



Hearth <hearthgarage@gmail.com>

Sat, Jul 6, 1:54 PM (5 days ago)



to Jillian ▾

Hi Jillian, thanks again for being a part of this.

We figured an email conversation would be a nice convenient way to do an interview, and that we could go back and forth a bit over the next few days so that the questions can still be responsive.

Starting from the basics!

When did you begin quilting, and how did you come to work this way?

Do you have any inspirations in the medium, or touchstones you look to?

Have these changed with time?



Jillian Tamaki

Sun, Jul 7, 7:15 PM (4 days ago)



to me ▾

When did you begin quilting, and how did you come to work this way?

I always liked handiwork of all kinds. Drawing, calligraphy, crafts, and such. I think my first memories of sewing was sewing Brownie patches onto my sash. I think I made my first quilts as a teenager or early 20s. I bought the fabric from the Salvation Army or Value Village, or cut up old clothes, which is still something I do now. Around 2010 I took a proper quilting class in New York City, where I was living. Around that time I also started playing around with embroidery. I ordered a little beginner kit online. By that time I was already working as an illustrator and cartoonist so it was a very natural process to combine the practices.

Do you have any inspirations in the medium, or touchstones you look to?

Have these changed with time?

Traditional American quilting traditions, particularly more improvisational approaches by African-American quilters. English crewelwork. Women who wrote needlework books in the 1980s and 90s.





Hearth Garage <hearthgarage@gmail.com>
to Jillian ▾

Tue, Jul 9, 1:56 PM (2 days ago) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

That's sweet that it came about in stages.

It makes me think about how accessibility of the materials is so key to the form, while at the same time exactly part of how it is disparaged; associations with repurposed material and class, use value, domesticity, and "women's work".

When I think of quilting I also think of time. These projects must take an immense amount of time. Several of the quilts have a diaristic theme, and it is cool to think about how the events mentioned in the diary could occur as the quilt is made, and how such a large amount of time can be folded and represented in them.

Do you find this medium facilitates different forms of thinking, or engagement with themes that vary from your other creative work?

How does spending time engaging in this practice fit into your life, around your other pursuits?



Jillian Tamaki
to me ▾

Tue, Jul 9, 2:51 PM (2 days ago) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

It makes me think about how accessibility of the materials is so key to the form, while at the same time exactly part of how it is disparaged; associations with repurposed material and class, use value, domesticity, and "women's work".

Yes, the usefulness of the end result really attracted me. I use a lot of the quilts, actually. I try to make them securely so they're washable. The ones without appliqué at least.

When you mention accessibility, it does remind me of comics. That's another form that has low barriers to entry and, similarly, a history of being dismissed as "popular art" or whatever.

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In terms of my typical work, I'm a person who draws. I generally prefer immediate results whereas the process of making these quilts and textiles is quite slow. I try to strike some sort of balance between bold design and contemplation within the details, I suppose. I've come to learn to appreciate how there are constant micro-decisions in a slow process.

In terms of creating the work over time, that also differs a ton from my commercial work which exists within an editorial process. There are sketches and plans to be approved by someone else. It's very novel to allow work to develop over the course of months into a shape that can be quite unpredictable.

Do you find this medium facilitates different forms of thinking, or engagement with themes that vary from your other creative work?

I think the concept of juxtaposition exists in a lot of my work in different forms. Sometimes it might actually be simply images juxtaposing with other images. With the textile work, the majority of the material is found, thrifted or old clothing of mine. So these fabrics come with stories and origins and personal histories – I have a relationship with them. I could point out little swatches in any of these works and tell you where it came from.

I find collage very meditative and I enjoy the responsiveness required. It oddly feels like a collaboration with the material itself.

How does spending time engaging in this practice fit into your life, around your other pursuits?

I typically have just done them when I'm less busy with commercial work. My favourite part of the process is not actually the piecing of the top but rather the final quilting. I just zone out to books or movies and quilt the whole thing together.

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Hearth Garage <hearthgarage@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 10, 5:43 PM (7 hours ago)



to Jillian ▾

Oh wow, I had not processed that connection between the two (textiles and comics).

While discussing the show, we landed on the title *A Walking Start* in relation to both the figures embroidered around the edge of the *Walking Quilt*, but also to a conversation where Philip and I discussed how the periods we spent walking between destinations this spring was some of the most restful time we got. Generative, but with the benefit of leisure. Zoning out can definitely be underrated! Our city&internet inundated nervous systems probably appreciate it.

A few final questions related to unpredictability and collaborating with the medium:

I saw online that it appears as if the *Blue Quilt* had at one point been dis and re-assembled, could you speak to what led to that?

Which of the pieces on view surprised you the most in how they resolved, or seemed to have a real life of their own?



Jillian Tamaki

Jul 10, 2024, 6:53 PM (6 hours ago)



to me ▾

While discussing the show, we landed on the title A Walking Start in relation to both the figures embroidered around the edge of the Walking Quilt, but also to a conversation where Philip and I discussed how the periods we spent walking between destinations this spring was some of the most restful time we got. Generative, but with the benefit of leisure. Zoning out can definitely be underrated! Our city&internet inundated nervous systems probably appreciate it.

I was never a very serious runner at all but over the last few years I've replaced running with walking. It feels more sustainable and less competitive. The ravines are one of the best parts of Toronto.

I saw online that it appears as if the Blue Quilt had at one point been dis and re-assembled, could you speak to what led to that? Which of the pieces on view surprised you the most in how they resolved, or seemed to have a real life of their own?

The Blue Quilt was my lockdown project and is a diary of sorts. I just added to it every day with no plan. At some point it had enough shapes and imagery on it where a sense of balance and gestalt had asserted itself. I hacked it up and rearranged it to create a better overall feeling.

This project was really started as a way of self-soothing in an uncertain time. I literally started it the week we went into isolation. In that way it felt very emotionally "pure", whatever that means, it was simply a means of keeping my hands busy. I even solicited suggestions for subject matter on Instagram, so some of the imagery and text is not even mine. For example, my friend Ginette Lapalme suggested the lyrics to "Blue (Da Ba Dee)" by Eiffel 65 so that's where those came from.



Hearth <hearthgarage@gmail.com>

9:29 AM (6 minutes ago)



to Jillian ▾

That is intense timing! Reappraising something you've made in that way and allowing for those elements of chance sound really freeing.

Thanks for taking the time to share a bit about these processes!
It's been really great to learn more about this side of what you do, and we're thrilled to be hosting them this summer.

All our best, and see you soon,
Rowan + Hearth

