

Uncoverings 2012

Volume 33 of
the Research Papers of
the American Quilt Study Group

Edited by Lynne Zacek Bassett



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*Presented at Lincoln, Nebraska
October 3–7, 2012*

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Published by the American Quilt Study Group
1610 L. Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Manufactured in the United States

Uncoverings is indexed in:
America: History and Life
ARTbibliographies
BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art)
Clothing and Textile Arts Index
Feminist Periodicals
Historical Abstracts
MLA International Bibliography
Sociological Abstracts

ISBN 10 digit 1-877859-28-1
ISBN 13 digit 978-1-877859-28-1
ISSN 0277-0628
Library of Congress catalog number: 81-649486

Cover illustration:
Jean Ray Laury,
Box Illusions, 1981
Cotton and cotton/polyester
72 x 72 inches
International Quilt Study Center & Museum 2010.014.0024



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 *Preface*

The authors published in this volume presented their papers at the annual seminar of the American Quilt Study Group in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2012. On the surface, it would seem that these four studies represent widely divergent topics, but in fact, their subjects are connected by common threads.

The intention to relate an historical event or tell a story through quilts is a topic explored by two papers. Kitty Ledbetter examines textiles printed with Mexican War subjects, used in quilts from the Winterthur Museum collection and the Winedale Quilt Collection at the Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas. Gloria Comstock Craft examines the motivation and process of Hortense Horton Beck in making her “museum picture” quilts—reproductions of America’s masterpiece appliqué quilts, “with scenes of people, animals, buildings, and floral arrangements that told a story.”

Examining a public reaction to war arises again in the paper of Mary Ellen Ducey and Joan Laughlin, who strive to solve the mystery of “The Palladian Quilt.” Made soon after World War I, this quilt likely honors a man who, along with many other Americans in the second decade of the 20th century, questioned the necessity of the United States’ participation in the war—a horrifyingly bloody conflict brought on by European imperial ambitions and, in the minds especially of those Americans involved in the new labor unions, the desire of “the capitalistic class” to expand their



markets. Military leaders from the Mexican War are heroicized in the prints examined by Kitty Ledbetter. Like World War I, Americans were divided over the Mexican War. In the end, the war had a tremendous impact on American history and culture, fulfilling the belief in Manifest Destiny but adding greatly to the tensions that ultimately brought about the Civil War.

The Quilt Revival of the last quarter of the 20th century is discussed in two papers, though with completely opposite subjects. While Hortense Horton Beck made her magnificent reproductions of historic quilts, nine California artists broke new ground with their art quilts, as examined by Nancy Bavor. For all of these women, quilting answered a personal need to create art and to mentor the next generation—though one did this by looking back, and the others did this by looking forward.

Together, these papers reveal how quilt studies offer valuable insights into history as well as contemporary issues.

Lynne Zacek Bassett
Editor