

Meet Ginny Eckley | Fiber Artist & Teacher

December 16, 2020



We had the good fortune of connecting with Ginny Eckley and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Ginny, can you talk to us a bit about the social impact of your business?

Often as Artists, we create alone. More and more, I am enjoying teaming up with others to create art, resulting in a broader impact. Over the last 6 years I have worked with artist, Susan Ennis. We created large Art Quilts, designed to be displayed on the wall. Last year we teamed up with 3 other Artists, Kim Ritter, Janet Bodin and Kay Hendricks, for an exhibit at the International Quilt Festival. The theme of our exhibit was entitled, "Women of the West." We had fun researching daring women who headed West in the late 1800's - early 1900's. Kim Ritter and Kay Hendricks have Cherokee heritage, and brought beadwork and stories of Native Americans to life. Kim creates art quilts with a wonderful sense of humor, and it was fun to see people gather around the quilts as she explained how they were made. Janet Bodin specializes in soft sculptures of dolls. She created a range of dolls from Annie Oakley to a Saloon Dancer. The collaboration allowed us to tell our story to a wider audience. It was fun to see people enjoy different elements of the exhibit.

We received very positive responses from the Quilt Festival visitors and sold artwork. It was made even more successful, as Becky Navarro of Quilts Inc., did an amazing job arranging and displaying all the work, so the exhibit had a beautiful flow to it. Her vision made all the difference. Kim Ritter and I created a book to accompany the exhibit. Our goal is to have the exhibit travel in galleries and museums in the Western US.

Last December, my brother, Terry Murnane, and I were celebrating. I chose 3 cool places in Houston to visit, and so did he. One of the places he chose was the 1940 Air Terminal Museum. It is an amazing Art Deco building, by Hobby Airport. As I was wandering through the rooms, I came across a quilt made for Continental Airlines. Unfortunately, there was no plaque explaining the quilt. The quilt was in 3 panels, encased in a custom Plexiglas box. The size was impressive, but even more amazing was how beautifully the design held together. I had a strong sense it had to be collaboration. I asked the staff, and all they knew was United Airlines donated it to the museum when they merged with Continental Airlines. So, I took a few photos with my phone, and pasted them on my Facebook page, asking if anyone knew who made the quilt. Instantly friends told me it was a mutual friend, Ivy Jensen! Her work is usually very abstract, so now I was even more intrigued. After reaching out to her, I learned she spearheaded the project to celebrate Continental Airlines anniversary and the successful leadership of COO Gordon Bethune.



Continental Airline employees from the JFK Reservations offices created the quilt, under Ivy's leadership. She didn't even know the quilt was at the Museum! Terry and I visited Ivy, as she had boxes of photos and information about the quilt. After hearing her story of reaching out to a graphic designer, quilters and getting over 100 employees to participate, my idea of collaboration grew to a new level! Iva Jensen also convinced her Mother, Wilda Lindstrom to add her applique skills! I am currently working on a book about the adventure of the quilt.



Alright, so let's move onto what keeps you busy professionally?

I was fortunate to find my passions early: enjoying Nature and making things. Both are easily nurtured through travel and education. My degree was in Fine Art, which broadened my skills and vision. Fabric has been my most dominant medium. I combine it with sewing, embroidery, printing, painting and quilting. With each new skill, I love learning all I can, and then push those skills to make them my own. Often combining techniques makes my work stand out.

The way I start a piece is with an idea, then research, draw and sketch until I have a design. I went back to school to learn computer graphics and often do my design thinking on the computer. Currently I am learning Adobe InDesign.

I have learned that one sure way to get ahead is to say YES when someone asks if you will do something! My work was in a traveling art exhibit, and a publisher reached out to me, asking if I would write a book! I ended up writing two books, *Quilted Sea Tapestries* and *Fabric Painting*, both by Martingale Press. That led to teaching all over the world. It was fantastic in so many ways; meeting new people, traveling, getting new ideas, and helping others learn. I would say a key to success in Art is get your work out in many places and help others. If you are in a gallery, bring people in to see your work. Help promote the gallery, not just your art. Another way to create is to Collaborate. First, I'll admit it isn't easy. By nature artists are independent. Collaborating is a give and take, but you come away with more. Everyone has different skills, and you learn what you can contribute. For me, it started in a fun way. I was trying to create a repeat pattern for a silk-screen. I showed it to my friend, Susan Ennis. She had done pattern making and knew exactly how to do it. She drew it, I scanned it into Adobe Illustrator, and we took off. Before we knew it, we had several designs. Our world opened up, as together we could make something at a higher level than we could alone. We created three large Art Quilts from those screens. Our goal was to use the same 3 screens, but make 3 very different works of art. All have been exhibited, and an article about the adventure was published in *Quilting Arts Magazine*, October/November 2016. Currently one of quilts, "Splash!" is in a Virtual Quilt exhibit online, at Quilts.com.

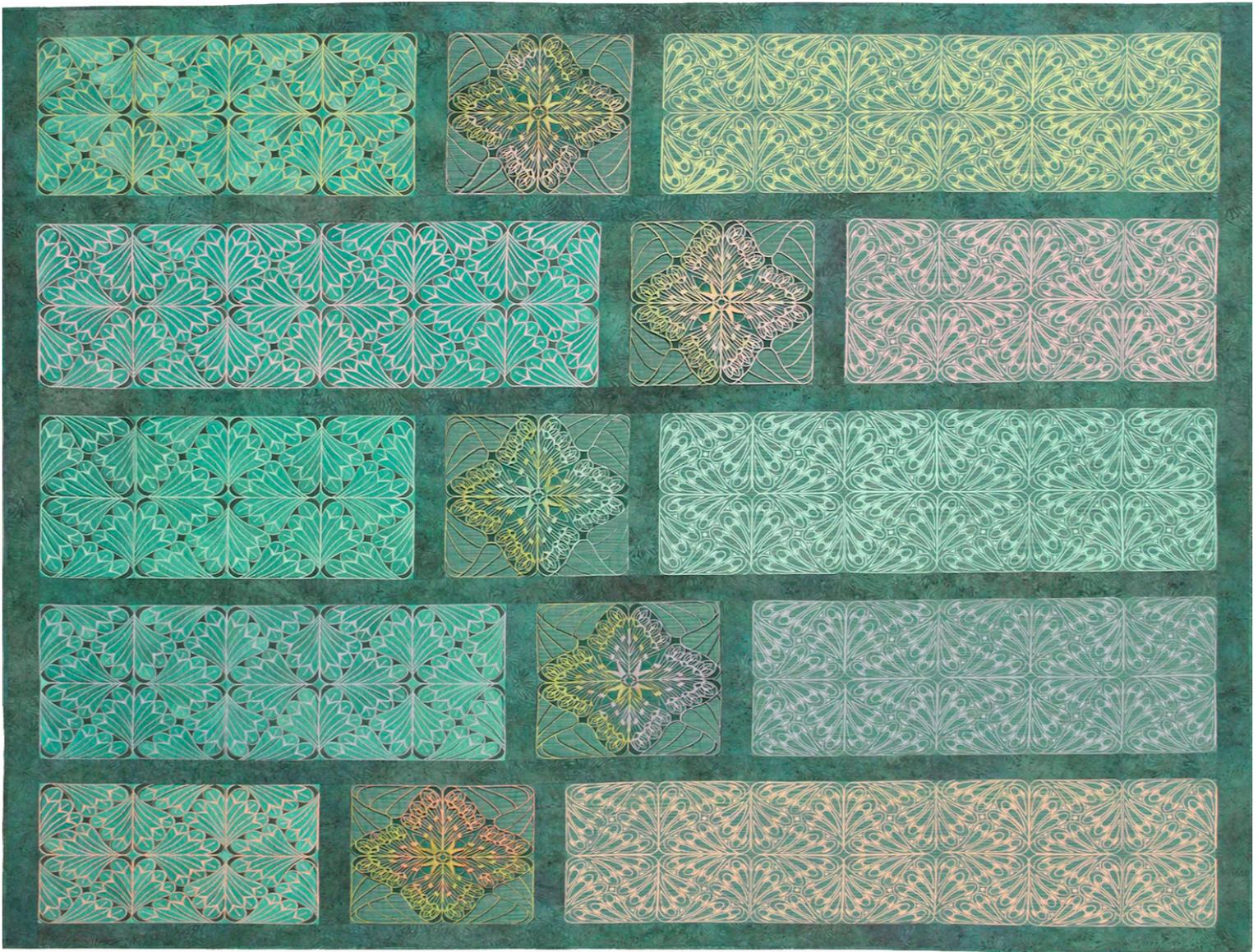
Let's say your best friend was visiting the area and you wanted to show them the best time ever. Where would you take them? Give us a little itinerary – say it was a week long trip, where would you eat, drink, visit, hang out, etc.

The Museum District has so much to see, so that it is my first place to show off to friends and family. The Museum of Natural Science and the Gardens of Hermann Park are right next to each other. There is so much to see, it usually takes 2 days! I love starting at the gardens, as they have been completely redone. There are acres to explore. Some of my favorites are the McGovern Centennial Gardens, where you can walk next to a waterfall, the Japanese Garden and the Rose Garden. After walking the gardens, lunch can be found at Ginger Kale, by the pedal boats. After lunch, a big decision has to be made! What to do? The Zoo, pedal boats, the train or the Natural Science Museum? The Museum is one of my favorites as the Cockrell Butterfly Center



allows you to walk through an indoor garden where butterflies dart around and often land on you! The Gem collection on the second floor is world class. Another favorite is the Cabinet of Curiosities. There are so many cool things to see, so first my guests and I visit the website, as there are 17 permanent exhibits and up to 6 Special exhibits. Fortunately they do have a handy restaurant on the first floor! For artists' friends, I have a trio that is a must: The Museum of Fine Arts, The Contemporary Arts Museum and The Houston Center for Contemporary Crafts. They are all near each other, so it's a fun trio. Visitors love being able to talk to artists in the studios of the Contemporary Craft Museum.

If the weather is nice, I love going to the Rice University Campus. The architecture is fabulous, and the new Moody Center for the Arts always has unique and intriguing exhibits. The Twilight Epiphany Skyspace has amazing sunset performances. Then I have to take everyone to the Orange Show and Smither Park. The Orange Show was built by Jeff McKissack. My husband Ty and I bought our first house directly across the street from the Orange Show, and lived next door to Jeff. It is just a few miles from the University of Houston, where we both graduated. Thanks to Marilyn Oshman, the Orange show has thrived. Her foundation has enlarged the park and filled it with amazing mosaics. From the Orange Show, we head to the 1940's Air Terminal Museum. On my last visit with my niece, a volunteer took us inside an airplane hanger down the street from the museum. My niece had the excitement of sitting inside a flight simulator, while I was amazed at planes, including one stripped down to show it was made of wood. Neat to learn that planes used to be made of wood, then covered with linen! This is what I love about museums- visual learning! My Japanese guests love going to Space Center Houston. Thanks to the beltway, it's an easy trip, and well worth the drive. We love the presentations, and I usually volunteer my guests to get up on stage! If the guests are up to it, we head to Kemah for amusement park rides and dinner at Landry's.





Occasionally I will get just the right guest who would like to go to the National Museum of Funeral History! This was another of my brother Terry's Museum picks! It was better than I expected and well worth the visit. From there I take guests to the Woodlands area. A favorite for lunch is the Tommy Bahama Restaurant in Market Square. It's fun to wander around the shops, with a neat park in the center of the shops. From there we hop on the free trolley through The Woodlands. Another option is to drive to the Riva Boat House, to rent a paddleboat or kayaks! Guaranteed fun!

Who else deserves some credit and recognition?

Marilyn Oshman
(Orange Show Center for Visionary Art)
Quilts Inc. of Houston,
1940's Air Terminal Museum,
former employees of Continental Airlines,
and the book, From Worst to First,
by Gordon Bethune.

Websites:

<http://www.hou.muse.org>

<http://www.hermannpark.org>

<http://www.visitthewoodlands.com>

<http://www.1940airterminal.org>

<https://www.fabricpaintings.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/ginny.eckley>

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