

The Quilt Show Profile
BKLYNMIKE
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What is your background in sewing/design?

I taught myself to sew in high school to decorate my room and make some of my own clothes. At that time I was also involved in musicals both onstage and backstage. In college (Colgate U, where I majored in chemistry) I took scenic design as an elective. A work-study job doing the costumes for the university theater shows opened up and I did that for several years, it was mainly altering rentals but I'd make something from scratch here and there. By graduation I'd done two internships in chem labs and decided that was not the career for me, so I pursued theater work. I went to grad school for historical dressmaking, which led me to where I am today.

When did you start quilting?

After a few years in the 'business' working on clothes at work, I no longer enjoyed making clothes at home. I don't remember what first drew my attention to quilting, but during a visit to the pier quilt show (which sadly no longer exists) I bought a few fat quarters and I was hooked. Seventeen or so years later I am truly addicted, the design aspects fit me to a tee, the piecing keeps my hand busy, and the quilting is a chore that needs to be done.

Is there quilting/designing in your family?

My mother owns a quilt passed down on her side of the family (I'd say from the 30's), and her mother loved to crochet and embroider. Once I began taking up costuming my mother did as well, though now she is retired to gardening and cats.

What inspires you?

Perhaps because of my science and math background, I am particularly drawn to complex geometry and things in series. Architecture is a great place to find interesting shapes and patterns; many of the things found there have functional as well as decorative purposes. I am a big fan of the Arts & Crafts movement. I subscribe to many quilting magazines (Quilter's Newsletter and American Quilter are particular favorites), and my bookshelf is stuffed, I tend to buy anything, which sparks an idea, though if I started keeping a sketchbook I could save some money.

What quilters/sewers/designers inspired you and why?

Caryl Bryer Fallert for her use of color and shape
Karen Stone, Judy Niemeyer, & Jaqueline de Jonge for complex geometric paper piecing
Michael James & Nancy Crow for showing how to develop ones own style
Eleanor Burns for making things fast and fun
Janet Smith (textilearts.com), *Starr Fabrics* and *Cherrywood* for their dying

Ricky Tims and *John Flynn* for showing men have a place in the quilt world
Fons & Porter and *The Quilt Show* for introducing us to so many artists (the appearance of *Sylvain Bergeron* on F&P sent me out to get my embroidery machine)

Erte for his stylized illustration

Frank Lloyd Wright his use of geometry and repetition

Do you sell your quilts/designs?

Selling quilts is an after thought. For many years I just made what I liked and gave them as gifts. I began getting requests from family and friends to make them something special to give as a gift, though I still try to do something that's on my long list of things to try. Lately I've been teaching beginning quilting at Brooklyn Mercantile (for whom I also do monogramming) and then sell my class samples in the store. If I had the time I'd love to make baby quilts to sell and tee shirt quilts to order, maybe those are in my future.

Have they/will they be exhibited?

I recently entered (and won) the Avlyn/Project Linus Komfort Kids quilt contest. Other than making blocks for the neighborhood quilting store (sadly now defunct, it was one of the perks to living here), this is the first contest I've entered. It will be on display in a booth at the International Quilt Festival in Houston. Quilts usually leave my hands as soon as they are done so I don't get a chance to show them. Working evenings and weekends doesn't allow for joining a quilt guild, though I may do so just to be included in their shows.

What are you working on now?

I just finished this year's raffle quilt for my union, and am already thinking about what we should tackle next year, so we can have it done early and I don't have to try finishing between preview showings. Many of the quilt this year have been variations on double wedding ring and pickle dish. The New Quilts from Old Favorites contest for 2011 is orange peel, right in that vein, so I hope to make one for that next year. I'm taking a quilt design class where we meet each month to learn a specific technique and then make an original piece by the next class. My piles of fabric and designs (I spend at least an hour every night working on EQ) are constantly growing so I have plenty to keep me busy.

What was your big break that brought you to work on Broadway?

Though I have done some costume design on the past, I now stick to wardrobe (presently with *Wicked*), working backstage keeping the clothes clean and in good repair, and helping the actors with their changes during the show. I had planned to come to NYC to work in a costume shop, but a show I was working on moved to Broadway where I have been ever since.

Can you give us some hint of "behind the scenes" from any of your shows?

As much as I try to pass off that it's just a job, there are many moments when it's anything but, such as when Liza Minelli stops by to see Ben Vereen. Working the

Tony awards or one of the many charity events you get to see everyone who's anyone in theater. The opposite side are the moments of chaos; trying to make the show work when you are 2 dancers short, the set stops working and they have to reblock the show as it goes, the lead gets sick in the middle of the show and there's the mad scramble to get someone else onstage in a matter of minutes. Those are the exceptional nights, I prefer the routine nights, I get to have time to quilt during my breaks.

Do you have a favorite show that you've worked on? Why is it your favorite?

I think my favorite show has been the revival of 42nd Street. Besides having such beautifully beaded clothes to work with (at least until they get a few years old), there were so many quick costume changes that it was a challenge to make it to the end of the show each night. I had worked briefly on the original production toward the end of its run; I don't think there's ever been such an elegant show. Along Sweeney Todd and Dreamgirls I wish I had been working here in the early 80's.

How does it work/what's your process/is there a history behind the "collaborative" quilts? Who were some of your collaborators?

The raffle quilts are done as a yearly fundraiser for my union's Political Action Committee. It's been an annual event for the last ten years; I made a block for an earlier one and took over being the designer and project manager 4 years ago. Not being one for sampler quilts I made the first one all by myself then vowed never to do that again. I keep my eyes open for a starting point (Broadway Modern was inspired by a coworkers tattoo, he is a big fan of mid century modern decor) then do some basic sketches and take them to work to get input from others, the same goes for color and fabric selection. Each year more people volunteer to help with the piecing so far I've done the quilting myself but hope that next year we'll make one in sections so that it can be distributed even more.

What's the story behind New York Deco?

The year of New York Deco I was thinking doing an art deco inspired quilt, and while researching online found many examples right here in New York City, so it became a quilt about New York architecture. I spent a few afternoons visiting art deco buildings and sketching usable motifs. I small medallions were a way to include many things I found (some are also traditional quilt blocks that fit the style) while still keeping the focus on the Chrysler Building roof line, Empire State Building lobby motif, and the Daily News Building floor. I chose the colors of copper patina. It's my favorite quilt to date. I hope to make it for myself one someday, though the main fabric is no longer available, darn.

Are there any costuming techniques that you apply to your quilting? Any other techniques you use?

I don't think there are any traditional sewing techniques the quilting world has yet to use, but I do try to get some 3 dimensional elements. I try to work a flange (or is that fillet? this is an argument we've never been able to settle) into the border or sashing of all my quilts.

I know there are other methods to use, but I'd never be able to make the quilts I do without foundation paper piecing. Otherwise the sections either end not quite matching and there's so much ripping and resewing. My methods need tweaking (I use copy paper which is just too thick to keep the seams from loosening when it's removed, I'm not very good at matching where multiple seams come together), but I've found ways to do Y-seams and other tricky bits.

Have you brought any of your Broadway friends into the quilting world?

A few coworkers have watched me at work and decided to try that themselves. This past summer I did a foundation paper piecing demonstration to get them more interested in helping with the raffle quilt. I hope to find time to work in some classes so that everyone can have some small project of their very own.

What brought you to The Quilt Show?

A coworker (TQS member Steven613) bought me a charter star membership as a thank-you for helping him get started in quilting. I love the shows (though plan on watching them on DVD now, I find it hard to watch them on the computer without being able to get work done at the same time). Ricky and Alex's diversions during their vlogs are very amusing. My favorite things to do is look at member's quilts, it's nice seeing the different ways people passionate (or even fanatical) about quilting find to express themselves.

I've spent so much time with quilting just being something I do by myself, in the last year suddenly I feel included in the much bigger community instead of just observing it.