

## DEMYSTIFYING THE NJS ENTRY CATEGORIES

by Vivian Kapusta

I've been asked to do what is almost impossible—to define art terms as they apply to quilting! Wise sages have argued the finer points of art terms since the beginning of time. What I will do is attempt to clarify the art terms as they apply to the *National Juried Show* entry categories for wallquilts.

### From the CQA/ACC Entry Form Categories:

1. *Original Design Realistic Pictorial Wallquilts depict subject matter in an accurate and realistic manner and demonstrate personal expression and originality in design, colour and/or techniques*

The source may be an experience that the quilt maker had or an image of a real event or a person, place or thing. The quilt maker attempts to reproduce that event, expressing it through their own eyes. Colour, proportion and line will closely show the viewer the subject matter as it existed at a particular time and place.

2. *Original Design Abstract Pictorial Wallquilts Quilts depict subject matter in an abstract manner and demonstrate personal expression and originality in design, colour and/or techniques.*

The image may not be a specific viewed event or photo source and is not intended to be a true reproduction. This image is something that the viewer can name or describe and all viewers would have a similar description. However, the artist uses the artist's prerogative to alter the image. There may be simplification or distortion of the original image, some aspects of the image may be removed or there may be additions to enable the artist to tell the story in their own way.

3. *Original Design Nonrepresentational Wallquilts Quilts have no recognizable subject matter and demonstrate personal expression and originality in design, colour and/or techniques.*

To quote Robert Genn:

"Abstraction generally involves implication, suggestion and mystery rather than obvious description. Like a good poem, a good abstraction attacks your feelings before your understanding."

So—each person, when looking at a non-representative expressive abstract work of art, will feel an emotion (positive or negative) and that may evoke a personal connection. A viewer is free to describe what the image means to them personally. Colours and line may suggest subject matter, but each viewer will draw on their own life experiences and bring those experiences to the image. This is art without specific images of places, persons or things. It often doesn't have a title and may be part of a series where the quilt maker is continuing to experiment with an idea.

You might think of Robert Bateman, who paints wildlife scenes that you could walk right into, as an *Original Design Realistic Pictorial* painter. Henri Matisse, who simplified gardens in a dream-like abstract

pictorial way, could be described as an *Original Design Abstract Pictorial* painter. Pablo Picasso, who abstracted humans so that they are barely recognizable—is still abstract pictorial. Finally, Jackson Pollock, who was in the forefront of abstract expressionist movement and produced art that generates conversation but is hard to describe, would be: *Nonrepresentational* painter.

### The Jurying and Judging process:

The jury and the judges will consider all categories from two viewpoints: technique and design. Technique and design elements need to enhance each other to create an expression of your expertise.

All quilts are judged on the quality and appropriateness of techniques for each specific quilt. Emphasis will change slightly for each category. The commonalities for all categories will be expert sewing and construction, balanced with skilful colour and design choices. The design will be judged on the impact on the viewer. The design needs to be compelling and draw the viewer to look closer. Ultimately, the best quilts in all categories will be memorable for the viewer!

The following examples are from my work.

Example One: *Original Design Realistic Pictorial*

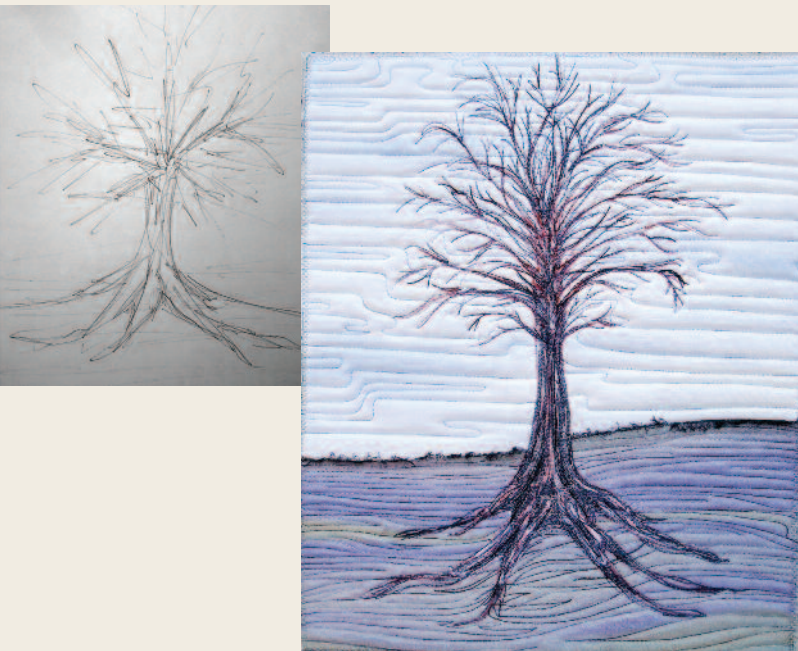
*Seagull*: Although I changed the colour of the background, the seagull and pilings are easily identifiable and the scene remains intact. My photo was the design source and inspiration—this art quilt is—Category #1.





Example Two: *Original Design Abstract Pictorial*

*Impression of Winter*. Note the sketch was used as a beginning for this abstract pictorial piece. Sketches simplify both the object and the background. The viewer can still identify the tree, even in a somewhat abstract setting—this art quilt is—Category #2.



A Dilemma:

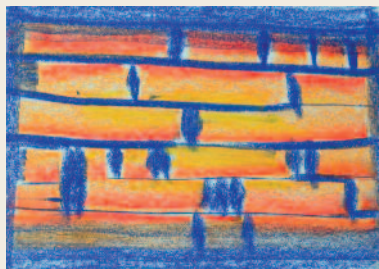
Here is the problem: some quilts do not clearly fit into a category. There is a gradual movement along a scale from #1 category of realistic pictorial representation to #2 category of abstract pictorial with slight to major abstraction, and then to #3 nonrepresentational. We may not be able to easily identify where one category ends and the other starts. At that point, as the quilt maker, you need to make a choice.



*Spring*: I had an image of springtime in my mind when I designed the Spring quilt and used colours denoting spring. The flowered fabrics symbolize the season and I would choose *Abstract Pictorial* category because most people would interpret it as spring-like.

Example Three: *Original Design Nonrepresentational*

*Fire and Darkness* started in my sketchbook, the design became a journal quilt and then was abstracted further to a large piece. When a design comes from your imagination, it portrays the feelings around an image. Fire and darkness was the image in my mind, others may see something else. In this example, all 3 images are #3 nonrepresentational.



*Untitled*: I could use the same design shapes in black and white fabrics, this design would have strong contrasting value, without hints for the viewer as to the subject matter. New shapes appear. It would be *Nonrepresentational*.

If you are still not sure of which category to enter, consult with other quilters who enter shows. They see your finished project with new eyes! Note: design decisions you use as a quilter are the same as a painter uses. That makes you an artist who works in fabric!

Here is the solution:

In consultation with the quilt maker, the CQA/ACC jury coordinator may now move a piece to a more appropriate category. This will enable the piece to be judged on the criteria for the appropriate category.

Hopefully, this article will help clarify the art terms used in the categories and make it easier for you to decide on which category to use when submitting your work to the CQA/ACC National Juried Show.