

# The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for Online Quilters

Issue 15 • April, 1997

## Quilting in Canada



Canadian  
Quilters Ring



Member  
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**THIS MONTH'S  
PATCHWORK  
PLANET**



Quilt Canada  
1998

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# THE PATCHWORK PLANET QUILTING IN CANADA

By Nancy Cameron Armstrong (and friends)

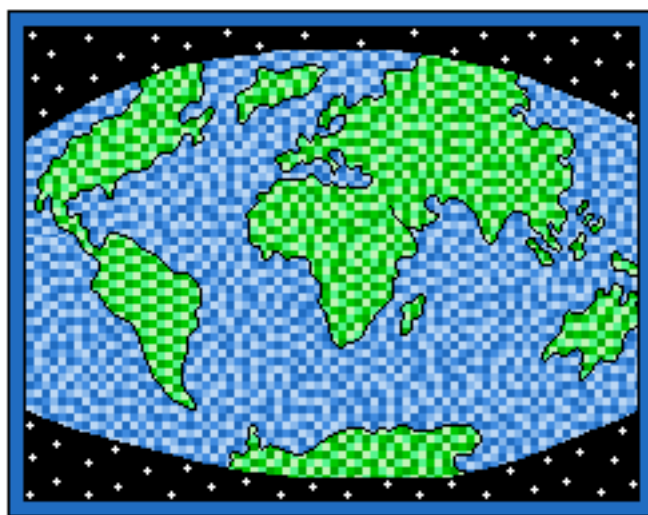
“An article on Quilting in Canada? Of course, pleased to be asked.”

But, wait a minute ... as I turned this over, I realized that viewing the complexity of the quilting scene in the second largest country in the world, from the coast of the Pacific Ocean and east 3,223 miles, called for more than one reporter. My informants, to whom I am most grateful, are: Shirley Connolly - far northern BC; Jayne Willoughby Scott - Edmonton, Alberta; from Ontario-Ann Bird (Ottawa), Dorothy McMurdie (Windsor), and Isobelle Underwood (Southampton); Jocelyne Patenaude - Montreal, Quebec; Barbara Robson - Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Carol Pettigrew - Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

Let's start with a bit of history, geography, and statistics: The French pioneered Canadian settlement in the 17th century (Quebec City, 1608) and Britain acquired Nova Scotia in 1717. Both English and French are official languages and a tie still remains to the “British Empire” even though there has been no formal legislative link since 1982. The population of Canada (less than the state of California with only 6 people per square mile compared to California's 175+) is nearly 80% urban. There are 10 provinces and 2 territories (total area equals the 50 US states plus a second Texas!). Only five provinces have more than 1 million population: Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba. Over 1/3 of the population lives in Ontario, and all of the provinces but Ontario have only 1 or 2 “major” cities. Over 90% of the population and all but Edmonton of the major cities are within 100 miles of the Canada/US border, which means lots of empty spaces but also some quilters who live a long way from a quilt shop. Throughout this essay, I suggest keeping in mind the idea of a small population living in a very big country right next door to an entrepreneurial giant.

There is a minuscule bibliography for the history of quilting in Canada. In the 1970s, when the second 20th Century quilt revival was taking hold, both Mary Conroy (Three Hundred Years of Canada's Quilts:

Toronto, Griffin House, 1976) and Ruth McKendry (Quilts and Other Bed Coverings in the Canadian Tradition: Toronto, Van Nostrand Rheinhold, 1979) carried out some early and limited research. However, the 1990s has seen a few exciting studies and publications that have looked carefully at the historical, geographical, and social factors that explain how Canadian quilting traditions have developed. Old Nova Scotian Quilts by Scott Robson and Sharon MacDonald and Patchwords 1992



& Patchwords 1994: Volumes I and 2 of the Research Papers of the Canadian Quilt Study Group edited by Nancy Cameron Armstrong were both published in 1995. The CQSG published papers include studies carried out in Ontario and Prince Edward Island. These studies are ongoing, as is a project in Nova Scotia. There are also groups in Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec who are looking carefully at Canadian quilt history and the CQSG provides a network for exchange of ideas and information with members in Canada and nine other countries world-wide.

The earliest pieced quilt in North America is in the collection of Montreal's McCord Museum. It is inscribed “1726” and is pieced from silk (including brocade and damask), velvet, linen and cotton. Research indicates that “The McCord Quilt” was made in 18th century England

and may not have arrived in Canada until the 19th. Mary Conroy refers to several 18th century inventories, including a 1752 Quebec sales record of quilts very likely brought from France. So when did quilting actually begin in Canada?

The earliest written reference Sharon MacDonald found in Nova Scotia was on the death in 1771 of Elinor Fallon, who left behind “one Quilt her own making.” The oldest surviving examples of quilts in Nova Scotia date from about 1810 (a Four-patch made of homespun,



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handwoven woolen cloth, and an English-pieced hexagon of cottons imported from England) and the oldest in the PEI study is an 1810 frame, or medallion, scrap quilt of imported cottons with a wonderfully romantic and sad history of the maker “Miss Catherine Anderson of New London” whose betrothed “master of a sailing vessel” died at sea when she was only 18. She never married and died when she was 93. Although the tie to English quilting traditions remained quite strong in isolated Australia, the proximity to the US had a pronounced effect on Canadian quilters early on and the American pieced block quilt rapidly gained precedence over English paper piecing, framed medallions, and whole-cloth quilts.

Isobelle Underwood in her work with the quilts of Ontario’s largely rural Bruce and Grey Counties has identified a significant genealogical source. “About 10 per cent of the quilts registered are Signature or Friendship quilts.” In addition to the many hundreds of surnames in her study’s family quilt histories, she has recorded approximately 22,000 surnames just on these quilts, a genre which generally include dates and a place name.

If a pre-contact art form, such as Pacific plaiting, is meant when we talk of “indigenous tradition,” there is no “Native quilting tradition.” However, there are in Canada, as in the United States, various indigenous textile traditions — many of them still practiced, or being revived, within First Nations communities as they search for and reassert their heritage so long denigrated by the dominant population. For several years, Ann Bird has been studying “Non-native Quilts with Native Art Influences and Quilts Made by Native Women.” She has attended Pow Wows across the country and interviewed and photographed quilters and their quilts. She observes, “there is little interaction between Native and non-native quilters. Native quilts are utilitarian except for Starblankets (Lone Star), which are often ceremonial and have been used to honor people since the late 1800s, mostly on the prairies.”

There is only one national quilt guild, Canadian Quilter’s Assoc./Assoc. canadienne da la courtepointe. Its Regional Representatives through their CQA/ACC Newsletter quarterly reports give a good insight into the prevalence of guilds across Canada. In the Summer 1996 issue Pat Menary says, “I am exhausted after reading over 100 guild newsletters.” Her report includes a brief look at JUST the pro bono activities of only 20 of the Ontario guilds, the province with the largest population and most members in CQA/ACC. Awesome! This particular issue has 12 pages of reports from nine of the provinces and both territories. Just this one issue confirms Dorothy McMurdie’s observation that, “after reading messages on the Internet about guilds I feel that the Canadian guilds are similar to those in other parts of the world.”

Guilds vary greatly both in size and in structure. Mayflower Handquilters Society, Nova Scotia’s provincial guild, has approximately 250 members and 7 chapters. Within the guild there are “bees,” smaller groups of 6-10 quilters who meet regularly in each other’s homes. Across the country (from sea-to-sea) the Fraser Valley Quilter’s Guild with 480 members is the largest guild in BC. It has eight identified “satellite groups,” and several smaller friendship groups who are not “on record.” As late as 1988 there was only one guild in Greater Vancouver. As of 1997 there are five, and dozens of other groups (varying from 10 to 50) who do not identify themselves as guilds yet meet on a regular basis, do pro bono work, and may even have quilt shows and invited teachers. The groups that are perhaps the

most appealing are those that Isobelle describes as meeting in member's homes, "much laughing and very relaxing. Membership by invitation, to keep numbers manageable." Perhaps akin to that search for a group with which one can bond, is the proliferation everywhere of two or three day "retreats" ... organized by local guilds and small groups and, where possible, kept very inexpensive by staying at a member's cottage.

Isobelle also thinks "that TV and advertisers consistently underestimate the quilting population." She cites Bruce County's Port Elgin (pop. 6,500) with 11 churches. Three she knows have fund raising quilt groups and suspects they all do. With 31 municipalities in Bruce "that is a lot of church quilting groups." She goes on to discuss the dozen agricultural fairs and the 41 Women's Institute branches ... all with raffle quilts, the two quilt guilds in the county, the many informal groups, and closes with the thought that "probably the greatest amount of quilting is done by individuals outside any group."

The Quebec provincial association Courtepointe-Quebec-Quilts is bi-lingual and Jocelyne Patenaude reports that "most of the Montreal francophones are plugged into the Canadian and American quilt networks. However, the majority of francophone quilters are unknown to the association, instead belonging to the large number of Le Cercle des fermieres (comparable to the WI) of which there are maybe 30-40 groups. Most members are not farmers' wives but live in small towns and villages and quilting is only one of many hobbies. They are not bi-lingual and quilt for traditional reasons of community."

The question that caused the greatest variety of responses was "is there a particular style characteristic of Canadian quilting?" Isobelle points out that "Canada for the most part uses the same books and teachers, and watches the same TV programs as do American quilters." However, she believes "uniqueness comes from the special creativity that each quilter possesses ... influenced by her life experiences and geography [and even, as] in the past, by the fabric that was available to them." The several furniture factories resulted in finding, in her heritage search, turn of the century quilts made from heavy upholstery fabrics! Ann agrees, "styles seem quite regionally influenced," and adds that "generally Canadians use bolder color, less actual quilting, and are quite experimental and innovative."

But ... Jayne Willoughby Scott says she thinks

"there is a particular style characteristic of Canadian quilting, though I have struggled over the past few years trying to identify it in words. I think there is more to the style than the subject matter (Northern Lights). In my observations, the designs and colors tend to be more subtle, which I think is reflective of the Canadian approach to things. I think we tend to be less 'in your face'



"The average Canadian is more individualistic in her approach to style. Even though the influences are evident, it seems more people are 'doing their own thing.'"

with our messages and designs than, say, the Americans. I think there is also more a sense of 'community' and 'wilderness' in terms of subject matter, though I can't say this with any certainty. In terms of technique, many Canadian quilters work in isolation because of the expanse and population of the country and I have seen and heard lately of fiber artists being 'discovered' in the middle of nowhere who have been doing fantastic innovative things with their quilting. I think the isolation may bring about some very creative methods and artistic expressions, and that with the improved networking we are just beginning to see the tip of the iceberg of what is really going on in terms of the creative uses of our medium."

Jocelyne thinks "the average Canadian is more individualistic in her approach to style. Even though the influences are evident, it seems more people are 'doing their own thing.' Our quilts are generally more subdued in both content and color. Whether by temperament or limited access to the tremendous variety of fabrics and threads available in the US? People are less influenced by workshop trends, fads, and pop culture in general, although that is changing with the widespread availability of all the new quilting books." Jocelyne — as do Jayne, and Carol — thinks "Canadians always refer to landscape and weather, somehow, which is a defining characteristic in [a] Canadian's self definition. It may not be readily apparent, but it is somehow always there."

Neither Dorothy nor Barbara gave replies to this question and that, in a way IS a reply. I find myself closer to Isobelle's perception of what is happening with the majority of quilters than to those whom I believe would identify themselves as "Art Quilters." Does the point of view explain the responses? Certainly identifying "what is a CANADIAN?" is a question that never goes away, and is frequently the subject of humorous skits and essays and also at the base of serious debates. We have only one trade, or commercial Canadian quilting periodical, Canada Quilts Magazine. It is published only five times a year, and the Editor and Publisher, Deb Sherman, works diligently to find interesting Canadian content to fill its pages. Gail Hunt, after trying unsuccessfully to find a publisher for her all Canadian content Quiltworks Across Canada: Eleven Contemporary Workshops (Pa-



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cific Quiltworks, Ltd 1996) self-published an outstanding and highly recommended title. Canadian content, Canadian publishing, Canadian ... anything! is regularly under threat. Rather like the third world countries inundated with advertising and product, and giving up on their own indigenous art forms, Canada has been a willing and equally unwilling partner in the continental economy and its pluses and minuses.

Jayne and Jocelyne are both multiple prize winners for their art quilts, although Jayne and all of the informants more or less agree, "the art quilt movement in Canada is really in its infancy." She says she thinks "because of the space between the artists in terms of geography, Canadians have not yet established an organization of art quilt makers, but this will happen — hopefully in the near future. Dorothy points out that "Canada does not provide as much financial support for fibre artists, either from the Government or private enterprise as in the US, and Ann says that "of the few numbers, given our population, many are not actively associated with

the quilt scene, rather the art scene." In Quebec Jocelyne knows "only a few other quilmakers who would be part of an art quilt movement. Three want no part of the traditional quilt world, two of us are sort of straddling the different worlds, and a few others think of their quilts as art but have not made any moves toward the 'art' world."

As with all the other replies, numbers of quilt shops and availability of supplies varies greatly location to location. Where there is only one quilt shop in Windsor and two in the Halifax area, Vancouver has seven. As well, Vancouver has many other possibilities, most of which offer the same 10% discount to quilt guild members as the quilt shops and charge less for the same fabrics (e.g. Fabricland, Fanny's, Craft Canada, Wal-Mart, Zellers, and dozens of East Asian stores). The Canadian/US exchange rate has been fluctuating somewhere around \$.72 to the \$1.00. With the cost of transportation, import duty, provincial (PST) and federal (GST) sales taxes, and exchange rate, coupled with the fact that there is virtually no Canadian textile manufacturing, everyone is agreed ... Fabric is VERY expensive. In Vancouver, any fabric with even a touch of gold is \$16.00 a meter. Typical prices for the major quilting lines are \$14 to \$16 at the quilt shops, and \$12 to \$14 elsewhere. The difficulty with fabrics, books, and fairly well all quilting supplies is not lack of availability or choice, but cost. Even books are subject to GST, so the \$21.95 US book easily becomes \$32.95.

Stats Canada recently published latest national figures (Household Facilities and Equipment, 1996) on the percentage of households with personal computers, modems, and internet connections. Which country in the world do you imagine has "the highest rate of computer ownership," which ranks second, and which third? I was surprised; will you be? Canada with 31.6 per cent (almost one family in three, but concentrated primarily in three provinces) is FIRST (followed by US, then Japan). Per cent breakdown by province (PCS first and Internet connections 2nd): Alberta 37.9/10, British Columbia 37.7/10.4, Ontario 36/8.6, Saskatchewan is "distant fourth," followed by Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick.

Everyone seems in agreement that "Canadian web sites are quite good but few in number." Gisele Fortin has designed an excellent Home Page for CQA/ACC ([www.nt.net/~giself/cqaacc1.htm](http://www.nt.net/~giself/cqaacc1.htm)) which she updates and adds new features to regularly. One page is E-mail ad-

dresses of members, and listings of E-mail addresses and web sites are becoming standard features in many guild newsletters. CQSG includes both of these in their Membership Roster; just recently CQA/ACC added a line for E-mail addresses to their Membership Forms. The Canadian Quilter's Ring (anyone with a Canadian, quilt/related URL may be included) will soon have a new member; Gisele is designing yet another Home Page, this one for the Canadian Quilt Study Group.

Although interest in E-mail and internet usage in a large country with a dispersed population is spreading and taking hold rapidly, computer quilt design programs have not become popular. Explanations? Cost may be a factor. (BlockBase at a reasonable \$69.95 US translates to a pricey \$110 CAN.) However, recognizing where the future lies, the biennial national conference Quilt Canada 98 to be held in Vancouver, BC at the University of British Columbia (May 25 - 31) will include three full days of computer classes offering a comparative look at all the relevant software, including general and quilt-specific design programs. Also recognizing INTERNA-

TIONAL as the future of quilting this conference for 400 full-time and 120 part-time delegates will include 1 Australian, 1 Japanese, 1 New Zealand, 4 American, and 26 Canadian teachers, and ... one or more quilt shows from each of these 4 Pacific Rim countries. As well, the National Juried Show 98 will be traveling to International Quilt Week Yokohama 98 "in exchange" for the Japanese show coming to Vancouver.

*Nancy Cameron Armstrong, one of only three named from Canada for inclusion in 88 Leaders of Today's Quilt World (Nihon Vogue, 1995), is Chairperson for the Canadian Quilt Study Group. She dedicates considerable time and effort to this locally-based organization with members in 11 countries. A quilt researcher and retired library science professor, she curated the respected exhibit of Gulf War quilts, "Women in the Eye of the Storm," which appeared at 1992 IQF (Houston) and 1995 MAQF (Williamsburg). She lives two miles from the US/Canada border, and can be reached at [narmstr@ibm.net](mailto:narmstr@ibm.net).*



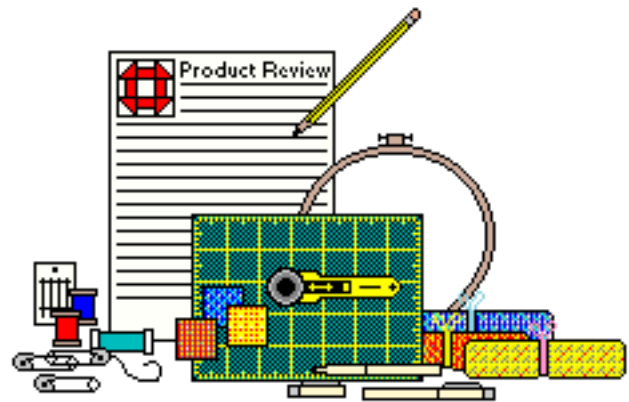
## A GRAPHITE MARKER THAT REALLY WASHES OUT!

By Addy Harkavy

In my continuing quest for the marker that washes out, I had a minor success — some might even say triumph — in a recent test.

With great skepticism I opened a plastic package that contained four suspiciously nasty looking rods of graphite — refills — in their own little cylinder, a holder that secured another rod, and a sharpener. The cosmic needle didn't flick, the package didn't explode in my hand, and the graphite didn't rub off on my fingers, either. So far, so good. A number of quilters had told me that marks made with this thing really had washed out for them, and I had to try it for myself.

After scribbling heavily, lightly, in straight lines, in curves, etc., on several samples of muslin and on light- and medium-color fabric, I **machine sewed over** some of the lines, just to treat the sample as though the lines were hand or machine quilted. This seemed to be a fair test.



Others had told me they washed their quilts and samples in cold water, which isn't my style when testing, so I dumped them in the washer on **hot**. The marks ranged from light and tentative to nasty and dark. To my amazement, all came out. Comparable test pieces then got the cold water treatment, and those came clean, too. Both tests were conducted with unscented, uncolored liquid detergent from the supermarket.

**Thank you, Anita!!!**

The gadget is called: Anita's Washable Graphite Marker and is put out by Morgan Quality Products, P. O. Box 58, Blue Springs, MO 64013; Retail price is \$9.45



# CHARMS & SCHNIBBLES

## NEWS NOTES FROM ALL OVER

**West Australian Quilters' Association Inc** will be holding the Winter Whirl Quilt Symposium 11-17 July 1997. Live in at Presbyterian Ladies College, Peppermint Grove, Perth for one full week. This is during school vacation, and the WAQA has hired the whole boarding school for the use of about 150 quilters. Local and inter-state tutors, visits, fun and companionship with people of similar interests. Everyone very welcome. Interested? Contact Winter Whirl, West Australian Quilters' Association, PO Box 188, Subiaco, 6094 Western Australian and enquire, or [bevmcgra@inet.net.au](mailto:bevmcgra@inet.net.au)



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**Heritage Quilt Show Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site** Petersburg, IL June 7 & 8, 1997 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Quilts will be displayed at the entrance, in the Visitors' Center, and in the village homes. Special events will include the Cherry Basket Quilt Drawing, Make-It Take-It Projects, demonstrations, doll quilt and block contests, and store vendor.

The Hornbuckle quilt made during the 1830-40s will be on display. This quilt is linked to the Abraham Lincoln story where he walked several miles to refund an overcharge on fabric bought at the 2nd Berry-Lincoln Store.

The Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site is the reconstructed village of where Lincoln lived. Take a photo tour of the village at

<http://www.netins.net/showcase/creative/lincoln/newsalem/salempic.htm>

For information on the contests and/or to display quilts send a SASE to

1997 Heritage Quilt Show Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site R. R. 1, Box 244A Petersburg, IL 62675



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### UPCOMING AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF QUILTS, SAN JOSE

Quilts by the award-winning artist Caryl Bryer Fallert of Oswego, Illinois, will be in San Jose's American Museum of Quilts from March 27 - May 11, 1997. These are part of an exhibit which will travel throughout the country coordinated by the Museum of the American Quilters Society in Paducah, Kentucky. This retrospective show, entitled "Caryl Bryer Fallert: A Spectrum of Quilts, 1983-1995," will explore the development of the artist's work,



*Charms & Schnibbles*

with its scintillating colors and illusions of light and motion. Included will be 20 quilts illustrating her various techniques and approaches, including the three-dimensional high-tech tucks and string piecing for which she is so widely known, and her recent explorations of dyed whole cloth quilts with elaborate surface stitching.

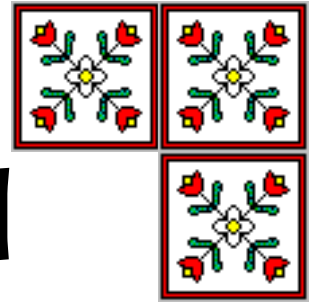
Artist's Reception Thursday, April 3, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. No admission charge. Slide presentation and book signing Friday April 4, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. \$10 non-members, \$7 members.

Simultaneous with this exhibit the museum is featuring "Revisions: Quilts from the Permanent Collection," a show of 19th and 20th century quilts, including some recent acquisitions.





# QUILTER PROFILE

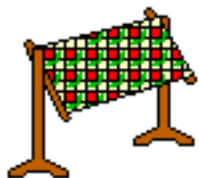


# LINDA COLSH

If the cliché image of a quilter is the woman who “stays at home and tends to her bindings,” Linda Colsh has shown that she can be, and is, at home anywhere in the world. And her quilting has become the better for it. An art quilter with a growing list of credits in shows and publications, Linda has spent most of her adult life in travels in Europe, Asia, and North America which have added depth and dimension to her work.

Linda doesn't lay claim to a rich family tradition of quilting: “My Dad's Mom made a couple of quilts and comforters and my aunt made some quilts, but I can't entertain with stories of crawling around under the quilt frame or learning patchwork on my mother's lap,” she says.

“I have been quilting since 1981 when I gave up steady employment to marry into the military and take



## *Quilter Profiles*

up the nomadic life of an Army spouse. (Ugly terminology isn't it: I'm the ‘spouse;’ he's the ‘sponsor’ and worse yet is ‘dependant’). After a short stint in Atlanta, we moved to West Point NY. That's where I learned to quilt while dabbling in several handcrafts trying to find what I really wanted to do.”

Like many quilters, Linda's early efforts were traditional and tentative as she tried to master both sewing technique and quilt design. The military eventually moved her again, to California, where she continued her self-taught development with assistance from a new direction:

“I'd lived on the East Coast all my life, but to no one's surprise, I fit into California like a hand in a glove. I found the Monterey Peninsula Quilt Guild full of kindred spirits and the California coast to be divine inspira-

tion. So when the boxes were unpacked, I launched into 30 handsewn blocks thinking that would cure my inaccuracy problems—it didn't.

“Then, I took a ‘pattern drafting for machine piecing’ class. This was the missing piece to the puzzle. From this point on, I was able to piece accurately with ease and could concentrate on the fun stuff like design, color, and adding other techniques like free machine embroidery.

“The northern California quilt community is all it's said to be: creativity is encouraged and nurtured. The longer I was there the freer and more original my work became. After a couple of years, I also felt trained, experienced and inspired enough to start teaching quilting to others.”

With mature skills and renewed confidence, Linda then began a new phase of her development as in 1988 she and her family were transferred to Seoul, Korea. “The US Army Post at Yongsan, which means ‘dragon mountain,’ has a well-equipped Arts and Crafts Center and I was able to start teaching quilting there right away,” she says. “My classes there were a teacher's dream. The students were enthusiastic, creative, and very productive. I worked hard to have new ideas to challenge them in each month's series of classes.

“I took advantage of living in Asia and hit the road to see as much as I could. I was able to visit Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong. I joined up with Susan Faeder's very first ‘Quilter's Express’ tour of Japan.

“But without a doubt the trip of my lifetime was to China: my Mom wanted to see China, so I offered to take her when she came for a visit in Spring 1989. We arrived in Beijing in the midst of the Tiananmen Square democracy demonstrations and Gorbachev's visit (we weren't even sure until we got there that we'd get into the country). The authorities and Chinese tour agency wanted us out of the city, but because the streets were often too full for our transportation to move we wal-

lowed in history (we did get to the Great Wall). At the time we were in Beijing, it was quite jubilant, although with People's Liberation Army and police not far away, we all knew what could and did happen (we were safely back in Seoul when the atrocities occurred).

"I recently completed a quilt about this incredible experience and it has just been selected for the next 'Hands All Around' international quilt show at Houston in October. This was a difficult, emotion-filled quilt to make. It took 7 years to complete and the design changed and was added to several times."

During this time as well Linda was moving further from her traditional origins to develop her mature style, which she describes straightforwardly and with a clear sense of purpose: "I make art quilts. I use commercially available and hand-dyed fabrics. I have always dabbled in other forms of surface design, but have not made major use (yet) of these fabrics in my quilts. I am more inclined to explore the look and expressiveness of the quilted line or the sculpted surface formed by quilting as opposed to using a painted line or painted or printed shapes. I enjoy surface design, but, so far, I have been more comfortable using thread and cloth than brush and

and the power of repeated forms. Recently I have done some fabric collage and raw edge work which permits other shapes, but I find the basics of design still govern my compositions (this is only logical)."

After two years in Asia, Linda and her family got word they were being transferred to Brussels, where NATO is headquartered. Of this move she says "My life-long dream of going to Europe not only was coming true, but it would last for 4 years (and then happen all over again!). I figure the Asian and European tours of duty are research assignments for my quilts. I am definitely inspired by and influenced by my surroundings and places I visit. There is a spirit of place that pervades my work and I can see it change when we move.

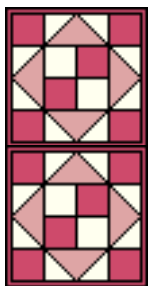
"I still was doing some teaching, although we did so much traveling, I taught less than before. I formed a small quilt group, the BlokQuilters (I lived on Blokstraat—is that an appropriate street for a quilter?)."

If Linda's quilts absorb place, they also accrete their influences from a wide variety of other inspirations, and from a meticulous and disciplined preparation process: "Mostly, I work with simple blocks, if I am working on a block quilt, or with simple shapes if it is a quilt not in block format. I keep journals for written and sketched ideas (it's interesting that the journals have much more writing than sketching, however I work in a non-written medium). I watch in my daily life for things that recur, coincidental things, things that catch my interest, anything that to me seems significant, even if it's something very insignificant. For example, one year I kept noticing orange triangles (a broken flower pot shard, a huge farm pile of carrots, a drawing by my son with 3 orange triangles for mountains, and so forth).

"My college degrees are in Art History and living in Europe surrounded by so many museums and architecture provides almost constant inspiration: a bit of Art Nouveau ironwork might turn up as a quilting design or the process of trying to unravel the meaning of a Magritte symbol might reverse itself and work up some other symbol for my own work.

"Certainly, the experiences of all the places I have visited and lived color my quilts. I don't naturally think linearly and past places and images will flash randomly again into my mind's eye. I have to be quick to make a note in my journal so I can recall such images and ideas when I need them again.

"I like to work with symbols and do a lot of mental and journal work with a symbol before it ever is trans-



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**"I don't try to do  
in cloth what can  
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paint. I am quicker to couch a textured yarn or sew a shiny thread than to draw or paint a line on my quilt's surface.

"The only traditional quilts I work on these days are those that are in my pile of 'tops awaiting marking and quilting.' I hand quilt these in the evening when I'm too tired and bleary-eyed to work on what I love to do: design and construct art quilts.

"Usually, my work is very geometric. That is the nature of piecing. I don't try to do in cloth what can better be done in some other medium. I try to work within the strengths of patchwork which are the geometry of the shapes easily obtainable with a seamed line

lated into cloth. For instance, the chair in 'In the Hot Seat,' [a quilt with a repeating chair motif now featured in *Visions: Quilt Art* - ed.] I wrote pages of ideas of what a chair is, what it has meant in folklore and my personal life—both literally and symbolically. I looked at chairs in famous paintings and photographs and even on an art kite made by Robert Rauschenberg who put chairs on his kite 'so there is a place to sit up there' in the sky.

"The idea for the chair was beginning to kick around in my head in Korea, which is a floor-sitting culture. When something we take so much for granted is missing, it becomes significant and we take notice. Then, the day we visited Toledo, Spain, the winding streets were all lined with chairs — all sorts of wooden stick chairs tied together by a rope — there was to be a religious procession the next day and the chairs were brought out to line the procession's route the day before. It was a sight that will forever be one of my main impressions of this beautiful old city. So, you see, I had to do it."

Linda's return stateside, back to California in 1994, brought her back from the very creative "distractions" of travel and allowed her time to consolidate her many impressions into quilts: "With less sightseeing to do, my quilt production increased in volume and in focus—I sought to make my work more meaningful by working out simple but thought-provoking symbols to incorporate in my quilts. And my color palette brightened and intensified. I learned some surface design techniques to use in my quilts and I started dyeing and discharging fabrics again (I had done some in the late 80s but lapsed while in Europe). My work was more my own now.

"I found the courage to enter some of the larger shows — shows with juries. And I've had some very satisfying success. I have a quilt in 'Visions: Quilt Art.' My quilt about the hi-tech virtual worlds we enter via our computers, while firmly planted in our low-tech chairs was selected for *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine's* 'Quilts: Artistic Expressions' in Lyon, France, last year.

Linda and her family have now returned to Belgium where she now finds herself working in isolation from a "real world" community of art quilters, but able to stay in contact through her computer as a member of CompuServe: "The CompuServe Sewing and Quilting Forum is like a cyberguild. I have made friends there and we share ideas and trade techniques like a real quilt guild. There is a wonderful mix of interests and levels in this Forum. I particularly like the Dyeing and Surface Design section and have been welcomed as a 'Twisted

CISter.' A 'CISter' is a participant in the forum—a word formed from the acronym for CompuServe Information Service, and you become a twisted one when you start



"The idea for the chair was beginning to kick around in my head in Korea, which is a floor-sitting culture. When something we take so much for granted is missing, it becomes significant and we take notice."

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looking beyond the traditional way of designing and making quilts.

"I also get several 'lists' (I really don't know the proper name for this class of 'things' that I receive in digest form several times a day): the Dyer's List, the Wearables list (although I've only made one rather laughable wearable—an apron for the Art Apron Challenge that will be shown this Fall. As a wall quilt, it's fine, but it's rather strange when worn), Quiltropolis, and the Free Motion Embroidery list. Mostly I lurk on these as it is too easy to spend waaayyyy too much time on the computer and not enough creating.

"The list that I most enjoy and find most stimulates my quilt work is the QuiltArt List. The exchange there is usually lively, sometimes even testy, but always interesting. Whether we are discussing quilting or art or crayons, I rarely scroll through any post; it all interests me. Lately, there have been very thought-provoking discussions about the function (and form) of art quilts — a thread started by none other than Michael James. This kind of discussion carries over into my work not in any literal way, but as an influence."


Linda has also used her computer in her quilt design, though sometimes with less satisfaction: I have used CorelDraw to design 3 or 4 quilts. The first quilt I designed on the computer, however, was a fairly traditional 'Judy in Arabia' (a block designed by Jeff Gutcheon). I used Deluxe Paint II and laboriously counted pixels to draft the block in about a 1" square size. That took forever, but after I tiled the blocks, the coloring of the pieces was fun. I wasn't sure when it was all over that I had chosen the easiest method—perhaps pencil, paper and crayons would have been more efficient."

Nevertheless the computer remains a major influence in Linda's art, and she foresees its continuing importance to her as an artist: "I think the computer will play a greater and greater role in my design work. I've already made one quilt about computers ('thruput:// LookingGlass,' which was selected for the 'Quilts: Artistic Expressions' show). My journals have other directions and ideas for computer-themed quilts; so, I expect to be working in that area for some time."

Of other future directions, Linda says: "I look in the near future to be experimenting with some more surface design, but expect in the long run for cloth and thread to dominate my quilts rather than paint and dye. Raw edge work has allowed a measure of design variety in my work. I will be able to use softer shapes in addition to the harder geometric shapes I have worked with in the past.

"I am concentrating also on trying to do more with the quilting of the quilt — experimenting with my own quilt designs; drafting original designs that exploit the qualities of the machine-quilted line or the surface sculpting made by matching thread color to fabric; and trying to defy the physics of uneven quilting in a quest to vary quilting density without getting a wavy quilt."

As is clear from her well-defined sense of self and art, Linda takes her quilting seriously, but not so seriously that it has ceased to be any fun. She has a unique way of making sure that "play" doesn't depart in the concentration on the "work" of design and competition:

"When I'm stressed from having to rush to meet a deadline or from having a hard time resolving a design problem, I often will just set everything aside and make a little 'spirit quilt.' These are not for exhibit; I work them up quickly and smallscale. They are made for 'the spirits,' those mischevous souls that play tricks if they are not kept happy. And they are also to make my own spirit happy. I hang these in my work space and while they often reflect where I am working today, they also contain clues as to where I can go next." 

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# BOOK & PATTERN REVIEW: PLAYING WITH FABRIC

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By Addy Harkavy

When I was a kid, my folks always told me not to play with my food, as I pushed it around on the plate or made sculptures from such delicacies as pureed squash, which I hated. Nobody ever told me not to play with fabric, and the books and pattern that follow quite admirably aid and abet that tendency.

Over the past few years I've found that books about technique or design have proven much more interesting to me than project books. These books — like Marsden's *Quilting with Style* tend to wind up on my reference shelf.

## The Art of Manipulating Fabric

Colette Wolff Chilton

310pp, \$29.95

I recently got my hands on Colette Wolff's *The Art of Manipulating Fabric*. Let the games begin! I'm eager to start playing, and am absolutely amazed by the incredible range and depth of material covered, not to mention a bit intimidated.

The book's given me inspiration for some clothing and a completely new notion about what a white-on-white quilt could look like, all as a result of its amazing graphic examples of dimensional and textural treatments of fabric. This book opens new windows and opens them wide! The author begins with a little rap on how to get the most from the book, and it makes sense because the rap gives a context for what follows.

All the illustrations are line drawings or photographs of white fabric that has been subjected to the technique in question, and the photography uses shadow to its optimum in showing sculptural effects while lending a tactile quality to the examples shown. All instructions are concise and well illustrated, with plenty of notes on how to use (clothing, pillows, etc.) the technique described. Although the book has a special section on quilt-

ing, it's difficult to look at any of it and say that it wouldn't apply.

Wolff has refined "quilt as you go" to "installment quilting," and the section on machine quilting is inspiring, even for me (the worst machine quilter this side of the moon). Pleating, shirring, tucking, gathering, smocking, stuffing doesn't begin to tell it all. Each technique is presented in the form we normally think of ... but then there's more. Tucking is followed by cross-tacked tucks, cabled tucks, partially seamed tucks (shows quite a few examples), bow-tie/undulating tucks, blind tucks and so forth. Lots of nifty dimensional techniques that look like shark's teeth, shingles, you name it. I could go on, but you get the idea here.

Suffice to say that this book is a reference shelf "must have" for anyone who loves to play with fabric.

## Tucks Textures & Pleats

Jennie Rayment J.R. Publications

104 pp, \$24.95

Just in case you have the impression that Colette Wolff said it all in *The Art of Manipulating Fabric*, think again! Jennie Rayment's book, *Tucks Textures & Pleats* admittedly covers some of the same ground, but she covers it differently enough that the two books are additive. Rayment's sections on weaving with fabric, folded designs such as trumpets and cornets, are a joy to read and to work through. She includes prairie points, dimensional bow ties, folded stars, and more. She covers fabric knotting and plaiting, and illustrates the techniques with photographs for functional items that uses these techniques. One thing that fascinated me was a little section on "adding insertions" to the sample. This, of course, is how one would make a dimensional pinwheel, but her instructions **generalize** the concept so quilters can see how to add dimensional insertions to almost

anything!

And that brings me to ...

## The Foldy Stuff, Pleated Quilts

Donna Poster Holiday Designs

\$8.95

OK. This is a pattern, but wow, what a pattern. On the surface, it appears to be iron-on transfers for a log cabin quilt. But wait! The log cabin strips have a dimensional folded edge for a unique new look.

Of course, I didn't start playing with this pattern until **after** reading about making insertions in Rayment's book (above), and all of a sudden, my log cabin sprouted

shark's teeth, and more!

Seriously, though, Donna Poster's directions are impeccable, and the six iron-on transfers will give you anywhere from 60 to 120 6", 7.5", or 9" log cabin blocks on muslin (you supply) foundations. Poster includes lots of useful info, such as yardage requirements, number of blocks required to make a given size quilt, embellishment tips, and more. Extra transfers are available, so quilters don't have to purchase the instructions all over again if they want more, more, more!

Addy Harkavy co-owns *PineTree Quiltworks* in Maine. Their website is at <http://quilt.com/pinetree> and Addy can be reached at [aardvark@ime.net](mailto:aardvark@ime.net).



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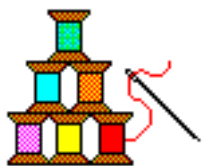
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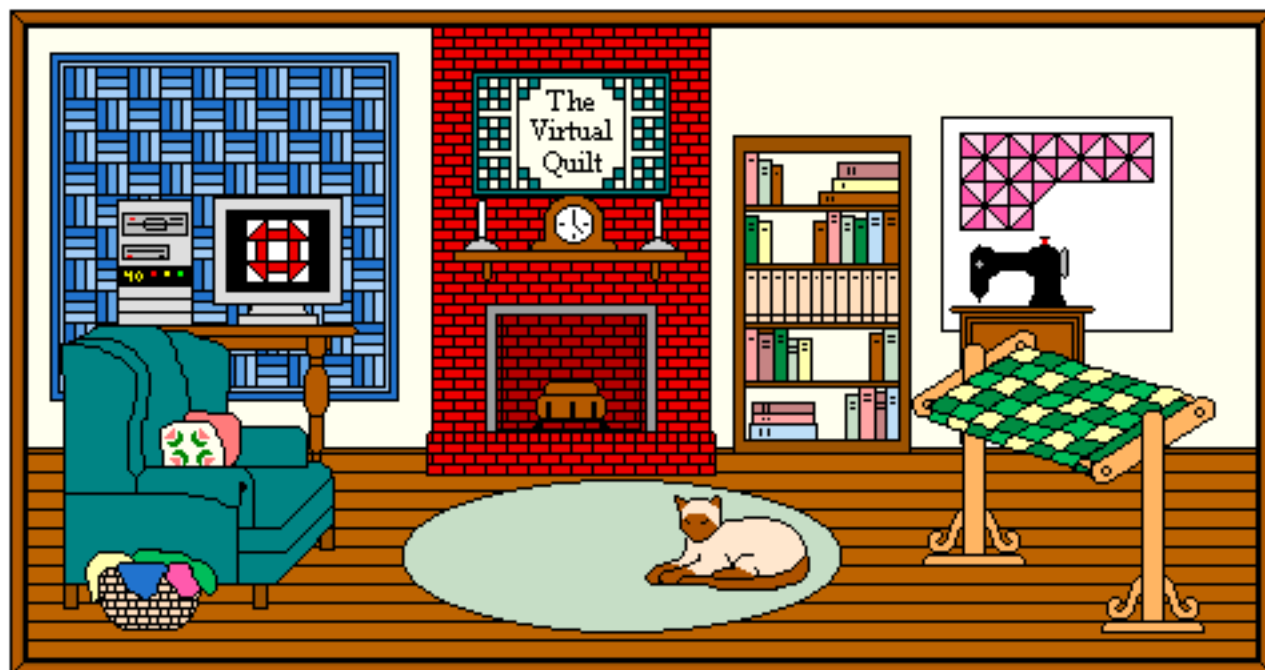
## The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for  
Computing Quilters

Editor and Publisher: Robert Holland, Decatur, GA

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