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Colorful fabrics produce wild Quilt Visions at OMA

By Cheryl Walker

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OCEANSIDE – Some of the fabric is painted, and some is textured.

Each quilt is a unique piece of art in “Quilt Visions 2008: Contemporary Expressions,” on display through March 1 at the Oceanside Museum of Art.

“These are not the type of quilts Grandma made – and not planned to be on a bed,” said Charlotte Bird, exhibition coordinator. “These are contemporary works of art.”

“Quilt Visions” is a biennial event that started 20 years ago and receives entries from around the world.

“We send out for entries in the odd year, and the quilts are due by the beginning of the even year,” Bird said.

To qualify, the quilt must have at least two layers of textile and must be held together in a stitchlike way.

“Beyond that, there's not much else that's required,” Bird said. “We receive entries that have hand-dyed fabric, hand-painted, color removed from the fabric and some with photo images. It runs a diverse range.”

This year there were 586 entries. Only 41 quilts were selected, largely because of space.

During the three-day selection process, judges sit in a darkened room looking at images of the quilts.

“Ideally they have all been professionally photographed,” said Patti Sevier, who helped coordinate the exhibit. “A good clear image is important or the jurors won't even look at it. Of course, fabric is always better in person, but if it looks good in a photograph, you know it's going to look good in person.”

Jurors first go through all the images to see what's there. In the second round, one out of the three judges has to vote to keep it. In the next round, if there are two “No” votes, it's out.

“Quilt Visions” is attended by both men and women. Sevier loves to see the reactions of husbands who bring their wives.

“Here he is being the dutiful husband, taking the wife on an outing,” Sevier said. “As he goes through the exhibit, I watch his eyes get bigger and bigger. By the time he's at the end of the exhibit, I hear, 'Wow, that was a really wonderful art exhibit.' They are always thrilled.”

The exhibit features the work of 20 artists appearing in this event for the first time.

“We always have multiple repeats,” Sevier said. “Susan Shie from Wooster, Ohio, was in every single exhibit up until this one.”

Quilts are from Israel, Australia, Hungary and Korea. But most are from the United States, including three from Alaska.

“Transcendent,” which received the Caught Our Eye Award, was created by Robert Leathers of San Diego. He and his wife built their own home, which took seven years. The 2007 fire destroyed it. His quilt is the first of a series that will tell that story.

Leathers' quilt is made from cotton, wool batting, fabric paint, colored pencils and cotton thread. It also has photos transferred to cotton, painted, stitched and appliqued.

Dan Olfe from Julian created his quilt using 3-D software, creating a design that simulates the surface of the water. It is digitally printed on whole cloth and machine quilted.

Quilts come in all sizes, from small wall hangings to one that is 18 feet wide. Nearly all will be for sale. Prices range from \$1,500 to \$25,000.


“Every single one is more than just fabric,” Bird said.

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