

# Quilt Visions 2020

## Meet Bonnie Bucknam

### Vancouver, Washington



[www.handwerktextiles.com](http://www.handwerktextiles.com)

### Artwork on Display

*McCallum Spring*

Bonnie Bucknam has been sewing and making art since early childhood. In high school she launched a successful mail order business manufacturing fabric purses. Since then she has always made art to enjoy and market. Bonnie grew up in Long Beach, California and graduated from California State University, Long Beach with a degree in Anthropology and Geology. Shortly thereafter, she moved to Alaska. She worked as an archaeologist and warehouseman building the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. She remained in Alaska for 31 years, spending most of those working as a legal assistant at the Alaska Attorney General's Office in Anchorage. She always used every "spare" minute to create fiber art. She attended numerous quilting, design, fabric dyeing, and painting classes and studied extensively with Nancy Crow. In 1997 she started a business, Handwerk, to market her quilts and hand-dyed fabrics. In 2006, Bonnie retired from legal work and relocated to Vancouver, Washington, where, as a fiber artist and painter, she now creates art full-time.

Bonnie Bucknam's abstract compositions are inspired by the colors and shapes of the natural world. Bonnie's work *Crater* won Best of Show at Quilt National 2011. She has also exhibited in Visions Art Museum, *Quilts=Art=Quilts* at the Schweinfurth Art Center in Auburn, New York, and numerous times in the biennial *Earth, Fire, and Fiber* exhibit at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. In 2016, Bonnie was part of the invitational curated by Nancy Crow, *Mastery: Sustaining Momentum*. In 2015 Bonnie's work was in a year-long solo exhibition at the Portland Oregon International Airport. Bonnie was part of the solo artist series at the Anchorage Museum in 1995, in *Quilts: Stitching a New Tradition*. Internationally, Bonnie's work has appeared in the Haus der Wirtschaft museum in Stuttgart, Germany, the Museum of Modern Art in Verona, Italy, and other venues in Germany, England, Ireland, France, Japan, Brazil, and the Netherlands. In 2015 Bonnie had her first solo show of mixed media paintings at the Second Story Gallery in Camas, Washington. Bonnie's work *Tangle* is part of the permanent collection of the Tuch + Technik Textilmuseum, Neumunster, Germany. She has work in the Patchwork Design Contemporaneo Collection in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the State of Alaska's Art Bank, and the Quilt National Collection at the International Quilt Study Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.

### Artist Statement

I create landscape and abstract works inspired by the places I have lived and visited. I try to convey my response to the character and essence of those landscapes. My works are created from my hand-dyed fabrics. I usually compose using an improvisational style and design on the wall. Some of the piecing is quite difficult and time consuming, and the design process can become quite physical, requiring multiple trips up and down a ladder. I have a longarm sewing machine, which makes the close machine quilting feasible and the quilting process enjoyable.

1000 Palms Oasis Preserve is in Rancho Mirage in the Southern California desert. About a mile and a half from the visitors' center is McCallum Spring, where water seeps up through the San Andreas Fault. The spring itself is lined with arrowweed, willows, and cattails. Because the palms are left in their natural state, the fronds pile up several feet high at the base of each tree. The site is a strange combination of dry desert landscape and green wetland vegetation.

## Meet Bonnie Bucknam - continued

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### Q+A

#### **What inspires your work at this time?**

I am a traveler. Since I left Alaska after 31 years there, I've spent much of my retirement trying to see the world. In the past few years, I have been to China, India, Nepal, Australia, Morocco, Paris, London, South Africa, Peru, Guatemala... When this pandemic lockdown ends, I have a few more places I'd like to see.

Everywhere I go, I'm enthralled with the colors, art, architecture, geology, and culture. My quilts are my interpretations of these influences.

#### **What was your route to becoming an artist?**

My mother had me at the sewing machine before I started kindergarten. All in my family were makers, and I was steeped in craft and sewing projects all my life. In high school I started making fabric purses for friends. I ended up advertising in *Seventeen* Magazine and had a business that lasted for years and paid for much of my college education. I was an art major my first two years of college before I switched to anthropology/archaeology and geology.

I started my first quilt when I was 17. Quilting is something that has been a constant in my life, through marriages, kids, divorces, jobs, and changes in geography. I started taking my quilting as a serious art form in the early 1980's and haven't looked back. I've also kept up my interest in book arts and painting.

#### **Do you use a sketchbook? If not, what preparatory work do you do?**

I have made extensive use of sketchbooks in the past. When I was designing with specific shapes, I put a lot of effort into sketching my designs over and over again until I felt the proportions were right. Then I sometimes used a large copier to translate the small sketch into a full-size pattern. Sometimes I executed the design by cutting out the pieces improvisationally without the use of any type of template. But with my current designs, sketching ahead just doesn't work. Since my colors all vary within these fan-shape units, I have no definite shapes to sketch. I've found that painting a color study works better for me currently. I do use my sketchbook to record ideas, notes, potential titles, and measurements needed to finish the work.

#### **What advice would you give to an aspiring textile artist?**

The possibilities are infinite. I would say first master the techniques needed in your exploration, then manipulate and use those techniques to manifest your own vision.

#### **What piece of equipment or tool could you not live without?**

Probably the equipment I can't live without right now is my longarm. I have several physical limitations, so being able to quilt without dragging the quilt through a domestic machine and eliminating basting have allowed me to continue to do this work. Of course, at the other extreme end of sophistication, I use my rotary cutter hundreds of times most every day.