

Quilt collector showcases his best

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

Bert Kronmiller, an art advocate from Bend, has been collecting quilts for years. He purchases the quilts from all over Central Oregon and on occasion wanders east to Amish country in Pennsylvania to find the perfect quilt that catches his eye.

“The artistry, myriad of fabrics, and geometric complexity drew me to start collecting,” Kronmiller told *The Nugget*. “To me, the Amish quilts are the gold standard for quilt making.”

Five unique quilts from Kronmiller’s collection will be on display at FivePine Lodge and Conference Center through the month of July.

Kronmiller became interested in fiber arts as a teenager and majored in visual arts at the University of Oregon.

“In the late ’70s my sister-in-law and I visited a quilt shop near Whitefish, Montana during one of our family reunions. And I fell in love with quilts,” said Kronmiller. “But just started collecting them about eight years ago.”

As an art collector for 25 years, he focuses on contemporary Western and Native

American art. He collects paintings, sculptures, ceramics, drawings, and quilts.

“I have a huge art collection. I sort of had an indirect relationship to art being in marketing and advertising,” Kronmiller said.

When Kronmiller moved to Central Oregon from California in 2011, his sister-in-law introduced him to the SOQS.

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“For me it was like being a kid in a candy store and I went bonkers. I make purchases every year,” he said.

A few years ago, Kronmiller, an Arts Central board member, met Tracy Alexander, Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show’s administrative manager, who at that time was in her last year as Art Station manager for Arts Central in Bend.

“My first impression of Bert as a staunch supporter of the arts came when, after his

first tour of the Art Station, he bought a GoPro camera for use in kids’ programming and promotion. I knew that Bert was proactive when it came to supporting art education,” Alexander said.

Arts Central, Central Oregon’s arts education and advocacy organization, closed in 2016.

Alexander joined SOQS as the administrative manager two years ago in a part-time position. Alexander is also a quilter who practices in the Hawaiian applique style of hand-quilting. In the summer of 2015 Alexander unexpectedly met up with Kronmiller at Sisters Coffee Co. while exploring Sisters with her family.

“I told him I was working for SOQS, and we chatted about the importance of quilting as a unique type of fiber art that not only looks beautiful, but tells a story. Bert purchased a quilt that day and I was so grateful for his appreciation for fiber arts,” she said.

Alexander saw him again last year at the SOQS purchasing more quilts and realized what a growing collection he had.

“This year, when Jeanette



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Art advocate Bert Kronmiller showcased Amish quilt collection in Sisters.

Pilak, SOQS executive director, suggested that we show Bert’s collection at FivePine Lodge, I thought it could tell a unique story ... from a collector’s point of view,” Alexander said.

Kronmiller has a few favorites out of his quilt collection on display.

“I have one of my Amish quilts, Lone Star Commons, that is a large quilt,” said Kronmiller. “I find the simplicity of their culture fascinating.”

Kronmiller also collects quilts from fabric artist Nancy Cotton, who is represented at Sunriver Art Gallery. She is well known for her geometric quilts. As a retired math teacher, she always loved geometry and patterns in nature.

“One of my Nancy Cotton quilts on display, ‘Sunflower Illusions,’ reminds me of colorful sunflowers and I bought it to complement my painting by Nelson Boren, a Western watercolorist,” he said.



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