

United States Embassy • Islamabad
Art in Embassies Program



**The Roots of Racism:
Ignorance and Fear**

{Cover Illustration}

Shirley Jo Rimkus Falconer, *Peace Over Hate*, art quilt,
50 1/2 x 50 1/2 in. (128.3 x 128.3 cm)

United States Embassy Islamabad

Roots of Racism: Ignorance and Fear

An Exhibition of Contemporary
American Quilts in the Residence of the
United States Ambassador to Pakistan

Art in Embassies Program

The Art In Embassies Program

The Art in Embassies Program (AIEP) is a unique blend of art and diplomacy, politics and culture. Regardless of the medium, style, or subject matter, art transcends barriers of language and provides the means for AIEP to achieve its mission: to promote dialogue through the international language of art that leads to mutual respect and understanding between diverse cultures.

Modestly conceived in 1964, this visual diplomacy initiative has evolved into a sophisticated program that curates exhibitions, managing and exhibiting more than 3,500 original works of loaned art by United States citizens. The work is displayed in the public rooms of some 170 U.S. Embassy Residences and diplomatic missions worldwide. These exhibitions, with their diverse themes and content, silently yet persuasively represent one of the most important principles of our democracy: freedom of expression. The art is a great source of pride to U.S. ambassadors, assisting them in multi-functional outreach to the host country's educational, cultural, business, and diplomatic communities.

Works of art exhibited through the program encompass a variety of media and styles, ranging from eighteenth century colonial portraiture to contemporary glass sculpture. They are obtained through the generosity of lending sources that include U.S. museums, galleries, artists, institutions, corporations, and private collectors. In viewing the exhibitions, the thousands of guests who visit United States Embassy Residences each year have the opportunity to learn about our nation—its history, customs, values, and aspirations—by experiencing firsthand the international lines of communication know to us all as art.

The Art in Embassies Program is proud to lead this global effort to present the artistic accomplishments of the people of the United States. We invite you to visit the AIEP web site, <http://aiep.state.gov>, which features on-line versions of all exhibitions worldwide and hyperlinks with artists and lenders.

Introduction

Roots of Racism: Ignorance and Fear

The world has changed a great deal since these quilts began their journey of transformation in September of 2000. An exhibition that started as a way to raise awareness of racism and focus attention on it evolved into a six city, and now international, tour of hope. Wherever the quilts have gone they have been greeted by viewers who expressed feelings of joy and faith that, as a country, we were moving ever faster toward breaking down racial barriers—both overt and covert.

The task of the exhibition was to get people talking openly about racism in their own environments. This was accomplished in every city in which the quilts were displayed—Memphis and Knoxville, Tennessee; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Ft. Wayne, Indiana; Houston, Texas; and Atlanta, Georgia. As people became involved with the messages conveyed by the artists, they expressed the resolve to move these concepts forward with a positive hope for mankind.

In Memphis, where race has remained a volatile issue, feelings and stories of hurt were shared with others who were willing to be there and listen. In Knoxville, children from divergent cultures, inspired by the quilts, came together to create collaborative works of art. In Ft. Wayne, a city with a then-raw racial wound, the exhibition brought together a coalition that helped the city begin to heal. In Houston, 50,000 quilters from all over the world took the messages back to their families. And in Atlanta, the quilts were the catalyst that brought together several social-betterment groups, which organized discussions across racial lines aimed at bringing down the barriers.

And now the quilts continue their work on a global level with messages to the World—racism doesn't work and we're all in this together.

Susan Lumsden
Guest Curator

Christine Adams

Rockville, Maryland

Shades of Diversity

Moving from Pennsylvania to Maryland when I was in junior high [school] was a pivotal experience for me. Because my dad was in the military the family traveled all over the United States. By the time I was in the seventh grade, I had been in ten schools. That move made more of an impression on me than the others. I was growing up and noticing the changes in my environment more. Once, when riding a public bus, the driver stopped and made my friend move to the back of the bus. When I sat with her, he again stopped the bus and insisted I move up front. Instead, we got off the bus. We were two giggling girls who thought we had been reprimanded for laughing and carrying on too much. It wasn't until later that I discovered what had really happened that day. Those who were black were relegated to the back of the bus. While my friend no longer must sit at the back of the bus, prejudice remains.

Thinking about diversity, I remembered a comment my youngest son made one evening at dinner. He said that his friend, Tyree, was beautiful and had shiny brown, smooth skin. That image was the beginning of *Shades of Diversity*, an effort to celebrate the beautiful surface differences and connections among the people in today's world. ●



Shades of Diversity

Hand made and hand dyed paper, silk, cotton, lamé, and beads
40 x 40 in. (101.6 x 101.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Rockville, Maryland

Christine Adams

Rockville, Maryland

Rejoice!

In 1995 I was one of nearly one hundred artists invited to create wall quilts in celebration of *Jerusalem 3000*. That exhibition traveled worldwide for the next year and a half. *Rejoice* is one of several pieces from a *Celebration* series made in response to a compelling need to celebrate all life, all people. This quilt features raised hands in many skin tones. Ecumenism, diversity, and the world's potpourri of dissimilarities and contrasts, are all a part of my message for harmony. The central motif is handmade paper torn to represent a map of Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Superimposed on the map are a five-pointed star and a six-pointed [star] – another message for harmony. I created the quilt using free motion quilting, appliqué, hand made and hand dyed paper, silk, cotton, lamé, and beads to convey a message of international friendship and joy. Without conscious effort on my part, much of my work has involved some sort of healing process, whether it be of the spirit or the body. ●



Rejoice!

Cotton fabric and rayon thread
18 x 18 in. (45.7 x 45.7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Rockville, Maryland

Joy Allen

Memphis, Tennessee

Yin/Yang Tango

I started this piece as a challenge to the yin/yang symbol in which the dark and negative is female and the light and positive is male. I wanted to show my dancers emerging out of the restrictions of symbolism. As I worked on it, I realized that I was portraying the most taboo of romantic relationships – the Black man with the White woman. The piece became for me a deeper statement on symbolism, on the symbols and beliefs we attach to skin color. We have a man and woman dancing here, but what we see is a Black man and a White woman (oh, my!), and we attach all kinds of prejudices to the sight. The dancers are pressed up tight against each other, going through the complicated steps of their tango—but they are watching their backs.

The figures are hand sewn and the piece is hand quilted. I usually work pretty quickly once I'm inspired by an idea. When you look closely at the work, you will see stitches both small and large. I like to think of the visible seams and stitches as symbolic of the patched together nature of our lives – all of our compromises, bruises, and scars made visible. We are tightly stitched in some places and frayed badly in others. Parts of our lives are smooth and firm, other parts we are unable to hold together. ●



Yin/Yang Tango, 2000

Mixed media
21 x 21 x 12 in. (53.3 x 53.3 x 30.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Memphis, Tennessee

Jan Brashears

Cumming, Georgia

Emotions

Emotions is illustrative of some of my darkest emotions at one point in time. When this piece was done, I was feeling anger at exclusion, embarrassed, and frustrated by my predicament. I worked in a frenzy, just getting pieces from the table, treating them with paint or whatever, and placing them on the piece until they worked. The work shows such power and anger that I find the quilt to be frightening, and try not to examine it too closely.

The situation that triggered this piece caused me to be excluded, humiliated, and tearful.

No longer could I belong to a group that otherwise might have been my peers. All of this was triggered by another person, a hateful person who felt, and said to me, that I was disruptive (I whistled subconsciously while I worked) and did not belong in the group. People looked at me strangely and seemed to agree with the person speaking. I moved into another room and did this piece. I could not believe how angry I had become.

Although I am white, I felt this piece would exemplify the feelings that I have heard verbalized by my friends who are not white. To be excluded from a group or an activity for any reason is sad. To be dismissed summarily for a small reason is mean. To feel uncertain and lack confidence because of what someone has said is unpardonable.

In examining our "white" history regarding how we have handled others of different colors, I cannot imagine the depth of their sorrows. To be considered different simply because we are born different is unnecessary. [People of] different cultures have the same basic requirements in life: food, shelter, love, and community. How can anything be any simpler? ●



Emotions

Fabric/quilt
48 x 34 in. (121.9 x 96.3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Cumming, Georgia

Rosemary Claus-Gray

Doniphan, Missouri

Cultural Centers

Cultural Centers uses various ethnic fabrics to suggest that there are diverse cultures in America today. The large hexagon with the sequin boundary marker represents those of the white establishment who use money and power to maintain the status quo. In the process, they may exploit others.

Exploitation is a root of racism.

The square with the cross represents all religions, with the good they do shown by the sheer, glowing fabric on the periphery of the block. The block itself, however, has the universal "no" symbol in gold sequins, and is veiled in black tulle. Unfortunately, the leaders of the church can, at times, be persuaded not to see or intervene in the major social problems of our times. Thus, the church has had little influence on racism. This block speaks to the evil that appears to be present when racism occurs.

Evil is a root of racism.

The radiating string pieced background emerges from various cultural centers, and clashes with others. These lines represent humans from various cultures who occasionally clash with their neighbors, at times, with lethal results.

Fear, ignorance and violence are roots of racism.

It is my hope in creating this quilt that the viewer will be more aware of the pervasive problem of racism, and be willing to make changes to ease the problem. One by one, we can make a difference. ●



Cultural Centers, 2000

Ethnic fabrics, sequins, tulle, and string
60 x 50 in. (152.4 x 127.0 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Doniphan, Missouri

Rosemary Claus-Gray

Doniphan, Missouri

When the Slave Traders Came

When the Slave Traders Came portrays African culture as rich and complete prior to the slave traders' arrival. The mask represents an honored person in the tribal society. The black and white with red represents the conflict and violence that occurred with the arrival of the white traders, forever changing the tribal ways. The slave traders diluted the existing culture through rape, kidnapping, and murder. ●



When the Slave Traders Came, 2000

Fiber

19 x 17 1/2 in. (48.3 x 44.5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Doniphan, Missouri

Claudia Comay

Oakland, California

We Are All Made up of Bones and Dreams

Racism is a subject that is hard to approach on any level, and especially in a visual way.

And yet it seems so vital that we speak of it and its injustices.

My quilt represents, in essence, a week, a lifetime. Because racism knows no boundaries of time, place, or family. Each quilt speaks with the symbols of colors to express anger, helplessness, loneliness, rigidity, and segregation. Hope is represented by yellow sleeves and quilting thread, which breaks out and floats and also holds the quilt (and us) up.

I really believe that communication and understanding are the key to better relations. My hope is that this quilt exhibition will open up new avenues of communication, and that the many voices of the quilts will be heard by many that, until now, have not paid much attention. We need to hear and care for each other as a nation, and I think that the people viewing this exhibition will see how important this is. I welcomed the opportunity to be a part of it, and have worked hard to make a piece that expressed my feelings and my hopes. ●



We Are All Made up of Bones and Dreams

Cotton quilt
24 x 42 in. (61.0 x 106.7 cm) each
Courtesy of the artist, Oakland, California

Barbara Cordio

Bailey Island, Maine

Common Ground

When I started this piece I was fed up with the situation around me. I saw, repeatedly, instances in which our children were not being treasured. Black children were not receiving an education that could help them be a strong part of our future.

We have to teach everyone! They are our future.

There is much we have in common and can share. We are in this together. Treasure the children—each one. ●



Common Ground

Fabric quilt

46 1/2 x 56 in. (118.1 x 142.2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Bailey Island, Maine

Deanna M. Davis

Piedmont, California

Can we all get along?

People,

I just want to say, you know,

Can we all get along?

Can we get along?

Can we stop making it, making it horrible for the older people and the kids?

But to go on like this,

It's not right.

It's just not right.

We can get along here, we can all get along.

We're all stuck here for a while. Let's just try to work it out.

—Rodney King * asks for calm, May 1, 1992, Los Angeles, California

Thirty years ago I saw Boston's ghetto burning in riots of rage but can no longer recall the event triggering that upheaval. I made this quilt in the hope that the Los Angeles riots would be remembered so that those remembering would contribute to making a difference. This quilt was made in 1992 and has been shown widely in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Oklahoma. The vivid blues have now begun to fade a little toward lavender, which to me makes the piece even more significant. Time continues to pass and still we struggle. ●

* The victim of racial profiling, Rodney King is the African American motorist beaten by Los Angeles police officers during the course of a routine traffic stop. A bystander captured the incident on videotape, which resulted in riots pitting the city's African American community against the predominately white leadership of the Police Department.



Can we all get along? 1992

Quilt

47 x 36 in. (119.4 x 91.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Piedmont, California

Judith Dierkes

Memphis, Tennessee

Don't it make your brown eyes blue?

Both of my grandmothers quilted. I am continuing that tradition with a contemporary twist. Blending traditional quilting techniques with contemporary materials, I create what I call quilted paintings. Creating is a joyful, spiritual experience and I am grateful for the opportunity to share the products of that experience with others.

Don't it make your brown eyes blue? was made especially for this exhibition. The piece began as an expression of an inner vision that I have been experiencing. Next I started thinking about how vision is connected to racism. Hearing a discussion about Toni Morrison's [book] *The Bluest Eye*, I remembered the song title *Don't it make your brown eyes blue?* At that point, the *Dresden Plate* fancy quilt pattern became an eye. I stuffed the "eyes" using a trapunto technique so they would pop out of the background. I like to take traditional quilting techniques and use them in a contemporary manner. ●



Don't it make your brown eyes blue? 2000

Acrylic, hand quilted cotton
34 x 17 1/2 in. (86.4 x 44.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Memphis, Tennessee

Judith Dierkes

Memphis, Tennessee

Cultural Diversity

Cultural Diversity is one piece in a series that I created using puzzles as the theme. Each piece was something that puzzled me. In this one, I was concerned with the values of color. In a painting, black and white change the value of any color. Puzzles are composed of interlocking pieces. Societies are composed of interacting people. How dull the world would be if we were all the same shape and color! ●



Cultural Diversity, 1999

Quilt, acrylic on handquilted cotton
14 x 12 in. (35.6 x 30.5 cm)

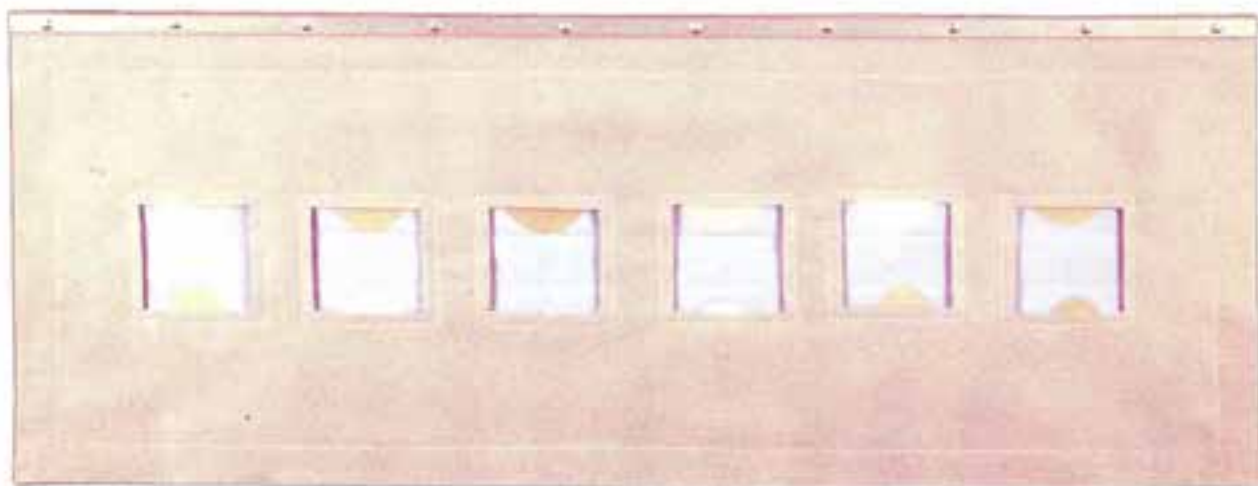
Courtesy of the artist, Memphis, Tennessee

Kristin Dukay

Seattle, Washington

Color Has Nothing to Do with Egg Quality

This soft book is part of a series of quilts based on children's themes and constructed with felt, vinyl, and metal hardware. The inspiration for the quilt was an anecdote related in Beverly Tatum's book, *Why Are All the Black Children Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Beverly's young son noticed one day that eggshells were both white and brown; she seized the opportunity to crack the eggs open and show her son that the eggs all looked the same inside. Researching this idea for the exhibition, I found the perfect quote about eggs on the American Egg Board's web site: "Egg shell and yolk color may vary, but color has nothing to do with egg quality, flavor, nutritive value, cooking characteristics or shell thickness." This quote appears on the "fried egg" side of the quilt. I decided to make a soft book out of the quilt to underscore the teaching/learning aspects of racism. ●



Color Has Nothing to Do with Egg Quality (obverse and reverse)

Felt, vinyl, and metal hardware
18 3/4 x 48 in. (47.6 x 121.9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Seattle, Washington

Alyson Annette Eshelman

Hamilton, Ohio

Hide-n-Seek

Building walls of exclusivity around ourselves shields us from ourselves, others, and God, destroying the potential for relationships in society. Because of these walls, society is kept from being what God intended it to be. We look through [the lens of] biases and ignorance and live as though the other [person] is insignificant. No matter our ethnic origin, we all have an emptiness inside that can only be filled with God. *Hide-n-Seek* explores these walls in hopes of allowing God to break through, fill us, and change us so that the walls may come down, all may be accepted, and our differences may be celebrated.

The bulk of my work focuses on interdependence and interconnections indicating relationships both with God and His people. In Western society, independence is celebrated with vigor. To the contrary, God calls His people to live in dependence on him and to deny themselves. Within God's universal church, we stand in unison, permanently bonded by the Spirit of God. The relationships are the result of our mutual connection to Christ. The work conveys these dynamics with the understanding that there is something both bigger and better than self. ●



Hide-n-Seek

Discharged cotton, machine appliquéd and quilted
33 3/4 x 35 1/2 in. (85.7 x 90.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Hamilton, Ohio

Shirley Jo Rimkus Falconer

Hillsboro, Oregon

Peace Over Hate

Each person must see over the horizon, to rise to the top, and fly with their feathered friends. Our feathered friends warn us, bad things happen to them. But it's worth the risk to be free.

As a former nurse, I've taken from Crow, Avery, Hopkins, Meyers, McDowell, and James, etc. They give me the courage to say things that are bothering me. So now I'm speaking up; racism, taxes, environmental issues, and that old glass ceiling are things to be dealt with. I also speak about waterfalls, dancing cows, and who knows what else. As a quilter turned to quilt art, I think I am finally doing the thing that means the most to me, ●



Peace Over Hate, 2000

Art quilt

50 1/2 x 50 1/2 in. (128.3 x 128.3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Hillsboro, Oregon

Marilyn Felber

Berkeley, California

Illumination

"You (each of you) are a whole universe hidden in a sack of blood."

—*Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–73)*

Illumination, the quilt, is simple: the loss of any part impoverishes the whole. Each block is a whole universe. If I look closely enough, I see the extraordinary beauty of each part. Which parts could be removed without harming the quilt? At what point would the quilt cease being exciting and strong, cease being an artistic whole?

The root of racism is ignorance.

(God looked on EVERYTHING that S/He had made and saw that it was good.) We know; we just forget sometimes how it all goes together, and lose our way because we can't see clearly or are afraid. So we recover as quickly as we can and bravely take responsibility for the consequences of our forgetting. ●



Illumination, 2000

Pieced cotton fabric, quilted
74 x 74 in. (188 x 188 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Berkeley, California

Deborah Fell

Urbana, Illinois

Silence Broken

In the 1950s, in a mountainous region of Hunan, China, the secret Nu Shu language was collected and translated by feminist Shi-huei Cheng. A book entitled *The Tao of Women* by Pamela K. Metz and Jacqueline L. Tobin (Humanics Publishing Group, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995) celebrates women's voices from the past to the present using a modern day version of Nu Shu. According to the authors, the eternal – oftentimes silent – language of women is “a thread that can serve as a guide through the labyrinth of life's unfolding passages, guiding us along the path walked by so many before us. *The Tao of Women* is woven with this thread.” The secret language and this art quilt celebrate the silence broken.

This art quilt is a visual celebration of the silence broken by these women. The Nu Shu symbols used in this piece have been chosen as a personal Tao of my life and dreams. The blocks are see-through to represent the strong connection between women; even those standing behind the piece can be seen, thus keeping the connection going in spite of the barriers. The fragile structure is pieced together by leather, emphasizing the dichotomy of the language and its setting. The straight line quilting represents the imprisonment of the women who created this language. Much of the fabric chosen for the “batting” of the quilt is lamé and sequins – the fabric is bright and shiny and is intended to be fabric of celebration. The block fabric is hand-dyed and the colors chosen are varied. The top of the quilt is variegated velvet.

“Remember the women who came before and the daughters who follow.” (*The Tao of Women*, page 3)

Dedicated to my friend Jane Marriott, who taught me about connections. ●

All images in the quilt are used with permission from the authors.



Silence Broken

Hand dyed fabric, velvet, leather, lamé, and sequins
64 x 44 in. (162.6 x 111.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Urbana, Illinois

Almerphy Frank-Brown

Seattle, Washington

Injustice

This is my attempt to render a part of America's underbelly in historical and contemporary images. In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, thousands of Americans were lynched by mobs without benefit of trial. By extension, the U.S. today has over 2,000,000 citizens in jail and prison, the highest proportion of any country in history. Blacks are 8.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than white people. Gay bashing, as evidenced by the murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie [Wyoming in 1998], and other hate crimes, are on the rise. While the country is enjoying a strong economy, I feel it is also necessary to examine some of its less savory aspects. ●



Injustice, 2000

Quilt
62 x 45 in. (157.5 x 114.3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Seattle, Washington

Marlene Glickman

Clearwater, Florida

I Have a Dream

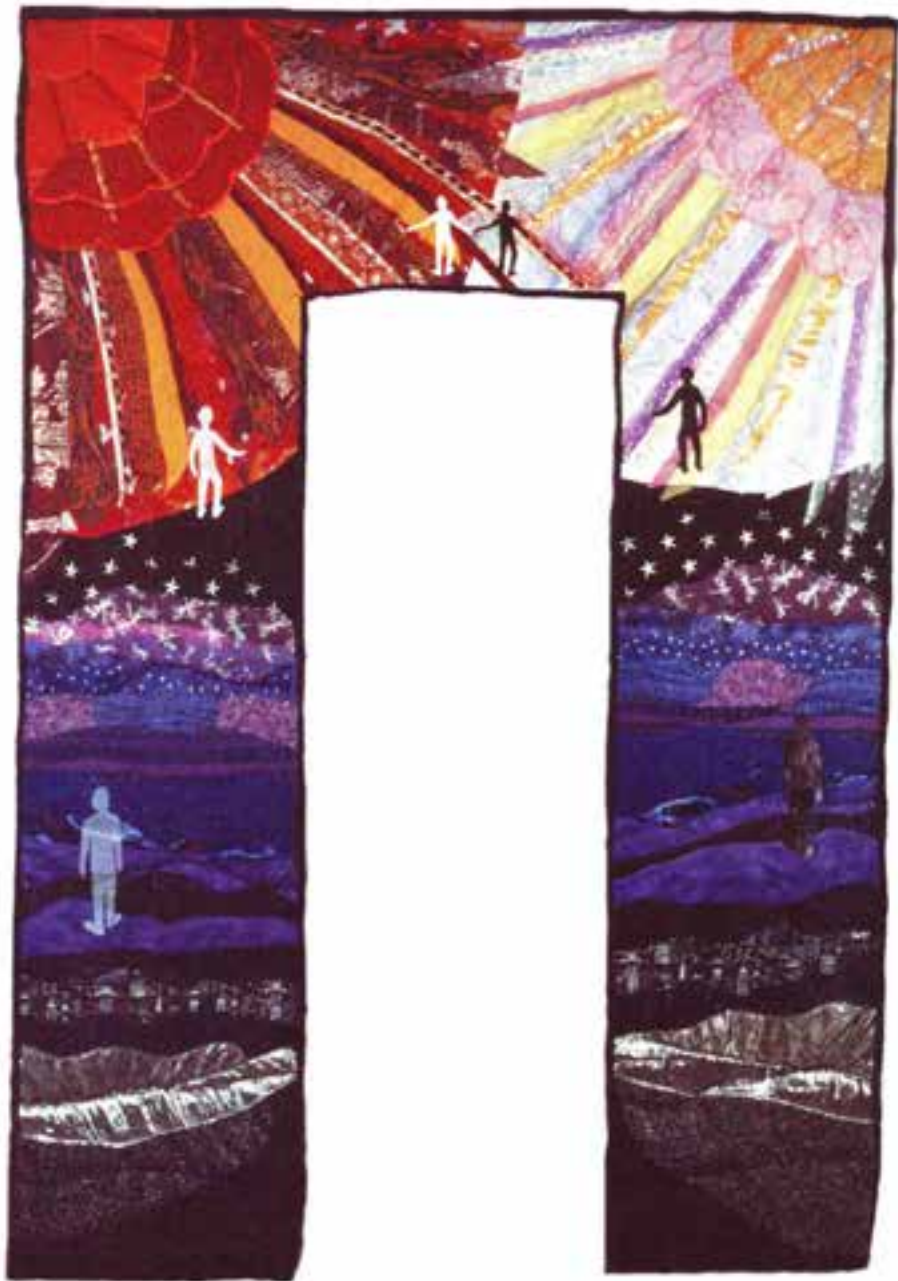
Martin Luther King's speech, "I Have a Dream," sets the goal for all people to hold hands as they walk through life together, helping one another with the knowledge that all people are created equal.

This doorway asks that you make a commitment to this dream and share your own dream of the future of mankind and what you want to do to make that happen.

For me, art is a way of reviving people's spirits, hopes, and dreams. Fiber is tactile as well as visual. So is life. My intention is to create something to enjoy and to remind us that life can become better with our participation. Having dreams is vital to being alive. I want my art to give people the hope that it is possible to make dreams become reality.

When I create an artwork, I once again assert my aliveness and willingness to communicate.

I welcome whatever a person wants to contribute to that artwork. Please add to the *Doorway of Dreams* by writing your dream on the paper provided, and placing it in one of the pockets provided on one side of the quilted doorway. ●



I Have a Dream, 2000

Fabric
93 x 66 in. (236.2 x 167.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Clearwater, Florida

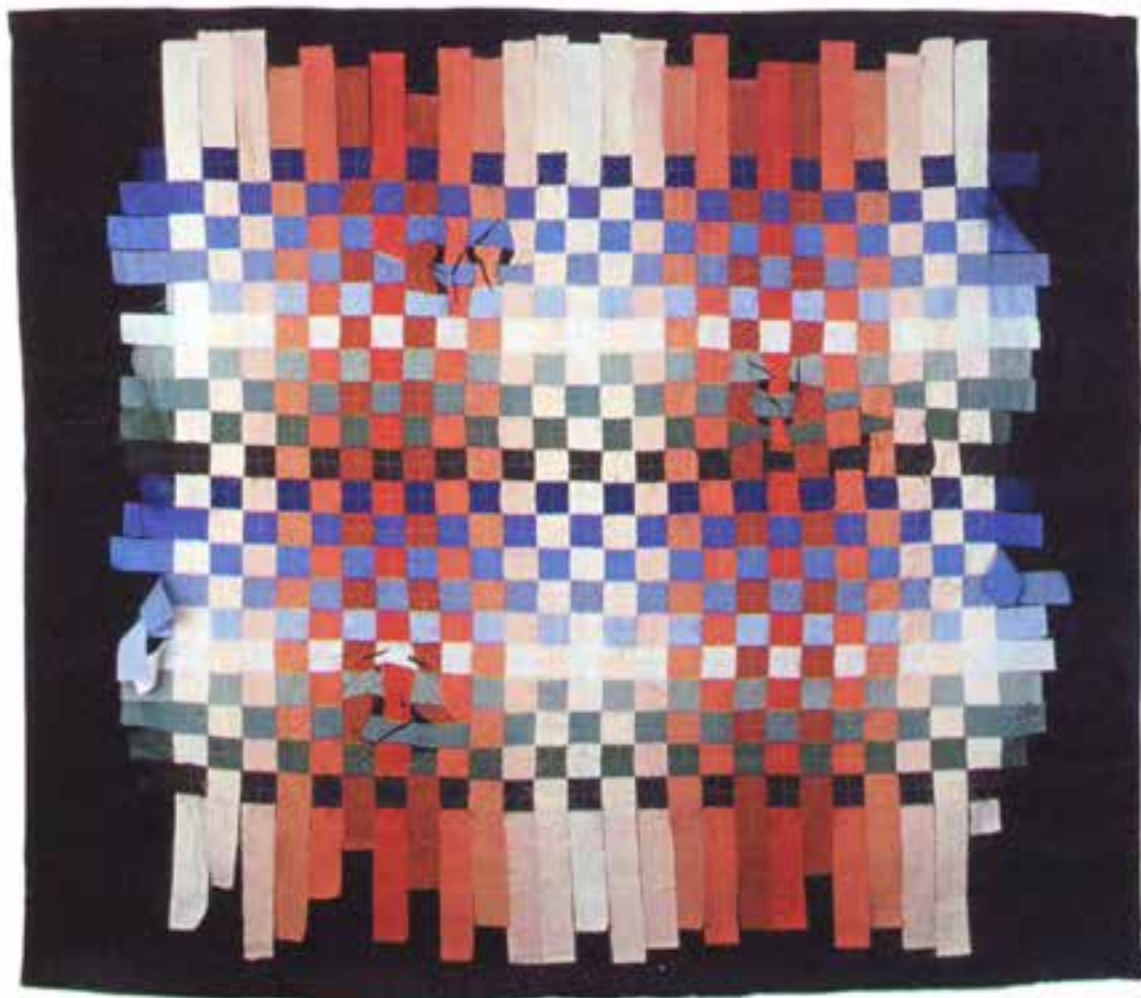
Mary Beth Goodman

Brainard, New York

Warp, Weft, Rift

Racism affects our day-to-day life on a community and world level.

The disruptions caused by hatred and bigotry may appear localized but are felt beyond the individual act. ●



Warp, Weft, Rift

Quilt
50 1/2 x 46 1/2 in. (128.3 x 118.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Brainard, New York

Louise D. Hall

Sarasota, Florida

Racism Is Woven Throughout the Fabric of Our Lives

I have attempted to convey through my design that what has transpired in the past regarding racism does affect us all, to some degree. It is up to each of us to overcome these hurdles to create harmony in our lives together.

I originally planned on depicting links of chain winding throughout my wall hanging with pictures of past events, with the title: *As Long As There Is Racism, We Are All in Chains*. Then I decided to read up on the subject for more input about past events. By the time I finished reading and taking notes, I decided to change to an informative piece. I learned a great deal more than I had known about racism. I want to share this knowledge with others.

If a person was not there at the time these events took place, he could not experience nor appreciate the suffering involved, or even be aware.

In my youth, I personally experienced minority discrimination: religious and national heritage; plus I had a father who ranted and raged about the 'niggers,' daily. I have tried to be sensitive to other people's feelings and not be prejudiced.

In depicting a 'woven fabric' theme, I selected fabric strips that relate to the printed text. ●



Racism Is Woven Throughout the Fabric of Our Lives, 2000

Woven fabric
 66 x 46 in. (167.6 x 116.8 cm)
 Courtesy of the artist, Sarasota, Florida

Kianga Jinaki Hanif

Riviera Beach, Florida

A Good Man Gone

It had been on my mind a long time to do a piece that addressed the senseless violence that pervades our society as a result of racism, ignorance, and fear. This quilt attempts to address the impact of that violence not only on the victim, but his family, and the world community.

The first and second panels of the quilt illustrate the words to the song *Johnny Was* by Bob Marley. Every time I hear that song I feel it very, very deeply. Even though I have not lost anyone in my immediate family to violence, as a mother of four I can empathize with the devastation it causes. At the bottom of the second panel I tried to list all the words that I've heard or read in the media, over the years, that describe these innocent victims.

The final panel pays homage to the March of Empty Shoes that occurs annually in our nation's capital. The first time I heard of this protest [against the shooting deaths of children] I could just visualize the thousands of shoes silently pleading with us to STOP THE MADNESS. ●



A Good Man Gone

Mixed media: nylon, cotton, tennis shoes, doll, and paint

72 x 36 in. (182.9 x 91.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Riviera Beach, Florida

Gloria Higgins

Mountain View, California

Leave the Label on the Box

One morning, I was thinking about what I could possibly have to say about racism. As a white, upper middle class woman I didn't think racism affected me much. Still I knew that I wanted to say something. I started brainstorming and I hit upon the word "labels." A flood of labels came to me; some said to me, some I'd heard others say, some I have said—some common, almost idiomatic, phrases. I felt sad that so many came to me so easily, I felt devalued by some, and guilty for having bought into others. I was reminded that we are all connected. Any time anyone is dehumanized by a label, humanity as a whole is affected.

My original idea for the quilt was to have labels pinned on to figures, but I felt that was too negative. When a friend suggested the obvious, that the quilt could be more about not pinning labels on to people, I was elated. What a relief! What a lesson about taking negative things and making them positive. It has become common practice to make labels ineffective by claiming them. I invite you to write a label that you have used or has been used on you.

Then leave it on the box. That's where labels belong. ●



Leave the Label on the Box, 2000

Textile

60 x 45 in. (152.4 x 114.3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Mountain View, California

Sara Newberg King

Paducah, Kentucky

Who Lost the Plan for the Brotherhood of Man?

There is a plan for brotherhood so the important word is WHO
'Cause I am thinking it could be ME and maybe could be YOU.

Whoever it is that lost it, and I think the word is plural,
Needs to come forward now to mend this troubled world.

We need to join our puzzle pieces to recover a worldwide plan.
We need to join our faces to look at the brotherhood of man.

A brotherhood of friendship, a brotherhood of love
Would help every one of us reach our potential from above.

So let's all know that we are the WHO, it is I who must find the plan.
If we will join together, we can begin to understand ... ●



Who Lost the Plan for the Brotherhood of Man?

Shibori quilt
45 x 22 in. (114.3 x 55.9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Paducah, Kentucky

Brigitte Brenda Lehl

Brackenheim-Meimsheim, Germany

Hatshepsut – WHY?

I was a tour leader in Egypt and had been living over a year in Thebes/West. [Of all the historic sites] I loved most Hatshepsut's temple. When terrorists shot tourists there, I was so shocked that I planned a quilt about hate and murder. I wrote of my frustration in a line around the border of the quilt. The sharp contrast between the beautiful love story of Hatshepsut and the architect of her temple, her lover Senemut, and the terrorists' hatred was appalling. When will people learn to solve problems without killing and hurting each other? ●



Hatshepsut - WHY?

Quilt

48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Brackenheim-Meimsheim, Germany

Susan Leslie Lumsden

Thayer, Missouri

Value of Diversity

When a society excludes others it becomes a study of tone-on-tone. How boring!

My life has been made much richer by learning about many cultures—often through their festivals, foods, fashions, and folk tales. These are wonderful bridges that allow us to share our wealth of culture.

Splurge on them! ●



Value of Diversity

Cotton fabrics, rayon, and metallic threads

28 1/2 x 28 1/2 (72.4 x 72.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Thayer, Missouri

Susan Leslie Lumsden

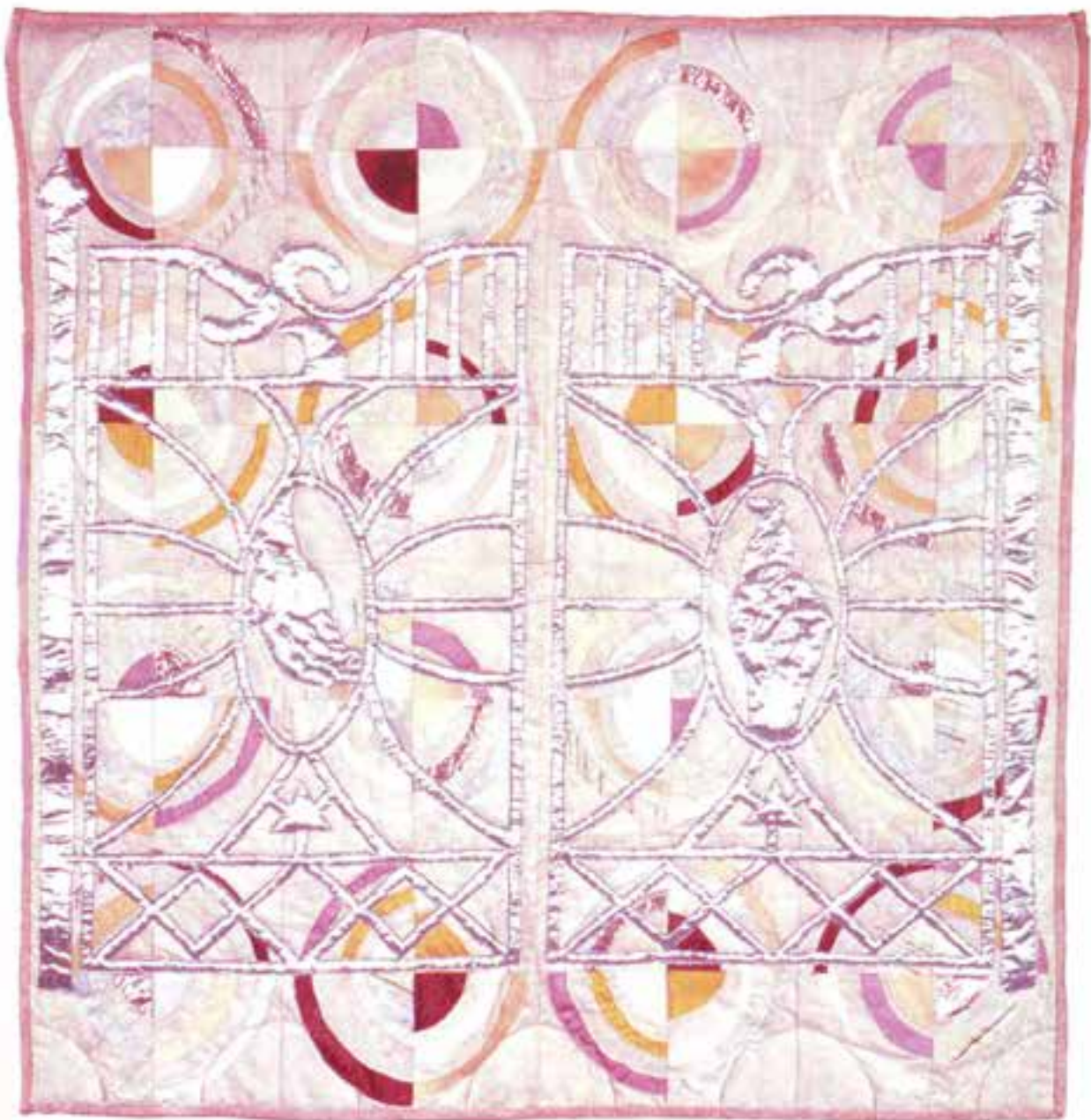
Thayer, Missouri

Whites Only—No Coloreds

No matter how fancy or elaborate a gate may be, its purpose is still to keep people out. In western society most often it has been whites excluding "others."

Sometimes help is offered but at a bitter price—the loss of dignity, the loss of personal growth, the loss of the individual's ability to survive, the loss of hope for the future. All these "costs" diminish the person.

Help, when offered, should be in a form that builds a person's self esteem, strengthens his ability to survive, and allows hope for a prosperous future. ●



Whites Only—No Coloreds

Fiber, cotton with Mylar/nylon appliqué, cotton, rayon, and metallic threads

28 x 28 in. (71.1 x 71.1 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Thayer, Missouri

Susan Leslie Lumsden

Thayer, Missouri

Closed Society

Any group that has been stung enough will tend to close ranks and exclude those who could hurt it. In the South especially, I feel this has occurred often with African Americans, and in the West with Native Americans. But when a society isolates itself, it is missing out on the opportunity to share the wealth of its culture with those who could learn from it and it is halting the opportunity to learn from others.

It is time to get past the hurt and the blame. It is time for all of us to be a full part of America and the world today. With over six billion people on the Earth today—separation is not the answer. ●



Closed Society

Fiber, artist dyed cotton, and cotton yarn
28 x 28 in. (71.1 x 71.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Thayer, Missouri

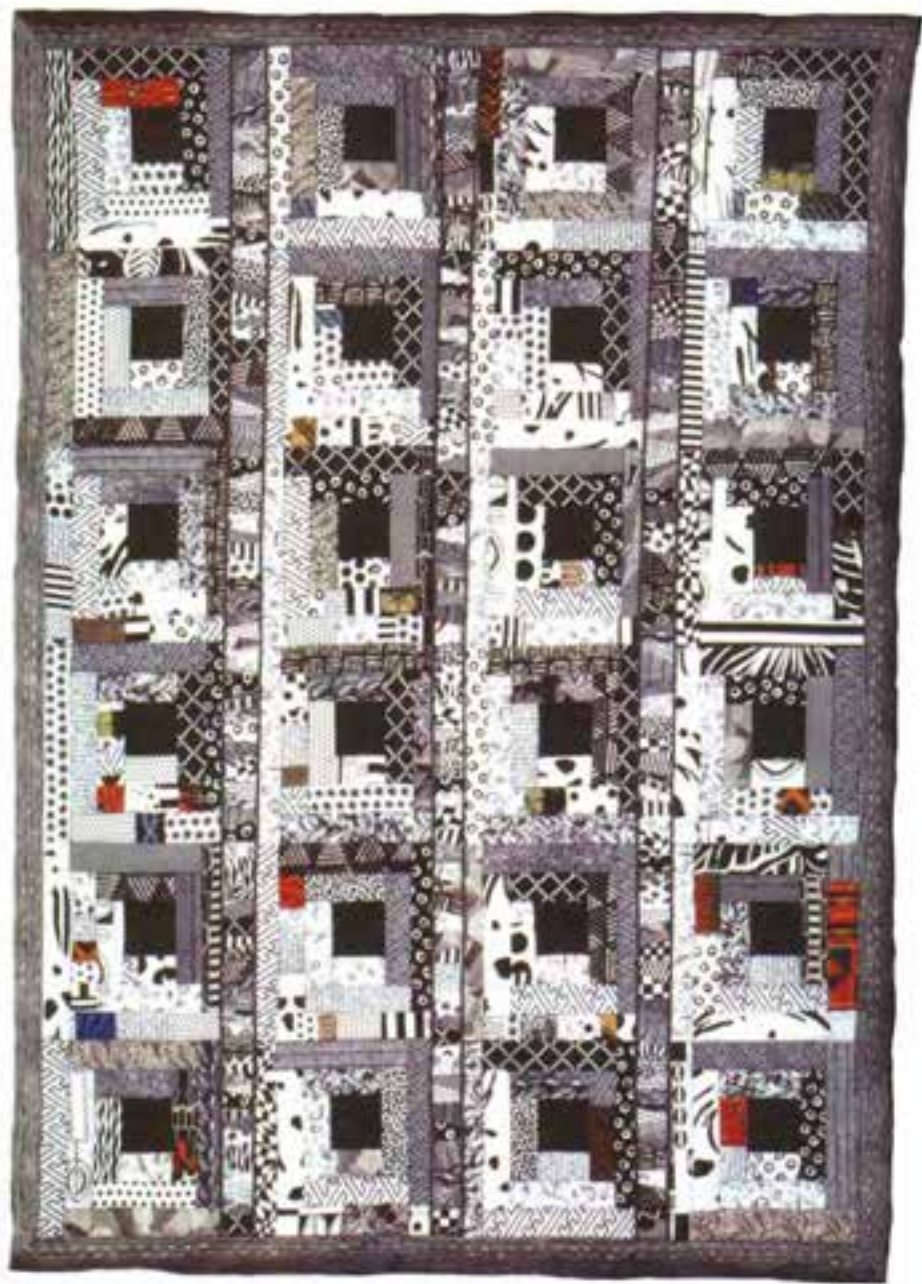
Vimala McClure

Boulder, Colorado

Please Stay in Your Box

[diptych with *Unity in Diversity*]

This quilt is the first in the diptych. It is about black-and-white thinking. The little bits of color represent the different cultures isolated in their little places where the majority feels safe from them. The whole quilt is structured to be very closed, structured, the way that a racist may think. The pity is the racist mentality, though. The back of the quilt, a beautiful African fabric I got in Senegal, shows what we want to face the wall where we can't see it. But if we were just to open up, the incredible beauty of other cultures will be available to and seen by all. ●



Please Stay in Your Box

Cotton, batting, fabric from a sari, 'millenium rainbow' fabric, and thread
62 x 46 in. (157.5 x 116.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Boulder, Colorado

Vimala McClure

Boulder, Colorado

Unity in Diversity

[diptych with *Please Stay in Your Box*]

This is the second piece in the diptych. It shows a *Log Cabin* block that is bigger, more integrated, almost dancing. It is made of fabrics from nearly every culture in the world, including a border of an antique sari from India and a backing of "millennium rainbow" fabric. It is meant to show the incredible beauty and life that happens when we encourage both the integration and the integrity of each culture to live together and shine. ●



Unity in Diversity

Cotton, batting, fabric from Senegal, and thread
64 x 48 in. (162.6 x 121.9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Boulder, Colorado

Patsy Monk

Parrish, Florida

What Enslaves You?

Being a slave is more than human over human. It is emotion, fear, bias, anger, money, health, life style preferences... it is any entity that clouds one's ability to see self or any other person in the true sense of being human. One constant pursuit is the "Perfect World." I would be so bold as to say it is the quest of probably every man, woman, and child who had any idea those things could be better.

There is a door to the "Perfect World"—but it is locked. Fortunately, every lock has a key and this door also has a key. Upon careful examination, the real KEY to the "Perfect World" and the real answer to what has enslaved you... will be obvious.

It will take that KEY to begin the journey. ●



What Enslaves You?

Fiber
49 x 52 in. (124.5 x 132.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Parrish, Florida

Longfellow Myers

Odessa, Florida

Sisters Sing / Blues Women

The classic blues women's lyrics reflected the injustices they encountered in urban America. They criticized discrimination and sang of the struggles for social change. Being an early feminist voice, many songs decried the male double standard. These women were rebellious and stood tall against domination in any form. This quilt is part of a series created to honor their spirit.

This project was designed using a basic *Log Cabin* quilt pattern, an obvious reference to the [Harriet Beecher Stowe] classic novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Two sides of each block are composed of dark tones and two sides are light tones. When joined they create an encasement that "holds" each singer. Each light or dark side is configured from seven different fabrics, the "7" being a symbolic, mystical number.

The materials were torn by hand and sewn on my mother's 1930s sewing machine. Embellishments were hand sewn. The collected black and white images were digitized, altered with the addition of color, and printed on cotton. All the components of this project are cotton, with the exception of miscellaneous adornments. ●



Sisters Sing / Blues Women, 2000

Cotton fabric, digitized colored images on cotton, and miscellaneous adornments
47 x 34½ x in. (119.4 x 87.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Odessa, Florida

J. Marie Norris

Umatilla, Oregon

Walk a Mile in My Feet; Work an Hour With My Hands

We as human beings are all similar in the way we are formed, but each of us is unique in his own right. As you view this work, I hope you will consider this and remember that God is not through with us. With each generation we grow, evolve, and learn. Being afraid because someone is different is wrong, and we all need to learn this. Please think before you speak to or act toward another. Do not look only at outward appearances but realize that each of us is special in his own unique way.

Please, do not pull on the loose pieces; they are like little children, still growing, who need to be handled gently, with tender loving care. ●



Walk a Mile in My Feet, Work an Hour With My Hands

Textile

45 x 48 in. (114.3 x 121.9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Umatilla, Oregon

Susan North

Troy, Michigan

None of the Above

My quilt is about—and for—my twenty-year-old daughter, who is of mixed race. Although her identity has always been clear in her own mind, she has struggled all her life because there is rarely a box to check on any official form that accurately describes her. From census forms to college applications, we have always faced this dilemma.

She posed for the figures on the quilt, which are symbols of her need to break out of the “check applicable box” mentality. The design proceeds from dark and drab colors on the upper left (with red and blue patches representing the police cruiser lights that she is more likely to see because her skin is dark) to a happier and more optimistic patchwork of bright and diverse colors representing our hopes for the future. Even the thread used for the quilting (some of it hand dyed) is a jumble of assorted colors. ●



None of the Above

Cotton fabrics and batting
28 x 25 in. (71.1 x 63.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Troy, Michigan

Pat Owoc

St. Louis, Missouri

All the world's a stage...

We exist in relationship with others, in encounters marked with intimacy or violence, friendship or distrust, cordiality or briskness. We've learned that we can, after an initial almost physical/emotional reaction, choose the way we feel about other people and situations, and that we can separate an individual from his behavior. And, often, we are able to recognize the worth of all, even those with whom we sharply disagree. It is when we are most hurt, or those we love are hurt, or those in whom we recognize a shared humanity are hurt, that we choose to become stronger, to become combatants, to witness for the worth of all.

As e-mail conversation progressed in the coming together of this exhibition, individuals related times of hurt and questioning and family rift and devaluation, and of growing strength and resolve. Many related specific incidents, describing those times as being marked by joy or pain or frustration or danger. It reminded me that how we affect each other, how we live with strength and the ability to form bonds, can bring about change. From our conversations to the making of these "witness quilts," to increased discussion and a heightened sensitivity to the spirit and soul within each individual, there is the hope for change. "All the world's a stage..."—how will each of us play our parts? ●



All the world's a stage ..., 2000

Fiber, quilt
43 x 82 in. (109.2 x 208.3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, St. Louis, Missouri

Edna J. Patterson-Petty

East St. Louis, Illinois

Human Wrongs

My concept of *Human Wrongs* came from watching the news, seeing people exclude, being excluded, etc. After internalizing these feelings I gave birth to my art quilt. In the quilt, the world is torn into sections; this is symbolic of disarray. The chains represent mental as well as emotional slavery. The white dove is symbolic of the need for world peace; the buttons at the beak of the birds' mouths represent the proverbial olive branch. The white buttons are symbolic of the spiritual connection that is needed. The scale represents the imbalance of "inclusion of everyone's rights." The empty scroll represents the need for revision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The words in red are self-explanatory. The six profile heads represent the bureaucrats that make laws, policies, etc., and the keys represent the Key to making the world a better place. The other 17 buttons are symbolic of Support, the support of each other's rights, support of the government, etc. The iridescent white fabric is symbolic of the peace and serenity of which the world is in need. The windows, if viewed closely, show clouds in a blue sky, but some of the designs are turned to give a different illusion, such as the look of explosion, nuclear warfare, destruction.

I felt such a relief after I completed this work. ●



Human Wrongs, 1998

Fabric, keys, and buttons

43 x 43 in. (109.2 x 109.2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, East St. Louis, Illinois

Barbara S. Pozek

Kimberling City, Missouri

Common Ground

In 1988, during the Democratic Convention, Jesse Jackson gave a speech entitled, "Common Ground." In the speech, he equated America to a quilt and it was an image that remained in my memory. When this exhibition came to my attention, I knew I had what I wanted to say about racism. Although the word "ignorance" is a pretty strong word, the meaning, "what one does not know" was attractive to me. I also thought that a lot of the issues of racism are buried in past beliefs, attitudes and injustices.

By all outward appearances, I am a typical white American woman. It is surprising, then, to know that my cultural heritage includes slavery, starvation, and cruelty. In this quilt, I made an effort to contrast what was happening to the African people and what was happening to the Irish people at the same time in history. I used information from respected history books and, when possible, I included direct quotes to allow the viewer to see the prevailing thought of the day.

Although I could not relate centuries of injustice to any ethnic group in one quilt, I assure you this is not an isolated moment in human history, and in fact, it continues today. In researching this subject, I came to the conclusion that racism is a tool for people of one ethnic group to make people of another ethnic group seem less than human (or childlike) so that they can be exploited with little remorse. This is a thought that is not isolated in the past or unique to these ethnic groups I've depicted in my quilt. In the end, I echo Jesse Jackson's thoughts that America, as a nation, is made up of lots of small groups.

If we use knowledge as strong thread, it can be brought together to make a thing of beauty just as so many of our grandmothers made warm blankets from scraps of cloth. This quilt depicts just one area where we might find some common ground. ●



Common Ground, c. 2000

Quilt

36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Kimberling City, Missouri

Wendy L. Ritchey

Berwyn, Illinois

Leave Your Bitter Stones Behind

This work draws on a sermon I once heard by a pastor who had participated in peace negotiations between Catholic and Protestant groups in Northern Ireland. During these talks participants were asked to select a rock from a pile outside the room where the talks were scheduled. Then the participants were asked to imagine placing all their fears and resentments towards one another into the rock. Afterwards people left the rocks behind as a kind of symbol of their willingness to turn such concerns over to God. When leaving the meeting, people could choose to take one of the stones with them on the condition that they would pray for the anonymous person who originally picked it up.

I liked this analogy because hatred and racism so often resemble an old accumulation of fears and resentments that have hardened into stone, like a kidney stone, instead of being flushed away as they would in a healthier body.

In this piece I am calling for your participation. The container of small red stones is there for all of us with old vestiges of fears and bitterness, feelings of superiority or inferiority based on race, to leave them behind by depositing the stone into one of the clear vinyl pouches on the quilt. If you want to remove a stone someone else has left behind, please do so, knowing that your action obligates you to think about that person who left it there with hope, love, and the faith that they too can be freed from their bitterness.

If this works, the quilt will not be so weighed down it falls off the wall—since some will leave stones and some will take stones. Some will do both, as I have. ●



Leave Your Bitter Stones Behind

Fabric, acrylic, paint, and stones
54 x 54 in. (137.2 x 137.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Berwyn, Illinois

Kim Ritter

Houston, Texas

Soil Sample

In this quilt I have used the metaphor of a soil sample to make a visual image of the layers of hate that we keep buried. Slavery and its by-products of hate, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping are just a few of the issues that society politely avoids. We don't want to face these realities. We bury them down deep. We've become so adept at forgetting the past, that we often don't even see the evidence of the pervasive racism that STILL haunts our society. The ghostly crosses lining the garden represent the victims of that on-going racism. And yet, the garden still grows under a moonlit sky. ●



Soil Sample, 1999

Art quilt
68 x 44 in. (172.7 x 111.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Houston, Texas

Meena Schaldenbrand

Plymouth, Michigan

Peeling Layers Back to Basics

Underneath our many layers of clothing and skin we are the same...

Marvel at our similarities, celebrate our differences.

Have a heart, reach out, and lend a hand...

Make a difference in the short time we have. ●



Peeling Layers Back to Basics

Fabric

33 x 33 in. (83.8 x 83.8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Plymouth, Michigan

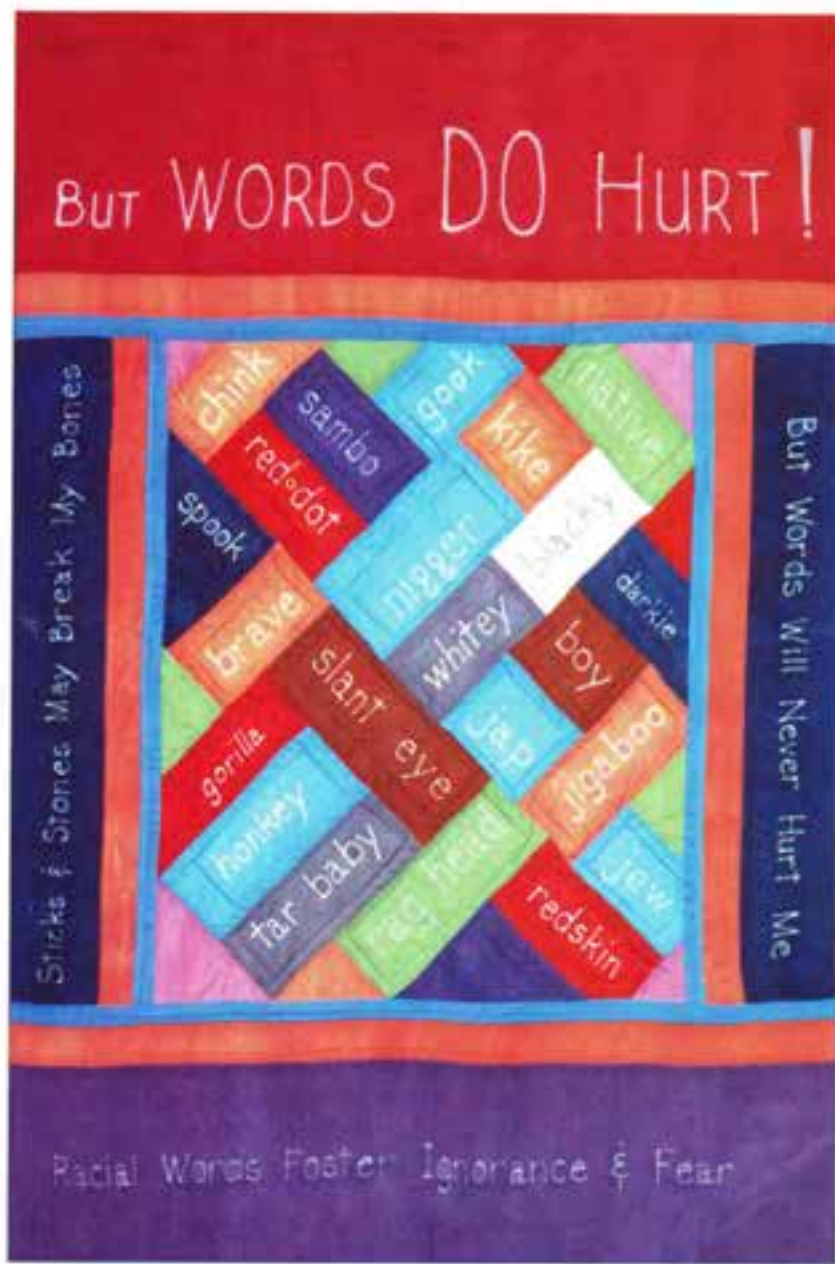
Mei-Ling St. Leger

Clearwater, Florida

But Words DO Hurt!

"Sticks & stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

I was lucky to have been born into a family with friends of all races, religions, and preferences. So I learned from the beginning that people were people, individuals with no other label attached. I learned to appreciate differences: once when I was about eleven I was standing with my mother, the only two invited Anglos at a pueblo ceremony in New Mexico. A curly haired blonde girl with her red haired mother, surrounded by black straight hair, watching, then participating in an ancient religious ceremony of which I only vaguely understood the meaning. It was a moving experience. When I left childhood I started to learn how much of the world looked at, and talked about others, fearing their differences. Since then I have felt strongly that we must educate people as early as possible to appreciate diversity, celebrate and preserve cultural heritage, and eradicate all forms of prejudice: racial, religious, or preferential. You may like or dislike an individual, but people are people, no matter what the belief, packaging, or lifestyle. I wanted to participate in this exhibition because I hope it will foster communication to further educate people. ●



But Words DO Hurt!

Resist dyed and quilted silk
42 x 30 in. (106.7 x 76.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Clearwater, Florida

Julie Zaccone Stiller

Boulder Creek, California

Pay Attention, Mom!

"Mom, I think all dark people are bad," said my 5-year-old son. Where did that come from? I've never said, thought, done anything to give him this idea! Where did he get this? I asked him as calmly as possible where he had gotten this idea. He said: "Well, all the bad guys in movies are always bad, bad, bad, dark, dark, dark." I asked him for a couple of examples and he mentioned all the Disney Bad Guys. In our small town we have almost zero racial diversity, we have almost no contact with any other races. The only constant source of images of diversity comes from the media we're in contact with. In our house that is books, kids magazines, and movies/television. I've been so worried about limiting their exposure to violence that I never really worried about race issues. We've always talked about it, that what's inside counts, everyone looks different from everyone else, etc. Guess that wasn't enough counterbalance!!

To show this in a quilt I decided that the central image would be a child flopped on the floor in front of the TV. The TV is growing roots under the floor up into the child. The mom is in the background whirling around cleaning and taking care of the household. She is not paying attention to what is happening to her child while she/he is parked in front of the TV. ●



Pay Attention, Mom! 2000

Art quilt

32 x 40 in. (81.3 x 101.6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Boulder Creek, California

Antoinette Tisa

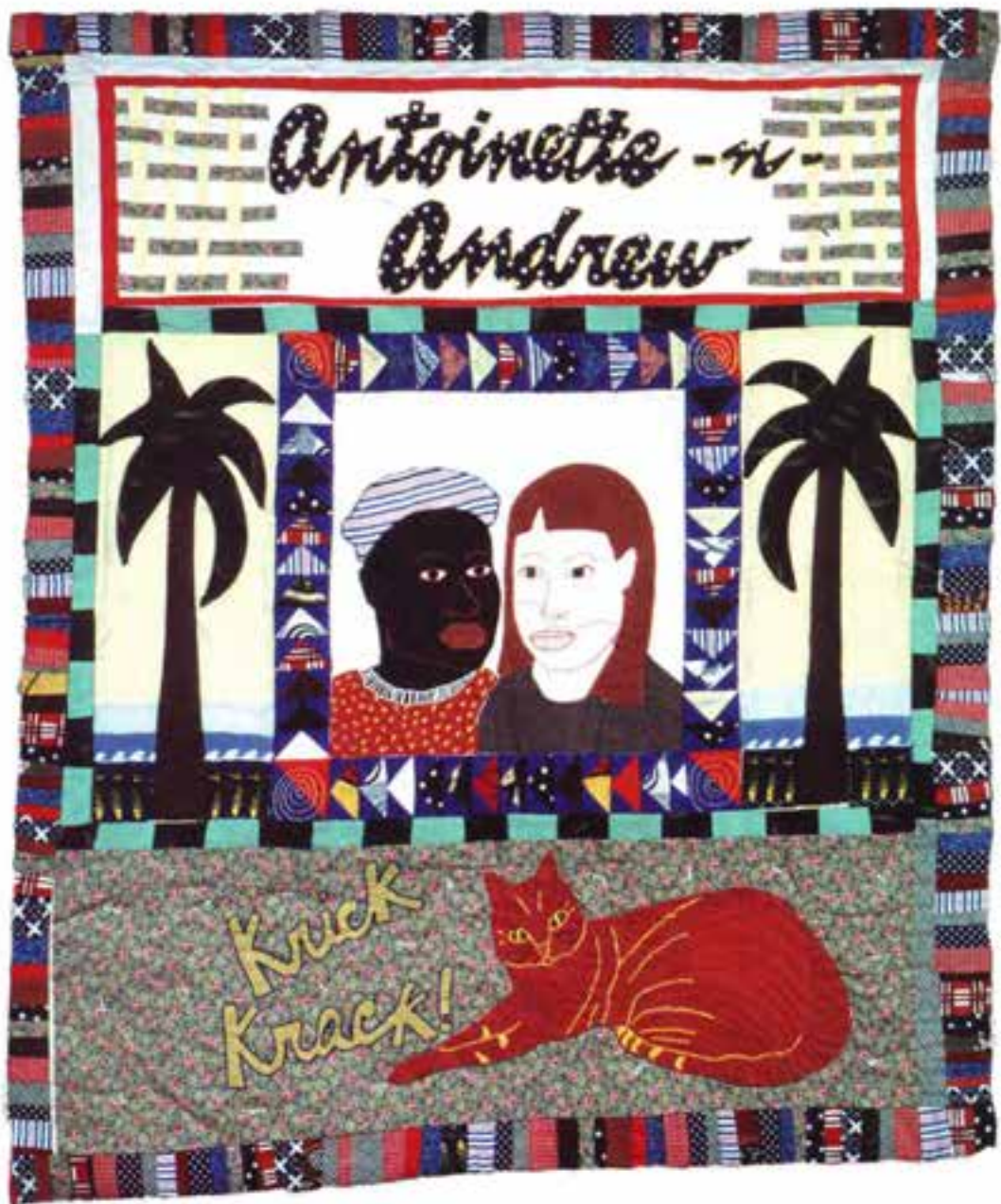
Brooklyn, New York

Antoinette & Andrew

I chose this quilt for the show because it shows an incredibly idealistic picture of race and race relations. It represents what was going on in my life at the time it was made. My boyfriend and I had just moved into a Caribbean community and even though I was an outsider, it felt as if anything was possible and that all could work itself out.

However, this was really far from the truth. The truth, unlike the quilt, is often ugly. I like this piece because it shows a happy 2-dimensional picture. It represents how people say they want race relations to be—harmonious. It doesn't show the challenge and difficulties that race presents as well as the incredible rewards.

I am happy that I made this quilt and can still look at it and smile. Aesthetically it is beautiful. It shows my naiveté and energy. However, I'd like to think that my later quilts show a picture with more depth. Not just smiling 2-dimensional faces that you can't really see beyond. ●



Antoinette & Andrew

Quilt, appliquéd, hand-pieced, machine and hand embroidered
48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York

Judith Trager

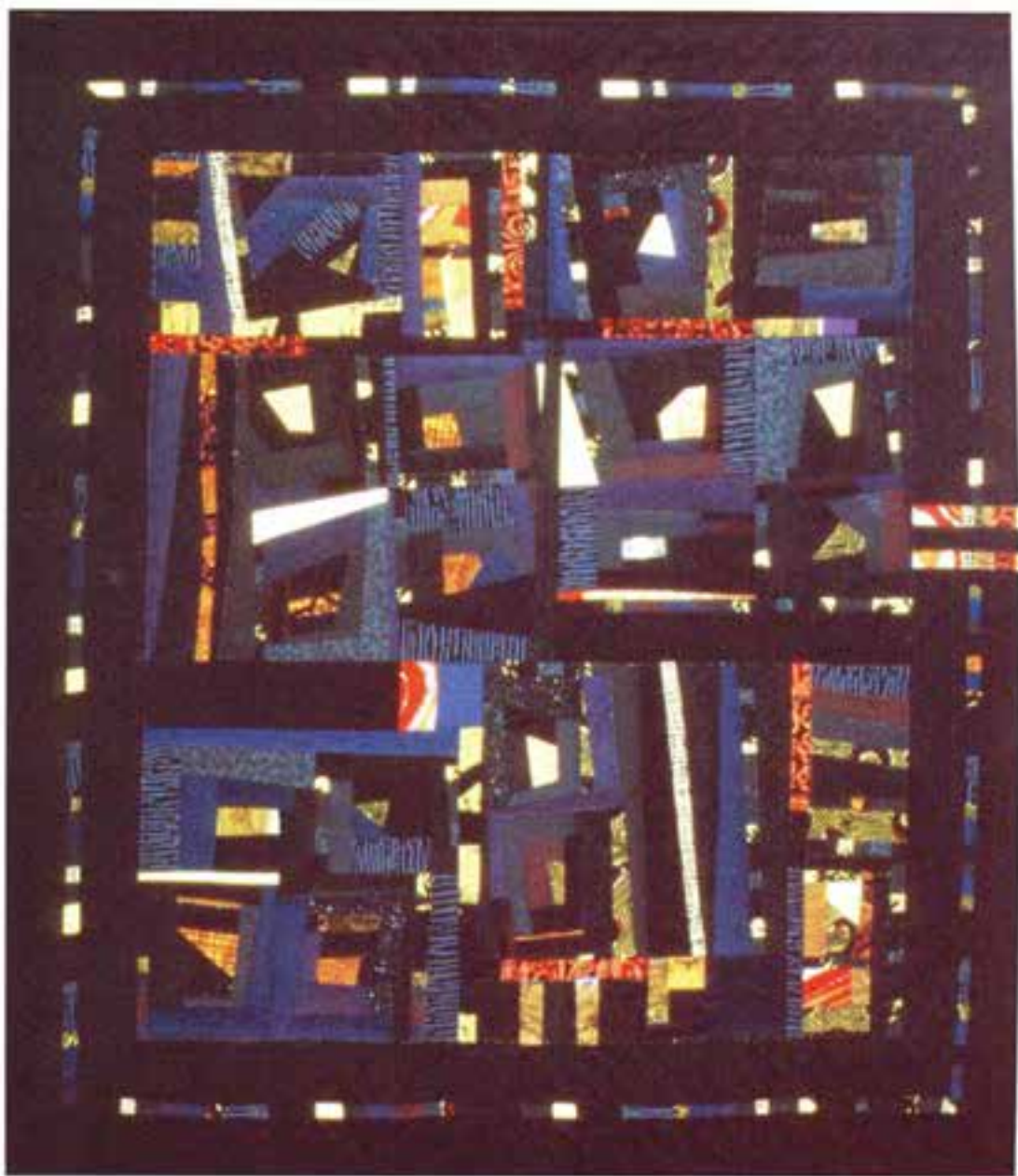
Boulder, Colorado

Sabbath in the Old City

The streets, empty by last light, were strangely hushed on Friday nights in the old city.

Doors slammed one last time as children and fathers gathered in the kitchens and dining rooms made warm by the aroma of fresh challah. Mother lit the lights and father blessed us with the same words used for eons. May we be strong like Israel; may we keep the commandments. We giggled, smelling the stew that would be our dinner. In the distance, glass was breaking.

Sabbath in the Old City reflects on the moment before *Kristallnacht* when Nazi storm troopers shattered the glass of buildings and synagogues across Germany. There is one way into the ghetto and one way out. Our people thought we were safe there. Life, like fiber, is impermanent. The yellow lights of the quilt's "houses" also commemorate the lives of those children lost forever to the Holocaust. ●



Sabbath in the Old City, 1991

Fiber

46 x 43 in. (116.8 x 109.2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Boulder, Colorado

Rosanna Lynne Welter

West Valley City, Utah

From One Tree

Where does it come from? This idea that one race is somehow superior to another. Isn't it perfectly obvious that we've all come from the same rootstock? Is a peach superior to a pear? An apple better than an apricot? ●



From One Tree, 2002

Fiber/textile
25 x 24 in. (63.5 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, West Valley City, Utah

Jill Rumoshosky Werner

Wichita, Kansas

What Color Is Your Skin?

We cannot choose our skin color and we cannot change it, yet our lives are tremendously affected by this particular physical characteristic. People think that they know us on the inside just because they can see what's on the outside. They often judge us and make decisions that affect us which are based solely on this one feature. When those decisions impact us negatively, it can change the paths of our lives forever.

This quilt is the game board for an actual game, which teaches the players about the effects of racial discrimination. As in real life, the players cannot choose their character's skin color; it is purely a matter of chance. However, it affects everything that happens to them in the game. The Minority Character faces a longer and more difficult Pathway to Success than the White Character. Also, the Race Cards contain real situations, which anyone can face, but the outcome of the situation depends upon the race of the character that drew the card. Quite literally, the deck is stacked against the Minority Character right from Square One.

I would love to have schoolchildren play this game. It may only take a few minutes to play, but the lesson it contains should be one that they remember. Perhaps, with a little more understanding, judgements could be changed here and there, so that in the future, people would be free to forge their own, best paths through life. Decisions would not be made for them based on their skin color alone. I want to change the rules of the game. ●



What Color is Your Skin?

Quilt
21 x 21 in. (53.3 x 53.3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Wichita, Kansas

Darcy Young

Houston, Texas

THE LINE BETWEEN / the best & worst in us!

The original sketch of these little boys was made more than two years ago. However, I wasn't sure why or where they would ever appear. While driving to a friend's house one day and contemplating whether or not I would submit a work to be included in the exhibition, *Roots of Racism*, the vision of the left side of this quilt appeared in my mind. Immediately, my mind said: "You can't do that—it's too harsh, too much, too graphic, might offend!" My heart constricted, my eyes filled with tears; oh, the shame of what we have done and continue to do to one another.

It was then that I knew: ... I HAD TO DO THIS QUILT! If I can verbalize part of what I want my life to be about, it would be: ...STOP the prejudice, the judging, the bigotry, the hating each other, and live with love, honor, respect, integrity, caring, partnership, sharing. My wishes for the world—PEACE FOR ALL, VISIONS OF LIVING TODAY AND TOMORROW WITH GRACE, AND ABOVE ALL, HONORING AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER (NO MATTER THE COLOR, THE RELIGION, THE POLITICS, THE SEXUAL ORIENTATION, ETC).

Please take time to sit quietly on a beach with arms around each other, contemplate God's creations and be grateful for the gifts of life and each other. ●



THE LINE BETWEEN / the best & worst in us! 2002

Handpainted silk
33 x 86 in. (83.8 x 218.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Houston, Texas

Acknowledgements

The Islamabad exhibition and catalogue were made possible through the efforts of the following members of the Art in Embassies Program staff:

Anne Johnson, Director
Virginia Shore, Curator
Imtiaz Hafiz, Assistant Curator
Rebecca Clark, Registrar
Marcia Mayo, Publications Editor
Sally Mansfield, Project Coordinator

