

by Contrast: Apparent Contradictions SAQA New Jersey + New York Region

Ann Johnston, Juror Statement, July 2025

I think we enjoy so many figures of speech in our daily lives that we often don't notice that they are incongruous or that they have other possible meanings. This exhibit highlights some of them in very creative works of art--all quilts from the members of SAQA's New Jersey + New York Region. The artists have written about their work so we can understand more about their thoughts. I had fun looking and reading--over and over again. Making choices is the not-fun part because I feel that all the works deserve our attention; they should have their voices heard. No matter the content, skill, or complexity in the piece, all the artists should be respected for their energy and willingness to put their work out to be seen. I think that they all have grown with this creative experience, whether or not their own quilt is in the exhibit.

The quilts show the depth and variety of a group of committed quilt artists. There are so many ways to create an image with cloth and thread and we see them all here, in fact some I hadn't really seen before. The greatest commitment seems to be to exploration, of ideas of course, but also to experimentation with surface design and construction techniques. We need to stand back and then get closer to absorb the details and read the comments to fully appreciate them. It all adds up to a feast for the viewers.

The most important thing I looked for was originality in the artist's approach to the challenge: did it look and sound like it came from a person's own experience? I think this selection of quilts is witness to how thoughtful personal exploration can result in an outburst of color and ideas for us all to examine. For me it has been a privilege to have had the opportunity.

--Ann Johnston July 2025