

**Jenny  
Hearn**

## REFLECTIONS OF SUMMER. SEASONAL PALETTE EXHIBITION.

JENNY HEARN.

The name of this quilt is Reflections of Summer, but it might well have been called Emerald Odyssey or Kermit the Hulk, it is so GREEN.

The colours of a Johannesburg summer are dynamic, rich and vibrant. Not the lush moist green of Ireland but a harsh green. Our light is yellow in the Southern hemisphere compared to the more mellow bluish light of the North. The colours are bright and brash, it is not possible to have the Gertrude Jekyll type of herbaceous border in this dry heat.

Reaction to colour is a highly personal and psychological phenomenon. My school uniform was green for twelve years – ergo, I hated green for a long time, and rarely wear it now. That was before I had a garden of my own. My parents named our house (in which I still live), “Greenbank”, and so it is.

Green is an emotive colour, evoking sheltering trees, the cool comfort of shade, a calm, restful atmosphere in contrast to the baking heat of our hot summers. Despite some negative connotations the colour also has many positive associations. It is a symbol of life, of fertility, freshness and youth. “Emerald delights the eye without fatiguing it” maintained the ancient Roman, Pliny. It is associated with emotional balance, perhaps because it is derived from peaceful blue and joyous yellow.

I work intuitively, not intellectually. I make visual decisions. I am a painter and have an Art History degree and an Interior Design diploma with formal studies in colour theory. I suppose this comes through subliminally. I never make a plan. Though I did audition a piece that I had done with Ineke Berlyn in a workshop at the Festival last year which could have been a base from which to work. However the busy-ness and loose composition did not suit the scene I envisaged.

I find that you cannot set your heart on using particular fabrics and expect them to conform. Colour has a will of its own and will go where it chooses. I am always curious about colour, the way it can be manipulated to change temperature, intensity, value and mood. Probably this is why colour is my medium. Luckily I seem to have a flair for putting them together.

The photographs of trees, taken from the verandah outside my studio, sets the stage for this piece, a mostly monochromatic framework of green, the lead colour against which the flower forms are placed. I wanted a sophisticated setting in which the value change was the most important element. The English artist Constable stated that the superiority of the greens in his meadow paintings was due to the fact that they were made up of a large number of juxtaposed, not mixed, green pigments. The values in my work are used in much the same way, different proportions of a hue make the surface lively and create rhythm, movement, harmony, unity and balance through asymmetrical placement.

I have a huge amount of fabric in precut two inch squares which allows me to work quickly and spontaneously. I place odd numbered clusters of a chosen colourway on the design wall and wing it from there. The outline of the square is blurred as its value segues by line, colouring and print into its neighbours. The small one patch works best for me, anything bigger and the shape becomes obtrusive and the colours won't flow, they have to be fluid like a painter's flickering brushstrokes. I paint *with* fabric and not *on* it.

Cutting strips and then squares from large scale splashy/splodgy patterns and textured prints means that the print is not properly aligned each time so I never get the same square twice. Colours don't always diffuse and dissolve as you want them to. Fortunately we see selectively, the eye will fill in the spaces to complete the lines and nuances. Small irregularities in the fabric surface help this illusion.

In this piece the value transitions were not as smooth as I would have liked. There is a substantial contrast between warm and cool greens which make for visual jumps and hiccups, the consequence perhaps of not reading the top under different light sources. Interestingly, these did not show up until the final photographs were taken. I excuse myself by saying that these indicate different foliar formations.

I used large and medium sized leafy prints and florals from tints to shades, with the odd abstract print for continuity. The magical Bali fabrics were used for luminosity and sparkle and the disciplined Jinny Beyers for quieter areas.

Dress materials, old frocks, upholstery and curtain fabrics are all in the mix, whatever will bridge well and reinforce the visual interaction.

Green is normally a receding hue, but in my piece is very strong – perhaps too intense and overwhelming. It also appeared rather dull and flat. The piece was quilted before adding the plants. To tame the ground and to reinforce the foliage concept, I sewed leaf shapes in toning variegated threads, some outlined for further emphasis. I want the viewer to look and look again at the subordinate pattern. Movement is suggested by the random placement of the leaves, energizing the composition.

With this quilt I started at the top, I used yellow to indicate sunlight and shadows filtering through the leaves. As I don't care for yellow particularly, I used a hazy print with a touch of chartreuse to dilute the tone, lead into the green and to give the idea of dappled light. I aimed to have a pale and airy area atop to give the illusion of perspective. The values and textures further down suggest visual weight with the dark massed colours appearing heavier and anchoring the scene.

I am interested in gardening and work sporadically in mine. The complex forms are a constant source of fascination. Initially this piece was based on my real garden, with the flowers portrayed fairly realistically with paint and thread. In my fanciful botanical garden, the plants and leaves were influenced by studies into Japanese painting, Art Nouveau and Art Deco design, Jacobean and Edwardian embroidery. The stream exists only in my dreams. This was embroidered in a rather haphazard way, using space dyed cottons of differing weights on mesh of different grid sizes, to indicate water. The contrast of fabric and embroidery squares is a further textural device to hold the quilt together.

At first I made the irises and lilies from silks and satins that had a muted lustre, but somehow they had no life. Then I burrowed into my beautiful Balis for vibrant and vivid hues to add resonance to the scene. High contrast is tempered by the luxuriant foliage. The flowers were satin stitched, adding a sinuous and sensuous organic line. The hand dyed fabrics acquired a glow not unlike satin. I incorporated three dimensional leaves for the fun of it.

I wanted to avoid binding and to face the quilt so that it would have a flat edge and blend into the other quilts before and after it in the gallery. But the sides needed some finishing statement so it had to be bound. I made the joins straight to fit in with the colouration of the squares within, a bias cut would not read well. The thin binding blends smoothly in value.

Usually I don't set myself a specific size to work towards, but continue until the colour stops logically.

With this piece, there was a size constraint, an enforced discipline that I'm sure I shall benefit from ..... given time.

I enjoyed the challenge, thank you for the opportunity to exhibit in your show.











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AMSTEL LAGER

HANSA PILSENER

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A person with dark hair, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, stands on a wooden stool. They are facing away from the camera, reaching up to adjust or add a label to a large wall display. The display is a grid of various beer labels, with a large section in the center being a dense, overlapping collage of green and yellow labels.

AMSTEL LAGER

HANSA PILSENER

PURE ENJOYMENT. NATURALLY.

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PREMIER  
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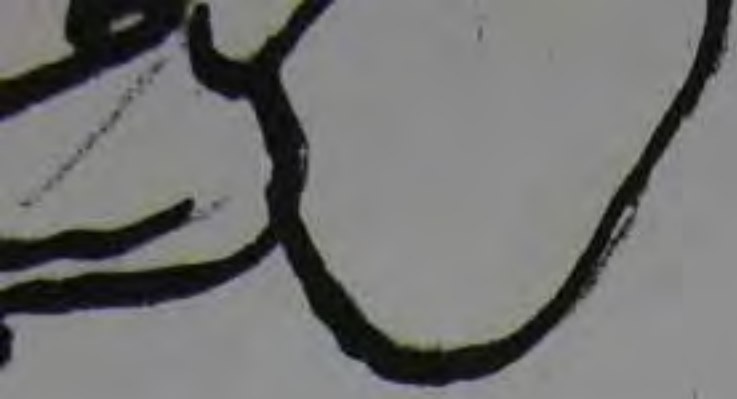






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## JENNY HEARN. PROFILE.

Art quilting has given me a voice, a language and vocabulary with which I can communicate my ideas and translate my personal inspiration and imagination into a relevant work.

In quilt making we are all expressing ideas and concepts in an abstract way. In traditional quilting we are using various combinations of shapes and blocks which have symbolic names and meanings, such as Log Cabin. A concept that is being explored in the art world is that a form, shape or image, which is non representational, acquires its own characteristics and personality, becoming a symbol that has no direct translation. It suggests or represents an emotion, thought or mood rather than a physical picture. The suggestion becomes apparent to the viewer when the work is perceived, the mind making the connection because of the knowledge it already has.

Colour is my medium. Our reactions to colour are variable and hard to define. My response is emotional and intuitive rather than intellectual. Colour is informational, spiritual, curative, has musical connotations, philosophical and mystical meanings and a host of other properties which influence visual and mental perception. Colour affects moods and has symbolic significance. It is an expressive force and it helps to convey the reaction to and the emotional impact of the quilt's message. Colour preference is subjective. Yellow is my least favourite, I find it aggressive, jagged in shape like the Pineapple block and as raucous as jazz. Colour values form the structure or scaffolding on which my quilts are built, and, in turn, establishes the narrative of the piece. I seem to have a flair for colour groupings and associations which makes my explorations into colourwash so much easier.

My initial introduction to this process, ( which is not new - what is), came from the doyennes of Colourwash, Pat Maixner Magaret, Donna Ingram Slusser and Dierdre Amsden. I must point out that my work is neither as disciplined nor as sophisticated as theirs. I have adapted their methods to suit my requirements. Other influences are the painters Marc Rothko and J.M.W. Turner. Rothko has a fluidity and fluency in pigment and brushstroke that draws the viewer into the painting. Turner perfected an entirely revolutionary approach to painting at that time, transforming everything in the picture into diffuse colour and light.

I draw on my experiences teaching art and art history and colour theory, such as the seven colour contrasts and colour harmony. I bring my knowledge of interrelated colourways in interior design practice to the party. I guess this is all subliminal, I certainly don't devise a plan other than to choose the predominant hues in keeping with the theme. I am by nature, impulsive, so I tend to dive into the building process spontaneously. My approach has to be informal and flexible because I am constantly adapting, maneuvering and manipulating colour to keep in tune with the subject.

The rich and expressive language of colour, whether used consciously or intuitively, depends on the harmonies and tensions, subjugations and enhancements brought about by the different ways colours react to each other. Colour is relative and is never seen as an isolated entity, it is fugitive, influenced by what is placed next to it, the size of the tonal area and its placement in the composition. Even the temperature can be changed according to its position amongst its neighbours.

The aim and objective of my work is to explore the magic and movement of colour value within the quilt. Hence I use an expanded colourwash, arranging irregular clusters of the two inch squares in swathes of colouration in groups of subtle graduations. Soft transitions and dimensions create a vibrant coherent and comprehensive composition. The simplicity is in the placement of the one-patch layout as a foundation. The complexity comes in the shading like that of a painter's sweeping brushstroke. I am painting *with* fabric rather than on it.

The two inch squares of fabric work best for me, when sewn together, the area is much smaller and the eye easily coordinates relationships and will gloss over inconsistencies as long as they are not too great. The three inch block will not work, you are more aware of the square than the tone. The differences become too eye catching and stops the colour run to the neighbouring cluster. A zing is one thing which may be invaluable in lifting a traditional quilt, but it destroys the fluidity of a colourwash.

I can only control the collage so far, slight irregularities or out of sequence jumps will occur. Sometimes they can add a lowlight, a subtle tension, a vitality and energy that enlivens the work or gives an illusion of perspective. I like to have the visual weight at the bottom of the piece, it is the logical place for it and it stabilizes the work. Usually these hiccups appear when the top is fully pieced, the storage boxes have been put away and it is too time consuming to hunt for the missing parts. Conspicuous differences which add nothing of value get appliqued over, while minor problems get quilted.

Colour is a great tool for generating rhythm and movement, repetition, balance and unity. The more gradual the tonal change in scale and proportion, the more effective it is as the shades advance and recede into the quilt's space. The subsequent additions are introduced as the fabric dictates. I make the values sweep and interweave as gracefully as possible to suggest space, depth, distance and volume, and to create a visual diversity and tension. An unequal distribution and interplay of colour is dynamic and must balance the impact of the inserted embroidered/ knitted/ embellished section which is added later. I have to avoid over coordinating the fabrics, this can make the quilt predictable and bland. I have to say that my work is not as smooth and harmonious as that of the ladies Magaret, Slusser and Amsden.

Putting the pieces together is an additive and addictive process. The patterns and textures are very versatile when cut into strips then squares. The continuity of the print is changed. The individual pieces will never look alike as the cutting is fairly random, particularly on fabric that has an asymmetrical design. Interesting and unusual links happen when large elements are broken, they diffuse, dissolve, or fade, yielding to what lies before and beyond it, creating a visual texture that helps to unify the design. Multi value splodgy and painterly patterns work well as do medium and large floral prints. When cut, the whole motif is lost, only the colour and line remain which will blur into the next area. Larger prints are tempered by medium and smaller prints in the vicinity and reinforces the rhythm

Highly saturated and vivid hues are difficult to combine but they can be subdued by the surrounding placements. It is challenging to get the magnificent Jinny Beyer fabrics, to blend. The repeats are more pronounced and defined, but it can be done. I have to be careful not to cause a focal point by using too many similar prints together, because they can read as plain colour. The eye then does not range over the quilt satisfactorily. With hand dyed fabric the joins are more apparent and solids

won't work at all. White is startling and halts the movement altogether. I never fussy cut, but I do sometimes use archival Magic Markers, dyes and inks to quell the strength of a part which will not go with the flow. Bali fabrics are magical, they are well behaved and bridge easily, much like Turner's "scumbling" technique. The underside of a print is usable too, the hues are muted and make good joiners. I avoid commanding stripes, plaids and directional lines, they are very strong and disrupt the sequences. The same applies to novelty prints.

My stash is enormous. Fortunately my husband's philosophy is – when you see it, buy it, it may not be there tomorrow. I buy fat quarters of patchwork cottons, dress materials, lightweight upholstery and curtaining. Polyesters are also in the mix as well as old frocks, with silks, satins and voiles etc., for the applique details. A large collection in small quantities and a huge colour spread is vital, I can always find something that can be made to fit. I very seldom bead, but I do use disparate found objects – washers, straws, replicated shells and fossils, whatever pertains to the story.

I store the precut colour coded squares in big beer boxes or foil containers. The foil trays stack better in my cupboards, take up less room and I don't have to worry about acid damage from poorly processed cardboard, but they are pricey.

I have a large studio, my son's split level "apartment". Boxes are spread about the room – it's organized chaos really, but a large inventory makes the selection process easier. The squares are pinned to the design wall, edges touching, through value changes and fluctuations, with constant refinements and tweaking. This cannot be rushed nor can the colour be forced into submission. The more I handle fabric and colour, the more it tells me what to do but it has a will of its own and will go off at a tangent. The process doesn't go smoothly by any means, there is trial and error aplenty, joy and disappointment along the path. I have to say though, that it is all worth it, the rewards and many delights in the satisfaction in discovering unique value nuances is wonderful.

I question all the time – is it saying what I want it to, will the viewer get the meaning or metaphor and will his attention be held? Is it relevant? Is it banal or merely pretty, too literal, too powerful? Is it crammed with colour that is too densely layered, and therefore over active, does it need to be tamed with a more restricted palette? In contrast, is the proportion and placement of hue too fragmentary so that connections can't be made? Is the concept too limiting, can other interpretations be made? Is this a good thing? Can this work lead to further explorations? I frequently ask and get advice from my artist friends.

The squares are taken down row by row, then stacked on a horizontal pinning board close to the sewing machine. I try to be as accurate as possible, measuring by eye, but it doesn't always work out that way. Inconsistencies can be hidden by the quilting. I match the thread to the area to be sewn, the stitching is less obvious. The squares are sewn one by one in a line, I never chain piece, that method leads to placement mistakes and there is no time for adjustment at this stage. I press heavily with a steam iron to flatten all the seams because the ridges of the joins can show up in certain lights and will destroy the fluidity. I also observe the top by different illuminations and at different times of the day – incandescent and fluorescent light change the colour and mood dramatically. A beautiful burgundy can become the most dreary brown when seen under electric light, with obvious consequences.



The top is then quilted with a Loomtex batting but without a backing in the relevant design. Just as the subtle effects of the tonal flow disguises the squares by blurring, the quilting is linear and textural and reinforces the camouflage. The quilting gives a tactile quality, an intensity and weight to the visual printed texture. Traditional motifs such as feathers and wreaths get lost in the intricacies of the colouring, so the quilting must be custom designed. I often use evenly spaced wave or zig zag lines, about an inch (2.5cm) apart. These are computer drawn, printed and then become the templates, which placed on more flimsy paper and perforated with a threadless needle on the machine and pinned on the quilt as a guide. Using a walking foot I can produce a reasonably regular line. Occasionally I use a double needle and two threads. If a more emphatic line is called for, I will use a satin stitch in freestyle organic shapes. I use fairly heavy variegated threads and space dyed embroidery cottons for this part.

I machine quilt because this is the most sensible method where materials of different weights have been used and there are many seams to stitch over and across.

I do not hand quilt but can do an adequate running stitch for embellishment. I have tried but I'm afraid I was defeated. When in training to be a quilt judge this was one of the requirements. I became unbelievably stressed, every joint ached as I wrestled with the hoop and stand, and my dear quilting friends giggled away and were no help at all. After the sixth attempt my supervisor relented and passed the assignment out of the goodness of her heart. I leave that to the experts and admire them greatly for their skill.

The top is then cut to shape to accommodate the insert section. Inevitably there are gaps in the alignment, so there have to be infill sections to contain the panel, which give scope to sculptural detailing. The cut may be folded back and lined or layers of contrasting elements may be set in. The backing is chosen to suit the mood of the front, attached and quilted through along the lines of the original decorative quilting, about six inches apart. This is strong enough to keep the parts together and adds further density to the front.

I prefer not to have borders. The outward movement of the design stops when it is visually complete in the design phase. The statement should be strong enough to stand on its own and does not need a frame. However, there does have to be some closure but I don't want contrast. An edging in a single print is too obtrusive. The binding is dictated by the areas within the top and therefore changes accordingly. I join the bindings in a straight line to match the squares, a bias join does not read well in this format. Very narrow French binding does not allow for mitred corners, they are as neatly butted as I can make them.

As a painter I am very aware of my surroundings, I always look for the unusual, the incongruous and the unexpected and collect numerous found objects which just may be useful at some point. These collections, though stimulating to me, have made our home too idiosyncratic to be easily sold according to estate agents. I use my camera frequently for inspirational ideas – thank heavens for digital. Sometimes my work is socially provocative in a mild sort of way as a personal take on local situations.

Words and their meanings and derivations are jumping off points for a series. Wordsmith on the Internet is an excellent source. Synonyms and metaphors, allegories, legends and myths are fascinating. Once I select a subject to illustrate, I search out all the connotations these words evoke,

as well as the adjectives and descriptive phrases to extend and complete the idea, using them as pathways to visualize my theme. Sessions with the Thesaurus are helpful.

Ideas come from travel, my garden, cloth, tree bark, articles in magazines and obscure colourations. One idea inevitably sparks off another resulting in interpretations of subjects such as Divination, African carvings, the history of writing and print, damaged posters, archeology and natural events.

I draw a rough pencil sketch of the idea, and make a list of what will be needed and the approximate palette that will be required. A detailed colour plan will not work for me, the end result is never what was originally conceived, neither can I rely on preconceived formulae. Colour has a life of its own and leads you where it will. I set the stage and wing it from there. I might just find something I didn't know I was looking for so it is worth the ride.

I have exhibited locally and overseas and have pieces in private and public collections. My work has been published in various magazines both here and abroad. It may be seen in "Masters Art Quilts. Major works by leading artists," by Martha Sielman; "500 Art Quilts", published by Lark Books; "1000 Artisan Textiles" by Sandra Salmony and Gina M. Brown; "Innovative Threads, a decade of South African Fibre Art", by Liza Gillespie; "Fibrearts Design Book 7," edited by Susan Mowery Kieffer; "Six Continents of Quilts, the Museum of Arts and Design Collection"; and "Quilt Africa", by Jenny Williamson and Pat Parker.

I am a member of SAQA, which is a constant motivating and encouraging mentor. I belong to two art groups – very serious stuff, and two home groups, who try to be serious but have a lot of laughs and cake instead.