

Sowing Seeds



From a two-week immersion in ikebana and art of many media, over 150 children at the Black Mountain Primary School near Asheville, North Carolina created three magnificent quilts for their school. Norma Bradley was assisted by Emiko Suzuki, both experienced educators, artists, and active members of Ikebana International, Asheville Chapter #74, which helped sponsor the program.

Bringing Japan's Creative Culture to American Children

Asheville Chapter has a hard-working Education Committee, which has spread the concept of "friendship through flowers" and recruited new members. This particular educational program brought new sponsorships and community recognition to the study of ikebana and much of Japanese culture. Over a three-month period, the children studied nature, art, design, textiles, ceramics, music



and stories, providing a fascinating look at life in Japan.

This hands-on learning experience was fully integrated into the school's third grade curriculum by 11 teachers and teaching assistants through weeks of advance planning with Bradley, a certified Ichiyo instructor and fabric artist. Her *Art Quilts* collections are inspired by her love of Ikebana and Japanese design. (View at <http://www.normabradley.com/>) Her years of experience working on special quilt projects with children and adults were complemented by the skills and knowledge of Ikenobo instructor and artist Suzuki. By creating his/her own ikebana arrangement, each student had a personal experience of connecting to natural materials and what it means to learn the craft of ikebana. This process helped them visualize and create designs



for the three quilts they worked on collaboratively. Through this program comes a greater understanding of diverse cultures that will benefit these children throughout life.

Making Quilts

The program studies crossed many subjects and teaching disciplines requiring many hours of advance curriculum development with Bradley, the teachers, and their teaching assistants. Learning to look at nature and art critically came from Bradley, whose work for thirty years has focused on incorporating this into textile arts.

Suzuki, visiting artist and Professor First Grade in the Ikenobo School, enriched the project with ikebana demonstrations and then worked with the children to create arrangements for their own ceramic containers made in art classes.

The quilts were exhibited at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville during the Ikebana International Spring Show in mid-May and at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts and for Art in Bloom,



an exhibition sponsored in part by I.I. Asheville Chapter and held annually in mid-June. In May of 2014 they will be exhibited at the North American Regional Conference (NARC 2014) taking place in Asheville, NC. Wherever these magnificent quilts are displayed, they bring the magic of the children that made them and a greater understanding of shared

cultures, Ikebana International, and the educational outreach programs. *Photos by Norma Bradley*

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**17TH NORTH AMERICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE
IKEBANA INTERNATIONAL**
MAY 18-22, 2014
Asheville, North Carolina
• information on programs and registration for NARC 2014:
http://www.ikebanaasheville.org/north_american_regional_conference_2014/general_information
• Renaissance Asheville Hotel:
<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/avlbr-renaissance-asheville-hotel/>