



Contemporary Patchwork Quilts by Linda Schäpper

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A young American artist who moved to Europe nearly a decade ago, Linda Schäpper began experimenting with patchwork while living in Lebanon in 1974-75, and her quilts are still characterised by the bold manner in which she combines American patchwork techniques with the Arabic geometrical tradition.

Before moving to Lebanon, Linda lived in Spain, Germany and Switzerland, working with local artisans and studying weaving, spinning and the needle arts. She eventually took up naive painting and the pictures produced during the year she and her husband spent in a Lebanese village reflect the joy she found there in the bright landscapes and vibrant village scenes, which were such a contrast to the paler, more ordered way of life she had experienced in Europe. But almost as a premonition of the political events which were to follow, Linda gradually found herself painting more and more scenes of Lebanese funerals. She

had always wanted to create happy pictures and finding that she could no longer do this, her painting dried up altogether.

However, many of her landscapes and scenes of terraced villages revealed such a strong patchwork effect in their composition that Linda decided it was time to move on and experiment with patchwork in its own right. It was about this time that she moved to Beirut and discovered that local craftsmen were still working in the traditional Arab art of quilting. For while the precise origins of quilting are unknown, it is likely to have been introduced into the West by the Crusaders, who used it for warmth and extra protection under their armour and brought it back from Palestine.

So, while living in Beirut Linda Schäpper began collaborating with a master craftsman in the ancient art of quilting. And she found that Beirut was the perfect place to produce patchwork: it provided a wealth of materials available in the local

*souks* and, more importantly, Linda was literally surrounded by geometric designs wherever she looked, in the designs of the mosques and in the tiles used for decoration everywhere, as well as in the designs of old windows and iron gratings. Many of these patterns are still reflected in her quilts.

After leaving Lebanon, Linda Schäpper returned to Europe where she has had one man shows in Milan, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Paris, Hannover, with more shows (in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Notodden, Oslo and Reykjavik) scheduled for this Spring. She has now produced over 70 quilts, doing everything including the buying of the materials, cutting, sewing and quilting.

Linda Schäpper was born in 1947 in Boston but grew up in the Midwest. She took her degree in Political Science from Michigan State University, is married to a Swiss architect and presently lives in Paris.