

See some of the Hawai'i Quilt Guild's best work at its annual Quilt Show, May 8-17, at the Honolulu Museum of Art School, 1111 Victoria St.

Spreading the Warmth

Field Notes explores Honolulu's vast and varied scenes and subcultures. This month: **The Hawai'i Quilt Guild.**

BY DAVID THOMPSON

What it is

➔ The Hawai'i Quilt Guild is a group of about 170 women dedicated to the art of creating warm bed covers, one decorative stitch at a time. Some members focus on traditional Hawaiian quilting, with its cotton fabrics, stylized botanical designs and labor-intensive hand stitching. Others favor the wide range of techniques, styles and materials of contemporary quilting, where sewing machines are enthusiastically embraced. All are united by a common love of fabric. "We are dedicated fabricaholics, with endless ideas for fabrics," says MaryAnn Bufalini, the guild's president.

General meetings

➔ Members gather each month in the basement of the Honpa Hongwanji, a Buddhist temple on the Pali Highway, to discuss guild business, plan upcoming quilting shows, hear guest speakers and, sometimes, argue about budget matters (the ticket price for the annual Christmas party was a hot topic recently). Each meeting ends with a show-and-tell, where members unfold their latest creations for all to see. Members wear quilted name tags, which they stitch themselves.



Bees & retreats

➔ Small groups meet regularly for quilting bees, where three to 10 quilters work on their quilts together. Library meeting rooms, condominium lobbies and members' homes are all suitable for bees. Anywhere quilters can sit, serve tea, socialize and sew will do. Occasionally the quilters will spend a long weekend on a Neighbor Island or at the Salvation Army's Camp Homelani on the North Shore for a quilting retreat. Says Bufalini: "We don't pay bills. We don't speak to husbands. We sew the whole time. It's great!"

Classes

➔ The Quilt Guild frequently organizes classes for its members. Recent offerings have included:

- ▶ **Stained Glass**, where the techniques for turning a bedspread into what resembles a Gothic cathedral's window were explored.
- ▶ **Threadology Seminar**, an intensive overview of all aspects of thread, including thread quality, thread construction methods and the aggravating inaccuracy of thread labels.
- ▶ **Hawaiian Fusion**, a new take on Hawaiian quilting that eschews hand stitching in favor of machine sewing. As the course description said: "Love Hawaiian quilt designs, but hate the thought of hand applique? This class may be for you."



No hoarders here

➔ Members of the Hawai'i Quilt Guild are forever giving away their handiwork, either to family and friends or to good causes. Regular recipients include Habitat for Humanity, the Hawai'i Children's Justice Center and the Wounded Warrior Project. All over the country, there are people with Lou Gehrig's disease keeping warm beneath Hawai'i Quilt Guild quilts. The giving spirit, which sometimes follows hundreds of hours of work, is part of a longstanding quilting tradition. "You don't want to be a quilter," says Bufalini, "you want to be the best friend of a quilter."



- **Fat quarter**
One-fourth of a yard of fabric.
- **Charms**
What quilters call their little squares of fabric.

- **Proquiltinating**
Working on a quilt when you should be doing something else, such as the laundry, or the dishes, or picking up the kids from school.

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"I like to make quilts for people and see how they enjoy them. It makes me feel good because it makes other people feel good."

Pat Hee, hosts a quilting bee at her home in Hawai'i Kai.

"In the old days, I would stay up half the night and quilt. But I don't do that anymore. I'm 81 years old and I need my sleep."

Jean Mader, specializes in Hawaiian quilts.



"That new pack of coordinating threads almost rivaled chocolate in the satisfaction I enjoyed from it."

MaryAnn Bufalini, president of the Hawai'i Quilt Guild. 