



Our creative teacher this month is
Sue Dennis

Her specialty
Art quilts

Where she teaches
Australia & beyond

Find her at
www.suedennis.com
(for information on workshops & entry forms for World Quilt & Textile)

Not many people can say their quilting career kicked off in a mining region where the dramatic, sometimes harsh, natural environment inspired their work. Sue Dennis can. It was when her husband's work took her to Mt. Isa, in North-West Queensland, that the stitching bug bit. Since then she has become a sought after teacher, the Studio Arts Quilts Associates (SAQA) Oceania representative, the World Quilt & Textile Australian coordinator and an award winning designer in her own right.



Above: Sue Dennis. Right: Opal Fever workshop, Ballarat Quilting Weekend 2008



With a husband in mining geology, Sue Dennis has lived in some of Australia's most dramatic landscapes and it was in 1990, while attending a TAFE course in Mt. Isa, that she discovered patchwork.

She joined the local quilting group in the area and was soon experimenting with the rotary cutter, machine piecing and quilting and generally "doing her own thing". Before long Sue had a class plan in place and headed to Isa Uniforms and Fabrics to suggest she introduce a beginner's class.

"The TAFE course was very basic," she says. "You didn't even get to make a quilt. I thought I could put a popular course together that showed people how to make great quilts fairly quickly." Eventually she was teaching four nights a week and tutoring on the weekends for the Queensland Arts Council. "It was great," she says, looking back. "Groups in remote places like Julia Creek - 632 km west of Townsville - could apply for grants then I, usually with a friend, would load up the 4WD with fabrics and supplies and drive out to teach."

Today Sue lives in Brisbane but she still covers many miles on teaching engagements. She's known for her relaxed, stress free classroom approach as much as for her distinctive and colourful patterns and designs.

"I don't like to put unrealistic expectations on students," she says. "I have a two day workshop called

'Opal Fever' where people can almost get their quilt finished ... But I assess and adjust things as we go. People don't learn when they're stressed."

Sue's earliest quilting days, away from urban design influences, may have helped develop the unique and striking style now present in her own art quilts. Inspired by the landscape, her travels, fabrics picked up along the way, politics and more, Sue says, from early on, she felt she wanted other people to see her work.

Links

- www.saqa.com
- www.qldquilters.com
- www.worldquilt.com

"When Pauline Rogers (from Toowoomba's Quilters World) came through town in the 1990s looking for works to exhibit at a symposium I showed her my quilt called 'Indonesia Journey No.1 - To the temple' ... later when I began sending work away to competitions or exhibitions, I would pay close attention to the critique sheets you got back. They showed me how I could improve my techniques."


Though Sue now has numerous prizes to her credit and her work is shown in exhibitions throughout Australia, the USA, the UK, Europe, the Middle East, South Africa and New Zealand, one of her proudest achievements remains the quilt held in the collection of the

Immigration Museum in Melbourne.

"My Dad escaped Czechoslovakia with nothing but a suitcase. My quilt features images of the suitcase plus a story written using free machine writing. I felt my deceased father was watching over me as I created that work," says Sue.

On top of achievements such as this Sue continues to put great energy into the quilting community locally. A judge and valuer, she also serves as the Australian coordinator for World Quilt & Textile, gathering quilts to send to the USA for judging at the World Quilt Show in New England.

In this capacity as Oceania representative for Studio Art Quilt Associates, Inc. (SAQA) - a non-profit organisation for the promotion "of the art quilt through education, exhibitions, professional development and documentation" Sue is curating the group's first exhibition from 7 - 22 February 2009 at Gallery, 159 Payne Rd, The Gap, Brisbane. She is also curator of the inaugural State of the Art Quilt 09 which launches at the Gold Coast Craft & Quilt Fair in March 2009 (see page 128 for details).

Already 2009 is promising to be a hectic year for Sue. The SAQA QLD exhibition is followed by a trip to the USA where she is guest speaker and will conduct a workshop for Empire Quilters, Manhattan and attend the SAQA conference before returning to Australia to run workshops in Queensland. 



Above: Copper Fire.
Left: Red Centre.
Far left: Spine.
Below: Outback Communities Thank Reverend Flynn.



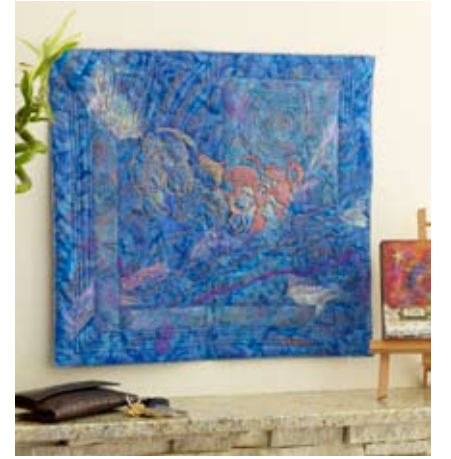
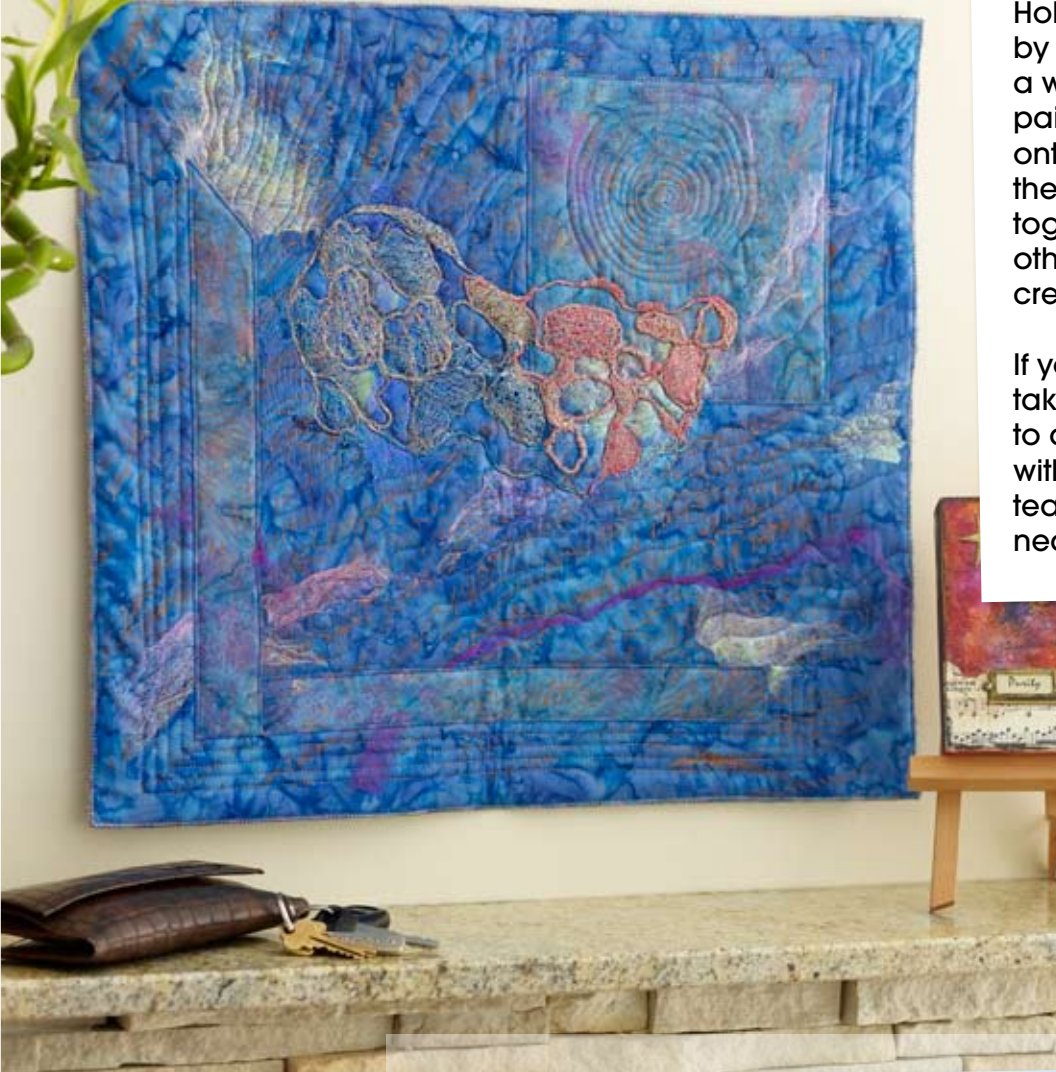


wholly holes

In April 2008 our Creative Coordinator attended Be Creative by the Sea where she had the pleasure of taking a class with Sue called Wholly Holes.

In this workshop 'Wholly Holes' we created fabric by machine stitching onto a water soluble base, painting and printing onto a background fabric then appliquéing the two together along with some other bits and pieces to create an art quilt.

If you enjoy this project take the opportunity to attend a workshop with Sue should she be teaching in a location near you.



creating holes

Cut a piece of wash away 8-10cm larger than the spring tension hoop all around. Place into hoop making sure it is drum tight. Optional - sketch design on wash away/solvay with an ultra-fine Sharpie. Drop feed dogs on the sewing machine and install darning foot. Thread machine (Gutermann rayon) and bobbin (metallic) with desired thread. Place hoop under the foot, take needle down and bring threads to the top and start stitching a circle shape going around the edge three times using a straight stitch. Make as many circles as desired. Zigzag stitch around the edge over the 3 rows of straight stitching (see diagram) to stabilize and link up, varying the zigzag width then start filling in the space between the circles. When finished remove from hoop and wash out in water, dry, and then press using an iron and pressing cloth.

background fabric

Print, stamp, stencil and paint your background fabric to suit your created holes. Place setacolor paints onto palette and apply to fabric using a sea sponge. Use a brush or make-up sponge to apply paint to stamps and items for printing. If stenciling, apply paint using a brush or make-up sponge. Make rubbings using oil sticks and draw or write using fabric markers. Place greaseproof paper over the painted/printed fabric and using a dry iron and high heat press. Repeat.

walking foot to the machine and using a straight stitch attach the extra fabrics. Zigzag over the straight stitches. Attach the darning foot and lower the feed dogs on the machine. Position the created holes fabric onto the quilt top and pin in place. Free motion straight stitch in place then free motion zigzag over the top as shown in diagram. Free motion quilt as desired or use walking foot. After quilting is complete, square up the piece. Zigzag around the outside edge using a wide stitch width in one colour and a narrow stitch width in a metallic thread. Alternatively cut strips of fabric and bind in the traditional method.

quilt

Optional - place angelina fibres between sheets of baking paper and iron. Use as is or cut to shape as desired. Select tulle, threads or fabrics to be incorporated into the quilt. Cut background fabric to desired size and set the strips aside. Layer background fabric, batting and backing and pin together. Pin on any extra fabrics, tulle, angelina fibres, etc. Attach



materials

- 2 fat 1/4s hand dyed, batik or cotton fabric without a definite pattern or repeat
- 2 fat 1/4s backing fabric
- 2 fat 1/4s thin wadding
- spring tension hoop approx 6"-7" (machine embroidery hoop)
- wash away/solvay (water soluble fabric)
- threads to blend & contrast with fabrics - metallics, rayons, cotton
- setacolor opaque fabric paints
- sea sponge, stamps, rollers, stencils, items for printing
- optional - fabric markers, oil sticks (Shiva/Portfolio)
- rotary cutter, mat & quilters rulers
- scissors & pins
- iron & pressing cloth
- sewing machine with zigzag foot, walking foot & darning foot
- greaseproof paper
- paint brush, make-up sponge & palette
- optional: ultra-fine Sharpie, Angelina fibres, baking paper