Today on *Across the Fence* we're gearing up for the 2012 Vermont Quilt Festival. We have a breathtaking assortment of handmade quilts to show you, and we will talk with Vermont quilters about their work and the upcoming festival. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us; I'm Judy Simpson. The Vermont Quilt Festival begins this Friday and runs through Sunday, July 1 at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction. This is the 36th year of the festival. In addition to quilts the festival offers a series of classes contests and even appraisals for new and antique quilts. My first guest is the founder of the Vermont Quilt Festival, Richard Cleveland from Northfield. Welcome; it's great to see you again.

Richard.: Hi Judy.

Judy.: Let's talk a little bit about what the history of the festival is and what it has become today.

Richard.: Sure--the festival was started in 1977 as a one day show as part of Northfield's Labor Day weekend celebration. It went to two days then to three days. We added the contest classes appraisals and eventually outgrew the facilities. We moved to Norwich University and in 2006 we came to the Champlain Valley Expo and Saint Michael’s College.

Judy.: What is the big difference between when you first started and today?

Richard.: Air conditioning. A lot of changes. We see more quilts made by machine both pieced and quilted by machine then we did years ago. We still have fine handwork but a lot more work by machine. The festival has grown tremendously in terms of numbers. Every year we have probably 10,000 people who come through the show.

Judy.: That's impressive. That's amazing. I'm going to introduce two members of the festival committee Joanne Latrell from South Duxbury and Mary Kay Ryan from Rutland thank you for being with us. Joanne maybe you can tell us a little bit about the main features of the festival of course the big exhibit.

Joanne.: The contest this year has 220 quilts to come from as far away as Arizona to the state of Maine and we also have some quilts from Japan and Germany and many of them from
Quebec. One of our youngest to quilters is five; the oldest is 90 so we have a broad range of quilters that exhibit in this festival.

Judy.: Why do you think it's important to get quilters from different parts of the country or even the world?

Joanne.: Different quilters from different parts of the country quilt in different manners and they may have a particular style that might be better than others. Quilts from other countries have different techniques than American quilters or Canadian quilters and it's really nice to see that.

Judy.: Let me ask Mary there's an educational component to the festival?

Mary.: That's true, we have about 80 classes and we run them for four days. We have 8 to 900 registrants who come on Wednesday and stay through Sunday and we house them on the campus of Saint Michael's where the classes are held. More this year will be staying off campus and it's one of the best things that we do in the festival.

Judy.: What are some of the things that people learn when they come to these classes?

Mary.: They learn the traditional techniques but then they learn the most current techniques. They learn things to increase and improve their skills in machine quilting and now we have long arm machines which cost as much as a small car. We do have several classes that are related to that. We have landscape we have piecing applique the usual things using pantography and using computers in your quilting.

Judy.: How unusual is it to have all these aspects of quilting in one place?

Mary.: Because we're one of the largest in the northeast, we offer a great variety of classes so you would tend to get these at the major shows around the country and there are probably a hand full of those. Smaller shows would probably have a smaller offering than what we have and we bring in teachers from all over the country and sometimes from foreign countries as well. It's very broad and we tried to pick the best quilters, national quilters to come. We have some northeastern quilters as well who are not quite as well known.

Judy.: Tell me a little bit about buying and selling the quilts.

Mary.: We do offer some on consignment through our contest and then we have some that are on consignment in our Vermont Quilt Festival boutique shops on the floor and I think that really covers it.

Judy.: People want to come and purchase these quilts?

Mary.: They can.

Judy.: Richard I also want to ask you to tell us about some of the opportunities for quilt appraisals because this is something interesting. I know I've talked to you in the past and people will go up and their attics and find quilts the family has had for years and years and know nothing about them.
Richard.: We started offering appraisals in 1981 between the appraisals at the show and offsite. Our quilt documentation days we've recorded more than 6500 quilts. The appraisals will be offered on Saturday from 9:00-4 at the expo. The appraisals are $40 apiece. The owners can have written appraisal a photograph and we do a condition report on each quilt. Over the years we've seen some really interesting and very rare quilts. We've seen quilts that date back to the middle of the 18th century. 1960 is about the cut off that we use for the most recent quilts that we will appraise. It's a great feature and an insurance company is going to treat a quilt just like a blanket if there's a loss unless you have an appraisal so it's something we would recommend for people who have a valuable quilt.

Judy.: People might not realize the value of quilts. What are some of the appraisals like hundreds of dollars, thousands of dollars?

Richard.: The most valuable quilt we ever praised was $50,000.

Judy.: Wow!

Richard.: We've had a small number at 15 to 16,000 we've had a couple of $20,000. It's hard to pick out an average but I would say anywhere from 500-1500 dollars on really good 19th century quilts.

Judy.: So it's really important to find out what you have?

Richard.: Yes it is and we're offering on Friday from 2 to 4 at the expo what we call the textile detectives. It's kind of a show and tell. We invite people to bring in the quilts they'll be there in front of everyone to hear what we have to say. We're not going to set values that day. If we see something that's really good and should be appraised we will suggest that. The textile detectives is an antique quilt ‘show and tell’ and there's no charge for that.

Judy.: Just to learn information about the quilts and how they were made.

Richard.: Yes.

Judy.: There are also other exhibits as well I know Joanne you want to talk about some of those.

Joanne.: We have some special exhibits. Some famous quilters who are coming in will have a special exhibit in Miller North. They will be doing gallery talks with special exhibits. There will be an antique exhibit that Jerold Roy is bringing in. Every year we have an exhibit for antique quilts.

Judy.: What about for kids?

Joanne.: We have a youth group and the youth exhibit. We have 16 young children between the age of five and 16 who have submitted quilts out of that, one of them will be chosen as the best child quilter/youth quilter. In the past we've had a generous donation from Bittersweet Fabrics in New Hampshire of Janome sewing machines for all of those newer youth quilters and we will be doing that again this year.
Judy.: That's exciting. Richard I know you want to talk about the antique quilt exhibit because that's always a lot of fun to see. A lot of times it's the first time these quilts are exhibited ever to people.

Richard.: We have 66 quilts in the antique exhibit this year from Gerald Roy of Warner New Hampshire. Jerry is a notable collector of American quilts. He and his late partner Paul Pilgrim amassed a very large collection. This is the second time that Gerry has loaned quilts from his exhibit. They will be in Miller North and Jerry will be doing gallery talks, three on Friday and Saturday and two on Sunday about the antique quilts. These pictures that you're seeing now are quilts from previous year’s antique exhibits.

Judy.: What is it about the antique quilts that people enjoy seeing so much do you think?

Richard.: I think it's a link to the past. For me and someone who's trained to be a teacher of history there's something about them. There's always unanswered questions about the quilts. I am wanting to know who made them and why, and the number of quilts we see that are actually signed or dated is relatively small, so I'm always curious to know as much as I can about them and I think a lot of people feel the same way about antique quilts. The fact that most of them almost all of them were done completely by hand, pieced and quilted. I think it's something that attracts people.

Judy.: It's also interesting to know if you do have an older quilt that's been in your family may be a good way to preserve it or how you should take care of it.

Richard.: That's one of the things we will be talking about with the textile detectives on Friday and at the appraisals on Saturday.

Judy.: I think we have some time; are there any other special exhibits that we haven't mentioned that we need to talk about?

Joanne.: We have teacher exhibits from all our faculty. They usually bring in quilts and we exhibit those in Miller South and you can see the different techniques of those.

Mary.: I would just like to add that we have lots of shopping so all you shoppers out there we'd love to have you shop and enjoy. The booths we have on the perimeters of the quilt exhibits and there’s everything even for non-quilters there's plenty of wonderful things for sale.

Richard: I do want to mention that in the special exhibits our principle special exhibit this year is work by Mickey Lawlor from West Hartford Connecticut. Mickey is a textile painter and all of her own quilts and quilts made by friends of hers who have used her fabric will be on display. Mickey will be doing demonstrations of quilt painting in the exhibit and she also will be doing gallery talks. The other large special exhibit in Miller North is quilts by Anne Gallow of Chelmsford, Mass. and Susan Rayban of Thetfield New Hampshire. And that's 34 quilts made by them.

Judy.: Excellent. I know we have time to take a look at some of your quilts maybe you can explain what we have here.
Mary.: The first one is a more traditional quilt and it is a quilt that has been the talk of the festival in the past, gold stars of Vermont. It's been hand quilted by an Amish quilter.

Judy.: That's beautiful I love the back too.

Mary.: Isn't that pretty.

Judy.: Yes it's very pretty a nice contrast.

Joanne.: This is a quilt by Noah Patella of Burlington. He's also is in the Shelburne Museum quilt show, quilts from men. He's a very talented young 15 year old who has made this particular quilt.

Judy.: 15 years old? That's beautiful.

Joanne.: 15 years old and he's the youngest one at the museum exhibit. This particular quilt is done by Ann Standish she's a Vermont quilter who does landscapes and she has used many different techniques in making this particular quilt. She is from Cambridge. This is also another one. These are quilts for this year’s show this is a small quilt that's been put into what we call the mini anything under 96 inches. This is from a class that Ann took. She was trying different techniques.

Judy.: What is this technique called, is there a particular name for it?

Joanne.: She tried different fabrics and started off with something very simple and explored. We decided it looks like orchids and it's working among the giants. This one is another quilt that's in the wall hanging category. This is by Alexandra Nicholson who was a former board member and this is her quilt for this year and it's sunflowers.

Judy.: Beautiful.

Mary.: The final one here is called paramount stars in the feathered star you see on the front of the table here is a class that will be taught this year at the festival.

Judy.: What makes this quilt unique as far as the star pattern is concerned? How do you achieve that?

Mary.: You achieve that by precise precision piecing and lots of sweat and tears although not really and truly. I teach this class and it's just holding that quilter’s toe to the fire and step by step taking a small bite of it each step of the way gets accomplished pretty easily.

Judy.: How long does it take to make something like this?

Mary.: That's a very popular question and there's also a very popular answer we've really don't know.

Judy.: We should mention the quilt behind you is that raffle quote for this year?
Mary.: That is the raffle quilt. That was done by Sadie Aiken of Middlebury. Sadie is from England and particularly enjoys with liberty of London fabrics so that's what we see here in all the centers. They are all cut up there are six pieces of fabric put back together for a kaleidoscopic affect.

Judy.: That's fantastic. We need to stop here as we're just about out of time and I do want to thank all of you for bringing in these beautiful works of art. They are more than quilts they're beautiful works of art and I want to give you information now as we mentioned the 36th Vermont Quilters Festival begins this Friday, June 29th and runs through Sunday, July 1 it's at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction. You can get more information including scheduling for classes and appraisals by going to the website on your screen it's a vqe.org that's a vqe.org and there's all kinds of information that folks can find there about the festival. I want to thank you all for bringing in these beautiful works of art—it’s nice to see you again. That's our program for today; I'm Judy Simpson. We will see you again next time on Across the Fence.

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