**TOWARD ABSTRACTION: AN EXHIBITION OF MODERN QUILTS**

**Thank you and welcome everyone to TOWARD ABSTRACTION: AN EXHIBITION OF MODERN QUILTS, representing a refashioning and revamping of the quilt genre.**

**And, of course welcome also to The Embroiderers Guild of NSW and Gallery76.**

**Any exhibition title including the words ‘abstraction’ and ‘quilts’ excites my immediate interest and attention, after all that’s what titles are for – and this exhibition certainly delivers.**

**So in the first instance I went searching for a definition for a Modern quilt and where they actually sit within other quilt styles.**

**And if you look at quilts as a straight line with traditional quilts at one end and art quilts at the other, then the modern quilt sits quite happily at the mid-way point, drawing deeply from both genres.**

**They’re described as a chic, modernist aesthetic, producing work that can be either functional or art.**

**For me, I’d describe the modern quilt as highly sophisticated and forward looking, making use of bold colours and prints offering high contrast and a strong graphic composition, sometimes showcasing improv piecing, minimalist design, expansive negative space and asymmetrical design. There’s also a strong use of solids and neutrals along with alternate grid work.**

**But there’s a lot more to a Modern Quilt – and that’s the artist behind the work who embraces self-expression and a willingness to explore and experiment, including ‘modern traditionalism’ or the modernisation of classic quilt design – all this at a time of the digital camera and online exhibitions, encouraging a world-wide interest and participation.**

**Yet the Modern Quilt movement manages to pay homage to quilting’s traditional values, all the while stepping outside its boundaries – and that’s fascinating in itself, displaying the influences of modern art and architecture, the artistic Gee’s Bend, free-form style of African American quilting along with Amish quilt traditions.**

**We’ve all heard the term ‘build a bridge’ – well I believe that’s exactly what Modern quilts achieve – they are a bridge, an exchange of knowledge and technique between traditional and art quilts and quilting – allowing a new and refreshing freedom of stylistic self-expression.**

**And in my opinion, it’s that freedom of expression which’s bringing new life and interest into the quilt industry as a whole.**

**Each of these 12 Australian Modern Quilt artists has presented two quilts – at least one of which has been juried into Quiltcon – the largest modern quilt show of its kind, presented by the Modern Quilt Guild of America.**

**And reading from Quiltcon’s own working policy, they’re always looking for innovation and original design, reflecting their mission ‘to support, and encourage the growth and development of modern quilting through art, education and community, to encourage renewed interest from year to year.**

**And that’s exactly what these 12 Quilt artists are achieving, demonstrating their fearlessness in design, displaying that much loved Aussie spirit.**

**How fortunate then are we, to be able to view these works in all their artistic and eloquent beauty.**

**I’m always on the look-out for connections, and in the quilts we see here today, I see the connection to traditional quilts, to art quilts, to art and the freedom of self expression.**

**But what I adore, as someone who’s really into history, is the connection to our ancient ancestors, who 20,000 odd years ago, fabricated a primitive needle and foraged for some form of fibre. Now their objective was survival, but to do so they also had to innovate and experiment – and they did so with a world- changing needle and thread.**

**And we’re still using both – just look around you here today to see how far we’ve come.**

**So it’s with a great deal of pride in these Australian artists, producing their vision of modern art in quilts and quilting, supporting each other and well able to compete on the world quilt and Modern Quilt stage, that I officially open this exhibition – TOWARD ABSTRACTION – AN EXHIBITION OF MODERN QUILTS.**

**Well done everyone.**

**Cathy Jack Coupland May 1, 2021**