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This first book-length study on kanthas published outside of South Asia focuses on two premier collections, one assembled by the legendary historian of Indian art, Dr. Stella Kramrisch, the other by Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz, leading proponents of self-taught art. Created from worn-out garments imaginatively embroidered by women with motifs and tales drawn from a rich regional repertoire, kanthas traditionally were stitched as gifts for births, weddings, and other family occasions.

Innovative essays by leading scholars explore the domestic, ritual, and historical contexts of the fascinating quilts in these collections_made between the mid-19th and mid-20th century in what is today Bangladesh and West Bengal, India_and trace their reinterpretation as emblems of national identity and works of art.