

# The Quilt Journal

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## Quilt Judges and Juries: Hard Questions

by Carol Jessen

*Judging (juring) art of any kind is an art; guidelines are vague and subject to endless exceptions. Judging quilt quality is particularly complicated as there are a number of separate spheres of work, each with its own criteria. Carol Jessen explores the state of the judging art for contemporary quilts and offers some specific suggestions for improving the discipline.*

—Editors' Note

Most quilting judges and jurors agree that judging others' artwork is a task best approached with humility: it calls into question one's opinions and tastes and the right to be a taste maker for quiltmaking as a whole. Ironically, however, one of the most frequent complaints about judging is that those who do it are too arrogant, convinced of the superiority of their particular approach to quiltmaking. There is indeed a thin line between humility and arrogance that a judge or juror must tread. But there are other more complex issues affecting his or her decisions. Is it fair, for instance, to pit quilts with differing purposes against each other in competition? At what point does an amateur cross-over to professional ranks? Which should be given more weight: aesthetics or craftsmanship?

Before judging can begin, however, there are always selection issues which need to be addressed. First is the purpose of the exhibition: to survey the breadth of quiltmaking or to focus on a specific theme? Second is professional status: will entrants be those who quilt as a vocation or avocation? Third is the exhibition's goal to entertain or educate?

These factors are often resolved by the exhibition's venue and its size limitations. There are more subjective issues, however, that perplex on a philosophical level. As more

exhibitions are juried, the issue of judging and jurying standards becomes acute. Some sorting out is essential if quilt exhibitions are to avoid a reputation for quixotic arbitrariness in their selection.

Much of the controversy in juried and judged exhibitions derives from the differences between traditional quilts and what are now called "art quilts." In 1993 Michael James estimated that traditional patterns were the foundation for ninety percent of contemporary quiltmaking; these quilts are made by avocationists who find pleasure in the craft. Art quilts, in his opinion, are made by people who consider themselves professional artists, working in an aesthetic medium. This bifurcation is quite divisive, though there is an enormous middle

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ground of quilters committed to improvement and innovation in their quilting. As Jonathan Holstein remarks, there are "many quilts informed by the past but very much updated: savvy interpretations of the inheritance."

The effort to bring quilting into the category of the Fine Arts has been resisted within and without the quilt world. Within, many practitioners do not wish to see quilting's special role as a democratic, domestic activity changed to compete in what is perceived as an elitist, public arena. Without, other art professionals do not consider the aesthetic foundations of quilting rigorous enough for serious consideration. They say quilting has no role in academic art history, that it is a footnote only. But what is Art History if not the study of aesthetic practices over time, and how they have been rewritten, reformulated, and challenged? Have quilting's challenges to the establishment justified its inclusion in the pantheon of Art History? How do studio art quilts gain acceptance as Fine Art? And what are the implications of this for judging and jurying practices in contemporary quilt exhibitions?

The easiest, and therefore most common, way to judge quilts is by those technical features apparent in the finished product: stitch length and regularity, straightness of borders and edges, absence of puckers, flat seams, sharp corners, etc. Judging by such artistic factors as design, color usage, subject matter, etc., is problematic because there are no objective absolutes. Additionally, there is the influence of prevailing taste and the judgments of individual judges and jurors—subjective at best, arbitrary at worst. Bringing quilting into the Fine Arts might logically be done by bringing the Fine Arts into quilt judging. This would mean recruiting as judges art historians, curators, authors, editors, news media critics, museum staff, college art professors, lecturers, art council staff, grant program professionals, art school faculty, and others who are typically left out of contemporary quilt judging in favor of popular quilters, quilt teachers, and writers of colorful instructional books. As was remarked by Patricia Malarcher, there is a sort of incest in quilt exhibitions: they are managed by, produced for, and selected from the quilters themselves, with little cross-fertilization from other arts and crafts or occupations. This results in a self-reinforcing, insular image of contemporary quilting. Cross-fertilization with other disciplines, however, exposes quilting to new influences and directions which are perhaps uncomfortable for traditionalists. There is a certain amount of dogma in any discipline, but quilting tends to have more than its share because of rigid judging standards that rely too heavily on technical factors and too little on the artistic. According to Susan Louise Moyer, "setting guidelines for technical perfection can be very tricky. It has been my experience that the creative person, once technically empowered, will break

the rules to create their own unique style and innovative techniques." Following strict rules produces a static adherence to conventional stylization: works tend to be derivative of one another. An art medium evolves with the diversity of the artists using it. Evolution comes from change and challenge. And yet a total disregard of rules, or an ignorance of them, leads to mere chaos. What is needed is a balance between a regard for convention and a desire for innovation.

The quest for balance has been a dialectic in the arts and crafts movement for decades. The debate is usually couched in terms of virtuosity versus expressiveness. As Bruce Metcalf writes, "What is the value of mastery of a craft? In the Fine Arts world, virtuosity has been regarded with intense suspicion ever since Manet intentionally employed rough painting to criticize the mindless polish of academic styles. Today, critics continue to...applaud sloppiness for its 'authenticity' [and] attack fine craftsmanship as an end in itself that distracts the artist from becoming more creative and original..." But "... in the Crafts world, fine workmanship is regarded either as a known quantity to be manipulated like a tool or as a worthy and self-rewarding goal... that fine craft has intrinsic value."<sup>3</sup> Metcalf remarks that an Art-Craft approach would give merit for skill in relation to other aspects such as the artistic creativity or expression which informs the making of the object.

Not every quilt is either a reflection of traditional values or a trendsetting novelty. In fact, the best quilts preserve past traditions while creating new and personalized idioms representing their makers. As Jonathan Holstein queries, where are the continuities and discontinuities? "What links with the past are contemporary quilters maintaining? Where are complete breaks into a new aesthetic occurring? Are old and new quilts judged successfully by the same aesthetic criteria? And the perpetual question, what about taste and judgment?" These questions seriously affect the approach to judging and jurying, and are encountered again and again by participants in workshops on the subject. Achieving finite answers may not be as important as the questioning. One problem is that limited answers — articulating defined parameters for judging and jurying — are reductive just when expansiveness is called for. Codification is always reductive, and creating a "level playing field" is a sure road to mediocrity. Neither does codification provide a context for the item being judged. It is easy to count stitches, measure corners, add scores, and find arbitrary cut-off points for inclusion or exclusion, but it is very difficult to discuss whether a particular quilt has a *joie de vivre*, or soul, or personal idiom, or fantasy, or communication with its audience - the things that make viewing quilts so pleasurable. Codification is too simplistic, and ironically, most codifying systems are fully as subjective as the judg-

ing techniques they are formed to replace. To derive a score for color usage based on a scale of one to ten is just as subjective as to make a judgment of "good" or "bad." Codification also demands an adherence to rules and standards, though it is widely acknowledged that the fresh and spontaneous creation of art comes through breaking rules, and combining elements in new ways.

Quilt judge and juror training and certification programs usually become, by default, training in technical factors accomplished in short-term, two-day or three-day workshops. Of all the facets of a quilt, however, craftsmanship is the most superficial. As David Hornung says, a quilt is a multi-leveled artifact that is a combination of its complex visual form, the materials used, and its cultural legacy. For judges and jurors to consider all of those factors, they must perceive an education in quilts as an ongoing revelatory process that cannot be distilled into a simple text. Being a good judge or juror of quilts requires a lifetime commitment to considering art in all its forms.

It is not my purpose here to trash all judge and juror certification and training programs that attempt to codify and objectify judging and jurying. But I believe there is an important need to deal more completely with the subjective side of judging and jurying, perhaps by expanding our ideas of competency and relevancy. What I feel we need is an aesthetic context for contemporary quiltmaking, one that must develop from Art History, Art Theory, a study of traditional values and individual artists' oeuvres, comparative analysis between quiltmaking and mainstream arts and fine crafts, academically-based and community-based arts programs, and curatorships and stewardships of all types. Broadening knowledge and experience is as important as codifying it. How will a juror, except through a broad base of larger art issues and history, know the difference between dilettantism and ground-breaking aesthetic advances, self-gratification and the search for intrinsic meaning, or flamboyance and true self-expression? Shelly Zegart is an avid proponent of an expansionist idea of judging and jurying because she has the foresight to understand that it helps to open doors, rather than keeping them shut.

The National Quilting Association maintains a judge's certification program for its members, a three day workshop (in conjunction with the association's annual quilt exhibition and conference) that is used to supplement on ongoing, in-depth judge's candidacy program. Recognizing that a three-day workshop is not an adequate foundation for certification, the NQA states that completion of a session does not automatically lead to certification.<sup>6</sup> Rather, certification depends upon completion within (renewable) three-year time periods of a comprehensive set of 32 "what-if" situational questions to which there are no definitively right or wrong answers. Each question presents a judging

scenario and asks the candidate to defend his or her answer, working from a list of bibliographical resources, and explaining his or her interpretations of current quiltmaking standards. During this process, the candidate is encouraged to develop a resume of experiences. The only shortcoming of such a program is that the panels that rate the candidate's responses to the questions are themselves a dynasty of previous candidates, leading to the same inbred quality that plagues quiltmaking in general. However, this is a defensible program which addresses the subjective nature of the judging process and tries to produce judges who approach judging scenarios neither too arbitrarily nor too rigidly.

Given the creation of an ample supply of highly motivated and competently trained professionals, what would be the ideal jury? The first quality that comes to my mind is "diverse personnel" and a panel would seem at first the best way to achieve that. As is true for most things, however, the obvious answer is often too facile. If the purpose of the quilt exhibition is to be an art show with a distinct frame of reference and internal consistency, a single juror may be appropriate. As Michael James, sole juror for the 1994 Visions exhibition, declared, such a role allowed him to present a show undiluted by compromise.<sup>7</sup> Such an arrangement depends, of course, on total trust in that single judgment. The strength of such a show is clarity of vision, its major potential flaw is unidimensionality, and its biggest risk is alienating viewers not in tune with a single viewpoint. A show with only two jurors may be polarized and achieve an off-putting dissonance, whereas a jury show with four or more members may become so bogged in compromise that it loses all identity and achieves only mediocrity. So, by default, the three-person panel is by far the most prevalent. Flexible enough to accommodate a variety of tastes and small enough to use such dialogue in the selection process, the three-person panel is most useful when composed of individuals with complementary skills and preferences. As the jurors for Quilt National '91 remarked in their jurors' statement, "our differences strengthened our collective judgment."<sup>8</sup> For a survey-type exhibition which attempts to show the "state of the art," this jury composition is most advantageous. The strength of the biennial Quilt National exhibitions at the Dairy Barn Arts Center in Athens, Ohio, has been their incorporation of non-quiltmaker art professionals on the jury panels. People such as Ann Batchelder (editor of *Fiberarts Magazine*), Rebecca Stevens (Consultant for Contemporary Textiles at The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.), Michael Monroe (Curator of the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution), and Gerhardt Knodel (Director of the Fiber Department at the Cranbrook Academy of the Arts) have lent their considerable wealth of knowledge during the past decade to help create a more expansive definition of the "art quilt."

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Local quilt groups that wish to reach beyond the similarity of the typical guild show can do so. Although they will not have the financial or personnel resources Quilt National enjoys in jurying its exhibitions, each community has sources which can be tapped. Local museums, community arts programs, galleries, and schools have knowledgeable art professionals whose help can be sought in jurying. Achieving a balance among credentialed judges, popular quilters/teachers and mainstream art professionals on quilt juries would give them a broader creative perspective than homogeneous panels from an inbred quilting fraternity. The exhibitions which would result, achieved with a wider participation and aesthetic view, would ultimately foster more community understanding and appreciation of quilting.

**CarolAnnJessen**

April 28, 1950-September 17, 1995

*It is our sad duty to record that Carol Jessen, who wrote "Quilt Judges and Juries: Hard Questions" for this issue of The Quilt Journal, has died after an illness courageously battled. Ms. Jessen's contributions to the quilt world were as artist (she had a textile arts studio), writer, and curator. Carol considered herself a critic, in the sense of thoughtful commentator, of the contemporary quilt movement. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University with a B.A. in Psychology and did graduate work in anthropology at the University of New Mexico. She had written about contemporary quilts and quilting since injuries interrupted her own quilting in 1991. During her years as an active quilter she refined a technique called "hard-edge appliqué."*

*Her writing covered all aspects of the contemporary quilt movement, and has included exhibition and book reviews, articles on textile and fiber arts techniques, individual contemporary quilters, the contemporary quilt movement and quilt aesthetics. Among her many articles, reviews, and reporting, noted here to demonstrate her the range of interests, were "Contemporary Quilts: Moving Beyond the Art vs. Craft Debate" (Surface Design Journal, Fall 1991), for which she received the Betty Park Critical Writing Award for 1991; "Quilts as Women's Art: A Quilt Poetics" (Review of a book by Radka Donnell in Fiberarts Magazine, Mar/Apr, 1994); "New Directions: Quilts for the 21st Century" (a review of an exhibition at the Bedford Gallery for Art/Quilt Magazine's premier issue, Autumn, 1994; and "From Powder to Picture," an article about the techniques for using laser toner images on fabric in Surface Design Journal, Spring, 1995.*

*Two other articles, "Searching for an Authentic Voice: Two Case Studies," a profile of the work of Virginia Harris and Kitty Pippen, and "Julie Berner: The Visible and the Invisible," will appear in All American Crafts this fall. I have mentioned these*

*two because, sadly, they will be, with the article in this Journal, her last writing for the field.*

*Carol never gave up. She became a writer about quilts when injury prevented her from making them. Now, seeing the end of her struggle approaching, she was determined to finish the work she thought important, and she did. We are grateful that she gave us the honor of publishing her intelligent consideration of a difficult subject. May this good and thoughtful person rest in peace.*

—The Editors

**Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup>Jonathan Holstein (Juror's Statement), *VISIONS: Quilts of a New Decade*, ed. by Deborah Bird Timby for Quilt San Diego (Lafayette, CA: C&T Publishing, 1990), p. 8.
- <sup>2</sup>Susan Louise Moyer, "Technical Perfection," *Surface Design Journal*, Spring 1993, p. 6.
- <sup>3</sup>Bruce Metcalf, "Replacing the Myth of Modernism," *American Craft*, Feb/Mar 1993, p. 46.
- <sup>4</sup>Jonathan Holstein (Juror's Statement), *VISIONS: Quilts of a New Decade*, ed. by Deborah Bird Timby for Quilt San Diego (Lafayette, CA: C&T Publishing, 1990), p. 8.
- <sup>5</sup>David Hornung (Juror's Statement), *QUILTS: The State of an Art* (Exton, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1985), p. 6.
- <sup>6</sup>Certified Quilt Judges Program, National Quilting Association, Inc., P.O. Box 393, Ellicott City, MD 21041-0393.
- <sup>7</sup>Michael James (Juror's Statement), *VISIONS: Quilts: Layers of Excellence*, ed. by Stevii Thompson Graves for Quilt San Diego (Lafayette, CA: C & T Publishing, 1994), p. 11.
- <sup>8</sup>Tafi Brown, Esther Parkhurst, and Rebecca Stevens (Joint Jurors' Statement), *The New Quilt 1: Dairy Barn Quilt National* (Newtown, CT: The Taunton Press, 1991), p. 81.

# Royal Connections: Quilting and the British Monarchy

by Shiela Betterton

*Much historical quilt research has centered in recent years on quilts and quilting in their social contexts, particularly in the folk cultures of America and Europe. Much less attention has been given to their roles in the lives of the privileged. Shiela Betterton, who has studied England's quilting traditions intensively, has assembled here a chronological record of quilts and quilting in the lives of British royalty over eight centuries.*

—Editors' Note

In many parts of the United Kingdom during the 19th century, owning a patchwork bedcover was considered a sign of poverty. Quilting, however, was different from piecing and has always been considered the finer art. Quilted garments or furnishings have been known for over 600 years in the UK, and quilting has been associated with Royalty, as well as the general populace.

In feudal England the display of heraldic insignia on clothing was a prominent feature during the reign of Edward III (1327-1377). Personal heraldic symbols developed to distinguish friend from foe in battle. Applique patterns were sewn to the surcoat, a garment which after c 1200 was worn over a protective mail shirt. The designs were also applied to horse trappings.

By the end of the 14th century the long surcoat was replaced by a short tight fitting garment called a jupon.1 Probably the oldest quilted garment extant today is the jupon worn by Edward, the Black Prince (1330-1375). The eldest son of King Edward III, he was a soldier renowned throughout Europe. It was King Edward's wish that his jupon be hung over his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral. The original garment is too fragile for public display, but a replica has been made. His jupon is a close-fitting coat of blue and red velvet, quartered—four pieces of fabric, two red and two blue alternately, make the back; the front is similar. The Royal Arms of England were embroidered in gold on linen and applied to the velvet. The whole garment was gamboised, that is, quilted longitudinally.2

King Edward III's third son, John of Gaunt, who died in 1399, was the ancestor of the Dukes of Beaufort. At Badminton, the present Duke of Beaufort's home in Gloucestershire, there is a small piece of quilted fabric, reputedly part of John of Gaunt's doublet. The top is indigo dyed linen, the backing natural linen, and it is tied, not actually quilted, through a thickness of nearly one inch.3

Edward III, in 1763, had issued a proclamation that no one whose income was below 400 marks per annum should wear cloth of gold4 or embroidery.5 However, just over 100 years later, Princess Mary Tudor, daughter of King Henry

VII (1485-1509), married King Louis XII of France. She had footmen dressed in white cloth of gold quilted with scales, the name given in Europe until recently to the pattern now called "clam shells."6

In May, 1540, Katherine Howard, afterwards fifth wife of King Henry VIII, received from the royal wardrobe as a sign of favor twenty-three quilts of quilted "sarcentet."7 Sarcentet is a soft silk material which was first known in England in the 13th century. Records show that it was being made into quilted and embroidered bedcovers as late as the 18th century, and it is still used.

A wardrobe account towards the end of Henry VIII's reign mentions "one pair of linen sleeves, paned with gold over the arm, quilted with black silk and wrought with flowers between the pane and at the hands." Sleeves were richly embroidered during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and it is probable that the quilting was worked flat with back stitch. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603),8 quilting was often used by royalty and commoner alike in the very splendid, stiff clothing of the period.9 Sir Francis Drake is reputed to have worn quilted clothing very heavily padded.

Many stately homes claim that Queen Elizabeth I visited and slept there; at Berkeley Castle in Gloucester, the oldest inhabited castle in England, there is a silk quilt with cushions to match, said to have been used by the Queen when she visited. The foundation fabric is very fine linen, the embroidery silver thread and multicolored silks. All motifs are floral—roses, carnations, tulips, etc. The quilting is a double trellis worked in back stitch with pale yellow silk. A petal motif is worked within the trellis. There are three borders. Five cushions complete the set.10

Perhaps the best known use of the word "quilt," other than as a term for a bed cover, occurred during the reign of Elizabeth I. In Shakespeare's play *King Henry IV*, part 1, Act IV, scene 2, Henry, Prince of Wales, greets Falstaff, a very fat man, with the words, "How now, blown Jack, How now, quilt." At that time, the word "quilt" was a term jokingly applied to a fat person.

Mary, Queen of Scots, was an extremely talented and experienced needlewoman, producing many items of exquisite workmanship. She learned her needlework skills in France and would probably have learned to quilt there, but she did not make quilts in Scotland. During her imprisonment she was denied embroidery materials, and most of her

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work during this period was small scale, "little flowers on canvas." While imprisoned on the island of Lochleven, she sent for canvases with outlining, which she filled in with colored silks, drawn in black silk cross-stitch. The quilt at Traquair in Peebleshire, once thought to have been made by the Queen and her four Maries, has been dated much later and is not in the style of her other work. However, if Queen Mary did not make quilts, she wore quilted clothing. Inventories reveal that on one occasion her steward was allowed to send her "a bodice<sub>11</sub> of crimson satin, a holland cloak, a bodice quilted . . .

Elizabeth I died in 1603 and her heir was James VI of Scotland (1567-1625), son of Mary, Queen of Scots. He became James I of the combined countries of England and Scotland. During the 1570s breeches worn in Scotland were heavily padded and quilted so that the hip and thigh were exaggerated. Some authorities say that this was to prevent injury. About the same time the doublet changed from a garment with applique patterns to a quilted one; it buttoned at the neck. The quilting pattern was of horizontal bands divided by double lines of stitching, each decorated with diagonal slashes running in opposite directions in each adjoining segment. The quilting on the body was vertical, and horizontal on the sleeves. Portraits of the King wearing such a doublet show this quilting quite clearly.<sup>12</sup> James I is supposed to have been so fearful that he would die through treachery he always wore a quilted doublet for protection.<sup>13</sup>

Extremes of fashion prompted James I to forbid servant girls to wear fabrics such as "Tiffany, velvet; lawns of white,"<sup>14</sup> but, once again, royalty and the nobility were able to indulge in sumptuous fabrics. Bed quilts were so common during the sixteenth century that a traveller from Europe, Paul Hertzner, in his "Travels in England, 1598" mentions that state beds were eleven feet square and covered in quilts shining in gold and silver. At Hampton Court Palace he says, "At no great distance from the Queen's Room we were shown a bed, the tester of which was worked by Anne Boleyn and presented to her husband Henry VIII. In the hall there were numbers of cushions ornamented with gold and silver, many counterpanes and coverlids."

During the early 17th century, fabric already quilted in yellow silk was imported from the east ready for embroidery. Once again, the sovereign, Charles I, interested himself in the English textile trade and issued a proclamation (1631) enumerating those goods which might be imported from the east. Among the permitted imports were "rich carpets of Persia and Cambaya, quilts of satin, taffaty, painted calicoes, benjamin, damasks, satins and taffaties of China, quilts of China embroidered with gold, quilts of Pitani embroidered with silk."<sup>15</sup>

Garments said to have been worn by Charles I are in

many stately homes and museums. The cap of white satin quilted in a running pattern, said to have been the skull cap worn by the king at his execution, is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.<sup>16</sup>

Towards the end of the 17th century, Celia Fiennes, who travelled the length and breadth of the country riding side-saddle on a donkey, commented in her diaries on all she saw. She wrote that "in Windsor Castle there was fine Indian quilting and embroidery of silk."

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, all four King George's concerned themselves with the English textile trade. In 1720, King George I passed an Act prohibiting the use of all decorated cottons. It was an Act to "preserve and encourage the woollen and silk manufacturers of this Kingdom and for the more effective employment of the poor by prohibiting the use and wear of all printed, painted, stained or dyed calicoes in apparel, household stuff, furniture or otherwise after the twenty-fifth day of December, 1722."<sup>17</sup> Fashionable ladies, of course, found ways around this edict, as can be seen in surviving garments and bed quilts made of Indian calicoes and palampores during the 18th century.

As well as using quilting for clothes and bed furnishings, some royal ladies made bed quilts, usually helped by their ladies in waiting. In 1742, helped by her ladies, Queen Caroline, wife of King George II, worked a rich white satin quilt.<sup>18</sup> Almost thirty years later, in 1770, Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, was said to have owned a quilt of cream satin embroidered with garlands of flowers. It was on her gilt bed, made in the Adam style in her quarters at Hampton Court Palace.<sup>19</sup>

In the early years of the 19th century, textile manufacturers produced decorative panels which could be used as quilt centers. One was printed for the golden jubilee of King George III in 1812 and had the motif G 50 R (for George Rex, 50 years) printed on it. One of the colors was a bright canary yellow, a new and very fashionable shade.<sup>20</sup>

In 1816 Princess Charlotte married, and the commemorative panel suitable for a screen or a chair was inscribed around the border "Princess Charlotte of Wales, married to Leopold of Saxe Coburg, May 2, 1816." The panel is an elongated octagon with the Prince of Wales Feathers in a cartouche at the top, the Royal Arms at the bottom and a crown at each side. A wide floral border surrounds the

One of the commemorative panels survives on a very large quilted bedcover showing a portrait of Queen Caroline, wife of King George IV. The Queen gained much popular support during her fight against the King's attempts to divorce her. The quilting pattern bears no relationship to the patchwork, which consists of triangular patches arranged in a fairly haphazard way. The quilt was made at Brecon in Wales about 1820 and is now in the collection of the

Welsh National Folk Museum."

On 17th February 1830 the Brig "Liberia" docked in Monrovia, West Africa,<sup>23</sup> having brought from Tennessee, the Rev. George Erskine, a black minister of the Baptist Church, and his family, all of whom had been slaves. Three years earlier, with help from friends, they had obtained their freedom. One of the daughters was Martha," then aged 13, listed as being able to read. She married in Liberia but, in 1850, after the death of her husband returned to the USA. She then married Moses Rix or Ricks and they returned to Monrovia in January, 1853. "Aunt Martha," as she was known, was famous for her patchwork quilts, and determined to make one for Queen Victoria, whom she called, on behalf of all slaves, "Our Mother."

Eventually in 1892, at the age of 75, Martha Ann Ricks was taken to London by Mrs. Jane Roberts, wife of a former President of Liberia. The "African Times" of 1st August 1892 reported that the meeting between the two women took place on Saturday, 16th July 1892, and that Mrs. Ricks took tea with the Queen.

There seems to be some doubt about the pattern of the quilt but it is more than likely that it showed a coffee tree. Moses Ricks was a coffee planter<sup>25</sup> and is still well remembered in Liberia as he gave some 50 acres of land for a Baptist school, the Ricks Institute, which continues to this day.<sup>26</sup>

Portraits of Queen Victoria figure in a number of quilts. One, at the Bowes Museum in County Durham, unquilted, incorporates two pieces of fabric which show the young Queen.<sup>27</sup> Another made later in the century commemorates the Queen's jubilee of 1887. The centre panel is of the British Lion surrounded by emblems of the British Empire. The main field is composed of Log Cabin blocks. Inserted into the corners of two of the borders are portraits of the Queen, two as a young woman and two 50 years later.<sup>28</sup>

A silk quilt made in Australia in 1887 for Queen Victoria's jubilee is composed of a variation on what is now known as the "Log Cabin" pattern. At the center is a panel showing portraits of the Queen, the Royal Coat of Arms and the date 1887. Four blocks of black velvet, one at each corner of the center block, are embroidered with the rose, thistle, leek and shamrock for the four countries of the British Isles.<sup>29</sup>

With the advent of the railways it became customary, when the sovereign traveled in Great Britain, that he or she used the Royal Train. The first Royal Train was used by Queen Adelaide, wife of King William IV. After the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1936, a new Royal Train was commissioned and a talented American interior designer, Marian Dorn (wife of E. McKnight Kauffer) was entrusted with the work of furnishing the Queen's salon. The curtains and carpet she designed herself but she turned to traditional north country quilting for

the bedcover. When Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne she kept the saloon exactly as it was, with its 1930s decor, until new rolling stock was put into service in 1977. The saloon can be seen at the National Railway Museum in York, complete with quilt on the bed. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the quiltmaker.<sup>30</sup>

In 1967 the Duke of Kent (Queen Elizabeth's cousin), and his wife, who were on a State Visit to the South Pacific, were presented with a tifaifai in the Cook Islands (Rarotonga). It was piece work with a crown (corona) motif. The Cook Islanders have a custom of ceremoniously displaying the tifaifai as they carry it towards the person being honored. A photograph shows that in this instance the women presenting the tifaifai are holding it completely unfolded as they advance towards the royal couple. The donors may place the tifaifai at the feet of the recipient or partially drape it over the person as he or she sits. The old photograph shows tifaifai hanging behind the royal couple and tifaifai draped over their chairs.<sup>31</sup>

To commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Miss Averill Colby, the well-known quilter and author, designed a cope<sup>32</sup> which was sewn by the parishioners of Burford in Oxfordshire, and presented to their church, to be



**The Quilt Journal**

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worn by the parish priest. The body of the cope is of church window hexagons of black, red, green and white satin, brocades and velvet; the orphrey<sup>33</sup> is of crimson velvet with gold octagons and squares; the hood in a pattern of crimson velvet and green and white satin incorporating a cross; the morse<sup>34</sup> is diamond check of red velvet and white brocade squares.<sup>35</sup>

On a visit to Berea, Kentucky, in 1974 I met a number of ladies living in Levi County who made quilts which they sold through the Save the Children Federation. I was shown a "Cherry" pattern quilt and was told that a quilt had been made to this pattern, taken to Washington, DC, by two of the quilters and presented to Mrs. Nixon. I was assured that it had been placed on the bed in which the Queen of England slept when she visited Washington,<sup>36</sup> a reassuring token of the friendship between our two countries.

*Shiela Betterton, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, has been associated for 30 years with the American Museum in Britain, the last 19 as its Textile and Needlework Specialist, with a particular interest in quilts. She was born in Northumberland, England, and, she notes, "always slept under quilts." She was intrigued, on a trip to America in 1963, to discover its quilting tradition. She began patchwork and quilting research then, and has continued it around the world ever since. Ms. Betterton lectures in England and abroad on the subject, and has written six books on textiles in the Museum's collection. She has also collaborated on many other publications in the field.*

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Margaret Jourdain, *English Secular Embroidery*, 1910.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Personal visit with the Duchess of Beaufort.

<sup>4</sup>Cloth of gold. Rich textile with warp of gold threads and weft of colored silk. The battle between Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France in 1520 was called "Field of Cloth of gold" because of the sumptuous textiles used for clothing, furnishings and horse trappings.

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Jourdain.

<sup>6</sup>Therle Hughes, *English Domestic Needlework*, 1961.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Jourdain.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Personal visit to Berkeley Castle.

<sup>11</sup>Margaret Swain, *The Needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots*.

<sup>12</sup>S. Maxwell and R. Hutchinson, *Scottish Costume 1550-1850*.

<sup>13</sup>The Cecils by Lord David Cecil, 1973.

<sup>14</sup>Therle Hughes.

<sup>15</sup>Therle Hughes.

<sup>16</sup>Margaret Jourdain.

<sup>17</sup>Maciver Percival, *The Chintz Book*.

<sup>18</sup>Therle Hughes.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. Colour illustration in - Maciver Percival, *The Chintz Book*.

<sup>22</sup>Personal visit to Welsh National Folk Museum, St. Fagan's Castle, Cardiff.

<sup>23</sup>Professor Svend E. Holsoe, University of Delaware, Correspondence with.

<sup>24</sup>Cuesta Benberry first alerted me to the story of Martha Ann Ricks, which she is currently researching.

<sup>25</sup>Professor Svend E. Holsoe.

<sup>26</sup>Dr. Jane Martin. U.S. Education and Cultural Foundation in Liberia. Correspondence with.

<sup>27</sup>Personal visit to Bowes Museum, County Durham.

<sup>28</sup>Personal contact.

<sup>29</sup>Annette Gero, Australia.

<sup>30</sup>Personal visit to National Railway Museum, York.

<sup>31</sup>Joyce D. Hammond, *Tifafai and Quilts of Polynesia*. University of Hawaii Press, 1986.

<sup>32</sup>Cope - Ecclesiastical. Long cloak, richly decorated, worn by a priest, usually a Bishop on ceremonial occasions.

<sup>33</sup>Accouterments worn with cope.

<sup>34</sup>Accouterments worn with cope.

<sup>35</sup>Averil Colby. Patchwork.

<sup>36</sup>Personal visit to Appalachian Fireside Crafts, Levi County, Kentucky.

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# Quilts and Art: Value Systems in Conflict

by Lorre M. Weidlich

*What's art and what isn't? And: Who's an artist and who isn't? The questions trouble all areas of creative endeavor, quilts included. In the 1970s when quilts moved to museum and gallery walls and collectors' homes, and an "art quilt" movement began, the questions became particularly significant. In this article, Lorre Weidlich explores some aspects of the issue, particularly as it relates to our perceptions of quilts made today.*

—Editors' Note

*Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. . . . Art worlds typically devote considerable attention to trying to decide what is and isn't art, what is and isn't their kind of art, and who is and isn't an artist; by observing how an art world makes those distinctions rather than trying to make them ourselves we can understand much of what goes on in that world.*

Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*

It has been three years since Michael James' keynote address to the American Quilters Society Quilt Show and Contest Awards Banquet, and its subsequent publication in *American Quilter*.<sup>1</sup> As any reader of *American Quilter*, attendee at the banquet, or follower of James' career in the quilt world knows, his comments were controversial, as they often are. A proponent of the "quilts as art" school, James' statement that "much of what's being made today and passed off as 'quilt art' is anything but" aroused the animosity of many of those listening to the speech, and led to a series of follow-up letters, pro and con, in *American Quilter*.<sup>3</sup> The controversy over his speech, and over his previous speeches,<sup>4</sup> suggests that the issue of "quilts as art" somehow taps into a level of importance for quilters much deeper than whether one individual man approves of their quilts. It reflects a conflict of values, and aspirations raised only to be frustrated.

## The Developing Relationship

The history of the current quilt revival is to a large extent the history of the exploration of the question, what is the relationship between quilts and art? The quilts initially welcomed by the art world were those produced without the input or blessing of the art world, but which fit into the paradigm popular in the art world at the time. "It was not

until certain developments had taken place in cultural history that these objects (quilts) would be called back from the kitchen, workshop, and rural home for general reconsideration."<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Holstein's explanation of the ways in which quilts express the design concepts of contemporary, geometrically-based art are sufficiently well known that they need no summarizing here.<sup>6</sup>

The art world embraced quilts. Part of the embrace, however, was a two way naiveté. Not only were the quilters who made these quilts unaware of the standards of the art world, the art world was equally unaware of the aesthetic standards of quilting. Naiveté, however, did not stop the quilt world from celebrating recognition by the art world, leading to the oft-quoted observation made by *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* "It seems to be official now-quiltmaking is indeed an art." "Official" here apparently means, acknowledged by the art world.

What quilter was going to argue with that? Quilters have always cared about aesthetics; recognition of their aesthetic achievements was welcome. During the late 1970's, when the current quilt revival was off and running, I heard numerous quilters proclaim quilting an art. Some were rural, older housewives; others were young, urban professionals. Their quilts ranged from highly traditional to extremely innovative for the time. There was no debate about which quilts were art. Everyone was learning together and the manifesto "quilts are art" was their common ground. I also heard the view expressed, "There's room for everybody."

When many people passionately pursue a creative form, and discover they have an audience for it, innovation occurs. Innovation was not new to quilting; quilters have always been innovative within their frameworks. One result of the plethora of state quilt documentation projects has been the discovery of innumerable quilts innovative by the standards of their places and times. Formally-trained artists, seeing a viable form and a supportive community, were attracted to quilting, and brought to it concepts foreign to its traditional milieu. Gradually, a new genre developed—the art quilt. The book, *The Art Quilt*, by Penny McMorris and Michael Kile, was published in 1986, but the term had been in use before then. Quilters began to talk about "the art quilt," but nobody asked—at least publicly—the obvious question: "If these quilts are art, what are the others?" Until then, quilts had been art, period. Now there

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was a dichotomy: the art quilts and the others. Presumably, "art quilts" were asking to be judged by the standards of the art world, despite the fact that the quilts proclaimed by the art world as "art" were made by women unfamiliar with, perhaps even unaware of, those definitions.

Michael James' pronouncements about what kinds of quilts constitute "art," in the context of the history of the use of the term in relation to quilts, plunge quilters into an ambiguous, consequently uncomfortable, state. Initially, quilters pursued their chosen form without concern for its label. When it was called "art," they were happy to embrace that label. Then they were told that in fact very little of it was art. They found themselves on one hand no longer artists, and on the other, not yet artists.

It appears now that only two categories of quilts fit the art world idea of art: Quilts can be uninformed by art world aesthetics but accidentally fit those aesthetic parameters and hence be proclaimed art. Or, they can develop highly sophisticated (self-conscious, self-aware, reflective) aesthetics and so attain the status of art according to the standards of the art world. All the quilts in between are not, by art world standards, art. They are no longer craft-accidentally-proclaimed-art nor consciously-attempted-art-that-succeeded. The first category, of course, ignores the idea of quilts as quilts, as having their own aesthetic standards. The second is more complex because it fuses quilts-as-quilts with art-as-art, aware of both the properties of the quilt and the aesthetics of the art world. In a sense, recognition by the art world largely destroyed the kind of art that the art world recognized. After the Whitney exhibit, women could be dead folk artists or living fine artists, but that category in between—living popular artists—is left in limbo. Quilters had, in effect, been welcomed into the Garden of Eden by Jonathan Holstein, and then ejected from it by Michael James. The striking thing about quilters' brief sojourn in paradise is that both of the gatekeepers were male.

### A Question of Definition

Definition is the core of the issue. Definitions are, by their very nature, arbitrary. A part of life, of reality, of nature, of human experience, is artificially separated from the whole of life, reality, nature, or experience, and given a name. This leads, of course, to endless debate about just where to draw the line between the part and the whole. "Art" is obviously an example of such a definition. Crucial to the issue is, who controls the definition? Those who control the definition control the category, because the awarding of the label itself bestows a certain value. As Howard Becker points out in *Art Worlds*:

*... The title "art" is a resource that is at once indispensable and unnecessary to the producers of the works in question. It is indispensable because, if you believe art is better, more beautiful, and more expressive than nonart, if you therefore intend to make art and want what you make recognized as art so that you can demand the resources and advantages available to art—then you cannot fulfill your plan if the current aesthetic system and those who explicate and apply it deny you the title. It is unnecessary*

*because even if these people do tell you that what you are doing is not art, you can usually do the same work under a different name and with the support of a different cooperative world.<sup>8</sup>*

Quilters, of course, have done and continue to do the same work regardless of the name, but after the proclamation, "quilts are art," their perspective on what they did changed considerably. Unfortunately, it also, on some level, put a woman's expressive form under the control of a male system of definitions.

Definition of art has always been outside women's control. In *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock trace the historical relationships between definitions of art and women's pursuit of art. The most striking example of the relationship between the two is revealed by their analysis of history painting—historical, mythological and religious painting based on human figures, popular from the Renaissance to the mid-19th century. To successfully create such paintings, it was necessary to master the depiction of the human figure and hence to study anatomy. Women, however, were excluded from the study of the nude, and hence from doing history painting. They turned instead to landscapes, portraits, and still lifes—all defined as "inferior" forms.<sup>9</sup> Parker and Pollock's conclusion?

*Control over access to the nude was but an extension of the exercise of power over what meanings were constructed by an art based on the human body... (Women had) no power to determine the language of high art. They were therefore excluded from both the tools and the power to give meanings of their own to themselves and their culture.<sup>10</sup>*

Like female artists throughout the history of art, modern quilters have found themselves excluded from the category "art" because of the way it is defined. Some quilters say, yes, I do or attempt to do what Michael James describes; the majority seem to be saying, I don't fit his definition, but I still consider myself an artist. What is it about his definition that women find violating?

### Women's Values, Men's Definitions

One of the groundbreaking works in the field of women's psychology was Carol Gilligan's 1982 book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. In it, Gilligan pointed out that the male model of psychological development had long been considered the norm. Insofar as women deviated from that model, they, rather than the model, were considered problematic.<sup>11</sup> Gilligan, through extensive interviewing, examined the differences between male and female values and concepts of relationship.

The central images in her analysis are those of hierarchy and network or web. Analyzing the moral understanding of a pre-adolescent boy, she finds a "hierarchical ordering, with its imagery of winning and losing"<sup>12</sup> paralleled, in the moral understanding of a same-aged girl, by "a network of connection, a web of relationships that is sustained by a process of communication."<sup>13</sup> She explores, in these terms, male/female differences in concepts of self-definition, autonomy and intimacy, separation and connection, and vio-

lence. The differing male/female values uncovered by Gilligan<sup>14</sup> suggest that definitions of art may differ along the same lines.

Let's look at Michael James' definition of art. "The growth of the art of the quilt. . . falls on individuals with subversive natures, with idiosyncratic or even radical viewpoints . . . to push it to limits beyond the known and the familiar."<sup>15</sup> James' definition of art and the artist is certainly not limited to him, but neither is it absolute, universal, and timeless. It emerged in the Western world roughly two centuries ago. As Parker and Pollock explain,

*The concept of the artist as a creative individual is a modern one. Before the eighteenth century, the term was applied to an artisan or craftsman, on the one hand, or, on the other, to someone who displayed taste. . . The modern definition is the culmination of a long process of economic, social and ideological transformations by which the word "artist" ceased to mean a kind of workman and came to signify a special kind of person with a whole set of distinctive characteristics: artists came to be thought of as strange, different, exotic, imaginative, eccentric, creative, unconventional, alone. A mixture of supposed genetic factors and social roles distinguish the artist from the mass of ordinary mortals, creating new myths, those of the prophet and above all the genius and new social persona, the Bohemian and the pioneer.*<sup>16</sup>

In a similar vein, Becker, discussing the "romantic myth of the artist" says, "Such a belief does not appear in all, or even most, societies; it may be unique to Western European societies, and those influenced by them, since the Renaissance."<sup>17</sup>

James' description of the artist emphasizes the idea of the solitary iconoclast who pushes the boundaries, a concept very much in line with Carol Gilligan's analysis of male self-definition through separation, as opposed to women's self-definition through connection:

*Thus the images of hierarchy and web inform different modes of assertion and response: the wish to be alone at the top and the consequent fear that others will get too close; the wish to be at the center of connection and the consequent fear of being too far out on the edge. These disparate fears of being stranded and being caught give rise to different portrayals of achievement and affiliation, leading to different modes of action and different ways of assessing the consequences of choice.*<sup>18</sup>

In short, fitting the solitary iconoclast image of the artist is an ideal way for a man to define himself, while it totally violates women's modes of self-definition. Part of the appeal to women of quilting is the fact that it provides the opportunity for connection. "It's kind of comforting that there's this long line of tradition of quilting, that somewhere I'm in there, I'm in that—I don't know if it's a line or a big pool. It's that feeling that you're part of something . . . It's wrapped up with family, with companionship, with artistic sensibilities."<sup>19</sup>

The male, Jamesian model of "quilt art" violates the very qualities that initially attracted women to quilting and reinforced their continuing pursuit of it. It feels, to a great many of them, alien. The imposition of a male model on a woman's expressive form leaves in a position of discomfort the very

people who are the life blood of that expressive form. In the art world of quilting, many of these people are the ones recognized by their peers as artists. At conflict is not simply a personal like or dislike of one kind of quilt. Many quilters say today, just as they did during the early 1970's, "There's room for everybody." Rather, the conflict is between two definitions of art, one intrinsic to the world of quilting, the other imposed from outside.

*Dr. Lorre Weidlich is a folklorist who specializes in the analysis of contemporary quilt culture, while moving in that culture as a quilter, designer, teacher, and judge. After obtaining her Ph.D. in 1986 from the University of Texas at Austin, she pursued a non-academic path for several years. Since moving back into scholarship, she has published in the *The Quilt Journal* and *American Quilter* and has had quilt-related research accepted for presentation at American Folklore Society meetings.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Michael James, "Quilt Art at Century's End," in *American Quilter*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (Fall, 1992), pp. 52-74.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup>*American Quilter*, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), pp. 60-61 and Vol. IX, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 60-61.

<sup>4</sup>Lorre M. Weidlich, *Quilting Transformed: An Anthropological Approach to the Quilt Revival*, unpublished dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1986, pp. 58-63.

<sup>5</sup>Jonathan Holstein, *The Pieced Quilt, An American Design Tradition* (Little, Brown & Co.: Boston, 1973), p. 113.

<sup>6</sup>Anyone unfamiliar with his analysis can find it in chapter 6, "The Skilled Hand, The Practiced Eye," of *The Pieced Quilt: An American Design Tradition*.

<sup>7</sup>*Quilters Newsletter*, no. 23 (September, 1971), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1982), p. 133.

<sup>9</sup>Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (Pantheon Books: New York, 1981), pp. 33-35.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup>Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London, England, 1982), pp. 5-23.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Jean Baker Miller, in *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), draws similar conclusions; in addition, sociolinguist Deborah Tannen analyzes speech differences between men and women which closely parallel the psychological differences uncovered by Gilligan in *You Just Don't Understand* (William Morrow and Company, Inc.: New York, 1990).

<sup>15</sup>James, op cit., p. 54.

<sup>16</sup>Parker and Pollock, op cit., p. 82.

<sup>17</sup>Becker, op cit., p. 14-15.

<sup>18</sup>Gilligan, op cit., p. 62.

<sup>19</sup>Personal interview with quilter Rebecca Salinger, February 12, 1994. See also my article, "A Folklorist's Thoughts on Quilting," in *American Quilter*, Vol. XI, no. 3 (Fall, 1995), pp. 6-63, in which I analyze quilters' verbal art to reveal its emphasis on relationship and connection. Jane Przybysz observes in "Quilts and Women's Bodies" that "some quilters have used and continue to use quilts . . . to make visible and sharable the enormous, invisible, and undervalued work of caring for and (re) producing human beings and social relations" (Katherine Young, ed., *Bodylore* (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1993), pp. 172-73).

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# Documenting Britain's Quilts: A Look at the Findings

by Janet Rae

*The Quilters' Guild, a British educational charity, completed in 1993 a three-year quilt documentation programme, the British Quilt Heritage Project, conducted in England, Scotland and Wales. A total of 4,183 items were recorded at 30 different venues. The book of the Project, **Quilt Treasures: The Quilters' Guild Heritage Search**, was published by Deirdre McDonald Books in London in June. It will be published in the United States by Rutledge Hill Press in the spring of 1996. Here Janet Rae, the Guild's Heritage Officer at the time of the Project, and general editor of the book, reports on the survey's findings.*

Documenting quilts is not, as we are all aware, an exact science. While technical features, construction, materials and layout can be objectively noted, corroborative written proof is needed to support the histories we record and interpret. Nevertheless, examination of quilts in numbers can discover trends and dispel previously-held beliefs. It can also turn up fascinating oddities. This was the case with the British Quilt Heritage Project.

Perhaps the first myth to be dispelled was the belief that traditional British patchwork was normally done in

of working in blocks. Not so. The Project turned up many examples of block patchwork, particularly in Wales and Scotland. Most were simple in form, an eight-pointed star, windmill or nine-patch. Others used simple squares for dramatic effect, particularly some of the Welsh woolen quilts which, made in two or three colors only, were reminiscent of the American Lancaster County, Pennsylvania Amish style.

There were examples of baskets worked in blocks, made in Turkey red and white, and numerous Log Cabin quilts. The latter were particularly prevalent in Scotland, the Isle of Man and the North of England. Strips in the blocks for the most simple of these, from the Isle of Man, were said to have been based on the measurements of the maker's hand. All were made from coarsely woven woolen fabrics or cotton shirtings. Many of the Scottish quilts dated from the Victorian era, when velvets, silks, satins and ribbons were used instead of cotton or wool.

Curiously, British quiltmakers did not attach labels or names to specific patterns, or if they did, none of these names have survived in the oral tradition. A basket was a basket and a star a star, and the designs were never specifically titled as in the American tradition ("Ohio Star" or "Grape Basket"). And, although the team working on the Project designated Log Cabin blocks as such when they appeared, this was the American usage. Indeed, as I dis-

cussed during earlier research in Britain, this particular block was called a number of different names in needlework books, including 'Egyptian' or 'Mummy' pattern (based on the linen wrappings on mummies) 'Canadian Logwood,' 'Loghouse Quilting,' 'Straight Patchwork,' 'Roof Pattern,' etc.

The Project did, however, record the popularity of different geometric shapes, particularly those used in mosaic patchwork quilts. As anticipated, the most popular pattern was the hexagon, sewn over paper templates. There were 365 quilts with hexagons as the all-over pattern, and a further 222 which had the single or double rosette hexagon pattern. The next most popular shape was the square, and there were 439 quilts where it predominated as an overall pattern.

## Noting a Characteristic Layout

In terms of patchwork design trends, perhaps the Project's most interesting find was not an individual pattern, but a quilt layout. Ten years ago, while researching *Quilts of the British Isles*, I saw several quilts in the collection of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Northern Ireland which were laid out with borders surrounding a central square. I had really not seen many other examples of this layout until they started appearing from private cupboards and blanket chests in the course of the documentation programme.

Classification of these quilts caused quite a debate among the documentation team, especially when it was recognized they did not fit the characteristics of 'medallion quilts.' Generally speaking, they did not have a turned square centre, but one that was sited straight on. Each border was then worked as a specific unit around the centre. Sometimes these borders were simple and nothing more than strips of fabric with patched corners (triangles or squares). Other times the borders were pieced squares on point, triangles, rectangles, stars, diamonds. Applique was occasionally seen in the centre square or in a border or corner square. The most elaborate example of this genre contained 19 frames. Four of the frame quilts presented for recording were in pristine condition, never having been washed. Two had printed centre panels (made in 1805 and 1810), and all were the work of four sisters, whose lives spanned a period from 1798 to 1875.

About 15 per cent of the pieced quilts presented for documentation fell into this 'frame' category. The earliest one bearing a date was simple and crudely pieced; it had the name "Anna Cartwrite" and the year 1796. The major-

ity of frame quilts recorded were made in the last half of the 19th century, and there were several examples of this frame layout on both sides of double-sided patchwork quilts.

There were many curiosities among the pieced quilts, including a very intricate, unfinished 18th century quilt top with a central basket of sunflowers and very complex patterns of trailing flower vines, hearts turned into flower patterns, clamshells, tulips, etc. Most of the patterns used were those one would expect to see as appliqué. In this pieced top, the maker first drew the entire design full size on paper, then cut each piece to use as a template. All of the papers, including the numbered flower petals, were intact.

There were two quilts made of pink corset material (one from fabric samples from the Spirella corset factory in Wrexham and dating from the 1930s) and many interesting examples of war time quilting, including the Red Cross quilts which flowed into Britain during the Second World War. Fifty-four quilts were recorded with labels of the Canadian Red Cross Society; all were easily recognizable because of their fabrics (occasionally they used V-for-Victory prints) and their utilitarian quilting.

### Traditional Wholecloth Quilts

Wholecloth quilts are a very traditional and fundamental part of British quilting, particularly in Wales and the North of England. It was therefore no surprise that about one-third of all quilts recorded fell into this category. One of the oldest, dated 1695, had a chain-stitch embroidered flower motif on a diamond-grid background executed in backstitch. An even earlier quilt in silk, found in Cornwall, had Indo-Portuguese quilted designs which had been stuffed. The oldest item of quilted clothing brought to one of our documentation days was a green silk 'undress' made about 1720. It was used for informal wear, much as one would wear a modern housecoat. The body of the garment was quilted in an all-over diamond pattern with a border containing a vine of flowers and leaves.

Wholecloth quilts, as one of our team pointed out, were hardly ever dated, and one of the quilting 'finds' of the Project was a group of quilts signed and dated by Alice Orange and made between 1851 and 1856. Sewn for the rector of the parish of Dinnington in Northumberland, these quilts contained a number of motifs which included fans, stars, chains, hearts and tulips. One distinctive motif in an 1852 quilt was a gryphon, part of the rector's family crest. Little was discovered about Alice Orange other than she was the rector's housekeeper, aged 38 at the time of the 1851 census.

From the outset, the British Quilt Heritage Project made a special effort to record interesting fabric used in quilts, and was fortunate in having two printed textile specialists attached to the team. 'Reading a Quilt' by looking at, among other things, the fabrics used became an important aspect of the Project and many close-up photographs were taken to record over 200 years of textile printing in Britain. The result, as produced in the book of the Project, gives guidance to quilt dating and testimony about the wealth of

cotton patterns that rolled from British mills, especially in the 19th century. Another major decision taken at the outset was the employment of a specialist textile photographer to attend each documentation venue and to photograph as many quilts as possible. Although lighting conditions and lack of time precluded the photography of many wholecloth quilts (many patterns were recorded only by hand), the Guild nevertheless has been left with a first class slide archive to match the project's databank.

One disappointment of the Project was the lack of adequate social history accompanying most of the quilts brought to us for recording. Although much was discovered through patient examination of patchwork, quilting patterns and fabric, it was usually difficult to obtain details of the maker. What did emerge through quilts with a known provenance, and through other means, were some interesting episodes of quilts crossing the Atlantic. On the very first day of documentation in Chester, two women turned up within an hour of each other bearing American kit quilts from the 1930s which used a dogwood appliqué pattern. One woman at least had been sent the kit to make up. The Project recorded 126 quilts from the United States (many of these dating from the 1930s) and 89 from Canada. A very few had interesting stories attached, including a Rose of Sharon quilt made by Sarah Ann Sobey who emigrated to Memphis, Tennessee, about 1850. She subsequently became caught up in the American Civil War and lost everything except the quilt, which she carried with her when she returned to Liverpool, where she married a farmer. She lived the rest of her life in Lancashire.

As with all research projects, there is still much to learn and investigate about quilt making in Britain. The 'traveling' of certain patterns over the ocean and between continents is a fascinating subject in itself. Nurse Jean McGregor Young of Lanarkshire, who worked in a Chinese mission hospital in the 1920s, and by 1941 was matron of a Red Cross convalescent home in England, probably made her Dresden plate quilt after seeing the Canadian Red Cross quilts. But what connections are there between the simple geometric style common to both the Welsh and the Amish? As with most research, The Project was more a starting point than a conclusion.

*Janet Rae, an American living in Scotland, graduated with a degree in English from the University of Michigan and has worked most of her professional life as a journalist. Her **Quilts of the British Isles** was published in 1987, and in 1988, **Traditional Crafts of Scotland**, which she co-authored. She was Heritage Officer of the British Quilters' Guild for five years, with general responsibility for the Guilds Documentation programme. She lectures on quilting and has helped organize several quilt exhibitions in the UK. For the last ten years she has been a partner in an Edinburgh-based consultancy specializing in corporate publishing, and she also runs a small arts and crafts gallery in the Scottish Borders.*

# Discovering "The Dedicated Quilter"

*The first in-depth survey of American quilters, *Quilting in America*, was conducted in the summer of 1994, and the results published in the fall of that year. Quilters were asked the most intimate details of their lives-in-craft, and a remarkable 76+% responded. Jonathan Holstein has extracted from the survey information he thought would most interest Journal readers, and has drawn a few conclusions.*

—Editors' Note

In the summer of 1994 two surveys asked a number of American quilters about themselves and their participation in the craft. The first, done in June, was sent to 40,000 U.S. households randomly selected. The second, done in July, was sent to 2,000 active quilters, those known to participate in quilting activities of some sort (making, collecting, etc.). The 2,000 were picked randomly from a number of lists of such people.

The results of the two blind surveys, both of which had rather amazing response rates of over 76%, were tabulated and published in a study, *Quilting in America 1994*, by its sponsors, *Quilters Newsletter Magazine*, a division of Lemay Publications, Inc., the journal of record in the field of American quilting, and Quilts, Inc., of Texas. The latter is the organizer of International Quilt Market and International Quilt Festival.

The purpose of the surveys, conducted by two professional research groups (see notes on the surveys at end of article), was to derive information on the American quilt for its sponsors. The data was expected to be useful in a number of ways, from demographic studies to, of course, marketing. Said Nancy O'Bryant, Executive Vice President of Quilts, Inc., "It was an effort to quantify the breadth and depth of interest in quilting in the U.S. There were no up-to-date, statistically valid figures, merely anecdotal information, hardly reliable in making a case for more coverage of quilts and quilting in the mainstream media." The published summary was largely a study of "...those quilters who drive the market—the 5.4% of all quiltmakers who account for 50% of all quilting market expenditures." The information amassed, however, is of considerable interest as a profile of the involved quilter in American society. What follows are the survey results I found most interesting.

**Numbers:** The numbers game with American quilters is interesting. A previous estimate made in 1983 and based on figures from the Yankelovich Monitor (Yankelovich is a national polling company) projected more than 14 million Americans involved in quilts or quilting. This 1994 survey comes up with a figure of 15.5 million quilters over the age of 18, 1.1 per household which has quilters (14,091,000, or 14.7% of all U.S. household). Each of these households

spends an average of \$110 per year on quilt-related expenditures.

If we set the total projected number of quilters against an American population of 250 million, it means that 6% of all Americans are involved in quilting in some way. This is a truly remarkable number (it is as if all of the residents of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston were busily involved with quilts or quilting), and I am not sure what to make of it.

Of this number, the study estimates that there is a group of approximately 840,000 quilters (5.4% of all quilters) who make 50% of the total quilt market expenditures each year (\$777 million of a total of \$1.554 billion). These are hard core quilters (called in the survey "Dedicated" quilters, and qualified by annual expenditures of more than \$400 on quilt-related purchases). This core group lives in 646,000 households which boast an average of 1.3 quilters per household. These households comprise .07% of all American households and 4.6% of all households with quilters. Again, these are significantly large numbers. While I'm sure more than .07% of all American households eat pizza and fast food, have bicycles or VCR's, the number of people significantly dedicated to most leisure-time crafts, and making significant expenditures to support it, is, I would think, quite small.

This is what "dedicated" quilters, who were self-ranked in the survey by skill level, Beginners, Intermediates and Advanced/Experts, look like:

**Their Ages:** The majority span two generations, 35-75. The average age is 52; 32% are aged 18-44.

**Their Education:** Some 68% are college educated.

**Where They Live:** The largest number of quilting households are, naturally, located in the densest population centers. Taken, however, as a concentration per capita (the number of quilting households in relation to population density, in other words), there are unusual concentrations of all such households in the West North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota); West and East South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee); and Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming) regions. There is a concentration of households with dedicated quilters in the New England (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont); West North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin); Mountain and Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington) regions. It appears that the first concentration (all quilting households) is in areas where traditional culture is still strongly in place, and the

second ("dedicated" quilting households) is more in areas of greater affluence and, perhaps, sophistication. It might also be seen as a difference between more traditional quilting culture and that which has developed in areas of greater exposure or receptivity to new ways of thinking about quilts and quilting.

**Their Income:** Their mean household income is in excess of \$62,000 annually. More than 1/3 have annual household incomes exceeding \$60,000, 8% have household incomes between \$100,000 and \$150,000, putting them among the country's more affluent consumers.

**Their Quilting Experience:** The dedicated quilter has 10.5 mean years quilting experience. Slightly more than 50% described themselves as "intermediate" in skill level when given a choice of Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced Expert; the next highest category was Advanced/Expert (about 28%). Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between skill level and quilting activity, with its commensurate economic investment. People who classed themselves as beginners owned an average of several hundred dollars worth of fabric and \$1,160 worth of quilt-related tools and equipment. Those who saw themselves as experts had an average of \$1,392 in fabrics (21.6% owned fabric collections worth in excess of \$2,000) and \$3,897 in tools and equipment.

**Their Quilt Learning:** Most said quilts books and magazines were their best sources of quilting information. Classes were also valuable sources, as were friends and television. Magazines were first (more than 80% of intermediate, advanced, and expert quilters, and about 70% of beginners, used them). Friends and relatives were significant sources of information (40-50%) for all skill levels; quilt shows, classes, guilds, workshops, and lectures were much more important to advanced/expert quilters than beginners (an example is guilds, which only 9.9% of beginners used as a source of information as compared to 50% of advanced/experts). All together they purchased an average of five quilting books last year; the average price of the last purchase was \$21. Video tapes are not significantly used by those surveyed. "Beginners rented virtually no video tapes last year and advanced/expert quilters averaged only .3 quilting video rentals. . ."

**Their Annual Expenditures (shopping, shopping):** Says the report: "The dedicated quilter segment is an active group of shoppers." No kidding. Each spent about \$1,360 last year on quilt-related purchases. "Big ticket" items were \$405; books, magazines, and videos were \$152; fabric was \$420; and miscellaneous/related travel was \$356. Over the previous 12 months, in addition to the expected fabric, thread, batting, needles, quilting tools, notions and quilts books (all purchased by 73% or higher), they bought patterns (67.5%), the largest number of which (38.3%) were for wall hangings, with "wearables" next (33.6%), and bed quilts third

(31.1%), bearing out a note below that 75% of their projects are not bed quilts.

**Their Equipment:** The total value of each dedicated quiltmaker's quilting supplies was \$2,572, plus \$922 for fabric. More than 90% of all dedicated quilters owned scissors, sewing machine, steam iron, and rotary cutter. Almost 50% owned shelving or other storage equipment (indicating a significant space commitment to the activity). Some 37.5% owned quilt racks for displaying their work, and 34.7% had floor-standing quilting frames. Lap frames were owned by 32.1%, and "PVC-type frame for hand quilting" by 28.9%. The type distribution of frame was interesting: almost 50% (49.4) of advanced/expert quilters used floor frames as opposed to 14.5% of beginners. The latter's favorite frame was the lap type. Some 33.7% of all dedicated quilters said they owned personal computers (28.1% IBM or IBM clone versus 6.4% Apple MacIntosh), and 8.9% had quilt design software (2% of Beginners and 16% of Advanced/Experts).

**Their Fabric Purchases and Preferences:** They planned to buy 60 million yards of fabric in the next year. They spend \$420 on cloth in an average year (24% of them spend over \$500). The annual textile purchases of a dedicated quilter in the year preceding the survey amounted to 72 yards at an average of \$5.83 per yard. Quilters who rated themselves as advanced or expert bought an average of 107 yards per year at an average cost of \$6.49 per yard, and their fabric collections averaged \$1,392 in total value.

They much preferred 100% cotton fabrics; 88.5% used that "most often" in their quilts. The poly/cotton blends "run a distant second, with 10% of dedicated quilters using this type of fabric most often. . ." Some 20% of fabric purchases in the last year were solid colors; the rest were patterns. The most popular were floral prints, with 87% purchasing such prints, and the most popular had designs in small scale. As to preferred colors, 35.6% favored what were described as colors in the "jewel tone" family (royal blue, fuchsia, purple, and emerald green). Pastels were next; 31.3% reported they purchased most often in this color family.

Some 82.3% bought their fabrics at a general fabric store; 68.2% shopped at "independent quilt shops." Discount stores saw 47.1% of them. The higher the skill level, the more specialty shopping: 83.5% of advanced/expert quilters shopped at quilt stores as compared to 37.7% of beginners. And 62.6% of advanced/expert quilters selected quilt shops "as their favorite source for quilting fabric vs. 26.1% of beginners, who cite general fabric stores as their favorite source." The single most important characteristic in a retail outlet was, naturally enough, a wide fabric selection.

**Their Projects:** They start an average of 12.7 projects per year, more than one each month (I wonder what this means; how many projects do they finish?). The higher the skill level, the more projects are initiated. Advanced/expert

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quilters initiate an average of 17.1 projects per year. Of these, a startling 75% "are not bed quilts, but smaller projects such as miniature quilts, wall hangings, fashion articles and functional articles..." (mostly home decorating items). The largest single category of projects started was "Wall Hangings," with 2.2 projects started annually by the average dedicated quilter. This perhaps reflects an interest in making "art" through the quilting medium on the part of sophisticated quilters. Some other crafts of significant interest to them in addition to those mentioned above were Christmas decorations, embroidery, crocheting, doll making and knitting. Each spends an average of 40.2 hours per month (!) at their project; 23% spent more than 65 hours per month. (Some 62%, more than 500,000 people, said they planned to give more time to quilting during the next three years, but such good intentions are often significantly unrealized.)

They did have some other leisure time activities. Almost 80% said they read for pleasure, 68% walked for exercise, over 50% gardened. They cooked, took adult education classes, collected antiques, took photos, swam, watched birds, camped, rode bicycles, boated, made music and hiked, some with backpacks.

**The Way They Work:** Catch this: 92% said they preferred to work alone; I wonder what percentage of other American quilters would show this preference, and if it relates to the making of the top only. And this: The majority prefer traditional quilts and quilt patterns, though 44% also liked "variation on traditional patterns." Nearly 80% used machine piecing and rotary cutting during the past year. Some hand piecing was done by 47.1% (26.5% of beginners compared to 61.1% of advanced/expert quilters), hand appliqué was used by 53.6% (23.1% of beginners vs. 72% of advanced/experts), strip piecing by 52.1%, and machine quilting by 52.7%.

About 18.5% said they used surface embellishments (beginners, 4.6% vs. advanced/expert, 34.5%). Crazy quilting was done by 15.3%, paper piecing by 19.2%, string piecing by 12.2%, and percentages under 10 for such techniques as fabric painting, stenciling, rubber stamping, trapunto, dyeing fabrics, photo transfer and marbling.

I found these speculations most immediately interesting:

The "dedicated quilter" would appear from this study to be well-educated, affluent, active, have broad interests . . . a portrait of the idealized American mom updated for the 90's (all that healthy exercise and outdoor activity). Not surprisingly, she appears also to be conservative, preferring traditional patterns and colors and small-figured patterns (those which would be in "good taste"); design innovation in quilting is happening elsewhere. Additionally, I would guess many of these quilters came to it not through the more traditional mode of oral transmission but through the apparatus of the modern quilt revival.

The small number of bed-sized quilts included in her projects surprised me, but quilting is only one of a number

of needlework pursuits this energetic woman follows; 70% listed "sewing" as another craft they pursued distinct from other leisure-time activities (which, as we have seen, were numerous). Quilting appears to be a craft experience for her, a leisure-time pursuit more than a conscious effort to make "art" or, obviously, necessary bed covers. They are great consumers of quilt information in most media; their profiles, including the large numbers who have computers, indicates they are in technology-conscious families.

Their significant spending power gives them probably more clout in the market place than they realize. A number of mini- and not-so-mini-industries are built around their predilections. One interesting thing is the intense entrepreneurial nature of quilt businesses; most are classic examples of businesses developed to meet specific opportunities too small or specialized to be addressed by "big" business.

I leave it to the reader to mine these surveys further.

**Sources and Survey Information:** My information was drawn from these sources: Press releases containing information extracted from the surveys and prepared by Quilts, Inc., and *Quilters Newsletter Magazine*, and an "Executive Summary" of the survey results, also prepared by the two organizations. The latter contains summaries of survey findings, extensive tabulations of specific categories, information on methodology, etc., and is available for \$250 from *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* through Tina Battock, QNM, Box 4101, Golden, CO 80402-4101. Her phone number is 303-278-1010. Its full title is "Quilting in America 1994: A Comprehensive Study of the U.S. Quilting Market Executive Summary."

**Methodology:** (The following information on methodology was taken from the Methodology section in the Executive Summary of the study.)

The first survey was done in July of 1994 by NFO Research, Inc. (said in the Executive Summary to be "the 8th largest marketing research company in the United States"). Its purpose was "to determine the size of the U.S. quiltmaking market in terms of both the number of adults (18-plus) involved in the activity and their annual expenditures."

The questionnaire went "to 40,000 U.S. households scientifically selected to be representative of all U.S. households. Six weeks were allowed for survey returns, and 30,667 households responded, a return rate of 76.7%."

The second survey was conducted by ABACUS Custom Research, Inc., "an independent marketing research company located in Emmaus, Pennsylvania." For study, an "nth" sample of 2,000 known quilting consumers was selected. Each was sent an "alert" letter in June of 1994 and the survey during the same month. "A total of 1,516 usable survey questionnaire surveys were obtained by fixed random sampling procedures. This represents a recovery of 76.3% of all eligible."

# Winterthur Museum's Treasury of Quilts

by Deborah Kraak and Kathleen Carpenter

*Winterthur, which houses one of the United States' premier collections of American decorative arts, was in effect the personal creation of Henry Francis du Pont. Mr. du Pont indulged his passion for things American by searching out the finest and rarest objects which appeared on the market, buying in significant quantities, and arranging his treasures in carefully orchestrated period room settings. Winterthur is a center for viewing and studying American decorative art in all its forms, and has one of the country's best training programs in American material culture study and connoisseurship. Here Deborah Kraak, Associate Curator of Textiles at Winterthur, and Kathleen Carpenter, give us a searching profile of Winterthur's quilt collection, and add complete information for potential visitors.*

—Editors' Notes

The quilt collection of Winterthur Museum is a kind of hidden treasure with a depth and richness only hinted at by the few quilts displayed in the period rooms or illustrated in quilt publications. Although best known for rare, late 18th-early 19th century medallion format quilts, examples in the collection range from the 17th to the 20th century. The majority of the approximately 224 quilts date from about 1825-1900 (see chart). Most of the quilts in storage have never been seen except by textile specialists. But the Museum has plans to bring its hidden collection to light in 1999 with a major exhibition and catalogue. *The Quilt Journal* has asked for this preview of the collection for its readers.

Unlike most museums or private collections, Winterthur's quilts were not purchased to form a collection *per se*, rather, they were acquired to decorate beds in specific room settings in the 175 Period Rooms created at Winterthur by Henry du Pont. Consequently, the collection is not an encyclopedic record of quilting in America, but a record of one man's taste and its expression in an architectural setting. Henry du Pont had room furnishings changed seasonally on a carefully considered schedule. While records of Mr. du Pont's quilt purchases are worded very generally ("blue wool quilt" for example), he nevertheless gave careful, detailed instructions about which quilts were to be used in each room at what times and in connection with specific changes of bed, window hangings and carpets.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes as many as four quilts would be used in one room on a seasonally rotating basis. Over time, staff reductions have made most such seasonal rotations a thing of the past, and the textile displays in the Period Rooms are now rather static. However, the Museum's goal is to gradually reinstitute selected seasonal changes so the public can once again

enjoy the room variations Mr. du Pont so carefully planned. Mr. du Pont was proud of the extensive textile collection he had created and wrote that, "The curtains, upholstery, bed hangings and bedspreads at Winterthur are in themselves a museum . . .".

Color was an important element in a Period Room's decor, both within the space and without. The textile changes, including quilts, were orchestrated to coordinate with the changing hues visible in the Winterthur landscape beyond the windows of the Period Rooms.<sup>3</sup> To judge from the number of blue examples in the collection, Mr. du Pont must have indulged his love of that color when purchasing quilts. Blue quilts in the collection include beautiful examples of two color resist-dyed blue quilts, as well as blue copperplate printed cotton quilts, and a number of blue glazed wool quilts, many with superb quilting.

Pattern was another factor in selecting quilts for Winterthur; Mr. du Pont particularly liked those with patriotic themes. Eagles were a popular motif. They appear in low relief on a chaste white work emblazoned with the word "Liberty," and in designs in medallions on the elaborate columns of so-called "pillar" prints. Skillfully engraved copperplate printed cottons used in quilts in the collection honor American Revolutionary War heroes. One quilt has an *Apotheosis of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington* print made in England about 1785; it illustrates Great Britain's eagerness to retain the United States as a trading partner. Patriotism and propaganda combine in a French copperplate print entitled *Hommage de l'Amerique a la France* made about 1783 and used in a quilt in the collection. The print was an elegant reminder of the great debt the United States owed France for its help in gaining victory over the British.

The scope and focus of the collection was unknown until the Museum decided to assemble an exhibition of its quilts. This led to the first systematic survey of the quilt collection, now nearing completion. Museum staff members were astonished to learn that there are nearly 224 quilts at Winterthur. The collection can be broken down into four major categories: 18th-century whole cloth wool quilts (21), 18th and 19th century whole cloth printed cotton quilts (73), late 18th and early 19th pieced quilts (26), and the previously mentioned medallion quilts. There are a few examples of embroidered Indian bedcovers or palampores (5), as well as a c. 1800 pieced silk quilt, brilliant mid-19th century chintz appliqué quilts, album quilts (4), and one crazy quilt. In Winterthur's quilts as in others, relatively few quilters left their identities: 20 of the quilts of the collection are dated, 20 are signed and 19 are initialed.

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Most Winterthur quilts are not the famous early pieced and appliqueed quilts that dazzle from the pages of books on quilts and historic textiles, but are simple, wholecloth quilts. One hundred and thirty-eight examples, in silk, wool, and cotton, demonstrate Mr. du Pont's interest in fabric itself, and include silk taffetas, velvets, brocades, and damasks, as well as cottons that are patterned by block, copperplate, and roller printing.

One of the most interesting results of the quilt survey, done in conjunction with the rehousing of the entire textile collection, was the discovery of many wholecloth quilts made of printed cotton. Although most of the printed fabrics used in the quilts were made in Great Britain, two very interesting quilts were block printed about 1800-1810; the Museum has the woodblocks with which they were made. The majority of the printed whole cloth quilts were stored on shelves along with lengths and rolls of historic printed fabric. It was exciting to discover in the Museum's unparalleled collection of early printed textiles unquilted fabrics similar or identical to those used in these whole cloth quilts. There were even examples of quilts or textiles with the same pattern printed in different colorways. This sheds new light on the range of choices available to the quiltmaker and the popular color schemes of their eras.

The wool whole cloth quilts are the type commonly, and erroneously, known as "linsey woolsey." In reality, these were not made of a fabric with a linen warp and wool weft, but of worsted wool. The shiny texture of the worsted yarns and the brilliance of the saturated colors were enhanced by a surface glaze. Several of Winterthur's wholecloth wool quilts retain their glazes and the crisp, new look that the glazing gives them. Research on the composition of historic glazes and their methods of application is being done by staff members in the Museum's Textile Conservation Department and will appear in the quilt catalogue.

Mr. du Pont's color and pattern preferences were particularly evident in the late 18th-early 19th pieced quilts. The nearly kaleidoscopic assortment of blockprinted, copperplate and roller printed textiles in the quilts are like a merchant's swatch book. Popular 18th century styles of madder dyed/printed floral prints mix with ca. 1800 prints in the fashionable drab shades of yellows, greens, and browns. Small-scale geometric prints and animal motifs — giraffe and leopard — are combined with squares of monochromatic copperplate prints. The incomplete motifs recall tantalizingly the 36" square patterns on lengths of English-export cotton cloths which are part of the Winterthur collection.

The late 18th-early 19th century medallion quilts are probably the most impressive quilts in the collection, both for their beauty and rarity. They contain the greatest diversity of types and styles of fabric of all the Museum's quilts. The quiltmakers cut fabric to form swags, ribbons, and geometric borders. With the medallions, there are appliqué "pictures," usually of birds and flowering trees, that were the principle motifs of printed fabrics. But they are com-

bined with a variety of colors and forms that would have been impossible, from a technical point of view, in any single textile manufactured by the block, copperplate and roller printing methods. The number of different textiles used in these quilts and the intricacy of the designs communicate the quiltmaker's delight in working with her medium. The expense of these textiles, particularly the furnishing fabrics, supports the theory that early pieced or appliqué quilts were not the product of scarcity but of abundance.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the most unusual quilts in the collection are those made from Indian mordant painted and resist dyed bedcovers. Decorated with a Tree of Life that flowered with real and imaginary flowers, these bedcovers were wildly popular in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Palampores could be purchased plain or quilted. Such quilts were among the earliest recorded quilts that were exported, via England, to the British colonies in North America.<sup>5</sup> Judge Samuel Sewall, in a 1720 entry in the diaries he kept from 1674-1729, wrote that he ordered from England "a good fine large Chintz Quilt well made" for his daughter's wedding.<sup>6</sup> This example demonstrates the fashion advantage of living in the colonies then. At the time of the Sewall wedding, it was illegal to own and use Indian printed textiles in England. The prohibition on these cloths occurred because their popularity threatened English textile industries. Textile manufacturers successfully sought government support in limiting British use of imported, printed textiles. It was, however, permissible to import them to England if their ultimate destination was the colonies.<sup>7</sup> The Tree of Life, seen on the Indian palampores, was prototype for both English printed furnishing fabric designs and for the trees found on so many medallion format quilts. Through the quilted and unquilted palampores in the Winterthur collection, the printed textiles, and the early quilts, it has been possible to trace that evolution in one collection.

The quilt and textile collections at Winterthur offer many possibilities for the serious researcher. Appointments can be scheduled for people doing graduate level research or for work for publication. Call the Winterthur Library, (302) 888-4681, for an appointment.

Quilts are on display in over a dozen of the Period Rooms. They range from whole cloth wool examples to densely quilted covers made from 18th century English copperplate prints or two-color blue resist fabrics, to 19th century stuffed white work quilts. These can be seen on either the two-hour tour of the Period Rooms, or in a Special Subject Tour that focuses on textiles. Call or write the Reservations Office at 800-448-3883. The charge for the two hour tour is \$21. The Special Subject Tour is limited to a maximum of four people, at a charge of \$80. The tour includes a visit to two study/storage areas: the Needlework Study Room and the Textile Study Room. Previously, the visitors on the SST tours could see scores of the Museum's quilts on sliding hanging racks in the Bedspread Storage room. This system was recently replaced by boxed storage, part of the general rehousing of

the entire textile collection when the new fire suppression system was installed. While this limits immediate visibility of the quilts, it will enhance their life expectancy by minimizing the damage caused by gravity, dust, and abrasion. The more fearsome destruction that would occur if one or more sprinkler heads discharged will also be reduced. Boxed storage is not ideal, and the Museum hopes to substitute a more "user friendly" system when all of the Museum's collections in storage are rehoused.

A selection of quilts is currently on view in the installation, *Perspectives on the Decorative Arts in the Galleries*. This includes a Baltimore album quilt, an early 18th century palampore, and a bedcover blockprinted by John Hewson of Philadelphia, one of the few late 18th century printers working in the United States. Hours of operation are 10:00-4:00 Tuesday-Saturday and 1:00-4:00 on Sunday. The last tour leaves at 3:00 and costs \$7 for all three properties. There are also quilts displayed at the Historic Houses of Odessa; please call (302) 387-4069 for more information.

Winterthur Museum Library has an excellent collection of books about quilts and historic textiles. The quilt selection alone numbers over 150 titles. There are also rare books and periodicals that contain fabric swatches. The Library is open to the public Monday-Friday from 8:30-4:30. No appointments are necessary, and there is no charge. Researchers do, however, need to obtain a Library pass at the guards' station in the part of the Museum known as the Glass Corridor. This modern structure that links the Period Rooms with the Research wing is difficult to drive to if you do not know your way around the Winterthur estate. It might be easier to park in the Visitor Parking Lot, clearly marked on your way into the property, and walk down to the Pavilion. A shuttle van runs every five minutes between the Pavilion and the Museum from 9:00 to 5:30. Once the visitor is at the Museum, a staff member will give directions to the Glass Corridor. In addition to picking up a Library pass there, the visitor will be given a key for a locker in which all bags, purses, etc., must be stored. Only books, paper, and pencils may be brought into the Library.

Swatch books and other fabric-related one-of-a-kind manuscripts are in the Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection, located in the lower level of the Library. Hours are 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday. For access please call Gail Stanislaw at (302) 888-4853.

## Acknowledgments

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*Ms. Kraak received her BA with High Honors in Art History at Michigan State University, a Museum Training Certificate from The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and an MA in Art History from the latter institution.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>White work quilts were ordered for messy guests, presumably because the quilts could be more easily laundered than could pieced or printed quilts.

<sup>2</sup>Notes to Mr. du Pont's executors, written during the period from 1945-1964.

<sup>3</sup>Denise Magnani. *The Winterthur Garden: Henry du Pont's Romance with the Land*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers in association with The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1995, p. 120, "Textiles also brought nature's colors indoors," and p. 123, "Perhaps the ultimate interplay of interior and exterior resides in two avocative parallels we can intuit, but not prove, to have been du Pont's intentions. One is the identification of similar color contrasts and triads in period rooms and the garden."

<sup>4</sup>Rachel Maines, *Paradigms of Scarcity and Abundance*.

<sup>5</sup>A palampore with an 18th-century Boston provenance is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted by Patsy and Myron Orlofsky in *Quilts in America*, New York, London, Paris: Abbeville Press, 1992 edition, pp. 34-35.

<sup>7</sup>After 1721, it even became illegal to own and use cotton fabrics printed in England; this helps explain why American textile collections often have more examples of 18th century English printed textiles than English collections.

WINTERTHUR QUILT COLLECTION					
	Late 17th Century Early 18th Century	18th Century	Late 18th Century Early 19th Century	19th Century	Late 19th Century Early 20th Century
Wholecloth	1	38	39	56	3
Pieced		2	7	28	5
Applique		1	2	16	2
Pieced & Applique		1	1	10	2

# Quilted Links? South African Kappies and French Boutin

by Lucille M. Chaveas

During the 19th century in South Africa, Afrikaner women were making elaborately quilted and corded sunbonnets for everyday wear. The majority of these were made of layers of white cotton or linen material and bear a striking resemblance to French white work of the 17th and 18th centuries. This study deals with the history, construction methods, styles, and designs of these sunbonnets and a comparison is drawn between them and the French white work. A possible link between these two needlework traditions is suggested via the Huguenots who arrived in South Africa in 1688.

Between 1835 and 1845 groups of Afrikaan-speaking farmers ("Boers"), migrated from the Cape Colony into what is now the northern part of South Africa. These Boers, mainly of Dutch descent, had become dissatisfied under British rule, imposed on them in 1806. When their slaves were emancipated by British law in 1833, followed by the return of annexed land on the eastern border of the Cape Colony to the African tribes, Boer families began moving north to escape British control. This migration is known as The Great Trek and the Boers who undertook it are called the *Voortrekkers*, or pioneers. The Great Trek has come to symbolize the independent spirit of the Afrikaners and it is regarded by them as one of the most significant events in their history.

The Great Trek was not one cohesive migration, but a series of departures of different groups, in different directions, at different times. When they left the Cape, the Voortrekkers were wearing the fashionable styles of the time. Because of distance and poor communication, these styles lagged behind what was considered current in Europe.<sup>1</sup> One of the most distinctive articles of clothing made and worn by the Voortrekker women was the white, quilted and corded *kappie* or sunbonnet.

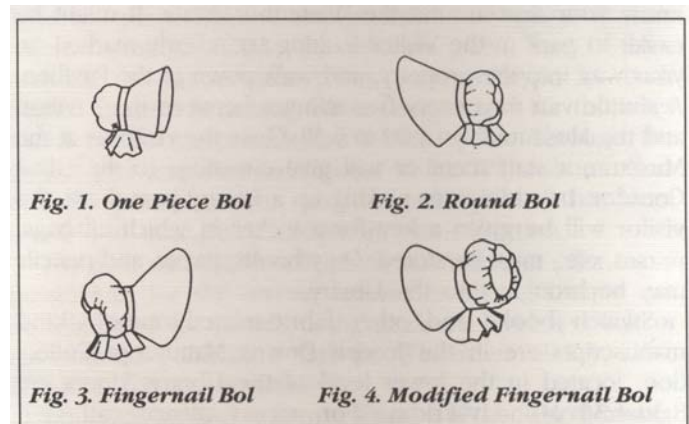
## Whitework Voortrekker Kappies

The kappie was an adaptation of earlier styles, and its origin was in 17th century white linen hoods worn in Europe and particularly in Holland. The Dutch women who came to the Cape in the late 1650s to marry early male settlers and establish a true colony, were generally country women, and many would have had these hoods in their wardrobes.<sup>1</sup> The style died out in Europe, but never completely in South Africa as it proved practical for the Cape Colony's climate. Such a large, hood-like bonnet was essential to protect women's complexions from the sun. Strings were added because of the wind on the Cape.

In the early 19th century classical styles became fashionable, with a general return to simplicity of line and function. Clothes as well as accessories followed these classical lines, and the "Grecian bonnet" appeared.<sup>3</sup> This bonnet had a wide brim to frame the face, a deep crown that stood out behind the head to allow for the hairstyle of the time, a short cape-like portion at the back to protect the neck, and ribbons that tied under the chin. These were known as country bonnets in Europe and sunbonnets in the United States. The Voortrekker women adapted their clothing to reflect the new styles of the 19th century and their kappies closely resembled these bonnets.

White kappies had four basic shapes with minor differences within these overall patterns: the *pofbol*; the *driestukkappie*, the two piece round bol; and the *tuitkappie*.<sup>4</sup>

The oldest style was the *pofbol kappie* or puffed crown bonnet, whose design easily accommodated the high bun or chignon that was fashionable early in the 19th century. There were minor variations within this style: the one piece bol (Fig. 1), the round bol (Fig. 2), the fingernail bol (Fig. 3), and the modified fingernail bol (Fig. 4).

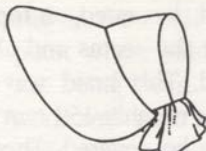


The *driestukkappie* or the three-piece bonnet takes its name from its basic construction in three distinct parts and it also had variations within the general form: three piece round bol (Fig. 5), and three piece long bol or fingernail bol (Fig. 6). The three piece kappies were popular during the Great Trek, though their height of fashion in Europe was during the 1820s and early 1830s.

As hairstyles changed at the end of the 1830s, so did bonnet styles. Hairstyles became smoother, hair was worn closer to the head and buns dropped lower on the back of the head and neck. The crown section of bonnets began to



**Fig. 5. Three Piece Round Bol**

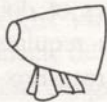


**Figure 6. Three Piece Long Bol or Fingernail Bol**

disappear as a separate part of the construction and was replaced by a circle or oval shaped piece of fabric (the bol) at the back. The brim now went straight through in a line from front to back. This fashion change is reflected in the third and fourth shapes used in kappie designs: the two piece round bol (Fig. 7) where the overall shape varied with the size of the circle at the back, and the *tuitkappie* or poke bonnet (Figs. 8 and 9) with its exaggerated brim.



**Figure 7. Two Piece Round Bol**



**Figure 8. Tuitkappie (or poke bonnet)**



**Figure 9. Tuitkappie (or poke bonnet)**

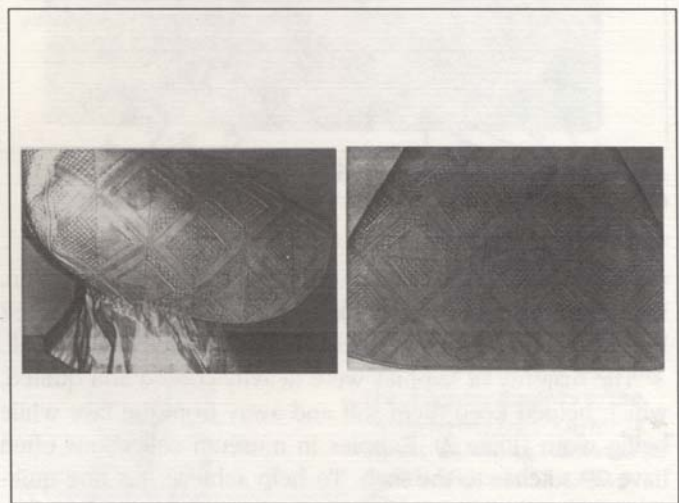
The *tuitkappie* proved to be especially suitable when the Great Trek took the Boers into a hot, dry part of South Africa. The long poke behind, finished with a small bol, created an air pocket, and the bonnet stood away from the ears when worn untied; this made it cooler. The large brim acted like an umbrella over the face, and many measured over 15 inches long. This style was sometimes referred to as the Dopper or conservative bonnet because when a young woman wore one it was difficult for a young man to kiss her; the poke got in the way.<sup>5</sup>

Patterns were not standardized within these four basic shapes. Museum collections indicate that many pattern variations existed for each style. Part of the explanation for this comes from the fact that the Great Trek was actually several different migrations over a ten year period and these Trekparties were essentially independent of each other.

These bonnets were worn primarily to avoid sunburn, and all four basic shapes served this purpose.

### Construction and Designs

What makes the white kappies so remarkable and precious are the designs worked on them in extremely fine quilting and cording. This is the major difference that separates the Voortrekker kappie from similar bonnets made elsewhere during the 19th century. The quilting and cording replaced all other trimming and the work was done entirely by hand (Plate 1).



**Plate 1. Two kappies in the collection of the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, South Africa. Photograph by Lucille Chaveas.**

The material used was white or light colored linen or cotton which was purchased from shops in the Eastern Cape or from traveling salesmen. The Voortrekker women did not weave their own cloth.<sup>6</sup>

The kappies were made of three or four layers of material with designs for the cording marked on the layer just beneath the top." These designs were either drawn free-hand, or traced from patterns cut from leather or, when possible, paper. Tradition has it that the handle of a tin spoon was used to make the markings.' A tin spoon leaves a mark on cloth similar to a pencil line. Sometimes slate or some other "drawing stone" was used to transfer the design.

Once the design had been carefully marked, the lines were followed with cotton cord twisted from frays of other clothing, most often from socks, because commercial thread was rarely available.' This layer was then sandwiched between the other layers and the cording was outline with tiny running stitches through all three or four layers. It is not clear how the cording was kept from slipping out of place during the quilting. Only one reference could be found that described it being tacked into place before assembly, but no clear details were given.<sup>10</sup> A few references describe

*continued on page 22*



Plate 2. Detail of a piece of 19th century French boutis. Collection of Lucille Chaveas, photograph by the owner.

the cording as being inserted with a thick needle or bodkin. One even described the bodkin as being made of steenbok horn." Most references do not mention this technique at all.

The majority of kappies were heavily corded and quilted, which helped keep them stiff and away from the face while being worn (Plate 2). Kappies in museum collections often have 29 stitches to the inch. To help achieve this fine quilting some women used a *naairing*, or sewing ring, when they worked. This was a ring for the thumb with a shield on it and it was used like a thimble.<sup>12</sup>

Some kappies were made without cording. In this case, either the bottom layer of fabric or the thread used had not been pre-shrunk. Once the quilting was completed and the kappie assembled, it was dipped in water and the thread or fabric shrank so that the design stood out. These kappies were not nearly as stiff as the corded ones, the patterns were not as pronounced, and they did not stand away from the face very well. Although they were less time consuming and difficult to make, they were not as popular.

The designing, cording and quilting were done on the individual parts of the kappies before they were assembled. To best appreciate the designs, kappies must be thought of as they would look if flattened out. Once assembled, it is not as easy to see the marvelous symmetry and proportion of the designs (Fig. 10). The kappies were assembled with the same care and patience used in designing the separate



Fig. 10. "Flattened out" Kappie detailing symmetry and proportion of the design

parts. The seams were meticulously joined, any excess fabric was cut away and a binding was worked around the edges. In cases where binding was not used, the separate parts were joined and decorated on top with a handmade, ric-rac like braid over the seams and along the line where the frill was attached. This braid was made of matching material cut into strips roughly 150 mm wide and twice the length of the seam to be covered. These strips were gathered with basting stitches sewn in three zig-zag rows and then pulled tightly to create a ric-rac effect that has sometimes been described as resembling the teeth of a saw.<sup>13</sup> Today this kind of braid is called gathered ruching or shell trimming. This finished ruching was sewn over the seams with nearly invisible stitches and it added to the overall beauty of the finished kappie (Fig. 11).

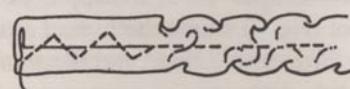


Fig. 11. Ruching or shell trimming

Some women took this added step even farther by using box-pleated ruching over the seams and occasionally between rows of cording on the brim, and by box-pleating the frill (Fig. 12). Single box-pleating requires material three times the width of the space to be covered by the pleats. There are a few examples of double box-pleating on the frills of kappies and this requires material five times the width of the covered area. Box-pleating and/or ruching added extra time and expense to the finished kappie, but the Voortrekker woman clearly thought it was worthwhile to judge from the examples in museum collections today.

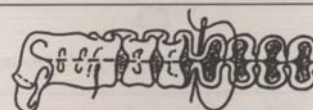


Fig. 12. Box-pleated ruche

All styles of kappies included a frill or *kraag* which covered the neck and some part of the shoulders for further protection from the sun. The frill was either gathered or box-pleated before it was attached. A special crimp block or gathering board with adjustable reeds was used to make these pleats. The gathering board was a wooden frame with openings on the longest sides in which reeds could be shifted. The material to be gathered was woven to and fro and then moved up and fastened. The size of the gather or pleat depended on how the reeds were set and how the material was woven; i.e., whether it was through one, two, or more reeds. After a few days the material was removed and it was beautifully gathered. These frills were finished off just as neatly and finely as the rest of the kappie. Some kappies had double frills, one shorter than the other. The frills could

be pinned to the back of a little girl's dress, or even occasionally to her braid, to prevent them from being lost during play. Frills on children's kappies sometimes have an extra piece of material on the inside at the back of the neck to strengthen the point where stitches or pins were used when the kappie was being worn.<sup>14</sup> White kappies represented months of work and were too precious to lose.

Voortrekker art was essentially decorative, and designs are found on most everyday objects. Almost every utensil of wood, horn or leather was decorated in one way or another. These decorations show a pure feeling for style, beauty, and symmetry. There is a clear preference for certain motifs, namely geometric patterns, animal figures, and plant designs.<sup>15</sup> Designs for kappies also show the variety of inspiration and artistic creativity of the Voortrekker women. No two designs were ever exactly alike. What similarity exists is usually explained by the fact that some designs were handed down in families. Designs were rarely traded and never sold, and there is no record of individuals being known for their special drafting abilities. It is clear that the women made up their own designs.

Geometric patterns outnumbered other designs, and these were usually done in straight lines along the brim or as zig-zags, checks or diamonds covering the surface (Fig. 13). Plant motifs were second in number to geometric designs and these were the individual woman's interpretation of local flora. Flower designs varied from the most simple, stylized patterns to relatively difficult, realistic versions (Figs. 14-18). Very few of these designs have come down in history with names. Only "wandering Jew" (Fig. 17) and "pineapple" (Fig. 18)<sup>17</sup> are specifically listed in collections, although various stylized flowers are recognizable, such as proteas, fuchsia, daisies or cosmos, tulips, and carnations, even if they are not recorded as such.

Circles and parts of circles are used to create overall patterns on some kappies (Fig. 19). Hearts were used on children's kappies (Fig. 20) and curved lines with simple flowers were common (Fig. 21). A floral motif combined with geometric designs was also popular (Figs. 22, 23). Often, there is a unique border pattern around the edge of the kappie even if this is not a separate piece of material used in the construction. This edge design will usually be repeated in the bol. No matter how many design elements were used on the various parts of the kappie, there is usually one element common to all sections. Inspiration for some of the geometric designs may have come from designs on imported lace, very popular at the time of the Great Trek.

The kappies were starched to add extra stiffness to keep them from falling into the faces of the women who wore them. Starch was usually made from potatoes or corn, but some references mention sugar or honey. Because they were



Fig. 13. The zig-zag pattern shows the effect of the combination of dense and widely spaced running stitches. (Drawing after D. Strutt, *Clothing Fashions in South Africa 1652-1900*, 0. 235).



Fig. 14. Leaf design used on brim of kappie. (NMB: G2339)



Fig. 15. Creeper design used on brim (NMB: G4202)



Fig. 16. Detail of leaf design used on brim. (NMB: G338)



Fig. 17. Brim design showing the creeping tendrils of the "wandering Jew." (After D. Strutt, *Clothing Fashions in South Africa 1652-1900*, p. 234).

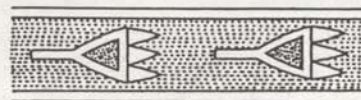


Fig. 18. Stylized pineapple design displayed in sixteen rows across the brim. (NMB: G732)



Fig. 19. Detail of crown showing the curved clam shell design. (NMB: G1130)



Fig. 20. Detail of the double heart design taken from the brim of a child's kappie (VMP: 131)



Fig. 21. Designs on brim showing curved lines and simplistic flowers. (NMB: G2751)



Fig. 22. Floral design showing the combination of floral and geometric designs. (NMB: G491)

Fig. 23. Floral design with corded, curved and straight lines. (NMB: G12640)



continued on page 24

white, they needed to be washed fairly often, and they were difficult to iron. The kappie was pulled over a special wooden block as it dried to help retain its shape and make it easier to iron.<sup>18</sup> The starch also helped to keep the kappies clean; dirt collected on the starch and was washed out with it.

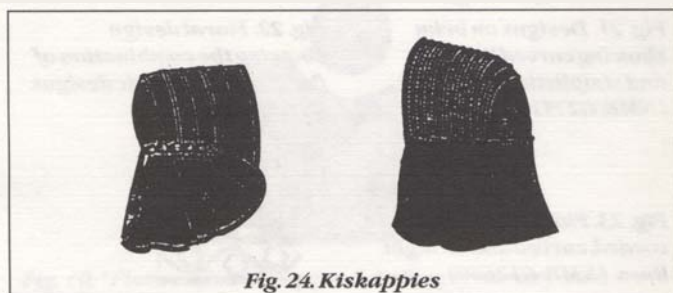
The importance of these white kappies is illustrated by two interesting facts about them. First, special wooden boxes were made to hold them when they were not in use. The Voortrekkers traveled by ox wagon and space was at a premium; nevertheless, a place was made for these boxes and some were beautifully painted. Secondly, kappies were never sold,<sup>19</sup> although on rare occasions they were traded for needed items or services. There is a magnificent kappie in the Voortrekker Monument Museum in Pretoria that was traded by the woman who made it for a milk cow for a baby whose mother had died.

### Kiskappies and Smouskappies

Not all kappies were white or made of linen or cotton. Another popular style was known as the *kiskappie* or formal bonnet. These were usually worn by older women and were sometimes exact copies of fashionable bonnets worn in Europe. *Kiskappies* were made of colored fabrics, plain or striped, and silk or shot silk was commonly used. Because this material could not be washed and starched, the bonnet was constructed and decorated differently from the white kappie. Without starch to support it, the colored kappie needed considerable body to keep the stiff shape of the brim. It was padded with wadding or flannel and even thick paper was sometimes used between the layers of

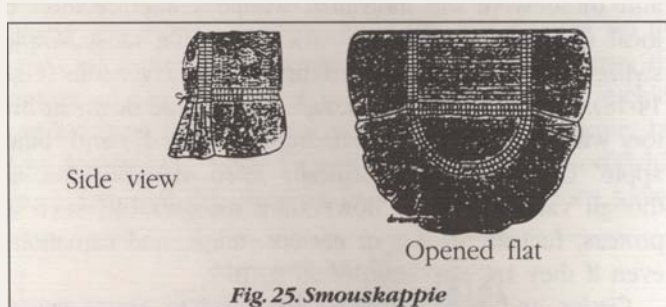
These bonnets were also corded but not in the elaborate patterns of the white kappies because the rich material being used did not require intricate designs to show it off. The cord was inserted in the same way, but it was much thicker, or two or three cords were sewn next to each other in sets to appear thicker. The rows of cording on the *kiskappies* were always straight and followed the line of the edge of the brim. Space was left open between the cords, or sets of cords, and the whole process was repeated until the entire brim was covered with cording and spaces (Fig. 24).

The top layer of material in the spaces between the cord-



ing was not stretched as tightly as the bottom layer, so puffed bubbles or puckering that gave a ruched effect was formed. This puckering could be exaggerated by slightly gathering the top layer as the quilting stitches were being done." These colored kappies were less time consuming to make than the white ones and the silk ones were popular with adults. Matrons wearing blue silk *kiskappies* were not an uncommon sight into the 1900's. *Kiskappies* show a marked resemblance to the European drawn bonnets made with cane hoops in the 1840's. One feature that was quite different, however, was the extreme length and fullness of the neck frill, which often covered the shoulders. Even when this style kappie was made for children in cotton rather than silk, the frill was very long. Examples in the Voortrekker Museum in Peitermaritzburg, South Africa, show the long frill being lined with net to stiffen it.

Peddler's bonnets or *smouskappies* were sold by itinerant merchants generally after 1880. they were usually made in black or floral patterns material and were never very popular. *Smouskappies* were entirely machine made, with a minimum of machine stitched decoration on the brim." They had a drawstring in two pieces that tied in the back and created the shape of the bonnet. When untied the bonnet would lie flat which made it easier to wash and dry (Fig. 25).



### White Kappies and French White Work

The resemblance between the white kappies of 19th century South Africa and French white work of the 17th and 18th centuries is remarkable. There is no written record that definitively connects these two traditions but many Afrikaners have Huguenot, as well as Dutch, ancestry. A small group of Huguenots arrived in the Cape Colony in 1688, not long after the Dutch, and they had a marked influence on many aspects of Afrikaner life and culture.

French white work, also called Marseilles quilting<sup>23</sup> or *boutis* work, has a long history in the Provence region of France; records of quilted white work from the city of Marseilles date back to the 16th century. *Boutis* work was done on a very fine, strong, white linen or cotton cloth for the top and a poorer quality white cloth for the bottom. The two pieces of fabric were joined by very close quilting in

either a back stitch or a running stitch which retraced a premarked pattern with parallel lines. The spaces between the parallel stitching lines were filled with long cotton cord twisted around a tool called a *boutis* that was inserted from the back between the stitching lines. The number of strands of cotton cord depended upon the width of the space between the quilting. Ideally this space was filled completely so that the design was shown clearly. The *boutis* was skillfully removed from the back and any excess cord was cut off and the loose ends worked between the two layers of fabric.

This *boutis* has been variously described as a long but supple needle with a blunt end and a large eye, or as a flexible metal rod. These tools were made at home by the individual doing the cording and were produced as needed. Individual workers had their own preferences for materials used and the size would vary with the width of the cord being inserted. Although the finished work takes one of its names from the tool that was used, the tool itself was not standardized or highly valued.

*Boutis* work was primarily used for white blankets, counterpanes, baby clothing and women's petticoats, but there are a few examples of it on bonnets for women and babies.<sup>24</sup> These articles were heavily adorned with very intricate designs that included a wide variety of flowers as well as birds, hearts and fruit (Fig. 26). Often the background space between the cording was filled with geometric patterns. Cross hatching was the most common, but semicircles and zig-zags were also used. These designs and the overall appearance of the Marseilles quilts is strikingly similar to the work done on the kappies.

These two white work traditions share a high degree of technical perfection and suppleness of design. They both required great skill and time to accomplish. This was never a type of needlework that had wide popularity and its documented tradition is both chronologically and region-

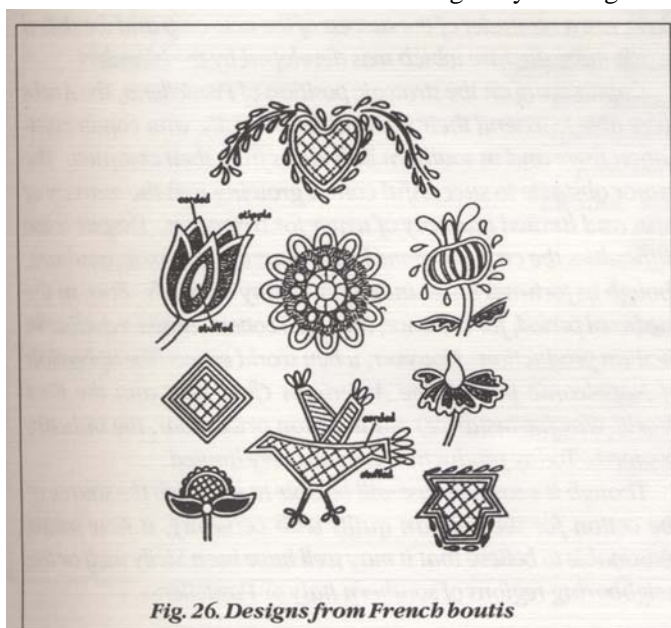


Fig. 26. Designs from French *boutis*

ally limited. The likelihood therefore of a Huguenot connection to the Voortrekker kappie is highly possible. More research needs to be done linking known examples of *boutis* and kappies to specific families in their respective countries then looking for family connections between France and South Africa.

Whatever the connection or origins, it is plain to see in these kappies that Voortrekker women were making a statement about themselves through their needlework. The high degree of workmanship and artistic sensibility seen in these kappies tells a great deal about their skill, patience, and ability to endure. The kappies add to the overall understanding of this part of South African history as experienced by women.

*Lucille Chaveas has participated professionally in many areas of quilt-related activities. Her quilts have been exhibited in a number of exhibitions abroad, and one hangs permanently in Chateau Chauveniac-Lafayette, birthplace of the Marquis de Lafayette. She has a teacher's certification from the National Quilt Association, and has taught quilting, lectured on quilts and arranged exhibitions in France, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa and Malawi. Her review of the Renwick Gallery (Washington) installation of the exhibition, "Who'd A Thought It?" Improvisations in African-American Quilting appeared in the Fall, 1992 journal of American Folklore. Ms. Chaveas received a BA from Syracuse University and an MA in Museum Studies from The George Washington University. Her time abroad has been spent with her husband, a foreign service officer, who is currently Ambassador to Malawi.*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>D. H. Strutt, *Clothing Fashions in South Africa 1652-1900* (A.A. Balkema, Cape Town-Rotterdam, 1975), 223.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 224.
- <sup>3</sup>A. Holden, *Elegant Modes in the Nineteenth Century: From High Waist to Bustle* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1935), 19.
- <sup>4</sup>Strutt, 225.
- <sup>5</sup>Hans Rooseboom, editor, *The Romance of the Great Trek: A Collection of Authoritative Articles on the Life and Times of the Voortrekkers* (South Africa: CNA Ltd., 1949), 156.
- <sup>6</sup>G.S. Preller, *Voortrekkerense* (Deel 1 & 2. Kaapstad: De Nationale Pers, 1918), 237.
- <sup>7</sup>J.D. Weilbach and C.N.J. du Plessis, *Gebiedenis van de Emigranten-boeren en van den Vrijheids-oorlog* (Kaapstad: Saul Solomon Drukkers, 1882), 23.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 23.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., 24.
- <sup>10</sup>A. Carlsen, "Die Voortrekkerkappie," *Museum Memo*, vol. 16, no. 4 (November 1988), 24.
- <sup>11</sup>K. Roodt-Coetzee, "Die Dekoratie in Die Voortrekkerkleredrag," (The Voortrekker Memorial Album of the University of Pretoria, 1938, 125. A steenbok is a type of antelope found in southern Africa.
- <sup>12</sup>Dr. C. J. Pretorius, Curator, National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, South Africa, Personal Interview, October, 1989.
- <sup>13</sup>Roodt-Coetzee, 126.
- <sup>14</sup>T. van Niekerk, personal interview at the Africana Museum, Johannesburg, RSA June 19489.
- <sup>15</sup>Roodt-Coetzee, 127.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., 128.
- <sup>17</sup>Myra Briedenhann, curator, National Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Personal Interview, June 1989.
- <sup>18</sup>Roodt-Coetzee, 39.
- <sup>19</sup>While living in South Africa between 1988 and 1990, I tried very hard to buy a *kappie* but could find no one willing to sell one at any price.
- <sup>20</sup>Strutt, 239.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., 239.
- <sup>22</sup>T. van Niekerk, curator, Africana Museum, Johannesburg, RSA. Personal interview, November 1989.
- <sup>23</sup>Sally Garoutte, "Marseilles Quilts and their Woven Offspring," *Uncoverings*, Vol. 3, 982, 115-134.
- <sup>24</sup>Museon Arlaten, 29, rue de la Republique, Arles, France.

# More on Sicilian Quilts

In the last Journal, I reviewed and commented upon Susan Young's article originally in *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* on the famous pair of Sicilian quilts in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Bargello Museum, Florence (see QNM for September, 1993, and TQJ Vol. 3, No. 2, 1994). I said at the end of that review that the quilts deserved further study, and hoped Ms. Young would do it. She has obliged by considering for this Journal one question we raised, where the cotton stuffing had originated. I speculated about the source of the batting: ". . . No cotton was then grown in Europe. But there was a significant export of finished cotton textiles to Europe from the Orient and the Levant; Sicily had strong ties with the latter. The nature of the filling in the quilts would seem to imply that the cotton trade of the period included unprocessed cotton, perhaps even cotton batting."

Texts I had read over the years, a number of which I reviewed for this note, made reference to the early cultivation of cotton in India and the New World, but were murky about its history as a crop in Europe.

We were thus very pleased to receive the following communique from Ms. Young, which corrects my incorrect assumption about early cotton cultivation in Europe. I am including here most of her general comments on cotton history in the belief that there are among our readers others as interested as I in this matter. Ms. Young writes:

*I was fortunate recently to visit the island of Pantelleria, which lies between Sicily and Tunisia. (Ed. note: Pantelleria is 62 miles from Sicily and is tied politically to that island. It occupies a strategic position in the passage which divides the eastern and western Mediterranean.) While there I leafed through a booklet about the history of the island, and noted a mention of the cultivation of cotton there centuries ago. I was intrigued by this because the source of the cotton filling of the Sicilian quilts was unknown. This promoted me to research the history of cotton cultivation.*

*Greek and Roman writers knew of cotton but spoke of it as an exotic plant, and the fabrics made from it as products of distant lands. Herodotus stated that, in India, they grew trees whose fruit" was a type of wool which was more beautiful and more practical than sheep's wool, and which the Indians used to make clothing. The cotton plant was known anciently as 'the wool tree' and the name survives in the German word for cotton - baumwolle.*

*The Greeks are thought to have begun to use cotton after Alexander's conquests, and the Romans after the wars with the*

*Asian kings. But there is no certain record that the cultivation of the plant or the production of cotton fabric was carried out in either Greece or ancient Rome.*

*Cotton cultivation began in China at a comparatively late date, perhaps not until the thirteenth century. The Arab traveler Suleiman visited China in the second half of the ninth century and made special mention that the Chinese, rich and poor alike, dressed in silk, but he made no mention of cotton. Likewise, Marco Polo spoke of the cultivation of cotton in various other countries but not in China.*

*Egyptian cotton enjoys an enviable reputation and it is surprising to learn that it has been cultivated there for not much more than a century. The Arab doctor Abd al-Latif visited Egypt in the thirteenth century and listed the plants known there; cotton is not on his list. By the end of the sixteenth century Egyptians were importing cotton from Syria and Cyprus. By that time they were growing the plant in their gardens as a curiosity or ornamental plant.*

*When European settlers arrived in the Americas, they found that cotton was cultivated, and fabric manufactured from it, in the West Indies, Mexico, Peru and Brazil. The species, however, were different from those known in the Old World.*

*And now Pantelleria: The island was conquered by the Arabs in the ninth century and they are credited with introducing cotton there. They made its cultivation possible by introducing an efficient irrigation system which used a rudimentary form of water wheel to ring water up from the island's wells. Some ancient Pantelleria place names, such as Cala Cuttuni (Cotton Bay), are a reminder of the success of the new crop and the skilled textile manufacture which was developed by the islanders.*

*Capitalizing on the strategic position of Pantelleria, the Arabs were able to extend their domination to Sicily, and cotton cultivation there and in southern Italy dates from their conquest. The major obstacle to successful cotton growing was the scarcity of rain and limited quantity of water for irrigation. Despite these difficulties the crop has remained a part of Sicilian agriculture, though its fortunes have undergone many reversals. Even in the medieval period, for instance, imported cotton caused a decline in Sicilian production. However, when world events (the upheavals of Napoleonic period, the American Civil War and the First World War for instance) made cotton prices soar, the industry boomed. Today production is again very limited.*

*Though it's unlikely we will be able to establish the source of the cotton for the Sicilian quilts with certainty, it now seems reasonable to believe that it may well have been Sicily itself or the neighboring regions of southern Italy or Pantelleria.*

This is the 6th issue of *The Quilt Journal - An International Review*, to be published in 4 years. It is also, we are sorry to say, the last for the time being.

*The Quilt Journal* was one outcome of our 1992 symposium, "Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt." Scholarship issues raised there resound currently in the field. Prominent among the more important matters raised in Louisville were these: The need of bringing to all quilt scholarship the same standards of professionalism and judgment which prevail in other fields of inquiry, and the necessity of bringing to quilt study an outlook more interdisciplinary and international. *The Quilt Journal* was our attempt to continue those endeavors.

Publishing even a small journal is enormously time-consuming. We needed to balance the need we saw to continue publishing against other equally important work that demanded our attention. The establishment of an international quilt index, another goal which grew from the Louisville conferences, and a national quilt center, project of The Alliance for American Quilts, in which the Editors are deeply involved, seemed more important just now; our energies, and resources, unfortunately cannot encompass all tasks. We hope that when the center is established, *The Quilt Journal* will be revived as its publication. Until then, we will send you, our members, periodic updates on the progress of

The Center, The Index and *The Journal*.

Publishing *The Quilt Journal* has been an act of love. We are proud of the articles we have been able to put before our readers, and deeply grateful to the scholars who so generously contributed them. Our attempt was to bring to the field for its consideration a great diversity of thinking about quilts and quilting, and in that we feel we succeeded. Articles have ranged the globe, modern and ancient quilts, scholarship here and elsewhere, quilt study methodology, quilts in literature, quilts from the standpoint of women's history, and much else. Response has been supportive and gratifying, and we were especially delighted to know that articles published in the journal were instrumental in helping at least one young scholar fund graduate studies. How sweet such music is.

Thank you, contributors, for giving us the privilege of publishing your work, and for your constructive suggestions and criticisms. Thank you, subscribers and readers, for supporting the Journal's publication and letting us know how you felt about our content. We hope you will rejoin us when *The Quilt Journal* is reborn.

And to those who will in the future read these journals, now, we are proud to think, part of the permanent literature of the field: It was a wonderful time to be doing this, when there was so much to discover.

## SPECIAL THANKS

The Editors give special thanks to our Sponsor and Patron level members for 1995.

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