

Sun Smith-Foret

## Textile Art – Artist Statement

My art quilts are works of cloth, paint, and mixed media referencing film and cinema. The African American textile technique of strip piecing seems an appropriate vehicle to structure compelling graphic imagery with ideas stimulated by mass media and what is often referred to as entertainment. Both forms, quilts and films, represent human expression from the popular domain, both are labor intensive requiring collaborative effort over significant periods of time, both seek to expand and open the world of visual and conceptual ideas to people hungry for connection with each other. By joining films and quilts in a hybrid form that includes painting, embroidery and applique, (decorative and expressive techniques originating cross-culturally as domestic aesthetic production), I seek to marry disparate aesthetic strivings from the domain of popular culture. I wish to locate myself and my artwork in a rationally, emotionally, spiritually, and humanely arrived at multicultural future with roots in narrative tradition.

Cinema reflects aspects of the shared unconscious. Films allow audience to build on collective memory. As audience/viewers we examine roles from the safe distance of voyeur. We alter received information with subjectivity. We dream a film, remember it, reflect on it -- an accretion of images that becomes our thoughts. We allow ourselves to play risky roles in dramas we would otherwise avoid. We take on identities we would shun in "real life". Films have offered me shared experience with friends, other artists, fellow therapists, patients, strangers in airports, my adult children, grandchildren, my 93-year old mother.

Film has become for me a vast landscape with an always distant horizon. No matter how far I move in the direction of closure, the horizon of possibility recedes, guaranteeing the life of the quest. This I find reassuring, heartening, that each person is unique and that there will always be more stories to tell and new settings in which to tell them. Current DVD technology facilitates a global discourse which I seek to join by way of my artwork. I like being part of a large and diverse audience. We gaze at a film, feel connections or ruptures. Our emotions are charged, or they are not. Issues are raised, or not. This is true. This is not true. We argue. We swoon. We are elated, frustrated, engaged, repelled, disappointed, enraged, euphoric. We walk out of the theatre or eject the DVD. We buy another ticket and extend our Netflix queue.

As an artist and as a practicing psychotherapist, I examine relationships on the lived and symbolic levels. My work is sourced by global cinema from the beginning in silent film to present time and by an ever-deepening immersion in art of the early Italian Renaissance and of American art, from settlement to present. I look at works of limners, luminists, folk artists, history painters, impressionists, ashcan school, abstract expressionists, pop artists, neo-realists, surrealists, minimalists, outsider and untrained artists, performance and installation artists. The quilt collection of Maude Southwell Wahlman, Professor of Global Arts at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, was my introduction to the traditional improvisational and code-bearing quilts on which my work is based. The Alabama women who made these works are to me and to my work as Leadbelly was to Woody Guthrie and Woody Guthrie was to Dylan.