

## Explanation of the Judging Form and Criteria

There are two main systems of judging in use around the world, the Point System and the Elimination System. The system used by the judges at The Festival of Quilts is a combination of the two systems. The quilts are judged hanging in their categories. The form is designed to be used, as qualified judge Linda Seward expressed, as the next best thing to speaking directly to the quiltmaker about her quilt.

The form comes in slightly different formats to cover the Student, Schools and Young Quilter/Young Embroiderer Categories. The form used for the main categories is broken into two parts – Design and Construction, each section being further broken down into smaller detail. The idea behind the form was two-fold. One was to help the judges make quick accurate evaluations given the short amount of time available to them on each quilt, and the other was to pass on to the quiltmaker as much useful information as possible.

The judges do not know the name of the quiltmaker, but do have access to the inspiration and design source if needed.

### Design

*Fulfils Category / Theme Rules* – basically are the quilts the right size for their category and have the quilts fulfilled any other special competition or theme guidelines. Also, have the quilts been entered into the right category – this is mainly to do with Group and, from next year (2006), Two Person categories, although this could apply to any other category – Traditional, Pictorial, etc.

*Visual Impact* – all about the ‘wow’ factor. Are you bowled over with the colours? Does the design, however subtle, make a statement? Does it draw you in for a closer look? Do you stand in awe of the workmanship?

*Originality / Content* - how original is the design or technique used? Is it a commercial pattern, a kit or in the style of a well-known quiltmaker? Was it made in a workshop? This is where it is helpful for the judges to have access to the quiltmaker’s statements. Is there integrity of content?

*Composition* - Is it balanced, harmonious and unified? Or is it lopsided or disjointed – a collection of unconnected parts? Is it a ‘safe’ setting / design or has the quiltmaker been innovative / adventurous and made an exciting or interesting quilt? Are the parts of the whole in proportion to each other?

*Choice and Suitability of Materials* – there are so many choices out there today, but not all work in all situations and with every technique. Any material is acceptable, what is judged is the success of its use in each situation.

*Border Design and / or Edge Treatments* – Not all quilts have borders – some don’t need them and, in deed, are better off without them. Quilt edges come in a variety of styles nowadays from the traditional binding to frayed. How well has the binding been applied? If the quiltmaker used the square binding method how neat were the corners? If the binding was mitred, how well was that handled? If there was wadding, did it fill the binding? How neatly was the binding sewn down on the back? Whatever edge treatment was used, how well did it fit into the design and has the quilt been enhanced by its use?

*Quilting Design* – A very important part of the quilt adding texture in the form of light and shadow. Has the quilting design been carefully thought through to add something more to the quilt top design? Are there areas that would benefit from more or less quilting?

*Presentation – Hangs well, Clean, Seam Allowances* – This is all about wavy edges, removing quilt markings, cat and dog hairs, cigarette smoke smells, blood stains and the like – yes, we have seen it all. Are any seam allowances ‘shadowing’ through (where they shouldn’t) because of a thin fabric – could the seams have been ironed in a different direction to overcome this? Have intersections in the piecing where there are many layers coming together, been handled to lie as flat as possible - avoiding some distortion of the quilt? And lastly, how neat and tidy is the back of the quilt – are there threads hanging? Does the bobbin thread colour tone in with the backing fabric? Is the backing laying flat or is it puckered and pleated?

One thing to take into consideration is how you pack your quilt to get it to a show. It is best practice to fold your quilt with wrong sides together (to avoid a deep crease occurring on the front), the more horizontal folds the better (allows the weight of the quilt to ease the creases out when hanging), and to pack the folds as much as possible to avoid deep creases. It is better to have a bigger box than necessary and allow plenty of room – after all, space in the box costs nothing to post.

## **Construction**

*Piecing* – how well matched are seams at intersections? Do the pieces lay flat or are there pleats and folds? Are curved seams smooth when they should be, straight seams straight? Are sashing and borders of equal width and parallel along their length? Do blocks line up when they should? Are inset corners well handled? Is the stitching tension good? Is the thread colour appropriate?

*Appliqué* – How well have the pieces been appliquéd? Are the curves smooth, points sharp and inside corners handled well? Has the thread been matched to the fabric colour? Are there enough stitches to hold the pieces down well and are the stitches as invisible as possible? If decorative stitches have been used, how even are they, are they in scale and are they appropriate to the style?

*Choice and Execution of Techniques* – There should always be a design reason for the inclusion of a technique. Filling a quilt with as many techniques as possible doesn’t usually work unless it is a sampler of techniques. Just as trying out a difficult new technique on a piece submitted for judging is not advisable unless you have executed it well. Each situation will be judged for the part it plays in the design as a whole and whether it is relevant and plays an important part in the design.

*Use of embellishment or surface design* – there are so many new ideas, new techniques and materials available to quilters today. Whether it is beadwork, hand or machine embroidery, computer printing, painting, stencilling, screen-printing, etc., any use of these embellishments will be judged on their success in adding to the overall design of the quilt.

*Quilting Stitches* – whether hand or machine, domestic or longarm, all quilting stitches should be even. Hand quilting stitches should show through to the back and be as even as on the top. Hand quilting stitches do not have to be small. Machine quilting stitch tension should be good, top and bottom (unless it is a deliberate feature).

*Quilting Lines and Curves* - All straight quilting lines should be straight and all curved lines should be smooth curves, points should be sharp. The traditions of Kantha and Sashiko quilting should be adhered to in traditional interpretations, and allowances made for innovative use.

*Quilting Starts and Finishes* – Hand quilting knots should not be visible on the top or the back of the quilt. Machine quilting starts and finishes should be neatly handled so that the thread is anchored and the stitches do not unravel. All thread ends should be neatly trimmed back or buried.

Where one or more of these sections are not applicable to a quilt there is no disadvantage in rating the quilt as there are no points used in this system of judging. The section will be marked 'N/A' or left unmarked.

*Judge's comments* - All judges would like more time to write, but the aim is to convey positive encouragement where there is room for improvement and praise where it is due.

The Festival organisers and judging organisers rely on the quiltmakers to be honest when they fill in their entry forms. The rules about what constitutes a group quilt, a two-person quilt, an amateur and a professional are all clearly set out in the Rules. If you have any doubt about any aspect of your entry please contact the organisers.