

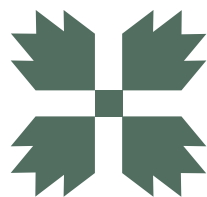


PIECED TOGETHER

The Art & Meaning of Carol Ford's Quilts







PIECED TOGETHER

The Art & Meaning of Carol Ford's Quilts

SPRINGVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

Emily Larsen, Museum Director

Essay by Kristin Barrus

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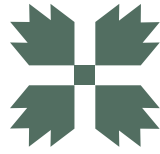


TABLE OF CONTENTS

In Memory of Carol Ford	7
Introduction by Emily Larsen, Museum Director	8
“A Life’s Record” by Kristin Barrus, Academic Quiltmaker	10
Endnotes	16
Quilts from the Carol Ford Collection	17
Acknowledgments	112
Museum Exhibitions 2025-2026	113

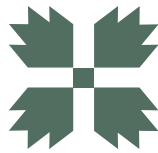






IN MEMORY OF CAROL FORD
1957- 2024





THE COLLECTION OF CAROL FORD

"We made memories to last a lifetime"

- Carol Ford

Quilts often tell stories—and Carol Ford's body of work tells the story of a woman who deeply loved her family, her home, and the beauty of nature.

Many of Carol's quilts tell stories that are instantly recognizable and deeply relatable. I vividly remember exhibiting *Brant's First Silver* in our 2021 Annual Quilt Show. Our visitors stood in awe and amazement at the delicate piecing that came together to bring to life the story of a young boy, Carol's grandson Brant, catching one of his first fish.

Earlier this year, Carol's family reached out wanting to do something special to memorialize Carol and her quilting after her unexpected death in August of 2024 and to make a major gift to the Museum in her honor.

As we started working with the family, we got to know Carol's quilting and life more intimately. It quickly became clear that an exhibition of her work would be a meaningful way to honor her artistry and her family's



Carol Ford, *Brant's First Silver*, 2020, Quilted by Virginia Gore.



generosity—and that it would be a natural and inspiring fit for our mission and programming.

At the Springville Museum of Art, our mission is to “foster beauty and contemplation through life-affirming art and experience.” Each year, we welcome nearly 100,000 visitors through our doors and serve more than 30,000 students and teachers through offsite outreach programs. We strive to make all our exhibitions and programs exemplify artistic excellence while fostering connection, reflection, and meaning-making.

Carol’s quilts do all of this at a high level. They are masterfully crafted artworks that tell stories that inspire, delight, and connect. We are proud to share them with our community.

Thanks to this exhibition and the educational materials created alongside it, Carol’s quilts will continue to inspire visitors and students for years to come. And thanks to the generous support of the Ford Family Foundation, we will be able to serve more visitors, students, teachers, and families each year with free, life-affirming, and welcoming arts experiences.

In the following pages you can learn more about Carol and her work through a short essay written by Kristin Barrus, one of Utah’s most significant quilting scholars, and by seeing illustrations of her work taken by Springville photographer Mike Snelson.

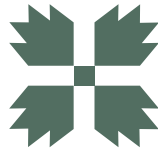
We are deeply grateful to the Ford family, and to Carol—for her legacy, her artistry, and the joy her work continues to bring. We’re honored to present *Pieced Together: The Art & Meaning of Carol Ford’s Quilts*, and we can’t wait for you to experience it.



Sincerely,

Emily Larsen
Museum Director
Springville Museum of Art





A LIFE'S RECORD

By: Kristin Barrus

Quilts measure a considerable number of things. Through them we begin to comprehend an extended art form, a socio-economic time period, or in this case, one woman's lived experience. This exhibit's meaningful reflection on the life of Carol Ford through her award-winning quilt collection is substantial not only because of the way the quilts display her virtues and values, but also because it shows how Carol contributed to a vast timescape of textile experiences with each object she created. The overview of Carol's collection is a generous life well lived.

The continuum of textile history stretches back 20,000 years through evidence of the first string in modern day France. Over the centuries, textiles have enabled civilizations to carry their belongings, stay protected from the sun, and find warmth during harsh weather. Textiles have also been used to adorn, to evoke feeling, to distinguish groups, to create community, and to show care, even from the beginning and in spite of some of their other practical or complicated uses.

Quilts are an integral part of this history of cloth, with their additional impressive contributions to care and community. While firmly an aesthetic artform, quilts are also a narrative of memory which contributes to cultural heritage across time and all over the world. Quiltmaking has been referred to as a 'bound volume of hieroglyphics,' 'art without frames,' 'quilt poetics,' and a 'mother tongue.'¹

Quilts are one of American culture's considerable, multi-sensory symbols of art and craft, but are indeed so much more. They are not "passive depositories of facts," but part of an active process of the creation of a "multiplicity of meanings."² Author bell hooks writes, "Aesthetics then is more than a philosophy or theory of art and beauty; it is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming."³ Quilts and their makers are key to understanding what it means to be human. They are distinct records of an individual, a place, a memory, a moment, imbuing the tangible with the intangible. And because quilts are so common and accessible, they are able to relate and encapsulate the experiential more easily than other art forms.



One of the most important factors of quilts and their effects is the way they have always been rooted in the lives of women. They are a visual language and culture intrinsic to women but for the benefit of all. Art quiltmaker Jean Ray Laury writes, "Quilts provide a lovely . . . visual communication from one generation to others."⁴ Very often, quilts are a record of the life of one woman, such as in this collection by Carol Ford. Carol's quilts can be placed within the quilt continuum by examining her stylistic approach as well as community and placemaking values seen in each object.

QUILT STYLES

Carol made quilts for a variety of reasons during a significant era of quilting's timeline. During her forty years of sewing and quilting until her passing in 2024, the art form and industry underwent extraordinary changes as the old century turned into the new. Fabric design and manufacturing evolved in softness and style. Accessibility as well as price increased during the digital revolution. Quilt shows, retreats, workshops, and stores, suddenly online and in person, proliferated. Carol was piecing quilts in the midst of it all.

With the expansion of international quilting practice came distinct and not-so-distinct aesthetic categories of quilt styles: *contemporary* – the popular of today, *traditional* – evoking past or historical styles, *studio art* – to be hung on the wall only, and *modern* – graphic and often using solid fabrics. There are tensions, blurred lines, and crossover between all of these labels. Carol's quilts are primarily contemporary with some intricate studio art quilts included in her last eighteen years of making.

As a quiltmaker, Carol was efficient and organized. Her sewing spaces in Utah and Alaska were tidy and inviting. Contrary to many others, Carol was a finisher. She generally started and finished one quilt at a time. She enjoyed being challenged and pushed herself to expand her own borders of quilting. These aspects of her personality can also be seen in the development of her more intricate work as she progressed as a maker.



Carol Ford, *Wilderness Ridge*, 2020, Quilted by Virginia Gore.



She did not have a set color palette, choosing instead to buy and use a variety of contemporary fabric colors and designs, supporting the idea that “a quilt is a fabric collection of the period in which it was made.”⁵ It is also a record of the styles and fads of that era. Carol’s quilts chronicle popular patterns being used during her quilting years, enhanced with her own skill and embellishment. Her quilts display local community row quilts, advanced techniques such as paper piecing and collage, and popular fabrics by well-known designers of those years. Some quilts evoke specific outdoor scenes while others are classic examples of repetitive blocks. Carol’s collection contains examples of the spectrum of quilts from those made for show to those meant to be used.



Carol Ford, *Wildflowers and Woodland Creatures*, 2017, Quilted by Virginia Gore.

Most of her quilts were finished by the same longarm quilter, Virginia Gore. Rather than traditional, laborious notions of hand quilting on a large frame, today’s makers give their completed quilt tops with batting and backing to an expert longarm quilter to connect the three layers. Carol was confident in her own work enough to allow Virginia to add her own artistry with very little direction from Carol. Carol’s daughter Leslie remembers her expressing, “I have this beautiful quilt, but Virginia is going to bring it to life.”⁶ Virginia’s talent can be seen in thread over most of Carol’s collection.



QUILTS ENGENDER COMMUNITY

As is the case with many people who quilt, the objects themselves are evidence of what artist and author Miriam Schapiro (1923-2015) calls, “the dogged will to make something extraordinary in the midst of family routine.”⁷ This is truly the beauty of quilts. Yes, they are examples of ingenuity and evolution in art, but more than that they are evidence of women’s complex lived experience. Quilts are created parallel to everyday life. In this way, they are the “preservation of a woman’s voice,” not soon to be forgotten.⁸ Carol’s quilts are to be enjoyed visually, but not without considering the interconnected memories within each one. They are strong examples of art created while prioritizing family, friends, and community.

Carol was an incredibly social woman. Creating was secondary to the connections she made around quilting. As a creative person whose identity included her quiltmaker status, she used quilting to deepen her relationships with those around her. Carol attended quilt retreats, taught others, and gifted quilts as an act of care. She demonstrated the ways “craft allows us to transform emotion into a tangible object.”⁹ She was a gatherer. She was a listener. She was a giver. All of these values were ingrained in each quilt she constructed and were the reasons she made quilts.



Carol Ford, *Memories of Brad*, 2012.

As she built her own techniques, she enthusiastically shared them with others formally and privately. She enjoyed gathering with like-minded quiltmakers to generate optimism and share life around fabric. On her many travels, she insisted on supporting the local quilt stores in each area by buying a piece of fabric for her collection. More than enlarging her art supplies, Carol recognized the importance of supporting small businesses within the quilt industry and this was her way of extending community wherever she went. Her quilt group, the Maple Mountain Quilt Guild, made intricate quilts regularly to donate to Primary Children’s Hospital’s auction.



Within her own family, Carol used quilt construction lessons to share quality time. Each grandchild was given multiple quilts. It is believed that her last finished quilt was a project she used to teach her craft to her grandson. When her son Brad passed away, she made several quilts from his t-shirts for loved ones, with the scent of his own lived experience in each ironed block. Carol used quilts to create community within her family, friends, and strangers as an extension of her great love for people.

QUILTS AS PLACEMAKING

Carol's collection of performative art is best viewed as a narrative of memory and place, rather than holding a particular aesthetic category. Author Barry Targan writes, "we exist in the evidence of our hands."¹⁰ Carol chose to use her hands—and her arms—to show love and connection. Thus quilting not only leaves evidence of these experiences after life, but, like oral history, is a performative practice of making. For Carol's quilts, this meant placemaking.

Quilts as material objects create and extend place. Placemaking is its own casual, personal branding; a remembrance connected to time and space. Place, in relation to this collection, is established in moments as well as physical locations. Often in these quilts, the two overlapped. For over twenty-five years Carol made quilts in her beloved Alaska. For example, as she spent time in Talkeetna with family and friends, she would translate an afternoon's encounter with a moose into a quilt to mark that moment. The colors of the Northern Lights found their way into her fabric choices. She was inspired by her favorite places as well as the relationships deepened while there.

In addition to the specific physical spaces or memories she wanted to capture in her quilts, there lies the time spent making them. Carol combined community with her love of making quilts, creating place for time with her, whether that was friends at a guild meeting or family in her sewing room. She saw time with others as an opportunity. Having the making be secondary to the finished product was often the goal.



Carol Ford, *The Light of the World II*, 2022,
Quilted by Virginia Gore.



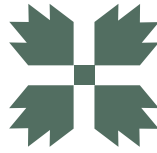
Carol advanced her earlier love of scrapbooking into quilting to commemorate important moments and places to be remembered. Her daughter Leslie shares, “she was documenting an event or a memory that she was trying to preserve through her quilts.”¹¹ This narrative of memory was captured on the backs of most quilts with elaborate labels depicting the associated experience, often with a fabric-printed photograph, truly sharing her mother tongue. Carol leaves entirely finished quilts, organized sewing spaces, and a legacy of love through making, all easily translated because of her thorough labeling.

There are many ways to be taught by someone. For some, verbal lessons are used. For others, demonstrations. For Carol, the softness of fabric reflects the lessons she wanted to teach of the importance of social connections and her great love of and care for people. “Quilts are one way in which women tell the truth of our lives.”¹² Her contribution to the textile continuum is artistry entangled with lived experience, as quilts so often are. For this one woman, the quilts in this collection represent the meaningful placemaking, community, and design she lived by and wanted to share with those around her, particularly her loved ones. When viewing these quilts, look for the progression of her skill, for the thoughtful fabric placement and artistic choices, but most of all for her truth, the specific legacy of life she is sharing through this medium. It is written in each quilt.



Carol Ford, *Mourning Star*, 2012, Quilted by Virginia Gore.

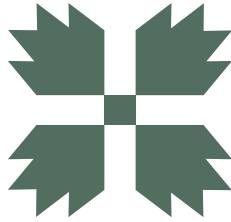




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**SELECT QUILTS FROM
THE CAROL FORD COLLECTION**





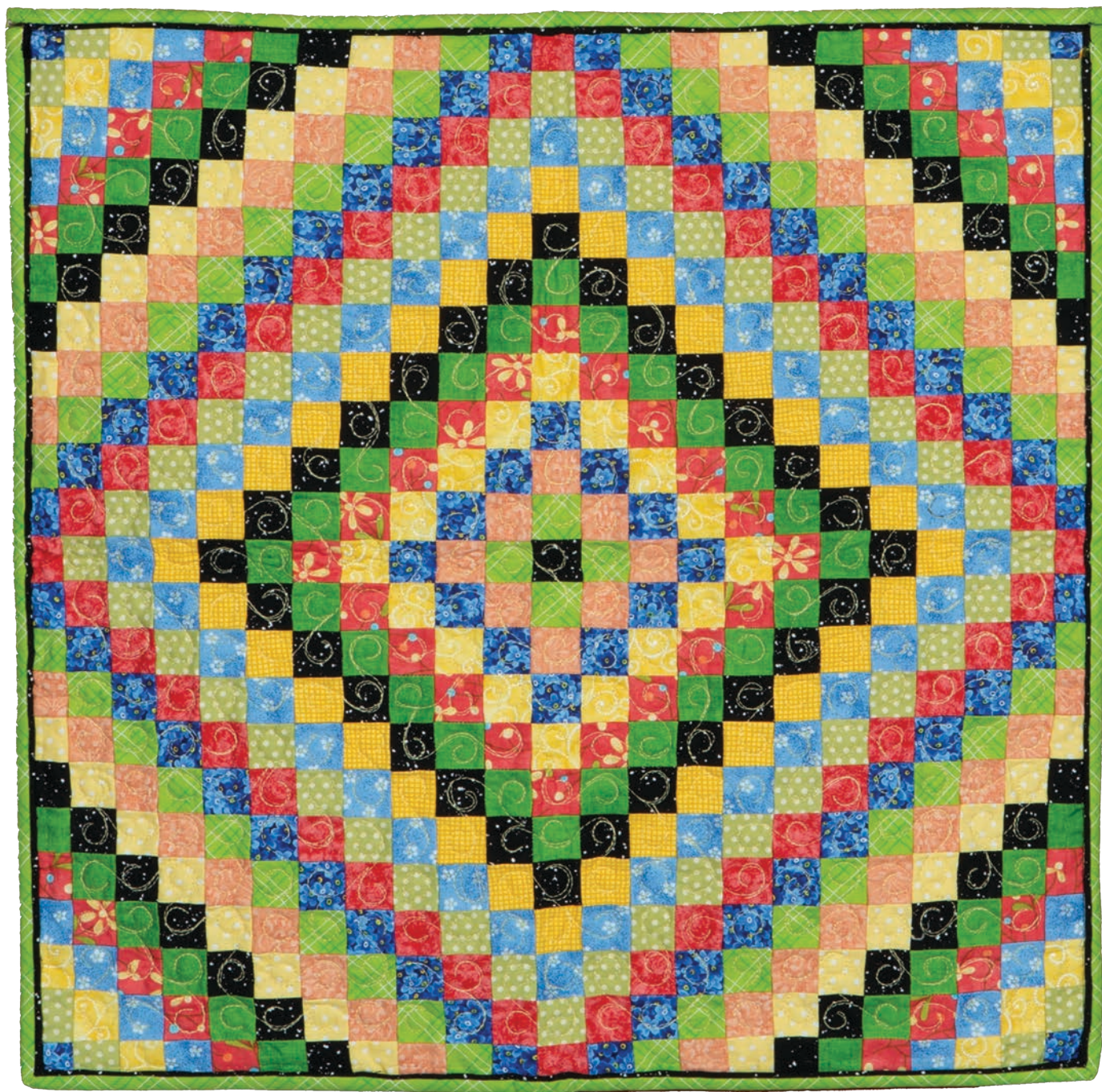
CAROL FORD

Untitled N.D.

Quilted by Virginia Gore
21" x 20.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Untitled (Dear Jane) N.D.
Quilted by Virginia Gore
72.5" x 61"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Wild Winter 2015
Quilted by Virginia Gore
41" x 40"

"These are some of the animals and birds that live on our ranch in Birdseye, Utah. I am thankful for the beauty of the earth that surrounds me, and for the many creatures in the mountains around our home. I found these paper pieced patterns online; and I purchased the fabrics in Alaska."

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Untitled N.D.

Quilted by Virginia Gore

16" x 27.5"

A LOOK AT THE BACK:







CAROL FORD

Summer Sampler 2021
Quilted by Virginia Gore
42" x 34"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Wildflowers and Woodland Creatures 2017

Quilted by Virginia Gore

49" x 54"

A CLOSER LOOK:







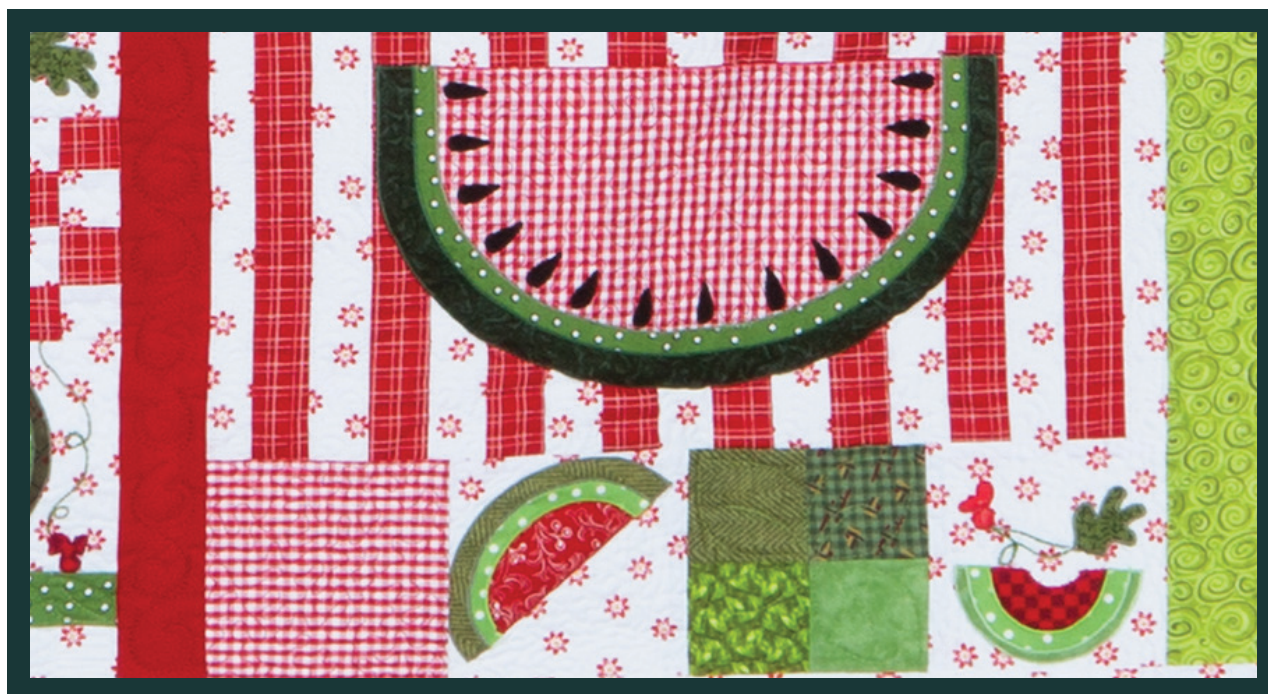
CAROL FORD

Watermelons 2016

Quilted by Virginia Gore

68" x 64"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Wildflowers of Alaska 2013

Quilted by Virginia Gore

60" x 60"

"This quilt reminds me of the beautiful berries and wildflowers found in the yard around our cabin in Talkeetna, Alaska. I purchased the fabric in Wasilla. The flowers in the center circle represent the state flower of Alaska, the Forget-Me-Not. While I was working on the center circle during LDS Conference, President Uchtdorf gave a talk about the Forget-Me-Not flowers of his childhood. I will always remember that connection and how it made me feel."

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Great Blue Heron 2023
Quilted by Virginia Gore
33" x 19.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Funky Fish 2014

Quilted by Virginia Gore

25" x 27"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Funky Fish 2017
Quilted by Virginia Gore
48" x 44"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Camilla The Crazy Cow (There's One in Every Herd) 2017

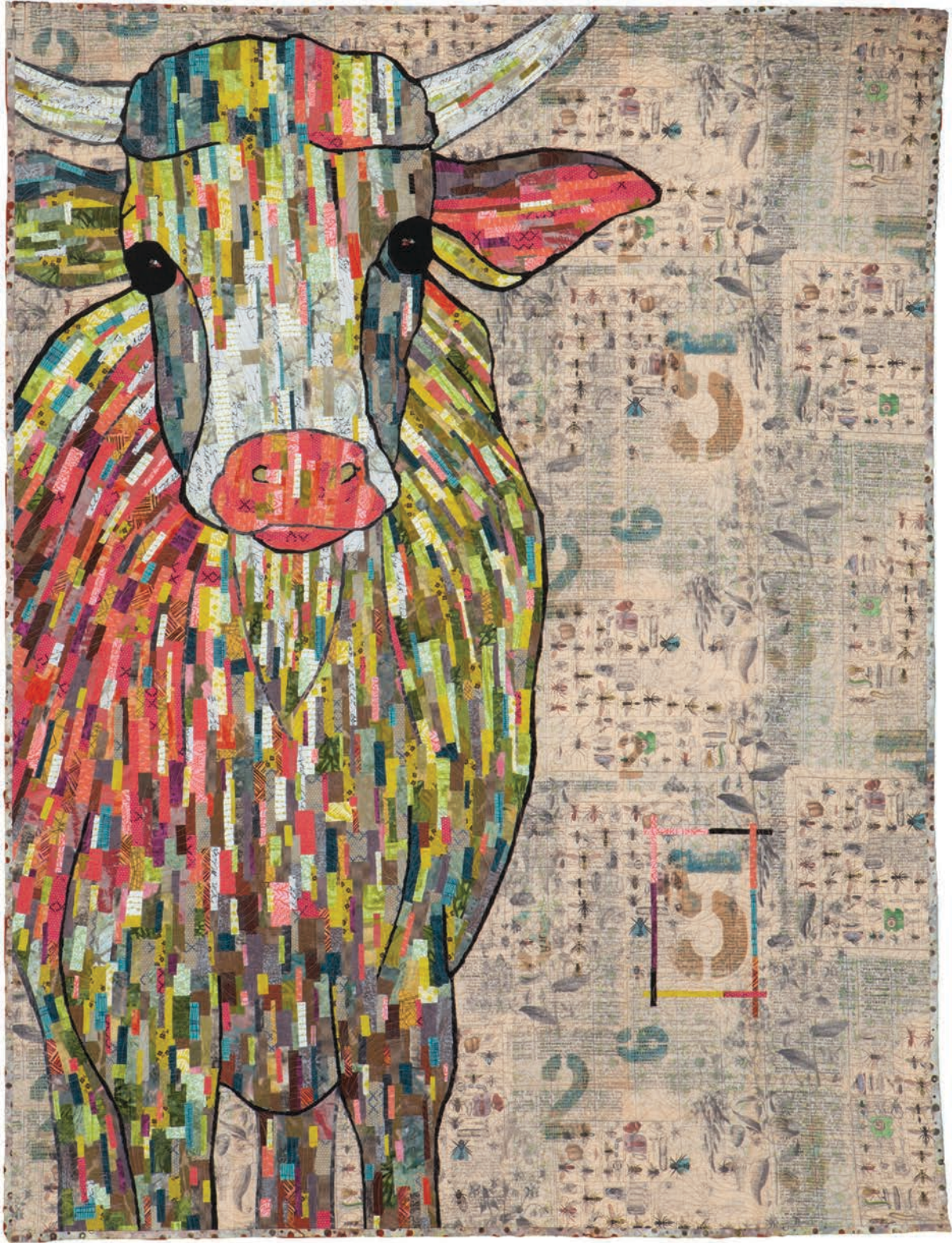
Quilted by Virginia Gore

53" x 40"

"I like to name my quilts. I was having a difficult time figuring out a name for this quilt. My son and my grandsons raise cattle. I was asking Kanyon, (my grandson) what some of the names were that he had given some of his heifers. He told me some of their names. There was Mojave Queen, Checkers, Checkmate, Spirit, (born on July 4th), and Camilla. He told me that they sold Spirit, and that Camilla was crazy. She had chased his dad over the fence, and she was hamburger now. Camilla the crazy cow. It was the perfect name for this crazy cow quilt."

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Watering Hole at Sandwash Basin 2016

Quilted by Virginia Gore

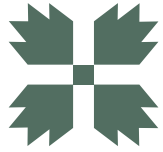
24" x 55"

"This quilt took almost an entire year of my spare time. I made many trips to the fabric store to find the batik fabrics that I used in this project. Some of these pattern pieces were really small, but the detail gave life to the horses. I love the detail that you can get using paper piecing patterns! Our family loves to ride our horses in the mountains around our home."

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Otis 2019

Quilted by Virginia Gore

48" x 33"

"I saw Otis on my first trip to Katmai National Park in Alaska during the summer of 2012. He is one of the dominant male bears that feed on salmon at Brooks Falls. The rangers there guess his age to be about 22 years old. I've seen him many times when we've been lucky enough to return to Brooks Falls. Otis didn't show up this spring from his winter hibernation. I like to think that he has found a new fishing spot in a better place. Fish on Otis!"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Ice Bear 2017

Quilted by Virginia Gore

45" x 44.5"

"My daughter Leslie and I went to Manitoba, Canada this summer to photograph polar bears. We stayed at Churchill Wild Lodge, which is one of the National Geographic's most remote lodges in the world. We made memories to last a lifetime. Our greatest adventure - so far!"

SEE THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT INSPIRED THE QUILT:







CAROL FORD

Dakota N.D.

Quilted by Virginia Gore

45" x 34"

"I am fascinated by collage quilts and have always loved horses. I used about 85 different fabrics in this quilt that was completed on Christmas Eve. This is our Brad's Birthday. He would have turned 40 years old today. He was a team roper. His horse's name was Dakota. I want to believe that there are horses in Heaven. Happy Birthday Brad!"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Montgomery Moose 2019
Quilted by Virginia Gore
42" x 47.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Fall 2016

Quilted by Virginia Gore

27" x 14.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Spring 2016
Quilted by Virginia Gore
26.5" x 14"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Winter 2016

Quilted by Virginia Gore

26" x 13.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Summer 2016

Quilted by Virginia Gore

25.5" x 13.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

On the Fly 2018

Quilted by Virginia Gore

21" x 28.5"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Sunflowers 2014
Quilted by Virginia Gore
20.5" x 15"

A LOOK AT THE BACK:







CAROL FORD

Echo Cliffs 2010
Quilted by Virginia Gore
24" x 21"

"Created from a photo taken in the Navajo Nation between Cameron and Page, Arizona. When the owner of a home dies, Navajo tradition is to vacate the home and remove the North wall."

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Brant's First Silver 2020

Quilted by Virginia Gore

35" x 47"

"Brant caught his first silver in August, 2018 on his Spiderman fishing pole that was purchased at Walmart. He was four years old, and was fishing on the Talkeetna River in Alaska. I made this quilt using a photograph taken by his mom, Leslie Ford."

A CLOSER LOOK:



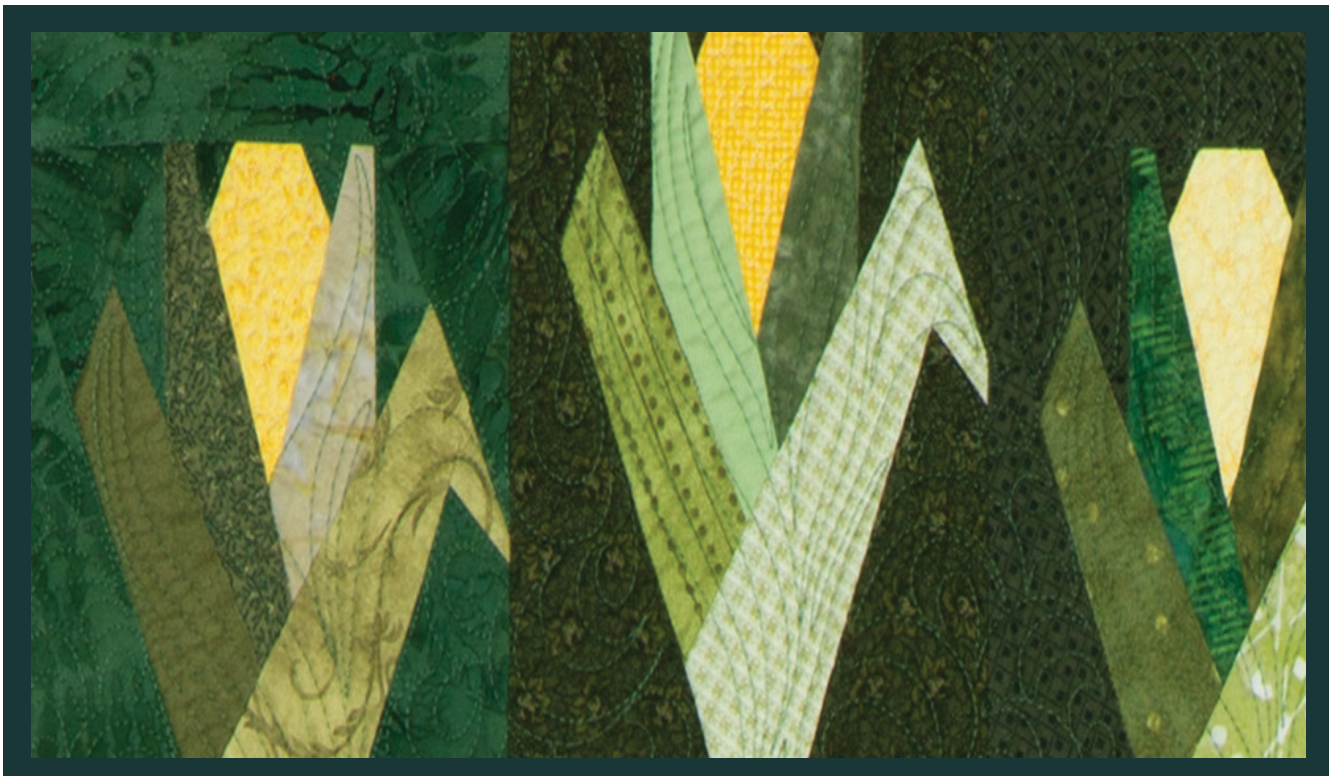




CAROL FORD

My Garden Patch 2014
Quilted by Virginia Gore
45" x 37"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD



Untitled
(Nativity Angels)
2007
Quilted by Virginia Gore
19" x 8"



Untitled
(Nativity Shepherd)
2007
Quilted by Virginia Gore
19" x 8"





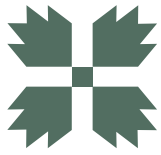
Untitled
(Holy Family with Manger)
 2007
 Quilted by Virginia Gore
 19" x 8"



Untitled
(Wise Men)
 2007
 Quilted by Virginia Gore
 19" x 8"



Untitled
(Holy Family with
Star of Bethlehem)
 2007
 Quilted by Virginia Gore
 19" x 8"



CAROL FORD

The Spirit of Alaska 2013
Quilted by Virginia Gore
84" x 67"

I spend a lot of time in Alaska, and I love batik fabrics. Everything about this quilt reminds of the color and beauty that I have seen there. This was one of the most difficult quilts that I have made; and I loved how it turned out. I think that the quilting truly brought this quilt to life. It was difficult to treat each block individually; and then tie all of the blocks together with the quilting. I thought about taking it back to Alaska to hang in our cabin; but I will probably leave it in Utah where I can see it every day.

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

A Scrappy Trip 2016
Quilted by Virginia Gore
29" x 29"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Shades of Autumn 2014
Quilted by Virginia Gore
12.5" x 12.5"

A LOOK AT THE BACK:



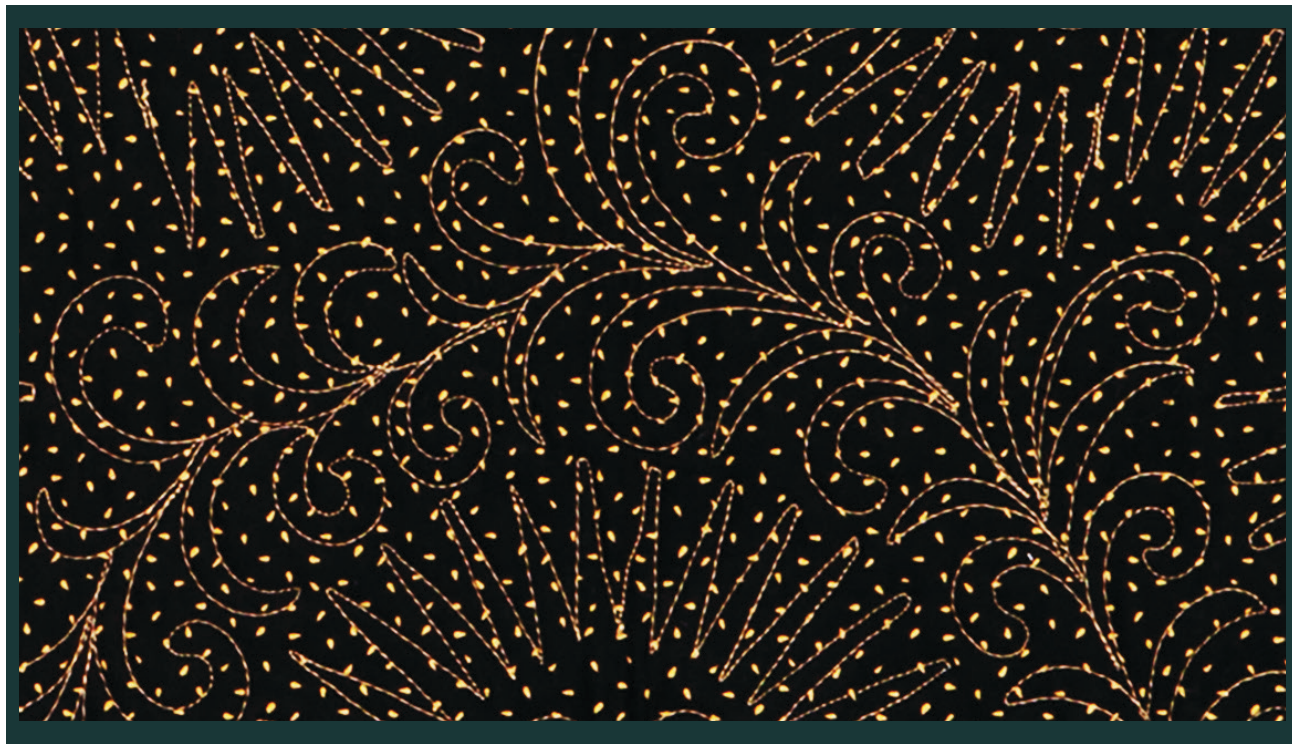




CAROL FORD

Baby New York Beauty 2008
Quilted by Virginia Gore
26.5" x 26.5"

A LOOK AT THE BACK:







CAROL FORD

Loon Lake 2014

Quilted by Virginia Gore

26" x 31"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Kotzebue Ice Fishing 2009
Quilted by Virginia Gore
32" x 32"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Summer Serenity 2008
Quilted by Virginia Gore
27" x 29"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Moose Tracks in the Snow 2014
Quilted by Virginia Gore
23" x 26"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Winter Wolf 2014

Quilted by Virginia Gore

28" x 27"

A LOOK AT THE BACK:







CAROL FORD

Mosquitoes 2022

Quilted by Virginia Gore

73" x 55.5"

"I love the Northern Lights, the animals and the flowers in Alaska. I don't love the long, dark, cold winter nights, and the mosquitoes. Mosquitoes swarm the herds of animals as they migrate over the vast tundra. They are relentless. There are fourteen mosquitoes hidden in the quilting of this Northern Lights caribou."

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Ice Fishing 2010

Quilted by Virginia Gore

29" x 44"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Mountain Man Compass 2005
Quilted by Virginia Gore
46" x 46"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

A Day on the River 2014
Quilted by Virginia Gore
24" x 22"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Sea Otter 2013
Quilted by Virginia Gore
21" x 25"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Liberty 2014

Quilted by Virginia Gore

27" x 23"

A CLOSER LOOK:







CAROL FORD

Birdseye Bruin 2014
Quilted by Virginia Gore
30" x 32"

A LOOK AT THE BACK:







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Emma Wilkins, *Exhibition Assistant*

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Jake Smith, *City Council*
Mike Snelson, *City Council*
Mindi Wright, *City Council*
Troy Fitzgerald, *City Administrator*
John Penrod, *Assistant City Administrator*
Bruce Riddle, *Assistant City Administrator*

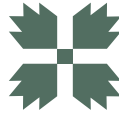
Special thanks to the Ford Family including Doug Ford, Leslie Hight, Mike Ford, and Brian Ford, for their support of the Museum and this exhibition.

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Thank you to Museum staff and interns for their assistance with exhibition inventory, photography, and installation.





2025-2026

SPRINGVILLE MUSEUM OF ART EXHIBITIONS

*In Search of Ourselves:
Soviet Art and the Shared Human Spirit*
Jun 18 – Ongoing

New Acquisitions
Jun 18 – Ongoing

Pieced Together: Quilts of Carol Ford
Jul 19 – Sep 20, 2025

51st Annual Utah Quilt Show
Jul 19 – Sep 20, 2025

*Enduring Beauty:
John Hafen and the Power of Art*
Aug 20 – Jul 25, 2026

39th Annual Spiritual and Religious Art of Utah
Oct 15 – Jan 7, 2026

54th Annual Utah All-State High School Art Show
Jan 31, 2026 – Mar 20, 2026

102nd Annual Spring Salon
Apr 25, 2026 – Jul 3, 2026

*Salon 100:
A Retrospective of 100 Spring Salons*
Apr 27, 2024 – Ongoing

Color!
Nov 16, 2024 – Ongoing





