

Quilt Visions 2020

Meet Judy Martin
Sheguiandah, Ontario Canada



<https://judithmartinart.com>

Artwork on Display

My Awakened Heart

Judy Martin (b. 1951) grew up on a large rural property in the Fort Frances area of Canada. She married Ned Martin when she was 22 and the couple raised their four children in three beautiful Northern Ontario locations; Thunder Bay, Kenora, and Manitoulin Island. Judy and her husband continue to live and work on Manitoulin Island, Lake Huron, Ontario, Canada.

Judy made her first quilt at the age of twenty and soon became inspired by the quilt's connection to the important life passages that occur in bed. During the 90's, she made hand-stitched story quilts using the meaningful poetic language within traditional quilt patterns and world embroidery. Judy Martin holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees in fine art, (1993 Lakehead and 2012 Middlesex). Currently, her most important work is about touch and vulnerability and about the relentless passage of time.

Judy's work has been widely exhibited across Canada as well as the USA, Europe, and Asia. Her stitched artwork was featured in the book *Slow Stitch: Mindful and Contemplative Textile Art* by Claire Wellesley Smith (2015) and in 2018, she received the Craft Ontario Volunteer Committee Mid-Career Award for Excellence.

Artist Statement

I work with the aesthetic of simplicity in combination with the most powerful of our senses, the sense of touch. I want my work to communicate on an emotional level and so I search out the poetic meaning within the materials I use. I keep my thoughts and ideas in journals and re-read them daily. Subjects that I keep returning to are: vulnerability, female-ness, love relationships and the inner world.

In many pieces, I use circular outlines that contain areas of intensity or emptiness within a larger square. Circles are a dynamic shape with no beginning or end and for me, they refer to the spirit within the limits of the mortal body. I like that circles are able to reference cosmic imagery at the same time that they also represent the self.

The amount of hand-stitching in my work adds strength, beauty and the sense of touch. Touch is the first sense that humans acquire and the last to fail, touch is a direct route to daydream and memory.

Q+A

What inspires your work at this time?

My current work is inspired by the inner world that we each carry around inside our bodies.

What was the route to you becoming an artist?

My parents encouraged creativity and I thank both of them. I learned at an early age how to enter the dream world within me. As a child I read, sketched, took piano lessons and taught myself how to knit and sew. We lived on a farm and my two siblings and I spent a lot of time outside. During the summer I did many quiet activities on a blanket or picnic table under the willow trees, but I also remember moving my body in circles a fair amount. My

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mother had a circular path through the property that we used for walking or riding a bike, while during the winter I would skate in circles, round and round, on a rink that my dad made us in the large back yard. All of those things helped me to discover my own imagination and how vast the world inside me is, and how vulnerable, and how adventurous.

I've spent most of my adult life seeking for and nurturing this inner world while at the same time, moving through a fairly normal life. My husband and I brought up four children and I taught art and music for years. I also have two university degrees in fine art that I did through distance twenty years apart, the rigor of those studies was certainly important and helped me to refine my voice. It's crucial that I mention that throughout my adult life, I continued to be isolated from the urban and that, for the last thirty years, I have had the fortunate opportunity to live on an island in one of the great lakes.

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

My designs take place in two separate places. The first place is my journal or sketchbook. This is where I collect my thoughts and ideas every day. I continue to study world textiles and fine art and respond to favourites with sketches and notes. I read a little poetry every day and write words that resonate into the journal. I re-read my older journals in order to remember and to refine my own ideas and philosophy. Currently I am striving for an open-ended simplicity in my work and am representing my inner world with circles or dots set into fairly large squares.

The second place is my studio. There is no table in this room, just a wall covered with ceiling tiles that I can pin into, a chair placed at a distance from this wall, and the materials themselves (cloth and threads). Most of the cloth I use has been altered through dyeing or painting, which is a preparatory step before the designing. Most of the time I follow through on a sketchbook idea but quite often I will impulsively start something completely different because of an inspiring material. In fact, most of my newer work allows the design to be led by the materials. Then, once the fabrics are on the wall, I sit and look at them for a long time and sketch and make note of what is up there. The journal work helps me to understand the new work, and it is quite exciting. So to answer the question, yes, I use a sketchbook.

What advice would you give to an aspiring textile artist?

Never stop learning. Learn to do by doing. Put time into your work. Time is very powerful because it is so valuable. Have several pieces evolving. While one piece is steeping, things might happen with your techniques or in your life that give directions for what to do next.

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

My needle and scissors. My journal and ball point pen. My two hands.