

**CRAFTING THE CREATIVE LIFE: THE  
RHETORICAL DIMENSIONS OF SELECTED  
AUSTRALIAN QUILTERS' MAGAZINES 1988-2005**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis answers the question of how magazines produced for Australian quilters respond rhetorically to their readers as members of communities bound by a specialised form of creative practice. It does so primarily by applying methods of rhetorical criticism to three commercially produced, newsstand magazines: *Down Under Quilts*, *Australian Patchwork & Quilting* and *Australian Quilters Companion*. The thesis augments a developing field of scholarship on Australian special-interest magazines and acknowledges, through its methodology, the essentially rhetorical (in its simplest sense, persuasive) function of magazines that respond to and shape communities of readers.

As rhetorical artefacts, the three magazines are derivative of other types of publication yet are generically distinctive. In both respects, this is seen partly through the magazines' juxtaposition of instruction and other text into which are embedded narratives of quilts and quilters. These narratives, over time, display a degree of coherence and believability in their shaping of the archetypal accomplished quilter with which readers are encouraged to identify or to which they are encouraged to aspire. Other distinctive and dominant aspects of the magazines, both verbal and visual, contribute to the clear yet complex picture of the quilter that emerges from the magazines, and these, along with narrative elements, are considered in the thesis through three strands of rhetorical criticism (generic, traditional and narrative).

Several rhetorical strategies are identified and discussed in the thesis. Prominent among them is the magazines' simulation of personable social spaces within which common ground is established with readers, and readers are inducted into the behavioural and attitudinal norms of their community. While egalitarian, these spaces also suggest continua – craft to art, amateur to professional – along which readers may be persuaded to advance. These spaces reflect upon the nature and meaning of creativity, which is shaped as a superior yet universally possessed faculty that, when exercised, yields rewards both material and otherwise; however, quilters typically face impediments to

creative expression, and these are aired and exploited by the magazines in setting communal norms. The thesis considers how narrative, lexical and visual components of the magazines respond to readers in these ways, and the rhetorical implications.

## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Rosemary Williamson

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