

orary style in antique art, quilts

While some of the Amish quilts would "come off" better and stood the test of time more than others, it would be more or less accidental, whereas contemporary art was more intellectually planned. "However," said Schenker, "there were ladies in the communities with better sensibilities than other ladies. The best quilts are made by individual women who like to control precisely what they are doing."

He speculated that the women who made their nice quilts thought of them as large rectangular areas in the same manner an artist thinks of a painting. "Then only when they used them functionally would they lose some of the overall effect that they had achieved in the original conception," said Schenker. "As soon as you put them on the bed, parts of them disappear," he explained.

Approaching the Amish is not always an easy thing to do, but Allen and Schenker have been able to maintain an easy relationship with them.

"If you go in casually and slowly the Amish seem to entertain you with a degree of ease. We never intruded upon them. We'd get recommendations from one person to another or someone would send us a card from the Amish community indicating that they had a quilt and we might want to take a look at it. We never forced ourselves in any situation," Schenker said.

then at the New Gallery of Contemporary Art in Cleveland, the Northwestern University in Chicago and at various antique shows.

Their antique show exhibits had great

responses and several were covered by almost every major newspaper in the state. In August, 1977, Del Donahue of NBC spent an afternoon with his television crew at Allen's and Schenker's

The majority of the quilts that the Amish are making today resemble the beautiful antique quilts very little. Because of the rising number of Amish who want to release themselves from the



Photo by Mark Caplan

A Mennonite 19th century "Blazing Star" quilt is displayed by Carl Allen (l) and Leon Schenker (r).



Photo by Mark Caplan

Carl Allen discusses similarity between abstract art (note painting on wall) and antique quilts.

Carl Allen explained how, because they cannot possibly take the time to do all the searching for the quilts themselves with their limited personal acquaintance with the communities, they use "pickers" to help them in their search. These "pickers" are men who have known the Amish for 30 to 40 years and are trusted by them. They keep their eyes and ears open for possibilities and are familiar with what Leon and Carl want. "There are very dry times even for the pickers," said Allen.

Schenker and Allen have had several exhibits of their antique quilts. They had one in Ashland to begin with, and

Bar and Diamond Gallery and then did a five-minute segment on them in the six o'clock news, with which they were very pleased.

Regrettably, Allen and Schenker can't really give exhibits any longer because they have been unable to hold onto the quilts they get because of the strong demand for them. And now, it is getting harder and harder to find the old, traditional and physically perfect quilts.

burden of their tradition in order to make out financially, they are catering to what people will buy. If someone wants a quilt with a white background and little Amish buggies all over it, they'll make it.

"They'll design for you. It is a little bit unhappy in terms of retention of culture," said Schenker.

Carl Allen has one word to say about the new quilts "Ugly!"



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