

colored thread

studio notes, fiber arts, and arts education

Wednesday, April 4

Art Quilt Elements 2012

I avoided opening night of Art Quilt Elements 2012 knowing I'd much rather be there when I could have unfettered views of the beautiful work. So I went the day after it opened instead! Overall, it's a good show, but I wasn't as blown away as I was for the 2010 exhibition. Of course, that may just be that I'm more familiar with many of the artists. This year's selection seemed to have fewer artists exploring surface design or stitching, and more hearkening back to quilt traditions. The following works were the stars of the show in my book, for their interesting structures, use of color, and interpretation of quilt arts.



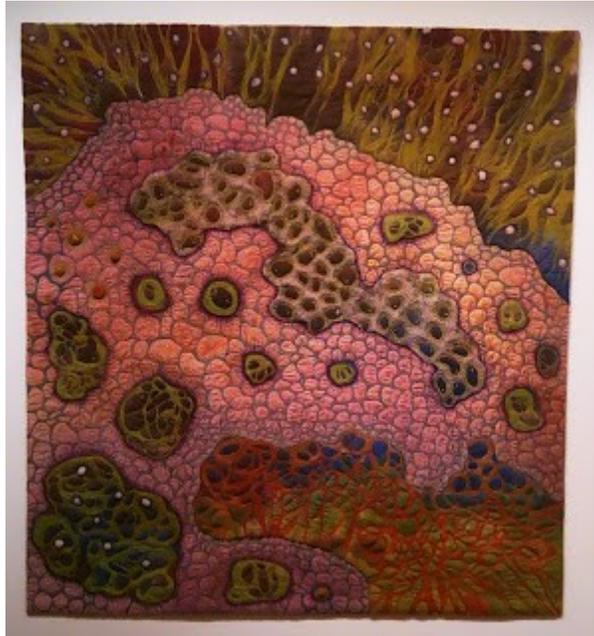
[Eileen Lauterborn's](#) "Climate Change" graces the postcard and catalog cover, and it's easy to see why: there is an explosion of color and intriguing textural technique. There are layers and layers of thin strips of cloth overlapped and zigzagged. Normally I'm a diehard for hand-stitching, but the machine stitched zigzagging echoes the movement of the strips for a perfect marriage of form and function. The complex surface sucks you in, and you are lost in the labyrinth of lines.



[Marianne R. Williamson's](#) quilt was another piece with lush surface color and texture. She layers raw edge scraps and densely stitches them down in free-motion stitching so that the fabric almost looks felted. Her color is gorgeous with an impressionistic effect.



One of my real favorites in Art Quilt Elements is [Betty Busby's](#) "Organelle". Her quilting stitches were really like an intricate drawing of the enlarged microscopic view.



Across the gallery from Busby's organic piece was [Beth Barron's](#) "Implosion":



From afar I was fascinated by the unusual form and jagged edge. Up close there's an "EWW!" factor- the entire piece is made of FOUND band-aids appliqued to the cloth surface. I really don't want to think about the sanitary issues of working on something like this, but the resulting wound-like piece is incredible. There's no bandaid to cover up a wound that big.



One artist utilizes the traditions of quilting, but brings them to new heights by combining and juxtaposing myriad piecing patterns. Mary Shell's "Colors Unfurled AKA if Betsy Ross had my Stash" combines quilt arts with Jasper Johns, with a separate quilt pattern to represent each stripe and a starburst for each state.



Commercial fabrics were pretty common this year, but none so transformed as by Shawn P. Quinlan:



Motifs from various commercial fabrics were applied to create a narrative composition of commercialism gone haywire. Careful, baby, there's sharks in the water, and the toy store's on fire!



I enjoyed [Mary Ruth Smith's](#) piece, below, for its emphasis on stitching, and I really like her layering of transparent cloth over digitally printed images and perhaps even paper. I'd love to be a fly on her studio wall sometime. But technique aside, she uses newspaper clippings- text, crossword and sudoku puzzles, comics, and story illustrations, which show the onslaught of media information we must filter through. I much preferred her subtle comment on media and current events over a nearby piece with the words "War sucks" emblazoned over the cloth.



Newspaper and media references continued in Jette Clover's typographic exploration (left below).



I most enjoy the technical virtuosity of work like [Ilene Pearlman's](#) (right above) which combined reverse applique and trapped found objects to create a dream-like atmosphere, and the unusual format of Brooke Atherton's "I feel free" (below).



As I've recently been stitching on found garments, I enjoyed seeing the yellow blouse stitched into the quilt- apparently it was something worn to friend's wedding. With the marriage no longer in existence the cloth's memory is tarnished, so it has been repurposed- it practically flaps away in the internal wind of the piece.



Art Quilt Elements 2012 is on exhibit at the [Wayne Art Center](#) through May 13th, and is well worth the trip.

Fiber Philadelphia isn't over yet!!

This Friday, April 6th, several shows are opening in Old City, including "Strings and Things" at 3rd Street Gallery with Melissa Madonni Haims, and the 2nd part of "Stitch Witchery" with Melissa, myself, Rachel Udell, and the late Maggie Brosnan at the Painted Bride as part of Inliquid. Come out to

First Friday from about 6-8 to see it in person!

The following Friday, April 13th from 6-8 will be the reception for "Softer Edges" at the Works on Paper building at Fleisher Art Memorial. Hope to see you there!

Posted by [MarieE](#) at [7:45 PM](#)

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