

# Current Happenings



Sonia Melichar Callahan has more recent quilts on to <http://www.quiltart.com> Look for challenge quilts, scroll down to Fabled Fibers and find the quilts. One is called "The Magic Veil" and the other "The Teeny Tiny Acrobats" The acrobats are all silk and didn't photograph well. These might be in the Houston show next fall as well so you might be able to see them there. The show benefits dependents of military people who need help."

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**Sonia Melichar Callahan was an exhibiter for her entry in the Alzheimer's Awareness part of the show.**

I got involved in this by responding to a short blurb on quilt digest. I looked into it and found that there are artists that support Alzheimer' and that more awareness was needed for this silent disease. The goal of the exhibit was to develop this awareness and to raise funds for research I didn't like the odds for acceptance but wanted to do it.. When I found out that there were 25 places for invitees and 25 spots to be juried ,I figured my chances of getting in were slim. However, I interviewed my friend who has Alzheimer's and took an additional look an unfinished quilt about women and felt the pain of Alzheimer's. I came up with two quilts .Imagine my surprise when both got accepted. Since the acceptance it has been a busy time. Appraisals, proof reading, voice recordings etc. I am really glad that the exhibit is finally up.

The names of my quilts are "The Alzheimer's Thief" and "Women Who Were". I wrote a poem for the text for "Women" which explains the "in and out" confusion of the disease. The Thief quilt is a simple image of a sinister thief stealing an urn filled with the qualities people loose as the disease advances. I have not met any of the other people who are involved in this. We have a common bond though..we want awareness and research. I will pass on your compliments about Ami's writing. I know she will appreciate it.

I just thought of something. Ami Sims of Mallery Press will be at the Houston Show selling the CD's and will

probably be showing bits of the show at her booth. For each CD sold \$10 goes toward research. If you go to the Houston Show ask for information to the booth.

I would love to hear your reaction to the "Gee's Bend" exhibit. We have one going on in SF and I have to say, I was not impressed. Poorly hung and some elements of exploitation were in evidence. If you get to the one in Houston I would really like to hear your impression. There is a whole discussion about whether these women were artists or quilters and who is it really making money from their designs.

Thanks so much for such a delightful letter and allowing me to share my joy of "doing something to make our world a more caring place" Love, Sonia

**Dear Jerry, Last night I received an email with photos and write up about a quilt show in which I have her permission to pass this on to you and will send her permission and follow-up note.**

**She was one of the only 25 who were accepted in this show - quite an honor!**

**She has exhibited nationwide for years and I have had the privilege of seeing her work at the Houston Show.**

**As the above mentioned Alzheimer's show will travel all over the USA, it may be of interest to some of our class members, or other classes who knew Sonia.**

Thank you, Judy

Dear Artists,

I came back from Nashville last night. You need to know the effect your quilts had on the 20,000+ quilters who attended the AQS show this past week. I can't even write this without my eyes brimming....again, as they have for several days now.



AQS gave us an enormous amount of space to showcase the exhibit. I paced it off and it was the equivalent of 24 booths. This, in itself, was amazing. The stanchions were set so that most of the quilts had 10 feet all to themselves. Unheard of. They formed 3-sided alcoves which made the setting feel intimate and somewhat private, with just 4 quilts per. I think this set was the most crowded.

The drapes were black and I set the poles so that the quilts were fairly low. (I find

it annoying to look at quilts through my bifocals and have my neck feel like it's breaking off after three quilts.) Ditto for the signs. The poles wore black "booties" so that they disappeared into the black drape. It looked elegant. After they hung, I had a good cry. Spreading them all around the furniture in Mom's room upstairs was a fair way to put them in order, but here they were hanging as they should be.

Seeing all the quilts in the stillness of this very large (156,000 square feet) hall the next morning before

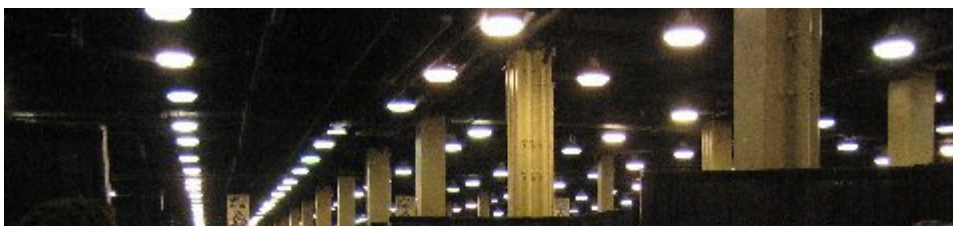
the quilters were let in was quite humbling. I reflected over the past year and the work of so many hands to get this far. The talent in that corridor, YOUR talent, was amazing.



I put the quilts in order by theme and then by color. Since many quilts spoke of more than one aspect of the Alzheimer's experience, it was not completely linear, but I wanted a beginning, a middle, and an end. I began with the quilts that told an overall story of what AD is all about, then moved into early diagnosis, caregiving struggles, anger, acceptance, and finally tributes. Again, this wasn't a straight path by any means. I think only 5% of the people actually saw the quilts in order.

There wasn't a person in the hall, down to and including some of the hotel workers, who didn't say Alzheimer's at least once. Not everyone saw your quilts, but they knew about them. (This too is raising awareness.) It also didn't hurt that we were the short cut to the lunch line.

Wednesday was slow, but the pebble had been dropped into the water. We saw the ripples expand and reach more quilters in the subsequent days. Several times I counted upwards of 50 people seeing the quilts at one time, individually, clustered together, holding on to each other, obviously moved by what they saw. You could hear the chatter and commotion of the rest of the show in our aisle...because it was so quiet there. It was hushed, almost reverent.



It was a hard show to see, yet quilters encouraged each other to go see our quilts. Most who looked at them and read the signs



cried. Many people came to our info table sobbing, barely able to compose themselves. We went through 4 boxes of tissues. Throughout the four days I heard comments about every single quilt. Know that the work that came from your hearts touched many, many people.



I will share one story, although there were so many. There was a couple standing in front of Sonia Callahan's "Alzheimer's Thief," wiping tears from their faces. One of the AQS hostesses went up to them to comfort them. The husband introduced his wife and said she had just been diagnosed with AD. She pointed to Sonia's quilt and said, "This is what it feels like!"

Some wrote comments in notebooks we provided. I'll try to transcribe their comments and put them on the web page. But most did

not write anything. I think they were too overwhelmed. I don't know how many people I hugged; I lost count.

The CDs were a huge hit. AQS suggested I bring 50. I had 25 done in time and brought all the parts for 200 total. At night I burned the rest in the hotel room and assembled them. We sold out, and then some.

Two different publishers approached me to turn the exhibit into a book, a plan all along, but really nice that other people thought it would be a good idea too. Many people asked about a book.

I will put a link on my web site soon so that you can order the CDs there and tell your friends. First I

need to get the CDs burned for the Harrisburg show.

A highlight of the show for me was meeting the four artists in the show who attended: Judy Szumlas (and her sister), Janet Heliker (and her husband), PhiloMena Mudd (and her sisters-in-law), and Elsie Campbell. I also got a chance to thank many people who have made Priority: Alzheimer's Quilts. The only disappointment was that the local Alzheimer's Association was too busy to send a representative.

Your quilts are already in Pennsylvania, safe and sound. They arrived today (Tuesday.). The local Alzheimer's Association is ready to rock and roll for us and I'm really going to miss not being there. Please tell me if you are going to be attending the show so I can alert them and the Mancusos for some added publicity. If you can White Glove, that would be fantastic. I will announce what I need in the Sept 1 newsletter.

Thank you all for sharing your magnificent quilts. This is only the beginning. I think your work will make a huge impact in the quilting world and hopefully beyond. Please keep chatting it up. Share our success with your friends and family. Tell your students, email your friends, and keep the momentum going.

I will try my best to keep you informed. Back to burning more CDs. Ami