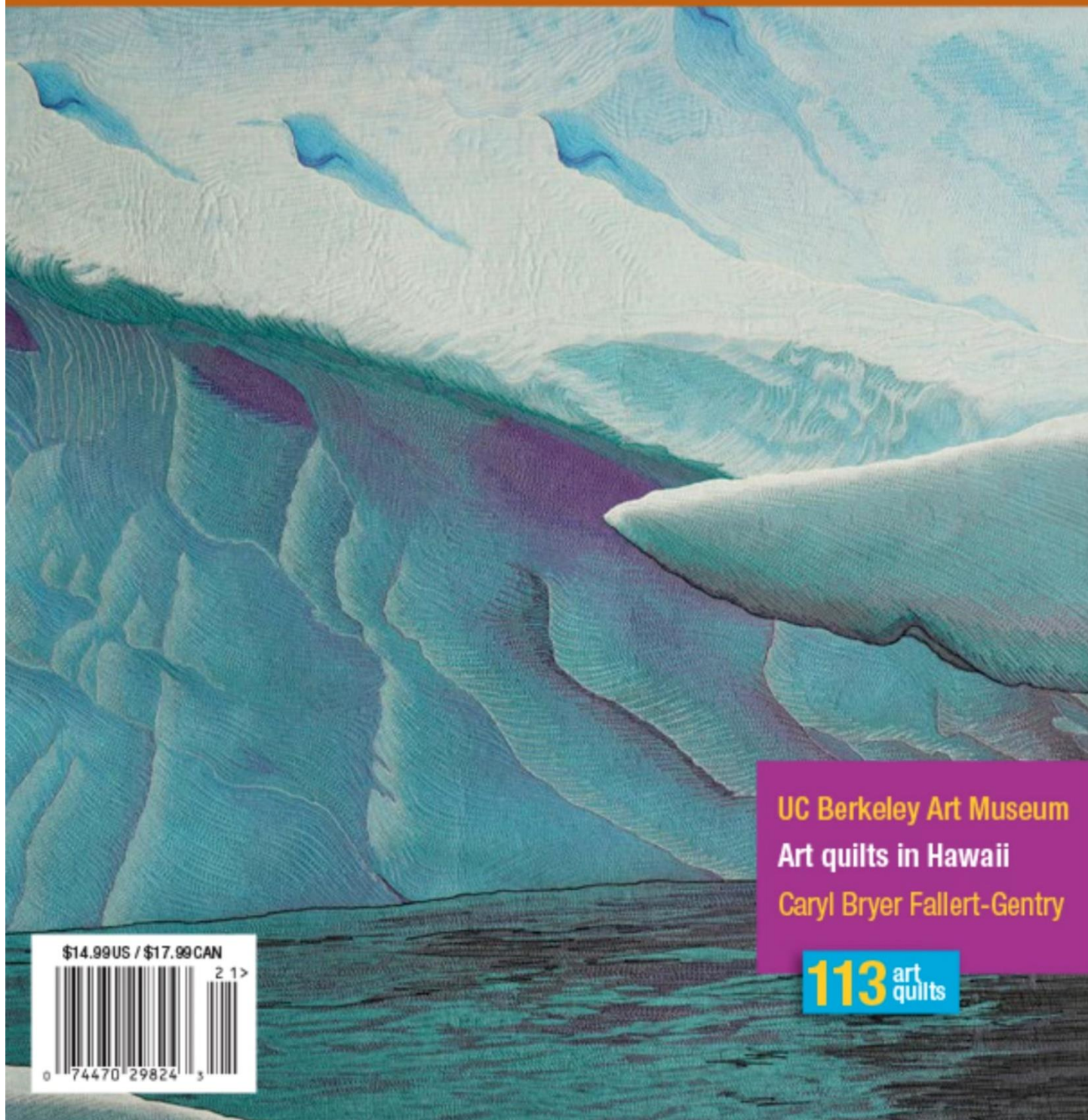


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art quilt QUARTERLY

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UC Berkeley Art Museum
Art quilts in Hawaii
Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry

\$14.99 US / \$17.99 CAN



113 art quilts

Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry

A continuing color evolution

by Diane Howell

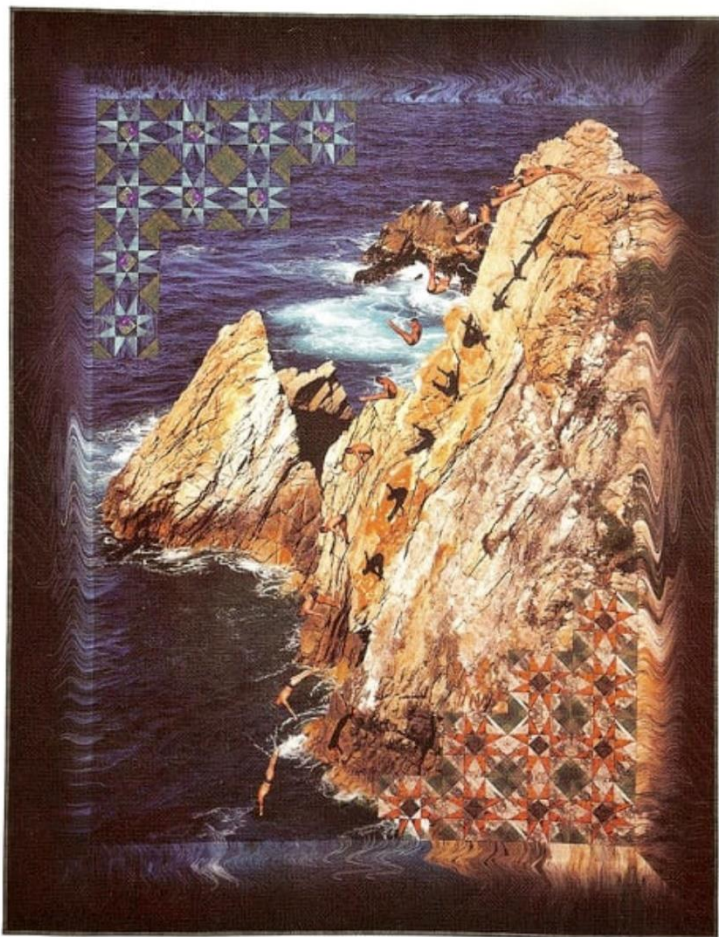


Flight attendant to quilt artist — how did that happen? My interview with Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry explores her transformation.

“From the time I was a very young child, I loved drawing, painting, and making things with my hands. Until 1976, I was mainly a painter but dabbled in many different media. I also sewed clothes and various home-decor items,” she says.

In the mid-1970s, she began to make traditional quilts for fun and as gifts. Then, in 1982, she attended a lecture by Jean Ray Laury, a trailblazer in the art quilt world whose original designs broke with tradition and encouraged students to make time to create art. “I went right home and designed my first completely original quilt, *Red Poppies*, using graph paper and colored pencils,” she says.

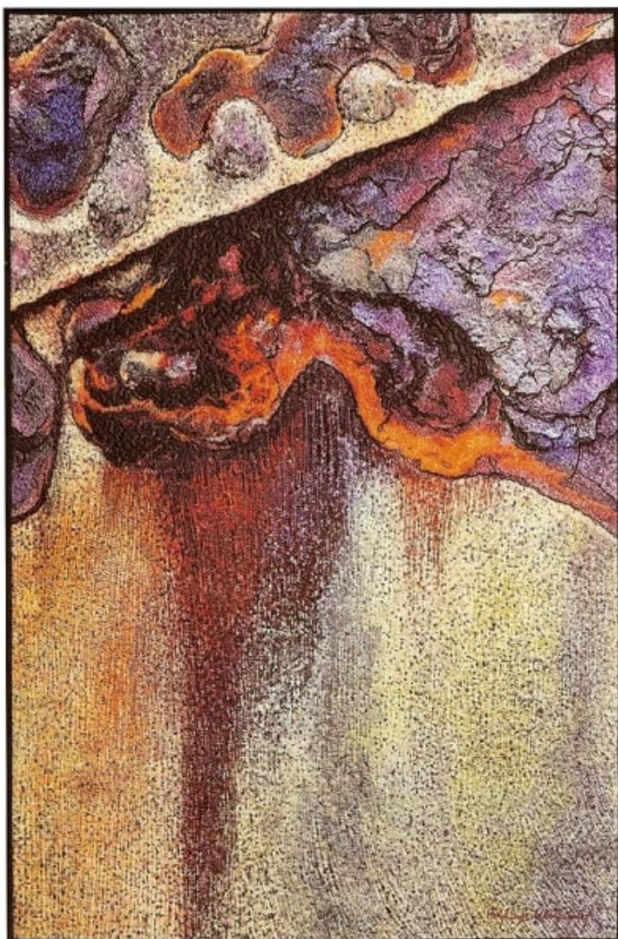
The quilt launched her art practice when it won a third-place ribbon in 1983 at the Silver Dollar City Spring Arts and Crafts Festival in Branson, Missouri. In less than a decade, while still a flight attendant for United Airlines, she made many more quilts, sold two pieces, and won her first Best of Show award. Invitations were extended for her to teach and lecture around the world, something she did for the next thirty years from her home base in the Chicago area. In 1997, she retired from United Airlines. Today, her website details each of the more than 500 quilts she has made, sorted by date and style. Many of her works have found homes in museums, corporations, and private collections.



Plunge

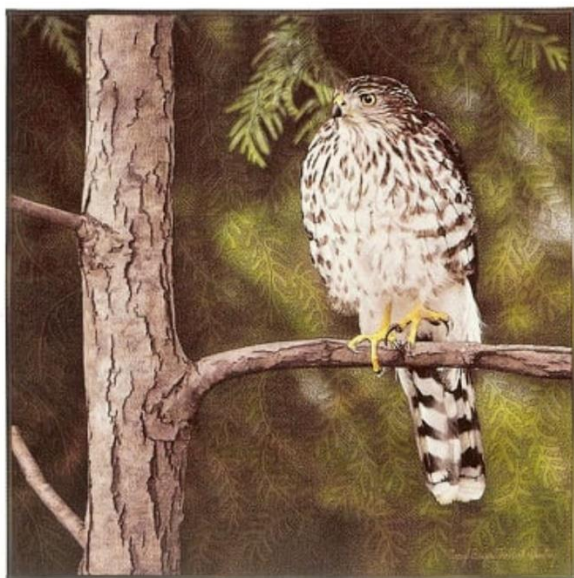
Collaboration with Ron Gentry

68 x 53 inches, 2019



Deception Decomposition #1

35 x 23 inches, 2020



Northern Harrier

30 x 30 inches, 2020

In 2005, she moved to Paducah, Kentucky, as part of an artist's relocation program. In the city's Lower-town Arts District, she built a space that combined home, workshop center, gallery, and the studio of her dreams just three blocks from the National Quilt Museum. "I loved filling my space with creative people from my neighborhood and visitors from all over the world, and I planned to live there for the rest of my life."

Her first husband, Bob Fallert, died in 2006. Five years later she met Ron Gentry, who lived in Port Townsend, Washington, and they married in 2013. "We tried commuting for a couple of years and eventually found a home in Port Townsend with a perfect studio space, overlooking the forest on one side and the sea on the other." Her combined gallery and studio building in Paducah was sold in 2014 to Paper Pieces, marking Fallert-Gentry's retirement from retail and teaching, but not from making art quilts.

Always growing

Fallert-Gentry's work consists of different series, with each new stage as intriguing as the last. Subjects, materials, and tools combine to keep the work current and relevant. "When I see something that catches my eye and makes me say 'oh wow,' I analyze what stopped my eye and include those elements in my work."

Her early quilts were made with commercial fabrics and recycled clothes. She narrowed her preferences to cotton fabrics and referred to herself as "Plain Cotton Caryl."

"Since 1984, with very rare exceptions, I have used only my own fabrics." At first, she hand-dyed and painted her own fabrics. In the early 2000s, she licensed some of her original designs and gradations to Benartex, and those fabric collections naturally found their way into her works.

Today, photography is the foundation for many of her art quilts. Always inspired by travel, she is joined in taking pictures by Gentry, a serious amateur photographer who likes to have the latest equipment and to shoot in exotic locations.

Process defined

Fallert-Gentry starts almost every piece with a preliminary sketch. With the purchase of her first



Migration #1
38 x 48 inches, 1990

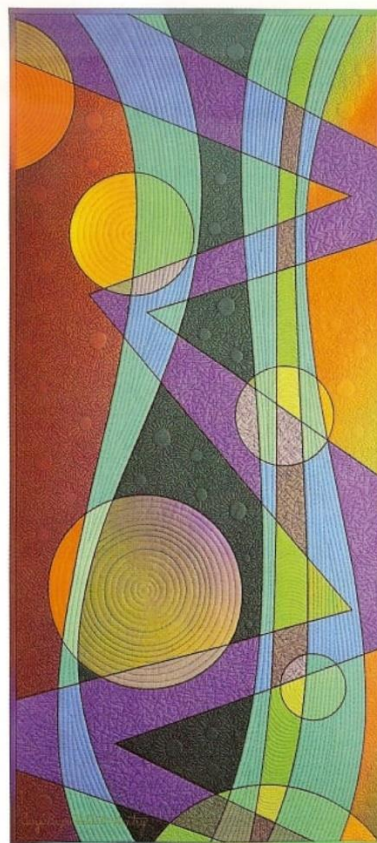
computer in 1990, she replaced graph paper and colored pencils with CorelDRAW. Today, her computer setup includes a 14 x 24-inch touch screen that lets her draw and paint with her finger or a stylus.

Her latest computer also lets her incorporate images into her art quilts more easily, something she started doing in 1987 using silk screens and photocopiers. She shared her knowledge of using photography in quilts in her book *Quilt Savvy: Fallert's Guide to Images on Fabric*, published in 2004 by American Quilter's Society.

"Naturally, the switch from film to digital photography has made everything easier, and the latest generation of digital cameras makes it possible to print very large-scale images at high resolution." The rise of on-demand print services that use archival inks or pigments also expands her options well beyond the limitations of a desktop printer.

Many of Fallert-Gentry's recent quilts were inspired by photos taken on trips with Gentry before the pandemic, and one art quilt, *Plunge*, represents a collaboration with her husband. More may follow, using macro photography of blossoms in their garden.

"In all these quilts I have used the photos as a jumping-off place and have done substantial digital editing and digital painting." In many cases, she has used parts of several photos to make a composite design, as seen in *Northern Harrier*.



Zigzags & Circles #2
41 x 18 inches, 2021

Fallert-Gentry notes that most of her pictorial pieces are quilted almost to the level of machine embroidery. "At one point I got tired of quilting feathers and fur and decided to try something that was pure fantasy. This led to my most recent experiment, drawing and painting graphic designs with geometric shapes on my computer and having fun quilting the printed designs with lots of different free-motion patterns."

Style staples

As the subjects and techniques have changed over the years, elements of her style have remained intact.

"One of the things almost all my quilts have in common is luminosity. As early as 1983, I began using color and value gradations to create the illusion that the quilt is glowing from within."

In addition, her construction techniques have remained fairly consistent. She developed her curved seam technique, Applipiecing, in 1989 and still uses it

see "Bryer Fallert-Gentry" on page 97

Bryer Fallert-Gentry from p. 15

in almost all of her pieced works. Her quilts almost never have raw edges, and they are finished with bindings, sometimes custom bindings.

"In all my work, whether abstract or representational, I have tried to reflect my idea of beauty. I seldom make work that comments on social ills, and even when I do, I attempt to make the piece itself beautiful."

Today and tomorrow

Fallert-Gentry remains committed to sharing what she's learned. Many of her patterns, publications, workshops, and recent tutorials are available as free downloads on her website, www.bryer-patch.com. This outreach keeps her in step with her most satisfying accomplishment, knowing that she has helped others tap into their own creativity.

Making quilts is what she has always done for fun. Because her first husband was unable to work after 1995, and she retired from corporate life in 1997, managing her online merchandise sales and organizing her traveling workshop schedule became her full-time occupation until 2014.

"My next quilt is almost always the one I think will be the most fun to make. While I'm making one quilt, I get ideas for what I would like to try next, and my style of quilting has evolved to match my interests."

Her next goal is to travel to southern Spain, the Maritimes on Canada's east coast, and Iceland. Images of these trips will no doubt foster more art quilts.

"Since that first exhibition and award in 1983, I have entered as many shows as possible. I make my quilts to have the fun and adventure of making them. After that, they need to be shared with others."

Diane Howell is the editor of SAQA Journal; she resides in Arizona.