

Maggie Geselbracht's Quilt Projects 2007-2014

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In addition to her many talents, Maggie Geselbracht was a skilled and passionate quilter. We have selected a group of her works to honor her creative ability and the role quilting played in her life and in her journey with cancer.

Over the years she made many wonderful pieces for her family and friends including table runners, hanging quilts, baby quilts, and balls. For Christmas 2007 she made the quilted shields (displayed here) for her sons Zach and Kieran.

We have framed the nine Journal Quilts Maggie made from 2007 through 2009 and one made in 2014. She first learned of Journal Quilts with her friend and fellow quilter Susan Mikota at a quilt show in Portland. Her sister Catherine also recalls the Chicago quilt show that several of the "Geselquilts" members attended, where they saw an exhibition of The Journal Quilt Project. "The quilt panels were displayed in configurations of nine per quilter. The quilter could portray any journey, and many, many of them dealt with cancer-fighting experience." The Journal Quilt Project was not a contest or competition, but a way to record life experience and experiment with new color, image, compositions, techniques and materials to foster creative development.

Maggie began to make Journal Quilt panels in 2007 when she returned to Reed after a sabbatical. From 2008 through 2009, after she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma again, she created eight panels inspired by her journey through chemo treatment, her stem cell transplant and recovery. In 2014 she made the panel "The Power of Water", inspired by a card from a friend Nora McLaughlin, as she faced a second stem cell transplant. We have gathered Maggie's Caring Bridge journal entries about each panel and displayed them next to each work.

From 2013 through 2014 Maggie made a table runner and a stunning set of six squares intended for a quilt. This work was inspired from a Jinny Beyer pattern and border print cloth Maggie loved. She created her own color combinations and patterns based on these. We framed the six squares to honor her recent creative work. After the memorial Maggie's sisters will complete the quilt. The table runner was completed by Susan Mikota and will be used in the memorial services.

Re-entry

Designed: May 2007 in Central Park, New York City on a Post-It while Kieran played on the playground.
Constructed: July–September, 2007

I designed this quilt to illustrate and work through my conflicting emotions as I faced the return to life after sabbatical. I have entitled the piece Re-entry 2007. The swirling purple, green, and black background represents the years before this sabbatical and the swirling array of competing demands for my time and attention both personally and professionally. The beautiful periwinkle blue batik represents the serenity, tranquility, and creativity of the sabbatical year, seemingly floating above the swirling background. Note that the serenity is composed of fractured fragments recognizing that peace of mind did not come easily but was carefully stitched together as personal and professional challenges were overcome and balance was achieved during the sabbatical year. As the year drew to a close, I felt perched on the edge of a precipice, beginning to spiral down into the vortex of “normal life,” the black hole in the middle. The bits of orange peeking out were originally meant to represent some light or insight peeking through. But my friend and colleague, Kim, immediately named the orange as an obvious symbol of latent anger at the return to the more demanding aspects of my job. Hmm...I hadn't thought of that. The serene blue border makes a link to my previous sabbatical and the 7-year cycle is represented by the 7 lines of quilting around this border and the abstract 7 at the bottom. Of course now, faced with my new challenge, the black hole takes on new meaning in this design. I am fascinated by how this has played out. Hopefully my next design will not be so “dark”.



Darkness

*"I will love the light for it will show me the way,
yet I will endure the darkness for it will show me the stars."*
-Og Mandino

Rather than go for the obvious, a starry night theme, I wanted to explore the inner darkness and turmoil that we all face, and the light that results from our endurance. My inner darkness is my ongoing battle with cancer and the uncertainty, fear, stress, and emotional pain that emanates from this challenge for me and for my loved ones. And yet, this darkness has also shown me incredible light in my life, and I wanted to celebrate that! The song "Orange Sky" happened to be playing on my iTunes when I listened to the fateful voicemail message from my doctor with my most recent diagnosis and triggered my descent into this chapter of darkness. Poignantly, the lyrics also describe the "stars" that have pulled me through this, my brothers and sisters, both literally and figuratively.
July 2008

Orange Sky

By Alexi Murdoch

Well I had a dream
I stood beneath an orange sky
Yes I had a dream
I stood beneath an orange sky
With my brother standing by
With my brother standing by
I said Brother, you know you know
It's a long road we've been walking on
Brother you know it is you know it is
Such a long road we've been walking on

And I had a dream
I stood beneath an orange sky
With my sister standing by
With my sister standing by
I said Sister, here is what I know now
Here is what I know now
Goes like this...
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, in your love, in your love

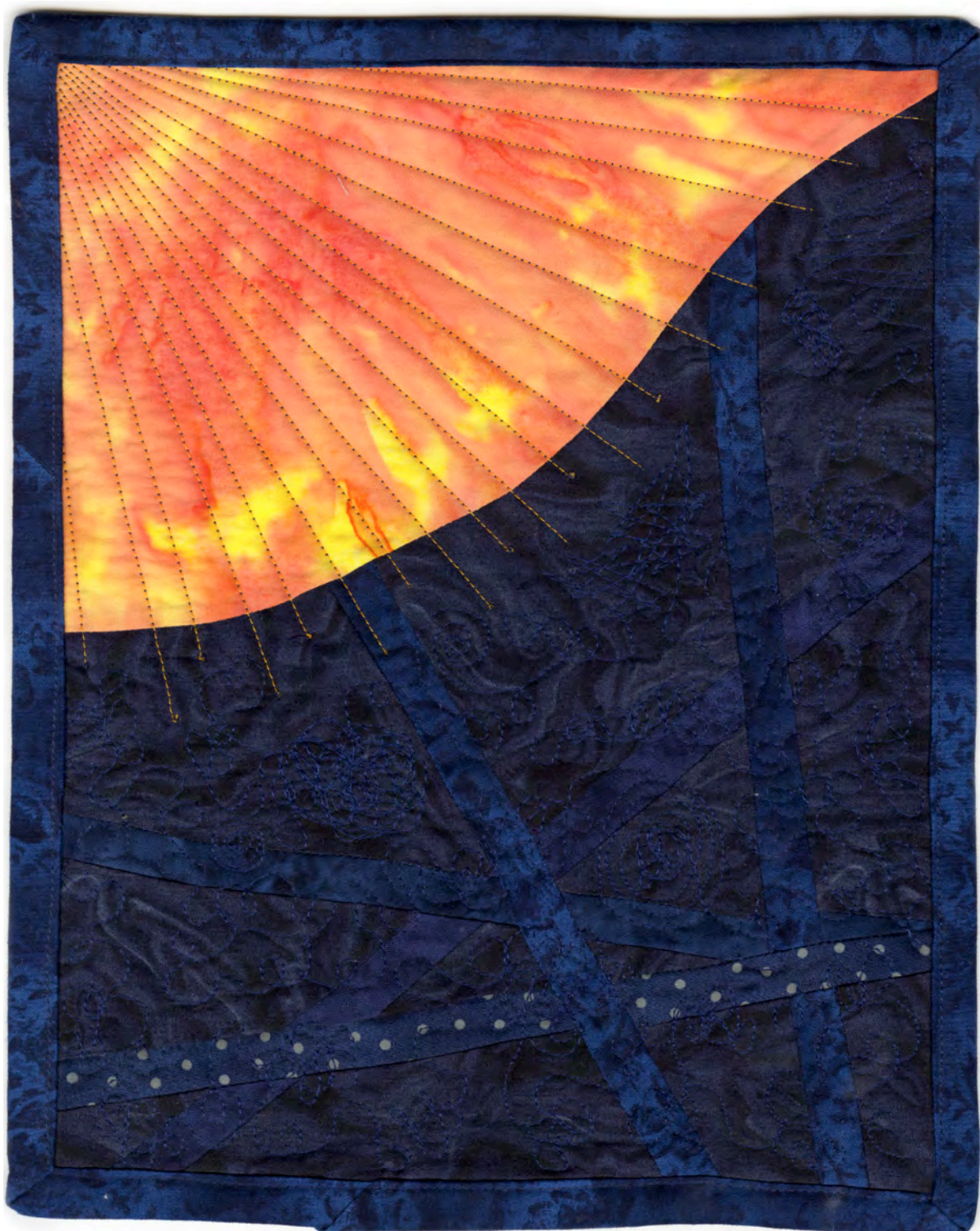
But sister you know I'm so weary
And you know sister
My hearts been broken
Sometimes, sometimes
My mind is too strong to carry on
Too strong to carry on

When I am alone
When I've thrown off the weight of this crazy stone
When I've lost all care for the things I own

That's when I miss you,
that's when I miss you, that's when
I miss you
You who are my home
You who are my home
And here is what I know now
Here is what I know now
Goes like this...

In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, my salvation lies
In your love, in your love, in your love

Well I had a dream
I stood beneath an orange sky
Yes I had a dream
I stood beneath an orange sky
With my brother and my sister standing by
With my brother and my sister standing by
With my brother and my sister standing by



Temptation

“I generally avoid temptation, unless I can’t resist it.”

-Mae West

Temptation is... gorgeous fabric that I could not resist buying to match the challenge fabric (bottom red/black piece), even if my resolve was to design only from my stash. Temptation is... cutting deep curves even if it causes wrinkles and puckers in the background of our lives. Nothing that a bit of steam and pressure can't smooth out in the end! Temptation is... a winding, ever-diverging path of interests and passions that clamor for my attention and my time.

Some additional thoughts on my design:

The technique of the month was free-form curved piecing. I had in my mind the winding path of temptation. After completing the design however, what leapt out at me was something more primal, emanating from the molten center of the earth, in some directions, erupting in fiery splendor. After thinking about this some more, this image relates as well for temptation springs from passion and fire smoldering within us. May 2008



Silence

“There is no need to go to India or anywhere else to find peace. You will find that deep place of silence right in your room, your garden or even your bathtub.”

-Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

For me, that deep place of silence is swimming under water, whether in a pool, a mountain lake, or the ocean. Surrounded by bubbles, and the wonderful feeling of my hair floating free, I am at peace. When I heard the challenge word, I knew immediately this was the image I wanted to convey.

Some additional thoughts on my design:

The technique of the month was raw edge appliqué and collage. I was not too fond of this technique when it was demonstrated, so my challenge was “breaking the rules” and not using the technique. The challenge fabric was also a print in oranges and reds, which did not fit my water theme. So again, I challenged myself to “bend the rules” in this case, buying the same print in blues (the lower left piece in the corner). June 2008



Chompity Chomp Chomp!

Here is my journal quilt for this phase of my journey, entitled "Chompity Chomp Chomp!" The design was inspired by a goofy image I found on the intertubes by Googling macrophage. It made Zach laugh, which made me laugh. :-) My lymphoproliferative disorder is represented by all of the "cells" that I fussy cut out of some cool fabric. Although it is probably hard to see with this magnification, a lot of these cells are "labeled" on their cell surface with the CD-20 protein, or what I imagine it might look like in thread. And then many of these are tagged with Rituxan, a monoclonal antibody (everyone knows these are shaped like Y's) stitched in a luxurious sky blue rayon thread. There are also a few Rituxans floating around in the intercellular medium. I chose the luxurious, silky thread for the Rituxan as it is quite a pricey little drug as I am learning from my insurance statements! These labeled cells are then signaled for destruction by the macrophage, and since Mn is somehow involved in the macrophage and all good inorganic chemists know that Mn(II) is pink, I have added some pink Mn nodules to the surface of the macrophage. A whimsical response to this part of my treatment perhaps. I am dedicating this piece to the memory of Dr. Keith Hansen who figured out I had the lymphoproliferative disorder, and because focusing on the busy work of putting this together helped me work through my grief at his loss.

To continue along the quilting thread, I spent Friday afternoon at the NW Quilting Expo. I was truly inspired and awed by the amazing artists that were represented in the show and of course, enjoyed some fabric retail therapy at all the vendors. Isn't this the real reason we go to quilt shows? I received several compliments on my blue turbanesque head covering (quilters spot great fabric). And one vendor who was a breast cancer survivor asked if I was going through treatment and wished me luck. She had a great line: It's not over until the fat lady sings....and I don't plan on doing any singing anytime soon! September 27, 2009

Chompity Chomp Chomp

This journal quilt, which I made in July 2009 is entitled Chompity Chomp Chomp! My lymphoproliferative disorder is represented by all of the "cells" that I fussy cut out of some cool fabric. Although it is probably hard to see with this magnification, a lot of these cells are "labeled" on their cell surface with the CD-20 protein, or what I imagine it might look like in thread. And then many of these are tagged with Rituxan, a monoclonal antibody (everyone knows these are shaped like Y's) stitched in a luxurious sky blue rayon thread. There are also a few Rituxans floating around in the intercellular medium. These labeled cells are then signaled for destruction by the macrophage, and since Mn is somehow involved in the macrophage, and all good inorganic chemists know that Mn(II) is pink, I have added some pink Mn nodules to the surface of the macrophage. A whimsical response to this part of my treatment perhaps. July 29, 2013

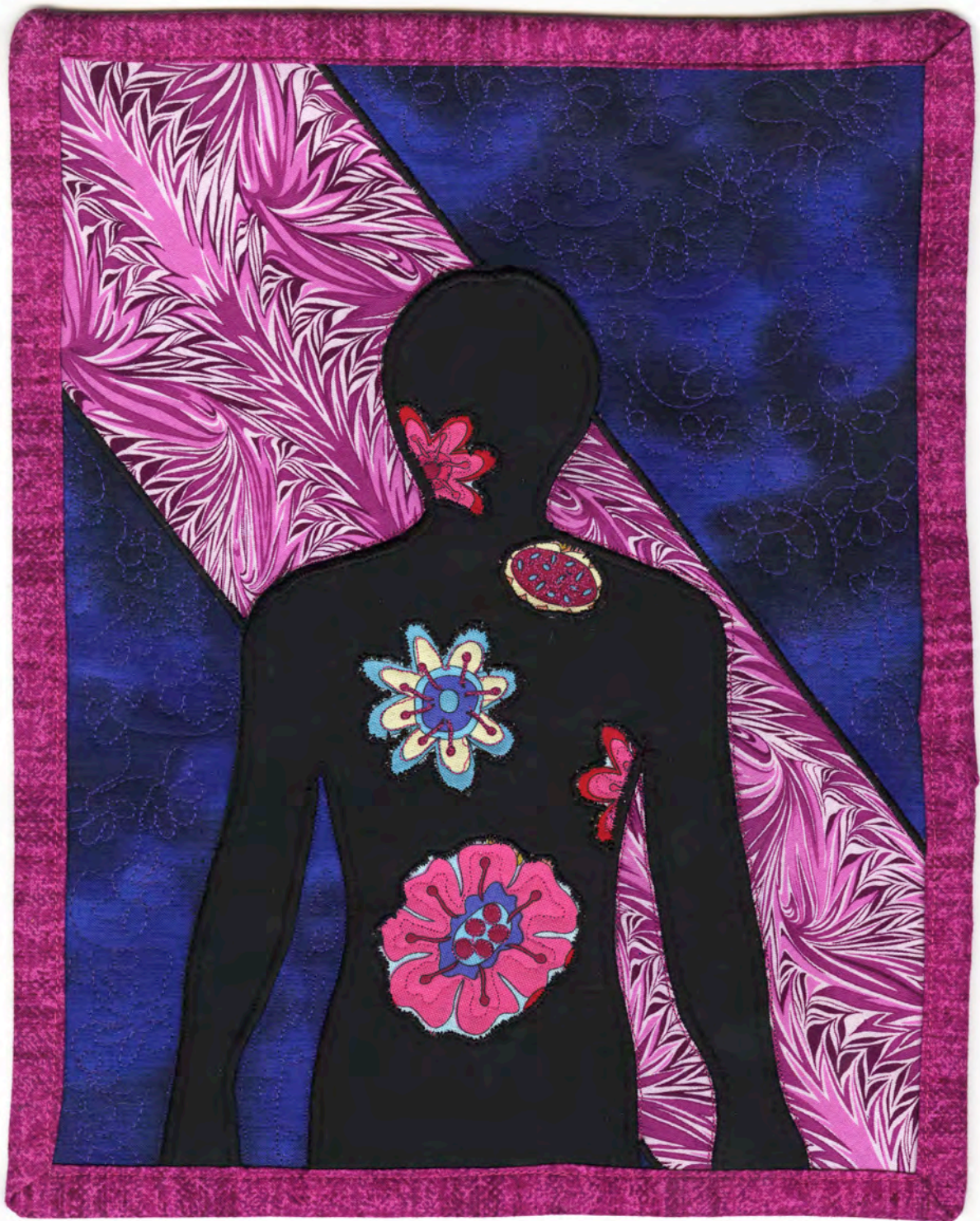


Mystery

My journal quilt is entitled "Mystery;" the design was inspired by waiting for the results of a PET scan.

The title was inspired by the quote from Albert Einstein, "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science."

April was truly a month of mystery for me. I have recently battled Hodgkin's Lymphoma for the third time in my life. April was the month of the PET scan that would reveal whether or not the latest attack on the cancer in my body was successful. Burned in my mind was the last PET scan image, which was a black body showing diseased lymph nodes "lit up like a Christmas tree." What mysteries would my body reveal this time? I tried to re-visualize the sources of previous disease now sprouting the beautiful from within. In my life, this ongoing mystery – how will I fare in this battle with cancer – has been the source of my inspiration as a person, as an artist (even if I hesitate to adopt that label), and as a scientist, helping me to shape the legacy that I want to leave behind. The challenge fabric was a floral that I have fussy-cut to represent the "inner beauty." The diagonal pink fabric represents to me what I imagine positron/electron annihilation (the basis of a PET scan) might look like artistically. The background I chose, as no color better represents mystery to me than deep purple (blame it on the Catholic upbringing). Normally, I am not a fan of pink, but the "annihilation" fabric and the challenge fabric led me in that direction. After more thought though, I decided the pink appropriately represents the radioactive labeled sugar that is the imaging agent that produces the positrons in a PET scan. June 15, 2009



ICE the DNA

This one is entitled ICE the DNA. I have had the design idea and the fabrics for a while but only sat down to execute it in trying to work through my waiting anxiety. ICE is the name of the chemo regimen that I have had so far, and all three of the drugs, ifosfamide, carboplatin, and etoposide, basically go after and f*#k up the DNA, hopefully preferentially in the cancer cells. At the bottom, I quilted lots of spirals in this fabric that sort of looked like cells. I am told by friends that spirals signify new beginnings in some cultures, so these represent to me the new beginnings of my stem cells awaiting their role in this journey. And for those of you that know my perfectionist inclinations will laugh at this detail. I traced the helix design from an image I found online, but when I first went to affix it to the background fabric, I realized I had a left-handed fabric helix instead of a right-handed helix! Well, that just wouldn't do, so I did it all over again to get the mirror image! July 14, 2009



Rebirth

I finally finished my journal quilt on the stem cell transplant. I have entitled it Rebirth. According to my friend Hilary, in the native New Zealand culture, the spiral symbolizes new beginnings. And so the spiral is central to my design, starting from the point when these fabrics called out to me at the fabric store. The color of the central spiral is close to the color of the stem cells once they were filtered from my blood, which of course, is represented by the background. I kept the quilting fairly simple on this one; I just did not find the motivation for anything complex. Maybe because the transplant changed my focus back to the basic, simple needs of surviving one day at a time. I have now hung all of my journal quilts in my sewing closet, so I am surrounded by beauty and inspiration as I continue to create. Christmas Eve, December 24, 2009



The Power of Water

I am happy to report that I completed my latest journal quilt, pictured here. To be honest, I was intimidated for many months by the design process. I struggled with hearing the voice of what I wanted to convey and then was afraid of failure in the execution. But this is where the small size of the piece (8 1/2 x 11") lowers the barrier and the risk. This piece, which I have entitled The Power of Water, was inspired by a lovely card that a friend (Nora McLaughlin) sent me a few months ago. She wished for me that the healing would flow over the stubborn "rocks" in my life and over time, wear them smooth. I loved that vision of a beautiful stream where the water spilled over the rocks and imagined many that I had hiked along and rested by. This vision of a peaceful spot was what I attempted to recreate in fabric and thread. And I look forward to the day when Cassie and I can hit the trails again in our beloved Pacific Northwest to find more magical spots highlighting the power of water. February 6, 2014



Quilt Squares

From 2013 through 2014 Maggie made a table runner and a stunning set of six squares intended for a quilt. This work was inspired from a Jinny Beyer pattern and border print cloth. Maggie created her own color combinations and patterns based on these.

We framed these squares to honor her recent creative work. After the memorial, Maggie's sisters will complete the quilt. The table runner was completed by Susan Mikota and will be used in the memorial services.

From Maggie's journal entry:

"On the quilting front, I had time to make up two more blocks for my Jinny Beyer border print quilt. The latest, pictured here, called Castle Walls is my favorite so far, even if it was technically challenging"
November 16, 2013

