

## QUILTS IN WOMEN'S LIVES

by Nina Antze

Nina Antze is a quilt teacher in the Santa Rosa, CA area and a first time contributor

At a recent showing of the film QUILTS IN WOMEN'S LIVES, I heard filmmaker Pat Ferraro speak. I thoroughly enjoyed the film and decided to learn more about this non-quilter who made a film, not just about quilters, but for quilters.

Pat Ferraro is a filmmaker, anthropologist, curator, and teacher. She presently is an Ass't Prof at S.F. State Univ. in the Center for Experimental and Interdisciplinary Arts. Her interest in quiltmaking goes back many years to a love for folk art and traditional art in general. As a teen-ager, living in the U.N. Village in New York City, Pat was exposed to the traditional folk arts of many cultures, and as a painter became particularly interested in the universal aspects of children's art. In the sixties when she moved to S.F., she became Director of Educ. at the Int'n Child Art Center. In 1965, Pat was joined in S.F. by her college friends from the Univ. of Michigan, Linda Reuther and Julie Silber who later opened Ma Strickler's Quilt, a store specializing in selling 19th century quilts. With Linda, Julie and Ann Shapiro, Pat co-curated a show of 19th century quilts at the S.F. Art Institute entitled, QUILTS IN WOMEN'S LIVES in 1976. It was at this time she decided to do the film.

And so for the past four years, Pat traveled around Calif., interviewing quiltmakers, researching the subject, raising funds, and producing, directing, and editing the film. She visited dozens of women before she began to narrow her choice. Because of costs, she needed to be fairly sure that she had what she wanted before they actually filmed. Nonetheless, there were scenes that had to be reshot and a lot of film edited.

Susannah Calderon, one of the women in the film, said, "It was terrifying at first" to be in front of the camera, but Pat had succeeded over months of interviews and visits in making the participants feel comfortable and trusting. It became evident that a filmmaker spends hours talking and listening to people to help them feel relaxed and self-assured enough to express themselves in front of a camera. Then comes the hours of filming as well as the time with the editor to get what she wants in the film. It is no small task to have it all come together smoothly.

What Pat mainly wanted to convey with the film was the "passion of quiltmaking", why

women do it, and what it does for them. She chose the women in the film more for the feelings they expressed than for their expertise in quiltmaking. She spent a lot of time in a large Mennonite community in the Central Valley of Calif. talking to the women in the quilting bees and then following the quilts to the Annual Auction.

Pat found Lucy Hilty in Berkeley, who was brought up in the Mennonite traditions and was able to articulate how that upbringing influenced her quiltmaking. In the film, Susannah Calderon explains how quiltmaking helps her work out her love of nature. Nora Lee Condra sees the needle going in and out as a form of prayer. Radka Donnell finds "her voice and authenticity" in her work. Both Grace Earl and Lucy Hilty came to quiltmaking in rural communities. For both it seems to be a link with their mothers, something they did, coming full circle as it were. The film ends with the Miller sisters, Christine and Hortense, who have been quilting together for 25 years. There is a wonderful competitiveness between them but also a closeness so deep they echo each others words and phrases. The film succeeds beautifully in showing the women's passion for quiltmaking. Each woman has found something very meaningful and rewarding in her life. We look behind their beautiful quilts and see the richness of purpose that quiltmaking gives the quiltmaker.

QUILTS IN WOMEN'S LIVES premiered at the San Francisco Film Festival in 1980 and has been excitedly received everywhere it has been shown. It won first place awards at both Sonoma and Mann County Film Festivals. It will be shown this fall at the N.Y. Int'l Film Festival and at the Margaret Mead Film Festival. It will also be shown continuously at the Oakland Museum where Pat, Julie and Linda are co-curating a large show of 19th century quilts, entitled "AMERICAN QUILTS: A HANDMADE LEGACY" which opens Jan. 13, 1981 for approximately three months.

For information on sale or rental, contact Pat Ferraro, 908 Rhode Island St, S.F. CA 94107 or phone 415/826-2791.

PARTIAL LIST OF CHARLES PRATT'S QUILTS			
YEAR MADE	TITLE	1ST PRIZES WON	NO. OF PIECES
1920	<u>Liberty or Death</u>	37	14,220
1923	<u>Rock of Ages</u>	44	18,125
1926	<u>Penn's Treaty</u>	36	14,577
1927	<u>Ninety &amp; Nine</u>	47	19,868
1929	<u>Lamb of Peace</u>	45	19,479
1930	<u>Ruth &amp; Naomi</u>	39	30,400