

NEW AGE QUILTS

Portals, chaos theory, and mirror-mad images, from Austin artist Leslie Kell

by Michael Abedin



I'll stay with you if you'll stay with me | Double Vision Collection

Remember the quilts your Grandma (or maybe your great-Grandma) made from scraps of material? Every piece had a story; every scrap came from a dress that someone once wore, a curtain that hung in someone's house.

Digital images have scraps, too – part of a photo here, part of another image there, and pretty soon a pattern starts to emerge, and a primitive art form is transformed into a new medium,

It's the next chapter in the story – a New Age quilt, a quilt that exists in a different dimension, a quilt that you won't sleep under because it's a work of digital art. It's a juxtaposition of what you'd think of as something homey and warm and comfortable that helps you sleep, and something that's visually stimulating and creates just enough tension to wake you up.

It's a double vision, one that creates another layer to what we thought we knew – and, at the same time, keeps an eye on what could be.

$d(ft(x),ft(y)) > exp(\alpha t)d(x,y)$

Look closely, and you'll see that Leslie Kell adds butterflies to each of her New Age quilts, to symbolize the transformational power of the creative spirit. In mathematical chaos theory, sensitivity to initial conditions is popularly known as the "butterfly effect" – the idea that a butterfly flaps its wings in a far off ocean, and the final result is a tornado in Waco. (There might be some karma involved there, as well, being as how it's Waco – but that's another theory.)

The mathematics of chaos theory are sometimes interpreted to mean that order descends into chaos and chaos arises into order, in a cyclical manner – or, to put it another way, $d(ft(x),ft(y)) > exp(\alpha t)d(x,y)$.

Got it?

As far as a New Age quilt goes – well, a lot of the images that make up Leslie's

work start out as architecture, probably one of the most stalwart expressions of Order, with a capital "O". Pieces of the Alamo, Austin City Hall, the Texas Capitol building, Rice University, and various Austin downtown buildings are in there, all of them broken down into chaotic pieces and reassembled into new patterns – with some native plants thrown in, to boot.

Leslie calls her work mirror-mad images that exploit the color, texture, and patterns of the environmental elements she captures on her camera.

"The process involves selecting images and manipulating them into a pattern, and then rebuilding them into a representation of something else entirely. I start with a simplified geometric drawing of something – an eye, letters, a star, or a pattern. Then I go to my photo folder and select images based on color, texture, subject matter, or whatever moves me. A single piece might utilize six or more individual photos that I twist and turn and reflect into a composition."

It's all ups and downs and ins and outs, until the planes and layers create a mosaic. "The end result is what I call wow moments – kaleidoscopic mirrors that revolve around a portal to an abstract reality."

Okay, it's digital and it's cool – but is it art?

The final works are output on canvas using a ten-color process. Paint is added to create another level of texture and detail, and each are presented with 3D elements that represent a traditional wall hanging (not pictured here). "It starts as a print, but the process after the output makes each an original and unique work unto itself."

And all the stuff about digital art not being accepted as real art? "I really do believe that history will show that digital art will be a major art movement that will change the way we perceive and execute art for centuries to come."

We'll never go back, she says. "The rules have changed, just like the Impressionists shook things up. Now there are exhibitions popping up that feature cell phone photography and ipad art."

Leslie Kell is an artist and designer whose career has spanned more than twenty years in the Austin area. Her clientele run the gamut from individual collectors to nationally known corporations. She lives with her family in South Austin (of course). lkell@austin.rr.com (512) 917-0104 For exhibition schedules and a complete collection of her work, visit www.kelldesigns.com



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You are just a dreamer and I am just a dream | Reflections Collection

Leslie Kell has been invited to do a solo show at the prestigious Jung Center in Houston in September. Her works can be found in venues and juried shows around the state. She's also the cover artist for *Austin All Natural*, which has given her the opportunity to, among other experiences, receive an email saying, "Love the flamingoes. Can you put some sunglasses on that turkey?"

UPCOMING SHOWS:

- APRIL, 2011: Featured Artist • Studio2 Gallery • Austin, TX
- APRIL 30: Sunset Valley Arts Festival
- JUNE 2011: Solo show • Vino 100 • Round Rock, TX
- JULY 2011: Solo show • North Hills Gallery • Austin, TX
- SEPTEMBER 2011: Solo show • Jung Center • Houston TX