

Quilt art in the gallery world

Growing trend builds artist resumes, creates new audiences

by Dr. Sandra Sider

If you want to make sales, boost the strength of your resume, and gain visibility among art consultants, gallery exhibitions of your work are very helpful. This is especially true if the gallery maintains an effective online presence promoting your pieces.

I queried more than three dozen quilt artists in 2014 who either show their work in galleries or have done so in the past. Those interviewed ranged from well-established individuals commanding five-figure prices per piece to emerging artists. Montana artist Nancy Erickson sums up the sweet feeling of a \$12,000 sale: "Ecstasy reigned for a bit!"

Let's address what most likely is your first question: How much is the commission for gallery sales? Respondents reported galleries took from 35 to 50 percent in exchange for exhibiting and selling their work. Some galleries that take a 35 percent commission do require artists to share in the publicity costs, with an up-front payment that varies depending on the square footage of exhibition space assigned to an artist's work.

The answers provided for this article give us some interesting generalizations. We shall ignore one purchase price (\$25,000) that is more than double the next highest number. Doing so, we find that the average price per square foot for quilts purchased in galleries is \$190, and the average size is 16 square feet, or a quilt measuring 48 x 48 inches. The quilts of prestigious artists, regardless of size, bring in the highest prices.

Only 30 percent of the U.S. galleries reported as selling quilt art are on or near the coasts, something of a puzzle when we consider how many art galleries are in cities such as New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Interestingly, 65 percent of quilt artists reporting sales are local artists, similar to the successes of local makers with art consultants and public art projects (probably because site visits are easier, usually leading to stronger proposals). To my surprise, 66 percent of the sales reported are for representational quilts containing recognizable imagery, often depicting nature. Collectors acquiring quilts for their residences seem to prefer this style rather than abstract designs, and occasionally commission their artists to create one or more additional quilts in the same mode.

What can we learn from these responses? The first lesson is that your work might be sold. Once you sign a contract with a gallery, you cannot change your mind and withdraw a quilt. This means that whenever you create a work that you consider pivotal or transitional in your style, you might want to hold that piece back from a gallery exhibition. The same applies for a quilt that you especially like for personal or aesthetic reasons. No matter how early you may be in your art career, it's a good idea to have a vision of the possibility of a solo or retrospective exhibition in the distant future. Keeping important quilts in your own collection will guarantee that you have significant work for that exhibition.

While you might have a chance to borrow your work back if purchased by an institution, that sort of sale rarely happens in a gallery show. Purchasers include individuals buying for themselves or art consultants buying for their clients, usually corporate entities. From my own experience with art consultants, I can tell you that once a corporation acquires an artwork, the work can become lost as time goes by. A building is renovated or a corporate collection is liquidated, and the art disappears. Several years ago, well-known artist Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry learned that quilts she created that had been on view in a corporate office were being auctioned on eBay for a tenth of their value.

Partly because very few galleries show quilt art exclusively, our artists typically exhibit in gallery spaces showing other media, often paintings, photographs, and prints. Several artists have had great success selling their work in frame shops, even when the quilts are not framed or on stretchers. This success makes sense to me because many people coming into a frame shop already have acquired art and are receptive to pieces conveniently displayed in such an environment.

The location of galleries plays a crucial role in impromptu purchases, and a storefront at street level obviously brings in the most traffic. If the gallery is situated in an arts neighborhood or near popular restaurants or other attractions, so much the better. Also, check whether the gallery has regular store hours or is visited by



Betty Busby's *Vortex*, 66 x 52 inches, sold at a solo show at the Dunedin Fine Art Center in Dunedin, Florida. Photo by artist.

appointment only, which can discourage traffic.

More quilts seem to be purchased out of solo shows than group shows, perhaps because a body of work can be both impressive and informative. In 2012, Kate Stiassni sold her first quilt for \$2,800 from a solo show in a Connecticut gallery that had never before exhibited fiber art. Nearly all of her pieces were purchased during the exhibition, causing the gallery to change its attitude toward contemporary quilts.

Quite a few quilts on the smaller side are purchased by tourists who prefer to bring home something special by a local or regional artist. To this end, quilt artists sometimes incorporate local imagery or themes

into their quilts, such as architecture, landscapes, seascapes, and even cuisine. New Mexico artist Betty Busby has sold eight quilts over the years to the same Rhode Island woman, a success story indicating that artists should cultivate their collectors after the quilt leaves the gallery. Quilt artists working in abstract modes who sell to the tourist market tend to keep their works relatively small, allowing the buyer to transport the work home in a suitcase.

Galleries appreciate and support artists who are willing to cooperate with them in developing markets for their work. Some galleries employ a corporate sales director, as mentioned by Nelda Warkentin, whose quilts have been placed by the gallery in the

offices of a hospital, a credit union, a bank, and other businesses.

Gallerists often cultivate art consultants, which means that you may be asked to create several quilts in a similar style to the quilt being shown in the gallery, a process that might not appeal to some people. The gallery usually expects a commission from this sort of networking, and artists sometimes are surprised to discover that they are expected to pay a commission to both the gallery and art consultant. While gallery contracts with artists can seem straightforward, it's always a good idea to have a lawyer look over any contract to search for hidden costs. On the plus side, building a working relationship through your gallery with a well-connected art consultant can lead to lucrative commissions for your work, such as a 2013 corporate installation by Carol Ann Waugh purchased by the City of Denver, Colorado, for more than \$10,000.


While quilt artists consistently report higher prices from their work purchased from the nationally juried exhibitions, especially Quilt National, in general they express satisfaction with their gallery sales. Galleries excel in promoting your work, and they may keep an inventory of your quilts, usually for six to nine months, which can result in sales after your exhibition closes. Gallerists usually earn their commissions, and since the 1990s they have been gradually expanding

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the market for contemporary quilt art. Most of the artists interviewed for this article sold their first gallery quilt after 2000, including several who had been trying to enter the gallery market earlier. Not only are more galleries offering quilt art, but also more professional artists have found their voice in this medium. I would like to think that SAQA has contributed significantly to this trend. ▼

Dr. Sandra Sider, a past president of SAQA, is curator for the Texas Quilt Museum. She has been professionally involved with studio quilts and fiber art since the mid-1970s and has published several books on quilt history and aesthetics. This article summarizes her keynote lecture in May at the regional SAQA conference Studio to Gallery in Melbourne, Florida, and she wishes to express her gratitude to all the artists who generously shared information about their work for her presentation.



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Research. Apply. Pack.

Detailed plans ease navigation of high-end craft shows

by Susan Lenz

In Box CCXCII, Detail

Six years ago I decided to join the high-end craft show circuit. I had an established body of work, a website, and gallery representation, plus the desire to share my work with potential buyers.

I researched events and focused on three indoor shows: the Smithsonian Craft Show, the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show, and the American Craft Show produced by the American Craft Council. These are among the most respected and competitive such marketplaces in the United States.

My first step was to attend a show. I looked at booth designs, approaches to lighting, and even the size of pricing labels. I saw the need for a hidden storage area within the allotted space. I learned that booth design is important and often works hand-in-hand with an artist's branding and demands of a particular medium.

The setup

Artists working in all media are presented side by side in long convention center aisles. The standard-sized booth is 10 x 10 feet and rent can be \$850 to \$1,280, depending on the show. Larger booths or corner locations are priced higher. An additional fee of \$95-\$160 is often charged for electricity.

I decided against a custom-designed booth. I purchased a basic structure from ProPanels (\$1,349 and up) with four track lighting strips and eight bulbs (\$580). My purchase was delivered on a truck, which added considerably to the shipping charge. Since then, I have ordered a matching shelf, a few extra lights, two shorter wall panels, and a heavy-duty cart.

Flooring is another consideration and expense. I started with a package deal on interlocking carpet tiles for a 10 x 10-foot booth (\$188 plus shipping). For the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show, I was accepted in two categories—decorative fibers and basketry—and needed a 10 x 15-foot booth. I had to purchase a new floor because my original floor tiles were no longer available.

The start-up expenses to participate in these shows can be overwhelming and the distances between artist and show vast. As a result, some artists don't own a booth. They rent pipe-and-drape units, display cabinets, and other fixtures from companies specializing in art trade shows. These providers also store privately owned booths in a temperature-controlled warehouse and transport booths to the venue. These services come in handy for artists living on one coast but exhibiting on the other. I transport my booth in a cargo van. At first, I rented a vehicle. Now, I own one.

Selling details

Beyond the physical considerations of a booth and the artwork to fill it, many other preparations must be made. Every artist needs a business license and the proper forms to file sales tax in the state in which the trade show is held. For the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show, a city business privilege license also is required. To conduct a sale, duplicate invoices are needed. Credit card processing is essential; I have a handheld PayPal chip reader.

Customers expect their new purchase to be appropriately wrapped and/or bagged. Most shows

provide a small number of small- and medium-sized paper bags. Unfortunately, most of my framed artwork doesn't fit in those bags. I bring a roll of bubble wrap and plenty of extra-large handled bags.

The details

Then there are the little things. My checklist includes extension cords, multipronged electrical strips, extra light bulbs, a handheld vacuum cleaner, tape, pens, business cards, small labels for prices, and a folding chair. Because my artwork is framed, I also bring glass cleaner and rags, wood-toned markers, and other items to keep my inventory in tip-top condition.

Booth design often works hand-in-hand with an artist's branding.

Everything must fit into my cargo van and be packed to allow for quick unloading. Each show designates a time for artists to arrive on site. There is usually a line of cram-packed vehicles with out-of-state license plates waiting to unload at their assigned time. The typical amount of time for unloading is a mere half hour. Your vehicle must be moved immediately to make way for the next artist. Some shows allow artists to drive onto the convention floor. Others require artists to roll their booths and artwork into the space from a designated parking lot.

With so many artists in so little space, you are expected to work within your booth space and not block aisles. Fortunately, there is always plenty of time to set up and fine tune the look of your booth. I've never been rushed to aim flood lights or hang artwork. During this period, artists meet their neighbors, snap photos for social media, and find the hospitality room.



The Smithsonian Craft Show is held in the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C.



Susan Lenz adjusts lighting in her booth at the Smithsonian Craft Show.



Lenz agreed to fill a corner booth this year after being wait-listed for the Smithsonian Craft Show.



Careful packing means everything has to fit in the van plus be arranged for quick unloading.



Lenz and her husband, Steve Dingman, add some levity to setup.

Photo by Teddi Fine

The show

Most high-end craft shows have a private room for exhibiting artists with coffee, light refreshments, and helpful show committee members. The Philadelphia and Smithsonian shows hold preview galas before they are open to the public. These dress-attire evenings present a perfect way to start selling.

It is paramount that artists know how to best approach potential buyers. This introduction varies from artist to artist according to work and personality. The opening conversation is what many call an elevator speech. Most people who enter my booth ask, "What is it?" They don't immediately recognize my work as fabric. Therefore, I wait for a bit before saying: "What you're looking at is polyester stretch velvet on recycled packaging felt with machine embroidery and melting techniques. I know that's a mouthful so I brought this step-by-step demonstration piece."

Quickly, I explain the process using my small visual aid. I always end by focusing on a nearby hanging work. If the browser lingers, I talk about my inspiration: "Much of my work is based on architecture, especially the fanciful 20th century buildings designed by Friedensreich Hundertwasser, an Austrian who stressed individualism. My work represents an aerial view of an imaginary Hundertwasser city. In each little box is a unique motif to reflect the individuals who live there."

Most people who attend high-end craft shows walk the entire show before buying. Artists refer to these people as "be backs", people with whom a conversation went well, especially ones that suggested a purchase might happen. It is important to remember what these people look like. Eye contact and a smile are often the way a transaction is initiated.

Show survival

I'm lucky because my husband, Steve Dingman, works the shows with me. When a selection is made, I hand the invoice on a clipboard to him. He handles the payment while I bubble wrap the artwork.

For artists who do the shows alone, the craft shows provide booth sitters, committee members who staff a booth during prearranged times so that the artist can take an occasional break.

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Craft shows

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Breaks are needed, especially on a day that runs from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Show schedules and times vary, but there is generally at least one day that courts the after-work crowd. Comfortable shoes are essential. Having a water bottle is helpful, too.

Practicality

Before any of this happens, there's an application process. It is hard to gain acceptance into a high-end craft show. The application fee is generally \$50. The Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show accepts only 190 artists across all media from a field of applications numbering more than 1,000. I have made it in four times, including the upcoming 2018 show in November. The Smithsonian Craft Show accepts 120 artists; this year, there were more than 1,200 hopefuls. I wasn't among the successful. I was wait-listed and for months Steve and I joked that "someone would have to die" before I got a spot.

Three weeks before the April event, an artist had to withdraw and I agreed to take over the booth. Within 24 hours, I had charged the \$1,925 booth fee to a credit card, returned a signed contract via email, and was listed on the official website. Steve booked an Airbnb basement apartment. We were soon on our way to the Smithsonian Craft Show in the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. To be among this talented group of artists had been one of my lofty goals. I was only able to take part because I was totally prepared.

And before going, I agreed to write this article to help others make their dreams come true. ▼

Susan Lenz is a SAQA JAM who resides in Columbia, South Carolina. You can view her work at www.susanlenz.com.

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The craft show circuit: Is it right for you?

by Cindy Grisdela

I've spent the last several years exploring the world of high-end art and craft shows as an avenue to get exposure and increase sales of my work. Along the way, I've learned a few lessons. Among my biggest learning experiences is that doing these shows is not for everyone.

It's hard work. It's expensive. It can be mind-numbingly boring when there aren't many visitors at a show, or when visitors aren't interested in your work and so don't stop at your booth. Most shows require the artist be present at all times while the show is open, although you may have an assistant or the show may provide a temporary sitter to give occasional breaks.

On the other hand, I've learned doing these shows is energizing for me. They help me develop as an artist in a unique way. Direct interaction with those who are interested in my work gives me valuable information on whether I'm on the right track as well as new ideas for future exploration.

Ann Brauer, a SAQA Juried Artist Member from Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, also participates in high-end art and craft shows. She offered this advice: "If you listen to your customers, they'll tell you if your work is successful or not." Ann, who has made her living selling her quilts for more than 30 years, does 8-10 shows a year. How did she arrive at that number? "If I do too many, I get exhausted," she said. "If I don't do enough, I don't make enough money."

It's probably not a good idea to start with the *Smithsonian Craft Show*, one of the most prestigious and difficult to get into of the high-end shows, although I have met one or two artists

who did that show as their first outing. A better approach is to do a few smaller local or regional shows to see if you like selling your work retail.

You have to have a thick skin to sit in a booth with your work for 8-10 hours a day for two to four days. People will sometimes talk to each other about you or your art as if you weren't there. But there's no substitute for the feeling you get when someone stops dead in their tracks in front of your booth and says, "Wow, that's beautiful!"

Getting juried in

The large, well-known shows are juried, which means you have to apply to enter. Your art is evaluated along with that of other artists, usually in a variety of media. High-quality, professional photographs of your work are essential. The images are usually shown to the jurors in a digital format, and they are looking at hundreds—maybe thousands—of images in the case of shows like the *Smithsonian Craft Show* or those held by the American Craft Council in Baltimore, Atlanta, St. Paul and San Francisco. You have one chance to make an impression on the jurors. Artists with photos that are out of focus, grainy, or include the cat walking by will likely be rejected regardless of how good the work is.

Many shows also require an image of your booth showing your work set

up as you plan to display it. Booth display can be an art form in itself—as simple or as elaborate as you want to make it. For my first indoor show, I simply hung my quilts from hooks attached to the top pipe of my booth with monofilament so they appeared to float on the black drape background. It worked and wasn't expensive, but it didn't look professional. I've found that since I've upgraded my booth display to a professional rigid-panel system, my visitor traffic and sales have improved. Last year, I won an award of excellence for originality, execution and overall presentation at the Downtown Festival and Art Show in Gainesville, Florida.

Have your story ready

Once you've been accepted to a show, arrived at the venue, set up your booth and the show opens, don't assume people will start lining up to buy your art. Showing your work is just the beginning.

Be ready to interact with your potential customers. Tell them your story. You have a story, right? I'm convinced that people buy the artist and the artist's story as much as they buy the art itself. I have a one-page artist statement with a photo of me at my sewing machine displayed in my booth. Sometimes visitors read it and ask questions. Sometimes I give those who exhibit interest in the work my elevator speech—a shortened version



Cindy Grisdela shares the Award of Excellence she won at the Downtown Festival and Art Show in Gainesville, Florida, in 2013. Many, but not all, shows offer awards as an incentive to artists to participate.

Photo by Margaret Lingg

of my artist statement. I explain I create my work using a domestic sewing machine. The texture is added free-hand without a computer or marking ahead of time, just like I'm drawing with a needle and thread. You need to give them this kind of visual picture of how you work. Explain what your inspirations are and what makes you and your work unique.

"It's important to respect all of your customers," Ann said. "You never know when you will hear from them again. One time I got a museum show because someone bought the smallest of pieces from my booth." That piece reminded the visitor of Ann's work later when she was selecting artists for the museum show.

Ambassador for art quilts

I like to think of myself as an ambassador for art quilts when I do these shows. Many times visitors have never seen quilts presented as art. For several years I offered smaller home décor items, such as pillows and coasters, along with my wall pieces to help people relate to my art better. But in 2014, I decided to eliminate them and focus solely on my wall art because I want to present myself as an artist who paints with fabric rather than an artisan creating functional work. This is a personal choice, not

a value judgment. I found making functional pieces took time that I would rather spend designing wall pieces. I offer wall art in a range of sizes and a variety of price points.

Importance of marketing materials

For most people, purchasing an art quilt is not an impulse buy. They need time to absorb it.

"Many people have to think about my work for several years before they purchase it," Ann said. For this reason, it's crucial to have marketing information like business cards or postcards with one of your images and your contact information to give out to prospective buyers. It's vital to have a guest book or other way to collect contact information so you can keep in touch with visitors. And you need to follow up. I send out an email newsletter about every other month with news and information about my work and my process. I also send out snail-mail postcards once or twice a year to keep my name and my art in front of those who have expressed an interest.

In 2014, I will participate in 12 shows around the United States from Boston to Florida, Atlanta to Michigan, New York to Oregon. Although I'm shy by nature, I enjoy setting up my booth to give visitors a window

into my world, and I gain energy and inspiration from talking to art enthusiasts. Several times these discussions have led me in new directions with my art. And there's no getting around the fact that I spend hours in the booth surrounded by my own work. When there's no one to talk to, I sometimes play a "what if" game and think about how I can create new designs.

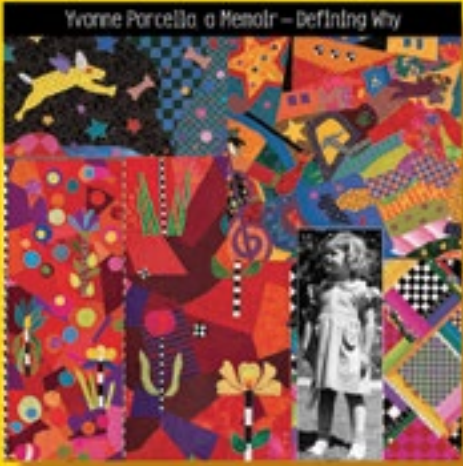
Being open to suggestions from visitors is important, Ann said. "Don't automatically say no when someone comes up and asks you to consider something new," she said. "Perhaps there is a way to work the suggestion into something fresh and unique that will still reflect your style."

Have a plan B

What do you do if a show doesn't go well? Analyze why. Maybe it wasn't the right fit for your work. Maybe you need to change your display or presentation. Talk to other artists at the show to learn from them, especially if it's a show you haven't done before. If the response to your work was enthusiastic but the sales didn't materialize, you may need to give the show another try the following year to give visitors a chance to think about your work.

see "Craft show" on page 30

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“Always have a Plan B,” Ann said. “If you do a show and come home with the same stock, how are you going to reduce your stock so you can continue making quilts? Maybe you can try a new market or have a studio sale.”

Doing shows involves hard work, expense, travel, time away from the studio, and even the risk of losing work. I had six pieces stolen from my booth at a show this year. Still, for me the benefits outweigh the risks. I have met some wonderful people, both show attendees and other artists. I’ve traveled to some interesting places, and I’ve been able to share my work with people I would never have been able to reach otherwise, all the while working full time creating art. ▼

Cindy Grisdela is a Juried Artist Member of Studio Art Quilt Associates from Reston, Virginia. See her work at www.cindygrisdela.com.

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Museum Acquisitions

How to get what you want

by Nancy Bavor

Have you ever wondered why certain artists are represented in museum collections? Who decides? What is the process?

As a quilt artist, your work may already be part of such a collection. Alternatively, you may have never thought about that possibility. While museums differ in approach to building permanent collections, there are many similarities. The purpose of this article is to give you some idea how museums select works for their permanent collections and how you might become one of those artists. While the focus here is on art quilts and the institutions that collect them, most of the policies and procedures also apply to non-textile museums.

Collections plan

Sometimes it isn't clear from a museum's name what is in its permanent collection and what it is currently collecting. An institution may exhibit art quilts but not collect them. How do you know?

Most museums have a collections plan posted on their websites which clearly defines what they do and do not collect. According to their websites, the Wisconsin Museum of Quilts & Fiber Arts in Cedarburg,

Wisconsin, collects historic and contemporary quilts, lace, coverlets, and antique sewing machines; the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum in Golden, Colorado, collects historic and traditional bed quilts as well as contemporary art quilts; the New England Quilt Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, collects antique and contemporary quilts and quilt-related items; and the International Quilt Study Center & Museum (IQSCM), in Lincoln, Nebraska, is "building a collection which reflects quilt making traditions from around the world and throughout history and today."

San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles (SJMQT) recently revised its collections plan. It is now collecting historic and contemporary quilts and fiber art (tapestry, other woven objects) with an emphasis on California makers, and wearable art as it relates to the art-quilt movement, such as work by Jean Ray Laury, Virginia Avery, and Yvonne Porcella.



Jane Sassaman
Brocade | 1996

Gift of Penny Nii and Edward Feigenbaum

Review the possibilities

Even with a narrow collecting focus, the range of possibilities is still pretty broad, so there are usually additional filters. A curator usually acts as the first filter for unsolicited donations, and very few pieces offered get to the next level, which is review by a collections committee.

If a curator feels an object is a good candidate for the collection, the next step might be presentation to a collection or acquisition committee. A collection committee can consist solely of curators, but also can include museum directors, board members, quilt and textile historians, and artists.

At SJMQT, the collection committee meets regularly to review proposed acquisitions. The following questions are asked about each object:

- Does it meet the mission and collecting goals?

- Is it in very good condition? (SJMQT does not accept items that "need a little repair." Funds are not available for expensive conservation.)
- Does it have strong aesthetic appeal?
- For contemporary artists: Is it an important example of their work?
- Does it fill a gap in the collection? Does it duplicate something already owned? Would it be exhibited?
- Can it be safely stored?

In addition to evaluating objects for condition, aesthetic appeal, and relevance to the rest of the collection, curators generally apply intangible considerations.

Acquisition process

Whether reviewing objects to acquire by gift or purchase, the process is similar, although objects acquired through purchase often go through a more rigorous scrutiny.

Sometimes curatorial or committee decisions are subjective and committee decisions are not unanimous. Recently, a well-known quilt artist offered to donate four of her works to SJMQT. The individual pieces met all of the criteria listed above. However, because of limited financial resources and storage space, a discussion took place over whether we needed all four works to represent the artist's oeuvre. The committee voted to accept only three pieces, but the decision was not unanimous, nor was there complete agreement as to which three should be accepted.

SJMQT's collections plan also includes a list of makers and artists whose work is wanted for the collection; this list is constantly being

updated. It includes artists whose work the committee admires. Perhaps their work has been in *Quilt National*, *Quilt Visions*, other art quilt exhibitions, or in a publication. They are frequently artists with whom members have a relationship, perhaps through SAQA, or they have had work in an SJMQT exhibition. Frequently they also live in California and are museum members.

Curators are also looking for what Carolyn Ducey, curator of collections at IQSCM, calls "wall power" or the "X factor." These are works that have incredible visual impact, move you, or are unlike anything you have ever seen before.

Collection costs

Museums cannot begin to take everything offered, nor should they. SJMQT is offered quilts—usually historic—several times each week. We accept less than 5 percent of objects offered. It is sometimes difficult for a generous donor to understand that no gift is free. Most donors are not aware of the considerable costs to acquire and safely store objects. For example, SJMQT's cost to acquire and process an object—to catalog, photograph, store in an acid free box with acid free tissue, etc.—is about \$300 per object. In addition to acquisition costs, there are perpetual storage costs that future generations must bear. Therefore, museums must be very selective about what they accept or purchase.

Like many smaller museums, SJMQT does not have funds for acquisitions, so it relies solely on the generosity of artists, collectors, and donors to build its collection. Collection building is often therefore a reactive process when relying on donors who offer items for donation.



Suzan Friedland
Savannah Cloth | 1994

Gift of the Artist

Proactive strategy

More commonly, museums are proactive in building a collection, seeking out works to fill gaps in survey collections and adding works by contemporary artists. As noted earlier, the SJMQT has a list of makers and artists whose work is desired in the collection, and it also has names of historic quilt collectors whose work may be wanted. These works and artists may be actively solicited for donations.

Some museums that collect art quilts do have limited funds for purchasing works. Frequently, museums with acquisitions funds will ask for a combination donation/sale where the artist may not realize the full asking price, but feel that being able to say "my work is in these museum collections" will further their career in other ways.

Create win-win outcome

If one of your professional goals is to have your work represented in

museums—art or textile—how can you make that happen?

If you offer to donate artwork, be sure the museum collects art quilts. Do your homework. Go to the institution's website. Most will have information about what they collect. If you offer an art quilt to a museum that doesn't collect quilts or textiles, you are likely to have a less than pleasant experience.

Museum collections often reflect the personal focus of a curator. Build a relationship with the museums where you think your work belongs, whether you are offering it for donation, as a partial donation/sale, or a sale.

Support museums that collect art quilts. Become a member. Donate works to their fundraisers and chalk it up to marketing. Talk to the store manager: Do they sell art quilts in the store? This can be a win-win arrangement. Remember, by supporting the

textile and fiber art world, you are supporting art quilts.

What if a curator approaches you and asks you to donate your work to a museum's permanent collection? You may feel insulted or flattered! Quilt artists already give a lot to support the art quilt community. SAQA is a good example of how generous artists can be. But if you think of this transaction as one of mutual benefit, where in exchange for a donation of your work, it will be exhibited in a prestigious venue, documented, and preserved in perpetuity, it may seem like a bargain.

Once a museum accepts your work, they will ask you to sign a deed of gift or other legal document to give them ownership. The SJMQT deed of gift also includes permission to use an image of the work in publications, notecards, or to promote an exhibit where this work appears.

Now for the fun part! Your work is included in an exhibition at the museum and you can invite friends and family to the opening reception. And when the exhibition is over, you will know that your work is cared for so future generations may also enjoy your art.

Note: This article is based on a panel presentation at the recent 2017 SAQA Annual Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska. I am grateful to my fellow panelists Carolyn Ducey, curator of collections at the International Quilt Study Center & Museum, and Wally Mason, director and chief curator of the Sheldon Museum of Art in Lincoln, for their contributions to this article.

Nancy Bavor has been the curator of collections at San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles since 2013, also serving as exhibits coordinator from 2014-2016. She was recently appointed executive director.

Inspired by

time and place

by N.K. Quan



Fenella Davies

Bridge of Sighs
39 x 49 inches

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A love of Venice, Italy—when the tourists are gone—inspired Fenella Davies' ongoing Venice quilt series, which includes *Bridge of Sighs*. Over the years, Davies completed six pieces focused on the unique city, primarily relating to its past glories, hidden historical marks, and passages of time. The city's absence of vehicles, unmodified architecture, and history dating back to the third century creates a special feeling for Davies.

Bridge of Sighs was inspired by the iconic Venice structure built in the 1600s and known by the same name. "It is a place where everyone stops to have their photo taken," Davies says. "The name says it all. It is where prisoners stopped to take their last view of beautiful Venice and sigh before they crossed the bridge leading to the hellish prisons below."

The emotions that must have been generated while standing on

that bridge preparing for incarceration—fear of the unknown, regret, and sorrow—were a ripe source of inspiration for an artist whose work is designed to express a mood and sense of place. Her approach is to pare down complex concepts to simple design elements and to focus on the relationships between form and color.

For *Bridge of Sighs*, the arching span of the bridge was the starting point. Bright red was used to connect with the bloody history of the bridge while streaks of yellow represent the shafts of sunlight pushing through the tall buildings and narrow city walkways.

"I never think about the technical side (of a quilt), just the visual," Davies says. "Colors usually come first, then shapes and form." The use of collage, paint, distress techniques, antique fabrics, and other elements contribute to her desire to connect with the past. "Very often I will paint

the top and collage it together, then work out the actual technique of sewing through layers of thick, hard acrylic paints." She utilized scrim, card, lead flashing, and Lutradur® in the creation of this quilt.

When Davies first started making quilts, her work had very strong color elements. Black was a dominant color and shapes and forms were linear and dramatic. "Now my work is much more subtle, often almost monochromatic, and leaves much to the imagination of the viewer."

Fenella Davies, a SAQA JAM, lives and works in Bath, Somerset, United Kingdom.

N.K. Quan is a writer/editor based in Phoenix, Arizona.

Creating a commission

by Dana Jones

Kath Wagar Wright had just moved to Morehead, Kentucky, when she learned the county library was seeking work by local artists for its new building. Pieces were to reflect the local environment, which was quite different from that of Colorado where she had been living. Yet the green, rolling hills of Rowan County weren't entirely foreign to Kath, who had attended Morehead State University years earlier.

She took the plunge. Not having a completed piece to submit, she asked if she could submit an idea for a piece along with samples of her work.

"I didn't have anything reflective of the local area so I proposed a commission," Kath said. "I submitted a proposal and several samples of landscape quilts I'd done. I told them I would create a quilt with a similar flavor but based on the local landscape. I said I'd put it on a stretcher to coordinate better with the other

art selected. They chose one piece that was a style they liked."

The next step was for Kath to submit sketches.

"The library board was to meet a few weeks after they accepted my commission, and I had to get them something more definitive by then," she said. "I did some rough pencil renderings then did marker block-color renderings. I gave them two that weren't drastically different from each other. I thought it was better not to give them too many. I've learned that from my work in graphic design."

Once the board selected one of the renderings, Kath knew she had to stay close to that image, so she put the drawing on her design wall.

"I used the rendering the whole time," she said. "I wanted to be sure the final version did not go too far from what I had presented and what they had accepted. I scanned the sketch and blew it up to the full size

that the piece was to be."

While Kath doesn't try to reproduce photos in fabric, she does like to have an idea of the overall shape and size before she begins.

As she was beginning work on the piece, an opportunity to fly over the area presented itself. Kath didn't hesitate. Getting a bird's eye view of the county confirmed she was on the right track.

"I went up with a local pilot and got some further inspiration and a concept of how the area looks from the air, especially the way the hills layer and how space is divided."

Kath got the commission June 12; the finished work was due in late August so it could be hung for the opening in September.

"The time frame was tight but I'm used to deadlines as a graphic artist," she said. "I often work myself into a corner and end up working all night to finish a piece. There is a point at

Two stages of *Out Cranston* in progress





Out Cranston

50 x 50 inches

©2011

which everything has to happen. I'm not sure I have a handle on how to make tight deadlines work more comfortably."

She worked on her piece, *Out Cranston*, right up to the deadline. Her work style — improvisational — and the need to meet the library board's expectations provided a challenge.

Kath works directly on her design wall, auditioning fabrics as she goes.

"It's like dance," Kath said. "I walk up and put things on the design wall then I step back. Maybe I'm not seeing enough contrast so I make changes. I use a camera as a design tool. Looking at the piece through the camera distills all the information for me. I use the camera through my whole process to reinforce what I'm seeing."

She works with a variety of fabrics, including commercial fabrics,

hand-dyed fabrics and batiks.

"I'm not really concerned about the quality of the fabric," she said. "I have a wide mix of fibers and manufacturers but I don't buy much fabric. Most of what I have is swatches and pieces, which forces me to combine things. I use prints to add texture."

She creates her pieces in sections, finishing one section before going on to another one.

"If I later decide I don't like something, I can go back to fix it," she said. "I think there are a lot of good solutions. With *Out Cranston*, I could have done things multiple ways, but I'm totally happy with the finished piece."

She didn't feel that way throughout the entire process. There were days when she wasn't sure she was on the right track.

"I got to a point where there were things that weren't working for me, and I just could not resolve them," she said. "I think that had to do with being true to the image I gave the library board. I had created an expectation of the piece that wasn't really defined. That locked me up because I was feeling a lot of pressure to deliver. It was scary to break through that and just do what I knew, to trust my judgment again. Once I got over that hump, it was fun."

She encourages other artists to take on commissions and not be deterred by tight deadlines.

"I was surprised how working on a commission tightened me up," Kath said. "It puts parameters on your work and focuses your work. Even if you can't make the deadline, you're

See "Commission" on page 30

Commission

from page 27

still on your way to making a great piece.”

Out Cranston is now in the permanent collection of the Rowan County Public Library in Morehead. It can be seen along with paintings, sculptures, ceramics, quilts and other artwork. The project was funded by the W. Paul and Lucille Caudill Little Foundation. ▼

Dana Jones is editor of the SAQA Journal. Kath Wagar Wright, a member of Studio Art Quilt Associates, is senior designer for Quilters Newsletter. She has recently moved to Lakewood, Colorado. Kath has had pieces exhibited at the International Quilt Festival/Houston and the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum in Golden, Colorado, and has won top awards in the Alliance for American Quilts' national fund-raising competitions. She has had numerous quilt designs published in Quilters Newsletter.



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Tips on commissioning quilt art

by Jack Walsh

My first step in commissioning an art quilt is to define the purpose of the commission. It may be to enable an artist to pursue an idea or vision. It may be to enhance a specific location. It may be to honor someone or commemorate an event. Knowing the purpose will impact your selection of an artist.

Many artists do not want to be limited by location or occasion, so if either of these is your purpose, you can narrow the field of possible artists to those willing to accept your limitations and specific requests.

When I issue a commission, it generally involves identifying artists who can benefit from having an opportunity to pursue a vision unrestricted by time and/or marketability of the finished work of art. When commissioning a piece for a location, I identify artists whose work is attractive to me as the sponsor of the commission. When commissioning work to honor someone, I identify artists whose work appeals to the person who will receive the finished work. For example, when my twin brother, Frank, and my sister-in-law, Christine, built their retirement home, I wanted to commemorate the occasion by having an art quilt created for them. We pored over photos of works by numerous artists. Then I contacted artists whose work they liked and found one willing to accept the commission.

Jack's Falling Water
by Gayle Fraas & Duncan Slade
56 x 36 inches
1997

Terms of a commission

The sponsor and artist need to agree on key points of the commission up front. These include size, price, date of completion and the sponsor's preferences in terms of subject matter. For example, when I issue a commission

for a work for my collection, I ask the artist to make it on the subject of water. If there is no limit on time for the artist to complete the commission, that should be stated.

Once terms are set, the sponsor and artist should sign a written





Water

by Terrie Hancock Mangat
122 x 98 inches
2010

agreement. This can be as simple as a letter or email if both parties are comfortable with that. The agreement should include the information listed above plus the following:

- A payment schedule
This may include initial and final payments. If many hours of work are involved, a payment halfway to completion may also be appropriate.

- Copyright ownership
When a work of art is created and is purchased by another person, the artist normally retains the right to duplicate the image. For example, artists of pieces I've commissioned can use images of their work for such products as greeting cards or hand-bags. It is helpful for the agreement to state that if the work is exhibited, the exhibitor may use images of the art quilt to promote the exhibition.

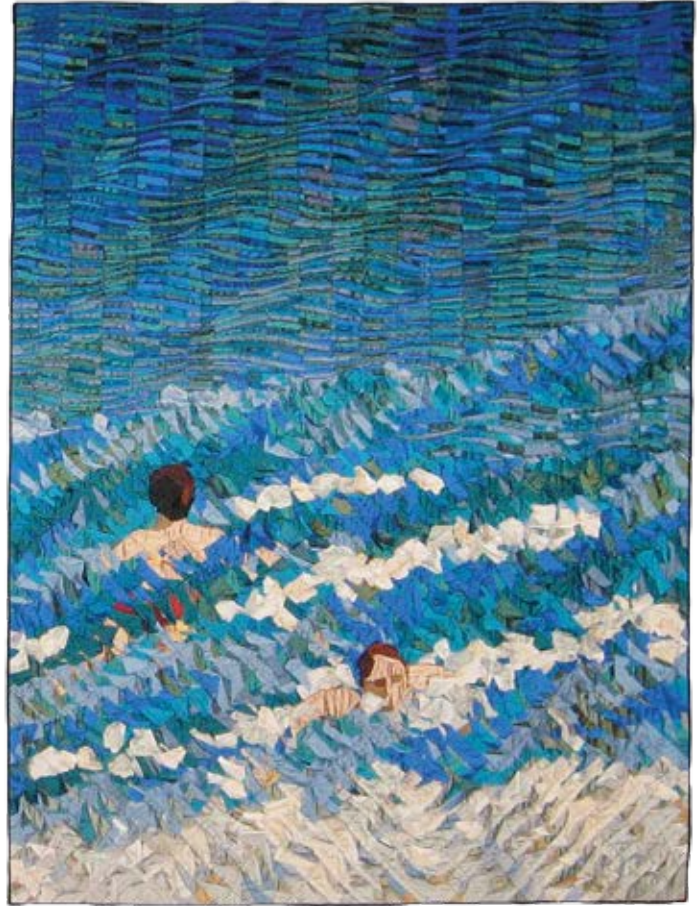
- Artist/sponsor relationships
Most artists have preferences for how they will interact with sponsors while working on commissions. The sponsor should let the artist take the lead in establishing the pattern of interaction, which may include spending time together at the start of the commission, guidelines for the frequency of communication while the artist is working, and a process for handling the artist's requests for input from the sponsor that may affect the nature of the artist's work.

If a sponsor is not comfortable with some aspect of the process, the sponsor should discuss it with the artist, being sure to listen to what the artist has to say. Artists often have developed ways of working with sponsors



Flow

by Joan Schulze
101 x 101 inches
1995



Surf Swimmers by Tim Harding, 89 x 138 inches (diptych), 1998

that work best for them. For example, an artist once asked me to take photographs of a waterfall for her to include in the work. I was hesitant to do this as I didn't feel capable as a photographer and didn't want to interfere with her work. In the end, I realized the artist knew what she wanted, and I became comfortable complying with her request.

Unless a commission is intended for presentation at a specific time or event, it is best to be supportive of the artist in working through delays. I have found that artists are most creative when outside pressures are minimized. Some of the commissions I have issued have taken a year or even two years to complete. When encouraged to work at the pace with which they are most comfortable,

artists have produced some wonderful works of art for my collection.

When the work is done

Receiving a new work of art is exciting. Opening the container to see the work for the first time is like opening a treasure chest. I don't know exactly what I'll find, but I know it will be great.

Once you own the commissioned work, let the artist know if it is exhibited in an exhibition and/or museum. Having work exhibited publicly enhances the career of the artist. Being able to list all of the exhibitions and museums in which work has been shown expands an artist's resume.

There are additional rewards to commissioning art. I have developed

friendships with artists that I enjoy long after the commissioned art is completed. Knowing the story of a work of art from its inception enhances my enjoyment of it.

A commission can enable an artist to explore new visions and new ways of creating. It is rewarding for a sponsor to know that she or he has contributed to the future work of the artist. ▼

Jack Walsh is an executive and licensed professional engineer whose life work is making water safe to use. He has collected art quilts for more than 20 years and has commissioned 10 artists to create art quilts on the theme of water. He has also commissioned two art quilts as gifts and commissioned a sculptor to create two pieces for his vacation home. Jack serves on the Studio Art Quilt Associates Board of Directors.

Working with Art consultants

by Dana Jones

Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA) members Nancy G. Cook and Carol Ann Waugh are finding markets for their work through art consultants. The route to that success took careful planning, hard work and patience.

“Working with an art consultant can be tricky,” Nancy said, noting that you don’t just pick up the phone and call one. “They don’t want artists to contact them. They work for the purchasing client; they are not the artist’s agent. You have to get your work known to a wide audience locally and regionally. Art consultants want to find you, so you have to be where they look.”

For Carol, that means locating her studio in a building with other artists who work in a variety of media and exhibiting with these and other artists in her home city of Denver, Colorado. Word of mouth is important.

“It you’re out there networking, art consultants will find you,” Carol said, adding they may stop by during events like First Friday programs.

“They won’t always announce themselves. They have to know all the artists in an area so they can present them to the businesses. They’re always out and about checking up on artists.”

Carol and Nancy both agreed that you may not hear from art consultants for months after they get acquainted with your work. When

they get clients with spaces suited to your work, they will be in touch.

“The art consultant’s job is to decorate offices, health-care facilities including hospitals, and the like,” Carol said. “Art consultants find companies—often ones moving to a new location or building a new headquarters—that hire them to decorate their spaces with art. Corporations don’t have experts on staff in terms of decorating, so they hire people to do that for them. Art consultants may work in tandem with architects, especially when it’s a new building. Corporations want a unified look that reflects the corporate vision.”

Nancy has worked with art consultant Christie Taylor of Hodges Taylor Art Consultancy in Charlotte, North Carolina. Christie echoed Nancy and Carol’s emphasis on getting known close to home.

“Most of our clients request regional artists,” she said. “Since we work on a project-to-project basis, we file information on artists for future reference.”

Christie said she has found health-care facilities the most receptive to quilt art. “Fiber communicates home, warmth and comfort,” she said. “My experience is that hospitals are a better opportunity for fiber art than corporate settings, but it all depends on the tone of the project I’m working on.”

First sales

Nancy and Carol’s first sales through art consultants were to health-care facilities. Nancy’s came through an art-consulting firm based in Texas that specializes in purchasing art for such facilities.

“My piece went to a women’s health center in Illinois,” Nancy said. “My piece was graphic and had red and orange in it that went with a piece of red-orange glass they were featuring in a room.”

Carol’s first sale through an art consultant was to a dentist’s office.

“They bought it and hung it, but then the owner of the chain said, ‘Take it down; I hate that piece,’” Carol said. Her disappointment didn’t last. A year later, the same company bought two of her pieces.

Nancy’s first sale helped her find her niche for sales through art consultants.

“You must know the kind of venue your art is going to work for,” she said. “Studies in the health fields are showing that certain kinds of artwork aid healing. Health-care facilities want realistic art with landscapes being especially desirable. Corporations are more interested in abstract work. As I looked at my work, I realized it was most appropriate to the health-care market. All the work I’ve sold through art consultants has been sold to hospitals. I work with images from nature, and that’s a good fit.”



Nancy Cook with *A Kousa for Mercy*, purchased by Mercy Hospital at Carolinas Medical Center

Carol Ann Waugh with *Allegro*, purchased by Kaiser Permanente for their Denver call center





Mesa Verde II
Carol Ann Waugh
22 x 40 inches

Purchased by Grand Hyatt Hotel

She's learned a few things that enhance her sales opportunities. Health-care facilities prefer horizontal work that will fit above the handrails that often line the walls.

"Hospitals are very concerned about viral infections, so some will not consider fiber art because it can get infected by airborne viruses," she said. "Fiber art in these settings must be behind glass or Plexiglas. If you don't want to put your work behind glass, you don't want to sell to these health-care facilities."

Carol doesn't want her work under glass, and her work tends to be abstract, so she sells more to the corporate world though she has made sales to health-care facilities that have not required glass. For example, she has work in a new hospital in Castle Rock, Colorado.

"The art consultant did a walk-through of the building, then selected five artists to decorate it," Carol said. "The hospital chose this art consultant based on her vision. She had a vision of renewal, so she came up with the idea of aspen trees. If you research the aspen tree, you will find it is one of the oldest trees in the world. She wanted all the art to be about trees, roots and renewal. Each

artist had to come up with art that fit her vision.

"When this art consultant came to me, she said she could visualize my pieces on four specific walls. She talked about size. I came home and started thinking about roots and how I could capture that vision."

Existing work or commissions

A resident of Charlotte, North Carolina, Nancy's work fit the bill when a cancer center at Duke University Hospital in Durham was seeking art.

"The art consultant working with the hospital was local, and she wanted a variety of local work for visual impact," Nancy said. "She was looking for a quilt artist and was also putting in sculpture, painting and paper collage. My work didn't fit the color of the walls in the first areas she worked on, but she continued to upgrade art in other areas of the hospital. They wanted a piece to go into the doctors' lounge and her assistant remembered my work.

"They wanted a piece I had in a SAQA exhibition, but it wasn't coming back to me for a year and a half. So she asked me to make a piece. I looked at the space. I had to create something that was both attractive to the doctors and would work with

the blocky furniture. It had to go between genders. I took a piece I'd done and modified it to do a new design."

Nancy and Carol have both sold existing work and have received commissions when working with art consultants.

"Sometimes art consultants see something you've already created that will fit their needs, and they come and buy it," Carol said. "Newmont Mining Corporation, which has its headquarters in Greenwood Village, Colorado, bought existing pieces. They had come to a First Friday open studio and said they'd had my work on their radar for a year. They were looking for art to represent all the continents where they operate—Australia, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, South America and North America." They bought Carol's work for the North American area.

Nancy is sometimes challenged when she gets a commission because it may be the wrong season for her to get the pieces from nature that she works from. In those cases, she works from older pieces she's done.

"I work with specimens so I know what the plant structure is," she said. "I enjoy examining and exploring nature. I fall in love with my subject



Photo By: Louis Collins

Art consultants from page 13

your work, and they respect you as an artist. They won't try to convince you to make work that is not you."

Carol and Nancy offered advice to those wanting to work with art consultants, including:

- Be in lots of places at the right time.
- Be in state and city art directories.
- Network with other artists working in all media.
- Have an online presence including a website and/or blog.
- Be prompt. When you set a delivery date, meet it. Be realistic in setting these dates.
- Get visibility. Watch for opportunities to show your work in good local shows that art consultants frequent.
- Think through what you create and who is likely to purchase that kind of work. Research your markets. See what other SAQA members and fiber artists are selling. Look at where art is being purchased. Look for art similar to your own and research those artists.
- In setting prices, get a fair deal for you and for the art consultant because that can mean repeat business. Nancy and Carol disagree on whether to include prices on their websites. Nancy does; Carol doesn't.
- When doing commissioned work, get a contract that includes price and delivery dates. Get partial payment up front to ensure the client is committed to the purchase.

Christie concurred with Nancy and Carol's advice and added what she's looking for as an art consultant:

"Printed materials such as catalogs by fiber-artist organizations are a great tool when working with corporate clients. Sending website information via email is the best way to connect with me. I use the Internet to research artists. Make sure you stay up-to-date with your current work on your website and have contact information easily accessible." ▼

Dana Jones, a former SAQA Journal editor and a member of SAQA, is an artist and freelance writer and editor based in Gilpin County, Colorado. Her first book about the quilts of Caohagan Island in the Philippines is due out in 2015.



Canyon Light

©Patricia Gould

Collection of the New Mexico Arts Division Art in Public Places Program. Installed at Ken and Patty Adam Senior Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Applying for public art projects

by Eileen Doughty

Public art matters. It enriches and becomes a part of our lives. It may be intellectual, experimental, consoling, commemorative, political, controversial or simply beautiful. It may be inside or outside. It may be created by a community, a solo artist or a team. It may be any medium—as permanent as a granite sculpture or as ephemeral as a dance.

Ralph Helmick, an artist and educator, says that successful public art is something that the audience didn't know it wanted. Lynn Basa, an educator and artist, says it is "art found anywhere people go for reasons other than to have an art experience." In this article, I will narrowly define "public art" as art that is purchased

by a public entity, in public view, responding to its setting.

As quilt artists, we love to have our work seen. Many of us have experience getting our work into exhibitions or completing commissions for a home setting, but the public art process is a bit of a different animal. It can be intimidating to compete for a public project the first time. Here are some tips to encourage SAQA artists to take the plunge.

Getting your foot in the public door

Getting that first project can be difficult because of the "catch-22" that it's hard to win one till you've done one. SAQA member Patricia Gould, a resident of New Mexico, has had her

work selected from that state's image library in support of the Art in Public Places New Mexico Only Purchase Initiative. Pat says, "For a large commission, they are usually looking for experienced artists. With small projects, they are purchasing existing work. Now that I have an existing purchase on my resume, I have a better chance with larger projects."

My own initial experience hinged on a lucky break: the venue was uncommon—a community center for the deaf—which resulted in a very small pool of applicants. My previous connection with deaf employees and knowledge of American Sign Language was invaluable for coming up with the winning concept.



**Welcome
Communication**

©Eileen Doughty
Center panel 72 x 56
inches, side panels each
72 x 30 inches

Robert G. Sanderson
Community Center of
the Deaf and Hard of
Hearing, Taylorsville,
Utah, Utah Public Art
Program

photo by PRS Photography

There are many ways to enter into consideration for a project. In addition to image libraries, art consultants may research artist websites or already know of your work after seeing it exhibited. Keep consultants apprised of your new work to build long-term relationships. SAQA member Linda Beach has received multiple commissions from an art consulting company because she is proactive about doing this.

Artist Nellie Durand shared her passion about healing-themed art quilts with a woman she met at a cocktail party, not knowing she was an art consultant and owner of a gallery. A year later, the consultant was awarded a contract to acquire art for a new hospital and asked Nellie to submit a proposal, which led to her commission for *Prairie Performance*.

Formal application process

Being contacted by a consultant is a fairly painless entry into public art, but somewhat rare. Let's take a look at the most common route of applying for a project, through a formal entry system. There are two general types: Request For Proposal (RFP) or Request For Qualifications (RFQ).

The most common is the RFP. Unfortunately for the artist, it's

almost like being asked to work for free, as the application usually has site-specific components. Typically you will be asked to include a letter of interest (the artist's vision for project) and a budget. But it can be a good opportunity for any artist, even those with a thin resume, as an excellent proposal could win over the committee. RFPs are usually issued by local agencies with small budgets,

Divide Mountain (left) and ***An Early Snowfall*** (right)

©Linda Beach
Eagle River High School,
Eagle River, Alaska





**Nellie Durand with
*Prairie Performance***

Advocate Sherman Hospital in
Elgin, Illinois

finalists present their proposals to the selection committee, and the decision is made.

The RFP or RFQ is normally quite concise, listing the deadline, artist eligibility, project description, monetary award, timeline, and selection criteria. The location for the art may be described in text, images, renderings and/or architectural plans. A rationale for the art and what it is to accomplish is usually included. Sometimes the personnel of the selection committee are listed. Read the project description carefully. There may be stipulations regarding lighting, durability, design, materials, size or other factors that would require careful consideration by a quilt artist.

For any RFP or RFQ, be prepared to submit a form (usually consisting of not much more than contact information), images of completed work, an image list, references, your resume, your biography, and an artist statement.

Just as for an exhibition entry, your images must be of the highest quality. They should show your work at its best and give the selection committee confidence in your professionalism.

If the venue is within reasonable travel distance, try to arrange for a site visit. You would gain invaluable insight about the existing materials and colors of the space as well as installation needs.

Should you apply?

It may be tempting to apply to many public art projects, since there are no entry fees. Yet, filling out applications

resulting in fewer applications—and less competition.

An RFQ requires that artists submit proof of their qualifications for the project, based on past work. A few artists will be selected from the pool

of applicants to submit a fine-tuned site-specific proposal; normally they will be paid a stipend for this phase. They are given access to the site or floor plans, the site architect and other key players. Then, the few



HydroEclectic Power

©Eileen Doughty
Swim and Fitness Center, Rockville, Maryland,
and the original maquette made for the
proposal

photos by the artist

can be very time consuming, since there is little consistency among them. Beyond the obvious factors, such as restrictions on media, an adequate budget, or eligibility constraints, there are other considerations to keep in mind.

The most frustrating step may be the image requirements. There is no industry-wide standard for image names or size. There are a few that make it very easy, such as CaFÉ (callforentry.org), a free service, which offers each participating artist an individual image library. Entering multiple calls is as simple as selecting from your preloaded images, uploading a resume and statement, and clicking on a few options in the form. CaFÉ and other organizations also provide listings of exhibitions and artist residencies.

You should have a personal interest and inspiration for the project, to be able to develop a stellar submission. Research the venue. Does it lend itself to textiles, particularly the lighting? Would you have to travel to install the project, or could you just deliver the finished work? If you must do the installation yourself, do you know how, for example, to hang a quilt on a masonry wall or suspend it from a multistory ceiling?

When perusing public art opportunities, you will notice that the majority are for exterior or durable materials. Understandably, there is concern about the longevity of textiles in spaces where there is a lot of light or possibility of wear. There may be flammability issues requiring the application of flame retardant to fabric. The venue may not know how to maintain a wall quilt and assume

Public Art Resources

Artist Merle Axelrad Serlin recalls, "I originally started putting together a list of art consultants by going to healthcare facilities and asking who did their artwork. It's amazing what you can find out when you ask." Artist Karina Thompson recommends, "Talk to as many people as you can. Talk to agents and find out what they want to have on file. Read about who is commissioning stuff and the agents they are using. Put them on your mailing list."

Search online for your geographic area's art organizations and agencies, and image registries maintained by cities or state arts agencies.

Publications

The Artist's Guide to Public Art: How to Find and Win Commissions
by Lynn Basa, Allworth Press

Handbook for Pricing and Ethical Guidelines, Graphic Artists Guild

Workshop

Elizabeth Busch

"Designing for Architectural Spaces"

www.elizabethbusch.com/page/951-735/workshop-descriptions

Websites

4Culture — www.4culture.org

artdeadlines.com

Art Opportunities Monthly — www.artopportunitiesmonthly.com

artistsregister.com/opportunities.phtml

CaFÉ — www.callforentry.org

Forecast Public Art — forecastpublicart.org/forecast/artist-services

Public Art Review trade journal — www.publicartreview.org

shop.forecastpublicart.org/index.php?p=home

Professional Artist Magazine — www.professionalartistmag.com

Public Art Network, part of Americans for the Arts —

www.americansforthearts.org

Public Artists Forum (online discussion group)

groups.yahoo.com/group/publicartistforum

United Kingdom

Public Art Online — www.publicartonline.org.uk

A-N, The Artists Information Company, www.a-n.co.uk

Canada

Canadian national arts organization CARFAC, www.carfac.ca

Australia

Australian Quilts in Public Places initiative of the Australian

Quilters Association

[www.australianquiltersassociation.com/index.](http://www.australianquiltersassociation.com/index.php?act=viewDoc&docId=36)

[php?act=viewDoc&docId=36](http://www.australianquiltersassociation.com/index.php?act=viewDoc&docId=36)

that doing so is difficult. Some places, particularly hospitals, require that the work be mounted behind glass or Plexiglas. It is important to be able to suggest strategies to deal with this.

Read the call thoroughly, and give a lot of thought to whether or not it will be worth the time and effort required.

Follow directions

As more sites move to online entry systems, it is harder to make a blunder in submission. Still, be sure to carefully read the directions. Don't give the selection panel an easy reason to drop you from consideration. If your images need to be numbered a certain way, or an image list needs to contain specific information, follow the instructions. Don't send anything extra—stick to the list provided.

Marie Nau Hunter, former Manager of the City of Columbia, Missouri, Office of Cultural Affairs, says, "In the end, artists who present complete applications (not necessarily beautiful ones, just complete) present themselves as more capable of having eventual success with the project." Selection staff tend to be overworked and can't devote the resources to sorting through extra information. However, if you have a question, do contact them; they want to receive wonderful applications and will help you through any difficulties or confusion. Do document all discussions and decisions for your own future reference.

You're a finalist! Now what?

So you've submitted to several calls and have the pile of "declined" letters

to prove it. But you refined your proposals and didn't give up. One day, hurray, you survived the first cut and are a finalist!

You'll have a period of time to provide a specific proposal to the committee making the final decision. It is best to be able to present your proposal in person. If it is impractical to travel to the presentation, arrange to ship your materials to the committee. I have given presentations over the phone while the committee was listening in on speakerphone on the other side of the country; it felt a little odd, but it can be done.

To prevent surprises and protect yourself from misunderstandings, you should obtain from the committee:

- **Contract**—get a copy of what you would sign if you won the project

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- **Proof of Approval** stating that the site is officially sanctioned for the project
- **Timeline**—especially carved-in-stone dates
- **Site plans and/or photographs**, if not previously available
- **Statement of the site's substructure**—what the artwork will be mounted on
- **Budget**—what materials and labor the artist must provide, and the payment schedule
- **Requirements** regarding longevity and flame retardancy of materials

Be prepared to provide:

- **A written description** of your specific concept for the artwork

- **A maquette** (scale model of the space, usually made of foam core) or a drawing/rendering of the artwork in place
- **Material sample**—small quilt or fabric; helpful to the panel to have this to handle
- **Budget**—be specific; include line items for materials and labor, insurance, travel, taxes
- **Installation needs** and equipment
- **Timeline**
- **Maintenance requirements** for artwork

This stage can be open to interpretation or negotiation. Ideally and ethically, you should get paid a stipend for preparing all these materials.

Don't agree to a contract you haven't seen or don't understand.

Consider hiring a lawyer to review the contract; find a pro bono lawyer if necessary. Don't sign away your copyright. Stipulate in the contract that you must be contacted in the future if the artwork is ever removed.

The winner(s)!

Successful artists put a lot of thought into what people will enjoy seeing and how their artwork will relate to its location. Public art projects are a lot of work—highly professional work—but the monetary and emotional rewards can be worth it. The winners are both you, the artist, and the public. ▼

Eileen Doughty, a SAQA Juried Artist Member, volunteer, and previous website coordinator, creates three-dimensional fiber art in Vienna, Virginia. See her work at www.doughtydesigns.com.

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