

# Memories of Migration

## Event Report

Partner: Queens Library: Queens Memory, Fresh Meadows Community Library, Children's Learning and Discovery Center, and the Older Adults Program
Staff Name: Lori Wallach, Natalie Milbrodt, Karen Fitzgerald, Lynn Cole, Madlyn Schneider
Event Name: Memories of Migration: Making a Talking Family Story Quilt: Workshop #4
Event Date: October 14, 2017
<p>Event Description: This session marked the shift of the project to the design and construction of the quilts themselves. Karen Fitzgerald, our teaching artist, led the session, drawing from her extensive experience conducting quilting classes, many of them at Queens Library branches.</p> <p>Before the participants arrived, Karen set up the room with sewing machines and ironing stations, and hung up photos of various types of quilt designs. She also brought and laid out an impressive array of sewing supplies, fabric remnants, buttons, sequins, etc. to share with the quilters. On the room's whiteboard, she outlined the goals of the session: to explain the applique technique for quilt design and how the electronic buttons might be worked into the design; how to create pockets on the quilt's back for the components and a rod pocket for hanging the quilt; and how to finish the edges.</p> <p>As the participants gathered around a table, Karen discussed these topics and demonstrated various techniques while the quilters watched, and some took notes. She also showed them how to use Wonder Under, a specially treated paper that allows fabric appliques to be ironed on to the quilts instead of requiring extensive hand sewing. After explaining these points, Karen worked with each participant individually. Depending on their prior experience and the time they had spent working on the projects at home, the quilters were at very different places in their processes, but Karen easily addressed their concerns. Several participants, for example, asked her to teach them how to use the sewing machine, while another had brought a nearly done portion of her quilt and had questions about batting material.</p> <p>The second hour of the afternoon was dedicated to such individual instruction and independent work; in many cases, the more experienced quilters helped the beginners select fabrics and accessories following the design principles Karen had explained.</p> <p>The session ran two hours, from 2:30 to 4:30 pm.</p>
Memories of Migration Activities: Every participant clearly drew upon the themes of their interviews for their quilt designs. They were very creative in their efforts to visually represent their countries of origin, and the New York skyline was a common theme in almost all the quilts.
Number of Participants: 5 registered attendees, all adults



Comments and/or Concerns: We were struck by the disparity among our participants' progress at the start of this session. While we expected people to come with design ideas and fabric they wished to use, everyone was at a different place. Two participants, for example, brought detailed sketches of their complete designs and some pieces already assembled, and a third attendee needed only a little help to finish off one section of her quilt. The other two group members, who had no experience with sewing projects, were still at the point of generating ideas and selecting fabric. Our team felt a bit helpless to offer advice, but Karen easily switched gears and met each participant where they were in the process. We were a little concerned, by the day's end, that the beginners might have been overwhelmed by all the tasks presented and by the faster progress of the more experienced participants; we hope everyone will complete the project.

Analysis of Event: We were grateful to have an accomplished teaching artist such as Karen to lead this portion of our series. She was able to explain both design principles and practical techniques in a way that even the least experienced members of the group could understand. Her generous sharing of supplies, supplemented by the sewing equipment and other items on hand at Fresh Meadows from previous programs, inspired many ideas among our participants and gave the less-prepared a place to start. Although we wonder if some of the participants are being too ambitious for the time remaining in our series -- while others are perhaps lagging behind -- the enthusiasm and hands-on work of today's workshop were encouraging. All the participants will need to spend significant time at home to complete their quilts.

