



A VISIT TO DREAMLAND:

The Creative Quilts of Tracy Zimmermann Szanto

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Tracy Zimmermann Szanto
(photo courtesy of Sharon Zimmermann)

The word *Dreamland* appears on an old wooden sign that hangs on the side porch of a house in Penacook, New Hampshire, where Tracy Zimmermann Szanto lives with her husband. Layered with dust 2" thick at the time it was found in the attic, the sign not only provides a visual marker for clients seeking machine quilting services, but also inspired the name of Tracy's quilt business—and an apt name it is! When this active quilter is not quilting customer's projects, one can find her designing and making new art quilts for competition, meeting challenges at her local quilt guild, or teaching others to make their own creative quilts.

Today, Tracy converts some of her grandfather's paintings into quilted works of art with the help of a local business, Berkcheska Custom Fabrics in Bow, New Hampshire, which can transform any photo into an image on a large fabric panel, ready for quilting. Fiber-reactive dyes, known for their bright and permanent qualities, are used in the process. After adding borders, the new "fabric canvas" is layered and then quilted to make the images appear three-dimensional. The image on the deer scene panel shown on page 98 was first painted by Clark in 1979.

Portraits of Family

In her art quilt, *Watch Out for the Red Hat Ladies* (page 97), Tracy had fun with a photo transfer of her cousin Leslie Clark and herself. She used found objects, such as old buttons, black velvet from an old dress, and silver trim from an old belt to complete the keepsake piece.



Finding Daylight, 22" x 28"

Walking in Her Grandfather's Shoes

Originally from Licking, Missouri, Tracy, an award-winning quilter, has been in business for six years. When asked where she learned to quilt so well, she says, "I'm self taught." Her proclivity toward art must be genetic, inasmuch as her grandfather, Harold Clark, was a wildlife and nature artist. In April 1978, *The Ozarker* magazine featured a scenic landscape painting of his on the front and back covers, as well as a two-page article about him.



Fairy Garden, 24" x 23"



Fairy Kingdom, 24" x 26"

Two Award-Winning Quilts

Finding Daylight (page 96), a quilt that won first place at the Images show in Lowell, Massachusetts, evolved when Tracy ran out of the black tulle overlay that covers most of the piece. It seemed like too much trouble to go into town and buy more tulle, so she used what she had on hand—a lighter piece—on the right side. When she was finished, Tracy discovered that it created the effect of sunlight coming through a window!

A second quilt, *Fairy Kingdom* (above), was started in response to a guild challenge and was inspired by a Sashiko beading class taught by Sue Weeks. A beautiful feather quilting motif in silver thread can be seen on the black borders.



Watch Out for the Red Hat Ladies, 16½" x 9"

In another portrait assembly, Tracy altered a digital image of her niece in Adobe Photoshop software to create a quilt she calls *Annie: Warhol Style* (below). After selecting portions of the face to create transferable layers, Tracy hand painted some of them. True to form, the velvet sashes are recycled pieces from a dress given to her by a friend. Tracy learned techniques for creating faces from art quilter Maria Elkins, but she prefers to "put her own swing on things," especially when painting the eyes.

Recurring Themes

Flowers, nature motifs, and fairies are subjects frequently visited in Tracy's works. *Fairy Garden* (page 96) is a wall quilt that features winged fairies flitting among flower blossoms, along with a surrealistically tall sunflower plant that could exist only in one's imagination! Large stars are quilted into the background. Tracy likes to quilt the outline of designs by machine and then fill in the shapes by painting on fabric, sometimes using Pebeo Setacolor paints. When asked what kind of thread she prefers, Tracy mentioned Signature cotton thread and Superior Threads King Tut thread for machine quilting, as "they don't break."



Annie: Warhol Style, 16" x 24"



*Photo transfer of a deer scene
painted by Harold Clark, 48½" x 65"*

Found Objects

Ever the recycler, Tracy is a true inspiration. With a sprinkle of fairy dust and a lot of hard work, this quilter takes unwanted and otherwise useless objects and creates exciting quilt art. One example of her reuse of materials is a quilted throw (right) that combines a found rectangular doily with leftover window treatment fabric from a friend's business.

The art techniques that Tracy uses are easily adaptable to blending vintage textiles with new fabric. An example of her imagination at work is a quilted textile piece that includes flowers and a hummingbird, which now decorates an antique washstand in her home (right). The top of the quilt is affixed with hook-and-loop tape to secure the top edges over a rod on the washstand. Tracy brings a vintage piece of linen to life by sewing it to a printed fabric background and altering the surfaces of both fabrics.

A visit to Tracy Zimmermann Szanto is truly good encouragement for anyone's creativity! Visit www.dreamlandmachinequilting.com or call (603) 753-2080. For Berkcheska Custom Fabrics, call (603) 228-3821 or email reebe001@aol.com.



Recycled doily for couch throw, 19½" x 52"

Patricia and Jim Cummings produce educational articles related to antique quilts and international textiles. Pat was certified as an EGA master craftsman in quilting in 2000 and has written for *The Quilter* since 1999. She is a quilt and textile historian, lecturer, and book author. For more information, visit their website, Quilter's Muse, at www.quiltersmuse.com. ♦



Textile used to decorate antique washstand, 27½" x 12½"