

BOOK REVIEWS

Laurel Horton, ed. **Uncoverings**. San Francisco: American Quilt Study Group, annual editions. Pp. 200+, photos, index. \$18.00.

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Uncoverings, the American Quilt Study Group's annual volume of scholarly research papers related to all aspects of historical and contemporary quilts and quilt making, is packed with current folklore research. *Uncoverings* is not just about quilts; it is about their social relevance. The papers are of special interest to folklorists working in the areas of material culture, women's studies, oral history, and performance.

Before about 1970, writings on the history of quilts and quilt making perpetuated popular romantic myths. It is only in the last twenty or so years that the field of quilt scholarship has emerged, and *Uncoverings* has earned a respected position as one of the few journals devoted to scholarship in the field.

For purposes of this review, I read the 1991, 1992, and 1993 editions (1994 was not yet off the press). Editor Laurel Horton, who has an M.A. in folklore from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, notes that themes seem to emerge each year as the papers come together. In 1991, several authors addressed the concepts of tradition and art. The papers in this issue range from Pat L. Nickols's biographical study of Mary A. McElwain (1869-1943), a quilt designer and businesswoman who established and ran a very successful quilt shop in early twentieth-century Wisconsin; to Clover Nolan Williams' survey research and interviews of members of the Bloomington (Indiana) Quilters Guild regarding their views of tradition and art; to Lawrence Howe's social research on the NAMES Project, which has created and is still creating the world's largest quilt—the AIDS Memorial quilt.

Communication was the topic of most of the articles in 1992. Nancy Cameron Armstrong investigated "Quilts of the Gulf War, Desert Storm—Participation or Protest?", while several authors, including Barbara Brackman, worked on historical topics. After reading many women's jour-

nals and letters, Brackman concluded that despite popular beliefs, most women did not work on quilts as they traveled the overland trails to Oregon and California between 1840 and 1870. Aspects of Performance were investigated by Jane E. Hindman, who investigated the talk among a group of African-American quilters, and Kristin M. Langellier, who looked at contemporary quilters' show-and-tell sessions.

As Horton commented in 1993, the researchers "address definitions of quilts and quilt making and our willingness to stretch these definitions to be inclusive and to acknowledge diversity and the legitimacy of marginalized peoples." Papers in the 1993 issue examined the struggle over women's history associated with the Smithsonian Quilt Controversy (as the debate about the importation of reproductions of American quilts in the Smithsonian's collection has come to be called); took a look at quilts and their makers from the Southwest; reviewed the development of the Women of Color Quilter's Network; and related Australian quilt making and the 1988 bicentennial of that country.

Uncoverings is indexed by *America: History and Life*, *ARTbibliographies*, *BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art)*, *Clothing and Textile Arts Index*, *Historical Abstracts*, *MLA International Bibliography*, and *Sociological Abstracts*. To obtain back issues of *Uncoverings*, send \$18.00 per issue plus \$2.00 postage and handling for the first issue and \$.75 per additional issue to the American Quilt Study Group, 660 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94105-4007

Harold Seidelman and James Turner. **The Inuit Imagination: Arctic Myth and Sculpture.** New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994. Pp. 224. \$45.00 Hardcover

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The new millennium will bring a new beginning to the Arctic Inuit. In 1999, if current plans continue to hold, the Canadian government will cede to the Inuit extensive autonomy over the northern arrowhead of the continent, an expanse representing one-fifth of the nation's acreage. The Inuit call the region *Nunavut*, which means "our land"; it stretches over vast reaches of mainland and an arrowhead of islands that extend toward the pole like jewels of soapstone and granite. Within this archipelago is Baffin, the fifth-largest island in the world.

When *Nunavut* officially breaks away from the Yellowknife-based government of the Northwest Territories, the Inuit will have an opportunity, rare in modern times, to create a new society without the devastation of