

# Tackling Geometry

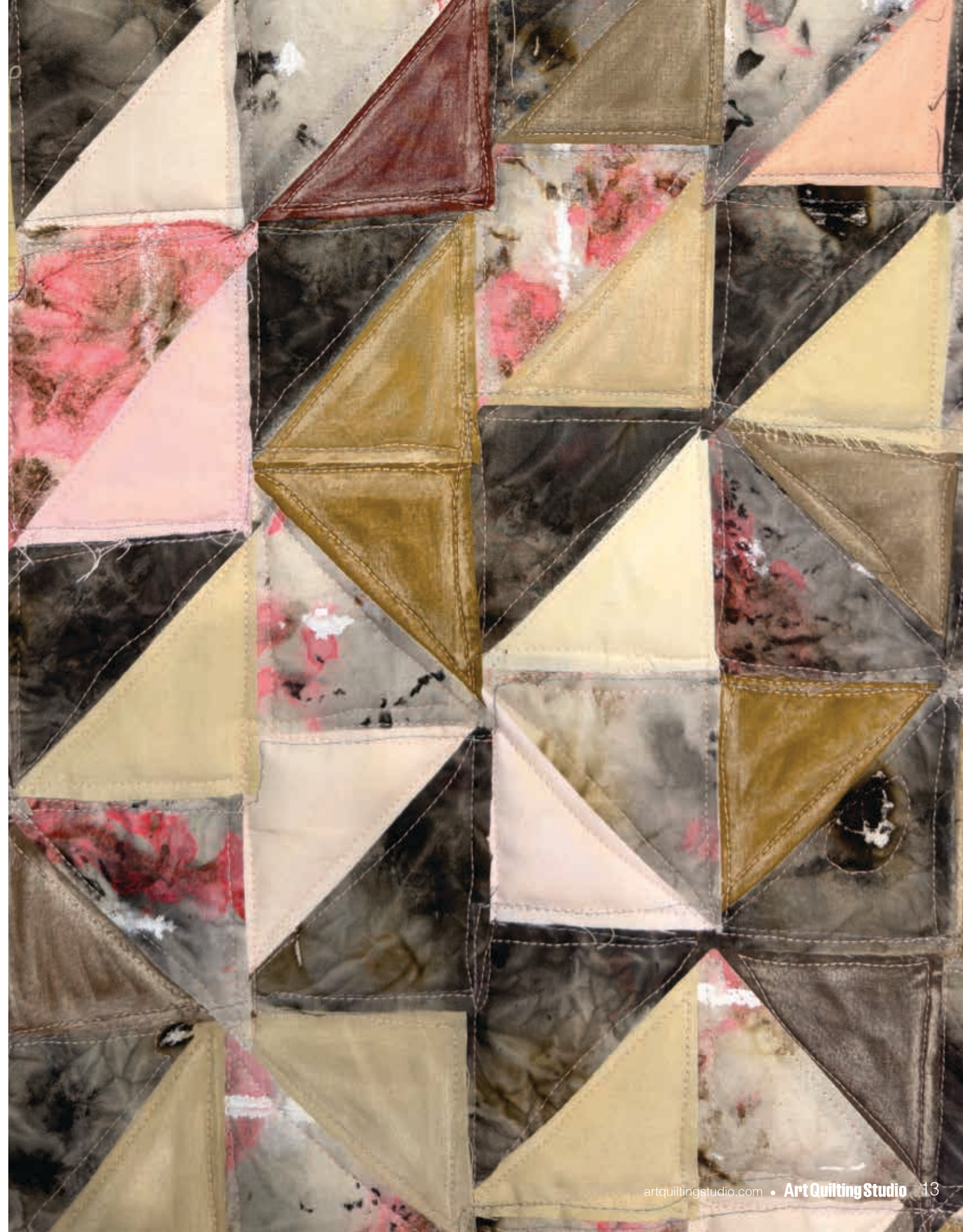
## WITH REGINA DURANTE JESTROW

by Danielle Williams

*Vulnerability & Resilience* 64 9" x 41½"



When Regina Durante Jestrow makes art, she pulls inspiration from the women, artist or not, who have gone before her and those who walk alongside her. She believes that sharing information with other female artists has helped her become a better one herself, and that celebrating one another is equally important to gaining new opportunities. A true talent, Regina describes her signature style or aesthetic as “sloppy geometry,” quickly asking, “Is that a style or aesthetic?” Her friendly, down-to-earth demeanor makes it a joy to work with her and view her vibrant, full-of-life quilts. →





*Americana Quilt 34 49½" x 52½" x ½"*



“WHILE IN LOCKDOWN FOR OVER A YEAR, I USED PLANT MATERIALS FROM MY BACKYARD AND KITCHEN TO DYE FABRICS” ...

*Americana Quilt 70 62" x 63" x ½"*



*Americana Quilt 53 51" x 67" x ½"*



Born in Queens, New York, Regina grew up alongside her twin sister and older brother, while her parents both dabbled in creative hobbies. While growing up, the kids learned how to sew, crochet, and knit from their mom, and their father was a skilled woodworker. “My mother, who always had three jobs to support her family and her future, is always doing something creative,” Regina says proudly. “There are always projects from gardening, reorganizing the house, making jewelry, and teaching her grandchildren to sew, knit, and cook.” She made Regina’s Halloween costumes and party dresses, and the sewing machine took up residence in the center of the house: the dining room, always surrounded by in-progress projects.

Regina attended the High School of Art of Design and Fashion Institute of Technology, focusing on art and photography. But, in the 1990s, when everything was transitioning from film to digital, she lost interest and moved to Miami at age 20, where she quickly purchased her first sewing machine. Always painting and exploring artistic notions, Regina didn’t discover fiber arts until her early 20s. It was then that she started quilting and completed her first project: a queen-sized quilt featuring windmill blocks and a mariner compass in the center. “I used that quilt until it disintegrated,” she fondly remembers.



The more Regina taught herself about quilt-making, the more quilt artists she discovered and was inspired by their work. Her first art quilt book purchase was “Gee’s Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt” (Tinwood Books, 2006), which she used to make drawings and paintings. From there, she added embroidery to the paintings, and experimented with screenprinting, patching, and embroidering clothing. In 2012, she made her first fiber sculpture: giant lily pads made from layers of organza quilted together with leaf venation patterns and hung from the ceiling. These were some of the stepping stones in her art journey to help her reach where she is today.

Regina charmingly calls her style “sloppy geometry” — the perfect description of her quirky shapes and blended patterns. “Over the last few years, I’ve been working with flesh tones, different stages of rust, India ink and walnut inks, and metallic and iridescent acrylic paints,” she explains. “Lately, I’ve been into champagne-colored sequins and tacky gold snakeskin with a splash of hot pink.” Her style has developed gradually, with the help of many other artists, as well as the influence of symbolic geometric patterns and architecture in natural environments. She is greatly inspired by Gee’s Bend quilters Elizabeth Murray, Helen Frankenthaler, Annie Albers, and Gego. Someone to knock around ideas with, her good friend Kerry Phillips creates unusual art installations and sculptures with everyday objects and materials. Having people like this to aspire to and learn from is invaluable to being an artist. →



Pieced Landscape 25 48" x 72"



The pieces featured here are from her "Pieced Landscape" series, which uses the Miami landscape as inspiration. Back in late 2021, Regina discovered annatto, a plant commonly used in South and Central America to dye foods like butter, ice cream, and rice, which also grows in Miami. The seedpods are a bright orange-red hue, which Regina combined with iron to dye fabric. To create a quilt she had sketched out earlier that year, she matched this dyed fabric with some light-pink and yellow fabrics. Over the summer, she took a workshop at Haystack School of Craft in Maine, where she took a natural-dyeing and fabric-etching workshop with Karen Hampton. "Because of her, I became more confident in my dyeing skills and started experimenting with different types of shibori." →

Vulnerability & Resilience 14 29" x 29"



One project tends to lead to the next for Regina. During the pandemic when the Black Lives Matter movement began, she started her "Americana Quilt" series. Collecting over 55 colors of flesh-toned fabrics, she designed geometric quilts based on traditional quilt patterns. "While in lockdown for over a year, I used plant materials from my backyard and kitchen to dye fabrics," she shares. "I started quilting together the hand-dyed fabrics with the solid flesh tones." When it was safe to return to thrift stores in person, she combined secondhand clothing that represented the Miami culture with the natural-dyed textiles. This series helped Regina through the pandemic and resulted from her research on Black Lives Matter, women artists and the women's movement, voting rights, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program.



*Americana Quilt 72 95" x 60" x ½"*



*Vulnerability & Resilience 13 63" x 47" x 6"*



*Untitled 7 53" x 32" x ½"*



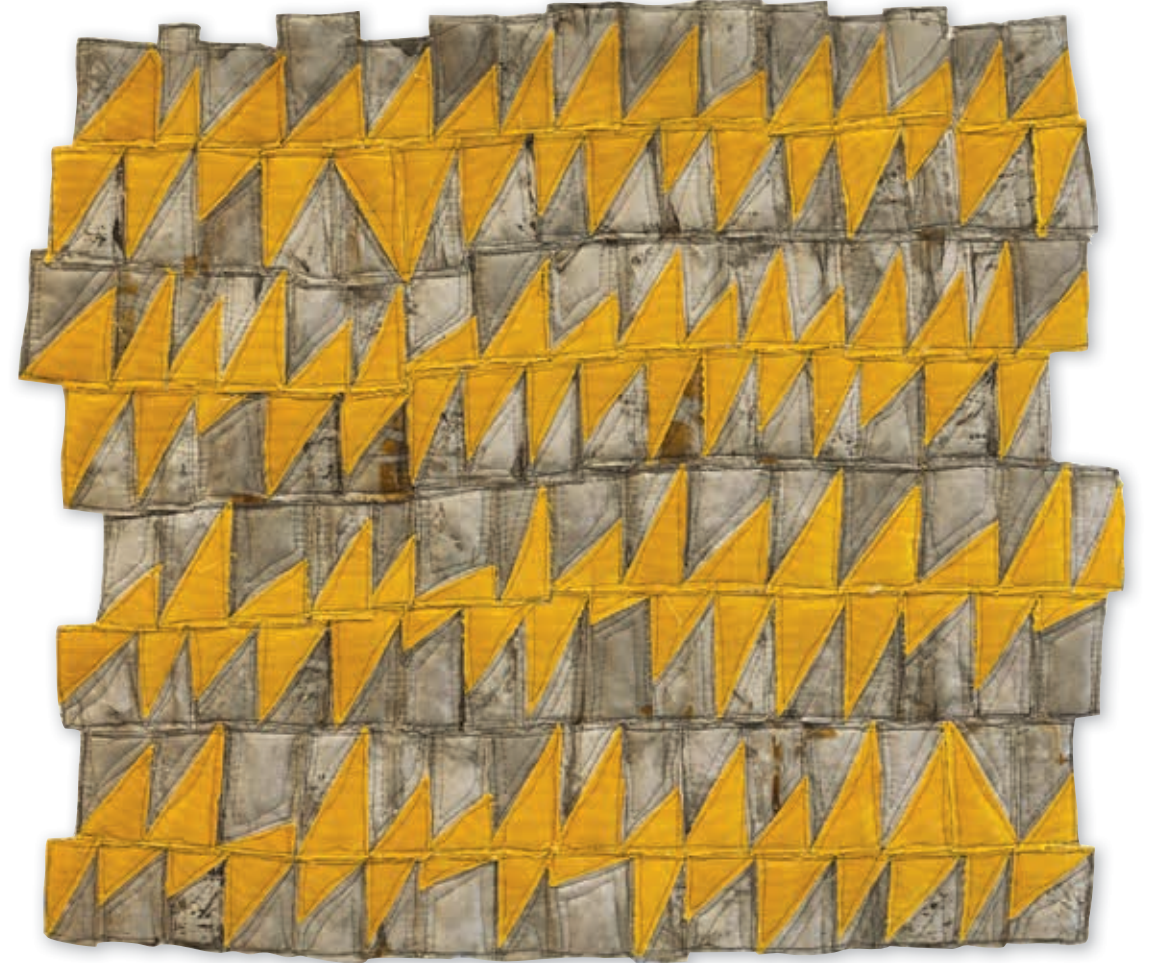
For the last 15 years, Regina has been married to a botanist, and together they have two little “bad” dogs (as she calls them), Bucket and Beanie, as well as a parrot, Petronilla. When asked what she does for fun outside of art quilting, she asked, “Does dyeing fabric count, or thinking and sketching out the next body of artwork?” Always thinking creatively, she does take breaks with her husband to travel, usually west to the deserts and mountains of Arizona and New Mexico. There, they hike, visit the botanical gardens, and see all types of art installations. During their latest adventure, they discovered Arcosanti, the Lightning Field, the Petrified Forest National Park, Desert Botanical Garden, and the Heard Museum to see Brenda Mallory’s exhibit, “The North Star Changes.” When she wasn’t well or was dealing with stressful things in her life, Regina found it difficult to focus on making art. But in 2019, she persevered through a hysterectomy and changed day jobs to better focus on herself, and she has been on fire ever since. →



*Glitter & Gold 11 36" x 59"*



*Pieced Landscape 2 (Corduroy 2) 29½" x 26½" x ½"*



*Pieced Landscape 6 (Annatto 3) 60" x 90"*



*Pieced Landscape 7 (Annatto 4) 90" x 72"*



Regina creates her masterpieces from her home studio. Back when they were looking at houses to purchase, one specific home caught their attention because the room adjoining the living room, previously a master bedroom, was an excellent size for a studio with a lot of natural light. She admits to recently taking over the living room as well, moving the bookcase to hide the fireplace but keeping a couch so the dogs can look out the window. She also installed an 8" x 9" pin wall and has a couple rolling carts filled with supplies that she can move back and forth. →



*Vulnerability & Resilience 2 34" x 31½"*

Her day typically starts at 6:30 a.m. when one or both dogs jump on her face to go outside and chase squirrels. Before there is studio time, there is coffee and the New York Times. “Most of the time, I try to get all the admin of being a self-employed artist out of the way first,” she says. “There are always applications and opportunities to research, and I am more clear-headed in the morning.” One exception is if she dreams about a quilt — then all bets are off and she focuses on that instead. The rest of the day is filled with dyeing, cutting, sewing, or sketching. Sometimes she plays dance music or turns on “Twin Peaks” while working, but lately she’s been listening to audiobooks, like “Ninth Street Women” by Mary Gabriel.

Regina doesn’t believe in creative blocks. If she doesn’t like something, she’ll cut it apart or try to push through it. If that doesn’t work, she might start a new project and return to the challenging one at a later date. Her future is full of exciting plans. In addition to the solo shows and artist residencies lined up in 2024 and 2025, she has the opportunity to make large installation pieces. “I am still looking at the landscape for architectural inspiration and Miami for its cultural diversity,” she reveals, as she continues on her ever-evolving art-making journey.

*To learn more about Regina Durante Jestrow, visit [reginajestrow.com](http://reginajestrow.com) and follow along on Instagram (@reginajestrow). She welcomes email at [regina@reginajestrow.com](mailto:regina@reginajestrow.com).*