

Connecting with Area Artists

Years ago, the *Crier* used to run articles on local artists. With the growth of Fairview and its nearby communities, there are even more talented artists and crafters who call this area home. Inspired by Andrew Dundas, who attended the Fairview Craft and Gift Fair for the *Crier* last year, we decided it was time to again feature local artists.

This series will focus on a particular art or craft each time, and we're kicking off with the fiber arts. Andrew gathered a list of fiber artists from a variety of sources and got in touch with several of them. He then interviewed three of them to help us put together the profiles in this section.

The artists featured here are just a few of the fiber artists in our area, as there is no way we can talk to or feature everyone. We hope that their comments will provide a glimpse into their work and motivation.

On Display The *Crier* is thrilled to be working with the Fairview Public Library to feature the works of the artists in this series. Starting November 2 and running through the end of the month, you can stop by anytime the library is open to see works by these artists.

An Evening with Fairview Fiber Artists On November 26 at 7 pm, the artists featured here will discuss their work and techniques in the Community Room at the Library. Each artist will have items on display and take questions from the audience. Stop by to say hello and meet these local artists!

Thanks to Jaime McDowell, head librarian, for her help with this project.

Fiber Arts: Weaving Together the Past and Present

By Sandie Rhodes

Fiber artists use fabric, yarn, and other natural and synthetic fibers to weave, knit, crochet or sew textile art. They may use a loom to weave fabric, needles to knit or crochet yarn, or a sewing machine to join pieces of fabric for quilts or other handicrafts.

Evidence of the use of fiber in the Americas dates back at least 10,000 years, as textiles and utilitarian containers made of fibers were found in Guitarrero Cave in Peru. The arid desert conditions preserved these rare textile samples. Many used color dye and served a variety of functions, including funerary bundles, ceremonial clothing and knotted fibers for record keeping.

From Then to Now

Throughout the past 9,000 years, the use of fibrous materials transitioned from functional objects to more comfortable clothing fabrics to extravagant displays of opulence and wealth. After World War II, the use of natural materials shifted to objects d'art, as fiber art gradually became a force in its own right. As artists and craftsmen received recognition, the term "fiber art" was coined to help describe their work.

The 1960s and 1970s brought an international revolution. With the rise of the women's movement and feminine art, along with the birth of postmodernism theory and its set of cultural tendencies and movements, fiber art gained a strong foothold in the art and craft



Specific to the Andean region is the *quipu* or *hipu*, which means "talking knots." Quipos were created from cotton or camel fiber, and the Incans used them for collecting data, keeping records, monitoring taxes owed, census records, calendar details, and military records.

world. Fiber works became more conceptual. Aesthetics became valued over utility, placing focus on the materials and the manual skill of the artist. Most fiber artists now incorporate weaving of some sort along with sewing, embroidery, knotting, twining, plaiting, coiling, pleating, lashing and interlacing mixed media.

Today, fiber and quilt guilds abound. Since 1967, the Fiberarts Guild of Pittsburgh (formerly the Embroiderer's Guild) has sponsored a juried exhibition that showcases innovative contemporary works of art in fiber from around the world. Locally, the Asheville Quilters Guild just held its 38th Quilt Show, with exhibitors from the southeast and beyond. A number of Fairview fiber artists have won top awards in this show. And the Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair show held at the end of October each year attracts natural fiber/wool spinners, dyers, weavers, felters and those who raise the animals that supply the fiber.

From examples including hand embroidery, tapestry, quilt production, large-scale public art pieces, miniature handmade lace doilies, and hand-woven, dyed and felted wool, fiber art is a movement that continues to help define art production.

Julie Bagamary

Julie makes quilted art, primarily wall hangings and three-dimensional art, such as birdhouses and birds. She works with hand-dyed/batik fabric or those with surface designs, such as painted fabrics, and generally uses a combination of machine, hand-stitching and basic embroidery to enhance her work (and sometimes buttons or screen fiber).

"It's not what most people think of when they think of quilts," she said.

She prefers hand stitching for its portability, as she travels a fair amount. "Even on my honeymoon, I had stitching projects with me," she said.

It's important to her to pass her skills on to future generations. "I have a couple of middle school students that come to

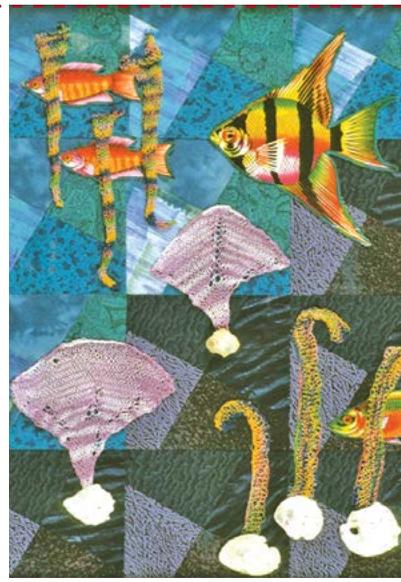


my house," she said. "I love teaching them the basics... and I am teaching my oldest granddaughter to use her sewing machine. We have set

times that we get together and create. We just recently collaborated on a few projects that are hanging in galleries."

juliebagamary.com





Paula Entin

Paula makes art quilts (some framed) with a quilted base. Then she adds elements of nature and things like gears, metal rods, buttons and lots of beads.



"I recently bought some antique garden faucets to use in a project," she said.

She learned how to sew, embroider, knit and draw from her parents. "My mother and her mother did lots of sewing, and my father's uncles owned a dress factory in Boston. My parents liked modern art, so I never felt restricted to just traditional quilts."

Why quilts? "During college, I took a quilting class and really liked it," she said. "My second quilt was not entirely traditional, because I wanted to play with shapes and color, and push the boundaries of tradition."

Paula has a one-person exhibition at the Education Center Gallery at the NC Arboretum running through January 10.

fibersong.com

Laura Gaskin

Laura grew up around women who kept their hands busy with sewing, knitting, crocheting, quilting and embroidery.

She thinks it's important to pass down these traditions for many reasons, including showing respect for traditional ways of making things and also giving people satisfaction from gaining the skills needed to make fine objects by hand.

She has done a lot of sewing, quilting, fabric dyeing and knitting in the past, but currently is "making stitched pictures using a technique that I developed myself... featuring plant and animal imagery often



inspired by the things I see in the Fairview area while hiking."

"Working with



fiber allows me to work with colors, shapes, and imagery in order to tell a story," she said. "It takes time, but the actual materials are inexpensive and most are readily available. Fiber is also a broad field

with many subgroups, and that allows plenty of space for needleworkers like myself to experiment and find their own space."

lauragaskin.com

