

The International Honor Quilt at the University of Louisville

by Shelly Zegart

I first met Judy Chicago in the mid 80's, when she came to Louisville to participate in a NEA funded collaborative art project with the Louisville Visual Art Association, called the *Hot Flash Fan*. In 2013, through a series of events I learned that TTF was interested in gifting the *Honor Quilt* to an appropriate institution, and after visiting Judy and Donald in Belen and seeing the *Honor Quilt* and its documentation, offered to help them place the project. Based on the many contacts I had developed in the quilt, art and visual culture world, I thought that the University of Louisville and its Hite Art Institute would be the perfect venue for this project.

When I proposed this idea to the University of Louisville they were immediately interested and excited at the prospect; meetings were held, proposals written and we were off to the races at a speed like running in the Kentucky Derby (it seemed to me). From the outset, Provost Shirley Willihnganz, together with John Begley, Curator of the Hite Art Gallery, wanted to go to New Mexico to meet Judy, Donald and Judy Kovler in person to present and discuss proposals for the gifting and care of the *Honor Quilt*. We all met in Belen this summer and were able to set – and meet - a very fast track for completing the gift agreement.

A key factor in the University's excitement about this gift is the *Quilt's* multi-disciplinary nature and educational potential through its crossovers among art, social history, visual culture, women's studies, the humanities and many other academic fields. Within the art department, especially its curatorial studies program and in tandem with other departments and colleges, the University is perfectly positioned to maximize the potential of this gift. Provost Willihnganz noted: "Owning the Honor Quilt represents a unique opportunity for the University of Louisville. The University's goal is to make the *International Honor Quilt* available on a permanent and ongoing basis for research, exhibition and instruction to the university and its students, to the Louisville community and to the national and international community of scholars and educational institutions."

I couldn't be more proud of my hometown university with their forward thinking about this project, the enthusiasm of the Hite Art Institute and its leaders, the collaboration of the many departments who had to sign off on this acquisition and everyone who has gotten us to this exciting place in less than 7 months.

The quilts arrive in Louisville the first week of November. You can be sure we will be there when the boxes come off the truck.