

May19

Timeout for Art: Going Nowhere

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I had the title – “Going Nowhere” – for this quilt-like piece long before I had even started it. The patterns are made of the little machine-cut bits that, when removed from packaging, leave a hole that is used to hang the merchandise.

Every day at the hardware, whether putting away freight or tidying aisles I'd accumulate several of the bits of shaped, stiff paper. Often, along with other trash that I collected over the course of my shift, it was forgotten until I emptied my pockets at the end of the day. The little basket that sits on top of my clothes dryer for collecting coins and other incidentals was soon overflowing with these little cut-out shapes. So, I started collecting them in jars, thinking that I might find a purpose for them.

The mere fact that I had such huge quantities of the little divots, collected two or three or maybe up to a dozen at a time, made a statement, of sorts. It spoke to me of all of the days, days upon days, turning into many years, that I have spent at that hardware store. In a job that doesn't thrill me. Doing menial labor. Going nowhere.

Time is an underlying theme that runs through my work: calendars, and the many ways we mark the passage of time. Slowly, the idea of a quilt came to me as a way to develop this idea. The grid, for its relation to the calendar, and its static solidity. Within it, repetitive elements with slight variations.

First, I cut heavy, painted papers into squares. I marked each square, from corner to corner, with an X. I arranged the shapes on top of the squares. Finally, I glued them onto a large (4' x 4') piece of plywood.

There were problems. The squares tended to curl up on the edges, and didn't lay flat. Some corners didn't line up as they should have. Some of the little elements delaminated when I applied glazes. Finally, I gave up on it.

From the first glimmer of an idea to the point where I abandoned the project (and I don't give up easily!), I had probably devoted ten years, off and on, to this piece. The title proved more accurate than I ever imagined...it was, in fact, going nowhere!