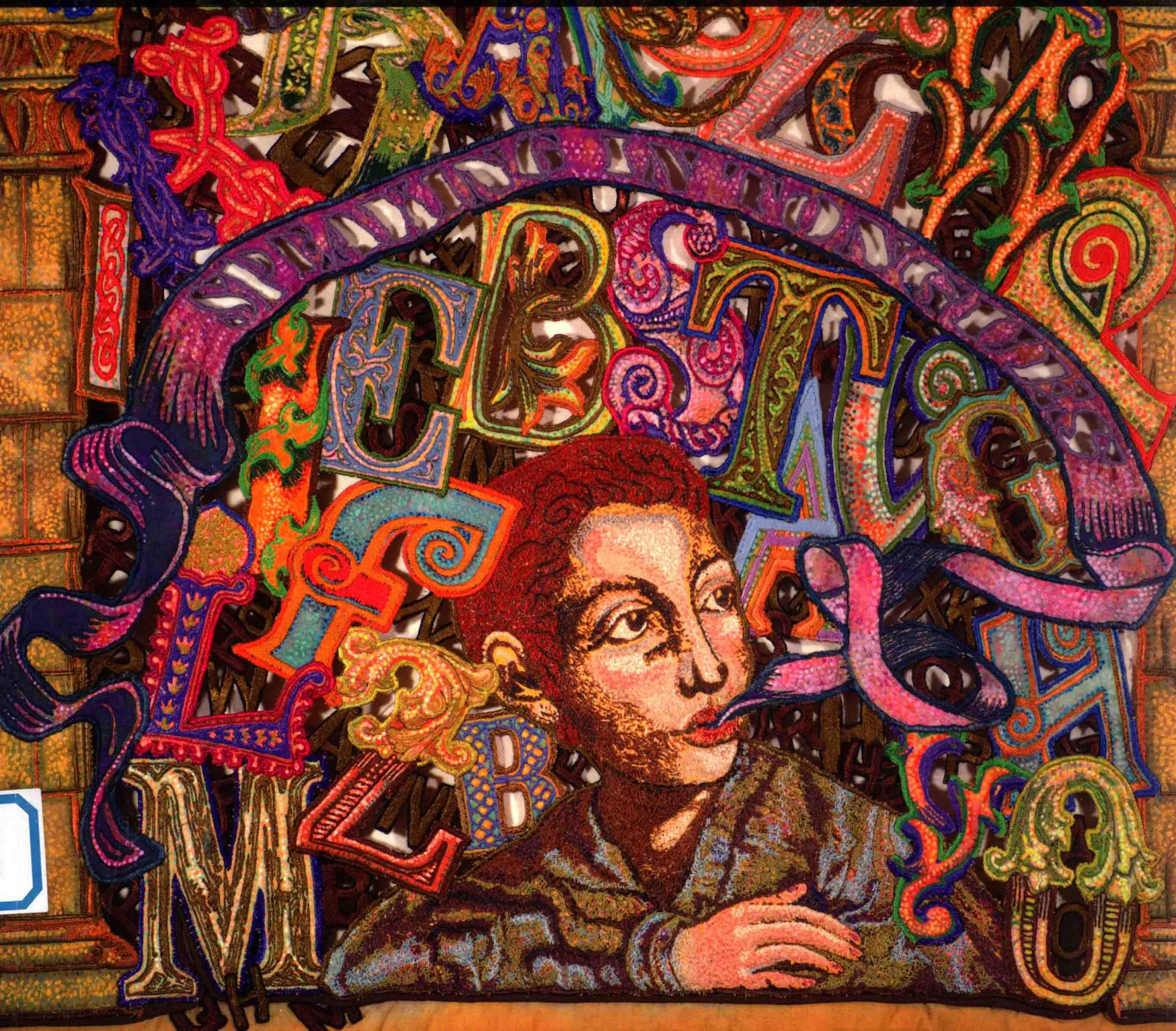
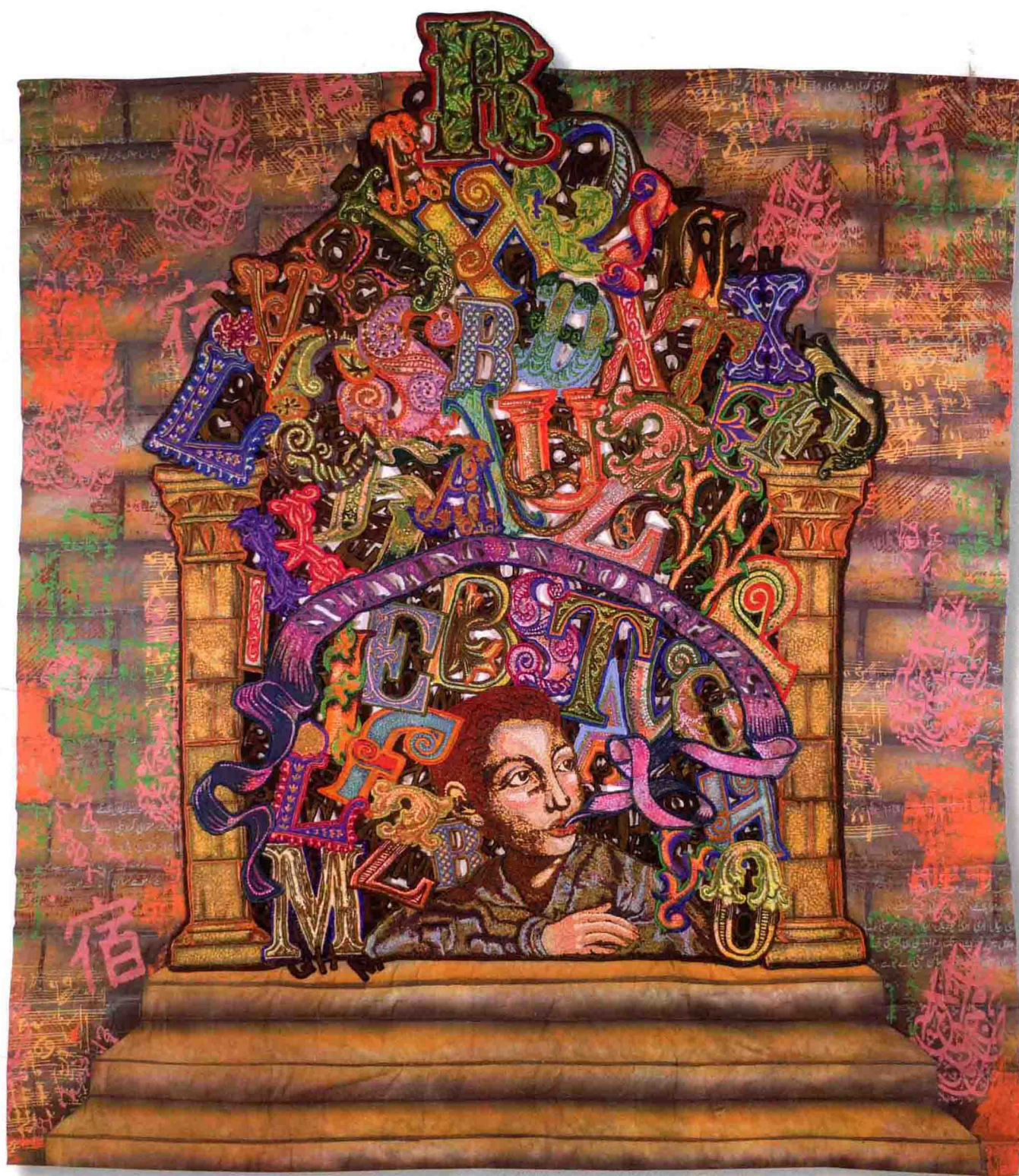


M. JOAN LINTAULT

CONNECTING QUILTS, ART & TEXTILES





M. JOAN LINTAULT: CONNECTING QUILTS, ART & TEXTILES

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my father who took me to museums while I was growing up. He gave me things even before I knew that I needed them, and always made sure I had enough paper.

To my children, Ian and Marcus, who were my dye and printing assistants; they are the reason to keep on going.

To Robert Shaw, who understands. Thank you for everything you have done.

To my Aunt Florence, who told us the best stories every summer day. I will never be able to approach the magic she gave us.

To Dorothy, who was never alarmed when meeting all sorts of different beings. She said "We aren't in Kansas anymore."

To Alice, from whom I got permission to look at things differently when I am on an adventure.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere thanks and gratitude to Linda Teufel, my publisher, for her patience. She called me up one day and gave me an offer that I couldn't refuse.

The handsome results of this book can be credited to Kim Koloski. Thank you.

I would like to acknowledge Bob Barrett, New Paltz, NY, and Dan Overturf, Carbondale, IL, who took such excellent photographs of my work.

I am eternally grateful to my friend, Debra Tays, who organized my exhibitions with such quiet generosity.

Special thanks go to my sister, Jaime Uhlenbrock, who edited my work and takes care of and helps me during terrible times.

Thank you to Anthony Thwaite for permission to print his poem *Archeology*.

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FOREWORD

Joan Lintault maintains that "Work as an artist emerges from ideas that come from the remote places of memory." As this remarkable book makes clear, Joan's memory, and therefore her art, comes from a lifetime of looking, learning and teaching, and encompasses gardens, insects, butterflies, trees, water, the Tao Te Ching, Buddhist philosophy and aesthetics, Chinese paper stencils, ancient Roman wall paintings, Hindu temple sculpture and contemporary kalamkari paintings, illuminated medieval manuscripts, 15th century Italian quilts, Japanese screens and dyeing techniques, 16th and 17th century Dutch still life paintings, Wedgwood and

Whieldon ceramics, cigar making, semiotics, memes, and the art and ideas of the likes of David, Klee, Kandinsky and Hoffman.

Like her quilts, Joan's book is rich, dense, allusive, and full of fascinating details about the intersections of nature and art and the process by which art is made, which is not from flashes of inspiration but from the sum of one's experiences and influences, from slow, laborious work and unsparing self-criticism. Her book will not teach you how to make a quilt or copy her work, but rather how an artist thinks and works and how you might become one. For those reasons, this is the best quilt how-to book I have ever encountered, and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

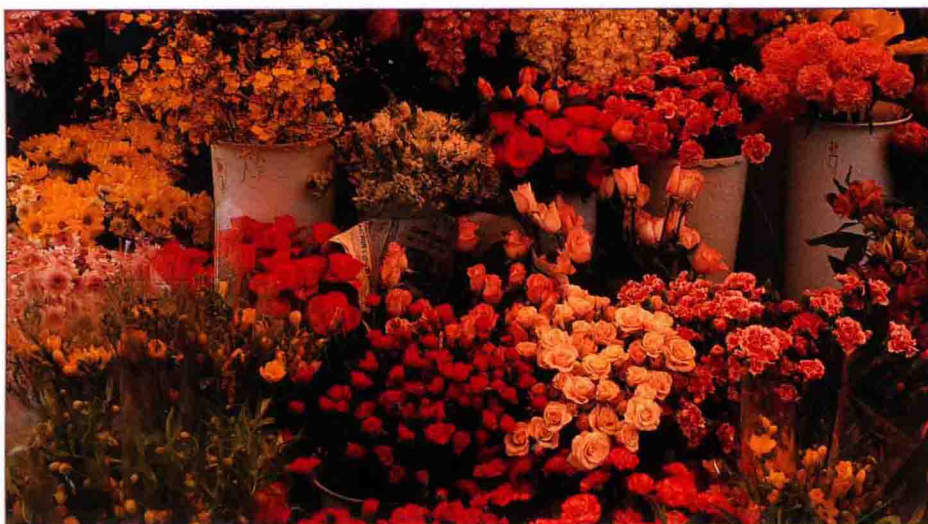
As Joan says, "Art can't be caught like the measles or come like a gift of divine grace. You can't sit around waiting for your muse. She must be actively pursued. For each person the path will be different. You must get yourself going."

I encourage anyone interested in making art to read this marvelous book and "get yourself going."

—ROBERT SHAW

AUTHOR, CONSULTANT, CURATOR,
LECTURER, APPRAISER

PHOTOGRAPHER: DAN OVERTURE



INTRODUCTION

In 1988, after having struggled with the direction of her art work for about ten years, M. Joan Lintault realized it was the quilts she had made (and liked) in the past that most “felt like her”. She credits this moment with having had an “epiphany” and focused her work more closely in this direction.

Right around that same period, Joan specifically remembers walking down a New York City street in the dead of winter when a store captured her attention. Outside and in front of the building was a very beautiful, cascading display of flowers, flowers of every description and color from different corners of the earth.

After returning home, she went into a supermarket and she was again captivated by the most incredible display of brightly lit fruit and vegetables. Her reaction was the same ---one of incredible abundance.

With these images in mind, Lintault looked more closely at artists and images that had always interested and inspired her. Of these, for example, there was the work of a 16th century Italian painter named Giuseppe Arcimboldo who painted fruits, vegetables, animals and allegorical portraits, and the 17th-century Amsterdam artist Rachel Ruysch, who painted still-life images of flowers, insects and reptiles. Other favorites included the work of the 18th-century ceramists Jacob Petit, Thomas Whieldon, and Josiah Wedgwood, who created bowls, dishes, and platters in the shape of fruit, vegetables and animals.

Through their work, they were able to turn a tabletop setting into a garden landscape.

Joan drew on past events and experiences that she had gained mostly from traveling and studying in several countries, with lessons and memories that were finally “locking in”.

Of these, her most intrinsically important experience came on a trip to Japan in 1984. While on a nine-month Fulbright Research Grant as Visiting Scholar in Kyoto to study kusakizome (grass and tree dyes), Joan developed a deep interest in Japanese aesthetics. During the course of many conversations she often told me that the best art history course she ever took was on Japanese art. She felt that there is so much emotion and spiritual richness connected with the Japanese sense of aesthetics and whose particular type of beauty evident in Japanese art is visible mainly by the use of materials. It is through this aesthetic, the beauty of simplicity and harmony in life, that things are seen as intuitive, imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. Joan refers to this idea as “the pathos of things.” When Joan left Japan it had profoundly changed the way she would approach her own work.

Another trip that had a profound impact on Joan's work was a trip to Italy to visit her sister in 1986, who was on a sabbatical leave from her University conducting art historical research. They went to museums, gardens, villas, churches, palaces and ruins, where manuscripts, frescos and wall paintings were located. In particular she was af-

ected by ancient Roman garden rooms and Renaissance techniques of wall paintings. They exhibited the beauty of the images and the complexity of the symbolism.

During the last several years, Joan has focused her research on the history of the first gardens of the world. In its earliest form, the garden was a place of bliss, offering supreme delight, portraying nature as divine presence, a place where man and nature live, in perfect harmony, a pleasure garden. The Greek word for this type of garden was *paradeisos* or paradise. It is through her quilts in her series *Evidence of Paradise* that Joan reinterprets visual images and metaphors of paradise.

The wellspring for this work comes from events, past journeys, research and a drive for personal growth. Lintault presents visual and symbolic images in an objective and unbiased way, offering the opportunity for unfettered thinking and allowing the observer to be challenged mentally.

She starts her work from raw fabric, which she then dyes, screen-prints, paints and draws on. She assembles her imagery in an openwork style using appliqué, embroidery and machine-made lace to connect it all. There is no background, only foreground, emphasizing all the elements of the quilt composition.

Although Joan places herself solidly in the textile tradition, ultimately she would like to be recognized as part of a continuum of artists who celebrate nature and paradise.

—DEBRA TAYES,

ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF FINE ART,
ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM





BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

"Begin at the
beginning,"
the King said very gravely,
"and go on till you
come to the end:
then stop."

—LEWIS CARROLL,
Alice in Wonderland, 1865

My work begins with a blank page, an image and a sentence, then with the desire to visually tell my own tale.

Each person's identity is an accumulation of the myths, rituals and legends of a cultural background merging with a life's story. We can remember where we have been, who we are right now and, because of that, what we hope to become in the future. These recollections are what make us human. All these experiences can make a tale.

Being able to tell my own story is a way of claiming my personal identity. Everything depends on the telling of the tale and the way it is told. Being able to tell a personal history can transform one from a person who is creatively trapped to one who is free.

The telling is not the end; there must be someone to listen, see, and understand.

My tales look to the past, to beginnings, and perhaps to a future path that has no end but only other beginnings.

How do we tell a tale? What will the format be; that is the first issue. For me the medium is cloth. How can I make that cloth special and make it a vital connection between my art, my tale and myself?

My work is first and foremost about the visual and formal elements of art: line, shape, color, form, negative space and positive shape, texture both real and implied and how these elements function on the picture plane I've created. I think that these elements are what make artwork powerful. The fact that I choose to use a particular arrangement of images is secondary. The images



*Anonymous Roman painter.
Garden Room at the Villa of Livia at Prima
Porta, 30 B, Museum Palazzo Massimo, Rome*

are just the subject matter but are useless unless my elements are visually arranged.

I like to talk about my work in formalist terms. I prefer not to write about my work exclusively in terms of feelings or inspirational stories. I think that people (especially quilt makers) want to be spiritually uplifted by a story, to be engaged first by the subject rather than the artistic in the work. The formalist aspects seem to be second or not at all. I am always asked to write about the inspiration behind my work. Most of the time the inspiration is not immediately evident before I start working. The inspiration evolves during the process of working and sometimes not until I am finished with a quilt.

I do like to write about what has influenced my work historically. But what drove me to choose those particular images I use is not one uplifting moment, but a lifetime of looking, reading, and being passionate about the power of the visual image.

I begin my work with white fabric because I see its possibilities. Fabric can be used in many different ways. It is an obedient, forgiving material. I want every process and technique that I use to contribute to the content of my work so I dye, print and paint my own images. The nature of fabric is that it accepts color and so it is more responsive to me. But I also like to yield to what happens with the process while I work.



*Anonymous Roman painter.
Garden Room at the Villa of
Livia at Prima Porta, 30 B,
Museum Palazzo Massimo,
Rome*

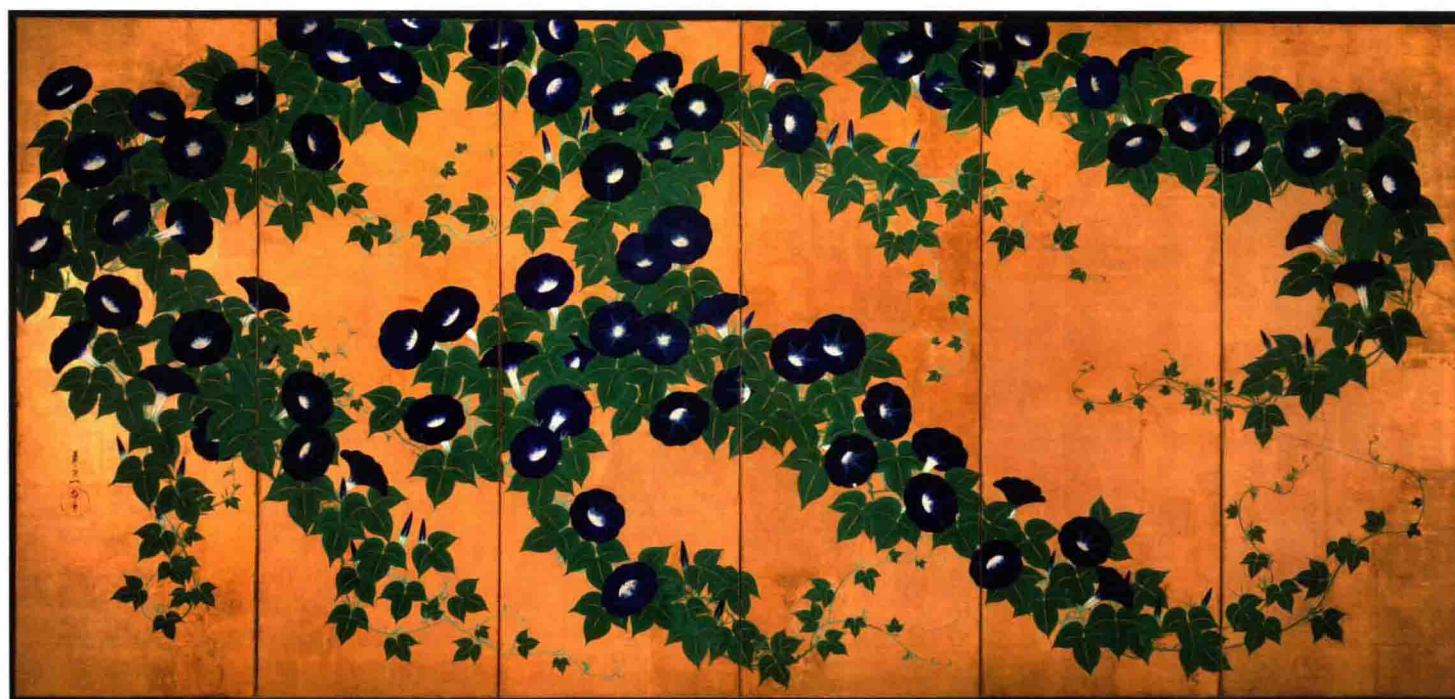
Fabric is sensual and can be manipulated. It can be made to have weight, mass and texture. Atmospheric effects can be created when fabric is translucent, transparent and reflective causing its appearance in light to be changed. For me, the result is a material with the potential for an infinite expression and expansion of form.

I place myself solidly in a textile tradition and because of that I feel free to use any textile technique that could contribute to my work. I look back in history to see where I came from, but the new comes from working as it was with my predecessors, the embroiderers, the quilters, and the lace makers who worked with fabric and thread.

Time is not a factor when I work. I do not choose to reject a technique simply because it is laborious. I base my work on geological rather than TV time. I am obsessed with every colored spot of dye and how it looks next to another colored spot. The use of my fabrics has led me to create a body of work that begins with the dyeing and printing of the fabric to its

construction on the sewing machine. Using the technique of free-motion embroidery on the sewing machine has allowed me to introduce texture and lace in my work, and to build the quilts in a unique way. My quilts are not pieced, appliquéd, constructed, sewn or quilted in the traditional way. I sew the individual elements together by quilting and using sewing machine lace and embroidery. Some of the lacework that joins the pieces together results in negative spaces. The negative spaces are the silences between the highly active, painted forms. Because of the manner in which I sew the elements together, it appears that the quilt is hanging in space. The irregular outlines of my work create a dynamic edge that frames the work and allows the outside environment to define the edge of the quilt. This enables me to eliminate the traditional ground or background that is usually used to hold the image together.

My objective is to produce a series of quilts that are motivated by metaphors and the evocative use of nature and objects. I want the technique and fabric to enhance my subject. With the basic theme of paradise and portraits, and the use of my imagery, I place myself among those artists who have established an unbroken history of works of art dealing with these themes of paradise and portraits. The subjects that I wish to address are largely traditional and symbolic, such as trees, garden, flowers, insects, animals, fruit, vegetables and various objects. These subjects offer me associations with many levels of meaning.



Japanese screens and 1st century Roman garden rooms particularly inspire me. They are historical works of art that use nature symbolism.

The wall paintings in Imperial Roman garden rooms of the late 1st-century B.C. and early 1st-century A.D. are rich in symbolism. In these rooms, people could refresh their minds while contemplating nature. The same interest in contemplation was used as the basis for Japanese screens. The images on the screens are meant to provoke an appreciation for the beauty of nature and the Japanese idea of *mono-no-aware*, the "pathos of things" and the acceptance of melancholia as an essential ingredient of life.

Having seen what inspires me you can see how these things are reflected in my work. Recently I have concentrated on the themes of paradise and portraits, presenting them in series. For my Paradise Series, I have chosen trees, leaves, flowers, fruit, vegetables and insects for similar reasons. I want to construct the character of nature and paradise from its smaller, more intricate parts. I also want to bring a perpetual summer indoors, from the cool of the forest to the heat of the meadow and to the whine of insects in the grass.

My love of nature began when I was a child and I spent the summer with my sister and cousins at my uncle's farm. I loved the barns, animals, insects, flowers, mountains, creek

Suzuki Kiitsu (Japanese 1796-1858). Morning Glories, Japanese, Edo period, six-panel folding screen; ink, color, and gold on gilded paper, 70 3/16 x 149 1/2 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Seymour Fund, 1954 (54.69.2). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art