

# Asking "Material Pulses" Artists What Really Matters

June 28, 2016

## Part I

If you find yourself walking through the OAC's Riffe Gallery wondering, "How do they do that?" The answer to that mysterious question is simpler than it may seem, though, it's definitely not easy. In short interviews with *Material Pulses* artists, curator Nancy Crow discovers the what, how, and why behind the artistic process of these large-scale quilts. In Part I, we explore the importance of medium and discipline.

### DISCIPLINE

Making art isn't all talent—discipline is key. Time dedicated to personal development can yield improvements in technical skill and craft, encourage new discoveries, and lead to epiphany moments. *Material Pulses* artists talk about how they keep sharp and continue to push themselves and their work (sometimes literally) to new heights:



L to R: Mary Lou Alexander, Claire Benn, Elizabeth Brandt, Jayne Willoughby.

#### **MARY LOU ALEXANDER | Hubbard, Ohio**

"I am committed to expanding and improving my skills with twice-yearly workshops in the US and overseas, and I take advantage of local opportunities to learn whenever they arise. For

me, the process of making art has always been primary. It's about the doing, not the having; about the making, not the product."

**CLAIRE BENN | Betchworth, Surrey, UK**

"I spend more time in my studio than anywhere else; just me, the idea, the materials, and the work."

**ELIZABETH BRANDT | Holland, Michigan**

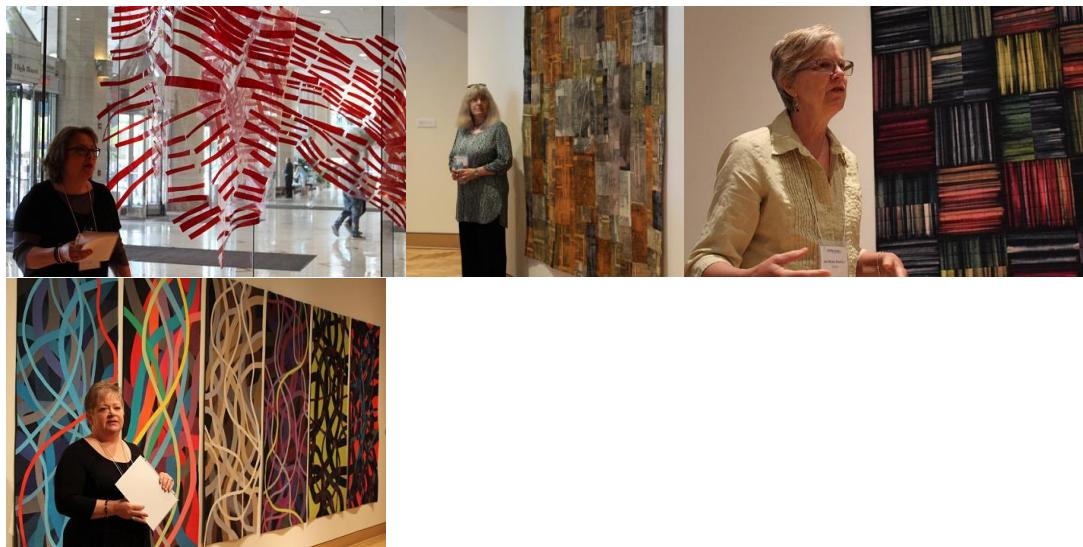
"It is not hard for me to be disciplined--I love going into the studio anytime I can. I figure the more I work, the more I develop."

**JAYNE WILLOUGHBY | Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**

"I am always growing as an artist. If I'm not creating art, I'm developing ideas, doing research, talking about art and creativity, teaching, or dealing with art business."

**MEDIUM**

In order to create, an artist must first choose her materials. Maybe a mentor or colleague encouraged its use, or perhaps it's always been a part of her life, or sometimes, the medium finds the artist. Learn more about fabric love affairs:



L to R: Christine Mauersberger, Barb Wills, Jan Myers-Newbury, Denise L. Roberts

**CHRISTINE MAUERSBERGER | Cleveland, Ohio**

"I choose to use fabric and other fiber-based materials because these things hold a deep connection to my formative years."

**BARB WILLS | Prescott, Arizona**

"I love the ability to dye, cut, stitch and print on fabric like no other medium."

### **JAN MYERS-NEWBURY | Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

"I started stitching into fabric when I was four years old, and it feels like breathing to me."

### **DENISE L. ROBERTS | Albright, West Virginia**

"There are many processes involved in working with fabric—dyeing, composing, piecing, quilting, and finishing work. I love them all."

*Material Pulses: 8 Viewpoints* is a display of contemporary machine-quilting and surface design by eight international artists. On view in the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery through July 16. Admission to the Gallery is always free.

## **Part II**

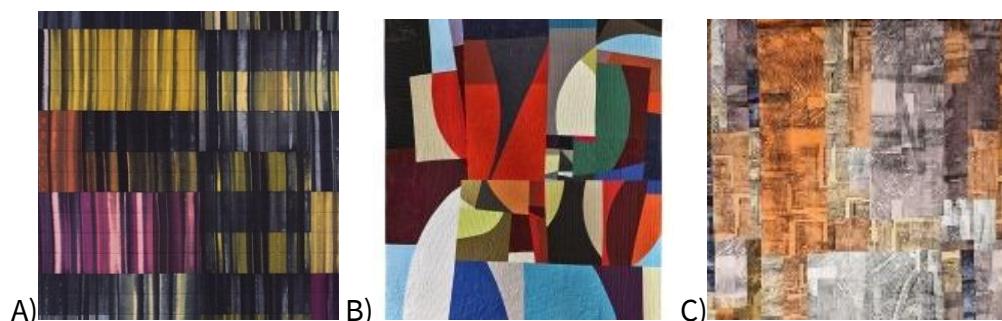
In this guessing-game sequel to "Asking *Material Pulses* Artists What Really Matters: Part I," we learn about the artist-coveted place of solace: the studio, and what drives them: ideas.

*Material Pulses* artists simply and powerfully convey the personal importance of each of these aspects of their creative processes—some artists seem to work and find inspiration in similar places and ways, yet their artwork differs greatly. See if you're up to the challenge and match the artist's quotes (represented by numbers) with their pieces (represented by letters). Find the answers at the bottom of this post—no peeking!

### **STUDIO**

Entire buildings to home offices—*Material Pulses* artists talk about their personal creative spaces:

- 1) "I use a two story building with 20' high walls, large windows, views of the forest and large work spaces."
- 2) "My studio is an old cottage which was part of my husband's family resort on Lake Macatawa. It is a few steps from my home."
- 3) "My studio is my private space and my focus, where the world falls away."
- 4) "My design studio is a light-filled aerie on the third floor of my home; I have one design wall 8' x 10' and work on one piece at a time. Fabric is dyed in my basement."





D)

## IDEAS

Some artists' ideas are sparked by a general concept, others let their subconscious run wild with improvisational techniques. Learn about where art starts for these artists:

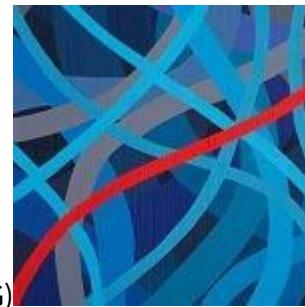
- 5) "Often, my work is inspired by quotes or poems. Usually, there is a reference to a political theme or to the natural world."
- 6) "Working in an improvisational manner produces many seed ideas."
- 7) "I generate ideas by thinking, reading, walking, and by noticing something new each day."
- 8) "My creative ideas come from everything I do and everywhere I go."



E)



F)



G)



H)

## CLUES

Need a hint? Read these short artist statements specifically about the *Material Pulses* artwork on display in the Riffe Gallery. The numbers reflect the ones above (quote 1 below and quote

1 above are by the same artist). Now, which piece of art belongs to which voice?

- 1) "My work incorporates imagery from my surroundings and mark-making in woodcut plate marks. Construction focuses on layers of marks moving across each piece."
- 2) "I wanted to explore greatly simplified forms combined with a dark, vibrating palette."
- 3) "[Some of my work is] a response to the vastness, emptiness, and simplicity of New Mexico and the adobe structures. 'Panchakarma' represents a meditation."
- 4) "This work is a departure from the arashi shibori that typified my production for 20 years."
- 5) "These quilts are inspired by the poem 'The Second Coming' by William Butler Yeats written in 1921: 'Things fall apart, the center cannot hold...'"
- 6) "Your mind is a fog where a thousand people talk at the same time, which the Toltecs called a mitote (pronounced MIH-TOE'-TAY). This series represents the "mitote" in my mind."
- 7) "We are obsessed with the concept of time, and yet we cannot see it. I think about whether it is possible to see time. In my work, the lines correlate to my own movements in time and space."
- 8) "I am fascinated by the veil as an object of clothing, and as a well-used metaphor for hiding some truth. These works explore the process of discovery of things humans keep hidden in attempt to fit into society."

*Material Pulses: 8 Viewpoints* is on view in the [Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery](#) through July 16. Admission is always free.

## **ANSWERS**

(1&C—Barb Wills) (2&B—Elizabeth Brandt) (3&D—Claire Benn) (4&A—Jan Myers-Newbury) (5&E—Mary Lou Alexander) (6&G—Denise L. Roberts) (7&H—Christine Mauersberger) (8&F—Jayne Willoughby)

## **ABOUT THE RIFFE GALLERY**

The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery showcases the work of Ohio's artists and the collections of the state's museums and galleries. The Riffe Gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, across from the Statehouse on High Street in Downtown Columbus. Like the Riffe Gallery on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Instagram](#).

## **ABOUT THE OHIO ARTS COUNCIL**

The Ohio Arts Council is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. Connect with the OAC on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), or visit our website at [oac.ohio.gov](http://oac.ohio.gov).