



EAST BAY HERITAGE QUILTERS
QUILT STUDIO TOUR

JULY 27, 1984

INTRODUCTION

For years I have been an avid partaker of house tours. These have consisted of decorator show houses and remodeling tours designed to earn money for worthy charities, and architectural tours to showcase the work of specific architects. I also have spent part of my career both working in and teaching interior design. When the Steering Committee began making plans for the symposium two and a half years ago, we were looking for some kind of special event that hadn't been offered at other symposiums. A studio tour seemed a natural to me. All quilters have in common the problems of work space, fabric storage, and adequate lighting.

EBHQ has been in existence long enough that individuals who consider quilting an important part of their lives have taken steps to take over part of their homes for their work. In putting the tour together we have tried to showcase a variety of solutions which we hope will inspire you to find answers for your own workspace.

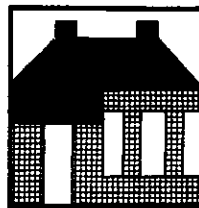
I would like to thank the members of my committee who have worked so hard to plan the tour. They are Sue Arnold, Michelle Martin, Marion Ongerth, and Ann Rhode. I would also like to thank the EBHQ members who opened their studios to us. For all this meant tidying things up, but for some, it meant wielding a paint brush and undertaking projects to completion.

Winston Churchill once said something about men constructing buildings and then the buildings shaping them. We could say the same about our workspaces.

Hoping your day is an enjoyable and instructive one,

Mary Mashuta

STUDIO 1
TERRIE SOLDAVINI



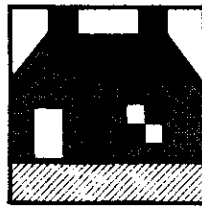
Terrie Soldavini's workroom presents several original solutions to the problems imposed by a small space. When the Soldavinis remodeled their home, the area intended for a walk-in closet became Terrie's sewing studio. In the past, Terrie did her quilting in the family room. With little children about, she didn't have the freedom to leave things out. Now, with her own room, Terrie can close the louvered doors and sew late at night without disturbing her husband and family.

Many items in this room reflect a close attention to maximizing the space available. There is a folding table that swings up out of the way when not in use. An ironing board on hinges can also be moved away. As there are no windows in this room, a skylight Terrie and her husband installed lets in natural light; track lighting and an artist's lamp help also. A wall of cork board allows her to pin projects and memorabilia nearby, and sewing supplies hang on nails within easy reach. Shelves above the cork board contain bolts of fabric. Other material is stored in variety store cardboard shoe boxes and baskets. Strips for strip piecing projects hang close at hand.

Terrie has sold her work to the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite, in the Napa Wine Country, at EBHQ Craft Fairs, and is currently doing commission work for the Cat Companion Catalogue. Quilting for over eight years, Terrie works alone on projects for her own business, but also has made six quilts with others while belonging to two quilt groups. She enjoys meeting with these groups, and feels you can learn a lot by sharing with others. Her own first quilt was a king-size bed quilt made from six-inch squares; now she usually makes crib-size quilts. Terrie seldom quilts on a frame, but does set it up in the family room if it's needed. She'd like one day to do frame quilting in their newly-created loft area which now serves as a play room and has its own cleverly constructed stairway.

The compactness of Terrie's well-designed equipment makes for a smooth working arrangement. Further details not to be missed include the back side of the cutting table, which serves double duty as a felt board when upright. Mirrors along the bedroom closet wall not only add to the illusion of space in the studio, but also provide Terrie a way to project in mirror-image fashion what her finished works will look like. All in all, Terrie has ingeniously created what she calls "a nice refuge."

STUDIO 2
DAWN MOSER



Dawn Moser's approach to her own workspace is best stated succinctly in her own words. "As soon as I could move my older son out of the house, I got rid of all the bedroom furniture and took over that space. I have worked out of closets, corners of rooms, and the dining room table too long to care whether we have a 'spare' or 'guest' bedroom. Let them stay at a hotel!" Dawn needed this space when her designing of dolls and doll clothes became more than just a "fun way to spend time," but a viable business of her own. Her 20 years of quilting now take a back seat to her doll business, which requires that she spend 20-30 hours a week in her studio.

Working so often on pieces for dolls no larger than 18" tall, Dawn finds she works best with lights that shine right over her work--every surface she uses often has lights on movable necks for maximum flexibility. A table size ironing board and pressing sleeve provide all the ironing surface she requires for both quilt pieces and doll work. Every detail in this room smacks of neatness and precision--from the storage shelves and uncluttered bookcases to the orderly array of hanging supplies and equipment.

Discussing aspects of the design phase of her work, Dawn says, "I work at all hours of day and night and mumble a lot when a design isn't going well. I don't like to work with others except in a quilting bee situation. When I want to think, I want to be alone to work out my thoughts. But sewing (as in quilting three layers together) is better done in a group."

Dawn's family happily supported her move into a separate workspace. "They have always been proud of my work. . .the boys and my husband--he especially because he will always have to live with my larger 'family'--are part of my work, my space, and my satisfaction in what I do. Having this workroom finally frees me to do what I want, when I want, without having to make a comfortable space for the rest of my family." Dawn views this workroom as strictly a *sewing* room. Any writing is done at a desk or a table in the kitchen. In as much as this room has given Dawn a haven of uninterrupted time and space, she still maintains, "One works in whatever space one has, the physical setup has nothing to do with range or imagination, or at least should not. I did most of my quilting when we lived in a very small flat with two very active boys running amok. I managed then, so I think I could happily work anywhere."

STUDIO 3

ROBERTA HORTON and MARY MASHUTA



One unique problem not faced by most of us involves sharing a workspace with another quilter. For sisters Roberta Horton and Mary Mashuta, such a situation was a mixed blessing. "At times it's nice and companionable, but there are certain times when you have to be alone to sort out your thoughts." Quilting supplies, sewing projects, and stray pieces had slowly oozed out of the original workspace (Studio A--the ex-dining room), and were threatening to invade all but the living room. The solution to this dilemma was offered by a friend who suggested turning the off-limits upstairs junk room, Fibber McGee's closet, and kitty haven into a second workroom. Thus Studio B was born. Both spaces continue to be vital areas in the quiltmaking process for Mary and Roberta.

Certain lessons learned from working in Studio A contributed to decisions about equipment for Studio B. The track lighting downstairs had allowed them to work easily at night; however, "heavy" studio months meant a "heavy" electric bill. Studio B contains fluorescent lights which use about 1/3 of the energy needed for incandescent lights. Vita-Lite tubes which simulate natural sunlight were chosen, along with additional movable floor and table lights in keeping with the modern, "high-tech" environment. An asphalt tile floor in Studio B was important to Roberta to allow for her to scoot around on a ball bearing secretarial chair from one workspace to another without damaging the floor.

Distinctions have been made regarding fabric storage. Studio A's alcove of narrow bookshelves quickly filled with fabric and then spread to baskets stored under the quilting frame. The overflowing area of books, slides and material also contributed to the need for Studio B. Now, B contains fabric currently being worked on while A's alcove will retain slides and fabric needed for Roberta's teaching. To protect the material from fading in harsh light, B's windows were treated with a solar control window film which cuts down on ultra violet rays. The window shade in B is backed with aluminum to reflect and absorb up to 87% of solar energy to reduce or retain heat depending on the season. An area has been staked out in Studio A for the computer Roberta uses in connection with her teaching, lecturing, and writing about quilts. Insufficient wall space and several unsatisfactory experiments with sagging fleece in Studio A led to the inclusion of a Celotex wall in Studio B. Also, white walls were selected for Studio B to allow for accurate color perception. Studio B has emerged as a design center while A continues to be a multi-faceted work space. The quilting frame downstairs will remain permanently in Studio A.

Continued on page 9.

STUDIO 5
CAROL BOYD



Carol Boyd states, "As long as I've been involved in sewing and, more recently, quilting, I've always appropriated some space for myself. It's very important for me to have this for my own place and helps define what I do." Carol has worked in several rooms in this house. One, a downstairs apartment, was vacated by her to help alleviate Berkeley's housing shortage. The next, a room upstairs adjoining the kitchen, ended up with too much cross-traffic. She then moved into this small but well-lit and out-of-the-way workroom. It even has its own mini-balcony. Because of its size, Carol doesn't share this added-on workroom with anyone on an ongoing basis. However, two of Carol's daughters are quilters, and they "happily appropriate it whenever they visit."

The high worktable built by Carol's daughter, Erica, is a perfect height for cutting. It also works well for gift-wrapping, so the table gets commandeered at holiday time for other purposes. Used bookshelves form the base of the table at either end. Stacking cubes extend the available storage space for articles that don't fit well on shelves. A small (10" x 20") padded board exactly fitted to a stairway end post serves as a handy pressing board alongside Carol's sewing machine. Thread is neatly and conveniently attached to the side of the sewing table. Practical articles found in hardware stores such as pegboard, hooks, and racks create simple storage solutions for tools and equipment. The only other piece of equipment Carol would like to install is a felt board, but the room's odd angles have caused a problem.

Carol began quilting 10 years ago and became so interested in it that she opened a shop with two other women. She has made both large and small quilts; while loving the effect of large quilts, she tends to create smaller ones because of their manageability. Due to her arthritis, Carol is now experimenting with machine rather than hand quilting. She has done needlework, embroidery, knitting, and sewing all her life, but "quilting is much more satisfying to me than any of these."

Carol has strong feelings about what her quilt group, Five Easy Piecers, means to her on a personal level. While working primarily on her projects alone, she often asks her group's advice when stumped on a problem. The group meets at Carol's house one day a week to work on each other's quilts. The frame they use is set up in the dining room because the studio cannot accommodate its size. Carol tries to spend two hours daily in her room but "that is probably when everything else in the house is running smoothly!"

STUDIO 4
ANN RHODE



Ann Rhode has created a studio space that beautifully combines the warmth and coziness of wood antiques with the functionality of modern lighting, storage, and counter space. Particular highlights of this room include fluorescent light fixtures with warm tubes that do not cast shadows and keep fabric colors true. The cutting table that Ann designed holds sliding metal baskets for easy and accessible fabric storage. The ironing board was built into the wall with a handy light above it, and a closet was removed to provide space for an inset armoire. One wall has an attached Celotex board covered with flannel to allow for easy designing. About the board Ann says, "I love it, it's easy to make decisions when you can see the effect and change it rapidly." The only problem Ann hasn't solved is where to put a quilting frame. Which is one of the reasons she hasn't done larger quilts yet. Ann loves the light in this room, and mentions that "even though it's too bright to hang quilts in here, it's a small price to pay for all the windows." She's added a unique touch of her own--a tin ceiling which was installed to cover cracks!

Ann's quiltmaking dates from 1977 with her involvement in school group raffle quilts. Ann was "hooked" by a lecture given by Beth Gutcheon at EBHQ soon after that. All of her completed quilts are wall hangings. Ann quilts on a hoop, but she is working up to full-size quilts as she pursues her interests in design, colors, and fabrics. Related activities include cross stitch, doll-making, sewing, and interior design. She is currently involved with several groups that share ideas, work out problems, and quilt together. The studio handles four to five people easily.

Ann claimed this room when her daughter moved downstairs. As her husband also has a large office in the house, there is plenty of room for all. Her children will often share the space with her to do homework while she is working. She states, "My quiltmaking is an important part of me and deserves its place in our mosaic of family life. It indicates to my children that I may be someone other than cook, laundress, and cheerleader for their activities. I have a feeling of peace when I enter my room. I am surrounded by things and colors I love as in no other place in the house."

STUDIO 6
TUDY GOODING



It's easy to see that one can create a truly functional workspace even out of a wall when you enter Tudy Gooding's sewing room. Tudy worked with Capri Construction in remodeling a hodge-podge area of open shelving which was filled with books, games, and material in her family's rec room to include a tidy niche of her own. Choosing to retain the oddly-shaped angles of the original closet space has added depth to the worktable, and allows Tudy to also keep books nearby, yet out of the way. The room affords excellent natural light which comes from floor-to-ceiling windows. Tudy says it is "good for my mental health and lifts my spirits." A generous file drawer to the left of her sewing machine aids greatly in keeping handouts, patterns, and magazines under control. Plastic color-coordinated baskets in an adjoining closet area provide orderly fabric storage. Only the placement of a built-in ironing board has not yet been worked out, so Tudy leaves her own standing nearby.

Tudy particularly enjoys the fact that this room can be shared by her entire family, and yet still affords her an area that the family respects as her own. "Rainy winter weekends with the fire going and all of us working on our projects are really nice."

Tudy began quilting nine years ago when a newly-formed group organized the first Thousand Oaks School quilt (her child was in the first grade at the time). Only three women out of 20 had ever done quilting before. She enjoyed that experience immensely, and began taking classes with Lynn Bilik and Roberta Horton. Tudy doesn't just limit herself to quiltmaking. She makes most of the gifts she gives (dolls, potholders, and "baby quilts by the ton"). She works both alone and in groups. She gets more done alone, but loves the exchange of ideas a group can provide. The time spent in her workspace varies greatly depending on the project. It's important to Tudy that her work be portable, so she does her quilting on a hoop.

This neatly enclosed space has allowed Tudy to say that her work is "not just a nice little hobby to occupy my time. After I've spent time working in my studio, either alone or with the kids there, I feel good, almost content."

STUDIO 7
SHERRILL WALKER



The danger of collapsing fabric shelves was just one of the reasons Sherrill Walker outgrew her former workroom. The inability to pin work to the wall and step back with enough distance to view, was another. Therefore, she and her husband traded their former bedroom for her current workroom. Light floods the room that Sherrill has arranged to suit not only her quilting needs, but also the transcription and secretarial work she does at home as well. "I love working in that room--it has a large window that looks out directly into the midst of trees that are green almost year round, and the effect is very spiritually uplifting to me." The worktable she constructed has two pull-out tables underneath; one on which a typewriter rests, and another which accommodates her iron and pressing board when piecing. Shelves, made from inexpensive pine, line one wall from floor to ceiling and create ample space for a rainbow of fabric and books. For designing, she uses a six-panel screen layered with cork, felt, and linen that was adapted to fit the larger wall space by adding additional panels. If she were to do it over again, Sherrill would install a flat linen-covered Celotex wall.

"A few years ago...I began to get quite serious about my quilting. I deliberately began calling that room my 'workroom' so that my daughter, who was about six or seven at the time, and my husband would be aware that that was where I went to do my work and I was serious, and that it was indeed 'work' (my husband has always been supportive but children need training)." Sherrill says that since she is primarily responsible for the functioning of her house, she tries to see that all family members' needs are met in connection with it. They have appropriate spaces of their own, also.

Sherrill's involvement in quilting stems from the first class she took in 1976 and her interest in local quilt shows at the time. She was exposed to crafts and needlework at an early age (sewing, knitting, crocheting), but not quilting. Once she found quilting, she has made it her first priority, although she still has some occasional "lapses" into former craft-related areas of interest--recently rug-braiding and stenciling.

Sherrill spends at least eight hours a day in her workroom, although currently not much of that time at her quilting, due to other demands. Chairs and a daybed allow her husband and daughter to freely share the room while she works at the mechanical aspects of her quilting. Although she values talking with other quilters, she says she's not creative in a group situation and prefers to work alone. Currently experimenting with color rather than design, Sherrill shuts out outside influences such as quilt books and magazines until she "gets past the tentative, experimental stage." She has sold both large and small crib-size quilts. She prefers to work on large ones, even if it takes her a year to finish. She quilts with an 18" hoop. "I now feel more akin to quilters of the past. I make quilts for functional purposes--for cover for our beds as well as occasional gifts--and for the walls for aesthetic purposes."

Continued from page 4.

As can be witnessed throughout the entire house, both Mary and Roberta are actively involved in the quilting world. Roberta's emphasis has been teaching and lecturing for 14 years, along with making primarily small-sized quilts (the size somewhat dictated by space restrictions). Mary has created many quilted garments and an occasional quilt from time to time. Both Roberta and Mary feel the need to be alone and uninterrupted during the design and construction phases, yet do enjoy quilting with others. Whereas Studio B seems like a super solution to the growing demands on two artists' working needs, Mary and Roberta are already talking about converting the garage (North Berkeley's first church) into Studio C!

CONCLUSION

'A room of one's own'--what does it mean to a quiltmaker? The studios you have just visited are as unique as the women who work, create, and dream in them. Some are practical, others ornate and cleverly functional. Yet they are, after all, simply spaces wherein quilts are made. These rooms are individual expressions, subject both to limitations and excesses. Carol Boyd cautions not to take the idea of a "studio" too seriously, "I feel strongly that quilters (or any craftspeople) should have a space of their own and, while the idea of a studio is fine, some space for your projects is important. Women should be encouraged to use part of their kitchen, dining room, living room--whatever is available."

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