The Quilt journal: Mission Statement

The past several decades have witnessed an extraordinary, worldwide explosion of interest in exhibiting, making, collecting and studying quilts. Supporting this and in turn supported by it, there has developed an international boom in the gathering, production and dissemination of information on quilts and quilting. Books, periodicals, articles and literature drawing thematic material from the symbolism of traditional American quilt making and quilt folklore have proliferated. Quilt information in non-printed media has experienced commensurate growth. This quilt information extravaganza shows no signs of abating, appears to be recession-proof, and includes material ranging from quilt pulps to the most thoughtful scholarly journals. While the great impetus for this has come from the United States, there has begun to be, as would be expected, feedback from other countries which is influencing and enriching what happens in America. This is particularly true in the area of contemporary quiltmaking but is not confined to that arena. During the two years of planning and review which accompanied the production of "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt"** we surveyed this vast outpouring of quilt information in all media. The Quilt Project was particularly interested in identifying the most significant trends in quilt scholarship, the future needs of quilt scholars, and the future of quilt scholarship. We came to three conclusions:

Infancy of Quilt Scholarship

First, quilt scholarship in all areas, domestic and international, is in its infancy, and that, barely. Other significant areas of quilt interest are equally at a beginning. The evidence for this is clear. The number of professionally trained scholars in the field in relation to the number of scholars working in the field is very small, much smaller than in any other area of the decorative arts. American quilts have accounted for more exhibitions in major museums over the past several decades than all other American decorative arts (furniture, glass, samplers, etc.) combined, and those fields are staffed by scores of professional, salaried curators. There is only one quilt curator in an American art museum. Also, most scholars in the field are women, and very few scholars make their livings in the field. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, while other work done largely by women, such as samplers, had secure niches in the hierarchy of American decorative arts, quilts were until very recently in a sort of art world limbo. Samplers, because they were meant to be hung on the wall like paintings, seemed to have an acceptable functional link to the "high" arts. Quilts, because of their functional nature as bed covers, had no such immediately discernible link and thus had no firm, respected place either in the American decorative arts or in the realm of American folk art. Curatorial careers could not be built around them.

Their status was changed dramatically and forever by those exhibitions which in the 1970s began to show them on the walls of museums to emphasize their design rather than their function. This aspect of quilt history is very new and often conflicts with the traditional views and folklore of quilts. It disturbs not only folklorists, who prefer to see quilts in the context of their social history, but also traditional quilt makers and aficionados who are uncomfortable with the idea of quilts as hanging objects, divorced from their traditional functions. Equally uneasy have been some art historians, who feel that the objects are out of context on museum walls. Thus there is still even within the field great confusion about intent, status, and the role of function and history versus aesthetics. In no other field would there be serious scholars and appreciators of the form who on the one hand want quilts honored for their beauty and the accomplishments of their makers noted, discussed, and praised, yet on the other are opposed to exhibiting them in a way which emphasizes their aesthetics, honors their continued on page 2
The Quilt Journal Mission Statement

This is a product of one of the field's unique aspects: No other thousands of women be ready to march on Washington be-stay of museum shops for decades. In no other field would objects. Reproductions of American crafts have been a main-makers as artists, and discusses them as significant designed objects. Reproductions of American crafts have been a main-stay of museum shops for decades. In no other field would thousands of women be ready to march on Washington because objects famous in the field had been reproduced for sale. This is a product of one of the field's unique aspects: No other has so many parallel interest groups, whose activities are mutually supportive. No other has an enormous constituency actually working in the craft. Quilt scholars and collectors, quilt makers and dealers, museums collecting and exhibiting quilts and museums devoted entirely to quilts, the contemporary quilt making movement and within that, the rise of a group of highly accomplished quilt artists, a publishing industry centered around the subject, all are interconnected, a phenomenon witnessed in no other field. And all are in their infancy. This ferment, controversy, freshness, is what makes the quilt field so exciting. It has also kept from joining it people trained in art history, museology and aesthetics, who wish to make their livings as scholars in the decorative arts and who would bring to it a needed perspective and professionalism. If more aestheticians wrote about quilts, fewer people would feel uncomfortable with exhibitions that emphasize their aesthetics. If more museums had quilt curators, quilts would be studied and viewed differently by the cultural establishment. If more professionals were attracted to the field and made their livings there, the quantity and quality of scholarship in the field would increase dramatically.

While we have concentrated here on aspects of quilt scholar-ship, the infancy of the field is no less apparent in its other components: exhibitions, publishing, quiltmaking. It may safely be said that we are at the beginning of a new quilt era in which we will see phenomenal, worldwide development in all areas. It might also be noted that, as a consequence, an extraordinary and unprecedented opportunity exists for documenting and studying the field as it grows and develops. For this reason we have pressed for the establishment of an international quilt index, first proposed and discussed at "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt" earlier this year. Both the Journal and the Index have been brought under a parent organization, The Quilt Project, to facilitate management. We invite your participation in The Quilt Project which will support efforts of The Quilt Project, this journal, and The International Quilt Index.

Interdisciplinary Involvement

A second conclusion, which grew from our study of current quilt scholarship and our experiences at the Celebration, was that the future of quilt study is interdisciplinary. No other decorative art object carries the quantity and quality of significant social and aesthetic information that is to be found in quilts. Embodied in the objects are data of the greatest interest to art historians, social historians, feminist scholars, students of industry and economics, etc. Within the field many scholars have been specializing, a few concentrating on aesthetics, others on social history, others on quilts as women's work, others on pattern names and origins, others on ephemera, others on the work of specific regions, others on particular types of quilts. As knowledge grows, such specialization will increase. As quilt scholars continue the difficult process of separating quilt folklore from facts, as more hard information is produced by responsibly conducted research and made available to scholars in other fields, the extraordinary nature of the quilting phenomenon will attract increased attention from other disciplines. Conversely, as quilt scholars work to increase their grasp and understanding of the field, they will seek information and methodology from other disciplines, and this will increase contact and interaction among different fields. Once such a process has started, it is self-perpetuating and irreversible, and it seems clearly to be happening. It will be one of the purposes of The Quilt Journal to bring significant work of quilt scholars and other information that might be of interest to the attention of those in other fields. It is equally our intention to alert those in the quilt field to important developments in other fields which bear significantly on quilts. The Index and The Journal will together serve this burgeoning scholarship.

International Focus

The final conclusion was that in many areas of quilt activity, there will be more international participation. This will certainly be true in contemporary quilt making, exhibitions, and in many areas of study. Ambitious quilt scholarship is already underway in other countries, and the results are evident in important discoveries, in new exhibitions and in publications. This tempo will increase and will enliven and inform research, quilt exhibitions and quilt making in this country. We intend to seek a wide international audience, to bring significant information generated in other parts of the world to the attention of the American quilt community, and to act as a reference source on important American quilt information for those living and working elsewhere.

There are many admirable publications in this field, and it is not The Journal's wish to compete with any of them. The need, however, for a source of quilt information directed toward other fields and other countries as well as to the American quilt establishment, toward the future, is clear. There is neither already functioning nor in the planning stage, any source of quilt information which deals with our concerns and the concerns of many currently working in the field. It is one of The Journal's missions to facilitate the work of those around the world who will be coming to quilt research from other fields, other places, and with different visions. The Journal will avoid publishing the sorts of information capably reported by others, concentrating instead on quilt issues of interdisciplinary and international interest and important issues avoided, mis-interpreted or overlooked elsewhere.

We will act as a filter with a mind, one which will separate
from the enormous flow of quilt information produced in the United States and abroad, things which will be of interest to other disciplines and to quilt professionals and amateurs in this and other countries. Conversely, we will filter out for Americans significant information from other disciplines and places. We intend to search diligently for and publish interesting and provocative articles and reviews which might not otherwise be printed; we intend to offer a forum to quilt scholars with unusual and interesting ideas; we will draw attention to exhibitions, articles and ideas which we feel are important and might be overlooked; we will discuss controversial issues which are not being generally aired where we feel it is appropriate. We will highlight articles and books we might not review but feel people should know about. We will invite all in the field to submit articles and article ideas and will have guest editors from time to time. We will do entire issues on a single subject. We will take critical looks at some publications, conferences, exhibitions. In short, we intend to act as a listening post, a sign post, and a filter. And we intend to do so using the extraordinary talent available among our colleagues in the field. We wish to welcome all of you to our first issue and look forward to communicating important quilt information to you in the years to come.

*For a description of the Celebration, see The Publisher.

The Publisher

The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc., was founded in 1981 by Shelly Zegart, Eleanor Bingham Miller and Eunice Ray to survey the state's quilts. An exhibition "Kentucky Quilts: 1800-1900," which traveled widely in the United States and abroad with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, and a catalogue of the same title followed the completion of the survey. The Kentucky project was the first such state-wide quilt survey and has served as a model for many others in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Others of its projects include securing for Kentucky a quilt by the American 19th century master quiltmaker Virginia Ivey, assembling an exhibition of Kentucky quilts for Australia, and giving financial assistance to other quilt groups for special projects. In 1991-1992 it sponsored "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt," planned to illustrate and further the worldwide growth of interest in quilts and quilting which has developed over the past several decades and provide a wider forum for emerging quilt scholarship. Included were six exhibitions: a re-creation of the 1971 Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition, 'Abstract Design in American Quilts;' "A Plain Aesthetic: Lancaster Amish Quilts;" "Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts;" "Quilts Now;" "Narrations: The Quilts of Yvonne Wells and Carolyn Mazloomi;" "Quilt Conceptions: Quilt Designs in Other Media;" and four conferences: "The African-American and the American Quilt;" "Directions in Quilt Scholarship;" "Quilts and Collections: Public, Private and Corporate; " Toward an International Quilt Bibliography." Two books were published in conjunction with the Celebration: Abstract Design in American Quilts: A Biography of an Exhibition, written by Jonathan Holstein, foreword by Shelly Zegart; and Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts, authored by Cuesta Benberry, forewords by Jonathan Holstein and Shelly Zegart. The Quilt Project, an offshoot of The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc., is a new parent organization forthijsjournalfand arforthcomng international quilt index.

The Editors

Jonathan Holstein's interest in quilts began in the 1960s when he and Gail van der Hoof began to collect and study quilts, concentrating on their aesthetic qualities. The exhibition they curated at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1971, 'Abstract Design in American Quilts," showed quilts for the first time as designed objects and is noted as the starting point for the modern quilt renaissance. Numerous other exhibitions curated by them and drawn from their collection were seen across the United States and abroad and gave wide circulation to their view of quilts as aesthetic objects. These exhibitions were instrumental in creating a worldwide awareness of American quilts. Holstein continues to curate quilt exhibitions. His writing in the field began with the catalogue of the Whitney exhibition. His book The Pieced Quilt: An American Design Tradition, a study of the history and aesthetic basis of American quilts, was published in 1973, and many articles and exhibition catalogues followed. He wrote the introduction and commentaries for The Kentucky Quilt Project's exhibition catalogue, Kentucky Quilts 1800-1900 in 1983 and has been a Director of that group since 1984. In 1991-92, with fellow Directors Shelly Zegart and Eleanor Bingham Miller, he organized and produced "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt." A new book, Abstract Design in American Quilts: A Biography of an Exhibition, was published in 1992.

Eleanor Bingham Miller was a founder of The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc., organized in 1981 to survey her state's quilts; and she has been active in all of its projects since then, including the 1991-92 production of "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt." She is a filmmaker and a partner in Double Play Productions, New York.

Shelly Zegart was a founding director in 1981 of The Kentucky Quilt Project, the first state documentation project. Her initial interest in collecting quilts expanded with the Kentucky state survey to a full-time involvement in the field. Zegart lectures on all aspects of quilt history and aesthetics. She has curated many exhibitions here and abroad, including an exhibition of Kentucky quilts in Australia. In 1992 she curated "Quilts Now;" an exhibition of contemporary quilts. Her articles have appeared in numerous publications. In 1992, she wrote forewords for Abstract Design in American Quilts: A Biography of an Exhibition and Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts. She continues to act as an advisor to other groups conducting state quilt surveys. In 1991-92 with fellow quilt project directors Jonathan Holstein and Eleanor Bingham Miller she organized and produced "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt."
A New World in the Old: European Quilt Scholarship

by Janine Janniere

While Europe's quilting tradition has been noted and studied for some generations, its quilt tradition has remained largely hidden. One can see in a number of European institutions examples of quilted articles (under-armor, caps, petticoats and other traditional, largely white, work). But in only a few museums in England, and several in other countries, have European quilts been on display. In addition, little research has been done in Europe outside of England on European quilt making. There are several reasons for this. It reflects the bias and interests of traditionally trained textile historians. It reflects the "high style" and "ruling taste" orientation of many European museums, art historians and aesthetician. "Folk Art" is not as a rule as popular or as highly regarded in Europe as in the United States. It reflects also the space needs of competing departments within European museums. Quilts take a great deal of exhibition area and have few spokespeople among museum personnel.

This is changing rapidly as more Europeans, inspired by the many exhibitions in the US. and elsewhere featuring American quilts, and contemporary quilt movements within their countries, are searching for their own quilt traditions. More European countries have become interested in indigenous arts and crafts, and the pioneering folk life museums of Europe have expanded their quilt holdings, research and exhibition schedules. One result of this awakened interest was the recent exhibition, "Quilts, The Dutch Tradition," at the Nederlands Openluchtmuseum in Arnhem, Holland. French quilt historian and Americanist Janine Janniere ponders European attitudes towards quilts and discusses the scope and impact of the Openlucht Museum exhibition.

—Editors' Note

British patchwork has been studied by many quilt scholars searching for the roots of the American tradition, but its possible influence on the European continent has not been analyzed until recently.

The first attempt at such research was, to my knowledge, Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoofs visits to major European museums while their quilts were touring the continent in 1972. They were, logically, looking for the origin of the American tradition mainly in countries like England, France and Holland. They actually found nothing in France and little in Holland or even England. Since then, of course, more British pieced quilts have appeared in public collections and more books have been written on the British tradition.

As for France, does the lack of pieced quilts or examples of traditional quilting techniques in major national museums imply that these techniques were not practiced, or does it reveal selective choices of the museum staffs who formed the collections? One of the goals of our folk art museums is probably to show the most characteristic works of our traditional cultures. But who forms the criteria, and who are the selectors and judges of the objects collected and shown? The curator, the collector, the scholar, the dealer, or the descendant inheriting an object might each have a different perception of that same thing. Was patchwork popular or significant enough in France to deserve a place in a national museum? What was, or what is, the status of textiles, and particularly women's needlework, in French museum circles and in the society as a whole? In the standard and classical academic training of curators, can we say that the great and prestigious textile traditions (such as the "dentelles du Puy" or the "tapisseries d'Aubusson") have overshadowed local or regional works? The answers to these questions could perhaps explain the apparent lack of research and surviving quilts in French museums. What was the context at the time of Holstein and van der Hoof's 1972 exhibition at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris? Parisians were the first to discover American pieced quilts. The impact of that exhibition at the Arts Decoratifs can hardly be over-emphasized. In the United States, their exhibition, "Abstract Design in American Quilts," changed the way Americans looked at quilts; but, on the whole, they knew what quilts were. In Europe, and especially in France, it is generally considered as the event that triggered the ensuing quilt-boom. People in France had no continuing quilt tradition for reference. It was a shock and a revelation. Some women immediately wanted to learn how to make these beautiful, radiant objects; the first shop opened in Paris offering classes, supplies, and antique American quilts. More and more women came to these classes taught by an American lady, Sophie Campbell; other shops and classes opened; the "boom" gathered strength; and this led finally to the creation of the French Quilting Association in 1984, modeled on American groups, with a newsletter, contests, shows, raffles, local quilt groups, etc. Now there are in France more than 7,000 association members learning how to piece American patterns and developing a French style in contemporary quilts.

In the United States, in the 1970s and 1980s, the categories of quilt "aficionados" increased: in addition to quilters, there were curators, collectors, dealers, art historians, historians, feminists, artists, folklorists, anthropologists, etc. In Europe, or at least in France, the "makers" have been until now a homogeneous group and the only real audience for quilts. Apart from the Arts Decoratifs in 1972, the rest of the French
museum world remained indifferent and silent; the academic world even more so. It has been through the persistent efforts of these thousands of members of the French guild that some changes have occurred, especially in the last three years. Some museums, not as important or prestigious as the Arts Décoratifs, have mounted exhibitions of traditional or contemporary quilts made by French women; and so the audience for these French quiltmakers is slowly growing.

The research world, however, has remained unchanged; no scholarly investigation of a potentially existing French patchwork tradition has ever been undertaken. Could the reason for this be that French textile scholars have just not been interested? Or has there been an assumption that patchwork simply did not exist in France, since no documented French examples were available in collections for study? Whatever the reason, the Old Continent apparently needed the two decades after the Whitney exhibition to realize there might be something on its doorstep, some remaining objects from its own past deserving attention and study.

The first major institutionalized effort on this continent was recently completed in Holland. It is so important for quilt history that it should be commented on in depth.

This past year, in April, 1992, the Openluchtmuseum (near Arnhem) opened an exhibit entitled "Quilts, the Dutch Tradition" with a catalogue written by its textile curator, An Moonen. It was the first time their quilt collection was described and made accessible to the public and the first major scholarly study, in Holland, of the Dutch quilting tradition. The exhibition presented 53 of their quilts and coverlets, whole-cloth and pieced, together with 20 pieces from other public and private collections. This fascinating research will no doubt shed new light on the early European patchwork tradition and is probably a result of the Dutch quilt-boom following the European tour of Holstein and van der Hoofs quilts, a selection of which was shown in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, after its installation in Paris in 1972. Like the French, the Dutch formed a quilt guild (in 1983) which has now 6,300 members (not an insignificant number for 16 million inhabitants). I will discuss some of the particular features and conclusions of this important exhibition.

In Holland, the quilting technique apparently came before quilts, as it did in England and America. One of the most important contributions of the author was her study of early documents to find evidence of the beginning of quilting in Europe.

In 1234, the accounts of the French King, Louis IX, show that payment was made for a "courtepointe" (quilt) and six pounds of cotton. In 1385, King João I of Portugal wore a quilted sleeveless jacket under his armour. In "Lanceloet," written in the early 13th century, An Moonen found references to a quilted mattress and a quilted coverlet (the world "culte" existed in the Dutch language as early as the 13th century). A surviving piece, dating from about 1410, is in the treasury of Chartres Cathedral: it is a quilted jacket that belonged, supposedly, to the Dauphin, the son of the French King, Charles VI.

Her findings confirm what we already knew of the early history: the evidence found so far indicates that quilted clothing and bedding were luxury items often made by professionals for the wealthy; and this exclusivity was maintained until the 18th century. The import of chintz quilts from India started in the 17th century (The Dutch East India Company was created in 1602) but there were also domestically produced quilts, as shown by a children's print of about 1750, representing a woman in a shop working on a quilt. Below it is written:

"Here is the quilt stitcher at work,
Neatly sewing diamond and flower,
She takes good care to mark the lines,
Her work is held in high regard."

(This print does not illustrate pieced work.)

The author ends her section on quilting with the following lines: "It is remarkable that the patterns on quilts and on skirts developed in opposite directions. With quilts the highly elaborate gave way to increasingly simple diamond patterns, with borders and rosettes, and later straight lines only. In the case continued on page
of the skirts, the diamonds came first, followed by diamonds combined with borders and finally the beautiful floral patterns which then disappeared as fashion changed. For the exhibition, she selected 32 whole-cloth quilts, half from the 18th century (the oldest dating from 1700) and about half from the 19th century.

Patchwork apparently emerged in Holland at the end of the 18th century. The author states: "As a result of the widespread use of chintz and cotton prints for clothing, many families must have had an ample supply of left-over pieces in the ragbasket. It was these remnants of chintz and cotton prints which led to the growth of patchwork." That is, of course, one possibility; and this is what has been assumed for England. There might have been other influences.

The earliest Dutch pieces show that they were made of expensive chintzes for the well-to-do. The author thus dismisses the common theory of the Dutch tradition, that it was born among the poor, and she contrasts it with the situation of the American colonists, using Lenice Ingram Bacon’s book as a source. Recent research in the United States has also questioned the apparent myth of the humble origins of patchwork perpetuated in Ingram Bacon’s book and earlier writings. Researchers in the United States have reached the same conclusions as Moonen did for Holland, echoing those of Averil Colby and Dorothy Osler for England.

So the situation seems to have been similar in England, America and Holland during the 18th century: wherever they first appeared, decorative patchwork bedcovers as we know them most probably started in upper-class households. The Dutch curator gathered 41 pieced bedcovers ranging from 1796 to 1960, most of them made in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the 19th century.

The earliest written references to patchwork she found apparently come from inventories: a marriage settlement drawn in Amsterdam in 1804 lists "a new chintz patchwork quilt" valued at 14 guilders (the term in Dutch was "Lappe deeken"). It is very interesting to see how the same piece reappears in later family documents, progressively losing monetary value: in 1821, "a patchwork quilt and a woolen ditto, valued at 10 guilders;" in 1823, "a cotton patchwork quilt . . .4 guilders."

An Moonen also describes a printed cotton scarf from the last quarter of the 18th century "printed in such a way that white triangles alternate with those with a 'chintz' pattern. Seen from a distance, this creates the effect of patchwork in linen and chintz. This attempt at imitation shows that patchwork was known at the time." Another striking resemblance between printed fabric and patchwork can be made: in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, there is a set of pieced bedhangings in a shell pattern from the end of the 18th century. Seen from a distance, it is very similar to a wood-block printed cotton created by the Oberkampf Manufacture in Jouy in 1792 and to another example from 1780 in the collection of the "Musee du Vieux Marseille," both called "Fans" and inspired by Indian design. Could the patchwork set be an imitation of the printed toiles so fashionable at the time? But, of course, the 18th century toiles were in turn influenced by earlier Indian design and maybe even earlier oriental piecework.

To gain an overall picture of the whole Openlucht show, I made an approximate classification of the 73 exhibit pieces. Some pieces probably overlap several time periods since the dating could not be very precise. The chart might be helpful in highlighting some primary trends. The covers have been sorted according to their predominant pieced pattern (i.e., a star quilt with a border of "Baby's Blocks" has been listed under "star"). No particular names for pieced patterns are known in

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**Approximate Classification of the 41 Pieced Covers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q = Quilt</th>
<th>CV = Coverlet</th>
<th>1796-1825</th>
<th>1830-1875</th>
<th>1875-1900</th>
<th>1908-1930</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Triangles (&quot;Yankee Puzzle&quot; &quot;Broken Dishes&quot;)</td>
<td>4 Q + 5 CV</td>
<td>4 Q + 2 CV</td>
<td>1 Q + 3 CV</td>
<td>1 Q</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexagons</td>
<td>3 Q + 8 CV</td>
<td>1 Q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Squares</td>
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<td>2 Q</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubes (&quot;Baby Block's&quot;)</td>
<td>2 CV</td>
<td>1 Q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Log Cabin&quot;</td>
<td>1 Q + 1 CV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stars</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Dresden Plate&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
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Holland, so standard American pattern names have been used for clarity.

The three oldest Dutch patchwork covers found so far are very similar in many respects: the same pieced pattern was used; they are all cotton coverlets; and, by an incredible coincidence, all carry the same embroidered date, 1796. It is interesting to note that until the hexagon shape appears in 1830, all the pieces found from 1796 to 1825 are examples of the same pattern (except for one that uses squares predominantly), and all are in cotton. The first shape (which actually remained popular into the 19th century) was the triangle sewn to form squares, similar to the patterns known in America as "Yankee Puzzle," "Broken Dishes," or "Windmill." Of the 41 patchwork pieces of the exhibit, there are 20 examples of this pattern. It was apparently popular enough in Holland for the author to call it the "Dutch Triangle."16

A comparison should be made here with similar early pieces in England and America. We can observe that in each country some of the earliest patchwork covers we know were executed in this pattern.

For England, if the assumption of its British provenance is correct, we could include here the silk coverlet that is presently in the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal. Given to the Museum by a descendant of the maker in 1972, restored by the "Centre de Conservation du Quebec" in 1985-86, it was exhibited for the first time in 1987.17 Thorough research by the museum curator, Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross, indicated strongly that the date appliquéd on it, 1726, was the year of its execution. The triangles are constructed on paper templates around a central medallion containing an eight-point star.18 This is actually the first of a whole "family" or type of pieced cover: they are constructed around a central medallion, most often from triangles and squares, in silk or cotton, and often use the "English Paper Patchwork" technique.

Another silk cover, made in Devon around 1750, was found in the 1930s by Elizabeth Hake. It dropped out of sight for many years but is fortunately now in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter.19 It is a quilt of ivory silk with a wide border of green and ivory silk in the "Windmill" pattern.

The Victoria and Albert Museum also has a late 18th century silk piece with the initials N.S.C. embroidered in the center that show the same pattern and technique as the McCord coverlet,20 as well as a cushion square in cotton, dated 1786, with a "Windmill" center.

This triangle design does seem to be an old traditional English pattern as described by Averil Colby, who mentions two early pieces that are unfortunately not photographed: "Patterns made of long triangles are common in all-over designs, especially the Windmill, which is one of the earliest and most persistent patterns. Another pattern is made when the triangles are rejoined in matching pairs, with the apex of each triangle meeting in the centre of each square. This pattern (sometimes called the "cotton-reel") formed the border of a silk quilt made about 1780 and was an all-over pattern in an immense coverlet of cottons about 1790. The light and dark colors alternate in the adjoining squares."21 This could perfectly describe the Dutch triangle covers.

As for America, the earliest written reference to the word "patchwork" is, to my knowledge, the diary entry of April 18, 1772, of Anna Green Winslow.23 Barbara Bradman has identified 12 quilts from the period 1775-1825 in an article she wrote about the pieced patterns of that period." One of them is the famous Anna Tuels marriage quilt, dated 1785, in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum, and also a Framed Center quilt from 1800-20 at Winterthur Museum.25 These clearly show that this triangle pattern was common to Holland, England and America in the 18th century. Since the earliest pieces come from England (even if only a few remain), one can assume the pattern went from England to the other two countries some time in the 18th century, probably during the second half. This confirms the British roots often suggested by quilt scholars since the earliest extant pieced quilts and the earliest written references to patchwork covers do come from the British Isles. All the available written documents from the first half of the 18th century should be thoroughly researched in England, America and Holland to allow, perhaps, more definite conclusions. Another feature of the Dutch quilts that is typical of British design is the construction around a central medallion.26 Fifteen of the twenty triangle covers in the exhibit have a central motif, most often containing an eight-pointed star, a popular design in England. The borders of the Dutch covers are also very similar to English quilts, often "sawtooth" or diamonds." A recurrent and interesting feature which could well be a Dutch characteristic is the placing of dark triangles...
to form a diamond or a sort of "Barn Raising" design, either repeated several times throughout the top, or as an all-over pattern: five of the triangle covers are designed this way (Cat. nos. 14, 63, 64, 67, 73. The earliest is from 1800.)

The second most commonly used pattern in the exhibition is the hexagon, the first pieces dating from the 1830s. The design and the method of construction of these quilts makes them indistinguishable from British quilts of the same period. The first evidence we have of the hexagon is again in England and dates from about 1708 and 1785, then in America during the first quarter of the 19th century, in Holland around 1830. It seems that the peak of popularity for hexagon patchwork in Holland covers the years 1830-1860, which corresponds to the period of the first published versions of this pattern in England (and in America). As we know, the English were "haunted" by the hexagon shape during the first half of the 19th century and onwards, and decorative coverlets using the paper template method were the "fancy" work of English ladies. It is not farfetched to think that this upper-class fashion might have crossed the Channel to the continent through the various needlework magazines of the time. Nine of the twelve hexagon covers of the Openlucht show are decorative coverlets, that is to say, with a pieced top and a backing (from the chart, we can see that out of the 41 pieced covers, 22 are coverlets). The other pieced patterns represented are not numerous enough to be commented upon as separate, significant design forms (see chart).

As to fabric choices, the Dutch were evidently most fond of cotton: 28 of the 32 whole-cloth quilts are made of Indian chintzes or Dutch printed cottons, and the rest are of silk. Of the 41 pieced covers, 36 are in cotton. The 5 other pieced works are in silk, satin, and velvet and date from the years 1850-1879 (typical of the Victorian era in England).

Another aspect which does not appear on the chart, but which is very interesting, is the large proportion of crib or children's quilts to full-size quilts: 21 out of 73 pieces were infant or youth size, mostly whole-cloth (only five are pieced). All are padded and quilted, most certainly for warmth and comfort.

To conclude, one could say that while the sample does not permit broad generalizations about Dutch patchwork, it could indicate certain trends. From the evidence so far gathered, we can assume patchwork was never as widespread a tradition in Holland as it was in England or America (unless numerous other surviving pieces are found in Holland in the future). The curator explained that "machine-made quilts almost put an end to the hand-made variety" which could explain the decline of patchwork after 1880. Most of the surviving quilts she gathered come from the region around the former Zuiderzee and only one piece in the exhibit is fully documented with the name and photograph of the maker (cat. no. 24). Initials and names are rarely found on Dutch quilts.

Most of the 41 pieced covers exhibited suggest a strong influence from British patchwork. Cultural and trade links between England and Holland in the period 1750 to 1850 could be studied to examine this influence.

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ered the American quiltmaking tradition during her years in rural New England and has concentrated on it ever since. She has done further research on the subject within a Ph.D. program in American Studies at Paris VIII University. After obtaining a research grant from the Fulbright Commission in 1984-85, she toured the United States for several months doing field work and was also a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Appalachian Affairs of East Tennessee University. She has been lecturing in France on this subject for a number of years.

Footnotes
2 Dorothy Osler, Traditional British Quilts (London: B. T. Batsford, 1987).
4 Rosemary F. Allan, Quilts and Coverlets from Beamish Museum (Beamish Museum, 1987).
5 Suzanne Lambert, President of the French quilting association ("Association Française du Patchwork"), agrees saying that in Paris the first contact of the general public with the patchwork tradition was during that show in 1972. But it is the French association which is largely responsible for spreading it to the rest of the country after 1984. (Conversation with the author, November 3, 1992.) For Holland, An Moonen writes, "The major exhibition of 19th century American quilts at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in the autumn of 1972 led to a revival of interest in the Netherlands. Since then, quilts made in the American manner have become enormously popular." (Quilts: een Nederlandse Traditie, p. 6, refer to note 3.) As for England, Dorothy Osler says, "The quilt revival began in earnest in the 1970's in Britain fed largely by contact with the American tradition of patchwork and quilting..." (Op. cit., 10).
6 The most important recent exhibitions were:
7 An Moonen, Quilts: een Nederlandse Traditie, (Amhem: Nederlands Openlucht Museum), Catalogue written in Dutch and English. The exhibition was from April 24 to August 23, 1992.
8 For this show, the curator tried to make an inventory of all the quilts she could find in Holland in public and private collections: she came up with about 200 quilts, whole-cloth and pieced. The Openlucht museum's own collection totaled about 100. The proportion of pieced quilts to whole-cloth in the catalogue (41) does not reflect the statistical reality: there are, in fact, more whole-cloth quilts in the collection; they were much more common than pieced quilts. For the exhibition, An Moonen selected mostly pieced works since she thought they were more interesting. Many of the whole-cloth covers were very similar. (For instance, her museum has about thirty examples almost identical to cats. no. 42.) (Conversation with the author, October 7, 1992.)
9 An Moonen, op. cit., 8, 10, 11.
10 Ibid, 21.
11 Ibid, 22.
12 She seems doubtful, and rightly so, about Ingram Bacon's theory that "in America, on the other hand, the colonists are said to have made quilts out of rags out of pure necessity. However, some of the oldest American quilts from the early 18th century turn out to have been made from expensive materials" (p. 7). She is referring to pp. 66-67 of Ingram Bacon's book, illustrating a whole-cloth silk and the famous Saltonstall quilt, previously dated to 1704. Several textile experts now believe the fabrics date from the 19th century.
13 Averil Colby, Patchwork, 26.
14 Dorothy Osler, op. cit., 29, 93.
15 An Moonen, op. cit., 23.
16 Averil Colby, op. cit., 99, fig. 113.
18 Michel Biehn, En Japon Pique et Robe d'Italienne (Marseille: Jeanne Laffitte, 1987) 32. Toile used for a quilted skirt in the collection of the Musée du Vieux Marseille.
19 An Moonen, op. cit., 25.
20 Letters to the author from March 8 and April 27, 1989.
23 Beaudoin-Ross, op. cit., fig. 3. (Query: Did silk pieced covers evolve from the chintz patchwork tradition, or vice versa?)
24 Colby, op. cit., fig. 112.
25 Ibid, 47.
28 Ibid, Appendix I, p. 118, quilt nos. 5 and 11. These two are very similar to the McCord coverlet and the Dutch cover.
29 Dorothy Osler, op. cit., 29, 30, 31, 32.
31 Except for the Levens Hall set of 1708 that already includes some long hexagons ("church windows"), the first all-over hexagon per is in Colby, op. cit., fig. 105, p. 101.
34 An Moonen, op. cit., 27.
35 Not a simple task for a scholar on this continent who may not have easy access to recent quilt research, mostly published in the United States in the last twenty years.
Rethinking Quilt Projects:
A Folklorist's Perspective

by Laurel Horton

As more scholars in different disciplines take up the study of quilts, there will inevitably be differing points of view as to what aspects of quilts should be studied, how this should be accomplished, who should do it, how data should be collected, interpreted, stored. Some debate on these and other scholarship issues has already ensued. Of considerable current interest has been the issue of methodology in state quilt surveys. Some professional folklorists have expressed concern that these surveys, conducted largely by amateur scholars, may be flawed in the ways they amass and record data; that, indeed, their goals and methods are such that the quilt information collected may be of little, or impaired value as research data. Laurel Horton, noted folklorist and experienced quilt scholar, discusses in this article the methods and goals of the folklorist in relation to the study of quilts.

—Editors’ Note

Folklorists study traditional behaviors in the context in which they are performed. A 1984 publication of the American Folklore Society defines the related terms "folklore/folklife" as "song and story, speech and movement, custom and belief, craft and ritual—expressive and instrumental activities of all kinds learned and communicated directly or face-to-face in groups ranging from nations, regions and states through communities, neighborhoods, occupations, and families."1

When folklorists look at objects of material culture such as quilts, they are interested not only in the object itself, but in the circumstances in which the object was designed, created, and used. "Since objects and actions commonly 'speak' louder than words, folklorists look at material culture as communication and learning."2

The primary tools that folklorists use in their study are the oral interview and observation. They try to understand the objects, behaviors, and events they study from the point of view of the participants. Since folklorists excel at examining active, functioning traditions as practiced by living individuals and groups, it is no accident that most folklorists' studies of quiltmaking have focused on individual quilters and quilting groups.

The best research by folklorists goes beyond a series of interviews with a single quiltermaker. Joyce Ice’s extensive fieldwork with quiltmaking groups in Delaware County, New York, is an excellent example of how a sensitive researcher can identify and describe the complexities of local traditions.3 And when folklorist Clover Williams conducted research within the Bloomington, Indiana, Quilters Guild, she was attempting a study of the group as a whole. Instead, she wanted to learn how quilters define "tradition" in their quiltmaking. Her findings indicate that "tradition" is a fluid term for these quilters which functions differently depending upon the context.4

Folklorists are at their best when they can examine living traditions and relate them to a well-documented historical record. But what happens when the historical evidence is insufficient or untrustworthy? My own experience serves as an example.

In 1975 I was a graduate student in the Folklore Curriculum at the University of North Carolina. Several books on quilts had recently appeared and were mentioned by my instructors. I found the photographs fascinating and decided to write a term paper on quilts for my Symbolic Anthropology class. At the end of the semester I decided to write my thesis on quilts in the part of North Carolina which had been settled by Germans and Ulster Scots from Pennsylvania.

In preparation for my fieldwork I read everything that was available on quilts, and that’s when I started running into problems. The books available at that time focused on limited numbers of quilts gathered in a variety of unsystematic ways. For a student trying to identify regional variations and patterns of diffusion, the task was difficult. Especially misleading were the descriptions of southern quilts as "artistic expressions little handicapped by economic considerations" exemplifying "the traditional cultured leisure of the Old South."5 I was new to quilts, but I knew that this oversimplification ignored a lot of southern quilts.

Besides the difficulty of locating trustworthy historical information on quilts, I also realized how difficult it is to examine large numbers of quilts in an area. I found that museums at that time generally knew very little about the quilts in their collections. Individual owners generally knew more, but identifying them and scheduling appointments was extremely labor-intensive.

Among the earliest areas of study for folklorists examining material folk culture was architecture. Researchers could enumerate and map double-crib barns or hall-and-parlor houses by driving rural roads and select case studies for more detailed investigation and measurement. I thought of those fortunate researchers as I drove rural roads wishing I had x-ray vision to discern quilts hidden from view in those same houses.

When The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc. announced its practice of holding quilt days and inviting owners to bring in their quilts to be recorded and photographed, I realized that this was an important new strategy for identifying regional trends in historic quilts. Quilt Days allow a research team to document and photograph more quilts in a few hours than could be done in...
weeks visiting the owners in their homes. Such Quilt Days have been adopted by every state and many regional quilt projects since. The collected data of the quilt projects could allow researchers to map the presence or apparent absence of particular quilt styles, techniques, and patterns over time and space, which would enhance our understanding of regional and national quiltmaking traditions.

Since the potential rewards for quilt projects seem so great, project organizers may have difficulty understanding why not all folklorists share their enthusiasm. Folklorist Joyce Ice, in a Southern Folklore review, identifies two major areas of concern: 1. conceptualization and 2. analysis and interpretation.6

For many project organizers the initial conception of a quilt project typically utilizes quilt days resulting in a selection of quilts for an exhibition and a book. At some later point the project is faced with the disposition of the collection materials. For a folklorist the collected slides and information form the primary goal of the project, and the exhibition and catalog are two preliminary byproducts.

Ice also questions the validity of state boundaries for a study of material folk culture, since cultural maps ignore such artificial demarcations. If a book and exhibit are envisioned as the culmination of a project, she makes an excellent point. Few of the state quilt books make an effort to include all of the geographic subregions within a state. As an organizing principle in order to collect data, however, a state project makes sense, especially since many states, like North Carolina, have state-wide quilt organizations to facilitate communication.

Because folklorists try to understand and analyze traditions in context, many folklorists are troubled by the quilt days themselves. Accustomed to interviewing owners of objects in the home context in which the objects are used, folklorists wonder at the validity of removing these objects to an unnatural arena in which they are subjected to assembly-line analysis.

Folklorists are not alone in their concerns about the quality and validity of the information gathered by quilt projects. Most projects provide some training for their volunteers, but a lack of time and experience frequently limits the quality of the interview data.

For example, in their zeal to do everything right, project volunteers have been known to tell quilt owners the "correct" name for a particular quilt pattern before ascertaining if there is a family name for the quilt. Even an offhand comment can cause a quilt owner to withhold data, thinking that the family story about the quilt must be wrong.

Not only do folklorists have concerns about quilt projects, but some quilt projects have had doubts about the participation of folklorists. I remember a project organizer reporting to me her amazement that a folklorist helping them was unfamiliar with differences between pieced and appliqued quilts. Not realizing that much of my own knowledge of quilts was self-taught, my friend had assumed that all folklorists knew about quilts.

Some projects have been fortunate enough to have as advisors and co-workers folklorists who are indeed knowledgeable about quilts. State Folk Arts Coordinators Jenny Chinn in Kansas and Andrea Graham in Nevada have both been closely involved with their states' projects. But even folklorists who do not specialize in material culture can contribute to the ways traditional information may be gathered, stored, and interpreted.

Folklorists can be effective members of quilt project teams, along with textile specialists, museum curators, historians, community organizers, and quilters. Many quilt projects have served as training grounds for students in these fields, and folklore archives are possible repositories for quilt project data.

As American quiltmaking emerges as a respectable and legitimate field of study, scholars trained in a variety of disciplines join those who are self-trained. Folklore, American studies, art history, textile history, speech communications, social history, cultural geography, sociology, psychology: All these approaches offer increased understanding of the complex phenomena surrounding quilts and their makers. No single discipline "owns" the subject, and only through the contributions from these and other directions can we hope to know the meanings of quilting in our lives.

Laurel Horton holds an M.A. in Folklore from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill and an M.S. in Library Science from the University of Kentucky. She serves on the Board of Directors for the American Quilt Study Group and edits Uncoverings, A QSG's annual volume of research papers. She directed the South Carolina Quilt History Project and is the author of Social Fabric: South Carolina’s Traditional Quilts.

Footnotes:

2 Folklore/Folklife, 19.
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