

21st Annual Festival of Quilts – Heritage Park, May 28, 29, 2016

AQ – American Quilter

September 2016

By Kim Hanson

Heritage Park, *Canada's Largest Living History Museum* is nestled in the foothills of Calgary, Alberta, Canada at the base of the majestic Rocky Mountains. As a fully accredited museum, the amazingly beautiful outdoor facility preserves and shares the history that is Western Canada. The Park is a jewel; filled with historic buildings and costumed interpreters – the ultimate backdrop for a “festival of quilts”. Sharing the joy quilting brings to us all is intensified when the setting is part of the exhibition.

Insert photo #1 – People resting on the bench in front of Glenmore Reservoir, photo #2 – Crowd watching the show in front of the Bank, photo #3 – Horse drawn wagon carrying a crowd.

Quilts cover Heritage Park – literally. They hang from both vertical balconies of the old Wainwright Hotel. They are showcased on fences and are suspended over verandas. Special quilt racks are posed on the manicured lawns of Prince House and Sandstone House; vintage homes that entice the visitor to take a closer look. With the wind blowing gently and the sun high in the sapphire blue sky, the quilted works of art become part of the beauty of nature.

Insert photo #4 – Quilts hanging from the veranda of the Cottage Hospital, insert photo #5 – Quilts hanging from the balcony of the Wainwright Hotel, insert photo #6 – Quilts on rack just outside Sandstone House, insert photo #7 – Quilts on a rack, insert photo #8 – Quilt on a fence.

The show features all the typical offerings of a quilt exhibit – a merchants’ mall, guild booths and quilt raffles. Making this festival unique, however, are the Parks’ amenities. “How to Build a Quilt 101” was a demonstration of beginner quilting skills, held in the cute and cozy cabin that is the Atlas Lumber Company. Need a break? Rest and “sit a spell” on board the S.S. Moyie, a half-size replica of an 1898 stern wheeler that cruises the adjacent reservoir. Kids can have their own style of fun by riding the Bowness carousel or the fully functioning antique Ferris wheel. Shopping for candy treats at Claresholm General Store will make the day even sweeter.

Insert photo #9 S.S. Moyie, stern wheeler

Catherine Redford, (www.catherineredford.com) a renowned fibre artist, teacher and speaker was the guest Workshop Instructor and Dinner Speaker for the Festival. Catherine was also called on to preside over the first ever Iron Quilt Challenge. Three teams of four quilters worked feverishly, side-by-side to finish a quilt top in just two and one-half hours. Each group succeeded in meeting the

challenge and their original quilt tops were then quilted and bound by volunteers, just in time to be auctioned off at the evening dinner.

Hanging in the plumb spot on the balcony of the Wainwright Hotel, Rachel Elliott's quilt "Gravity" (pattern by Julie Herman of Jaybird Quilts www.jaybirdquilts.com) is an amazing achievement for a novice quilter. Rachel has a math background and was intrigued by Julie's rulers and quilting tools. She says, "I was fascinated by the use of shape and colour in this pattern. Up to this point, I made simple quilts – mostly squares and I wanted to break out of my comfort zone with this quilt". Mission accomplished! Rachel considers quilting her therapy. She struggles with PTSD and its daily mental health challenges. Quilting has been a continuing positive influence, allowing Rachel to be creative and to give back to her community.

Insert photo #10 – Gravity by Rachel Elliott

Each year a Calgary-based resident is chosen as the Quilter of Distinction. This year, the indomitable Margaret Jones Jessop was chosen and her body of work was hung in the lofty Canmore Opera House for all to see. Among other criteria, a Quilter of Distinction is someone who "has shown growth and progression in the quality of their work". More importantly, perhaps is "someone that has made significant contributions by volunteering, being an inspiration to others, and showing encouragement within the quilting community". Margaret is a humble, lovely woman who richly deserves the accolades. She has been resilient in dealing with not only the loss of her quilt studio, but her entire home in Calgary's 2013 flood, and the passing of both her mother and her daughter in 2014.

Mirror Lake is an example of how Margaret turned a Group of Seven painting by Franklin Carmichael into her own work of art. She began by drawing her version of the painting; then working top to bottom she used the freezer paper method of applique, taught to her by Caryl Bryer Fallert. The finished product speaks to Margaret's love of nature, and displays her advanced and well-honed quilting skills. Mirror Lake was a wedding gift to one of her lucky children.

Insert photo #11 – Margaret Jones Jessop with her quilt Mirror Lake

The Orange Peel; an eye-catching and scrumptious-looking quilt hanging from the iron railing of the Famous 5 Centre of Canadian Women. Vanecea Greene's quilt was styled after Composition II by Shoko Sakai. In 2015, Vanecea collected fabrics for this quilt by shop-hopping her way across the United States to Sisters, Oregon. She added some luxurious silks to the fabric mix which actually made the quilt sparkle in the sun.

Insert photo #12 – Orange Peel by Vanecea Greene

Since the Festival of Quilts is not a juried show, first time exhibitors like Charla MacPhee are encouraged to submit their work. Charla made "My ABC's" for her four children. She used free Moda letter patterns that were offered as part of a blog hop. Charla says, "with all the kids, I thought it would be a great way for them to learn the alphabet. It took quite a bit of hopping but I managed to find them all!"

Insert photo #13 – My ABC's by Charla MacPhee

Creative Kids; a delightful presentation of quilts made by youngsters hosted in the unique, antique Weedon School house. The old building came alive with the energy and excitement that children bring. Mya MacPhee's patchwork quilt – Blue Meadow is so pretty with her fabric choices of misty blues, soft browns and energetic taupes. Kudos to Festival organizers for including children in this year's exhibition. After all, it will be kids who keep the tradition of quilting alive for future generations.

Insert photo #14 – Mya MacPhee and Blue Meadow

7,000 people gathered for the Festival of Quilts at Heritage Park. It was a wonderful success. Looking forward to 2017, Kelly Killick-Smit, Special Organizer to Heritage Park says, "I can tell you that we are very excited to be welcoming Judith Baker Montano (www.judithbakermontano.com) as our guest Workshop Instructor and Dinner Speaker". Judith, a Canadian living in the United States, is an award winning fibre artist, photographer, author and teacher who is best known for her astounding crazy quilt artistry and silk ribbon embroidery. She will add her own flair to the festivities in 2017. Plan your visit to Heritage Park now!