

# Quilt Visions 2020

Meet Deborah Weir  
Rolling Hills Estates, California



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## Artwork on Display

*First Sunrise*

### Artist Statement

I am a mixed media artist who primarily uses textiles in my work. Though contemporary in every sense, the work I do references traditional “women’s work,” slowly built up, mostly by hand, with a needle, using gentle materials – fabrics, thread, floss – in addition to more modern edgier ones such as Tyvek, metals and found objects. My work is detailed, often with reflective surfaces and tiny, rich elements, and does not always neatly fit typical categories but includes collage and heavily worked or embroidered surfaces as well as art quilts and weaving. I choose from myriad techniques, whatever works to express my vision.

I love the process of making, but my work is always idea driven. I work in series so that I can pursue themes of importance to me. The 15,000-55,000 year-old cave paintings of northern Spain, southern France and Australia are the subject of one such series. Pomegranates, which represent fecundity and come in the most amazing colors, create an additional one. There is another about industrial detritus which is made of fabrics, rusty metal and random “junk” which sparkles and intrigues. Early human mark-making is an ever-present theme. My series *Fierce Winds* explores the excitement and terror of searing winds which have been exacerbated by sudden climate change. And *Confluence*, a show I curated and sent to six venues over three years, considers aspects of water: its beauty, scarcity and impact. My work in *Confluence* deals with the Pacific Gyre and was comprised of household plastics and other discards.

I have recently completed a 3-part series called *Incarceration*. It explores issues of imprisonment and is based in part on a visit to Alcatraz and study of a WWII POW camp in Hereford, Texas, which led to the artistic development of Arturo Burri. There are 9 quilts, 17 “cells” on stretcher bars, and a dozen 6” square embroideries called *The Keys*. A new collaboration (Bent Needle Collective) is in the works in 2019 as is a new series examining the relationship between degradation and hope.

The objective of my artwork is to awaken the mind of the viewer by means of visual seduction.

### Q+A

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

I predominately focus my art on social issues. For some time I did a lot on pollution of the ocean, but in the last couple of years I have looked at incarceration and its tie to social justice issues in the US. In January of 2020, I had a solo exhibit called *Incarceration*. It included about 60 pieces on such things as Alcatraz, WW II POW camps in the US, the cells themselves, antique keys and ended with a playful section called *Escape by Moonlight*. The pieces comprise art quilts but also a lot of mixed media.

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

I sewed my own clothes in high school and had been involved a bit in theatre at that time so when I was in college it was a no brainer to work in the costume shop. I graduated

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with a degree in Theatre Arts with the specialization of Costume Design. I had a career in the field for a few years but eventually decided that it was not a steady and dependable way to survive so got further education and moved on to working as a language acquisition specialist with the deaf and other non-native learners of English. But of course I sewed and took workshops on art for the entire 35 years of being a college prof. and always hoped I'd get time afterwards to pursue my first love. Lucky for me, I retired 16 years ago and have been 100% dedicated to pursuing my art every minute since!

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

I do occasionally rough out an idea in ball point pen in a sketch book but I am much more comfortable just diving in to the materials which feel right for creating the theme I have in mind. I often do quite a bit of research before I begin, so I take notes and collect images to get a running start.

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

Do the work. Put in the time. Study with those who inspire you. Visit museums. Read.

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

My Gingers embroidery scissors.