

Dave's Note: I believe the festival has been graced with a major work of art. Lots of people think of quilting as a quaint and sometimes exquisite folk art and tend not to think of it as studio art. For those folks I would highly recommend a visit to the Museum of American Quilters in Paducah, KY, but for a quicker trip they can come to the Big Muddy Folk Festival where it will be displayed every year.

The narrative below is from Mona Stevenson, of the New Franklin area.



Big Muddy Banner Information

Development:

The process began when festival artistic director Dave Para asked quilter Mona Stevenson to consider making a banner to decorate the stage for the 2014 festival. Thinking about a way to incorporate the river into a folk-style banner, she decided this was an opportunity to try the quilt concept she'd seen at several international quilt shows: the slice quilt. She put out a request among art quilting friends for volunteers who would like to try this concept. Five women accepted the challenge to try something new. They were Patti Cantu, Christy Gray, Janice Haralson, Suzanne Henage and Karon Huggler.

At an initial meeting, the slice concept was discussed and design ideas shared. To add interest to the long scene, the decision was made to span the seasons, with two panels each for spring and autumn and one each for summer and winter. To avoid obstructing the riverscape, the lettering would be placed on separate panels above the river scene. For continuity, some fabrics would be repeated from panel to panel, especially for the river. Cutting the water in

diamond shapes gave the river a sense of movement and the impression of waves, as well as a suggestion of traditional diamond quilt patterns.

Work began with photographers Patti and Christy. The photo selected was taken from the overlook at Harley Park in Boonville. Christy used photo editing software to develop the final photograph. Mona and Christy traced that image onto muslin backgrounds.

Using seed money from the festival, Mona purchased batting, muslin, and some fabrics for the lettering background and water. She also purchased shirts from Savvy Seconds for fabrics to incorporate the frontier ethic of making do by reusing garments in quilts. Some fabrics include printed trees and wildlife. Others are floral, striped, plaid and mottled batik to give texture and the suggestion of soil, foliage, grass and water.

Each quilter selected a panel, contributed materials from her own fabric collection, cut them into

shapes and fused them to their slices. Some panels incorporate traditional quilt patterns, including Flying Geese, Hole in the Barn Door, Nine Patch and Four Patch. A few panels are highlighted with paint for foliage detail. Christy and Mona quilted the nine panels using recycled bright plaid homespun fabric donated by Jeannie Sanchez as the backing. The group worked together to cut the panels to size, finish the edges and the hanging sleeves, and attach labels and connecting Velcro strips.

The completed banner is more than a decorative backdrop for the musicians on stage. Quilting, like folk music, has roots in the past and a growing, changing present. The river, too, flows from our frontier past into our future. Contemporary art is linked with folk tradition. The banner's recycled components are a reminder of the pioneer days when people made do with what was at hand and the current popularity of "upcycling".

