

WHAT IS AN ART QUILT?

The Art Quilt Association

AQuA members have approved the following definition of an art quilt for the purposes of our group.

An art quilt is an original exploration of a concept or idea rather than the handing down of a “pattern”. It experiments with textile manipulation, color, texture and/or a diversity of mixed media. An Art Quilt often pushes quilt world boundaries. An Art Quilt should consist predominately of fiber or a fiber-like material with one or multiple layers which are held together with stitches or piercing of the layers.

The following guidelines are an attempt to elaborate on the above definition in an effort to help members create suitable works and make AQuA the best organization it can be.

- “Cheater” cloth: where one uses commercial cloth without altering other than perhaps by adding stitch or bead, would not usually be acceptable. Motifs taken from commercial cloth and used as elements in your own design would usually meet the definition of an art piece. Flower prints cut from batik fabric and attached here and there on quilts doesn't seem to be "cheater cloth."
- Patterns: Someone else's pattern such as you might buy or make in a workshop. Your own original work started in a workshop would qualify but you should generally credit the teacher for her technique. Any work that relies heavily on a teacher's technique should be credited to them as well.
- Photos: Your own photo worked into fiber art would be original. A photo of my grandfather is mine to use. Your husband's photos belong to you. Does a design from a commercial photo constitute an original art quilt? Dilys Fronk does a series using gates. She collected photographs of existing gates in her travels. She then interpreted these photos and made her gate design. An art quilt should challenge you; you learn from your mistakes; you learn by creating your own composition. So what's the answer on commercial photos? What about Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup Cans? This topic is still open to discussion.
- Altered works: Sometimes “altered” works would be an art quilt and other times not. When we use someone else's quilt for a background, this would be using ‘altered’ works. We're not using the original work as our art quilt; we are using it as an element in our design.
- Work can be “inspired by” something but should not be a copy. Your work would need to be more than decorating a Van Gogh sunflower print.
- Spoofs: Examples: the mustache on the "Mona Lisa", or adding yourself to a picture of famous women artists, or substituting something for the pitchfork in the American Gothic picture.