


# What Is Modern Quilting?

RTMQG  
May 18, 2024



# The Modern Quilt Movement

- ▶ Modern quilts are primarily functional and inspired by modern design. Modern quilters work in different styles and define modern quilting in different ways, but several characteristics often appear which may help identify a modern quilt. These include, but are not limited to:
  - ▶ the use of bold colors and prints
  - ▶ high contrast and graphic areas of solid color
  - ▶ improvisational piecing
  - ▶ minimalism
  - ▶ expansive negative space
  - ▶ alternate grid work
- ▶ "Modern traditionalism" or the updating of classic quilt designs is also often seen in modern quilting.

# What is modern quilting and how did it begin?

- ▶ Modern quilting has existed in many forms for much of the 20th century. It wasn't until the 2000's that quilts with a modern aesthetic began to appear in greater numbers and quilters began to describe themselves as modern
- ▶ A defining event occurred in 1998 when Martha Stewart Living featured Denyse Schmidt, calling her quilts a “chic, modernist aesthetic.” For many quilters in the early days of the movement, this was a key inspirational moment.

# What is Modern Quilting and How Did It Begin

▶ The growth of the movement was facilitated by four factors:

1. The cultural shift of quality design being recognized by the general public
2. Affordable digital cameras
3. The changing fabric industry
4. The rise of social media

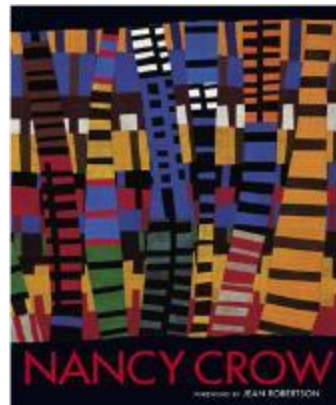
# Growth of modern quilting movement

- ▶ In 2002, the Quilts of Gee's Bend exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and the publication of Yoshiko Jinzenji's book **Quilt Artistry**, further provided inspiration to a small but devoted group of modernist minded quilters.
- ▶ Two influential books were published in 2005, Denyse Schmidt **Quilts** and the **Modern Quilt Workshop** by Weeks Ringle and Bill Kerr. The first online quilt-alongs were established on blogs around these two books and awareness continued to increase in the online world.

**Exhibitions  
and  
publications  
expand  
awareness**

# Early influencers of Modern Quilting:

- ▶ Denyse Schmidt
- ▶ Yoshiko Jinzenji
- ▶ Nancy Crow
- ▶ Gwen Marston
- ▶ Quilts of Gee's Bend



# Denyse Schmidt

- ▶ Denyse grew up in central Massachusetts around many old textile mill towns, a setting that is embedded in her inspiration today. Her parents were both makers, with her mother sewing clothing for four kids and her father making furniture; this spirit is embedded in her and Denyse started making things when she was little and has never stopped
- ▶ A former graphic designer and graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, Denyse Schmidt has helped to change the way we think about quilts. Intrigued by the rich historical nature of quilts and inspired by beauty born of necessity, Denyse adds her distinctive aesthetic sensibility - clean, spare lines, rich colour and bold graphics - to this rich art form.
- ▶ Though firmly rooted in the techniques of American quilt-making, Denyse Schmidt is renowned for her fresh, offbeat approach to design and colour and has won acclaim from the worlds of art, design and craft.

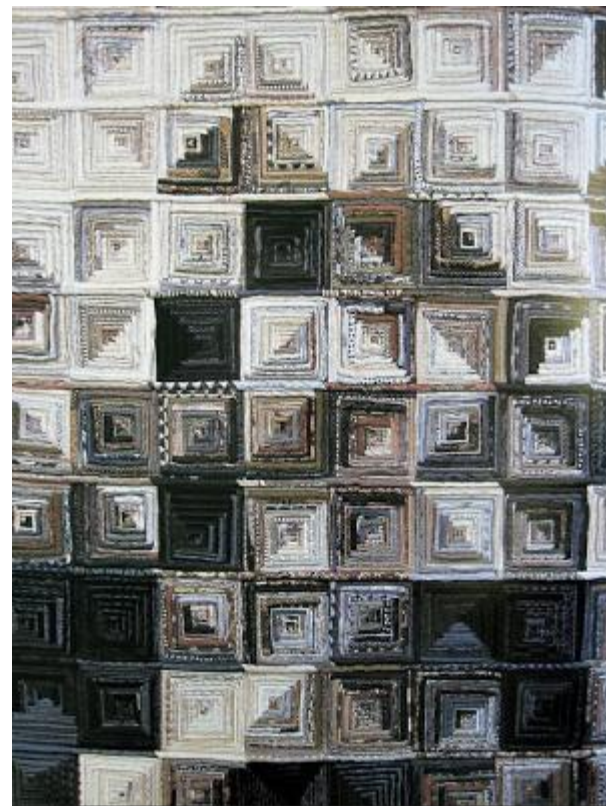
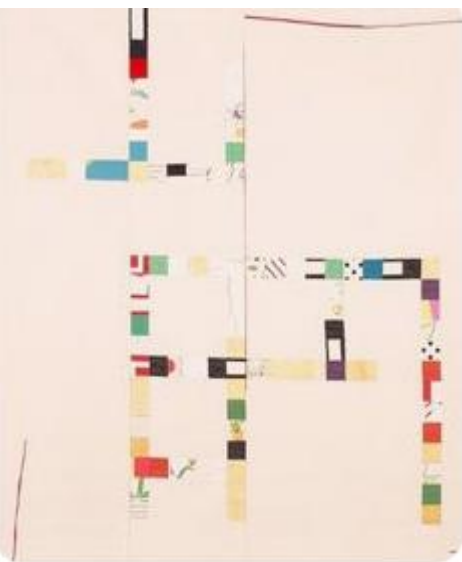
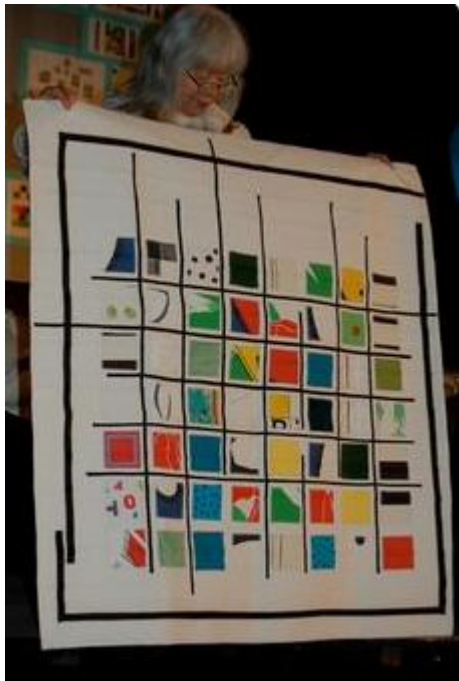
# Denyse Schmidt



# Yoshiko Jinzenji

- ▶ Yoshiko Jinzenji began making quilts around 1970 and in fact, she has recently retired from quilt making and is focusing her creative talent on cooking. Her prolific quilt career over more than four decades, and her incredible vision and innovation, offer contemporary quilt historians a rich legacy.
- ▶ Yoshiko has finely tuned her minimalist palette and infuses her art with tons of tiny details that give her quilts rich hues and an unforgettable feel.
- ▶ For many years Yoshiko maintained studios in Bali, Indonesia and Kyoto, Japan and living in these two countries inspired her to seek out and perfect the art of natural dyes. At one-time, she was practically a one-woman industry who would dye her own yarns, weave her own cloth and make completely original quilts and other items from her own textiles.
- ▶ Yoshiko's quilts require patience and personal experience to truly appreciate. Her work is unusual on so many levels and the quiet palette of mostly white, off white and other natural colors is incredibly soothing in a world saturated with color, noise and confusion.

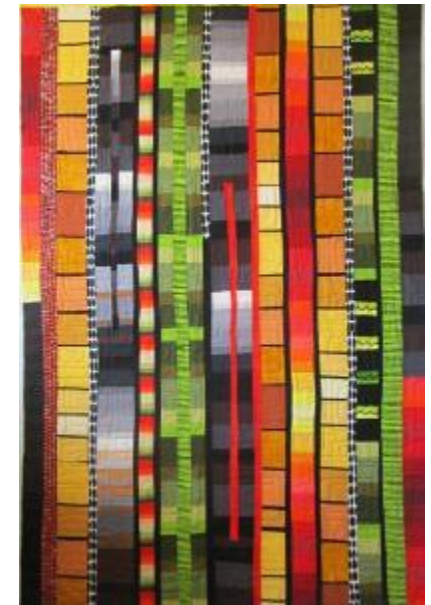
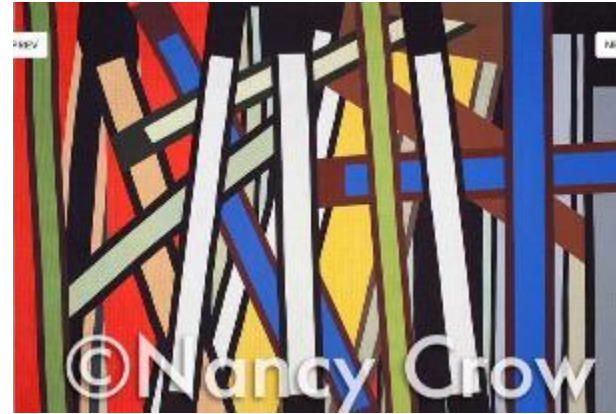
# Yoshiko Jinzenji



# Nancy Crow

- ▶ Crow was born in 1943 in the small town of Loudonville, Ohio. She is the youngest of eight children. Crow studied ceramics and weaving at Ohio State University where she earned a BFA in 1965 and a MFA in 1969.
- ▶ In 1979, Crow began to concentrate seriously on quilt making. Her emphasis from the beginning was on graphic power of color. In her early quilts, she juxtaposed traditional quilt patterns like the Log Cabin block with vibrant color combinations. Her later works use her own asymmetrical designs.
- ▶ Crow is one of the leading figures in the development of the art quilting movement of the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, Crow developed freeform cutting techniques allowing for more spontaneity and personal expression

# Nancy Crow



# Gwen Marston

- ▶ In the mid 1970s, Gwen Marston saw an exhibit of fine antique quilts at a local art museum that inspired her to become a quiltmaker. As most quilters do, she learned how to make quilts from traditional patterns passed down through generations.
- ▶ In 1990, Gwen began to design her own direct, uncluttered, and bold work. Her intent during the past seven or eight years was to simplify the elements, to melt them down to their most basic forms, and thus to allow the color to speak in a stronger voice. In the past year, she has pushed further in that direction, working in a decidedly minimal style.
- ▶ Gwen works almost exclusively with solid fabrics when making contemporary abstract quilts. She prefers solids for a host of reasons, none more important than the fact that the line and form of the design are more clearly defined. Solids emphasize the delineation between shapes, whereas prints can blur the edges of adjoining shapes.
- ▶ Gwen first decides on the basic form she'll use to construct the piece (such as working in rows, or beginning in the center and working outward). Then she thinks about color and scale, and after working out those general ideas, she starts building the parts and designing the quilt, constructing it in an improvisational way.
- ▶ Gwen passed away in April, 2019 after an aggressive battle with cancer. She lived in Michigan.

# Gwen Marston



# Gee's Bend Quilters

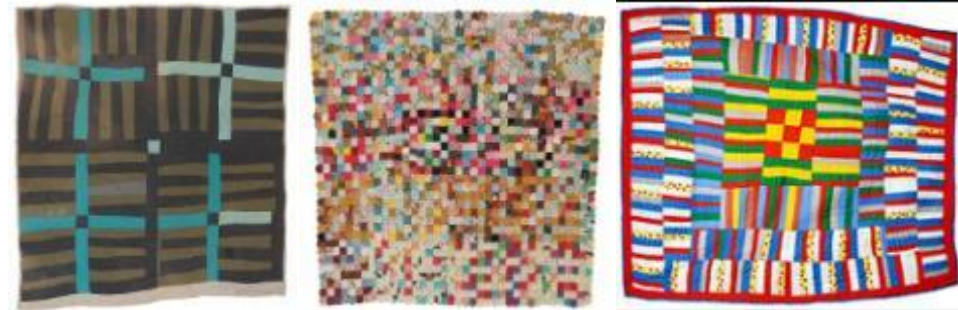
- ▶ Boykin, also known as Gee's Bend, is an African American majority community. As of the 2010 census, its population was 275.
- ▶ Gee's Bend was named for Joseph Gee, an early large land owner from North Carolina who settled here in 1816.
- ▶ Community was very geographically isolated for decades
- ▶ Most Gee's Bend quilts can be called improvisational or "my way" quilts. Uninhibited by the norms of fine or folk art
- ▶ Until the 1950s, the majority of quilts from the area were made from worn-out work clothes, a palette of old shirts, overalls, aprons and dress bottoms whose stains, tears, and faded denim patches provide a tangible record of lives marked by seasons of hard labor in the fields of the rural South.
- ▶ Gee's Bend's art also stands out for its flair—quilts composed boldly and improvisationally, in geometries that transform recycled work clothes and dresses, feed sacks, and fabric remnants.
- ▶ The quilts of Gee's Bend are considered to be unique, and one of the most important African-American visual and cultural contributions to the history of art within the United States.



# Some of Gee's Bend quilts



Any quilt dominated by concentric squares as a "Housetop," which reigns as the area's most favored "pattern."



The Bend quiltmakers have been guided by a faith in personal vision; most of them start with basic forms and head off "their way" with unexpected patterns, unusual colors



Quilts dominated by a single shape express themselves almost magically, repeating, revising, and rearranging an element in a dizzying number of mutations and variations on themes.



Until the middle of the twentieth century, the majority of quilts from the area were made from worn-out work clothes, a palette of old shirts, overalls, aprons and dress bottoms whose stains, tears, and faded denim patches provide a tangible record of lives marked by seasons of hard labor in the fields of the rural South.

# Growth of Modern Quilting continues

- ▶ The Flickr group Fresh Modern Quilts, established in 2008, provided the first online centralized social media venue for quilters in the movement. With that flickr group and many active blogs, the online world of modern quilting took off like wildfire.
- ▶ As social media morphed, so did the online modern quilters' focus. When Instagram came online, Flickr lost popularity as thousands of modern quilters moved their interest and content over. Instagram offered image driven posts with a limited amount of text.
- ▶ Many modern quilters taken advantage of IGTV to prepare short videos offering technique, new patterns, new fabric lines and ultimately drive viewers to their websites or Etsy Shops.

# Social media and modern quilting

- ▶ In 2009, Alissa Haight Carlton and Latifah Saafir founded the Modern Quilt Guild giving the online community a chance to form in person connections with other modern quilters.
- ▶ In 2013, the Modern Quilt Guild hosted it's first QuiltCon which has evolved into the largest modern quilting event in the world. The first QuiltCon was held in Austin, Texas and began as a bi-annual event. The national and international popularity of QuiltCon was beyond expectation and the event quickly became annual.

# The Modern Quilt Guild

▶ Here are the current 2024 categories of modern quilts:

1. Minimalist Design
2. Improvisation
3. Use of Negative Space
4. Modern Traditionalism
5. Applique
6. Piecing
7. Handwork
8. Group and Bee Quilts
9. Small Quilts
10. Youth

# Modern Quilt Categories

# Presentation prepared by:

KATHLEEN ROBERTSON

[cakath11@gmail.com](mailto:cakath11@gmail.com)

 [cadoodlesanddesigns](#)

CATHERINE ADAMS

[cathadam@live.com](mailto:cathadam@live.com)

 [renocan8dn](#)

[Reno Tahoe Modern Quilters Guild | Facebook](#)

[Reno-Tahoe Modern Quilters \(@the\\_rtmqg\) • Instagram](#)