



Heidi Proffetty & Rhonda International Quilt Festival 2019 Houston TX

Each time I view Heidi Proffetty's mosaic quilts, I am intoxicated by the intense emotions of the personal subjects created by tiny fabric pieces. These little mosaic pieces simply boggle my mind! How does Heidi create these marvelous soul captivating quilts?

Rita Farro delves into the award winning quilter's creative life and discovers a foundation of family life mixed with heart, diverse interests and the importance of a guiding hand through mentorship. One doesn't always know the importance of encouraging actions and kind words. Who will you help today? Watch Heidi's appearance on www.thequiltshow.com, episode #2406, from March 10, 2019! Sew SCHMETZ & Grabbit® Too!

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Heidi Proffetty





Heidi Proffetty

Heidi Proffetty is an award-winning quilt artist and teacher. Her quilts have been juried into American Quilter's Society, International Quilt Association, traveled with Cherrywood Fabric's Challenge exhibits, and exhibited in local galleries. She has been a guest on *Quilting Arts TV* and contributor to *Quilting Arts Magazine*. In 2018, she was featured on *The Quilt Show with Ricky Tims and Alex Anderson*.

In 2018, Heidi Proffetty's mosaic quilt, *Is She Ready Yet?* won first place in the People, Portraits and Figures category at the 2018 International Quilt Festival in Houston, TX and in 2019 it won first place in the Small Wall Quilts-Pictorial at AQS QuiltWeek in Paducah, KY. These huge honors are even more remarkable when you consider that, until about 2012, Heidi didn't even know there was such a thing as an *art quilt*.

So, who is this new Quilting-Artist-phenomenon Heidi Proffetty? Where did she come from, and what is her secret sauce?

Because Heidi had a few of those AH HAH MOMENTS, she developed a new quilting technique that combines inspirational photography, mosaic design, machine quilting, and a digital die cutting machine. Yes, you read that right. A digital die cutting machine.

But, here's the thing. Never in her wildest dreams did Heidi Proffetty believe she would one day become a celebrated quilt artist.





Heidi's new home studio.

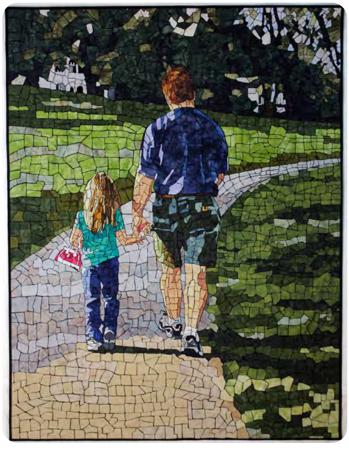
To go back a few decades, Heidi and her husband, Steve, live in Bridgewater, MA. Steve is an electrician and Heidi was an insurance professional. They worked hard, bought a piece of property, cleared it themselves, built a home and raised their two daughters, Erin and Tina.

The Proffetty family had many varied interests and hobbies. Steve was passionate about flying, earning his pilot's license in 1991. In later years he bought a plane and is building one of his own! Heidi enjoyed sewing, and for 20 years, she got together every Tuesday night with friends to sew. This is where she learned how to sew and quilt. A few years ago, the family took up beekeeping. Heidi says, they look like ghostbusters when they all put on their white bee suits, light their smoker and

head down to tend their hives. In 2018, the Proffetty's added an addition onto their home which included a brand new (14' x 24') studio on the main level of the house.

About ten years ago, Steve turned the electrical business towards solar energy, and things started to take off. They decided Heidi could take a step back from her insurance career to spend more time with the girls. Wanting to advance her sewing skills, she started by upgrading her sewing machine. A visit to the local sewing machine dealership rocked her world. She met educator, Janet Miller, and owner, Fred Start, after buying a new top of the line sewing machine. She spent many afternoons at that shop, learning all about the amazing things





Daddy, Hold My Hand.

her new machine could do and much more. It was her new friend, Janet, who fueled her passion for sewing and quilting even more and encouraged her to attend her first quilt show.

It was 2012, and she went to The Original Sewing and Quilting Expo Show in Worcester, MA. Heidi attended some classes and had a bag full of goodies from shopping on the vendor floor. At the end of the day, she decided to walk through the quilt exhibit. There was an aisle where the photography quilts were displayed. It was the first time Heidi had seen anything like that. It was her introduction to art quilts and she could not believe what she saw. She was stunned by the realism, and heavily struck with emotion that these quilts evoked. Heidi was in love. She was about to become obsessed.

The next year, she attended the Worcester Quilt Show again. But this time, she headed straight for the art quilt exhibit, which was sponsored by an international non-profit organization called Studio Art Quilt Association (SAQA). This is where another random meeting changed the course of her life. The SAQA rep put her in touch with Sue Bleiweiss, the SAQA regional representative. Sue began a correspondence with Heidi, and encouraged her to attend a SAQA quarterly meeting. Even though Heidi wavered in her confidence and had no finished art quilts to show, she attended that meeting. Then the magic happened.



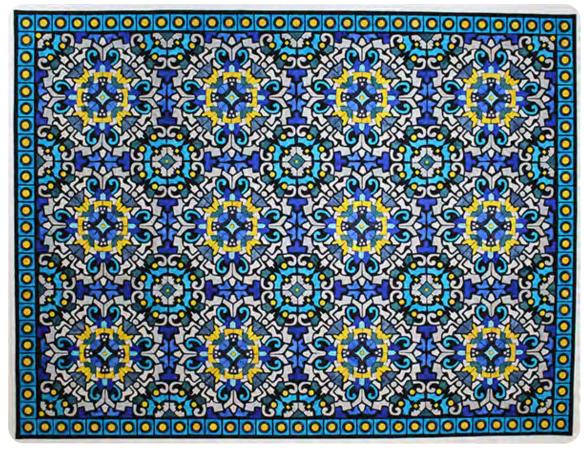


Blossomed

Sue was spearheading a new program at SAQA, the Mentor/ Mentee program. Heidi filled out an application and was chosen to mentor with Sue Bleiweiss for a year. They discussed Heidi's goals, and how to develop her artist's voice. In 2014, Heidi began working part time at the sewing machine dealership where her friend Janet worked. She was invited to attend Janome's bi-annual education convention in Texas. This turned out to be another case of being in the right place at the exact right moment in time.

At that convention, Heidi took classes to learn about the new sewing machines and embroidery digitizing software to help her customers back at the dealership. Then, she walked into the 3-hour class about the Janome digital cutter. Her heart started to pound with excitement as she watched for the first time this digital cutting machine cut intricate shapes from all kinds of materials, including fabric! In the back of her mind, she also thought about Sue's encouragement to find her own voice when creating her art quilts. Heidi immediately saw the possibilities. She could hardly wait to purchase a Janome digital cutter to experiment. Once she mastered the software and the digital cutter she then knew that she could take her photography, render a mosaic design, marry it with the digital cutter to cut small fabric pieces, and use it to create her own mosaic photo quilt. She knew she could do it. She wondered why nobody else had thought of it.





Azul-Medallions Quilt

For Heidi, the inspiration for most of her quilts starts with her photography. However, more recently, she has been working on a new style of non-figurative mosaic quilts, which she calls Moroccan Mosaic quilts. Although she is not a professional photographer, she has always taken lots of pictures. She says, My images speak to me personally. They express feelings, mood, color and light connecting me to the people, places, and objects. After choosing a photo to work with, I freehand draw a mosaic design of it which is later used to create a digital pattern. Next, I carefully select commercial batiks and hand-dyed fabrics to achieve the perfect combination of shading, contrast, and interest. In the end, all of the small, intricate fabric pieces are precisely cut using a digital cutter, fused into place and freemotion stitched creating an art quilt that is both filled with emotion and visually stunning.

The quilt on the cover, Is She Ready Yet?, was based on a photo that was taken by Heidi's sister on the waterfront in Plymouth, MA. Her daughter, Erin, was about two years old at the time, giving a flower to her baby sister who was inside Heidi's belly. This sentimental photo has been displayed on a shelf in my home for years. Once I started art quilting, I knew someday I would turn this photo into an art quilt that not only I would cherish but years down the road my daughters would cherish too. This quilt took about 5 ½ months from start to finish and has over 5,000 small mosaic appliquéd pieces. Creating it was truly a labor of love!









Heidi's Precision Tweezers

Little Abstract Flowers

Of course, Heidi understands that using a digital cutter, software, and computers to design or create a guilt is not everybody's cup of tea. Now, Heidi is teaching her mosaic quilting technique. In her classes, she sometimes uses this analogy: cutting intricate applique fabric shapes using scissors verses a digital cutter is like cutting a tree down with an ax verses a chainsaw. Sure, you can use an ax but it's going to take a while to cut the tree down and your cut results (or chopping) won't as be perfect or as precise.

But, as accomplished as Heidi is with a digital cutter and software, make no mistake. Heidi Proffetty's ART is not about the technology.

The motto on her website says, Creating Works of Art One Tiny Piece of Fabric at a Time. It doesn't say, Creating Works of Art One Tiny Piece of Fabric at a Time Using a Digital Cutter. When she speaks about her process, she talks about using a digital cutter. But when she speaks about her art, she talks about how she captures the beauty in one of her photos or how she enjoys designing in a Moroccan style, how she is able to render these as mosaic designs, and how she recreates them in fabric. This is what defines her art.

For more information on Heidi's techniques and process, visit her website: www.HeidiProffetty.com.







Generally, there are two categories of die cutters: manual die cutting machines and digital die cutting machines. Most manual die cutters are portable, require no electricity or computer to run them. They use various types of metal dies which are purchased separately and are used to cut uniform shapes out of multiple layers of fabric. They basically work like cookie cutters to mass produce cut shapes. Digital cutting machines generally require electricity and software to create a design and a computer to electronically send designs from the computer to the cutter. The cutters look a lot like a home printer and are hooked up using USB and power supply cords. They also use a small blade seated in a blade holder and cut shapes out of one layer of material positioned on a cutting mat.





Heidi's Family & Friends





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