

# ART QUILTS IN FOCUS EXHIBITION: OPENING ADDRESS

by Brenda Gael Smith: curator, artist, teacher, judge, author & mentor

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather and recognise their continuing connection to this place. I pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. From the first peoples to the 21st century, we are all united by a basic urge to express ourselves and share our creativity through art. Today, we highlight and celebrate a particular medium - the art of the quilt.

Through the annual members' exhibition the *Sydney Quilt Show*, QuiltNSW provides a valuable platform for quiltmakers across the spectrum to share their quilts. This exhibition, **Art Quilts in Focus**, is a selection of works from the 2019 show drawn primarily from the art quilt category.

What are the essential hallmarks of an art quilt? Importantly, these works are the *original* design of the artist, not a copy or variation on the design of another artist working in any medium and not a traditional pattern. Art quilts may be abstract or representational. At their very core, they communicate an idea, emotion or concept through the medium of stitched and layered textiles and are intended to be displayed as an artwork.

Intention matters. By entering the art quilt category, the makers are telling us their intention to make art via the quilt medium. They are also asking us to evaluate their work as *art*. What does this mean? In the context of the art category of the Sydney Quilt Show, and other QuiltNSW art quilt exhibitions, judges and jurors consider the visual art trifecta:

- design;
- content (or meaning); and
- execution.

This is not an assignment for the quilt police with rigid rules about stitches per inch and plump bindings. Rather, has the maker used their design and materials to best express what their work is about? does the chosen technique reflect the maker is in control of the medium? Is the quilt made with skill in a way that complements (instead of distracts from) the work? A successful work is one where strong design, meaningful content and and mastery in execution all complement and reinforce each other.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a lightly curated exhibition designed to showcase a selection of art quilts from the Sydney Quilt Show with a cohesive flow. It is wonderful to be able to enjoy the collection in an intimate gallery setting and I invite you to view the works as *art* with fresh eyes.

Staging an exhibition is a significant collaborative undertaking. I acknowledge the multitude of people that have made this exhibition possible:

- the QuiltNSW committee in seizing the opportunity to focus on the art of the quilt;
- the Embroiderers' Guild for their support in providing such a sympathetic venue ;
- the artists for making their work available for consideration;
- The quilt show drop off volunteers for adjusting their procedures so that the quilts could be collected directly from the Sydney Quilt Show;
- Megan Manwaring's family who have forgone the dining room table for the last few weeks so the works could be stored flat and in exhibition-ready condition;
- Jane Gibson and Megan who checked hanging sleeves, and got down to business with power tools and supplies preparing hanging rods and signage;

- the installation team including Jane, Cathy Jack Coupland, Megan and others who executed my design layout with aplomb;
- all those that have provided refreshments for today's festivities; and
- those involved in returning the artwork to their makers.

This exhibition *Art Quilts in Focus* is testament to QuiltNSW's ongoing commitment to its fulfil its constitutional remit. In particular, the objectives to:

- promote the art and craft of patchwork and quilting;
- encourage and maintain high standards of quilting; and
- organise selective exhibitions.

Historically, QuiltNSW has been at the forefront of promoting the art of quilting to the wider community. Back in 1991, Judy Hooworth and Anna Brown were instrumental in establishing *The New Quilt*, the first juried contemporary quilt exhibition to be shown in an art gallery in Australia. For two decades *The New Quilt* was a regular fixture at Manly Art Gallery and also sometimes toured to other venues. Securing gallery space is challenging and *The New Quilt* has been in hiatus in recent years. However, QuiltNSW is delighted to relaunch *The New Quilt* with a seven week exhibition at the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery at Windsor in early 2021. I encourage all textile artists to enter.

Whereas for this exhibition, there were constraints on the size and number of works that could be displayed, *The New Quilt 2021* welcomes large and dimensional works. Hawkesbury Regional Gallery is a generously proportioned exhibition space with flexible configuration. So think big, think bold – be adventurous!

The *New Quilt 2021* is open to any textile artist resident in Australia whether or not they are QuiltNSW members. Note:

- there is no prescribed theme – submit your best work reflecting your creative practice;
- a quilt means stitched and layered materials using any technique; and
- 2-D, 3-D, installation work, ceiling hung work, work on stretcher bars, and framed work are all eligible for consideration

Entries close on 2 October 2020. I know that's over a year away but making takes time. Start planning now! The jurors Judy Hooworth, Anna Brown and a representative from Hawkesbury Regional Gallery are excited to see what you come up with. Regardless of whether you enter a quilt, I invite you all to come to Hawkesbury Regional Gallery in 2021. In the meantime, share the word about this exhibition **Art Quilts in Focus** so that more people can celebrate the art of the quilt. The exhibition runs until 29 August and Gallery76 is open every day.

**ART QUILTS IN FOCUS**  
a selection of works from the Sydney Quilt Show 2019 highlighting the art of the quilt

on exhibition at Gallery 76  
76 Queen St, Concord, NSW  
1-29 August 2019

Mon-Fri 10am-4pm  
Sat/Sun 10am-2pm

Exhibition opening:  
2.30pm, Saturday 3 August  
RSVP online: [www.quiltsw.com](http://www.quiltsw.com)  
presented by

**QuiltNSW**  
with support from the Embroiderers' Guild NSW Inc

Artwork by: Sheila Beer, Dorrie Booth, Anne Brown, Sue Dennis, Dianne Firth, Jane Gilson, Carlyne Gordon, Barbara Gower, Kay Hazland, Judy Hooworth, Cathy Jack Coupland, Linden Lancaster, Deborah Layt, Yvonne Lee, Judi Nikowski, Denise Sargo, Caroline Sharkey, Carolyn Sullivan, Di Trammontana, Lisa Walton, Jessica Wheelahan

**CALL FOR ENTRIES**

the **n e w** quilt 2021

start planning to share your artwork  
large & dimensional works are welcome  
think big, think bold - be adventurous!

**CLOSING DATE: 2 OCTOBER 2020**  
Conditions of Entry available on website now

**QuiltNSW** [www.quiltsw.com](http://www.quiltsw.com)