



CONTEMPORARY QUILT ART

An Introduction and Guide, Kate Lenkowsky; Indiana University Press, Bloomington/USA 2008, ISBN 978-0-253-3512-1; 288 pages, 143 colour ill., English text; US\$ 34.95

The author of this book, a quilter since the 1990s, feels that her country's most prominent quilt artists are neglected by the art world, so she sets out to give them the attention they deserve. She introduces 20 quilt artists, presenting several pieces by each with an accompanying text comment. The selection criteria are not mentioned, but the fact that she places much emphasis on naming awards, and listing museum purchases and exhibitions, suggests that her perspective is of a collector interested in art as an investment, oriented around the values of gallery owners and insurance companies who, according to the author, merit attention as partners for artists.

The book is in three sections, beginning with a general introduction on quilts describing their evolution from bedcover to art object over the past 40 years. This section is well researched by an author who has obviously interviewed all renowned experts, and has a large body of up-to-date information.

The second part consists of the artist portraits discussed earlier.

The third section is unusual in that Kate Lenkowsky has compiled a handbook for dealers and collectors where readers can find many practical references to educational institutions, galleries and museum collections active in this field, and to exhibitions providing visitors with an overview of the art quilt scene. This chapter also discusses the pricing of quilts, representation of artists by galleries, and insurance costs for art quilts, usually by specialists in the respective fields. The focus is always on pro-

fessional artists, i.e. those able to make a living from their art. The author claims that of the ca. 1,600 SAQA (Studio Art Quilt Associates) members, 320 are 'professionals'! I suspect that in all of Europe, we would not arrive at such a number even if textile artists of all disciplines were combined. Over here, most 'professional' textile artists have a first or second job lecturing or working in some other field related to textile art. Thus Europeans have much to catch up on in this respect!

The book concludes with an impressively long list of US museums offering quilt collections, a list of quilt artists' websites, a bibliography on the subject, and the biographies of the 20 quilt artists presented. A list of "important worldwide exhibitions" reveals gaps in the information provided, and shows that the author is less familiar with events beyond the borders of her home country. As an example, Scottish artist Pauline Burbidge appears in US publications because American collections have Burbidge quilts. While the European Quilt Foundation (a small Dutch family business) and the Birmingham Quilt Festival are mentioned in the section on exhibition organisers, probably due to the fact that communication with them is easy for speakers of English, the book omits the important Carrefour du Patchwork in Alsace, or the European Quilt Triennial held in Heidelberg.

The book exudes a conservative and distinguished spirit, offers impeccable print quality, and is crammed with information for quilters and their cultural community; thus it merits inclusion in any quilt library! *Beatrijs Sterk*