

African Fabric Shop Quilt Challenge

the finished quilts!

This month we show you more of the fabulous quilts that have been made from Helen Conway's 'No.1 African Fabric Shop' quilt that she exhibited at the Quilt and Stitch Village show at Uttoxeter in 2013. All the finished quilts will be exhibited at the show this year and will be available for sale in a silent auction both at the show and through the projects website, www.buyaplank.com.



'Shades of Africa', Nerys Horrocks

I was a Quilt Angel at FOQ 2013 and I spent a good deal of my time explaining the concept of the 'No.1 African Fabric Shop' plank project. I had also been to a talk on African fabric by Magie Relph and so decided to invest my fabric money in the plank project. When my plank arrived and I saw the other names of eminent quilters taking part I felt somewhat out of my depth. My plank looked just like a hut so I made some wonky huts in neutral shades and then decided the original hut was out of proportion so gave it the rotary blade treatment and added the pots and figures to give 'Shades of Africa' brown landscape and colourful people. ▼

▲ 'Achimota', Liz Howlett

I lived in Ghana for three years. The inspiration for my quilt was the warmth, colour and pattern I found there. I used my hand-dyed fabric with African wax-print and batik fabrics to create a street scene. 'Achimota' is a town north of Accra.



◀ 'A Plank for Musa', Linda Bilsborrow

I watched Helen's 'No.1 African Fabric Shop' quilt grow from a small piece on her design wall and so was pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this project. When it arrived my plank wasn't the long thin piece that I'd mentally planned for! So, I added 'planks' from my own collection of African fabrics (including a last minute purchase from Magie) and set about making an off centre, irregular log cabin piece with Musa's clinic at it's heart.





▲ 'William', Dorita Smith

With the plank challenge I immediately thought of pirates! One of the only recorded British sailors to walk the plank in 1822 was William Smith. This happens to be my father in law's name who was born and bred and still lives in Suffolk, hence the inclusion of the Suffolk Puffs. The circles came from Helen's quilting design on my challenge fabric and the circular pattern on Musa's indigo damask which I wanted to include. I wanted to achieve a traditional design in a contemporary style.

▶ 'Strip Village', Magie Relp

Many villages in Africa are strip villages. Where roads are built, houses are built along the road, near to communication and transport. The plank that I received was part of the door - so that made me think of the doors and windows of the different compounds that I often see in a strip villages as we travel around Africa.



◀ 'Variations on a Theme', Sarah Williamson

I used a piece of fabric loosely attached to the original block as the basis for my design. I incorporated that fabric in my blocks and used a lot of donated strips trimmed from finished quilts to make them, so there is a friendship and recycling theme as well. The original block was free line quilted with green thread so I did the same with the rest.

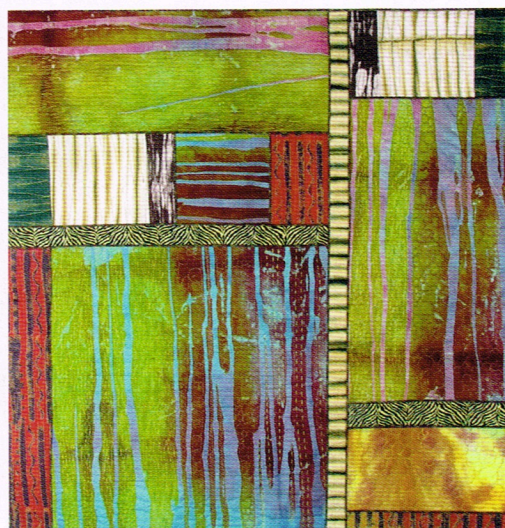
▶ 'And the Rains Came!', Janice Gunner

Inspiration finally came on how to use my plank when sorting out a pile of half-finished work! I came across one third of a triptych using an African, wax batik that I had already heavily free-machine quilted. I cut this and my plank into sections and then went about arranging and re-arranging on my design wall. A few hours later I had the final design. The sections were joined together and yarn was couched over the joins with a final touch of big stitch hand quilting. The incessant rain earlier this year gave me the title.



▲ 'The Price of Help', Judi Mendelsohn

I wanted to take part in this because I was there when the original discussion between Magie and Helen took place in Uttoxeter last year. I did seriously become quite daunted by the company I was in and that is not to denigrate me, but to recognise that I admire and like Art Quilts, but was frankly out of my league! I don't quite know what it will be like to not see it again because it was only complete and in my dwelling for about two hours. I think what Magie and Helen have done and are doing, is way beyond the amount of work they might have anticipated and I remain seriously indebted to them. What I had not expected - and will actually now be very grateful for - was to feel so emotionally enriched by taking part in the challenge and to see something really outstanding and worthwhile come out of it.





▼ 'A Dance for Musa', Anne Stacey

When I received my plank I realised the most important thing was that whatever I added had to be the same weight and quality as the beautiful original - no pressure then! I remembered buying a piece of fabric years ago, with African dancers on, so I added a strip to each side of the original plank having pieced and quilted them first. They were joined with curvy lines and the dancers were then machine appliquéd.



◀ 'One plank makes many huts', Alison Livesley

I realised just how many African fabrics I have when I started rooting through my stash for just the right colours and styles to complement my plank. There's shweshwe, batik and wax prints from Magie Relph and a lovely crackle print my Mum brought back from Zanzibar for me. I used ice dyed fabrics (following a recipe from *P&Q magazine* a couple of years ago!) for the Flying Geese and half square triangles strips.



◀ 'Go Brave', Premila O'Connor

My quilt is the first and only one I have ever attempted. For me it became about connections with people... the student who advised me to GO BRAVE when encountering a new situation, the young man cutting my fabric

who confessed that he had bought a sewing machine but didn't yet sew, my daughter who reasoned you just have to make a quilt, all the craftspeople who took time to share their skills on the internet and of course all the others who bought a plank .



▲ 'Little Acorns', Melanie Benn

I wanted my quilt to reflect the hope that our contributions would grow into larger cash contributions to help the clinic. One of the fabrics in my plank looked like tree bark and that inspired me to make a raw edged appliqué tree. Over time the fabric should fray and alter just like a tree growing. I chose a bright yellow background to reflect the sunshine and heat in Africa and used the pictorial fabric to make the framed images as added interest.



▲ 'Going Home', Lynne Arlow

I worked with a charity called Friends of Gambian Schools for about 12 years and know just how valuable the clinics are in the villages. As I had managed to buy a reasonable stash of fabrics out there, I thought it would be nice to make some of it up and send the money raised back to it's home. Putting ready quilted blocks together was a real challenge but I wasn't brave enough to try free motion quilting. I have always loved putting silhouettes on quilts so added a few ladies being busy as the ladies in The Gambia always are.



▲ 'Peanuts' Jane Rowland

Peanuts are the main cash-crop in The Gambia and I liked the serendipity that my love of Africa is a result of my parents going to Tanzania after World War Two to work on the Groundnut Scheme. I will always be inspired by the African landscape and people, the vibrant colours, crafts, ethnic symbols and mark-making.

▼ 'The Dark Continent', Kate Dowty

I find it hard to resist a challenge and this was a good one. My plank was pinned to the studio wall for a long time before I got started. Over the years I have accumulated quite a few of Magie's fabrics and this was the perfect excuse for using them. I added other fabrics from the stash which had the right feel to them. I work in an improvisational way and once I got started, it all fell into place very quickly. It's not quite my usual style though!



'Whirlygig',
▼ Molly Bullick

I am an African Quilt Shop addict and the opportunity to do something to help Musa's clinic was a brilliant idea. My inspiration of course is African fabrics so there was no problem getting into the colour and vibrancy of the quilt. 'Whirligig' is a dancing rhythm of pattern whirling around the window which was the part of the quilt I received. I had a piece of wax print which I loved which was the same as used in one corner of the window so this was the chance to exploit it.

Don't forget you can see all the quilts on show at The British Quilt and Stitch Village. See page 27 for more details. For more information on the project and to place a bid visit www.buyaplank.com.