

# Interview QuiltItalia | August 2015

## **QI: How and when did you get interested in patchwork?**

ME: My mother and both grandmothers didn't sew and creative activities were not part of my childhood.

At the age of 35, my husband and I moved from the German to the Italian part of Switzerland. I didn't get a new job immediately, so I was looking for something new and exciting to do. A friend talked me into signing up for a patchwork/quilting class, but I had no idea what patchwork or quilting was. I signed up anyway.

It was the time when little flowery fabrics in baby hues were the only available cloth, and everyone made quilts from patterns out of books. I found this very limiting and was ready to give up. But on a trip to California I discovered that there were endless possibilities and approaches and came back with a suitcase full of books, fabrics and tools.

I'm a self taught quilter. When finally the art quilt movement came over to Europe, I realized that THIS was my road to go and I started to take classes with internationally known artists, first here in Switzerland, then in Europe and in the U.S.

## **QI: Where do you find inspiration for your quilts?**

ME: I'm most inspired by people I meet and places I visit. But inspiration is everywhere.

On most days I go for a walk and my iPhone (camera) is my companion. Taking daily photos has become a habit and has opened my eyes to find beauty in things I may have previously overlooked.

I often use my photos as reference or I alter them digitally and print them on cloth.

## **QI: Before starting to work on a quilt, do you always make a definite plan, a precise sketch?**

ME: No, I never make a definite plan. I start with an idea and let it unfold as I'm working.

## **QI: When planning your project, how do you choose your colors?**

ME: Only recently, after many "colorful" years, I finally discovered what makes me really happy: to use color sparingly.

I love neutrals, different shades of beige, white, gray and black. I often use red as accent color.

**QI: What materials do you use in your works?**

ME: My work usually starts with white cloth, which I then alter using dyes and paint. I mostly work with natural fibers (cotton, silk, linen). But I also use commercial fabrics, mostly solids, which I combine with my self printed cloth.

There was a time when I used to incorporate non-textile materials (paper, plastic etc.). I'm still open to new techniques and materials, but the point of departure for experiments will always be cloth: the tactile attraction and the enormous quality of cloth, the quality of raw edges and hanging threads, the way painted and dyed fabric changes character, the flexibility to surface design. These qualities continue to challenge and to inspire me.

**QI: How much time do you dedicate to quilting each day?**

ME: I don't quilt every day, but I wish I could dedicate as much time to quilting as I could earlier in my life. But life is an evolution: 4 years ago my husband retired and life changed – in most ways for the better. But as we want to spend more time together, time management became pretty difficult.

I'm also the founder and organizer of TexArtAcademy, a meeting point for textile artists and quilters here in Ticino. Planning and organizing these events takes up a lot of time. But it's also a lot of fun and very rewarding: students get so much out of the experience.

**QI: Which do you prefer to use: hand or machine quilting?**

ME: Definitely machine quilting. I know that for many people hand quilting is a relaxed meditative process. Not for me. I relax when I sit at the sewing machine. But I like to hand embroider.

**QI: Do you think that the environment in which one lives influences the artistic side in one's quilts?**

ME: Oh yes, absolutely!

A couple of years ago, an art teacher told me that natural environment (landscape and nature) influences our use of color.

I never really believed this statement. I am surrounded with color: think of Switzerland's beautiful, lush landscapes. So, why was I drawn to minimalistic art and to neutral colors when I create a quilt?

Then I discovered that it's not necessarily nature (the outside world) which influences my art: it's the colors I am surrounded with directly and every day. Clothing, furniture, home decor ... and yes, also the cats (I have two gray Chartreux cats) not only have a physical and emotional effect, but really influence my color perception and the way I use color in my art.

**QI: Do you have any special advise to give to our readers?**

ME: Be authentic. Create work that is uniquely yours.

Start by asking yourself what you love and what you are good at (techniques, processes, supplies...).

Know what you like and what you don't – and why. Look at other art forms like painting. Which paintings do you like? Why? And why don't you like others? The "why" is probably the most important question.

You will discover a lot about your preferences. Use this knowledge to your advantage.