

Jonathan Holstein



*Collector, historian, author, co-organizer of the 1971 Whitney Museum Exhibit
Inducted in 1979 at the Continental Quilting Congress, Arlington, Virginia
Research Associate: Julia A. Berg*

Jonathan Holstein's interest in early American life and its artifacts led him, with Honoree Gail van der Hoof, to acquire a large quilt collection, mainly from Pennsylvania and the New England states. He found quilts to be similar to modern art and wanted to share their collection with the general public in an art museum that would display their quilts on the walls—like paintings.

In June of 1971, 62 pieced quilts from this collection were placed on display at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. The success of the exhibit was great, causing the six-week exhibition to be extended to mid-September. The publicity and favorable responses from art critics inspired other museums to host quilt exhibitions curated by Holstein, across America, in Europe and Japan. His research resulted in the publication of *The Pieced Quilt: An American Design Tradition* in 1973. He continues to write and lecture on quilts, their aesthetics and their social history, and wrote the introduction and quilt commentary for one of the nation's first state quilt surveys, *Kentucky Quilts 1800-1900*.

On the 20th anniversary of the Whitney exhibition, Holstein and Shelly Zegart organized a symposium and exhibits, *Louisville Celebrates the American Quilt*, where the original Whitney exhibition was reinstalled. He chronicled this ground-breaking exhibit in *Abstract Design in American Quilts* and is an advisor to the International Quilt Study Center, University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He appears in the book *88 Leaders in the Quilt World Today*.