

A visual history of life during the pandemic

Museum displays COVID-19 commemorative quilt

By MaryRose Denton

Back in March of 2020, just as the coronavirus pandemic shuttered businesses, isolated families and caused a run on toilet paper, something else a little quieter was taking shape.

A group of 16 quilters from around Washington state began sewing, at home, alone. They were brought together by Stanwood resident Denise Long's vision to create a quilt and visual story of life during this challenging time. She called it "The COVID Commemorative Quilt: piecing life together during the pandemic of 2020."

The finished quilt is on display at the Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum in La Conner.

The quilt's inception, for Long, was similar to the AIDS quilt designed during that 1980s epidemic as a memorial to those who died of the disease. She conceived the project as a visual representation of life during the pandemic, offering a message of hope and how people managed for future generations to view. "Quilts are visual art, representing what happened at a time in history," Long explained.

Long started gathering ideas and fashioning blocks when she heard about a project the Washington State Historical Society was launching. They were looking for contributions to a COVID-19 collection of memorabilia. Long wasted no time becoming the first to apply.

She began designing more blocks and recruited friends and quilters. Several of the quilters she connected with through the Pacific Northwest Quilters group on Facebook live in different parts of the state: Vancouver, eastern Washington and two quilters came from La Conner: Simme Bobrosky and Ester Woods.

Even though each quilter worked at home, alone during months of the pandemic, this project kept all of them feeling connected to a community as well as to something bigger, something which will always have meaning.

The quilt's design is of four columns, each depicting an aspect of the pandemic life. Column one shows various supplies needed like groceries, column two displays the essential workers and the other columns depict staying healthy, with pictures of masks and hand sanitizer and, finally, problems needing solving, such as creating a vaccine.

At i.e. in Edison through April 25

Artists taking on new mediums in natural study

By Claire Swedberg

Some Northwest artists have recently learned fairly new techniques to express the changing forms in nature. That means sculptors were painting, painters were sculpting and other new techniques were at work to express Earth's ancient patterns. The results are on display at the latest art show at Edison's i.e. Gallery through April 25.

Allen Moe, Michael Clough and James Brems have all taken on a new – or relatively new – medium for their latest work. Sculptor Moe is displaying a series of oil drop paintings. Clough, traditionally a painter, has completed a collection of carved stones while James Brems – painter and wood carver -- is distilling his work to the simplicity of transfer drawings.

For more than a year Margy Lavelle, i.e. Gallery owner, has been planning the exhibit, sparked by a visit to Michael Clough's studio in Anacortes. She was surprised to see rock sculptures there. "I was blow away by them," she said. "His work was astounding, and he had never worked with that medium. This was a big surprise." Clough was using carving to study the transitory nature of the environment over millennia, through the lines and shapes of rock.

Lavelle then spoke with two



A QUILT WITH A STORY, JUST LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS – "The COVID Commemorative Quilt: piecing life together during the pandemic of 2020" covers a bit of Washington state's coronavirus year. This group project has 16 contributors, including Simme Bobrosky and Ester Woods from La Conner. Stanwood resident Denise Long's vision, made real, will hang in the Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum through May.

– Photo courtesy of Michael Wooten

Woods sewed the block titled, "6 feet apart," reflecting a vital way we all could help each other remain safe and healthy. There is even a block for the toilet paper crisis.

Long sent all the quilters a pattern for their blocks, similar to a black and white coloring book page. She included a square of white fabric with the pattern, which helped maintain unity to the overall design. The sewers set to work, either embroidering their square or employing appliqué.

But the meaning behind the quilt does not stop with the blocks. Long specifically chose fabric scraps donated from Days for Girls to create the borders, edging and backing of the quilt. These scraps were leftover material from the 10,000 masks Days for Girls sewed during the pandemic and distributed to first res-

ponders and essential health care workers.

What began in March came to fruition that August, a five-month endeavor and labor of love. Long collected the completed blocks and put the finishing touches to the quilt. "Being creative during this stay-at-home period helped us stay sane. It also helped us to do something for the world", says Long. "It's a historical testimony. We made it through and we created something beautiful".

The quilt can be seen displayed in the library of the Museum through May. It will then make its way down to the Washington State Historical Museum in Tacoma, where it will become part of their permanent collection.

Tickets to the Museum are \$7. Hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Wednesday-Sunday. Bring the whole family!

Whitmore . . .

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until released in New York forests.

The two Pacific northwest species of hemlocks are widespread growing from sea level to the tree line. On the east coast there are few conifers, Whitmore says. Hemlocks are a foundational species forming an irreplaceable habitat, critical for a myriad of species to survive: migrating birds, mammal in winter, trout needing cool water and they are an iconic landscape.

Success is not certain. As an invasive species, HWA, populations grow unchecked. In the Great Smokey Mountain National Park, 10 years after HWA invaded, all hemlocks not treated with insecticides were dead. Whitmore repeated "countless millions of trees have died" more than once.

The U.S. Forest Service started a program of implementing

biological controls in the 1990s. It is part of long term management strategy. Whitmore notes that "there is not a whole lot of success with biological control. That's the hard part. Trees are long living organisms. They spread across the landscape." Yet forests cover such huge acreages that chemicals are not a solution.

"We are seeing results, but a smashing success has yet to be seen," he reflected. "If you don't hope you don't get anywhere. If you don't hope what do you get?"

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