

Quilt Visions 2020

Meet Susan Bianchi
Saratoga, California



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Artwork on Display

Pieces of Perfection

Susan Bianchi is a born and bred California fiber artist and has always followed diverse artistic pursuits. In the late 1980s, she added traditional quilting to those pursuits and by the 2000s had turned to fiber art. She has won awards for her art quilts from quilt shows across the United States and has been juried into *Breakout: Quilt Visions 2016* at Visions Art Museum, *Threads of Resistance* touring exhibition, and *Junctures 2018* at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles. Her work has been published in magazines and catalogs and is held in private collections around the country.

Artist Statement

I create images of things and ideas that capture my interest. My husband and I take a lot of photographs and then I play with them in various apps, such as Photoshop, to see what is interesting and what will work in quilt form.

Combining quilting, mosaics and photography is appealing - deciding on an image that has depth and dimension, choosing and laying out the colors that will best reflect the range of tones, and then the therapeutic repetitiveness of hand-sewing all the buttons and beads. Getting the right shade sometimes involves dying or painting the buttons, making them out of either found things or from polymer clay so they are the size I want, and my personal favorite, shopping at places that have vintage buttons for those unusual colors and textures. It's a slow process, but selecting the right button and bead is engaging – it's like looking at a photograph one pixel at a time.

The tactile nature of this kind of quilt satisfies me – the weight of it, the way it feels when you run your hand over it. I want to create an image that people want to touch and that can be seen in more than one way – the beauty of each button and bead up close and the depth of the image from a distance.

Q+A

What inspires your work at this time?

Right at this time, sheltering definitely influenced, I find myself selecting images that have some dark feelings but flashes of hope, too. I'm focusing on doors at the moment. Those seem to really sum up how I'm feeling. Which side of the door do you want to be on? Which is the safe side? Which side presents a future? All of those questions plus wanting that one magical door to walk through to be in a different reality.

What was your route to becoming an artist?

My childhood was filled with learning to sew and every craft and art project known to mankind – both good and bad. In my twenties, I was a singer/actor of no note. However, it did continue to satisfy my creative side. Marriage, work, and family filled my days and I took some art classes and dabbled in painting. Then I took up quilting. Learning the basics of traditional quilting as an adult gave me the freedom to experiment and play artistically. The jumping off point was pursuing the “what if” ideas that would pop into my head.

Meet Susan Bianchi - continued

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

I do use a sketchbook sometimes but not consistently. Sometimes I use it just to make notes on ideas and construction of the piece – write quotes down that might inspire the piece more or clarify the idea. Most of my pieces originate with photographs. Sometimes photographs inspire the pieces, but most of the time I come up with an idea and then search out things/subjects to photograph, or look for an existing photo I have that will support that idea. I end up playing with a lot of photo apps and Photoshop before beginning the physical work on a piece.

What advice would you give to an aspiring textile artist?

Be fearless! Don't waste time worrying about how others will view your work – just focus on how it makes you feel. Explore every “what would happen if...” and, as Lyric Kinard consistently says, don't be afraid to make bad art.

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

Beyond a sewing machine and fabric, my laptop and printer are necessary! (Yes, I cheated. There are two.)