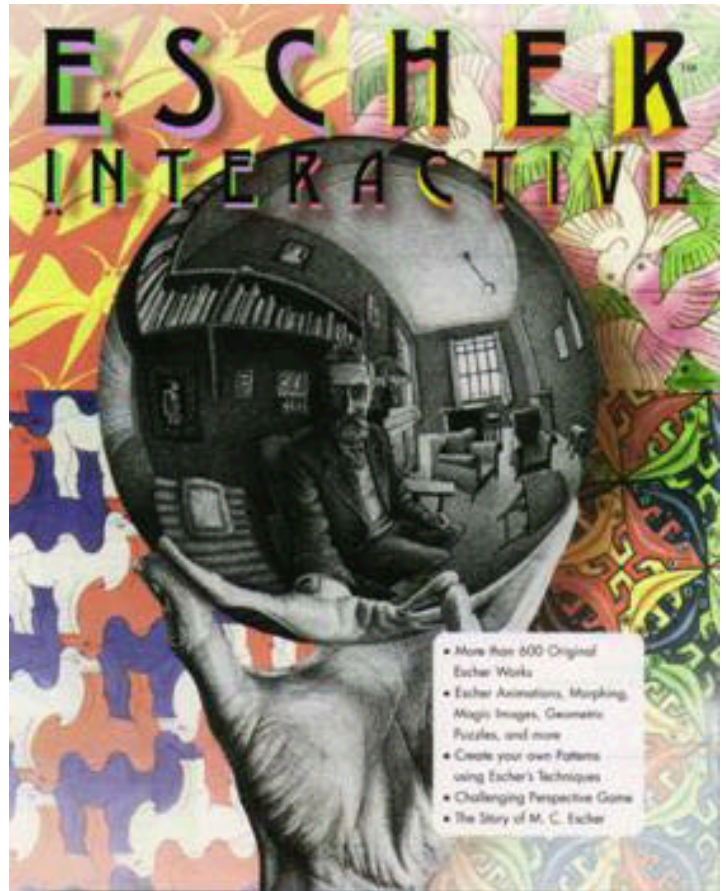


image at a time or click on a timeline to navigate. About one in every four or five of the images is accompanied by audio commentary.

Tessellations — geometric techniques for dividing up a plane into symmetrical interlocking forms — have been of much interest to contemporary quilters, and some, like Ruth McDowell, have studied the science in depth. Escher Interactive offers a software module which allows the user to manipulate shapes to create her own tessellated designs, based on a variety of different approaches, and to print them out or save them to disk. While the program does not provide a way to output the design in a template or other form useful to a quilter, it offers virtually limitless opportunities to play with designs when can then be manually adapted to quilt-making.

Likewise a morphing module is included on this disc that could be used by an enterprising quilter to de-

velop an unusual quilt design. Shapes can be drawn which can then be progressively changed to form new shapes at the end of the process. Again this is not designed specifically for quilters, and it does require extra work to convert these designs from what appears on the screen or printout to a usable quilting template. But there are quite a few creative possibilities once you learn how to use the module.

Other sections of the CD-ROM are less interesting, and somewhat less relevant. For instance a module of “magic images” takes advantage of the contemporary fascination with 3-D illusions, using Escher’s work as the basis, but appears to be more of a gimmick than a meaningful way to relate to the art. Likewise an “im-



While the program does not provide a way to output your own design in a template or other form useful to a quilter, it offers virtually limitless opportunities to play with designs which can then be manually adapted to quilt-making.

possible puzzle” game can be fun, but aside from being geometrically based, it has little relation to Escher.

A section called “Animated Escher” is of interest in that it takes some of Escher’s still geometric renderings and puts them in motion, creating interesting perspectives and eye-teasers. Their applicability to design is problematic, but then this CD-ROM doesn’t promote itself primarily as a design tool.

Another section, called “Spheres” gives you some of Escher’s “impossible buildings” and a mouse-manipulated tool for looking at them through a small convex glass. I found this the least interesting of the modules on the disc. After a little bit of experimentation it seemed kind of pointless.

Technical and production aspects of this CD-ROM are all quite high quality. The voices and the music which accompanies the narration are professionally done, and the use of one female and one male voice helps to create variety. Program installation went flawlessly and I have



had no lock-ups of the program even though I’m using a slow (2X) CD-ROM drive.

The disc comes without a manual. There are installation instructions and some minimal introductory material in the CD liner notes, but you are dependent for the most part on online help. Fortunately that help is pretty good, and context-sensitive, so I was able to figure out how to do most things, though I would have to spend a great deal more time with the program to really master it and mine its potential.

All in all, if you have an interest in Escher and the implications of his work for quilters, this disc is a nice addition to your CD-ROM library. It will probably be interesting and fun for children as well. I bought my copy for about \$40 through the Boston Art Museum catalogue, and I have seen it on the shelves of major software stores.



It is also available directly from the publisher at <http://www.byronpreiss.com/bauhaus/escher/escher.htm>

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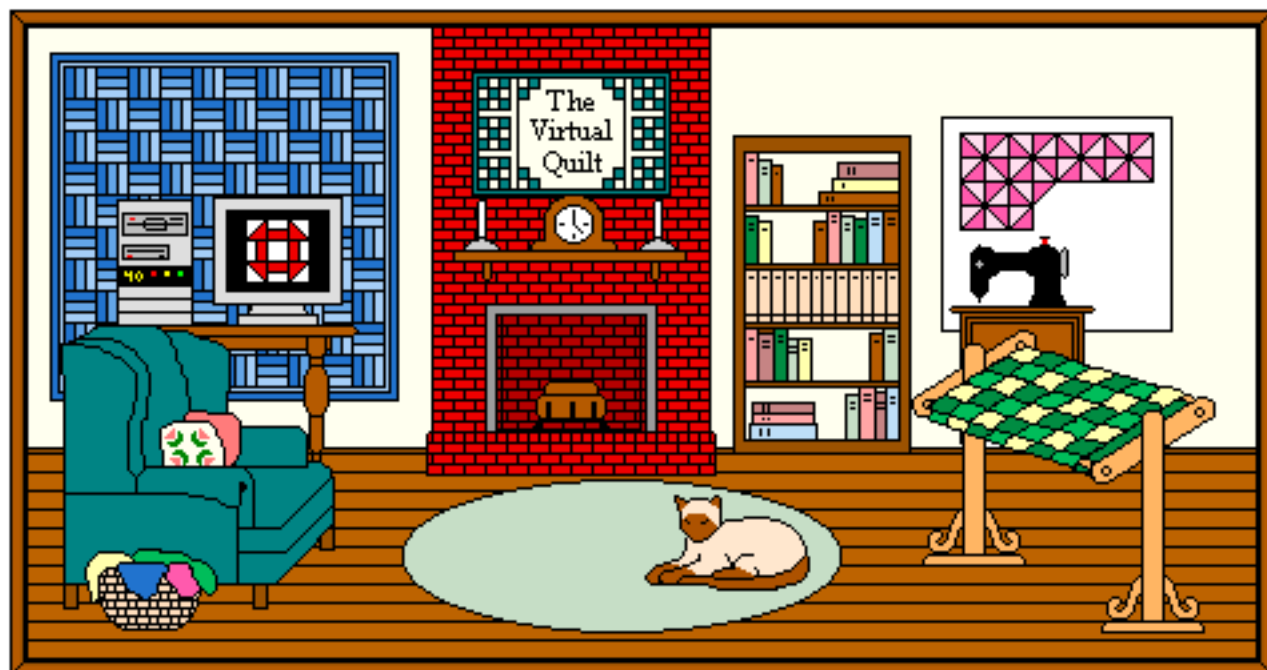
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A Newsletter for
Computing Quilters

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