

## THE ARTIST & THE QUILT

*THE ARTIST & THE QUILT*, ed by Charlotte Robinson. Alfred A Knopf. 144 pp. \$12.95 paperback

by Bets Ramsey

*This review, published with permission, appeared in the CHATTANOOGA TIMES weekly quilt column by Bets Ramsey on 12/15/83.*

When I first learned of the Artist and the Quilt project several years ago, I was intrigued.

Reports by several of the quilters kept me informed of progress. A handsome book, *THE ARTIST AND THE QUILT*, is the culmination of the seven-year project which began during the Bicentennial year.

Although Charlotte Robinson is the guiding force behind the project, she generously gives credit to the assistance of scores of enthusiastic artists, quilters and volunteer workers.

Robinson edited the book, which presents her memoirs of the project, provocative essays by Miriam Shapiro, Lucy Lippard and Eleanor Munro, and accounts of the collaborative process between artists and quilters. Sketches, paintings and photographs of work in process help clarify, from concept to conclusion, the quilting process.

Ms Shapiro began to cross over from pure painting to collage with fabric in the late '60s. From quilters she learned to add a new dimension to her artistic vocabulary...

"Our art has been changed by a profound involvement with the ideas and materiality found in quilts and other useful and decorative arts," Ms Shapiro says...

Ms Lippard examines feminist art, "high" and "low" art, social acceptance and academic attitudes, arts and crafts and other thorny issues relevant to women in art.

The project was designed for an artist to conceive a work and execute it into a finished piece, which was then interpreted by a quilter into a new form.

Interaction between such teams of artists as Isabel Bishop/Wenda F von Chamberlin and Charlotte Robinson/Bonnie Persinger enables the reader of the book to see the obstacles and pleasures of working together.

Here one better understands the painters and grasps the challenge to the quilters, while fitting another piece into the puzzle of the women's movement.

I regard this as an important book for both artists and quilters to read. Perhaps the next project will allow the quilters to form the concept, to be interpreted by the painters.

by Wendy Howe

*Wendy Howe is a quiltmaker, lecturer and until recently, co-owner of the Wild Goose Chase in Pacific Grove, Calif. This review, printed with permission, appeared in THE MONTEREY PENINSULA HERALD in the fall '83.*

Most quilt books fall into two categories those that teach and those that inspire through wonderful photographs. *THE ARTIST AND THE QUILT* falls into neither category, and frankly, it makes me nervous. It contains sentences such as "Since the new wave of feminist art began around 1970, the quilt has become the prime visual metaphor for women's lives, for women's culture."

The authors of *THE ARTIST & THE QUILT* had artists do designs that were then translated into quilts by quilters. The book contains a lot of text, much of it having to do with art and a lot of it dealing with feminism. The phrase "the marriage of fine art and folk art" helps explain what they set out to accomplish. The color photographs are wonderful of the newly designed and executed pieces as well as of the antique quilts depicted in the first chapters. I think I would really rather see quilts that were designed by the quilters who made them (they could appropriately call themselves "quilt artists") and leave the artists and feminists to other pursuits.



*Ed note: When my friend Sue McCarter presented me with *THE ARTIST & the QUILTMAKER* even the title upset me. It set the mood for the book and presented the premise that the quiltmaker was not an artist*

*Those of us who know and love the works of Chris Wolfe Edmonds, Judy Mathieson and Pat Newkirk (to mention only a few of the talented quiltmakers who worked on these quilts) know that these quiltmakers are fine artists and certainly very capable of designing and executing their own quilts.*

*I enjoyed Jean Federico's chapter on "American Quilts: 1770-1880" and I read with interest the other essays. The photography of the old and new quilts was excellent. I would be interested in hearing from others as to their opinion.*