

requirement last year. It is up to you to decide when to make your JQs within the year; all you need to do to meet the Challenge is complete 12 by the end of December (unless you only started part way through). That said, keeping up momentum is usually easier with a regular schedule and we do recommend this.

There will be a monthly Facebook Album as usual. If you would like to, do post a photo of each JQ in the appropriate album, together with a brief comment on why/how you made it. Don't forget to add your name – unlike with a post, Facebook does not automatically include your name when you are adding to an Album.

If you don't use Facebook, please take a good, high resolution photo of each JQ and keep these in your own album until the end of the year. Please note, you no longer need to email your photos to me on a monthly or four-monthly basis.

In December 2024, we will be inviting everyone who has taken part (whether or not you use Facebook) to select their favourite JQs of the year and email a high resolution photo of these to me, together with a short statement. We will use these as the basis for the Newsletter Review of the challenge and to set up a website gallery. This gives members who are not Facebook users the opportunity to share their work.

I hope you enjoy next year's challenge and if you have any queries or problems (or suggestions for a future theme), do drop me an email.

jq_contemp@quiltersguild.org.uk

October Journal Quilt

by Sandra Grusd

Having been a calligrapher in a former incarnation, I was very happy to read in the December 2022 CQ Newsletter that the theme for the Journal Quilts for 2023 was 'Words'. What further delighted me was the lack of restraints.

I made the decisions and set my own limitations. Earlier in the year, I had learned a bookbinding technique which allowed one to bind single sheets together. I decided to make my twelve journal quilts into a book using that technique and to make each quilt A5 size.

I began gathering all the fabrics that I had with text on (no buying new allowed). I had a small piece of commercial fabric but the majority was hand printed by me including screen printing, stencilling, block printing and hand written. I even found some pieces of paper lamination which I made years ago. In addition to fabric, I used wet-strength tissue paper onto which I had hand-written words with permanent ink. These were either adhered with matte medium or Bondaweb.

October's quilt is layered up as a collage with a piece of paper lamination bonded onto the felt, with plenty of clear white organza showing the white felt wadding beneath. In the top right hand corner is a piece of hand written tissue paper,

adhered with Bondaweb. The other fabrics were positioned and stitched into place and a final piece of paper lamination added to the right hand side to balance the composition.

The work was machine quilted with monofilament thread, then trimmed to size and bound with net.

sandragrusd@gmail.com

Editorial: What A Piece of Work is Man's

Featured here are more men who move in the quilting world. David Owen Hastings himself contributed to the article that Khurshid Bamboat has composed. After some sessions of stewarding in the Guild's *A Diverse Patchwork* Gallery at FOQ this August, it struck me that I could ask Heather Audin (the curator) for an historical perspective on men and quilts. This she has generously provided and the fascinating piece is on page 17.

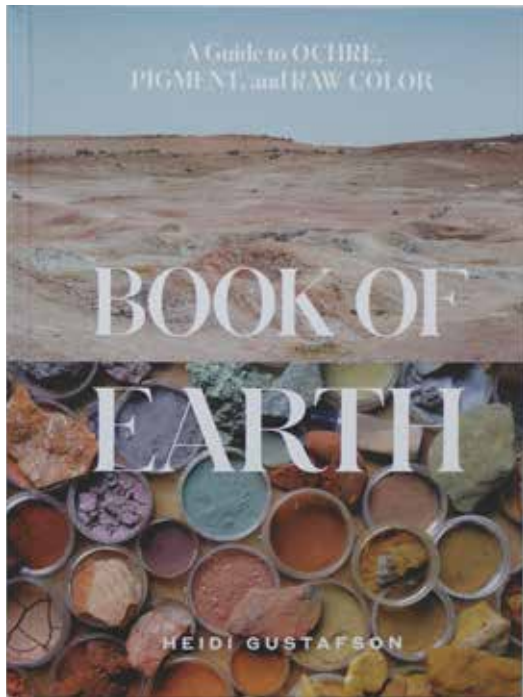
One of my several goddaughters has experimented with textiles since she was a little girl; now she is a landscape architect, needle and thread remain a passion and she is always eager to spend time with me at FOQ. By complete chance, Helen came this year on the very same day that Chris English was giving a talk about his quilt in *A Diverse Patchwork*. Eagerly she told me about the day's workshop she had recently done with him. Not to miss this unexpected opportunity, I asked her to write a piece about her experience of learning from Chris; the result is on page 26.

There are a couple of 'opinion pieces' in this issue. Out of curiosity, I asked Sheila Dalgleish if she had had any answers to the question that she posed in September on page 15. She did have some by email, and in conversation with people that she met, all encouragingly supportive. She is not disappointed that there were not more, for her intention had been to make readers think rather than to evoke a response. Please don't hesitate to tell us if you ever have anything to say after reflecting on contributions such as those by Jill Holden of Contemporary Textiles London (who always relish a good debate) and Sharron Law from Region 8. Even better, please pen a few paragraphs!

Right: Banner at the entrance to the Ashmolean displays an extract from *Decadent Young Woman, After the Dance* by Ramon Casas (1899)



As well as reviews of three textile artists' group shows that have now ended, there are reviews of two fabric-related exhibitions that run into 2024; these are on page 33. After I had immersed myself in the vivid world of Victoriana in the 'Colour Revolution' galleries, I browsed in the Ashmolean's shop. There I came across a book with an alluring cover, *Book of Earth: A Guide to Ochre Pigment and Raw Colour* by Heidi Gustafson, published by Abrams, New York, earlier this year. Knowing that several CQers use earth pigments in their work, I bought it.



The author is an artist and alchemist with an archive of over 600 rare ochre pigments. Despite the presence of crystallographic diagrams of the iron minerals described, this is definitely not a geological book in the scientific sense; it would be highly unlikely to find the statement that red ochre is from the 'body or blood of a god' in such a text (tangible origins are listed, too). It is fundamentally about earth, and Earth, but from a holistic, even 'holistic', profoundly spiritual perspective. Although there are extensive notes, there isn't an index, but perhaps this more freely flowing writing would be spoiled by imposing such formality. Also frustratingly, there are no locations given for the wonderfully ochre-hued landscape photographs but Heidi says that she has made 'every effort not to disclose images, place or knowledge shared with me in confidence, nor do I mention specifics involving ochre use from known sacred places'. In her words, it is not 'an easy breezy, encyclopaedic global trot around the planet to check out colourful places to travel to...'

There are many thought-provoking passages that shift one's perception: 'I imagine ochre (iron earths, iron oxides) as a shared creative portal between the cosmos, Earth's heart, and my tiny life... We contain inescapable intimacy with earth and dust. We are made up of earth'. Throughout the narrative, anthropology meets ecology meets mythology meets the indigenous meets the deeply personal meets practical paint making. The book ends with a generous 'From Rock to Paint' section with tempting recipes.

If, in your travels near or far, you meet a book that so catches your eye, please do write about it for future Newsletters.

Dealing with Delirium

by Annie Henderson-Begg

I made this piece in response to my mother's descent into delirium. It was a scary time, characterised by her unpredictable and sometimes aggressive behaviour and with no way of knowing how it would end. Stitching as therapy.

I had imagined delirium was a fictional malady suffered by ladies in Victorian novels. Until my mother got it, aged 96, after contracting Covid. Already affected by dementia, she became intensely paranoid, convinced people were trying to poison her, so stopped eating and drinking. In hospital, I would find her barricaded into her bed by staff or crouched by the nursing station, desperate to escape.

This coincided with Festival of Quilts 2022 when I was part of the group putting together CQ's 'Uncharted' gallery.

Ignorance of what might follow amplified my fear. We just had to wait and see how well she would recover.

I was already in the habit of taking some stitching with me when I visited my mum, as I had done with my dad in the months before he died. He tended to drop off in the middle of conversations and I could get on with my sewing until he woke up again. With my mum, it was something for us to talk about and, even if a visit was frustrating, at least I would have a bit of work to show for it.

I'm a member of the Strands textile group (ex-Missenden Abbey City & Guilds). We had each dyed a metre of fabric and some threads and trimmings using plant dyes, then split them between us, and our challenge at the time was to make something using only those fabrics on the front. I'd been planning a long, thin piece to hang from a vintage Axminster Carpets bobbin, so started laying out the fabrics onto a backing of gorgeous handwoven wool from Cloth Atelier (clothatelier.com).

I had no plan other than to express the futility of my trying to impose order on a

Right: Annie at the Festival of Quilts with her award





condition that could not be controlled. There are a few straight lines (though even those are fraying), losing the battle against heavily ruffled pieces and meandering hand stitch. The colours are muted – not at all my usual palette – but, boy, did they match my mood. See facing page, detail.

This was satisfying to make, easy to work on during visits to my mum or when trying to relax in front of rubbish TV. Eventually she did improve (it took months) and is still with us at 97. It was hard to know when to stop as I could have added more and more stitch. But after a few months I rolled it round the bobbin and put it away.

Then came FOQ entry time so I bunged it into Art Quilts with zero expectation (the secret to a happy life, as a friend said afterwards).

Tip 1: When they ring the night before and say, 'Are you coming to the Awards Ceremony?' and you say, 'Can you tell me what I won?' and they say, 'No, but it's a good one', it's worth buying a train ticket to Birmingham (I came 1st in Art Quilts).

Tip 2: Enter your quilts (in the right category). There were fewer than 50 Art Quilt entries in 2023 so my odds weren't too bad. Next year it could be you.

Tip 3: Make what you make with conviction. *Delirium* was fuelled by raw emotion, and I guess that's one of the reasons it won.

And thank you: To everyone who put up with me at FOQ 2022 when I was also going a bit crazy; and to Strands, who helped me rise to the challenge.

anniehegg@btinternet.com

Left: Detail from Annie Henderson-Begg's *Delirium*

Grouchy and Grumpy: Contemporary Quilters at the Festival of Quilts

by Jill Holden

Our group of contemporary quilters decided recently to change our name to Contemporary Textiles London, removing the word 'quilt' from our title. Although we all come from a strong quilting background, we felt this change allowed more scope for variety and experimentation in our practice; most of us hoped we would develop further as a result. This needs to be stressed, as in our discussions of this year's Festival of Quilts, we fully acknowledge we form only one part of the quilting community, and the Festival has a very broad reach. With this early caveat, the following thoughts arose from our musings, and centred on the judging process and the somewhat arbitrary nature of the different quilt categories.

It is clear that judging is done under severe time constraints and much of the organisation and grouping of quilts helps to facilitate the judging process.

Additionally, stating on the entry form the category to which the quilt belongs makes hanging the work a more manageable task. However, there is a question of whether this is putting the cart before the horse. In particular, many people, including those with much experience, have great difficulty in deciding both which category to enter and what the judging criteria may be.

Take, for example, a two-person quilt. This can, presumably, be any style: modern, contemporary, traditional, miniature – and yet all are judged under one heading. A single person quilt, identical in every way to a two-person quilt, other than the number of fingers involved in making it, must be entered according to pre-determined guidelines. This leads us to question the reasoning behind the categories. Are different categories evaluated on different criteria? The very complex, technically accomplished traditional quilts seem to pop up as group winners, whilst it would be reasonable to assume that more fluid criteria – design, inspiration, use of colour, for example – are influential in deciding the prize winners in the contemporary and art quilt groups.

The picture has been muddied further by the recent introduction of a category labelled 'Sustainable'. Are sustainable quilts prized for the best use of sustainable materials? Where, if anywhere, is there consideration of the aesthetic appeal? Is 'sustainable' a reference to environmentally friendly materials or, as seems the case from the recent show, inclusive of items which have been recycled, such as plastic wrapping, but are not necessarily sustainable in the more usual interpretation?

The questions above are easy to ask, and far more difficult to answer. The issue of more transparency regarding the judging process is one which should be addressed. Judging is obviously subjective, and not easy, but more guidance both on how to decide which category your quilt fits and, possibly, some idea of what judges value in the different categories, would be very helpful. Whilst every entrant may not aspire to a prize, it would be good to know what the experts consider prize-worthy, and how they reach consensus. Sadly, it is not even possible to ascertain the details of the syllabus followed by participants in the prestigious quilt judging course, a qualification necessary for judges at Festival of Quilts.

In considering the categories of quilts our group did, however, come up with some thoughts which may be useful. Simply entering quilts by size and/or orientation, regardless of technique or style, may facilitate simpler hanging. Further sub-dividing them by differentiating abstract, representative, pictorial and block patterns could be an option. This would necessitate a very different way of judging, as all previous categories would merge, but it may lead to a more equitable judging process. Maybe different weightings could be given to different elements, so that design, inspiration, colour and technique merge in the same way for all.

Two serious bugbears consumed and ignited our debate. The first was that of quilts made from published patterns. These, we concluded, should never be judged alongside original designs. It is true that most quilts, particularly of a traditional nature, often using well-known blocks, will owe much to previous designs, but those

using commercial patterns or designs handed out in workshops are of a different order, and should be judged separately.

The second issue, on which we all agreed, was how disappointed we were with the quilt judged 'Best in Show'.* We appreciated the technical competence, especially the miniature quilts incorporated and beautifully worked, and we could see the cartoonish humour in the piece. Nonetheless, we all felt that if this was an example to the outside world of the best quilt in our major UK festival, and an advertisement for 21st-century quilting, it left us cold. Our indignation was fuelled by the knowledge that there has NEVER been a contemporary or art quilt chosen as best in show for decades. Sour grapes on our part? As our Chair repeated, 'It's a quilt show!', and, as stressed at the outset, as contemporary artists we occupy a small corner of the quilt world. We do hope, however, that within, the (relatively) safe confines of Contemporary Quilt, we may elicit some small murmurs of assent, or at least pose questions for the community.

jillholden@btinternet.com

*To see the Best in Show Quilt go to thefestivalofquilts.co.uk/best-in-show-2023/

Here's another thought. Having read this article whilst working on the layout, Janet McCallum mentioned to me that it was a pity that there was no longer the Fine Art Quilt Master category. I remember the spectacular work in those galleries over the years. So I researched to see what had happened and found this press release from January 2019 (thefestivalofquilts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FOQ-2019-Fine-Art-Textile-Award.pdf). Here it is stated that this had 'traditionally been a celebration of quilts that transcend craft and demand equal billing with gallery quality fine art works, attracting entries from quilt artists from all over the world. This year, and going forward, the category will become the broader Vlieseline Fine Art Textiles Award, an international juried exhibition open to all amateur and practising artists using textiles as their medium'.

Is FOQ the right venue for the Fine Art Textiles or would it be better suited to just the Knitting & Stitching Shows be more appropriate (or both venues)? Should the Fine Art Quilt Master make a comeback? Just asking!

Maggie Jarman

newscontemp_copy@quiltersguild.org.uk