

Left: Nancy, Surendar, and Naina at the International Folk Art Market.
Right: Nancy and Patricia Stoddard viewing a Ralli Quilt.



Editor's Letter

Art can express the idea that we belong to a community. This past summer I was, without a doubt, reminded that a community brought together by art can be as vast as the whole world.

This gratifying revelation struck me during Folk Art Extravaganza, our joint *SchoolArts/CRIZMAC* seminar in Santa Fe, New Mexico, this past July. Our thirty-seven eager participants had joined us for almost a week of hands-on activities, museum visits, speakers, and the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market.

Our special guests, though, turned out to be the highlight of our seminar. These were Pakistani quilter Naina Valasai and her husband, Surendar. Naina was representing Ralli Quilts, a cooperative of women from her remote village in Pakistan. Though Ralli Quilts has been represented for many years at the market, this was the first time one of the quilters has been able to come.

Patricia Stoddard, a modest woman who has made such a difference in the lives of these quilters by promoting the sale of their work, brought Naina and Surendar to meet us. Naina didn't speak English, but her husband did, so he translated for her.

This trip was the first time Naina had ever been out of her rural, isolated village and the first time she had been outside her home unveiled. I don't think the life experiences between Naina and our group could have been more different, but that did not matter. We were a community brought together by quilts and an understanding of the

need to make something by hand. We belonged together.

Prior to Naina's visit, our members each began a personal quilt square as a souvenir of the seminar and our time in Santa Fe. We had chosen the quilt square as a project because of the number and variety of fiber arts we knew would be at the market. On our final day, after we had experienced the Folk Art Market, we were displaying everyone's quilt squares when Naina and Surendar returned to say goodbye.

Naina was very curious about the finished quilt squares and looked at every one. Later I heard from Surendar that "Naina was surprised that highly educated ladies, in Western costumes, too, do the quilting, which in our part of world is considered the job of only uneducated women."

Though we wondered how Naina would be changed upon her return to Pakistan, we knew we would never be the same. She opened our eyes to another world and broadened our community. We will never forget her.

Learn more about Naina, Ralli Quilts, and how you can help the quilters whose homes have been destroyed in the recent floods in Pakistan at ralliquilt.com; to learn more about the 2012 Folk Art Extravaganza, go to page 36; to learn more about the International Folk Art Market, visit www.folkartmarket.org.

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Nancy Walkup