

Machine Quilting Section • Amazing Machine Embroidery

www.thequiltermag.com
December 2013/January 2014

The Quilter[®] Magazine

12
Wonderful
Winter
Projects

How to STOP
a Quilt Thief

A Trip to the
Poore Farm

Modern Art
Inspired by
Traditional
Patterns



\$6.99 Please display until 01/07/14
An All American Crafts Publication

Side by Side: Traditional Meets Contemporary at the American Folke Art Museum

A groundbreaking exhibit featuring contemporary works inspired by traditional quilts will be on display through January 5, 2014, at the American Folk Art Museum in New York. The exhibition, *alt_quilts: Sabrina Gschwandtner, Luke Haynes, Stephen Sollins*, includes works by three contemporary artists who explore, in their own genre, the history, meanings, and structures of American quilts. A total of 23 contemporary pieces are showcased together with 10 traditional quilts from the museum's permanent collection.

An American Phenomenon

"Since its inception, the American Folk Art Museum has celebrated a distinctly American phenomenon—the pieced quilt," notes Dr. Anne Radice, the museum's director. Until the twentieth century, quilts were the predominant form of artistic expression for women. Besides reflecting the quiltmakers' talent and creativity, quilts were often guardians of memory, records of events, indicators of economic status, transmitters of narrative, and interpretations of history.

As with other art forms, quilting has evolved far beyond anything our ancestors could have imagined. The contemporary works currently on view at the museum illustrate the balance between randomness and structure, flexibility within rigid parameters, and the highly controlled use of materials. While the artists were drawn to specific, well-known quilt patterns such as Log Cabin, Tumbling Blocks, and Double Wedding Ring, their interpretations diverge dramatically from convention. Only one of the artists, Luke Haynes, actually uses fabric.

Sabrina's Work

Each of the six featured works by Sabrina Gschwandtner (www.sabrinag.com) is made with pieces of 16mm film sewn together in strips and displayed on a light box. Gschwandtner explains: "The source of the historical footage is the Fashion Institute of Technology,

which recently de-accessioned the 16mm films in its library. These short educational documentaries, dated 1952 through 1982, focused on textile crafts, such as crocheting, knitting, sewing, fabric dyeing, and quilting, and celebrated the women who made them. After watching the movies many times, I cut them up and sewed them together with my own personal film footage. In processes that reference both painting and experimental filmmaking, I bleach dye, scratch, and paint onto some of my film."

One of Gschwandtner's works, *Camouflage*, contrasts footage from one film that shows how fabric was made, dyed, and processed at the Bradford Dyeing Association in Rhode Island with footage from another film in which children learn about shadows and how to make them. A top supplier of camouflage to the United States military, Bradford Dyeing had been in operation since before the Civil War, but closed

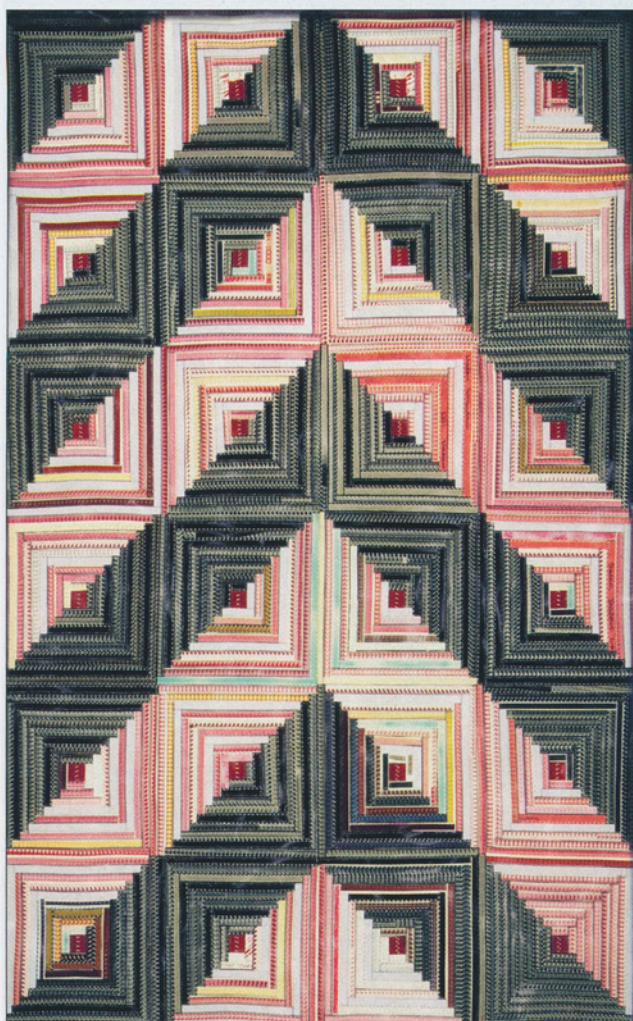


Log Cabin throw, light and dark variation, silk and cotton, unfinished, 57 3/4" x 57 3/4" (1875-1880), by Harriet Rutter Eagleson (Collection of American Folk Art Museum, NY. Gift of Miss Jessica R. Eagleson, 1979.18.1. Photo by Gavin Ashworth, NY)

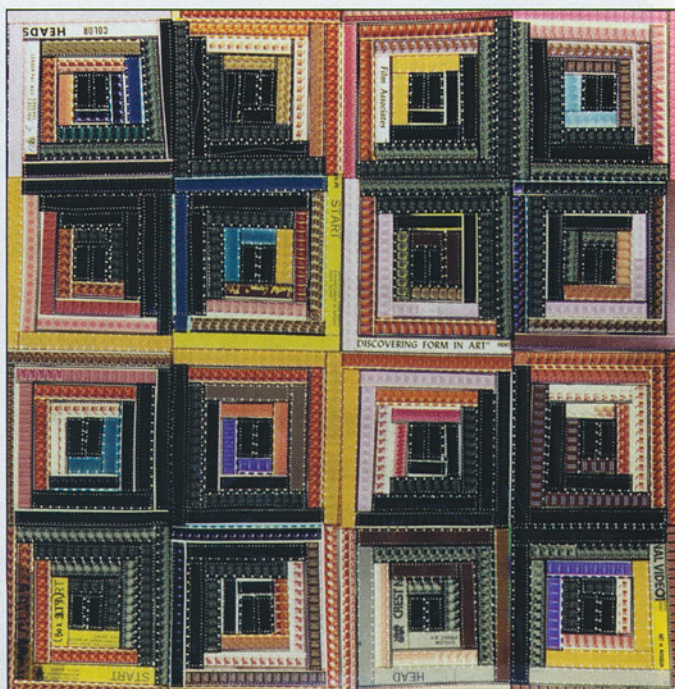
in 2011 after years of labor abuses and heavy fines for dumping chemical waste. The film falsely paints a picture of happy productive workers, itself a kind of camouflage. The second film shows two children making shadow puppets and going outside to look at shadows in the sun. In combining the two films, the artist wanted to "bring out the shadow aspects of the textile mill film and to represent this idea of 'camouflage' in multiple ways. It's also an acknowledgment that whenever you shed light on something, you also make a shadow."

Luke's Work

Luke Haynes (www.lukehaynes.com), who began his career as an architect, is interested in series and how individual works within a series expand the idea or visual



Camouflage, 45½" x 69½" (2012), by Sabrina Gschwandtner, is made with 16mm film, polyamide thread, and lithography ink. The artist used film footage from two documentary films, as well as her own personal footage. (Courtesy the artist and LMAKprojects, NY. Photo by Matt Suib, Greenhouse Media, courtesy Philadelphia Art Alliance)



Arts and Crafts, 23" x 23" (2012), by Sabrina Gschwandtner, is made with 16mm film sewn together with polyamide thread to form a traditional Log Cabin pattern. The title is a reference to the narrative theme of the documentary film footage used in this artwork, which also contains additional footage that Gschwandtner bleached in the sun and scratched. (Collection of Jerrie Whitfield and Dick Motika, Los Angeles, CA. Photo by Matt Suib, Greenhouse Media, courtesy Philadelphia Art Alliance)



Log Cabin quilt, Barn Raising variation, silk, 67½" x 67½" (1869–1875), possibly by Sarah Lamb King. The rich fabrics used in this quilt are described as having been salvaged from pieces of dresses. (Collection of American Folk Art Museum, NY. Gift of Mrs. E. Regan Kerney, 1980.12.1. Photo by Schecter Lee, NY)



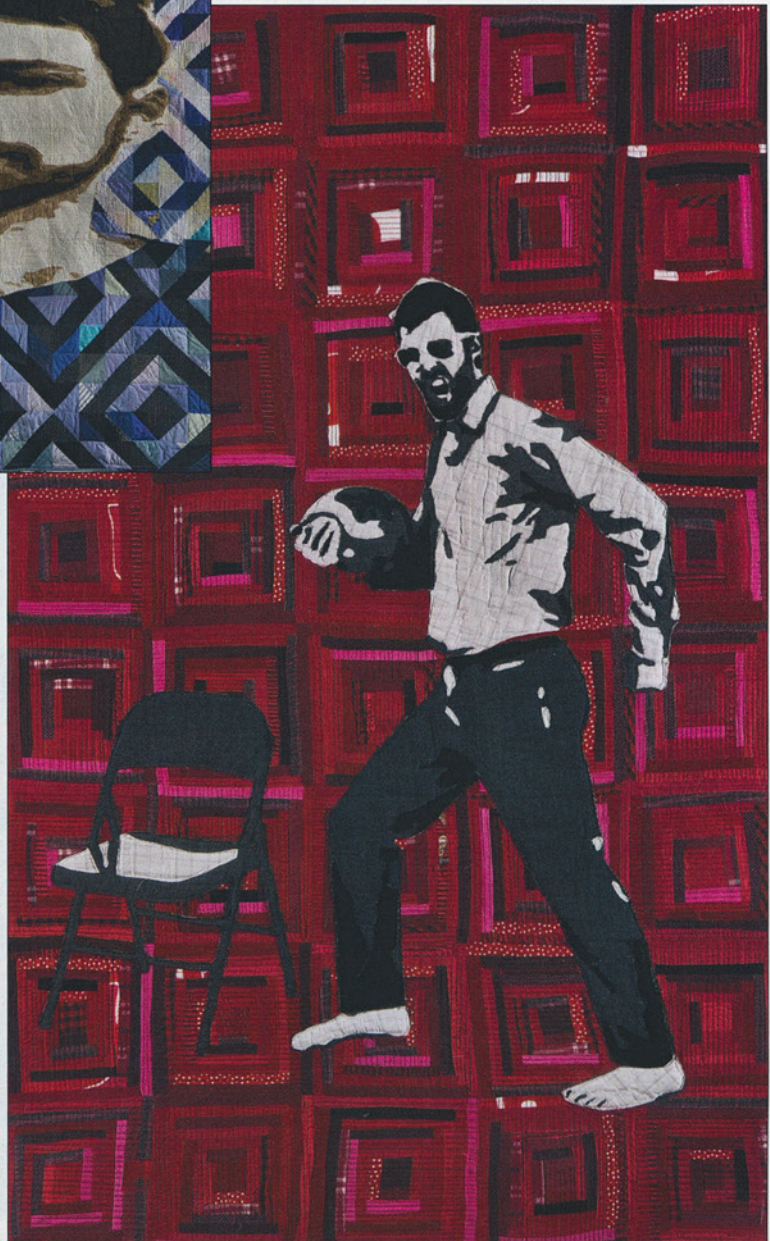
[Self-Portrait #7] Over Here, 90" x 90" (2013), by Luke Haynes, is assembled with fabric, batting, and thread. The final in his series of self-portraits, this quilt captures Haynes in a visual push-pull between the anamorphic image and the shirt pattern in the background. (Collection of American Folk Art Museum, NY. Gift of the artist with funds from Moda, AccuQuilt, and the American Folk Art Museum, 2013.2.1. Photo by Gavin Ashworth, NY)

sequence. As an architect, he is also fascinated by volume and perspective.

In several series, Haynes incorporates the appearance of three dimensions through anamorphic perspective, a technique in which a flat, seemingly distorted arrangement of shapes, colors, and shading assumes three-dimensionality when viewed from a specific angle. This anamorphic perspective is evident in [Self-Portrait #7] *Over Here*, which shows the dichotomy between the shirt pattern, subsumed by the portrait into the background, and the self-portrait that literally puts Haynes "out there," staring at each visitor as he or she walks by.

Another of Haynes' series is based on photographs the artist took of friends. Each individual was asked to wear clothing and to hold an object that expressed his or her sense of identity. A chair was the common denominator in each photo. The subjects gave Haynes the

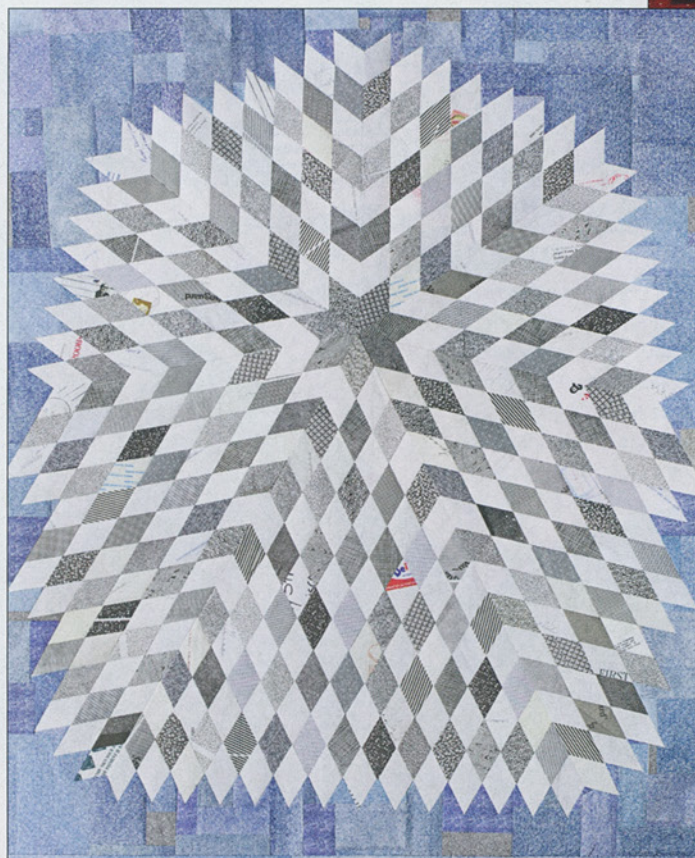
clothing they had worn in the photograph to compose their portraits. The figure in [Clothes Portrait #2] *Helmet* is appliquéd in the foreground against a background that is randomly pieced from recycled clothing. It is five squares across and eight squares down. The monochromatic palette of the figure was limited by the clothes he wore; the black is actually sourced from the inside of the pants pockets.



[Clothes Portrait #2] Helmet, 36" x 60" (2012), by Luke Haynes. The Log Cabin squares are comprised of used and recycled clothing. Part of a series, this piece of art depicts Haynes' interest in the environments we create for ourselves through the clothes we wear and the environments we inhabit. (Collection of the artist. Photo by Gavin Ashworth, NY)

Stephen's Work

"Source materials have always been very important in my work," explains Stephen Sollins (www.stephen-sollins.com). "I have used worn household linens, television schedules, camping supply catalogs, and the daily newspaper." Sollins is not a quilter; his meticulous, analytic compositions are made from used envelopes and other mailing materials. He taught himself how to re-create the structure of a quilt by studying photographs in books, especially the museum's first quilt collection catalog, *Glorious American Quilts* (1996). It was in this publication that Sollins came across the *Blazing Star Quilt* (right), which was published only in black and white. For his composition below, he originally approached the seven-pointed star as a block, the way he surmised quilts were constructed, but discovered that the math did not work and the pieces did not fit together properly. Sollins was forced to take it apart, finally coming to the realization that this deceptive pattern required the insertion of chevrons between the points of the center star and seven separate triangular sections that meet in the center.



Untitled (Afterthought), 31 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 41 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2010), by Stephen Sollins. This piece, made with used envelopes (including printed paper, ink, pencil, acetate, and stamps) re-creates the *Starburst Crib Quilt* (above right) in the American Folk Art Museum's collection. (Courtesy Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NY. Photo by Tom Powel Imaging)

Starburst Crib Quilt, cotton, 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 44" (1880–1890), artist unknown. *Starburst*, or *Sunburst*, is an overall diamond-pieced design that typically begins with an eight-pointed star in the center. The area between each pair of points is filled with two diamond patches that initiate a row of chevrons. In this unusual quilt, the pattern is further complicated because the center star has only seven points. (Collection of American Folk Art Museum, NY. Gift of David L. Davies, 1991.29.2. Photo by Matt Hoebemann, NY)

Sollins' meticulous analytic compositions reflect his interest in using the geometry, grids, and symmetry found in quilts to approach high-modern conceptual art.

The American Folk Art Museum, located at 2 Lincoln Square, New York, NY, is the premier institution devoted to the aesthetic appreciation of traditional folk art and creative expressions of contemporary self-taught artists from the United States and abroad. This exhibit was curated by Stacy C. Hollander, American Folk Art Museum chief curator and director of exhibitions. For more information about current and upcoming exhibits, see www.folkartmuseum.org. ❖