

JURORS' STATEMENTS

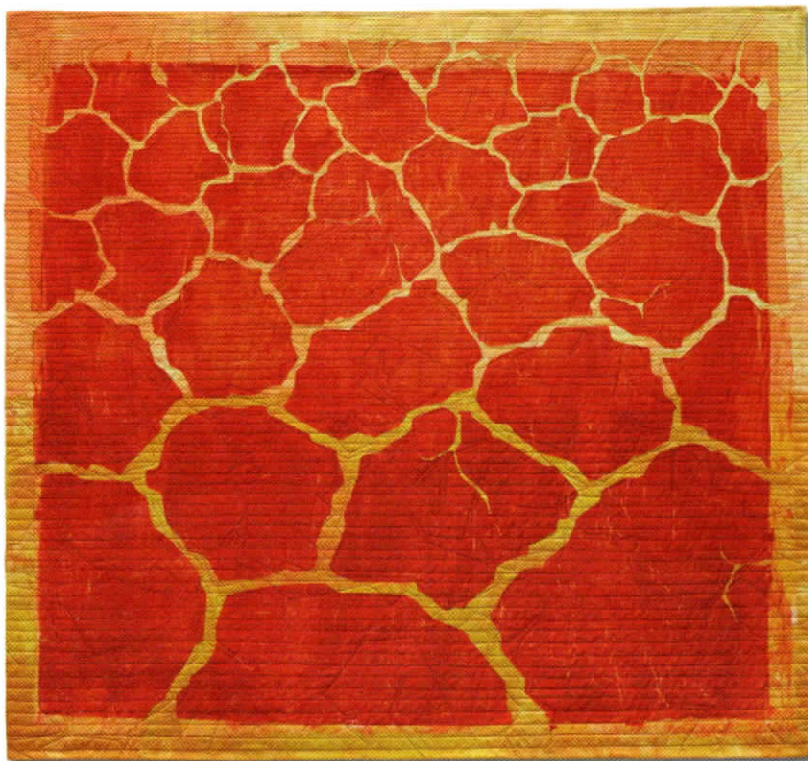
Ann Johnston

Being on the jury of *Quilt National '15* has been an excellent opportunity for me to take another look at what I think makes a quilt a piece of art--and the reverse--what makes a piece of art a quilt? In the whole scheme of things, it doesn't really matter to me what category an art piece fits into, but for this exhibit, quilts are defined quite clearly. In looking at digital images of so many textile pieces that appear to fit into this definition, I found that in addition to considering the composition of each piece, I had to consider the spirit of the rule as well as the specifics: did it say quilt to me, or was it textile art that fit the rules of the exhibit?

As you look at *Quilt National '15*, you will notice that many quilts are small or medium-- approximately 2/3 of the entries were roughly less than 4' x 4' in area. A quilt in the traditional sense usually implied a certain scale; a 4' x 4' quilt would have been a small quilt. Making something large means making a commitment of time, of labor, and of materials; it has to be important to the maker. As I viewed the entries, I looked for this commitment. The Dairy Barn is an opportunity for artists to have a large space for exposure, and for viewers, it offers a wonderful chance to see quilts that would not fit in many other venues--something to consider for future submissions to *Quilt National*.

I am not missing the irony that I have had more quilts rejected than accepted for *Quilt National* over the years. I have come to realize that, of course, one of my quilts could have been included some of those years. Having been on the jury confirms my certainty that the (implied) title, "best of contemporary quilts" is just a title, and that there were many quilts not chosen that might have been included. There were former jurors and many artists whose work we know and love that were not chosen for *Quilt National'15*. Most of them understand that

Dry Lake, Ann Johnston
55" x 60", 2014
Photo by Bill Bachhuber



it is a process that requires eliminating pieces that one or more of the jurors wanted to include. Primarily it is a democratic process, three people with equal voices. This I realized in advance, but I did not realize that after paring the list down to about 80%, we would have to eliminate many works that were by the same artist and replace them with others. I also had no idea that there would be so many alternates in the exhibit because some of those chosen first were found to have broken the rules in one way or another.

Being a juror is risky because it implies that I know what is best; however, I never know what is best, even in my own work. I just keep working and making and learning. So, as I viewed the work, I made a list of qualities that seemed to be the most important to me and noted qualities that were missing in pieces I otherwise preferred. All the pieces finally selected by our jury did not have all these qualities, and many of the pieces that were not selected had many of them.

- An individual voice, passion or point of view, adventurous
- Visible hand of the artist in marks, stitches, and/or pieces
- Scale with power to address the viewer, commitment to an idea
- Use of complex colors and attention to value contrasts
- Stitches or other joining techniques that have a visual impact on the design
- Use of texture as a design element
- Composition that allows imagining some of the artist's choices
- Details that show attention to the whole composition
- Title in the artist's own words
- Continuity of composition and artist statement
- Construction methods and techniques that enhance the concept
- Craftsmanship where it is needed

As time goes on, my list will be revised and refined. I offer it to you to do the same. Your work is for yourself and you are its ultimate juror.