

Stitching the Story Through Town

by Zoë Strickland, Clover Reveille Editor



CUNNINGHAM QUILTS — “The Cunningham Line” by Joe Cunningham is currently on display in Bolt.

As part of its “Telling the Story” series, the Cloverdale Performing Arts Center (CPAC) is embarking on a journey to explore the history and evolution of quilting. From the classic patchwork quilts that grandma used to make to art quilts that depict picturesque scenery, “QUILT: Stitching our story” is aimed at bringing the conversation of quilting craft to Cloverdale. The weeklong multimedia event kicks off Nov. 4 and culminates in an afternoon of events on Nov. 8.

CPAC board member Jack Fitzsimmons got inspiration for the event from presentations he saw while on vacation that discussed women who quilted as a type of therapy. “I did more research and discovered the AIDS quilt,” he said.

From there, he began to research quilting history and how much quiltmaking has changed.

“It overturned my preconceived notions of quilting as a craft,” Fitzsimmons said. “Every picture tells a story and every quilt tells a story.”

While the main events of the program will happen on Nov. 4 (see sidebar for event details), organizations in Cloverdale will be displaying different types of quilts all week. The CPAC will be displaying small art quilts; the Cloverdale History Center will be showing the “Quilt of Compassion”; the Cloverdale Arts Alliance will be showing historical and abstract art quilts; the Cloverdale Senior Multipurpose Center will be showing a selection of quilts that they have been gifted; and the event will coincide with the Cloverdale Regional Library’s quilt show.

As part of his research, Fitzsimmons discovered art quilts and creating quilts as a social statement — two types of quilting that will be discussed during the event.

“The Quilt of Compassion” was created by the Mendocino Quilt Artists in 2001 as a response to the events during Sept. 11.

“They really felt like they wanted to do a quilt,” said Vicky Groom, a Cloverdale quilter who is a member of the Mendocino Quilt Artists. From there, the initial creators of the quilt (Betty Lacy and Laura Fogg) asked their fellow quilters to contribute pieces to the quilt. Groom added a dove to the piece.

During her own quilting journey, Groom was initially interested in creating more traditional quilts. However over time, she started getting more into creating art quilts. She lended four of her quilts to the “Stitching our story” displays.

One of the most notable quilts that she created is called “The Jagged Eye” and is primarily made of items she bought at the hardwood store.

“Quilting is a huge deal now, there are more and more people getting involved,” Groom said. “The neat thing about doing this in Cloverdale is that this is a way to show people the other side of quilting.”

One type of quiltmaking being explored during the event is art quilts — a type of quilt that serves explicitly as a piece of art, rather than being used as a blanket. In addition to having some art quilts on display, the event’s highlighted presentation is by Joe Cunningham, a quilt artist. Cunningham has been quilting since the 1970s and has written multiple books that tackle the history of quilting.

“I have a quilt of Joe’s on display in front of the store to give you an idea of what kind of things art quilts consist of nowadays,” said Kate Barrett, owner of Bolt Fabric and Home.

While this is the first weeklong quilt-based event put on, Fitzsimmons has high hopes for the event’s ability to educate.

“The amount of people who have contacted me has been pretty amazing,” said Fitzsimmons. “We’re really hoping this can create some buzz (in the quilt community) and put Cloverdale on the map.”