



The language of quilts

As part of its 30th anniversary celebrations, Quilt Art is staging two touring exhibitions of new work opening this month

THE 18 ARTISTS that form Quilt Art may take the quilt as their starting point but they remain diverse in their interpretation. Their work does not necessarily conform to the traditional definition of a quilt, and several members have backgrounds in other textile and art disciplines. Some experiment with paint, dye and print, unusual materials and methods of display or three dimensions. Some work with technology, using digitally programmed embroidery or photographic techniques. Others confine themselves to fabric and thread, feeling that their expressive potential is far from exhausted. But all are united by their passion for fabric, stitch, colour and texture and the limitless creative possibilities of the textile surface. The first such group in Europe, Quilt Art was founded in Britain in 1985 to develop the quilt as an artistic medium and promote its recognition as an art form. At the time there were few exhibiting

opportunities for artists whose work was experimental and sometimes challenging. The Quilters' Guild recognised this need and selected the first eight members to form a new group with the title Quilt Art. After a few years operating under the umbrella of the Guild, Quilt Art became independent and self-supporting and now has the status of an educational charity. The founder members included well-known artists such as Pauline Burbidge, Mary Fogg, Dinah Prentice and Michele Walker. Another was Inge Hueber from Germany, who was instrumental in attracting members from elsewhere in Europe. One of the unusual features of Quilt Art is its international membership. Today more than half the artists come from outside the UK – from Ireland, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and Hungary, with one American member. For many years, Quilt Art was the only group of its kind, but today there are numerous exhibiting groups across the

UK and Europe, along with many more opportunities to show work. The group responds to the challenge of producing innovative work by maintaining a small but rigorously selected membership of leading practitioners who exhibit nationally and internationally. Their work has been acquired by public institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, the American Museum of Arts & Design in New York and the International Quilt Study Center in Nebraska, as well as by numerous private collectors. Quilt Art mounts travelling exhibitions every two or three years, and this month sees the opening of two exhibitions: *Dialogues* at The Quilt Museum in York and *Small Talk* at The Silk Museum, Macclesfield. The accompanying book includes a text by the quilt historian and academic Dr Susan Marks, illustrated with artworks from both. ●

Sara Impey

www.quiltart.eu



Dialogues is at The Quilt Museum in York from 11 September-31 October; Small Talk opens at The Silk Museum, Macclesfield 16 September-30 October. A book accompanying the shows is available at show venues and from www.quiltart.eu priced £18 plus P&P

It is with much sadness that Quilt Art heard of the death of Allie Kay on 14 July. Allie, who lived in Ireland, had been a member since 2009. Her beautiful work and her valuable and insightful artistic input will be greatly missed by the group.



- 1 Sara Impey, *Hustings*, 2013. 129 x 129cm. PHOTO: KEVIN HEAD
- 2 Val Jackson, *The Lilac Dress (detail)*, 2014. PHOTO: THOMAS VALENTINE
- 3 Fenella Davies, *Seam/stress Bloodline*, 2014. 100 x 124cm. PHOTO: MATT LINCOLN
- 4 Allie Kay, (l-r) *Happy Days*, *Contained*, *Fractured* and *Phantom*, 2014. 350 x 100 x 10cm. PHOTO: ROB LAMB
- 5 Dirkje van der Horst Beetsma, *Skoda 1*, 2013. 28 x 594cm. PHOTO: WORLDONPHOTO.COM.NL