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# Stunning Quilts Made Entirely From Used Envelopes

Artist Stephen Sollins proves that recycling-bin rubbish can be reborn as art.



BY CAREY DUNNE 1 MINUTE READ

Quilting and snail mail: two things that, in the day of “smart blankets” and e-everything, seem quaint and grandmotherly. But artist [Stephen Sollins](#)’s quilts, made entirely from paper envelopes, are anything but. His stunning modern take on the traditional art of quilting features eye-popping patterns that appear 3-D. These painstakingly crafted large-scale pieces prove that geometry doesn’t have to be dull and that recycling-bin rubbish can be reborn as art.

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The quilts are made more impressive by the fact that each scrap of mail used has autobiographical significance. Sollins doesn’t buy these envelopes—he collects them from mail he receives. Adorned with fragments of cursive handwriting, the blue insides of security envelopes, the Tyvek of FedEx packaging, and orange New York parking tickets, these woven paper trails track different moments in the artist’s life. American quilting traditionally referenced memories and family histories—quilts told stories—and Sollins rejuvenates that tradition with his magpie mail-hoarding skills.





Sollins isn't a quilt-maker by training: He taught himself to mimic the art of piecing by studying photos in books, especially *Glorious American Quilts* from the Museum of American Folk Art. He fell in love with the museum's Blazing Star Crib Quilt, a zig-zagging starburst of a design. After several botched attempts at replicating the mathematical arrangement of this seven-pointed star, Sollins managed to re-create the quilt in paper. Last October, his paper quilt was displayed alongside the original an exhibit at the American Folk Art Museum titled [alt\\_quilts](#). Reminiscent of the op-art aesthetic of street artist [Barry McGee](#), Sollins's work is an attempt to bring an ancient folk-art form into the 21st century.

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