

City and Guilds not compete because they have the unfair advantage of a lot more knowledge than those who haven't (and that includes me...)? Should anyone who teaches not compete because they are professionals? It is a valid discussion, but I'd rather those who felt like this brought it out into the open rather than muttering in the background. If those who fall into the above categories did not submit work, would there be as interesting an exhibition? Who would decide where the cut-off was? Would you feel as great when you win as you would if you were competing against an open field?

Loch Lomond solved this by making three levels of entry into all their competitions: novice quilters of (I think it was) three years or less, intermediate and professional which covered anyone who had ever taught even just one class, or sold their work. This is another way of looking at competitions altogether. I have no idea how the level of entries went as this, of course, fragmented each competition category. I do remember one themed year when there were only nine entries.

Anyway, I thought I would write about this as it is an interesting conundrum; I will be interested to hear how people think it should be done. Should it be changed to reflect experience? Maybe there should be no prizes at all. Would that make a difference to how many people entered? Would it make a difference to how people feel about who enters? If you think there is room for change, maybe you should contact quilt show organisers to suggest it. For myself, I am not sure I will enter the Scottish Quilt show again. It made me feel very uncomfortable to find out that some people resented it, and me, so much. The local groups here are amazingly supportive to me and I have no wish to upset them; I may still have an exhibition or two left in me yet!

sheila@sdalgleish.co.uk

A Challenge Challenge (for the third time of asking...)

I will be stepping down from the role of CQ Challenge organiser when the 'Diversity' challenge starts to tour in January 2024. I took over the position four years ago and since then have steered three challenges, 'Fragmentation', in 2019, then the gloriously successful 'uncharted', for CQ's 20th Anniversary, and currently, 'Diversity'.

The time spent on challenge business is not onerous and neither is it continuous – after writing the outline and instructions, there is a long quiet period while pieces are being created. The very best part of all is when the quilts start arriving – it is immensely exciting, feeling just like Christmas.

It has been wonderful meeting the people behind the names and getting to know them; this has opened up CQ for me. If you would like to enrich your experience of CQ and are enthusiastic to see the challenge to continue, please, please volunteer. To me, the challenge is an essential part of CQ. If you feel the same, then contact me, Janine Pound, at cqchallenge_contemp@quiltersguild.org.uk

Beginner's Luck

by Annie Folkard

A thought crossed my mind that we, as textile artists, ought to be submitting work to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. It seemed a bit of a crazy idea, since the submission number is enormous, (it is capped at 16,500 digitally, from which some 4,000 are selected to be brought to the Academy for scrutiny) and the applications have to be severely whittled down, despite the normal Academy policy of 'stacking them high, and filling the walls.'

What prompted me to try? When I was a small child, I remember that my mother, an accomplished painter, had once tried to get a painting accepted, without success. In my mind's eye, I vaguely imagined how happy she would be if she knew that I had followed suit but with success.

Something nagging me in the back of my mind pushed me onwards. Last year's coordinator, had included three or four works which were called quilts, but on the

whole they were not that well constructed and didn't, in my opinion, represent the best of textile work.

This year, because there had been an exhibition at the RA that included some Gees Bend quilts, 'souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers', I wondered if the coordinator might be inclined to include quilts and textile art again.

Two friends egged me on; one said to me as we walked through Waterloo station, 'you've got to be in it to win it. I agreed with her; it was definitely worth a try.

Quilting giant, Nancy Crow had encouraged and boosted my coincidence in 2022 when she told me casually that, with enough determination and effort, I could become an established textile artist. Critically, she helped me to believe in myself. So, at the appropriate time, I quickly selected a couple of works. My criteria: they needed to be bold and have impact. I didn't think about clever construction or beautiful stitching.

The piece with which I was



Above: Initial strips

successful I had started at a Crow workshop in 2022. Here she required us to make 12 widths of strip-pieced fabrics with different widths of lines and shapes, varying from line to narrow shape. The final width of fabric could vary from around 5 to 9 inches finished. The lines could be grouped on one side or both sides, but should not be in the middle.

Each textile section was defined in terms of values, for example:

No1: dark grounds, light figures (different colours in each fabric)

No 2: light grounds, dark figures (different colours in each fabric)

We were allotted a specific time in which to complete the manufacture of these 12 new fabrics. We then had to compose and construct a final work which needed to be finished by 9.30 on Monday morning.



Above: Eight pieces of fabric by Friday night



Right: Progress on Monday!

The instructions were to be 'wild and free,, to cut off squares and rectangles and to be sure that not every rectangle was the same size. We were to love our composition, being as free and energetic as possible.

By close of play on the Friday evening, I had only manufactured eight of the required twelve fabrics. Taking these back to my hotel, I contemplated the next steps. They would have to be simple as I had only two hours on Sunday to make more fabric and two hours on Monday morning to complete my composition.

On Saturday, I went with a fellow student to a beautiful Nellie Mae west exhibition. This proved inspirational, giving me pointers for colours that needed to be in the next two fabrics, most importantly, the inclusion of a bright blue and a lilac. On Sunday, as well as make two more fabrics, I was able to sketch a rough design idea so I had a definite plan and a photograph from which to work the following morning. Monday morning came and I was fired up, ready to complete my composition. So *Good Vibrations* was born.

Having submitted my application to the RA soon after Christmas, I had decided that the best thing to do was to forget about it. So in early March I was really surprised to receive an email telling me that my piece had got through to the second round; I needed to take the actual quilt up to the RA so that it could be physically assessed. I was very happy to have got this far, and never for a moment thought it would go any further. When the final email came saying I was successful, that I was over the moon is an understatement!

There is something very enjoyable about the ancient traditions of the Royal Academy. Varnishing Day has been going on since 1769. Traditionally it was when painters went in to apply their final coat of varnish, but these days it's a private view for the artists to see how their work looks when it's been hung.

The day starts with a parade from the RA to St James Church, Piccadilly, accompanied by a steel band, a short service and a blessing. I made a friend while waiting outside the Academy for the parade to set off, and subsequently we then went around the exhibition together which made it more enjoyable. She already knew that her painting was in room 9, and the catalogue told me that mine was in the final room as my catalogue number was 1612. Little did I know this was a prestigious location so I was stunned when I saw it jumping off the wall with a 'matching, pink paint job, all on its own. In the centre of the Wohl Central Hall hung a dramatic, blue, fluid sculpture by Richard Malone and, on the walls, a few other textile pieces, also mainly blue. My work positively glowed. I was then equally delighted to see that in the catalogues my name had been picked out, along with a couple of others, in the introduction to the room. I couldn't have been happier; words cannot describe my excitement.

My hope is that this will encourage others to submit works and continue to help raise the profile of quilts in the textile and art world.

folkard@mac.com



Above: Annie with *Good Vibrations* in the Wohl Central Hall

Below: A quilter exclaims with delight on seeing *Good Vibrations*.

Obviously, a well known artist can command more, often five figure sums (except for Joe Lycett who listed £1,354,999 for his little acrylic painting!) All the exhibits in the Wohl central Gallery were textural, textile related, and Annie's catalogue price was seven times less than a smaller canvas across the room that was a (rather beautiful) painting of Japanese indigo textiles. Later conversation with Annie shed light on the matter. When submitting, the artist has to state the sale price. So she had asked a sum suitable for a quilt show. Of course, one must remember that the Academy takes 30% commission. There is also the administration fee of, this year, £38 for every initial entry. Should quilters now be setting their sights higher?

Around the show were art works (I hesitate over the word 'art, in front of some of the 'works,) created by knitting and crochet as well as sewing. Some were bravely bold, though slightly puzzling, like the life-size pink bear, others that I would have binned (I mean recycled...) as poor workmanship. It was a relief to see a proper piece of quilting; I agree that the RA has included quilts before, but these have largely been collections of fabric chunks joined by crude stitching, and two Gees Bend ones in 2022.

What was most pleasing is that *Good Vibrations* had a wall all to itself - so much space to breathe. The photo below gives a glimpse of the gallery next door where, like all the others, exhibits are crowded together - stacked high, but certainly not sold cheap!



No White Gloves ...

by Maggie Jarman

... at The Royal Academy and no 'Do Not Touch, sign either, I observed while studying Annie Folkard's quilt. That's one difference between an Art and a Quilt show. There's another significant one, that of price, not just here but generally. For *Good Vibrations* to be accepted is a milestone, a big step forward towards art world recognition. Remember, David Remfry, when selecting for that Central Room, was looking at creating a particular 'ensemble, as well as individual merit of pieces; a curator's personal taste and aims will vary from show to show.

Recently, there has been a drive for Art Quilts to be accepted as Art and priced accordingly. After all, why is a quilt on a wall worth less than a painting on a wall? Is it because it is considered craft, not art?

The wide variation in prices at the RA Summer Exhibitions is often puzzling.