

## ARTIST PROFILE

### Mary A Ritter



*Calle de Cadiz - Tea Time*

Some artists focus on sea life or ships; others on landscapes or working in the abstract.

Throughout my life, I looked across fields and pastoral scenes of the midwest towards farmhouses, barns and grain elevators and thought what a pretty picture I could paint someday.

*Farm Home*

My early years were spent on our family farm, climbing trees, swinging from a favorite tree branch, or playing in the treehouse that my brother scabbled together in the woods we loved. My style started with simple folk art themes as my favorite artists were Charles Wysocki and Grandma Moses. Later in life, with the chance to visit art museums around the world, artists that influence me grew immensely and are quite varied.



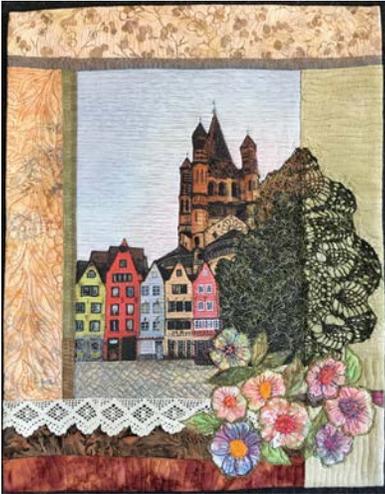
I have taken the creative approach all of my life, thinking, "There has to be a way to handle this task in a way that can be fun!" I received my BA from the University of Minnesota; later, I completed my Master of Arts in Education at the University of California, Sacramento. Classroom instruction was always approached in an imaginative way, culminating in yearlong themed instruction, "From Wagon Wheels to Cyber Space", in my instruction of fifth-graders who were studying early American History. You can find one of these lessons by googling my name under the Library of Congress where I completed a fellowship. Technology became an obsession when I attended the NASA Classroom of the Future at Jesuit University in Ohio for two months.

Having learned the basics of thread and fabric as a youngster from my mother, I approached textile art by employing many techniques, and I continue to experiment with a variety of techniques. Traditional quilting did not satisfy my creative bent, so I was thrilled to discover textile art.



*Old Stories - New Chapters (Honfleur France)*

Then, I traveled abroad and viewed the ancient architecture in the cities of Europe, digitally capturing the arches, windows, doors and details, and returning home to create art from that base. I wish to create pieces that capture people's imaginations as they view the common scenes around them, as well as the vast surrounding world, as they travel in reality or in their dreams. My art, most of all, is meant to tell a story.



*Fischmarkt Street  
Cologne Cathedral*

*Honfleur Harbour,  
Honfleur, France*



I have studied design and fabric dyeing from Elizabeth Barton's online classes; beading and design from Lyric Kinard; painting from Shelly Stokes and Susan Stein; improvisation from Katie Pasquini Masopust; and mixed media techniques from Deborah Fell.

My career took me into the digital world in the 1990s, and that enhanced the digital approach in my art. With the digital camera available, I began to take a multitude of photographs. When I retired and began to look at quilting as a way to fill my days, I was thrilled to discover art quilting. Because I was adept at working with fabric and thread, both by hand and machine, I could envision creating my visions with fabric rather than paint. So, here I am, using my skills and talents to live inside my visions.



My approach begins with my own digital photograph which I adapt through the use of a variety of software applications. The altered digital photo is sometimes printed on fabric by Spoonflower, a business which specializes in printing on fabric.

*El Tajo Gorge, Ronda, Spain*

In 2019, I attended the Quilt Surface Design Symposium and under the tutelage of Deborah Fell began to move away from detailed photo realism. She led us through exercises to create small art elements that could then be assembled into a larger statement.

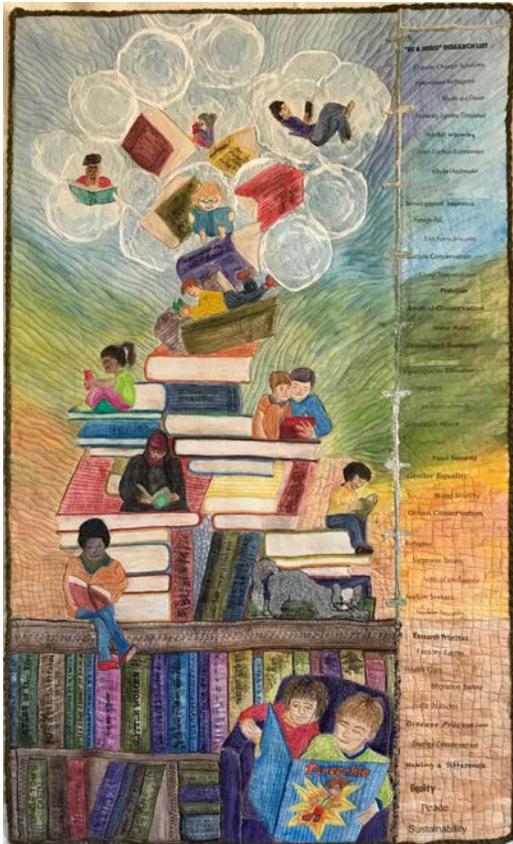
Still wanting my art to tell a story, I returned to the family theme that I had struggled to complete for three years. I attended a rural school, the same school my father and his siblings attended. My mother taught my uncle in the same school and that is where she met my father. This mixed media piece incorporates digital photography, painting, embroidery and machine stitching. And it tells a story!

*Generational Link*



Currently, during this pandemic and its physical distancing requirements, my work centers on completing projects that have been stored away over the years. It feels comfortable to finish things. My work might gently comment on political concerns, but political commentary is not my focus usually. The SAQA Benefit Auction is an annual fundraiser and my 12x12" piece this year did offer a gentle emphasis for maintaining physical distancing out of concern for others.





The hero, chosen for the “A Better World” exhibit, is “The Reader” - which connects with my master’s degree work focusing on how to encourage and instruct readers. I honored those who inform their opinions by reading and researching. It is included on the website and in the book, but did not travel with the exhibit. Perhaps a library somewhere would like to hang it in their space, an idea I haven’t yet pursued.

PAQA-South (Professional Art Quilters Alliance-South) is the organization, centered here in Cary, that has allowed the possibility of showing my art in the Page-Walker Art and History Gallery. The Town of Cary supports the artist community in so many ways. I am also a member of SAQA and two of its regional groups - SAQA NC/VA and SAQA SC/GA. My goal is to attend a SAQA conference soon and to begin to enter more calls under their leadership. I have had two quilts featured in their professional journal on the gallery pages: Farmhouse and Tea Time on Calle de Cadiz. Most recently, they featured “Together” in their advertisement for the benefit auction.