

2009 Hinckley Lecture

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Please join us in Fall 2010 for the 11th Annual
Hinckley Lecture, to be given by the
2010 John S. Hinckley Fellow, selected for
outstanding teaching, service, and scholarship at
Weber State University.

<http://weber.edu/hinckley>

10th Annual Hinckley Lecture

Dr. Judy Elsley

**Honors Director
and
Professor of English**

**2009 John S. Hinckley
Fellow**

Text and Textile

October 14, 2009
1:00 PM
Hetzel-Hoellein Room
(Special Collections)
Stewart Library



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Dr. Judy Elsley

Text and Textile

I've spent much of my academic career moving back and forth between quilts and writing: I make quilts and I also write about them. A non-quilter might ask how anyone could spend 25 years writing about quilts; I might as well have focused on lace doilies or chain saw bears. Harmless enough stuff, but build a career out of it? It's amazing what topics pass for dissertations these days, and while we're at it, does it really count as academic? Well, yes it does, as I hope to explain.

My lecture will focus on three topics, all of them making a connection between quilting and what I've done professionally for the 20 years I've worked at Weber. I'll begin by briefly explaining the significance of quilting in American culture, as that has been the focus of most of my academic publications. My goal is to make a connection between scholarship and quilts, answering, I hope, the question of whether or not quilts count as an appropriate subject for academic research.

Second, I'd like to tell the story of my own involvement with quilts. I teach the theory and practice of autobiography, and I've published a number of autobiographical essays, so this is a fitting way to explain my passion for quilts.

Finally, I want to draw a comparison between the process of making a quilt and the business of writing a text. Whether I'm writing about quilts or working on an autobiographical essay, I go through a creative process that parallels what I do when I make a quilt.

Biography

Judy Elsley was born and raised in England. After moving to the U.S. in 1979, she completed an M.A. at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas in 1985, and a Ph.D. in English Literature at the University of Arizona in Tucson in 1990. She has worked at Weber State since 1990, teaching in the English Department and doing a series of administrative jobs, directing Writing Across the Curriculum, First Year Experience, the Bachelor of Integrated Studies Program, and most recently, the Honors Program.

Quilting has been the subject of many of Judy's published articles. She has written about quilt related literature, quilts in contemporary culture, and the place of academics in quilt scholarship. She has also co-edited a book of academic essays on quilting: *Quilt Culture: Tracing the Patterns*, published by the University of Missouri Press in 1994. A revised version of her dissertation was published by Peter Lang Press under the title, *Quilts as Text(ile)s*.

As well as writing about quilts, Judy publishes personal essays, including *Getting Comfortable*, a book of essays about living in the American West, published by Jumping Cholla Press in 1997. She has published 16 peer reviewed articles and essays, and contributed 4 chapters to books.

Judy is an avid quiltmaker. She creates complex cloth, a process of dyeing, overdyeing, discharging and printing on fabric. She then cuts up the cloth to make quilts of her own design. She has developed and taught a class focused on dyeing and quilting as a creative process. To see some of her work, as well as her students' quilts, visit her website at: <https://www.weber.edu/jelsley>.