

Have venue? Now install

by Pat Pauly

Editor's note: This article is based on the mini workshop, "Have Venue, Will Install: Mounting Your Exhibition 101," presented by Studio Art Quilt Associates member Pat Pauly at the 2013 SAQA conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

You did it. You have a venue for your work. A possible drawback: you must do the installation. After you celebrate landing a gallery space to exhibit your work or your group's work, reality sets in. You realize the task of mounting an exhibition may not be your strength. At worst, you've never hung a show before. Given that the venue may not have support staff, here are ground rules to install an exhibition.

Make a list

Inventory the works to be exhibited. Use whatever method you prefer—a

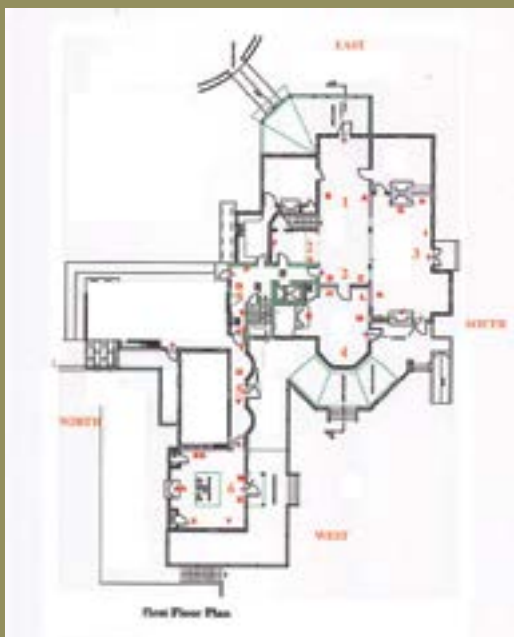
computerized spreadsheet, a table in a word-processing document, or paper and pen—to gather all the facts in one place. Include the following for each piece:

- Title of the piece.
- Artist's name.
- Year completed.
- Size.
- Artist's city, state and country.
- Contact information.
- Insurance price.
- Selling price.
- Special hanging instructions.

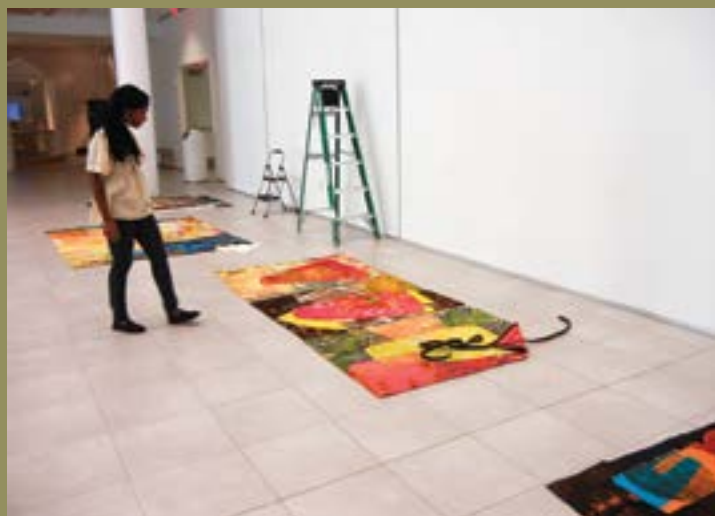
Being able to input and send this information electronically is important because this list will be used to generate exhibition labels, the gallery insurance list, the contact list for publicity, and the shipping and handling checklist.

Configure your space

Most galleries have floor plans that give running feet—the total width of the walls combined—and the elevation. To figure how much work will fill the gallery, add the total width of the works you have, then add about four feet per piece (SAQA recommends two feet per piece) for spacing



Prior to the installation, lay out your configuration using the venue's floor plan. When preparing to hang the works, lay them all out before installing the hanging hardware.





You can use wall color to break up the space and highlight pieces. If the work hangs in a rich architectural setting, competing with wall color, furnishings and molding details call for additional thought and careful placement. Aim to complement the space.

Installation

When you get to the space, set up tables to accept the work and unwrap it. Then the fun begins. Place the works at the planned locations. To space the works on a wall, add the total width of the works, subtract that amount from the width of the wall, and then divide the leftover amount by the number of spaces you need between pieces.

Choose a midline, which is the center line from which all works will fall. I use 60 inches from the floor because it makes the math easier. To find the top height of each piece, add the center height and half of the height of the piece. For example, if my

and the width of the title panel. Check this against the running-feet total in the gallery space to see if you have too much or too little room to exhibit.

Take traffic flow into account. If you have moveable walls, configure them so you lead your audience in a path that allows the works to unfold in the storyline you want. If you can hang pieces from the ceiling, realize that the hanging work will function

like walls that will change the traffic flow.

Lay out the works on paper

There will be a natural entrance to the exhibition, so use it to focus your viewers on the most visually dramatic work. Add a title wall in view of this entrance. Place more dynamic works where you will see them from far away. You want to move viewers around the space, and this placement will do that.



Labels, the exhibition title wall, publicity, postcards and web announcements need a coordinated hand.





A common midline keeps the work grounded. Consider the placement of works for scale and ability to draw the eye (and lead the visitor) through the space.

centerline is 60 inches and the piece is 70 inches high, then the top of this piece is 60 inches plus 35 inches—95 inches—from the floor.

Hang the rod first. Attach one end to the wall, put a level on the rod, and mark and secure the other end. Take down the rod, slip the work onto the rod and hang.

Mounting tricks

I use nails, hooks, hanging rails and just about anything that is allowed to hang the art. Check with your venue as to what you can use and what they can provide. Think creatively. Consider using adhesive-strip hangers, suction cups and material that can act as ballast. Consider hanging pieces from rafters.

Graphics

Labels, the exhibition title wall, publicity, postcards and web announcements need a coordinated hand. The title wall is the main vehicle for information about the exhibition. Make it work for you. Include a graphic of the title and a large label that becomes a statement about the exhibition. Keep the statement brief. Include the theme, who is exhibiting, and names of supporters and contributors. If your budget is low, enlarge a black-and-white printout at a local copy shop. Add a header and footer of another material—paper and fabric work well—to stretch the height. If you have a bit larger budget, you can have a sign store cut adhesive vinyl letters that apply directly to the wall, then add a copy block that you have enlarged. Stapling directly to the wall can work when you need a minimally invasive technique for mounting.

Labels on individual pieces should include information specific to the

see “Venue” on page 30



Seating allows for rest and contemplation.



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Venue

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pieces. Individual labels should be legible. Print them so they can be read from four feet away, and hang them just below eye level. Hang all of the labels at the same height on the same side of the pieces—for example, 58 inches from the floor and 8 inches from the right side of each piece.

Lighting

The aim of the lighting is to bathe the works evenly. If allowed by the venue, you may want to augment existing lighting with clip-on lights. Keep in mind that light levels for textiles should be low, and keep pieces out of direct sunlight. If you have a blast of uncontrollable light, you can use it for the title wall.

Reception

As you design the space, reserve a place for the opening reception spread. Accept help adding goodies to the table and recruit help with staffing the table. Opening night is for you to mingle, not serve. Don't forget to label yourself with a name tag. It makes you stand out and connects you to your work. Your audience will know whom to compliment on a wonderful installation. ▼

Pat Pauly, who has more than 30 years' experience in exhibition design, curates and organizes fiber-art exhibitions. Known for her contemporary fiber work, Pat lectures and teaches throughout the United States. Her website is www.patpauly.com.

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My quilt is accepted! Now what?

Many tasks combine to create travel-ready artworks

by Sarah Entsminger

Congratulations! You're in! The time and effort spent to create an artwork for a SAQA exhibition makes you an important player in our exhibition schedule and our mission to promote the art quilt. It is tempting to sit back and celebrate, but acceptance means there is still much work to do before you enjoy seeing your work on display.

Each exhibition is assigned an exhibition coordinator by the Exhibition Committee to assist with myriad administrative and collaborative tasks. These steps are required to build a collection of accepted pieces into an exhibition ready to travel. The exhibition coordinator will send you a packet of information, titled Artist Instructions, along with a contract.

The first thing you need to do is input all the important dates listed in the instructions into your calendar. It is vital that you adhere to these deadlines, as many others are working in tandem with you to complete

the necessary steps toward a successful traveling exhibition.

Include the exhibition coordinator assigned to your exhibition in your safe senders list for email, as you will continue to receive communications while your quilt is part of the traveling program. Keep the exhibition coordinator updated with any new contact information for yourself so you don't miss out on the exciting news when a new venue agrees to host the exhibit.

When you submitted your original registration, you were asked to either state the sales price or choose "not for sale" for each piece. The contract you receive will reflect what was in the registration. You need to double-check to make certain it's correct, as it cannot be changed once the contract is returned. Sign and return the contract as directed—one copy electronically and the original via the United States Postal Service.

Save yourself stress by recording the dates your quilt will be part of the traveling exhibition in your

records. That way, you won't submit it to another exhibition in the same time frame or sell it to someone who expects to take possession before the exhibition ends. Once the contract has been signed and the quilt shipped, the work cannot be withdrawn from the exhibition.

Once that is done, there is still more paperwork to process. You will need to write an artist biography for the Education Committee to use in preparing materials for docent training, as well as educational activities for each exhibition. This biography should be written in the third person to serve as an introduction when you are not present with the exhibition. Remember to include information about your website and where you can be found on social media.

The schedule of dates in the instructions includes the date your quilt must be received by SAQA Shipping Central. Your wonderful, accepted quilt is very important to you, so how you package and ship the quilt should reflect this. Before you begin looking for the right box, examine your quilt with a critical eye. Are there threads hanging? Is there pet hair on the surface? Are there creases that need pressing?



SAQA's *Earth Stories* exhibition
Huntington (West Virginia) Museum of Art

Does it need to be aired out before packing? Is the sleeve the correct size and placed properly? Does the label contain all the required information? Review your artist's instructions and online resources. If you are shipping a 3D piece, review online resource articles available to SAQA members (see sidebar) and pay close attention to the packaging suggestions.

Find a sturdy box that will allow you to either fold, with appropriate cushioning, or roll your quilt. If you are reusing a box, be sure to remove all previous shipping labels and bar codes. Use bubble wrap or tissue paper to protect the quilt as it is rolled or folded, then wrap it in clear plastic. Your box may be exposed to the elements several times before it reaches its destination. Once you have the plastic-wrapped package in the box, along with any materials requested in the artist instructions, seal the box. Reinforce the corners and edges of the box. It's a good idea to use bright colored or printed duct tape somewhere on your box so that if it is misplaced, there will be an easy way to identify your box among all the other brown boxes in transit.

SAQA covers the insurance while your quilt is part of the traveling program, but it's your responsibility to provide insurance for the trip to Shipping Central. It is very important to send your box with both tracking and signature required. You can use the tracking number online to follow your box's journey. Requiring a signature will insure that your box is not left when no one is available to

accept it and put it into secure storage. You will be able to track the time and the name on the signature line so you will know that your box arrived at its destination safely. There are too many packages going in and out of Shipping Central for SAQA to be able to send you confirmation of each

box's arrival. Set your mind at ease by tracking your package online.

Your work is not finished yet! There are no restrictions on publishing images of your accepted artwork prior to the opening of the exhibit. Consider this your opportunity to create positive press about your work

see "Accepted" on page 32

SAQA member resources

The SAQA website has a wealth of exhibition information for members. We encourage you to visit often. Interested in a topic not listed here? Please email editor@saqa.com with your idea.

General resource articles

www.saqa.com/resources.php?ID=2240

Specific articles of interest

How to make a hanging sleeve by Sarah Ann Smith

Shipping 3D artwork by Susan Else

How to write a press release by Cheryl Dineen Ferrin

General exhibition guidelines

www.saqa.com/resources.php?ID=3496

Specific Items of Interest:

SAQA policies and FAQs

SAQA shipping policies

SAQA Journal Page

www.saqa.com/members.php?ID=3263

Index of Journal articles

How to improve color accuracy in quilt photography by Deidre Adams

How to pack and ship fiber sculptures by Susan Else

Write artist statements that welcome, captivate your audience by Sarah Entsminger

Traveling Exhibition Program puts members' work on the road by Bill Reker

Picture this! Instagram for art quilters by Abby Glassenberg

Behind the scenes display hardware for quilts by Daren Redman

Blogging: A guide for getting started by Mirka Knaster

Photographing your art like a professional by Cindy Grisdela

Writing a press release by Amanda Carestio

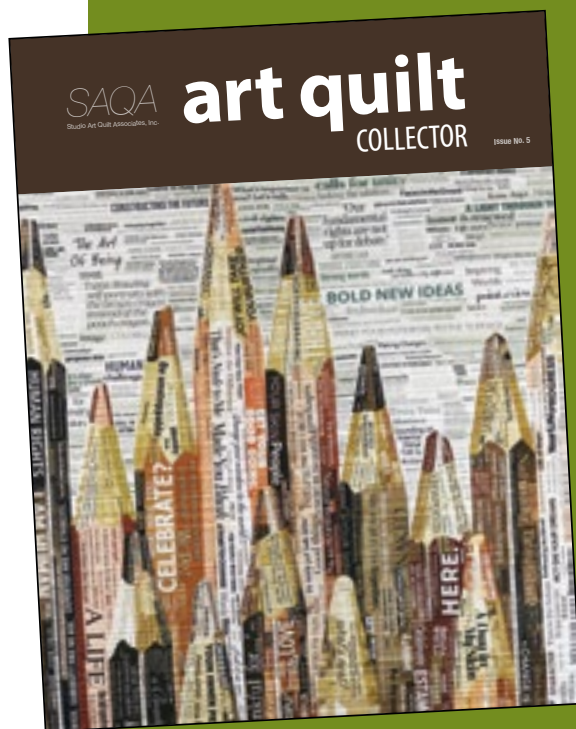
Email Contacts

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Gwyned Trefethen, exhibitcoord@saqa.com

SAQA Traveling Exhibition Coordinator

Bill Reker, shipping@saqa.com



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as well as the exhibition. Use your website, blog, or other social media outlets to promote your work. Be sure to include the dates, times, and location(s) of the exhibition. Consider creating a short video about your work, and your piece in particular, as another way of introducing yourself to potential viewers and purchasers. As the time approaches for the debut of your artwork, consider preparing and sending a personal press release to your local news outlets. Include a high quality photograph of your work to increase your chances of publication.

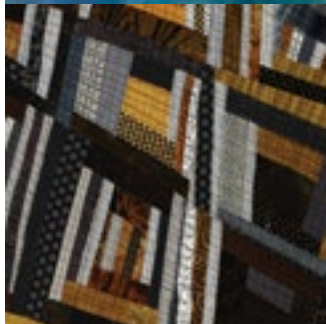
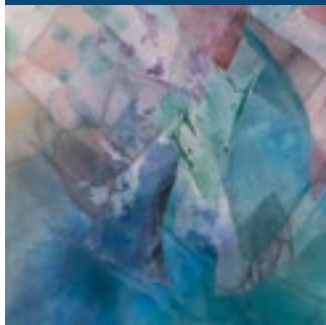
SAQA's website contains a wide variety of resources to assist you in creating your artwork and writing an artist statement, as well as to help with all the steps needed to get your

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artwork seen by the public. The SAQA *Journal* article index on the website will allow you to quickly see relevant articles that have been published by title as well as category.

The website also has a *Resource Articles* page which includes articles in other media, divided into sections. The *Exhibition* page also has many guides, including videos on how to enter your quilt, how the exhibition process works, and a detailed set of frequently asked questions. All of these resources are available for members to use at any time and are an important part of your professional development as a working artist. ▼

Sarah Entsminger is a SAQA JAM residing in Ashburn, Virginia. She is a member of the Exhibition Committee.



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“ Fabrics, threads, and sewing machines have always been a big part of my life. I started with garment construction, then moved to traditional quilting. Finally, I combined artistic skills and quilting fabrics and have found my home in art quilting! SAQA has been a big part of this journey. I have enjoyed the conferences, the amazing online information, and encouragement of like-minded folks. Most of all, I cherish the connections and lifelong friendships that have come through SAQA. I want to see SAQA continue long into the future, inspiring the next generation of art quilters. That’s why I’ve chosen to donate to SAQA and have left instructions in my will. I hope many others choose to do the same.

—Beth Schillig



Is SAQA in YOUR will?

How to pack and ship fiber sculptures

by Susan Else

Good news! Your 3D work was accepted into an exhibit. Now how are you going to get it there?

Many SAQA members are starting to experiment with three-dimensional art quilting, and more SAQA exhibits have started to accept it. Since I have been doing sculptural quilting since 1999, I wanted to share my packing and shipping experience.

You have two primary goals: to prevent your shipping container from being crushed, and to prevent your

artwork from banging around inside the container.

Use new cardboard boxes. They tend to hold up better to the rigors of shipping. Your box is likely to be dropped by the shippers, and it will have other boxes stacked on top of it. The exhibit venue will return your work in the box you sent it in. Consider double-boxing, with a



Susan Else's collaged and quilted sculpture *Family Life*, 2014, 38 x 20 x 20 inches, with its cardboard shipping box. She has added a sheet of corrugated plastic to reinforce the bottom of the box.

Here the skeletons have been swathed in bubble wrap to help them conform to the dimensions of the box. The carton has been lined with polyethylene foam, further reinforcing the box and making it a snugger fit. The foam cradle at the top will separate and support the delicate necks and skulls of the figures, and the extra foam layers on the side of the box just above the sculpture's base will help keep the piece from shifting in transit.

slightly smaller box packed inside the main shipping box. To pack my piece *Family Life*, I reinforced the bottom of a cardboard box with a piece of corrugated plastic made by Coroplast, available at retail plastic and signage stores. An extra piece of cardboard would also work for this purpose.

Pack the sculpture snugly, so that it can't move inside the box. A box

that just fits the work, with a little room for padding, is better than an oversized box that allows the piece to shift around. If the shape of the piece means that even a snug box has lots of air space, be sure to fill up the empty area, either with bubble wrap, air pillows, or similar materials.

I often line the box with foam sheets or build a custom foam cradle

that fits snugly inside the container. I use a polyethylene product called Ethafoam®, which is flexible but resilient and can be cut with an X-Acto knife. It can be purchased at retail plastic outlets or online. Recycled packing foam can be pressed into service as well. Since these products do not always accept glue, I use packing tape to adhere them to each other and to the box, always making sure that all tape stays well away from the surface of the sculpture.

Examine your piece to see where it is strong and where it is fragile. In *Family Life*, the cloth-covered plastic skeletons sit on a sturdy cloth-covered wood base. If the packing box fits snugly around the base, it will help keep the carton from being crushed. The base itself, plus the reinforcing piece of corrugated plastic sheet, work together to protect the more fragile skeletons.

If you can, keep standard box sizes in mind when creating 3D work. I recently worked on a sculpture I envisioned to be 48 x 48 x 15 inches. I realized that making the piece a couple of inches smaller was a better idea, as it had a better chance to fit a commercially available box. Your shipper can show you a list of available box sizes. You can create your own boxes or cut down standard ones, but it takes more time. Cutting down boxes can also damage their integrity. Although it's important to use new boxes when you ship, other materials, like packing foam and bubble wrap, can be reused many times. I rarely have to buy new bubble wrap.



photos by Marty McCallivray

All the empty space has been filled with recycled bubble wrap and air pillows. Unpacking instructions, as well as “to” and “from” information, are added before the carton is sealed.

A second view of 3D packing

by Mary McCauley

Storage and shipping of 3D fiber art need not be difficult or expensive. It can even be a creative work in itself! I reuse old foam-core boards to create sides, top, and bottom for a box that is only ½-inch bigger in height, width, and depth than the artwork itself. This keeps the art from shifting around too much inside. I cover the box panels with scraps of fabric from other projects. I sew the panels together with either a zigzag or a hand whip-stitch, and I use Velcro® tabs to close up the box.

If the work is more fragile (like *Protea*, shown here), I use rolls of bubble wrap, or the air pillows from other packaging I have received, to make bumpers or blocks that hold my art in place within the box. This is all lightweight, and it recycles packing materials I might otherwise have to throw out.

I fuse a photo of the artwork to the opening panel of the box, and inside I add a photo of how the art looks when correctly packed. The box can then be taken to a shipper and placed inside one of their standard shipping boxes, usually with a simple layer of bubble wrap placed around my box, acting like a double-hulled boat. If the shipper's box gets damaged, my storage box inside is usually protected, and my artwork avoids damage or exposure.

top right: Mary McCauley's **Container Garden: Protea**, 14 x 16 x 16 inches

center right: **Protea** inside its custom container, with stabilizing bumpers made of bubble wrap and foam core.

right: The custom container with its fabric cover and handle, Velcro closure, and fused label is ready to put in a standard commercial shipping box.



photo by Inge Kraus



My colleague Mary McCauley has a slightly different approach to packing her delicate 3D work, which tends to be smaller than mine. She makes a custom container for each piece, and then packs these inside commercially available shipping boxes. She allows room for a layer of bubble wrap between inside and outside containers.

Delicate and projecting parts of the work should be reinforced and stabilized. Sometimes I wrap a projection with bubble wrap and then circle that with thin, flexible cardboard. If an area seems too delicate to bubble wrap, I cradle the work. I might make a foam cradle that extends from the sturdy waist of a figure to the edges of the box, leaving delicate hair or toes free of packing material but unable to bump the sides of the box.

Most exhibition venues prohibit packing in foam peanuts. Shippers do not like duct tape, so use clear plastic packing tape to seal your outside box. If you have an inner box or cradle that you want the exhibition venue to reuse (either to ship the work on to another venue or back to you), seal it with blue painter's tape that can be removed without damaging the container. Put a small roll of extra tape in the box. McCauley achieves this same result by sealing her inner boxes with Velcro®.

Label all your packing materials with your name so they can be identified for return shipping. Include a sheet of paper with your name and address and the recipient's name and address. If the piece is complicated to unpack and install, put instructions in the box and consider adding photos of the process and of the assembled sculpture. You can email

the instructions to the venue as well, but often your contact for a show is not the person who will actually unpack and install the work.

Big, heavy sculptures may require wooden crates. Most of my work is pretty light, even if it's large, so I've had to use a wooden crate for only one piece: a five-foot-tall mechanized Ferris Wheel with a steel armature. Since some venues prefer not to receive wooden crates, check out the new kübox, a combination of laminated paper and corrugated fiberboard. This line is available at FedEx® in a few standard sizes and in custom sizes online; visit www.thekubox.com for details. These strong, lightweight containers are more expensive than crates you make yourself, but take into consideration that your time is also valuable.

Shipping costs are determined by weight and size, and they can be expensive. I use lightweight plastic materials for armatures in my work wherever possible. Designing a piece so that it can be disassembled can save a lot of space, but be sure you include assembly instructions, as well as photos of the process and what the assembled piece is supposed to look like.

The shipper you use will depend on many factors: who is available nearby, where you have an account, and the maximum package dimensions a shipper will accept at standard rates. It is worth doing research in advance, and if you already have a relationship with a shipping business that sends your flat work, it may be a good source of information and advice. In the past, I have used UPS, FedEx, and the U.S. Postal Service. Specialty art shippers are pricey, but they are

sometimes the only option for very large-scale, delicate pieces.

Check your shipper's regulations on insurance and on shipping artwork. If you want to insure something for more than the "default" amount (currently \$500 for the shipper I use), they may make you unpack the box or insist on packing it themselves. Some artists solve the insurance problem with a rider on their homeowner's policy; check to see if this is an option for you. To protect myself from theft, if I have to declare the contents, I always list "textiles" instead of "artwork."

I have been packing and shipping sculptures since 2000, and so far I have had one piece damaged (you could see tire tracks on the box, but I was able to repair the work) and one piece lost (the quilt show organizer wasn't paying attention when the piece was returned). I have never tried to press a claim. If you are really worried about a sculpture, do not ship it. Sometimes things happen. I try to remember that I could have chosen to make flat quilts!

Please bear in mind that this advice is based on my personal experience, and it is not meant to be an endorsement or guarantee of any kind. All artwork is different, and so are individual artists' packing and shipping needs. When in doubt, check with your shipper and the exhibiting venue. ▼

Susan Else is a SAQA JAM residing in Santa Cruz, California. Susan also is a SAQA board member and serves on the Exhibition Committee.

Regional exhibitions: Right for you?

SAQA Regional Exhibition Coordinator offers tips

by Betty Busby

I'd like to introduce myself as the SAQA Regional Exhibition Coordinator and tell you about the benefits of creating a regional exhibition. My job is to help your region put on an exhibition that highlights your art in a professional manner.

Regional exhibitions are fundamentally different from the all-SAQA exhibitions. They are conceived and run by individual SAQA regions solely for their own members. All-SAQA exhibitions are formulated by a central Exhibition Committee, and by definition are open to the more than 3,400 SAQA members worldwide.

I volunteered to be the Regional Coordinator because I have been involved with the New Mexico

exhibition committee since I joined SAQA in 2008. From those who are prominent fiber artists to those who have only begun to exhibit their work, our activities encourage and draw our members together.

I also have applied to juried exhibitions many times and have worked to make the regional entry process as simple and responsive as possible while upholding SAQA's standards. The Regional Exhibition Guidelines are available on the SAQA website, and the proposal form and other relevant documents are posted on the Regional Rep Info page.

Briefly, the guidelines state:

- All members of a region should be eligible to enter.
- All members will be given equal consideration in the jury process. Any work outside the jury process, such as display of a juror's work, must be clearly and separately labeled.
- Curators work on a volunteer basis, but jurors may be paid an honorarium.
- Regions may join forces to create an exhibition.

Why have a SAQA regional exhibition? In addition to the member benefits noted above, sanctioned regional exhibitions are covered by SAQA's insurance for the duration of the exhibit. Also, YOU choose your OWN venue, theme, and timing.

Beyond Tradition, a 2014 SAQA New Mexico regional exhibition at the Hubbard Museum of the American West in Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico

photo by Mark Hollingsworth Photography



The first step is securing a venue. Begin by checking with Desiree Vaughn, the Reps Coordinator, to make sure that the venue you have in mind is not contracted already for an all-SAQA exhibition. Think ahead, as most venues plan a year or two in advance. Many post their application requirements online with specific dates and requirements for consideration. Think about putting together a presentation folder for your region to present to potential venues. It can include:

- Mission statement: What is SAQA?
- Short biographies of several of your artists
- History of exhibitions your group has participated in
- Photos of representative artwork
- Promotional materials: postcards, brochures, etc.

- Installation photos of previous exhibitions
- CD with all of the above-mentioned material

Regional reps are not required to curate shows. A separate exhibition committee may be put together to handle all the arrangements.

In order to receive approval as a SAQA regional exhibition, the curator must fill out the proposal form and send it to me at least four weeks prior to issuing the call for entry. The timing of this step is preferably right after the venue is secured and the show's theme and title have been set. I then ensure budget figures are on target and that the regional guidelines are met.

Once the basics are taken care of, remind people early and often about your exhibition. Get the details out to your members immediately. Nine

or ten months in advance is not too early, especially if members will need to create artwork.

Promote the show in the email text portion of every regional newsletter that goes out, as many people do not open attachments. Encourage people to bring exhibit projects they are working on to your SAQA meetings to build excitement and interest.

The SAQA website will post your call for entry as well, and will include images of your announcement postcard and installation photos after the show is up.

There are options available to make your exhibition experience more professional. The SAQA online entry system, ArtCall, is available to regions for \$350. This service provides a four-week window for entries to be submitted. Entry fees can be paid online through the SAQA Store, and the funds will be credited to your region.

Staffing options for regional exhibitions

Jamie Fingal, a JAM from Orange, California, has put together many successful exhibitions over the years. Her list of volunteer positions includes:

Organizer: This person fills out the SAQA paperwork, which will be approved by the SAQA Regional Exhibition Coordinator and the local SAQA rep. The organizer puts together a committee to plan the show.

Curator: This volunteer communicates with the artists. Duties may also include finding other venues to show the exhibit and approaching media for coverage.

Wall card preparer: This person is responsible for the wall cards for the exhibit. The text for each quilt can be uploaded from the ArtCall site if that tool is used for entry submission. Some venues have guidelines for the text, but if you are doing a gallery show, templates are available from the regional

coordinator. The person who ships or hand delivers the quilts needs to work with the wall card preparer, because the cards will accompany the quilts to the venue.

Shipping coordinator: Quilts are shipped to one person. That person checks in all of the quilts and repacks them for shipping to the venue by rolling them and placing them in boxes. This can be done with a committee of two or three people to check the quilts in, organize the boxes, and manage the return shipping labels. Another team can roll the quilts to be transported and/or shipped to the venue in a few boxes. They are rolled so they are flat upon arrival. If the team is local to the venue, the pieces can be hand-delivered to the venue in the boxes. If not, one team can hand-deliver the boxes to a shipping company to send to the venue.

This person also handles the receipt of the quilts back from the venue and coordinates shipping back to the artists. Most regional shows do not require shipping.

Financial paperwork coordinator: This person tracks expenses.

Exhibition catalog designer: This function is only required if you decide to create a catalog. The organizer or curator can coordinate this task. If ArtCall is used, images and text can be downloaded from that site.

These positions can be combined and tailored to fit the needs of your region and exhibition. They are options to consider and a helpful guideline as you plan out your show with the Regional Exhibition Coordinator.

Through the ArtCall system, all the information about the work will be available online, in one place, and can be used to jury the exhibition, for publicity, and to make the labels for the exhibition.

Another important factor to consider is using a juror. It is not required for regional exhibitions but is strongly encouraged. Why? Unless you are prepared to hang all the work submitted, somebody needs to choose the work that will be shown. That person is your juror and should be independent of the show.

No matter how large the exhibition space, there is a limit to the number of works that can be shown. An overcrowded space is the mark of an amateur production. A juror can choose the correct number of pieces to hang, and also make a cohesive statement

as to the general appearance of the exhibition.

Many people are apprehensive about the jury process, because they have applied to large international shows, which typically have a low acceptance rate due to the large number of entries received. However, with regional exhibitions, there will be far fewer entries and a much better chance of getting into the show. For instance, 35 works might be hung out of 60 submissions in a regional exhibition.

Regional exhibition committees can, of course, choose their own jurors. They can be SAQA members, artists, gallerists, educators, or critics from the larger art community. The local committee can negotiate an honorarium with a potential juror. Many are willing to work for a minimum fee due

to the smaller number of entries in a regional exhibition.

I also can recommend a juror. There are many experienced SAQA members who would be pleased to invest their time to see regional exhibitions achieve the best possible results.

I have 27 regional exhibitions on my spreadsheet right now that are either on display or in the planning stages. These exhibits are well worth the effort involved. And putting on a regional exhibition does get easier! Many of the regions on my spreadsheet are on a repeat visit to their venues. Some have been invited back to the same location up to six times because their events have been so successful.

This can be you. Give it a try! I am here to help. ▼

Betty Busby is a SAQA JAM who resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



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Traveling Exhibition program puts SAQA members' work on the road

by Bill Reker

SAQA's Traveling Exhibition program is a major benefit to our members, offering the opportunity to enter and be juried into exhibitions that travel around the globe. Next year, 16 all-SAQA exhibitions will be on view in museums and quilt expositions on four continents. Venues include ten museums, as well as the International Quilt Festival in Houston, the Festival of Quilts in the U.K., and the Taiwan International Quilt Exhibition.

The success of this program is supported by the hard work of the volunteers that make up the 16-member Exhibition Committee. Each exhibition begins in the Development Subcommittee (DevCom), currently chaired by Heather Pregger and

comprised of members from the full committee. DevCom meets monthly to review venues and discuss potential themes for exhibitions. It is here that the first creative sparks ignite to turn an idea into an international touring exhibition.

DevCom considers ideas from many sources, including members, venues, other exhibitions, and brainstorming sessions, to arrive at up to three themes for each potential new venue. It then reviews the needs of the venue, including its size and ability to handle 3-D, freestanding, or framed works, and whether it has a specific hanging system. These factors determine the parameters of the exhibition. DevCom is conscious of the needs of SAQA's diverse membership,

and much thought goes into creating exhibition themes that will appeal to a broad spectrum of artists, from those who create abstract works to those who make representational art. Finally, three DevCom members write a first draft of the theme description to present to the entire Exhibition Committee.

The full Exhibition Committee is chaired by Gwyned Trefethen. It meets monthly to discuss multiple aspects of the exhibition program, including changes to policies, juror selection, venue selection, and other issues that arise in such a large program. Also considered at these meetings are new exhibition themes. The committee members, having already received draft descriptions, consider

Lifecycle of a SAQA



every aspect of each proposed theme. How will membership respond? Will it fit representational and abstract approaches? Is it strong enough to form a cohesive show? Will it allow artists to find their own interpretation? Will the theme and any proposed title bridge SAQA's languages and cultures?

Once a theme has passed these tests and is selected, an Exhibition Committee member is assigned to write the final description. Anne Hiemstra, coordinator chair, writes the prospectus, or call for entry. Trefethen recruits an exhibition coordinator. Juror coordinator Patty Kennedy Zafred recommends and secures a juror. Jurors with diverse artistic training and backgrounds are sought out,

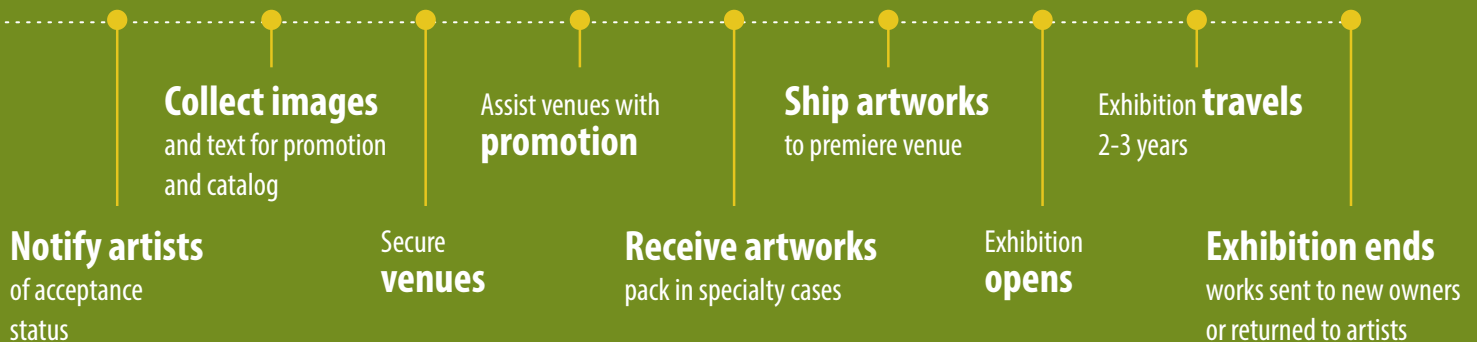
and may include museum curators, artists who work within the academic community, and well-known artists of all media, including fiber. Choosing a recognized juror not only adds to the prestige of the exhibition and increases the ability to secure quality venues, but also increases the number of potential entries and overall interest in the exhibition. Since the jurors are chosen after the exhibition theme and concepts have been finalized, consideration is also given to the potential juror's individual knowledge or connection with the subject matter to be expressed.

After the call for entry is approved, it is posted on the SAQA website. Anne Hiemstra prepares a timetable for the exhibition and works with the

exhibition coordinator. The exhibition coordinator plays a key role. Once the call for entry is posted, that person becomes the main contact person for artists considering the exhibition. This volunteer answers a wide range of questions from artists, including size of works, shipping or display constraints, and whether certain interpretations of the theme will be acceptable. Once the entries have been submitted and juried, it is the exhibition coordinator who contacts artists who submitted entries to let them know if their work was accepted. She then sends accepted artists further instructions for the exhibition along with contracts to sign. After the artwork has been selected for an exhibition, the exhibition

see "Traveling exhibitions" on page 36

exhibition



Traveling exhibitions from page 19

coordinator sends the list of accepted works to Deidre Adams, SAQA's art director, and to me, SAQA's Traveling Exhibition coordinator. We work with Cheryl Dineen Ferrin, SAQA's marketing director, and Kristin LaFlamme, a member of SAQA's Education Committee, to write and design the marketing materials for the new exhibition. Combining images of the artwork, juror statements, and the exhibition description from the call, a marketing brochure is created.

During this time, Adams and SAQA's executive director, Martha Sielman, work on the layout and design of the exhibition catalog. This is the first time individual pieces come together as an exhibition, created with the images and statements

the artists submitted with their entries.


When the marketing brochure is complete, it is used to help the premiere venue promote the exhibition and to approach other potential venues about it. In the months leading up to an exhibition's debut, I work with the venues to meet their needs. With each new exhibition, everything from the creation of labels to concerns about unusual design, hanging order, shipping, customs, and other issues need to be coordinated and confirmed. Along with finding new venues, I make sure there are exhibitions available to meet our obligations to repeat venues.

Finally, the quilts arrive at the shipping center, and I and Allison Reker,

SAQA membership secretary, prepare the exhibition for travel. Each individual quilt is unpacked, inspected, and repacked with the others in one of SAQA's shipping trunks. The final paperwork is prepared, travel arrangements secured, and the exhibition is shipped off to its first venue.

Thousands of hours of work by the artists, the Exhibition Committee, and SAQA's staff go into each new exhibition of art quilts. Thank you all for making our Traveling Exhibition program a success. ▼

Bill Reker is SAQA's Traveling Exhibition coordinator and supervises ad sales for the SAQA Journal.



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Mounting and matting art quilts

Presentation is critical for small works

by Elizabeth Van Schaick

After completing an art quilt, the artist must consider the presentation of the piece. While other established fine art forms have conventions for presentation, the fabric medium brings specific challenges for presenting the artwork. While the variety of choices for the display of art quilts may create some confusion, it is important to consider different approaches to presenting small or unusually shaped art quilts that can enhance their physical presence and impact. Each artist must strike a balance between the purely practical aspects and the aesthetic effects of mounting an art quilt. Some artists feel that the two go hand in hand.

Attention to mounting or matting can bring a level of professionalism to exhibiting artwork. Artist and curator Lyric Kinard notes, "A well-framed or presented piece shows that you care for and respect your work." While a small scale may be the perfect format for an individual artist's technique and vision, such pieces may benefit from an extra level of treatment, depending on the artist's intentions and the exhibition conditions.

Context is vital. In contrast to their life in the artist's studio space, small works may become lost or simply not gain sufficient attention in an exhibition hall or even a reasonably sized gallery if presentation has not been addressed. Adding a mat or mounting of some sort grounds the art piece and provides another level of dimension.

One popular treatment for the small art quilt is to attach it to a gallery-wrapped canvas. This is a stretched artist canvas, 1½ inches thick (instead of the ½-inch deep inexpensive canvas), that has the fabric pulled all the way around to the back so that the edges are covered. The artist can make her own decision about how

wide a border the canvas should create and can paint the canvas, apply texture, or cover it with a background fabric. Some artists use one or more layers of felt along with other elements.

Marilyn Gillis explains the advantage of her method of pulling layers together: "I usually choose a canvas size that gives about a 2-inch border beyond the quilt. I paint the canvas a color that brings out the best in the quilt. Next, I sew several layers of commercial felt together around the edges and in an "X" through the middle, from corner to corner. I size the felt to be ½- to 1-inch smaller all around than the quilt. I stitch the quilt invisibly to the felt piece, and then glue the felt with the quilt attached to the canvas. Because the quilt is stitched to the felt, and only the felt is glued to the canvas, the quilt can be removed easily if someone doesn't like the mounting and wants to change it."

Similarly, Margaret Cooter paints a canvas, especially around the edges, and mounts the quilt separately onto one or more layers of felt that are sewn securely with stab stitches, and then glues the felt surface to the canvas. "Probably there is a size limit for this method, but it seems to work well for journal quilts."

Along the same lines, some artists find hook-and-loop tape an easy, strong and safe, but non-permanent, option for securing fabric art to a backing.

"I strongly favor mounting small art quilts," says Lyric Kinard. "The space between the piece and the wall keeps it from looking like a potholder and turns it into a piece of art. My current presentation method is to sew a small piece onto a 1-inch gallery-wrapped canvas that I've painted in such a way as to complement the

piece. I've also seen a very nice presentation on a plainly painted gallery-wrap canvas that was also collaged with handmade paper and fabric, with the piece mounted in the center. The canvas becomes the frame for the fiber piece." The quilt can be stitched to the canvas or to the center of a piece of background fabric, which is then stretched and stapled to the canvas or frame. Kinard has also mounted small art quilts to watercolor paper that she has machine-stitched around the edges.

For Brooklyn artist Niradhara Lynne Marie, an existing interest in recycled and reclaimed textiles and objects and a lucky find in her neighborhood led to the mounting technique for her *Vespers* series. She salvaged some discarded wood floor planks, sawed them into small lengths, and attached her digital-collage art quilts to them with a nail in each corner. The thickness of the pieces of wood and their patina give the small pieces the feel of antique religious icons. For works like these, most of which are approximately nine inches high by five inches wide, the wood mount adds a sense of the naïf and of purpose.

Another choice is to attach the art quilt to the top of or behind mat board. Putting the quilt in front of a solid piece of mat board is a very workable technique, while using the mat in a traditional way, in front of the piece, may or may not be the right choice. This depends on the thickness of the finished quilt and how the artist feels about covering its edges.

Holly Knott often uses both layers: "First I cut a piece of acid-free mat board to use as a backing piece. I place the quilt over it, position/center the quilt over that backing board, then lift up the corners in order to



Autumn Morning, 8" x 20" (framed), © 2006 Holly Knott

mark them on the mat. Then I poke holes just inside the outer edge of the quilt, about ½-inch or so. From the back, I stitch the quilt to the mat through the holes. I use acid-free tape over the knots on the back as added security. Then, for some pieces, though it is not always necessary, I place a mat with the opening over the front of the quilt/backing mat. No glue, tape or stitching is necessary." She then frames the pieces, finishing the back of the frame carefully.

Mounting art quilts onto plexiglass (either the same size or larger than the quilt) creates a lift between the quilt and the wall plane. One advantage, particularly in humid climates, is that plexiglass or acrylic is impervious to moisture, and therefore will resist damage in varying conditions of shipping and display.

Questions frequently come up concerning how to support round or unusually shaped art quilts. The best options for support are foamcore, masonite, or some type of strong art board. All of these materials can have holes drilled into them fairly easily, allowing the quilt to be mounted by stitching through to the back side. Pins can be used easily with foam core to tack the quilt and/or backing fabric to the surface while working on securing it. To protect the integrity and longevity of the art, it is essential that any backing or matting be acid free. If the materials are not acid free or archival, thoroughly coating them with a primer/sealer will help protect the fabric from damage over time.

Some designs may require creating a

custom-built wood frame in the appropriate shape, as Susie Monday found after creating pieces that were not square or rectangular. The artist leaves at least a few inches of extra fabric around the whole piece so that it can be stretched around the frame and secured on the edges or the back. Mounting or matting also solves

issues of unintended waviness on medium to medium-large art quilts. ▼

The next article in this series will follow this discussion from matting to framing.

SAQA active member Elizabeth Van Shaick is a fiber artist and jeweler. She lives in Wayne, Pennsylvania, and her web site is www.elizabethvs.com.



Three, 4" x 6", © Lyric Kinard, along with the back of the piece showing stitching and label



Left: **Guadalupe de los Niños**, 18" x 12" x 3.5", © 2007 Susie Monday



Right: Mounting under construction

Shipping quilts

By Susan Crouse-Kemp

As organizer and curator of last year's SAQA: *On the Wall* show, I was the recipient of over 40 quilts, with wide variation in methods used for preparation and shipping. The experience of opening all these packages made me realize how important all these details are, and I would like to share some tips for professional results.

As fiber artists, we have it pretty easy when it comes to shipping our artwork. We can roll it up, we don't have to worry about glass, and the artwork is usually light and inexpensive to ship. However, we do have some responsibilities for preparation of the artwork that artists in other mediums don't have to think about. Your goal as an artist is to make sure your art is hung as perfectly as possible. While quilt venues are prepared to hang quilts, don't expect museums and galleries to have these specialized hanging systems. When you control the variables, your artwork is more likely to be hung correctly, since often you won't be there to supervise.

Quilt Preparation

Make sure the quilt is signed and has a label on the back with your name, the name of the artwork, and your contact information. Labels can be printed onto fabric and hand-stitched to the back of the quilt. You can also use fusible web to attach the label, but fused labels have been known to come off!

Most quilt venues have a hanging system designed to accommodate sleeves and slats. Most shows historically ask for a 4-inch sleeve, which is a carryover from traditional quilt shows. A 4-inch sleeve is not always applicable for smaller artwork, and 3-inch sleeves are sufficient for most hanging systems. Larger pieces can be further enhanced by adding a bottom sleeve and slat, which helps the artwork hang flat.

Sleeves should be at least one inch

shorter than the width of the quilt to allow a half-inch on each side so the slat will not extend beyond the edges of the quilt. When attaching the sleeve, allow some extra room within the fabric tube to accommodate the thickness of the slat. If the sleeve is stitched too tightly to the back of the quilt, the slat will cause an unsightly bulge when the quilt is hung.

Slats can be made of various materials, but round curtain rods and dowels should be avoided. The thinner the slat, the less obtrusive it will appear when hanging. My favorite material for slats is aluminum bar stock, found at the hardware store. It comes in various widths and is about 1/8-inch thick. It's very strong and very thin, so there is no bulging in the sleeve. It is easily cut with an electric saw or a hacksaw, and it's easily drilled for hanging holes. It then requires some simple filing to smooth the cut ends. I find the aluminum much faster to prepare than wood, but it is a bit heavier to ship. Another option is Plexiglas, which can be cut and drilled to order.

You should always ship the slats unless explicitly asked not to by the venue.

Shipping

Before shipping, be sure to label everything that will go into the box, including tubes, bags, slats, ties, and even the box. I often tape business cards to the inside of the box.

The most common way to ship quilts is to roll them on tubes. Good choices for tubes are swim noodles, which are light and easy to cut to size and tubes from home-decorating fabric, usually free from your local fabric store. Make sure your quilt is pressed and free of lint and hair. The quilt should be rolled with the front facing out to keep wrinkling to a minimum. (They are not likely to press your quilt at the venue.) You may put a tie

around the quilt, or maybe your bag includes the ties.

Put the rolled quilt in a labeled quilt bag. It's a good idea to then wrap the quilt in plastic to protect it from water damage. You can use a plastic bag or make your own heavy-duty bag out of 3-ml plastic painter's tarp cut to size and stitched along the side and bottom. Add a label with your name and address or attach a business card. Place the bagged quilt into a sturdy box, putting the slat on the outside of the bag. If there is extra room in the box, add filler to help prevent the box from being crushed during shipping. A suitable filler material is upholstery foam, cut to fit as needed, or you can use bubble wrap. Do not use styrofoam peanuts, because they're too messy.

To assist the venue in return shipping, you might tape return packaging instructions to the inside of the box, especially if you have special requirements. Add necessary paperwork and return shipping labels as required, and seal the box carefully.

Everyone has a favorite shipper. Most labels can now be completed online, including return shipping labels. Most shippers will charge you for insurance, so if you are shipping frequently, it might be time to buy an insurance policy for your quilts. This insurance is relatively inexpensive and may even pay for itself over the year.

You want your quilt to arrive in good condition, ready to hang, and make the return process easy for the venue. Your shipment is a representation of you and reflects on your professionalism as an artist. Make sure you're presenting a complete package. ▼

SAQA Utah/Colorado/Wyoming representative Susan Crouse-Kemp is a fiber artist from Colorado. Her web site is www.sckart.com.

Finding and responding to calls for entry

by Lyric Montgomery Kinard

Your artwork has something to say. Whether your visual message is controversial, political, intellectual or personal, you are driven to create and share your work. It can be fulfilling when a viewer connects with something you have created, understands your vision or finds a personal message in your art.

That connection cannot happen if your work sits in a closet. For you to gain viewers, achieve recognition and make sales, people need to see your work. Responding to calls for entry for juried exhibitions can be a key way of doing just that.

Organizations, venues and individuals develop exhibitions, set rules for participation, detail parameters of what they are looking for and release calls for entry. When you choose the right juried shows to enter, they can be a good vehicle toward achieving your goals as an artist.

Finding calls for entry

Because I came to art via the quilt world, my first foray into juried shows focused on exhibitions exclusive to quilts. I scoured quilt magazines and newsletters for listings of juried quilt shows; today we can search online. I maintain a list of calls

for entry, focusing on art-quilt exhibitions, on my website, www.lyrickinard.com/enter_shows.html. When you sign up for my newsletter, the list will be emailed to you each month.

I recommend three other websites that list exhibitions that feature art quilts and often expand to include other kinds of fiber. These sites also list fairs where you can vend your work, artist residencies and broader art shows that include categories into which you work may fit. These include the Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA) website, and websites of

Quilting Arts magazine and Fiber Art Calls for Entry newsletter:

- SAQA: www.saqa.com/calendar.php?ID=9
- *Quilting Arts*: www.quiltingdaily.com/content/Call-for-Entries.aspx
- Fiber Art Calls for Entry: fiberartcalls.blogspot.com

I encourage you to enter shows in the larger fine-art world even if they don't have a category for art quilts. I've entered pieces, depending on technique, in collage and mixed-media categories. When entering these exhibitions, it often helps if



Family Ties
Lyric Kinard
40 x 39 inches
2010

**Amsterdam Alley:
The Shortcut Between**

Leslie Tucker Jenison
48 x 36 inches
2011

your work is framed or mounted so those unfamiliar with art quilts understand how to hang it. There is a wide variety of lists for such exhibitions on the Internet. A few to check out include:

- artdeadlineslist.com
- www.artshow.com/juriedshows/index.html
- www.callsforart.com/home/index

Selecting exhibitions

You need to ask yourself, “Should I make artwork specifically within the parameters of a call for entry or should I look for shows that fit my current body of work?” There is no one answer to this question; there are advantages to both methods.

If you choose to create a piece specifically for an exhibition, it can give you the opportunity to explore a subject you hadn’t considered.

Some artists enjoy working within a set of restraints and realize doing so can, paradoxically, free their creative side. You may find you love working within a size you hadn’t tried before, pushing you in a new direction that will help you discover the next level in your own work. A downside is that if you don’t get juried into the exhibition, you can be left sitting with a piece that doesn’t fit into your body of work.

SAQA member Leslie Tucker Jenison of San Antonio, Texas, likes working to exhibition requirements. She said:

“Specific guidelines push me creatively, and I think that is a good



thing. I find it rewarding because it is so challenging. I approach the process in a different way, especially if there is a need to create a piece with a size parameter. A size requirement pushes me to focus on the composition elements in a less linear fashion.”

SAQA member Patty Kennedy-Zafred of Murraysville, Pennsylvania, is among artists who find working within someone else’s guidelines stifles their creativity and forces them into work they don’t want to do. Patty found this to be the case when she entered SAQA’s *Text Messages* exhibition.

“I found the size requirement particularly difficult, which impacted

the potential of the piece and the joy in the process,” Patty said. “In the future, if my work fits the theme and size of a call for entry, I will enter, but if not, I will likely pass on shows that have very specific size requirements.”

Patty discovered she is among artists who choose to create only the works they are driven to create, then hunt for exhibitions that fit their work. This can be a challenge when an exhibition has size requirements, has a very specific theme or requires artists to include a specific fabric as in the case of challenges sponsored by fabric manufacturers.

When you work without the restrictions of exhibition guidelines, you



work within your creative comfort zone and are not pressured into bending your artistic voice into a timbre that may not suit it. The art world is large with room for many types of expression. If you look hard enough, you will find venues that suit your style.

Evaluating calls for entry

Whichever way you work, an exhibition should spark your interest. If you want to enter a piece from your body of work, look carefully at requirements to make sure your artwork follows the rules. It's not worth the entry cost to submit a piece that doesn't fit the venue.

You need to know your goals as an artist when choosing shows. Are you looking for the largest number of eyes to see your work? A show like the International Quilt Festival

in Houston, Texas, draws more than 65,000 people over just a few days and has the added benefit of prize money. Are you looking for sales? Gallery shows may be your best bet as that is their first priority.

Be sure you understand all the costs of entering an exhibition, including entry fees, shipping costs and commissions paid to the venue. Sometimes it is worth entering just for the chance to get your work in front of a gallery owner or a well-connected juror. While museums do not count sales of your work as their first priority, showing your work at museums is valuable in building your resume.

Entering exhibitions

Taking the first step toward moving your art into the public eye can be as unnerving as putting your child onto the school bus for the first time.

No Childhood Permitted

Patty Kennedy-Zafred

24 x 24 inches

2012

But the analogy holds: your child will never grow up and reach her or his full potential if you refuse to cut the apron strings. You must prepare yourself for rejection; it's a reality for every professional artist. Don't take it personally. It's part of the process. When you do your research ahead of time, you give your work the best chance for success.

Do your homework. Read all instructions and follow them exactly. Read the prospectus carefully, then send the information requested. Don't enter pieces that do not fit the size or hanging requirements. Your error might be overlooked in the jury process, then cause problems when it is caught. You should do enough research to know whether or not your work fits the general look of the show. Do not ask show organizers if you can do something differently; they have enough to do. Make it as easy as possible for the exhibition staff to accept your art. Be sure your artwork will be available for the entire time of the exhibition, plus time for shipping.

Send the best-quality photographs of your artwork that you can. Having had the experience of curating exhibitions and attending the jury process, I know how frustrating it is to see wonderful works of art excluded because of bad photography. Your work will have the best chance for acceptance if your photos are well lit, in focus and have a plain background. Size your images correctly. If you are unsure

see "Calls for entry" on page 31

Calls for entry

from page 20

how to format your digital entry, find a digital guru to help you. For help with this, I recommend Gloria Hansen's book, *Digital Essentials: The Quilt Maker's Must-Have Guide to Images, Files, and More* (Electric Quilt Company, 2008).

Meet the deadlines, noting whether the deadline is a "received by" or "postmarked by" date. Understand how the jury process works. Don't expect jurors to give you comments. Understand getting selected is often the luck of the draw. Exhibition organizers do their best to recruit jurors who are knowledgeable about art, who have strong opinions and a good eye. They must put together exhibitions that fit the given spaces, look cohesive and make strong statements of the themes, working with the guidelines and images they are given. They often work in teams so may have to make difficult compromises. Being rejected is not necessarily a statement on the quality of your artwork.

As a professional artist, you need to show your work, get it into the public eye and make your statement. Just as you work to perfect your technical skills, you must work to develop a following for your art, to make sales and to expand your resume. You need to do what it takes to get your art out there. Answering calls for entry helps you reach that goal. ▼

Lyric Kinard of Cary, North Carolina, is an artist, author and educator who loves to share the joy of creating beauty in cloth. You can see her work and read about her publications and workshops at www.LyricKinard.com.

Documentation

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encouraged her to document for herself, but also as a way of sharing her processes.

"The point was made that museums and even galleries want information about artists' processes," Gay said. "That made sense to me. Some artists are reluctant to share that information, but I'm happy to do so."

Gay recommends each artist develop a documentation style that works for the artist. Life experience and work style will impact it, she said. Gay has worked as an art photographer, hand coloring and collaging images. Then she earned a doctorate in psychology and had a therapy practice for a number of years. She began art quilting in 2003 when she retired from that practice.

Along the way, she also studied art and learned to weave.

"I've always had textiles in my life," said Gay, the granddaughter of a tailor, her paternal grandfather, and a dress-pattern maker, her maternal grandfather. "When our children were young, I was a weaver. In the late 1970s, I went to college to take a drawing class and stayed long enough to get a bachelor's degree in fine art."

The art she makes today combines her art photography, art education and lifelong love of fiber. By documenting her work, she is able to expand her skills, advance her art, and share her art and techniques with others. ▼

Dana Jones is editor of the SAQA Journal.

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The mystery of museum exhibitions explained

by Nancy Bavor

This is the second of two SAQA Journal articles about museum policies and practices. The first article on museum acquisitions appeared in Vol. 27, Issue 3.

Have you ever wondered how museums decide which exhibitions to present, or artists to exhibit?

Museums may vary in their policies, but the basic procedures to decide which exhibitions and artists to present are relatively similar. Most exhibition schedules are planned at least a year ahead and it is not unusual to have contracts signed for exhibitions three years into the future. Because museums often rely on grants or other funding for exhibitions, which take time to arrange, some museums maintain a five-year plan. While there may be schedule flexibility to allow for cancelled exhibitions or additional space becoming available, museums are not well-known for nimbleness.

Although most of the policies and procedures discussed in this article also apply to non-textile museums, this article focuses on museums that exhibit art quilts. Only museums with permanent collections were surveyed, except for the Texas Quilt Museum, a non-collecting institution that occasionally exhibits quilts from the International Quilt Festival Collection. Having a permanent quilt collection to draw on can significantly affect an exhibition program.

It is not always clear from a museum's name what it exhibits. All of these museums have the word quilt(s) in their names: San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles; Visions



The San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles exhibited SAQA's *Earth Stories*, including works by Noriko Endo, Cynthia St. Charles, and Patty Hawkins.

Art Museum: Contemporary Quilts + Textiles; New England Quilt Museum; Texas Quilt Museum; and International Quilt Study Center & Museum. But what kind of quilts (or textiles) do they exhibit, and how frequently?

To form a cohesive exhibition program, these museums have an exhibition plan that outlines what they exhibit and a group or committee that reviews proposals from curators, artists, or other institutions. The plan may be in writing, or it may exist as a less formal policy or practice. However formal or informal the exhibition plan might be, museums are constantly re-evaluating their program, reacting to world events, changes in the art world, and expectations of attendees. All museums constantly look to present high-quality, relevant, and meaningful exhibitions that will attract and engage visitors.

Even with a well-defined plan, there are lots of possibilities for exhibits: historic or contemporary quilts, other textiles, or fiber art. Generally, each institution attempts

to strike a balance in its exhibition program. San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles (SJMQT) has an approximately 18-month cycle and tries to schedule exhibitions showing costumes or clothing, contemporary quilts and textiles, world textiles, and works from the collection. Recently, there has been more focus on exhibiting contemporary fiber art, especially by California artists, and developing exhibits with social-justice themes. Visions Art Museum: Contemporary Quilts + Textiles (Visions) exhibits exclusively contemporary art quilts and textiles created since 2000. It occasionally exhibits work made before 2000 from its permanent collection. It has two biennial juried exhibitions — *Quilt Visions* and *Interpretations* — with each exhibition running from October through mid-January.

The practice at New England Quilt Museum (NEQM) had been to mount two historical/antique quilts shows a year and two art/contemporary innovative quilt exhibitions. However, attendance figures indicate that

the contemporary shows are better attended, so in the future there will be a greater focus on displaying contemporary innovative and art quilts. Thematic exhibitions that explore a 200-year history of a specific aspect of quilting, such as silk or embroidery, have been popular and will continue.

The Texas Quilt Museum (TQM) exhibits quilts of all types. It also exhibits quilt-related works, such as quilted kimonos, and in conjunction with an exhibition may include journals by quilt artists. Nebraska's International Quilt Study Center & Museum (IQSCM) makes an effort to balance the work shown at any given time among American and international quilts, historical and contemporary quilts, and traditional and studio art quilts. It also presents several non-juried *Community Showcase* exhibitions each year in its auxiliary spaces.

Even with a well-defined plan, the exhibition program often reflects geography or curatorial interest. For example, Pamela Weeks, curator at NEQM, has been researching early quilt artists from New England, notably Molly Upton and Susan Hoffman. Upcoming exhibitions scheduled for the next several years will feature these artists. Assistant curator of exhibitions Jonathan Gregory curated an IQSCM exhibit based on the subject of his dissertation: Ernest Haight, a Nebraska engineer and quiltmaker. IQSCM recently mounted *The California Art Quilt Revolution: From the Summer of Love to the New Millennium*, an exhibition based on this author's master's thesis.

The decision makers

Each organization has a different method to evaluate proposed exhibitions and develop its exhibition program. SJMQT has an exhibition committee, chaired by the curator

of exhibitions, that includes the director, a board liaison, artists, and other staff and community members. The curator is the first screener for submitted proposals; the committee sees less than 10 percent of what is submitted for consideration. The curator also researches and proposes exhibition concepts and artists.

Visions has a curatorial committee of nine members, all of whom are quilt or textile artists. Some members also have advanced degrees in art or design, teach or lecture in the field, and all attend quilt, fiber, and textile exhibitions nationally and internationally. The committee creates the mix of exhibitions and decides which artists will be invited to exhibit. Each member of the committee acts as the managing curator for one or two exhibitions each year.

The curator at NEQM gathers proposals and with the executive director and collections manager, makes the final decisions. Similarly, the curator at TQM suggests exhibitions and exhibition concepts to the co-directors, who make the final decision about which shows to have at TQM. IQSCM recently revised its exhibitions proposal process and is standardizing its approach to considering which exhibitions to mount. A committee consisting of the museum's director, curators, and head of exhibitions makes the final decisions.

When evaluating exhibitions, all committees ask themselves: Does it meet the mission and exhibition plan? Is the work of the highest quality and aesthetic? Is there a compelling theme? Who is the audience for the exhibit?

Number of exhibitions

The number of exhibitions each museum presents each year varies. It is dictated by museum size, number of exhibition spaces or galleries, and

staff time. SJMQT presents between 16 and 20 exhibitions in five exhibit spaces; the main exhibitions change every 12 weeks and the FiberSpace community exhibitions change every six weeks.

Visions presents approximately 16 exhibitions at 12-week intervals; it has four new juried online exhibitions every year on the museum's website. NEQM mounts four major exhibitions each year in the Main Gallery, and four smaller ones in a classroom gallery. In addition, they exhibit six to 10 quilts to complement other exhibitions in the Donahue Permanent Collection Gallery. TQM has three gallery spaces where they present two or three different exhibitions every three months. With its new expanded facilities, IQSCM mounts approximately 30 exhibitions per year, not including traveling shows.

Solo shows

There is a wide range of policies about single-artist exhibitions. Some museums (NEQM and SJMQT) have had policies that discouraged or rarely presented solo shows. However, this policy seems to be changing everywhere. At SJMQT, there is an increasing focus on hosting single fiber artists in one-gallery exhibitions and commissioning site-specific installations. The 2017 schedule at Visions includes eight solo shows, and in 2018 six solo shows are planned. NEQM is planning a series of exhibitions to highlight the New England art quilt pioneers like Molly Upton and Susan Hoffman. TQM presents two or three single-artist shows per year. IQSCM's current calendar contains up to 50 percent single-artist exhibitions.

Antique vs. art quilts

With the exception of Visions, which exhibits quilts made before 2000 only

SAQA Museum Partners

In addition to museums detailed in this article, many highly respected venues welcome SAQA exhibitions. They include:

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum,
Tucson, Arizona

Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.

Erie Art Museum, Erie, Pennsylvania

Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science & Art, Scranton, Pennsylvania

George A. Spiva Center for the Arts
Joplin, Missouri

The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Grants Pass Museum of Art,
Grants Pass, Oregon

National Quilt Museum, Paducah, Kentucky

Ruth Funk Center for Textile Arts,
Melbourne, Florida

J. Wayne Stark Galleries at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

if they are part of the permanent collection, quilt artists compete with historical and antique quilts.

While the permanent collection at SJMQT will continue to play a role in the exhibition plan, the museum is trending toward presenting a greater number of contemporary art quilt and fiber-art exhibitions. Although NEQM traditionally presented an even split between antique quilts and contemporary quilts, lower attendance for the former has caused the organization to shift its focus to more contemporary and art quilts. The TQM endeavors to balance

exhibitions among antique quilts, traditional contemporary, and art quilts. The IQSCM also seeks a balance among historical, traditional contemporary, and art quilts.

Pre-curated exhibitions

Some museums rely heavily on exhibitions organized by other institutions such as SAQA, Quilt National, or companies that create exhibitions, educational collateral, and signage. These services can be attractive for museums that do not have a permanent collection or have limited staff to develop an exhibition concept, research potential artists and objects, and produce related educational materials.

Although pre-curated exhibitions can save staff time and stress, they come at a financial cost. Loan fees can range from \$500 to \$50,000, with the majority between \$5,000 and \$20,000. In addition, there are shipping costs that can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand dollars for an international exhibition.

In the past, more than 75 percent of SJMQT's exhibitions were curated in-house. Currently, SJMQT relies more on guest curators, pre-curated exhibitions, and collaborations with others (SAQA, *Fiber Art Now*, and Surface Design Association) to develop exhibitions. This model allows the museum to present visitors with different points of view and curatorial styles, and exhibit a broad range of fiber art.

Both NEQM and TQM originate about half of their exhibits and rely on pre-curated exhibitions for the other half. With its extensive permanent collection to draw from, IQSCM organizes about 80 percent of its exhibitions. Visions curatorial committee originates all its exhibitions, except for the two biennial juried exhibitions. Visions is the only museum included in this article that doesn't rely on pre-curated exhibitions.

All museums in this article (except Visions) have hosted at least one SAQA exhibition in the last few years. Due to staff changes and a need to incorporate more pre-curated exhibitions in the schedule, SJMQT presented its first SAQA show, *Earth Stories*, in late 2015. The museum is currently collaborating with SAQA to present *Guns: Loaded Conversations* in 2018; the SJMQT curator of exhibits will choose 10 additional artworks to include with the SAQA works juried into the exhibition. SAQA's *H2Oh!* will be at SJMQT in 2019 during the SAQA Conference in San Jose.

NEQM exhibited SAQA's exhibition *Seasonal Palette* and will host *H2Oh!*. Since opening, TQM has presented several international SAQA exhibits, including *Seasonal Palette* (2013), *People and Portraits* (2014), *Wild Fabrications* (2016), and *Tranquility* (2017), as well as *On the Fringe* from SAQA's Northern California/Northern Nevada region (2016). IQSCM presented *Layered Voices* in conjunction with SAQA's Conference there in 2017.

Follow the money

While some curators won't admit it, their directors want a financial blockbuster. Museums are focusing on what brings in visitors without compromising exhibition quality. They depend heavily on income from attendance to earn admission fees, store shoppers, and potential donors and members. Exhibition choices often reflect this need.

Space considerations

Museums are different sizes and shapes. Not all can gracefully handle a pre-curated exhibition with lots of artworks, large artworks, or three-dimensional pieces. A museum may be unable to host some pre-curated exhibitions or to hang all the selected works.

SAQA artist involvement

The SAQA exhibition committee and the director of global exhibitions work with museums all over the world to develop themes that appeal to those institutions and meet their missions and exhibition plans. Not all the themes may appeal to you, but getting SAQA members' works exhibited in museums is an important part of the organization's mission.

SAQA's global exhibitions travel for three years. If your work is juried into one of these exhibitions, you may not see it again for that time period while it makes the rounds. Space limitations in some museums mean that there must be limits on the size of individual works and the number of pieces in each SAQA exhibition. Both issues are challenges for the artists; the latter is also a challenge for jurors who must select from a large pool of entries.

Not all SAQA exhibitions are appropriate for all museum spaces or their missions. The next time you receive a SAQA call for entry or read about the various venues hosting SAQA exhibitions, hopefully you will understand a little more about why certain themes are selected or the sizes and number of works are limited.▼

[Author's Note: I am deeply grateful to my colleagues Beth Smith, executive director, Visions Art Museum: Contemporary Quilts + Textiles; Pamela Weeks, curator, New England Quilt Museum; Sandra Sider, Texas Quilt Museum; and Lydia Neuman, head of exhibitions, International Quilt Study Center & Museum, for the valuable information they provided for this article.]

Nancy Bavor was recently appointed executive director of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles. Since 2013, she was the museum's curator of collections, also serving as exhibits coordinator from 2014-2016.

Mistyfuse as Muse
2 Artists
2 Techniques

Laurie Russman manipulates Mistyfuse fabric to create texture and dimension.
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