

## "To Honor & Comfort"

Margaret Wood stitches together layers of fabric and layers of time to create a contemporary art quilts that reinterpret American Indian traditions. Wood brings her Navajo/Seminole heritage to bear as she transforms the Seminole tradition of patchwork into fiber arts of distinction. Although not a weaver in the traditional Navajo Way, Wood weaves together stories past and present to translate timeless messages into contemporary thought.

Margaret Wood describes Rusty Maize as a crazy quilt with a message". The quilt developed from a collection of fabrics she accumulated over a decade that all featured the color rust. That rusty color is also the tone of the southwestern landscape where Wood grew up, as the deep red-brown skin of the Native peoples of her homeland. Rusty Maize reinterprets the Navajo wedding basket form as well as its counterpart in Pima culture, the man in the maze basket. Both basketry forms embody the concept of a pathway- a pathway to the light, to the center, the good path, the righteous path, the middle path.

Wood talks of the quilt as a kind of map. The viewers enter the path-representative of the path of life-at the upper left corner along the black, white, and red stairstep pattern of the Navajo wedding basket design.

In traversing the path, the way becomes less distinct as the colors disintegrate and the pathway forks. For wood, this symbolizes the choices that must be made in life actually spiraling upward. when there is not always a clear, strong path to follow. Through many permutations, the path leads back to where it began, but we sense that his path is probably not just a circle but a spiral. Though the path seems to lead back to the beginning, it is In its title, Rusty Maize also reminds us of the symbol of maize-corn, the life-sustaining grain of this Western Hemisphere that links so many of the indigenous cultures of Americas.

Corn images point the way, leading us in the four directions from south to east, north to west. Each corn symbol is designed from patchwork squares of red, yellow, black, and white, colors that in combination simulates flesh tone. Thus, the corn images remind us of our relationship to one another in this journey of life. In the center of Rusty maize a montage includes a tree of life design. Symbolic variations of the tree of life occur in many cultures throughout the world. However represented, the tree of life teaches the strength of walking the middle path, in between good and evil., with integrity and balance in harmony with others. Rusty maize is truly a crazy quilt with a message for all of humanity.