

New Wine in Old Wineskins: Quilts, Samplers, and Other Experiments by Ian Cozzens and John Chamberlin

Exhibition on View: August 18, 2022 - October 19, 2022

Curatorial Statement:

Patching, mending and re-imagining old forms anew comes naturally to Ian Cozzens and John Chamberlin. In “New Wine in Old Wineskins,” the artists use quilted fabric to re-tool well-loved patterns and explore newly discovered visual motifs. In developing the exhibition’s title, Cozzens and Chamberlin were interested in the Christian parable in which Jesus, instructing his followers not to try and adapt their old pre-Christian ways to his new teachings, tells them not to put old wine in new wineskins. The artists disagree, suggesting with this exhibition that “of course it’s a good idea to patch old clothes, combine old and new fabrics, try putting new ideas into old forms ... go ahead, explode it!”

Artist Statements/Bios:

John Chamberlin has been inspired by the many makers in his family. He received a BA in Crafts (ceramics + textiles) at California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) 1971 and taught at the elementary level for ten years in Hawaiian Gardens, CA, until retiring from public school teaching June 1982. He then returned to CSLUA to earn an MA in Art Education before heading to the University of Arizona (UA), Tucson for a doctoral program in Art Education. In the summer of 1987 Chamberlin accepted a full-time faculty position at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). After thirty-one years in RISD’s Department of Teaching and Learning in Art + Design, he retired in June 2019.

Upon moving to Rhode Island, Chamberlin began working in clay, making ceramic tiles during off hours, and his work in tiles was influenced by the geometry of historic quilt patterns. Around 2014 he began taking lessons and have since made over 120 quilts, most of which he donates to Rhode Island Child Family Services to be given to foster children. Since retiring and devoting more of his time to quilting, Chamberlin has established and directs the Quilt Ministry at Grace Episcopal Church. “The quilt making process has filled me with a renewed purpose. The pieces on display demonstrate a different direction for me. I am currently working with photography, altering the image with software, digital printing on fabric, then using traditional quilt block patterns for a new look. The content is all about DOWNCITY Providence.” To view a partial archive of Chamberlin’s quilts, visit his website: johnchamberlinquilts.com

Ian Cozzens is an artist and educator from Providence, Rhode Island. He has made quilts, shelves, gardens, wallpaper, spaces, sculptures, and many drawings and prints... and he’s currently fixing up a non-zero number of sailboats. He works as the Resident Artist Mentor in Printmaking at New Urban Arts, a drop-in art studio for high schoolers. Ian is a queer man, a sailor, and a Scorpio.

You can probably find Ian thinking or talking about cities and buildings, perceptions of gender, sharing power, letterforms, perspective drawing, non-hierarchical projects, urban coastline access, getting your hands on the material world, beauty, and the malleable and/or arbitrary nature of reality.

Ian rides a bike everywhere, and feels most connected to his own existence when at the tiller of a small boat under sail. For questions or commissions: secretdoor.projects@gmail.com



John Chamberlin - "Westminster Street"

51X59"

\$450



John Chamberlin - "Pixel Pavement"
47.5X48"
\$425



John Chamberlin - "Snapshots"

52X63"

\$450



Ian Cozzens - "Rhoda's Quilt: Purple & Green Drunkard's Path" (February 2018 - ongoing)
60X60"
cotton fabrics, machine pieced & hand quilted

Encountering a historic, high-contrast drunkard's path quilt on a ye olde Benefit St. house tour, I was fascinated. I wanted to see if I could make some drunkard's path squares & what I could do with them pattern-wise... and what the ideal proportion of concave to convex arc area would be. The central fabrics were initially chosen as "fabrics that are I think are ugly & don't care about, good for making experiments with".... then I started to get into them. Now I really like them. Luckily Rhoda also likes purple, pink, & green. I figured out the perfect proportion of shape... but decided to use all the squares I had already made anyways cause perfection is overrated & I had already done the work of sewing them... and a little bit of wobbliness is easy on the eyes.

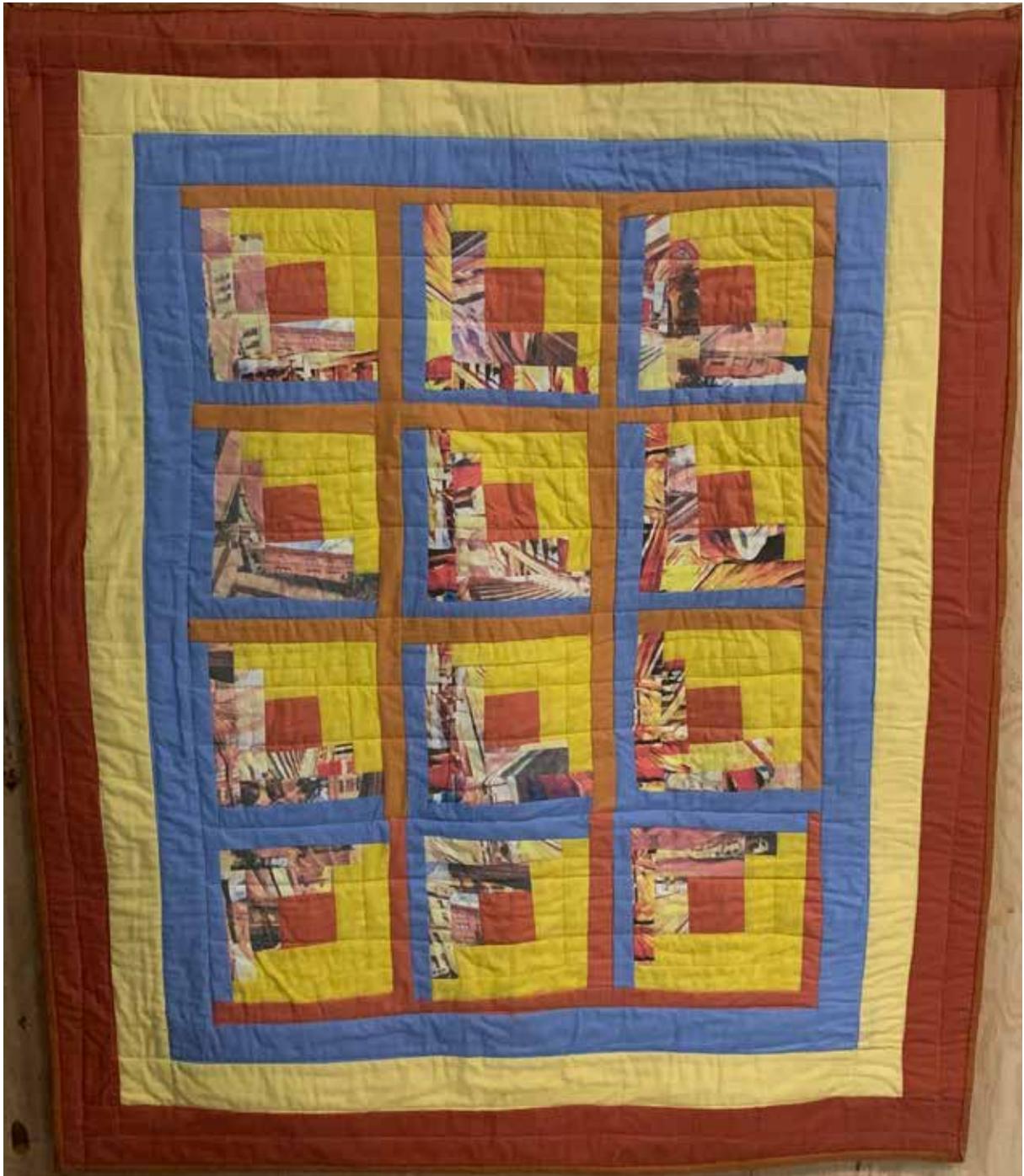
As Rhoda got bigger, I realized I had to add a couple stripes around the edges to accommodate a larger child. I was also able to introduce a couple additional solid pink colors to brighten it up (Rhoda really likes pink). A lot of the quilting happened during the early pandemic when there was nothing else to do... then I mostly fell off when summer 2021 hit & I had a sailboat to work on. Don't grow too big too fast, Rhoda!



John Chamberlin - "Irish Chain"

51.5X60"

\$450



John Chamberlin - "Urban Log Cabin"

46.5X56.5"

\$425



John Chamberlin - "Blue White Yellow"

51X58"

\$450



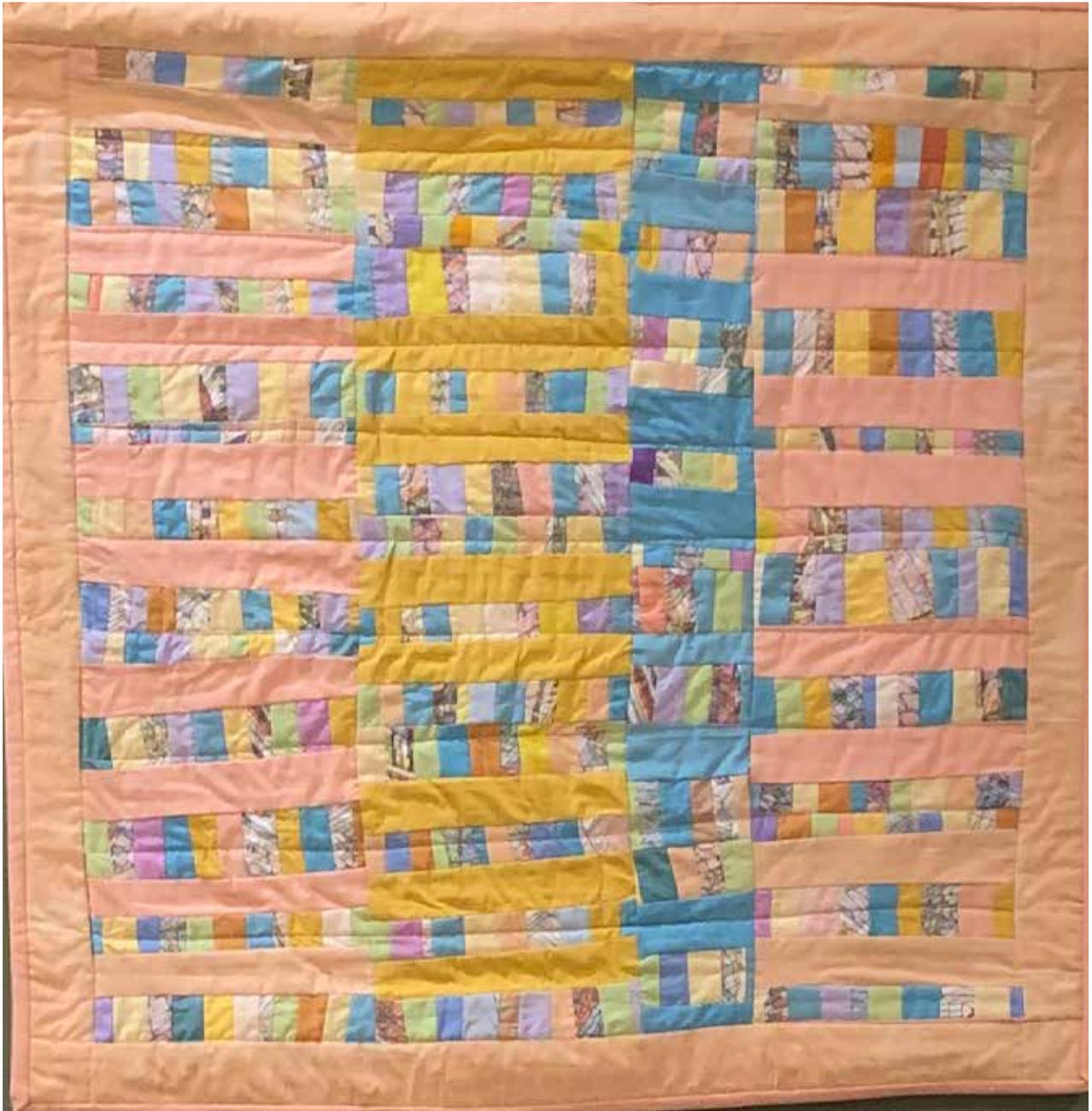
Ian Cozzens - "Red/Blue Spiral Quilt" (2016-2020)

94X84"

lifelong collection of interesting scraps, old garments, a couple purchased fabrics, & some special bright green and dark blue linen. machine pieced & hand quilted.

This quilt began as a way to consolidate the many tiny precious scraps I had of red and “red-related” fabrics... after a major cleaning of my fabric area which had become infested with moths. I washed everything & sorted by color... realizing how many little pieces of memory treasures I had in “the red box”. They started becoming triangles and now make up one element of the red zigzag spiral that radiates out from the center. I worked on this in a haze of pointlessness after the 2016 election, asking myself “what the point of art was if the world is just going to be garbage anyways” and additionally... “is beauty enough?” A friend answered “yes”.

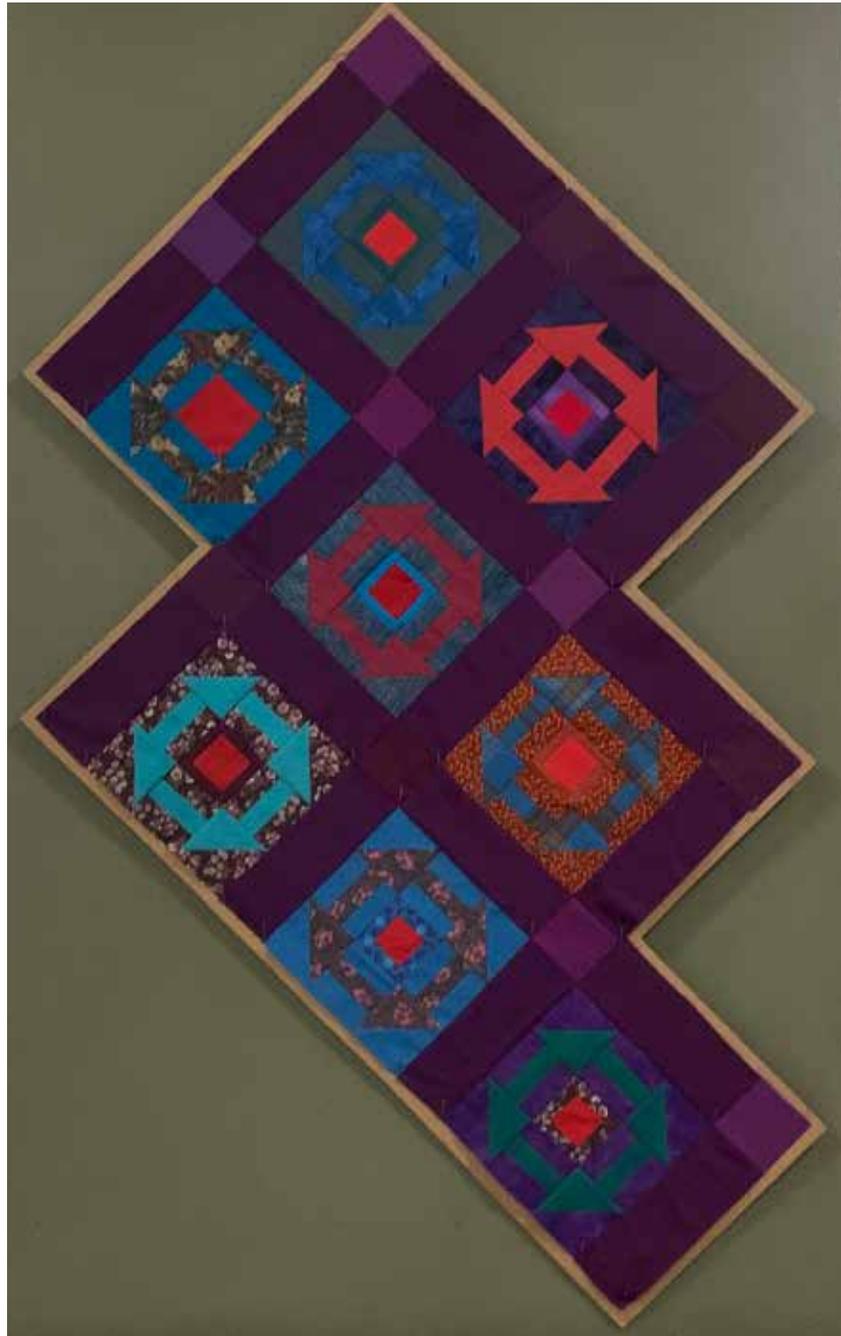
I had an overarching plan for the color scheme but didn't know exactly what was going to populate each area/segment till I figured it out. The many decisions that make up this quilt, down to the quilting stitch patterns, were spaced out over all 4 years. If I had tried to make them all at once/ahead of time, the paralysis would have been insurmountable. When I got the whole thing pieced, I thought it was too big... now it has become clear that it is the exactly correct size. There are about 12 seams left on here to quilt.



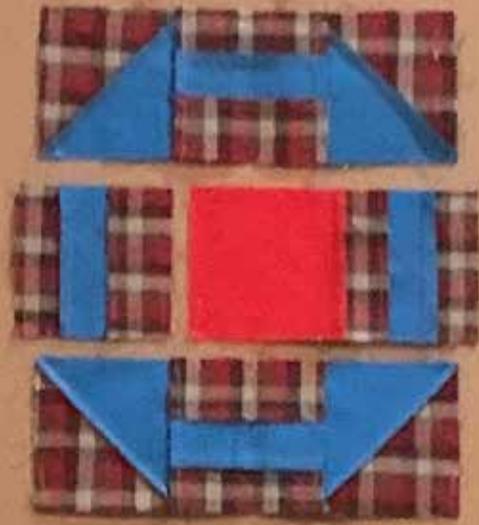
John Chamberlin - "Parfait"

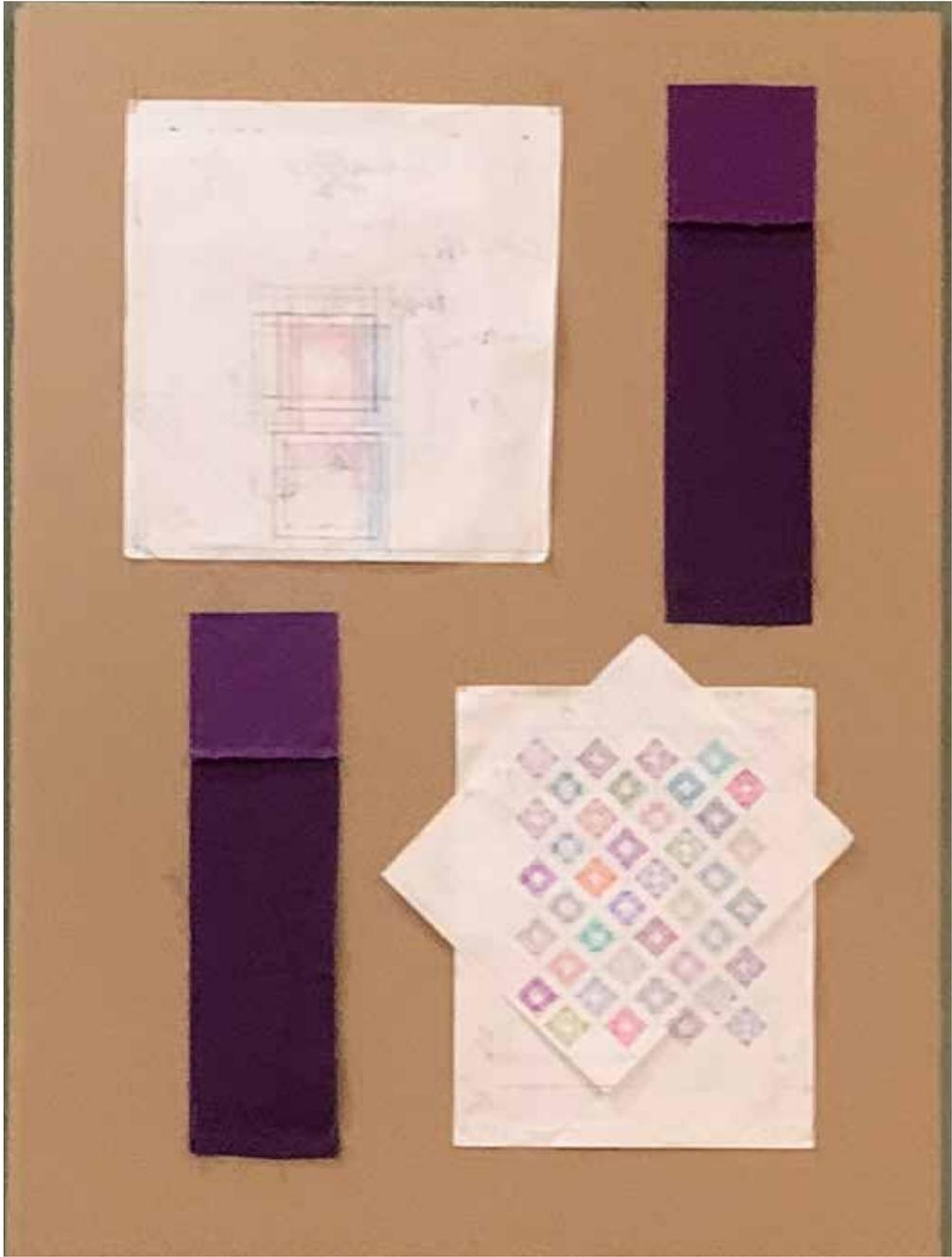
35X36"

\$225



Ian Cozzens - "Jewel Tone Golden Gate" (November 2018 - ongoing)
dimensions unfinalized, each block approximately 9X9"
cottons, wools, silks, synthetics, etc





As part of a group show of quilts & textile works at the Sutton St. carriage house gallery in fall 2018, I ran a patchwork piecing workshop & my friend Michael Cheatham picked the “Golden Gate” pattern out of a book as one he wanted to try. I taught folks how to make easy half-square triangles without having to hassle with sewing things on their bias edges. After we had each made a Golden Gate block, I got intrigued to make some more. My mom had made a Golden Gate quilt for my brother long ago, using my dad’s old button-down 70s shirts... I was psyched to try a different color variation on the same pattern.

At that time, having a spacious studio space with a very large work table allowed me to pull broadly from my fabric collection to pick a lot of quirky bold jewel tone guys, & start putting them together in what I think of as a “deep assortment”: there is consistency and unity, however there are no *exact* repeats. The end goal is to create something compelling to let one’s eyes bounce around for decades to come. Fabrics were selected for their glowing boldness & color relationships to the other fabrics, ending me up with some hefty woolens as well as some slippery silks & synthetics. The “assortment” and the arrangement of the different color blocks got finalized in my kitchen/living room during the pandemic. I took notes on it (see drawing pinned to cardboard panel) & put all the elements away in a clean pizza box for 2+ years.

For this show at City Hall, I pulled it out & started working on the next element of the “assortment”: which red fabrics would go in the centers of which blocks. I didn’t second guess my block layout from 2020, gotta nod to your younger self for the work they put in! The purple sashing strips create a lot of wiggle room for the blocks to not all be exactly the same size (I had learned my lesson from the red/blue quilt with all its corners where 45° lines had to meet perfectly). Some Golden Gate blocks in progress, shown backwards so the structure/sequence of the piecing can be seen, are visible on the cardboard panel.