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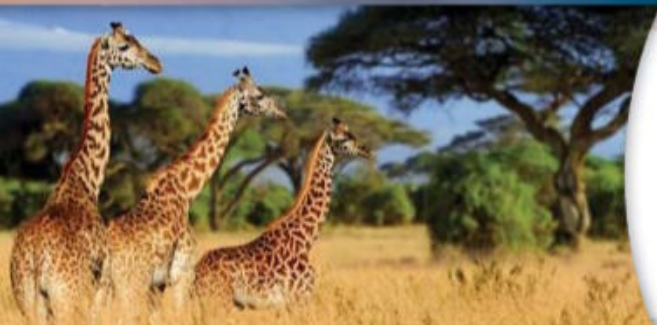
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SOME OF MY VERY BEST MEMORIES

of summer have been sitting on a rock by a lake or atop a cliff overlooking an incredible valley. These moments are often deep in the wilderness at the end of a high mountain trail. Stepping into nature rescues me in the same way that my creative practice does. It calms my mind like an athlete getting in the zone, and everything just flows. Warm summer days have also led me to outdoor adventures in surface design, such as fabric dyeing, painting, and sun printing in the yard.

Welcome to our summer issue—a celebration of the bounty of nature and the joy of new beginnings. As I step into this new role, I'm feeling excited about what's to come. Collaborating with talented contributors, exploring incredible stories and art quilts, and working closely with the QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE team bring me all kinds of new joy. I'm inspired by these contributors to dive back into supplies in my studio that I haven't pulled out in a while. The future

looks bright, and I can't wait to be a part of it.

I have a deep appreciation for the rich history of QUILTING ARTS and I want to thank longtime editor Vivika Hansen DeNegre. Her dedication and passion shaped this magazine for over a decade and laid a strong foundation of celebrating art quilts and inspiring the art quilting community.

Now, let me paint a picture of what's to come in this issue. Our pages are filled with inspiration—from stunning quilts that capture the essence of nature in our “Farm to Table” Reader Challenge to a gallery of award-winning quilts from QuiltCon 2024. You'll also find valuable tips and techniques to elevate your craft. Kestrel Michaud has expertly pulled together some practical guidance on how value makes all the difference in an art quilt. You will learn to paint the sky with acrylics to create your own fabric for inspiring landscapes in an article by Julie Garcia. And Cindy Lohbeck teaches us to paint on fabric using a dextrin resist. It's a technique and product I haven't used before so I can't wait to try it. With each turn of the page, you'll discover new ideas and inspiring stories.

Brandy enjoys a moment at Cathedral Lakes, British Columbia, Canada.

Our latest Reader Challenge—an “Artful Zippered Pouch”—gives you a chance to steal away some time in the studio. It's the perfect opportunity to show off your skills with your own personal style of art quilting. You could also connect with a friend and try out a new technique together. You'll see when you read the challenge that it's bite-sized and achievable even during the summer hustle. I encourage you to give it a try!

I'll end this inaugural Editor's Note with a heartfelt thank you to my friends, family, and many of you for your notes of congratulations. I'm proud to take on this challenge and it means the world to me to have your support. Let's bring on a future that continues to celebrate art quilts and inspire the art quilting community. I look forward to connecting with you all through the pages of QUILTING ARTS.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brandy Maslowski".

Brandy Maslowski,
Consulting Editor





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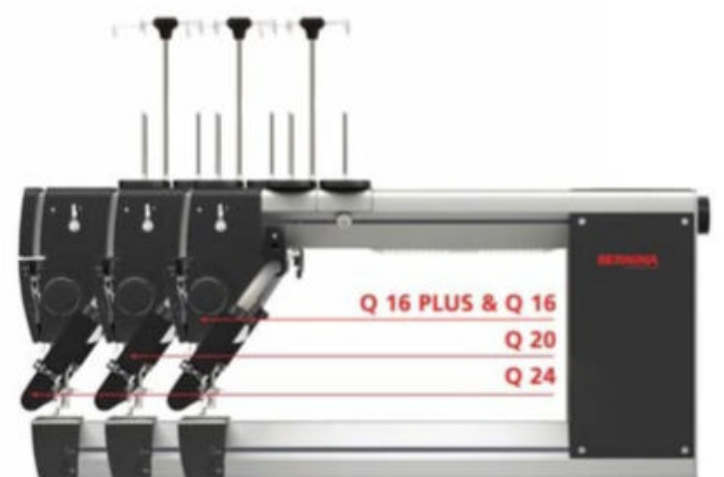
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get more *online*

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Cover art by Susan Price

it's your turn

Our Readers Respond!

In the last issue, we asked our readers to respond to the prompt “Upheaval.” We asked them to reflect on a time when an adverse circumstance or seemingly insurmountable challenge presented itself and how that became a springboard to creativity.

Thank you to the readers who bravely shared their stories and artwork. We can only say, they are amazing at making lemonade out of lemons!



“South Holmes Street” (detail)
Laura Chapin
Photo courtesy of the artist

Dear QUILTING ARTS,

I grew up in Iowa and settled there again after divorce at 29. Three years ago, I decided to move out of state to be closer to family, but I left behind the first house I owned by myself and the last house where my late dog lived. I decided to turn an image of my house into a quilt. Working on this helped me process the transition.

Upheaval can be positive—like it’s been for me—but that doesn’t mean it’s easy to let go.

Laura Chapin • Buffalo, Minnesota

Dear QUILTING ARTS,

[Editor’s Note: In October 2021, after a diagnosis of subdural hematoma, Mary Louise was fighting for her life. At one point, her husband Jim was told she would not survive the night due to the swelling of her brain. A few days later she awoke. She eventually spent 41 days in the hospital (mostly in the ICU) and 12 days in rehab.]

By February 2022 (after this experience), I was creating again, starting with thread-painted postcards for my physical and occupational therapists. During the summer, I was compelled to create a quilt about my experience. I found out through cognitive behavioral therapy, that there is a post-critical care syndrome similar to PTSD. Creating this piece was a way to work through

the trauma of the stroke and the time spent in ICU. I finished the piece on October 31, the one-year anniversary of my survival. A weight lifted from my soul. The trauma, pain, and fear were transferred to the quilt and were no longer inside me.

Throughout my hospital stay, I felt the pull of my sewing machines and the need to return to creating. It was a goal to work toward. The creativity of designing and executing pushed through the brain fog and helped me heal. It has now been almost three years since the stroke. I am still improving functionality. I was able to design and complete an entry into SAQA’s Fierce Planets and it was accepted!

Mary Louise Gerek • Fort Collins, Colorado

Our latest prompt: Get Back to It!

For many, fall is back-to-school and prepping-for-winter time. Fall somehow seems more serious than summer, doesn’t it? Will this change your artwork? What inspires your quilt art as fall rolls around? We’re hoping it’s a productive and enjoyable time to make or plan a quilt and that you’ll share your work, process, thoughts, and ideas about getting back to it after time off.

Show us your work and share your story in an email to QAfeedback@goldenpeakmedia.com with “IYT—Get Back to It” in the subject line by **June 28, 2024**. Please include your name, city/town and state (plus country if not U.S.), and additional information about your quilt such as materials and techniques used, its title, and dimensions.

Look for our readers’ responses in the Fall issue.

We look forward to hearing from you and thank you from the Editorial Team!

We love to hear from you, our readers.

What are you working on now? How has QUILTING ARTS inspired or educated you? What new techniques or influences are you exploring?

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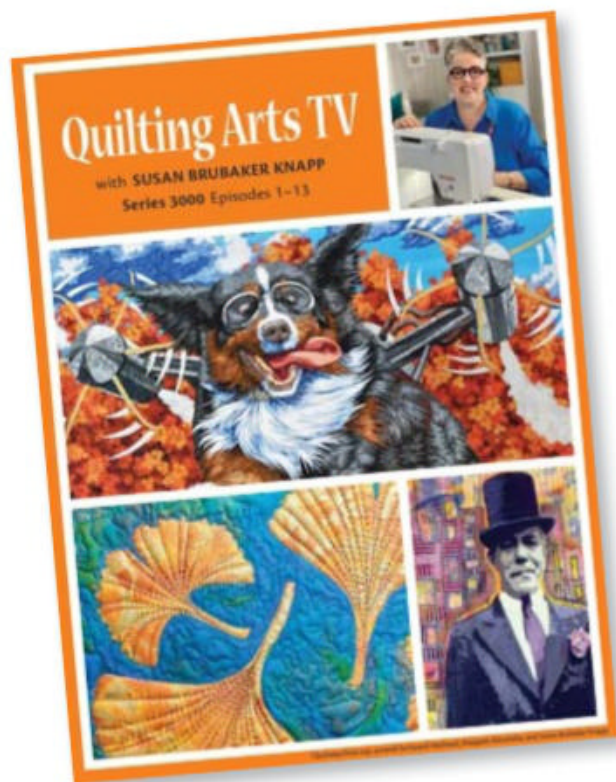


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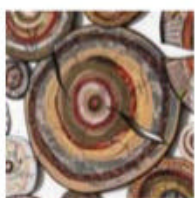
about our contributors



Equal parts human rainbow and transformative educator, **Cindy Lohbeck** is 100% dye-hard! Her colorful contributions to the quilting community include an extensive line of fabric dyeing kits and innovative techniques. She shares a deep knowledge of color, dye, and textiles along with an array of unique tools, tips, and tricks with her students. Cindy has worked in textiles and fabric dyeing for over 40 years. dyehardsstudio.com



Rose Legge's love for mixed media and textiles has inspired a lifelong journey of creating work for shows, writing articles and a book, *ART, FABRIC AND STITCH*. She is most drawn to birds and the natural world, and has an endless fascination with faces. [@stitchartrose](http://stitchartrose.com)



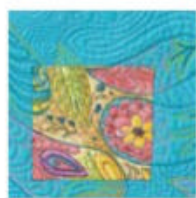
Born and raised in Denver, **Diana S. Fox** is a studio fiber artist and quilter with a passion for textiles and an unwavering dedication to her art. She has earned numerous awards for her unique and captivating work, which tells stories of color, texture, and influences from nature. Diana is a SAQA Juried Artist member, as well as a member of the invitational art quilt group 4 Common Corners. contemporaryquilter.com



Lisa Thorpe is a mixed-media fiber artist and explorer. She has used many mediums over the years—from fabric to painting to printing and collage—but the unifying thread through all these is a love of the puzzle. Lisa teaches in person at events like International Quilt Festival, Houston, and virtually through platforms like Craft Napa and through her website. lisathorpe.com

J.R. Armstrong has been sewing since she was nine and quilting since she was in her 20s. She has lived all over the United States, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic. She is the author of five mystery and romance books and has won awards for her quilts and writing. jrmstrong.net

Teresa Duryea Wong is an author, lecturer, and historian. She is the author of six nonfiction books on quilts and textiles and is a contributing writer for several publications. Teresa is a member of the International Advisory Board of the International Quilt Museum and also serves on the Board of the Quilt Alliance. [@third_floor_quilts](http://thirdfloorquilts.com)



Jenny K. Lyon is a fiber artist, author, and teacher. Her work focuses on free-motion quilting on wholecloth and has been juried into international quilt shows, art shows, and galleries. Jenny teaches and lectures on free-motion quilting wherever she is invited. She claims the title Encourager-in-Chief as she believes that every quilter has the skills to free-motion quilt some of their own work. quiltskipper.com



Valerie Komkov Hill is an award-winning artist working in a variety of media including painting, fiber arts, and mixed media. She is a member of Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA) and the Caprock Art Quilters, a SAQA Circle in West Texas. art-by-valya.squarespace.com



Kestrel Michaud is a classically trained and award-winning fine art quilter with a BFA in Illustration from the Ringling College of Art and Design. She specializes in imaginative realism storytelling. Her fine art training, two decades of experience, and unique style make her work unlike that of any other artist. Kestrel is a SAQA Board Member. kestrelmichaud.com



Sharon Emerson is a fourth-generation quilter living in San Luis Obispo, California. In 1995, she was named a MacArthur Fellow for her innovative research in evolutionary biology. That same creativity is visible in the subject matter of her current art quilts.



Rita Summers' work is created from the land itself—leaves and dirt—the result of a direct relationship and collaboration with the Tasmanian landscape. She finds and reinvents vintage and recycled materials with natural dyes or paints and stitching techniques, allowing the materials themselves to inspire her creations. Rita was born in Canada but has lived and worked in Tasmania since her teens. gonerustic.com



Eleanor Levie is an art quilter, a popular presenter, and workshop teacher for quilt guilds. She is the author/editor of many quilt books, notably *SKINNY QUILTS & TABLE RUNNERS* and *SKINNY QUILTS & TABLE RUNNERS II*. She lives in Center City Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. eleanorlevie.com



Julie Garcia is a Canadian fiber artist who has been exhibiting and selling her fabric landscapes for almost 30 years. Inspired by the Canadian countryside, Julie's artwork combines fabric painting, appliqué, quilting, and freestyle hand-embroidery. She is a member of SAQA, Fibre Art Network of Western Canada (FAN), and the Textile and Fibre Artists of Manitoba (TFAM). juliegarcia.com

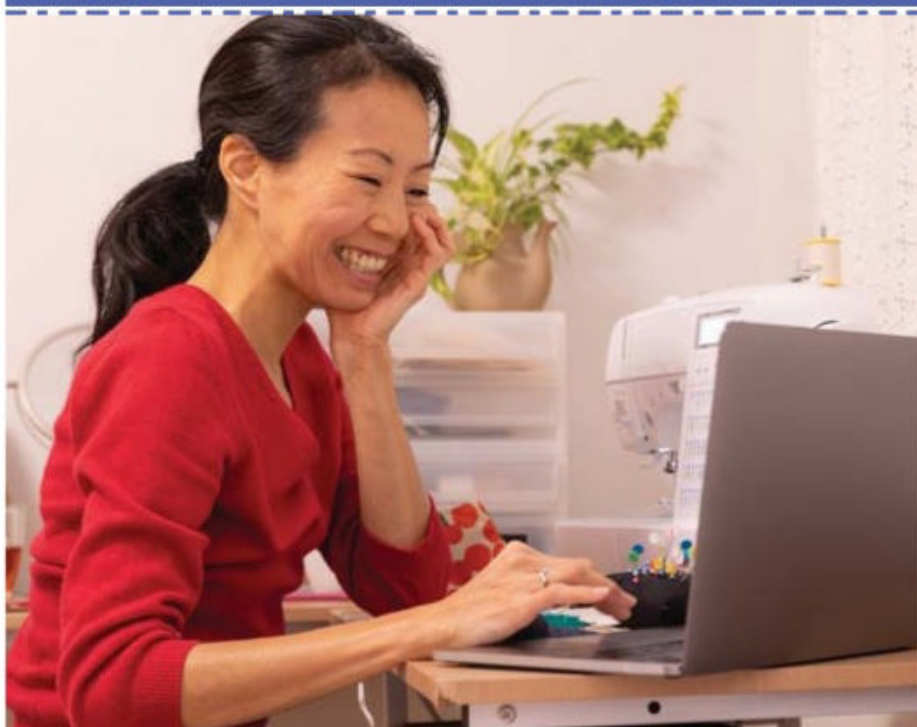


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in the
SPOTLIGHT

Julie Garcia

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA,
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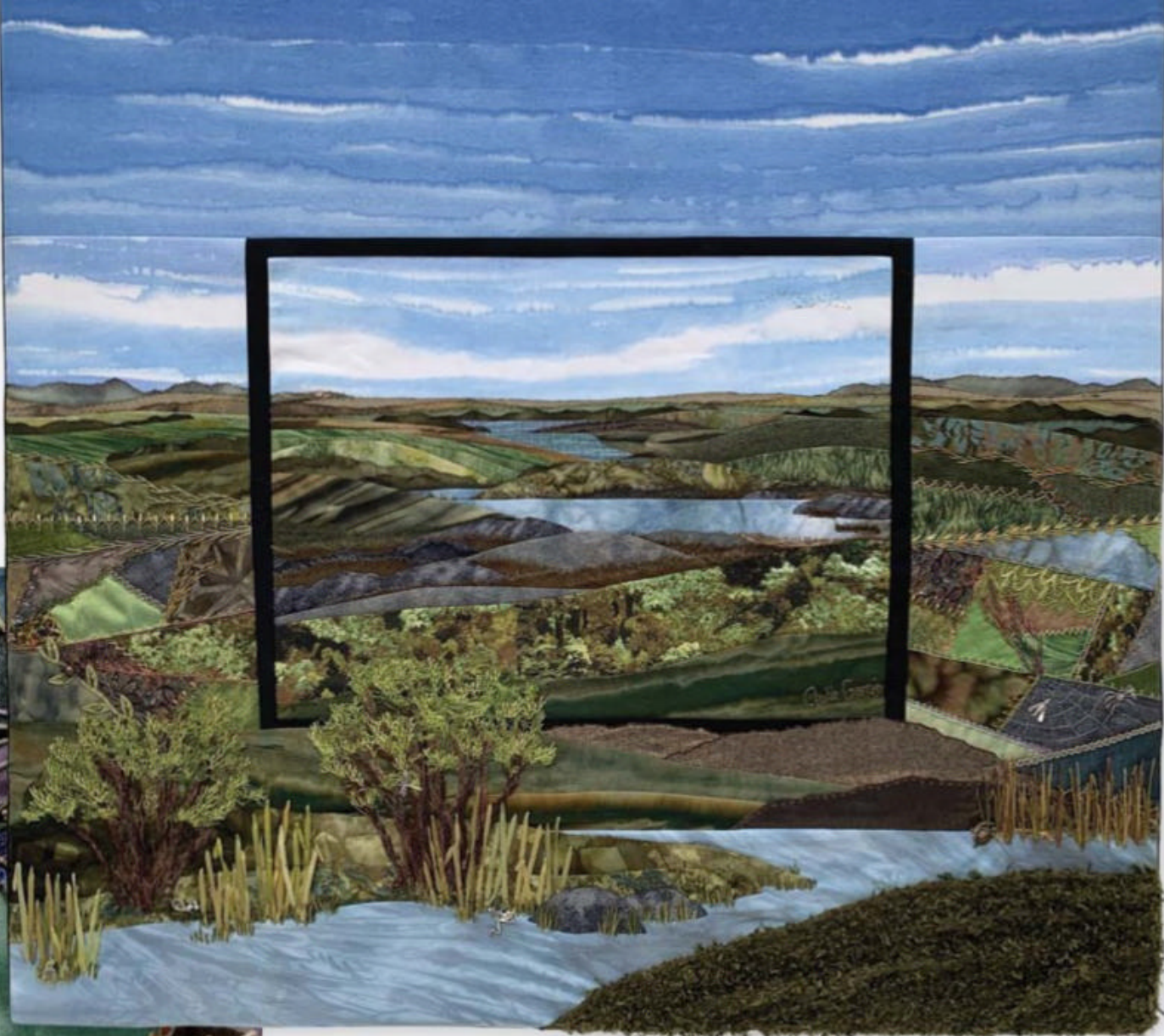
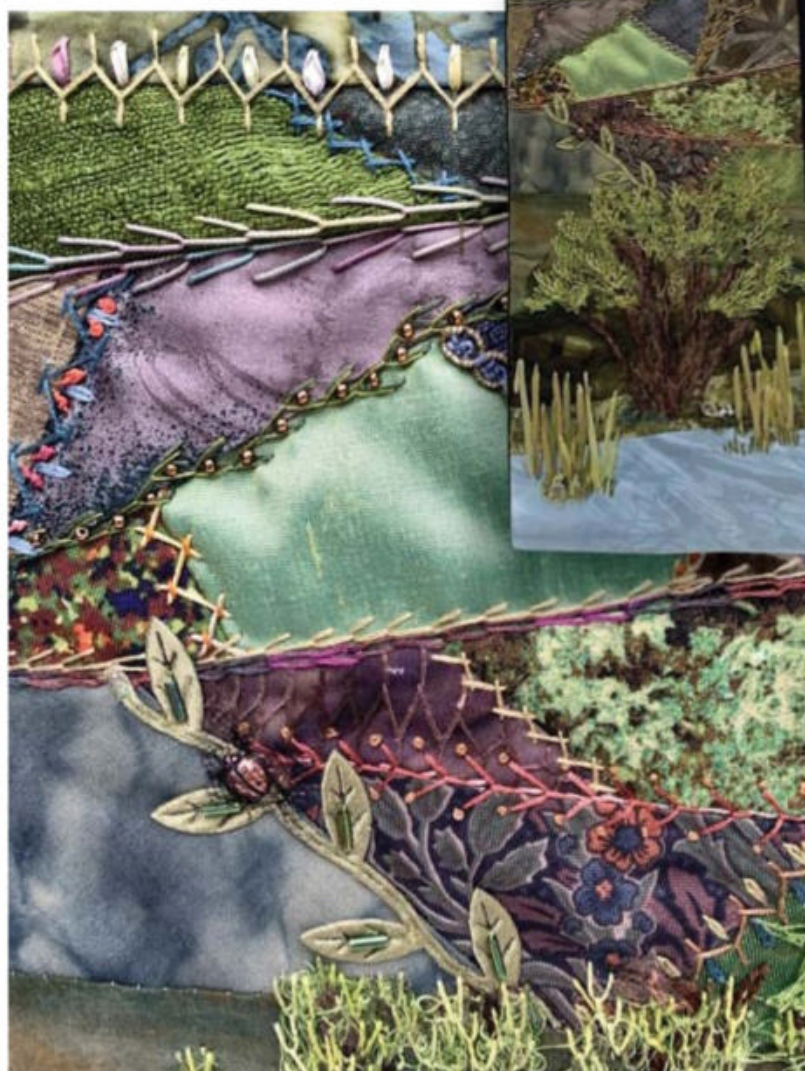
“a scroll through my camera roll tells a clear story of a passion for landscape and nature’s detail. Growing up on a grain farm in rural Manitoba, I spent my childhood under the vast skies of the Canadian Prairies. I never tire of expansive landscapes, literally taking hundreds of photos year-round to capture the beauty of these views. Ever-changing scenery inspires my work and the colors and surface designs found throughout the seasons are a constant source of interest for me.

Like many quilters, I owe my love of creating to my mother. Growing up in a creative home, I have been a maker for as long as I can remember and deeply value the creative confidence that this type of childhood brings. I learned to sew as a child, first machine piecing together clothing and quilted items, and then learning how to hand-stitch with basic embroidery. With a love of fabrics, I pursued a degree in Human Ecology at the University of Manitoba, majoring

Right: "I Spy ..."
31" x 28"

Designed to engage
viewers, 10 charms are
hidden in the scene.

Details, below and left.



in Clothing and Textiles. I worked in the apparel industry, then spent a decade as a retail entrepreneur, always creative in my work and continuing to sew while raising a young family.

In The Beginning

Looking back, my fabric art journey truly began almost 30 years ago when I enrolled in a Fabric Landscape course in Olds, Alberta, with fiber artist Judith Baker Montano. This class changed my life! Judith is the artist who introduced me to silk ribbon embroidery and crazy quilting techniques. Her proficiency at

techniques I learned in this class, I developed my own style of landscape art. Over the years, I have been influenced by the embroidered quilt art of Dottie Moore and the thoughtful colors in Jo Diggs' appliqué landscapes. For me, the challenge has always been to make my work look less like quilts and more like paintings. It was this desire to create more realistic landscapes that led me to read Mickey Lawler's instructional book, *SKYDYES*. Sky fabrics were difficult to find locally and learning how to paint them myself gave me more control over the art I wanted to make.

stitching and ability to combine color was captivating. To this day, I continue to admire Judith's work and refer to her books for inspiration and stitch instruction.

Using many of the

The Fiber Art Journey

When I began selling my work in local art shows and sales, I was often the only fiber artist, facing collectors who were new to fabric art. It is still my favorite feeling to see the look of wonder on people's faces as they realize my pictures are made with fabric and thread. Once the realization happens, they engage with the piece in an entirely different way, considering not only the aesthetic appeal but the detailed construction. Selling my work through galleries, it has been my experience that framing fabric art makes the purchase decision easier for buyers and eliminates any question of how to hang it with traditional paintings.

Creating the landscapes is a multi-step process, beginning with a painted cotton sky fabric that becomes the background onto which the other layers are hand-sewn. The sky fabric sets the mood for each piece and draws the



"Still Standing" • 26" x 31"



"Morning Calm" • 32" x 24"

viewer's eye back toward the horizon, creating a point for them to pause and take in the sky before exploring the stitches and fabric that create the composition. I prefer to keep the sky unquilted and stretched tight, using white interfacing behind to keep it stable and smooth as a backdrop.

I use a mix of cotton, silk, and synthetics (including upholstery fabrics in the foreground) for interest in the landscape. No fabric is off-limits! I enjoy re-purposing fabric sample swatches and find the challenge created by smaller pieces of fabric enhances my overall design. I rarely throw out a scrap and prefer to keep all the bits in plastic bins that I can sift through when I'm looking for that perfect fabric piece. Some of my best fabrics have been found in second-hand clothing stores, from sweaters to men's ties, these unique fabrics are a treat to find but are difficult to replicate. "Still Standing," an homage to the incredible Jack Pine trees that grow tall and strong despite clinging to rocks, includes three different men's ties, including the water, rock, and mountain fabrics. Careful placement of the embroidered trees across the water hides the seams required to carry the narrow tie fabric across the picture.

My landscape designs are developed organically with a general scene in mind to start, inspired by my own photography or copyright-free reference photos (old calendars are wonderful for this). I decide on the final size of the piece early and use a matboard to continually "frame" the design as I work. Without a pre-determined pattern, I begin with the sky and audition fabrics as the scene takes shape. I often place a still body of water in the distance to draw attention and build a feeling of calm into my work. "Morning Calm" and "Birches at Dawn" are examples of this. The quiet line catches your eye, invoking a peacefulness that precedes taking in the rest the scene.

I cut, pin, and collage fabrics over and over until I see the landscape clearly and make decisions. Along the horizon, synthetic fabrics are used to allow for a melted raw edge that will not fray or pucker as it is stitched. I make it a rule to choose colors under natural daylight as fancy fabrics with sheen will change color depending on the lighting and viewing angle. To assess the piece from a distance, I either move everything over to my design wall, or if this isn't practical with all the small pieces, I stand on a stool above my work and take a photo with my phone. Reviewing the landscape in a static photo works well for evaluation and allows for many improvements to perspective.

Basting glue and pins hold the layers together as I stitch, beginning at the horizon and working my way forward. It is essential that the piece stays flat, and I like to work freely on a drafting table, cutting away fabrics underneath as new layers are added. Some layers are appliquéd, others stitched down with torn or melted edges depending on the effect I want.

Finishing Touches

When the final layer is secure, I begin the fun of adding details like trees, fences, and flowers. This is my favorite part and where I can add special touches using ribbon, cheesecloth, mesh, and threads to paint the rest of the scene. "I Spy ..." was created for the 2024 Grand National Fiber Arts Exhibition, "Delights," and includes crazy quilting embroidery in the landscape and ten charms that are hidden within the stitches.

My focus now is to continue to advance my work, look for exhibition opportunities, and create resources that will support others in making fabric art. I'm currently recording content for a virtual course and will be teaching at the Embroiderers' Association of Canada



"Birches at Dawn"
17" x 21"

Seminar in 2025. I always enjoy in-person classes but seeing the opportunity to reach so many more students through virtual learning, I am determined to learn the technology needed to explore this new medium!



To learn more about Julie and her work, visit juliegarcia.com.

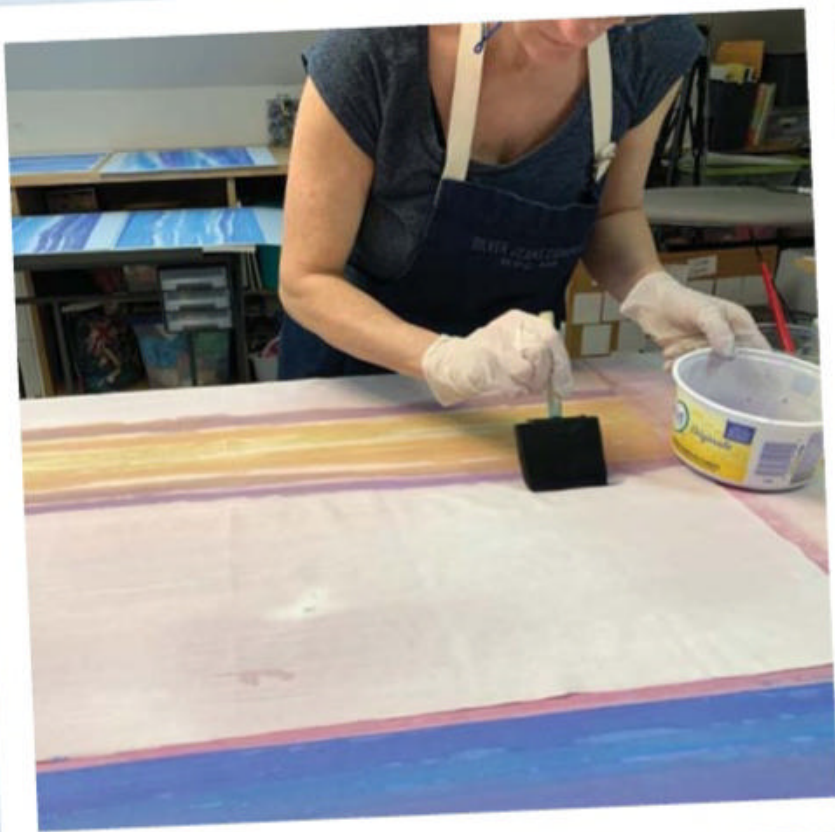
Paint the Sky

Create your own fabric for inspiring landscapes

by Julie Garcia

Beautiful sky fabric can inspire new ideas for landscape quilts and by learning the basic technique to paint your own skies, you will be able to create interesting color effects and personalize your work. I paint fabric for the sky in each of my quilts and, if needed, I also paint specific fabrics to be used as water, rocks, or tree trunks.

Fabric painting is a simpler process than dyeing as it doesn't require special safety considerations. It's easy to get started in a small space and cleans up with soap and water. Being able to create the fabrics I need has given me flexibility in my work and a way to design a unique landscape style.



Process and figure photos courtesy of the artist

MATERIALS

- Fat quarter or ½ yard tightly woven, 100% cotton white fabric plus small pieces for color testing
- Smooth waterproof surface, ideally a portable one (such as a heavy plastic sheet or plastic tablecloth)
- Foam paintbrushes (one for each color of paint)
- Plastic containers
- Water-based acrylic paint (I use Createx™ Transparent Airbrush Colors or Pêbêo Setasilk silk paints in transparent colors) See “Don’t Overthink It!” for tips.
- Mister with a fine, continuous spray filled with clean, plain water (I use a hair stylist mister.)
- Disposable gloves and apron
- Rags or towels for clean-up

Optional

- Color wheel for reference

I first tried fabric painting after reading MICKEY LAWLER’S SKYDYES: A VISUAL GUIDE TO FABRIC PAINTING and have adapted her technique to suit my work and preferred results. Although I have been painting fabric for over 20 years, I continue to be surprised by the end results!

With time and practice you will become more proficient in mixing colors but be patient with the first few skies you paint. Determining how much to dilute paints and how damp to make the base fabric will become more evident with each piece. Enjoy the process of experimenting with this technique and the sky’s truly the limit on what you can create!

DIRECTIONS

Test the paint

1. Prepare a flat space to paint and gather the supplies. (figure 1)
Cut the heavy plastic sheet to 24" × 24" for a fat quarter or 24" × 48" for a half-yard cut.

TIP: My space is limited so I maximize it. If I’m painting more than one piece of fabric, I pick up the finished one by the plastic and move it to another flat, protected area to dry. This frees up the painting space to place another plastic sheet and piece of fabric to keep painting! If you only have one space available, place the fabric directly onto a smooth plastic tablecloth or plastic sheet and leave it undisturbed to dry.



figure 1

2. Mix up paint with water using a separate container and foam brush for each color. Begin with no more than ½ cup of water and add drops of color until you have achieved the depth of color you want.



“Sunflower Fields”
48" × 24"

Photo courtesy of the artist

Don’t Overthink It!

There are many options for paint that can be used on fabric. Some impact the hand of the fabric more than others, some are easier to blend—but, for me, the main consideration is the color selection.

I enjoy using Createx Transparent Airbrush paints as they have a large selection of vivid colors that are readily available at a reasonable price. Pêbêo Setacolor/Setasilk and Jacquard® Textile Color paints are also excellent to work with and I encourage you to experiment with diluting other acrylic paints to see the results.

Check the paint manufacturer’s instructions on how to set the color and make the fabric colorfast.

- Before painting, test the colors to ensure you have the right combination and that the colors are of similar strength. First, dampen the test fabric with plain water and then brush on the paint. Allow it to dry fully. (figure 2) If you need to make adjustments, do so now.

NOTE: You may need to add more water to some and more paint to others to achieve a balanced palette. This is a good time to look at your color wheel for guidance. Colors look much darker when they are wet, so don't be in a rush to dilute them before the test is done. A blow-dryer can help speed up this testing process.



figure 2



figure 3



figure 4

Paint the fabric

- Place the plastic and fabric on the work surface.
- Mist the entire surface of the fabric with plain water until it is damp (but not soaked). Add a couple extra horizontal lines of water with a clean foam brush if you want a watery, cloudy painting.
- Beginning at one side, paint the fabric in smooth, horizontal lines. For a blue sky, angle the 'clouds' upward as you approach the

NOTE: Clouds generally lie in linear patterns, running horizontally and with a subtle upward angle as they move across the sky.

edges of the fabric—noting the whiteness of the clouds are merely unpainted areas. (figure 3) Leave small areas of fabric unpainted so the naturally occurring air pockets allow space for the paint to travel in a watery effect. For sunrise/sunset skies, paint the first horizontal line in the lightest

Color Story

To create a blue sky, start with mixing up two different shades of blue. I like to use a deep blue with a few drops of ultramarine blue plus ultramarine blue with a drop of violet.

To create a sunrise or sunset, you will be mixing up five or six different colors! Sunrise colors include pinks, yellows, peaches, grays, cooler blues, and violet tones while sunset color palettes hold more yellows, oranges, dark reds, and purples.

TIP: As I'm mixing paint, I sometimes like to add a small amount of a second or even third color—a drop of purple into yellow or a drop of violet or turquoise into deep blue—as these combinations create richer, more interesting effects once the paint travels on damp fabric.



"West Coast" • 23" x 23"

Photo courtesy of the artist

color, about 6" up from the bottom edge. This will be the horizon as you work. Continue to paint in horizontal stripes across the piece moving through the colors as desired.

TIP: I like to paint a narrow 'reflection' of the sky colors below this horizon line at the same time as I am painting the sky (*figure 4*) as I find it can be especially useful fabric when I am designing my landscape pictures.

4. For a watercolor look, dip the corner of the same foam brush into the next paint color and paint across the fabric. This will invite the two colors to blend naturally as you work. This double-dipping can produce wonderful results but try not to alter the original colors in their containers. Once the brush has dipped into a couple different colors, rinse it out in water to prevent muddying the colors.
5. Allow the fabric to dry without moving it—except to pick it up by the plastic, as mentioned earlier. It can take hours, so walk away!
6. Once dry, press to heat set the paint following the manufacturer's instructions. Usually, you will be instructed to slowly iron back and forth across the fabric. (*figure 5*) This process will make the colors permanent. 🌟

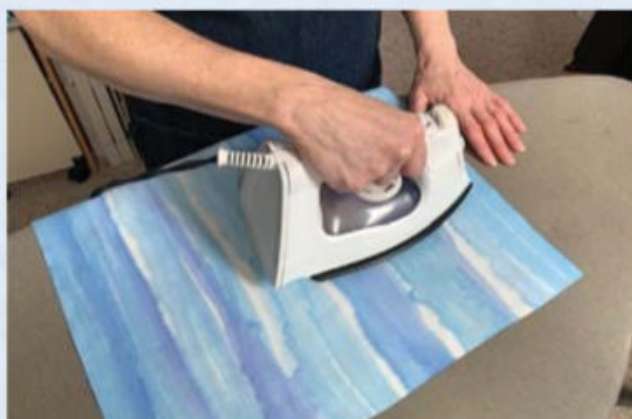


figure 5



Photo courtesy of the artist

"Sunset at Dorothy Lake" • 30" x 24"

Julie's Top Tips for Painting Success

- Start with smooth, crease-free fabric that absorbs water drops easily. If water droplets bead on the surface, it will not work well for painting unless you pre-wash it to remove the finish.
- Take your time in mixing paint colors. Wet the test fabric, test, dry, and adjust the paints to improve the end results. Patience will pay off!
- For a realistic sky, painting in horizontal lines is key. Keep the brushstrokes moving across the fabric so any air bubbles caught in the piece run horizontally.
- As already mentioned, paint colors appear lighter once the paint has dried. If you want to further lighten the paint color, either add more water to dilute the paint or mist more water onto the base fabric.
- Work quickly so the fabric remains damp throughout the entire painting process.
- Have rags and towels handy to catch the inevitable drips that occur when painting anything! Luckily, these paints clean up easily with soap and water.
- Mix multiple colors into the sky. Even if you simply want a blue sky, adding variations of blue and purple to the palette will translate into a more interesting piece. Blend these colors right on the fabric by double-dipping the corner of the foam brush into the next color.
- Many textile artists like to paint outdoors. Watch that you aren't at risk of leaves falling on your work or wind blowing the fabric around. Some artists are relaxed enough to consider this a naturally added design feature, but I like to protect the process as much as I can!

START WITH

A SQUARE



"Blue Start With a Square" • 15" x 15"

A playful technique
to explore free-motion
quilting and expand
your skills

by Jenny K. Lyon

I am always looking for fun, low-stress ways to play with free-motion quilting and expand my skills. This is one of my favorite ways to get creative with free-motion quilting with an encouraging and playful project.

I first saw this technique used in an award-winning quilt by Linda Waddle. She painted a close up of a Helleborus flower

MATERIALS

- Fat quarter (or larger) of a medium- to large-scale print for the starter square. (See "Choose a Starter Square.")
- 18" square neutral or solid cotton fabric (**TIP:** This will be the background and should coordinate well with the print you choose for the starter square.)
- 18" square batting
- 18" square backing
- Water-soluble marker
- Temporary adhesive spray for fabric or 3" square of fusible web
- Topstitch needles in size appropriate for chosen thread

Optional

- Heavyweight plastic, approximately 24" square
- Dry erase marker

and extended the lines of the flower into the border with free-motion quilting. I was so taken by her technique that I knew it would eventually find a place in my work.

The beauty of this technique is that your inspiration comes directly from the designs already in the fabric you choose, making it simple to get creative. Newer free-motion quilters will find this a great way to gain confidence and all quilters will learn to combine different free-motion quilting designs to create a personal style.

This is a fun way to practice free-motion quilting and will build the confidence you need to quilt larger quilts. Start with a fabric you love and let it inspire your own creation!

DIRECTIONS

Begin the composition

1. Make a quilt sandwich of the background, batting, and backing fabric. Baste, using your favorite method.
2. Mark a 2" perimeter around the outer edge of the background fabric with a water-soluble marker. This defines the area you will work in and leaves room for your hands to hold the square as you quilt.
3. Choose the portion of the design you want to isolate from the starter square fabric. Cut a 4" square.

4. Turn under the edges of the square $\frac{1}{2}$ " on all sides. Press. The square now measures 3" $\times$ 3". (*figure 1*)
5. Following the manufacturer's instructions, apply fusible or temporary adhesive spray to the back of the square.



figure 1

Choose a Starter Square

The starter square will be your inspiration for creating this project. Choose a fabric that you find interesting and fun to work with. Your choice of a starter square is key. You want to love it!

Here are a few tips for success:

- Nature inspired fabrics are good choices, as most of us can easily draw a leaf or flower.
- If you're having trouble visualizing just a portion of the fabric, create a view finder template by cutting a 3"–4" square out of the middle of a piece of lightweight cardboard or a file folder. Place that on the fabric and move it around to find a portion of the fabric that you want for your starter square.
- A starter square works best if the motifs in it are varied, not the same thing over and over, and have designs that are smaller than your fist but larger than a silver dollar. Scale is important.

- Do *not* fussily cut the square or confine all the shapes within the square. You want to cut right through a major shape! You will finish that cut off shape with free-motion quilting, as you will see further on in the project.
- Finding a fun fabric with a theme you can relate to makes this technique more fun.
- Avoid designs with symmetry—that is hard to replicate.
- Motifs need to be simple enough to easily stitch around and into. Something with too many nooks and crannies will be difficult.

NOTE: For purposes of this article, we will work with a starter *square*. You may choose to work with a rectangle or other shape, however.

6. Place the square onto the background. It can be in the center, on point (corners of the square point to the top, bottom, and sides of the top) or off-center.
7. Adhere the square to the background, pressing with your hands or an iron, depending on the product and its instructions.

Quilt the motif

The goal of this technique is to continue the design elements you see in the starter square onto the background, almost like finishing the starter square with free-motion quilting. You are creating the focal point of the quilt with this stitching.

TIP: Keep the starter square fabric nearby as design inspiration. My eyes go back and forth from the lines and

designs of the fabric to the square under the needle as my hands recreate them in the free-motion stitching.

1. Thread the machine with a mid- or heavyweight thread in a color you wish to feature.

TIP: If it makes you feel more comfortable, mark some of the cut off parts of the starter square onto the quilt top with a water-soluble marker, then quilt along those lines. (figure 2)

2. Finish the trimmed-off designs of the starter square by extending the design's lines into the quilt top with free-motion quilting. (figure 3)

Tips for Success

- There's no need to exactly replicate the original design—just capture the essence of it—nor do you need to quilt fussy details like every serration on the edge of a leaf.
- You also do not need to finish every design that was cut off. Often, I will complete 3–5 elements and ignore the rest or I'll add elements such as the stems you see here. (figure 4)
- Consider changing thread to add additional colors. I used black, light blue, and white in this central motif.

Tips on Thread Selection

I use a variety of thread colors and weights in these quilts.

Choose several spools of mid-weight or heavyweight thread to coordinate with the Starter Square and highlight the thread work and quilting (30wt–50wt for example).

Select one spool of mid-weight or thin thread to blend with the background. (I use 50wt–100wt.)

NOTE: In general, err on the side of a lighter rather than a darker-colored thread. Darker threads will be more prominent and show less-than-perfect stitching more readily.



figure 2



figure 3



figure 4



figure 5

Work the rest of the quilt

After you are pleased with the quilting on the starter square motif, add free-motion quilting to the rest of the quilt top out to the drawn perimeter edges.

1. Change thread to a lighter weight option, possibly in a light or neutral color. This will help keep the motif as the focal point.

TIP: I sometimes add an area of dense stipple quilting directly around the motif I have created. (figure 5)

2. Design-wise, there are a couple of considerations for completing the quilting:

- Expand the lines of the design from the starter square throughout the quilt—possibly sprinkled around the quilt, such as in “Blue Start With a Square.” For example, add additional paisley or floral shapes to the background to support the central motif. For this, consider using colored threads similar to what were used on the motif.
- Scatter additional free-motion quilted designs around the unquilted areas of the top—add grids, florals, bubbles, and other quilting designs you wish, perhaps creating 4–7 sections with different quilting in each such as on “Gray Start With a Square.” For this, consider sticking with the lighter weight and neutral colored threads so the central motif continues to pop out even when flanked by elaborate quilting.

3. To explore background quilting choices and patterns, if desired, place a piece of heavyweight plastic on top of the quilt. Using the dry erase marker, draw continuous lines and quilting patterns on the plastic to audition quilting ideas. You can see right through the plastic to judge whether you like the drawn design



“Gray Start With a Square” • 15" × 15"

Choosing Free-Motion Background Quilting Designs

- Consider scale when choosing designs. Avoid motifs in which the scale is close to that of the starter square’s designs.
- A combination of curvy and linear designs is pleasing.
- Change thread color for a dynamic, striking background or stick with a neutral or matching thread for a harmonious design and to highlight the starter square motif.

for your quilt or not. Draw and doodle until you are happy with your design ideas.

4. Finish the quilting.
5. Trim and bind the quilt.

I hope this project gives you more confidence and practice to free-motion quilt your own larger work! 🌸



Get more *online*

Jenny demonstrated this technique on “Quilting Arts TV” Series 3100, available November 2024 at [quiltingarts-tv.com](https://www.quiltingarts-tv.com).



Left:
“Little House #145”
5" × 5"



Below:
“Little House #143”
5" × 5"

Home Sweet Home

Make tiny houses
to display or gift

by Valerie Komkov Hill

There is something appealing and charming about creating little projects from small scraps of fabric and because an image of a house can evoke so many feelings—nostalgia, security, dreams, and wishes—it is a perfect little project to create and share.

Think of houses you are drawn to—whether they are cozy cottages, sleek mid-century-modern homes, rustic farmhouses, or earthy adobes—and then imagine them in an inviting landscape. With a few pieces of fabric, trim, and thread—plus a measure of whimsy and improvisation—your dream house can become a reality in miniature.

MATERIALS

- Scraps of assorted prefused fabrics (I use leftovers from other projects or apply fusible to 5" charm pack fabrics.)
- Background fabric (unfused)
- Embellishments like ribbon, lace, yarn, beads, and trim
- Double-sided fusible webbing (I use Mistyfuse® or Lite Steam-a-Seam®.)
- Felt or thin batting
- Small, square, stretched artist canvas or wood board for mounting (I use 5" x 5" canvases.)
- Double-sided tape for stitchery and fabric mounting (I use Stitchery Tape™.)

Optional

- Paint, metallic paint, Inktense pencils, or permanent ink pens (I use Posca.)
- Backing fabric (if not mounting the quilted house on canvas or board)
- Quilting soap (I use Quilt Soap by Quilter's Rule.)

figure 1



figure 2



figure 3

DIRECTIONS

Create the house

1. Assemble a selection fabrics and choose a palette that appeals to you. (figure 1) Apply fusible web, following the manufacturer's instructions, if the fabric is not prefused.

TIP: Be adventurous. Sky does not always have to be blue; foliage does not have to be green.

2. Select elements that will be in the background of the composition, such as clouds, mountains, trees, ocean or desert, etc. Trace or draw these images on the back of the prefused fabrics, remembering that they will be reversed on the front side.
3. Cut and fuse these elements to the background fabric to create the scene. (figure 2)

4. Select prefused fabrics for the house and cut out the shape. Play around with the placement of the house on the background fabric before fusing. Add details to the house by fusing on windows and doors, a chimney, a porch, etc. These pieces may be very small. If they are too small to fuss with, the same effect can be achieved by stitching the shape of a window, for example, and then coloring in the panes with ink or paint. (figure 3)

NOTE: The house you create can be very simple—cut from squares, rectangles, or triangles—or you can print copyright-free or personal photos of houses (even your own) and print at the appropriate size to cut out and use as inspiration or a template.

5. Machine stitch all the fused elements in place using plain or decorative stitches.
6. Add foreground elements for more details such as shrubbery, walkways, or fences. Creating layers of depth helps make the tiny scene pop. (figure 4)
7. Add handwork or embroidery at this point, before quilting, so you are only stitching through one layer. Details too small to stitch can be added with paint or fine-tip pens.

Finishing

1. Create a quilt sandwich with the house composition and felt. Restitch around the general shapes to quilt it completely.

NOTE: Because I almost exclusively mount my completed tiny houses on stretched artist canvas, I do not include a backing fabric. If you wish to create a more traditional quilted composition, add a backing fabric to the quilt sandwich before quilting.

2. Seal the edges with a zigzag or satin stitch and steam press both sides for a clean finish.

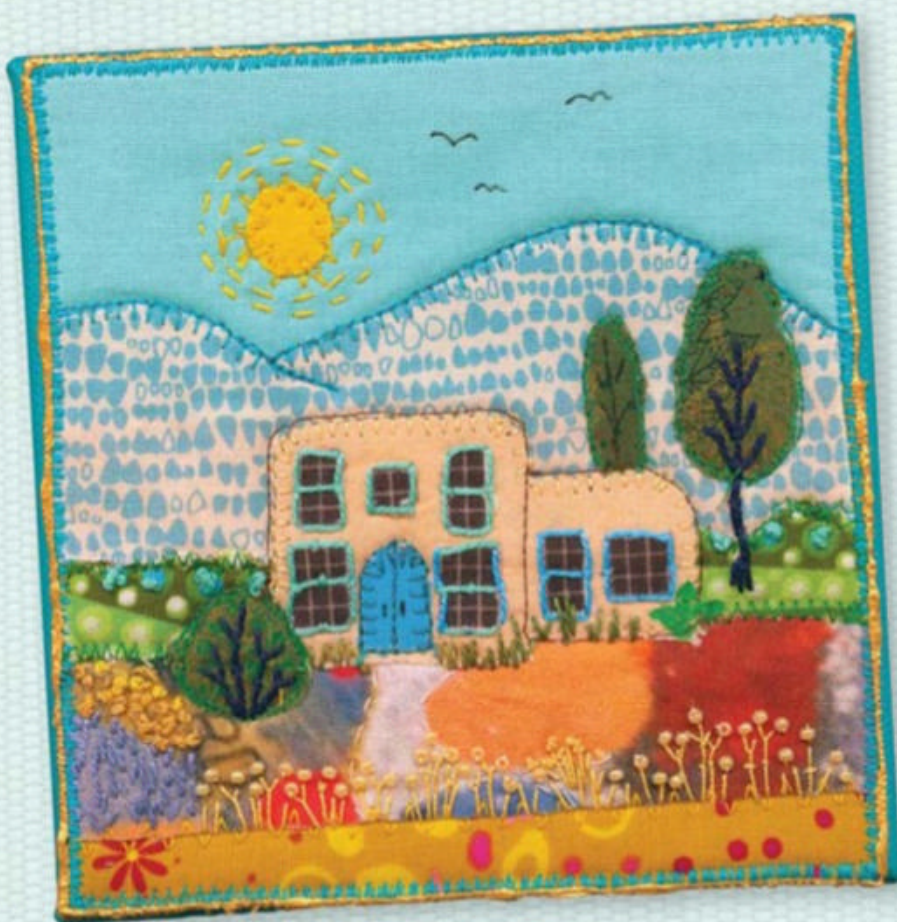
TIP: I wash my house quilts in quilting soap before this pressing step to remove any oils from my hands or surface dirt that may have collected while I worked on it.



figure 4



figure 5



“Little House #146” • 5" × 5"

3. Add any additional beadwork, delicate trims, or 3-D elements after pressing.

NOTE: For handwork lovers, try making the entire project the ‘slow stitch’ way using only hand stitching, piecing, embroidery, and quilting. Finish the edges with a whip stitch or blanket stitch.

4. If desired, brush the edges with a metallic paint to add a bit of flair. (figure 5)
5. Before mounting the house on stretched artist canvas, paint the canvas a color that matches or complements the project. Once the paint is dry, add strips of double-sided mounting tape onto the canvas’ outer edges, line up the house on top, and press down firmly with your hands to adhere. Add hanging hardware or the finished piece can be hung from a simple nail or push pin. ■

Focus on your studio: add these finds to your quilter's tool kit and library



PRO Sun Printing Paint Kit

PRO® CHEMICAL & DYE

We've enjoyed playing with cyanotype printing in the past so this kit with 12 small bottles of Sun Printing Paints from PRO Chemical & Dye caught our eye as a variation on that theme. The paint was easy to apply to dampened PFD fabric (not provided) and we created compositions with leaves and what nots—these little one-holed elements are a mystery item from the garage—and waited for the fabric to dry in the sun. The kit also comes with a packet of coarse salt which made an interesting design on a second piece of fabric (not shown). The paints are ready to use right from the bottle, are water-based for easy cleanup, and can be mixed to create other color combinations. They are non-toxic, too. The only additional 'ingredient' needed is patience to allow the painted fabric to dry!

\$15.95 • prochemicalanddye.net



Bluebell

JANET CLARE

Many of the fabrics in this group really caught our eye for how beautifully they resemble handmade cyanotypes—

taken to the next level! The collection by Janet Clare for Moda Fabrics contains 24 different fabrics—many are blenders and supporting players—in pleasing tones of blue, white, and turquoise. We love the ethereal quality of the cyanotype-looking prints plus the artful combinations of others—one print, for example, incorporates measures of sheet music sprinkled with small floral prints. The mix of small- and large-scale motifs will provide lots of interest for your next quilt.

modafabrics.com

Heat Wave

KATIE PASQUINI MASOPUST

This fabric collection designed by Katie Pasquini Masopust for FreeSpirit Fabrics is vibrant, energetic, and fun. We love the cacophony of bright, irregular patterning partnered with more mellow, geometric prints—the perfect platform for a quilt full of liveliness, which also needs sections for the eye to rest. Some of the colors lean cool while others are warm, especially when near the black-and-white prints. The collection, comprising 16 fabrics, truly expresses the high temps of a heat wave along with the cooling relief from a fan. The design possibilities feel wide open!

freespiritfabrics.com



EXPLORATIONS WITH COLLAGE!

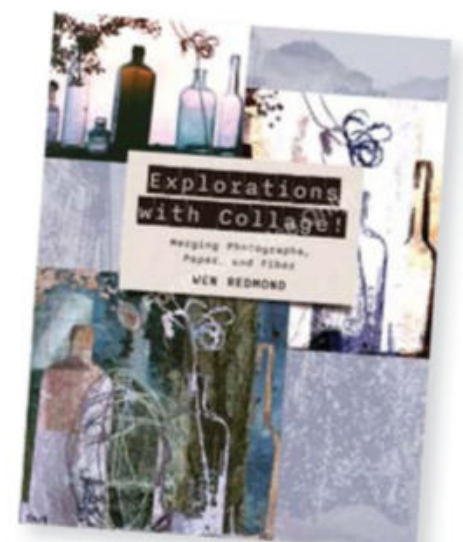
MERGING PHOTOGRAPHS, PAPER, AND FIBER

WEN REDMOND

Author and artist Wen Redmond has devoted decades to the interplay of paper, photographs, and fabric in her mixed-media work. In her new book with Schiffer Craft, she shares dozens of her main techniques plus many variations on them. This book is so full of ideas, you'll want to begin playing along immediately as Wen manipulates her materials and resources in innumerable ways. The chapters are arranged tutorial-style, with one lesson informing the next. This book will fill your days with wonder and artful experimentation.

\$34.99

schifferbooks.com



in the SPOTLIGHT

Photos by Gary O'Neill



Sharon Emerson

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA



“**m**ost of us enjoy a good laugh and probably never more so than during the dark days of the recent pandemic. That’s when I began making a series of art quilts depicting bird idioms.

It all started with an unrelated piece I did featuring three loggerhead shrikes, a declining American bird species, sitting on a branch. Every time I glanced at my design wall, the three shrikes stared back at me intently as though I had wronged them. Their piercing looks prompted me to name the quilt “Three Shrikes, You’re Out.” From this bad pun about shrikes it was a relatively small jump to imagining a series of bird idiom quilts.



31" x 19¼"

Birds are Inspiring

An idiom is an expression that does not mean exactly what the words say. For example, when someone says it's raining cats and dogs, we generally think of a heavy rain rather than dogs and cats literally falling from the sky. There are many idioms in the English language, only some of which involve birds.

I chose bird idioms for my quilts because of my lifelong interest in nature. My work as an evolutionary biologist included long hours of studying frogs in tropical rainforests from Panama to Borneo. Frogs are active mainly at night, so I had free time during the day to watch birds in the forest.

I have continued as a bird watcher after my retirement and take my binoculars with me almost everywhere I go.

Each of my bird idiom quilts represents the actual, literal meaning of a common idiom. To make it more fun, I made a few rules to follow when constructing the quilts.

The pieces would have no visible title. All the idioms had to be made up of two words, one of which would be the name of a bird I had seen somewhere in the world. I chose a mix of familiar and exotic birds to portray. For example, in "Jay Walking," the four jays include two American species, a Mexican Green Jay, and a Bornean Crested Jay. The challenge is for viewers to identify the bird and then the idiom from what is depicted in the quilt.

Sewing Tradition

My mother taught me how to make traditional quilts when I was in my 30s. Initially, I sewed them by hand. Ironically, it was the only way I could fit quilting into my busy life. Getting to the field sites where I studied frogs involved long hours of airplane travel and waiting for connections, chunks of time that could be used for quilting if I brought hand piecing with me. An unexpected bonus of hand sewing in

Guess the Idiom

Can you identify the titles of each quilt on these and the following pages?

"Crows' Feet"

"Jay Walking"

"Sitting Ducks"

"Swan Song"

"Three Shrikes, You're Out"



21¾" x 16¼"

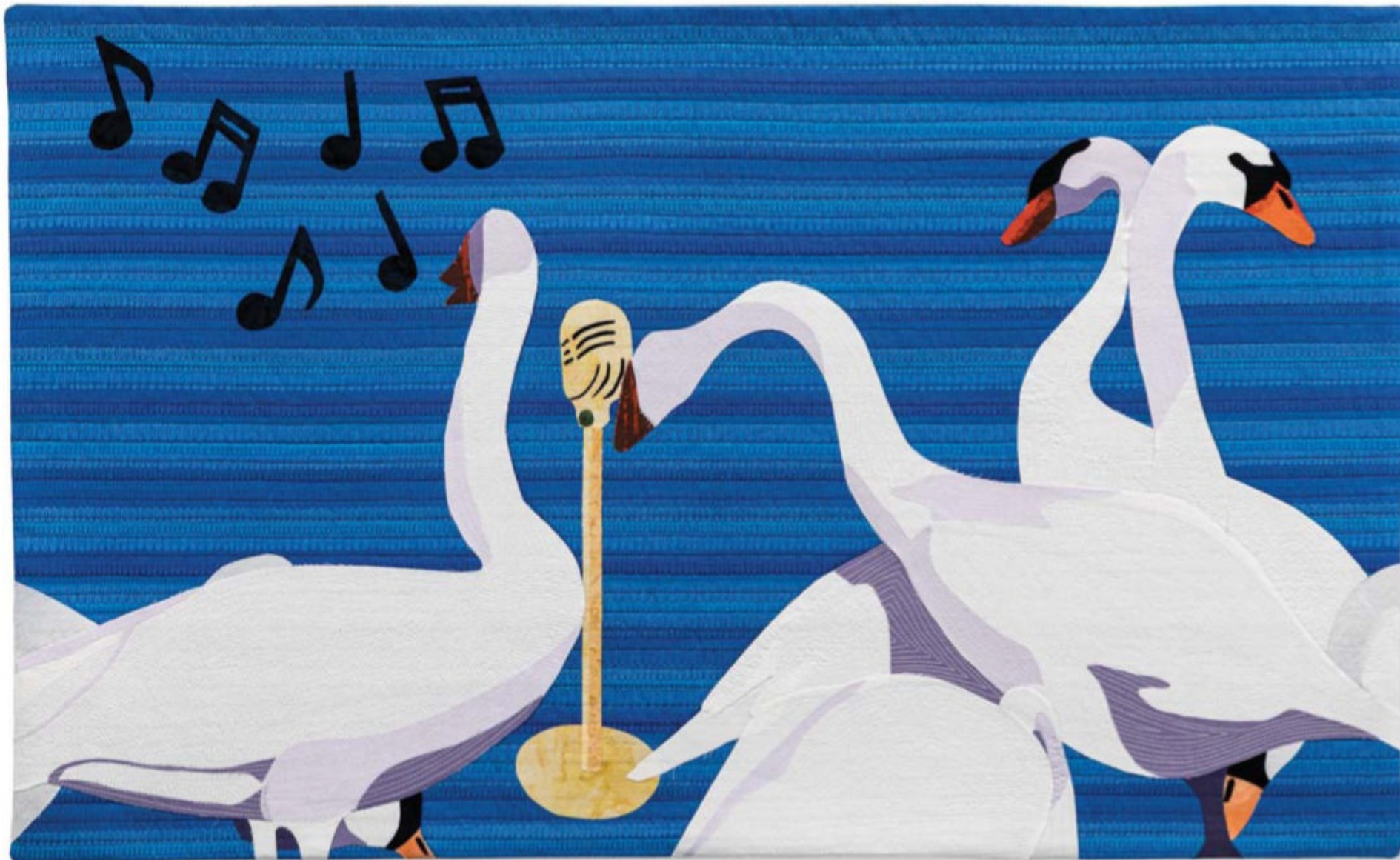
remote locations was that local women would approach to see what I was doing and initiate conversations.

As time went on and work demands lessened, my quilts—still sewn by hand—became larger and less traditional. I often mixed cotton fabrics I had bought in Japan and Singapore with commercial fabrics from a local quilt store. It wasn't until I encountered and devoured Roberta Horton's book, *THE FABRIC MAKES THE QUILT*, that I began making art quilts. The rest, as they say, is history. My enthusiasm for quilting has only grown through the years.

Most of my art quilts are portraits of people, animals, or ordinary objects. I haven't had any formal art training but am an avid reader of quilt books. My work has been especially influenced



24½" × 22½"



34½" × 23½"



28¾" x 21"

by studying the quilts of artists Susan Carlson, Alice Beasley, and Joan Sowada.

Quilts Today

My general approach to quilt construction is to complete the quilt background separately from other elements of the design. For the bird idiom quilts I chose either a single piece of fabric or a composite made from machine sewn pieces. This background was attached to fusible fleece and quilted.

Copyright-free bird images were found on the internet and enlarged to the desired size. I then traced their outlines onto black fabric, prefused with interfacing, and cut them out. Using fabric from my stash, I collaged a representation of the bird on the front side of each black bird shape, fusing the collage fabrics to the black base when

I was happy with the composition.

I chose this form of construction because it allowed me to easily quilt the bird independent of the quilt background.

After quilting the bird, I added fusible web to the back of it and peeled off the release paper. I then auditioned the placement of the bird on the quilt background using the sticky back of the bird image to hold it in place as I moved it around. Once I decided on the final composition, the bird was fused in place permanently following the manufacturer's instructions. The extra black fabric layer of the bird gave it a slightly three-dimensional look even after it was fused to the background.

Note: I used Lite Steam-A-Seam 2® from The Warm® Company. I like its stickiness that allows me to reposition the birds until I'm happy with the final composition.

What's Next?

I have shown the bird idiom quilts in public on three occasions—in a nature center, at a restaurant-gallery, and before a grammar school audience in an assembly. In the first two venues, I offered a "cheat sheet" with hints and answers for those who were stumped or wanted to confirm their guesses. Visitors and kids had lots of fun guessing the answers.

The response to the bird idiom quilts has been so positive that it inspired me to create more interactive art. I have begun a new series of quilts called "Getting Together." Each quilt features a different group of four individuals sharing coffee/tea around a table. Viewers are asked to imagine what the people might be talking about and to provide a sample dialogue. I am planning to hang the quilts on the walls of a nearby coffee house—the perfect place for discussion. ”



QuiltCon

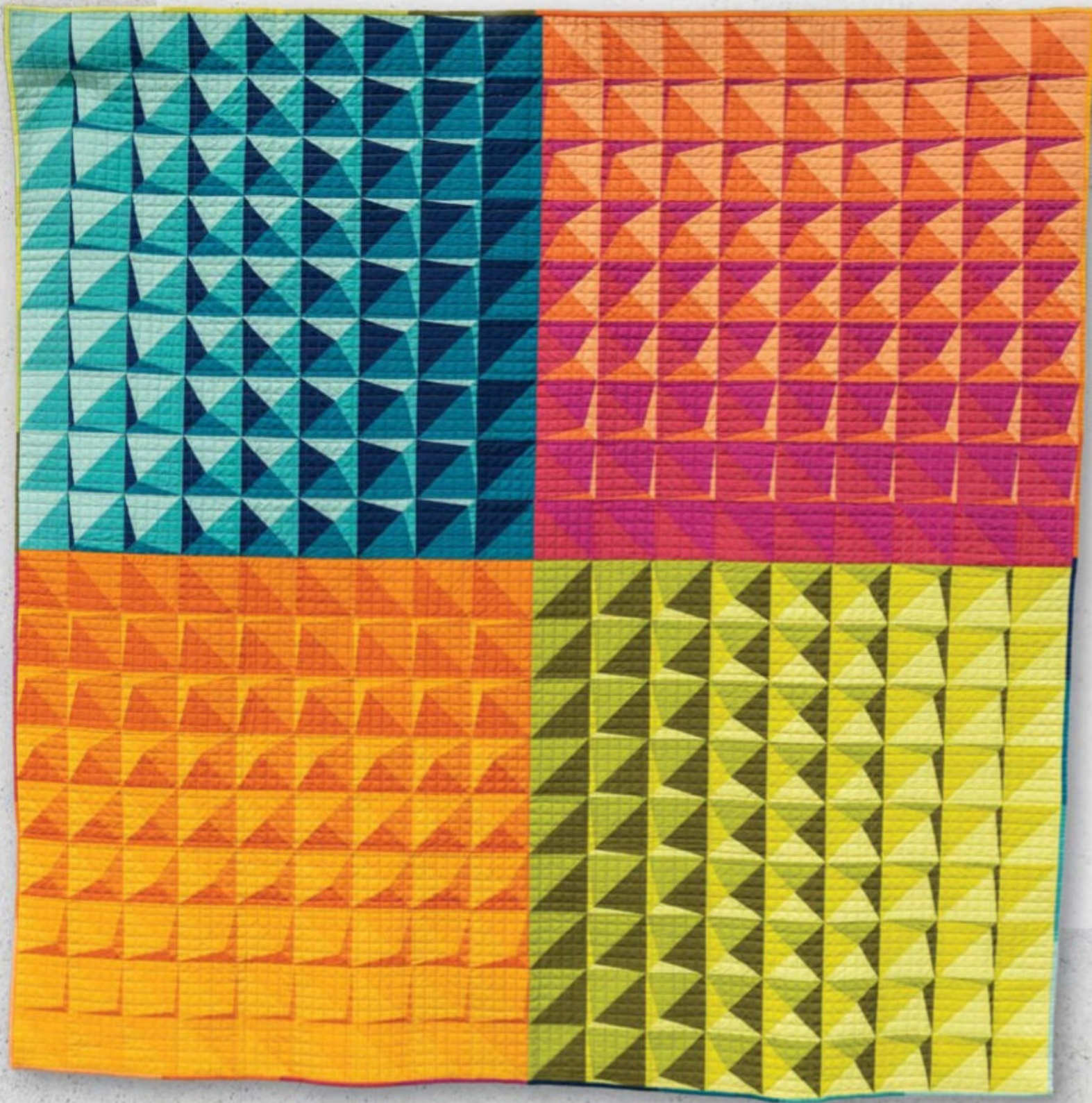
2024

A gallery of winning quilts

Presented by the Modern Quilt Guild, QuiltCon 2024 was held in Raleigh, North Carolina, this past February and featured a treasure trove of modern quilts by MQG members. The quilts on the following pages—all award winners—represent some of the best examples of modern quilt art. Their innovative designs, craftsmanship, and artistic expressions continue to improve and excel as QuiltCon grows into a more and more impressive exhibition of its members' incredible talents.

QuiltCon 2025 will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, and planning is already underway for this popular annual event. For more information, visit quiltcon.com.

Photos courtesy of the Modern Quilt Guild



◀ BEST IN SHOW 2024

What We Will Use as Weapons: A List of School Supplies

GINNY ROBINSON • INDIVIDUAL MEMBER • 35" x 79"

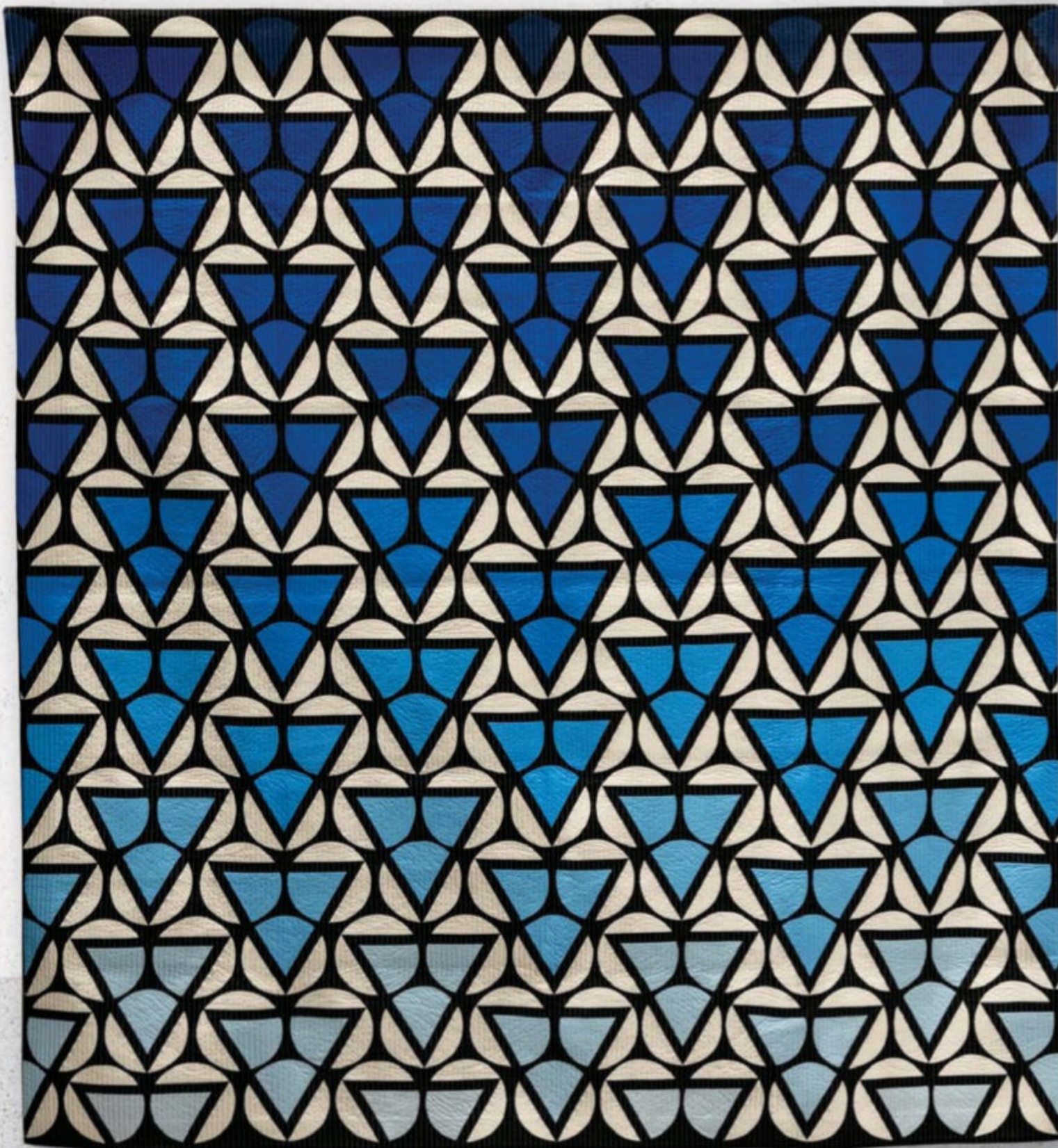
"Gargoyle bookends." "Pencils." "Erlenmeyer flasks." "Jugs of paint." "Cello cases." "Building blocks." "Nothing but my words." I'm a teacher who asked other U.S. teachers what ordinary classroom objects they would use to defend their students in a school shooting. Their answers varied by grade level and the subject they teach. Shaped like a door, the quilt celebrates the good work these school supplies do each day to teach our kids about life and the world, while also acknowledging that teachers sometimes see these things in a different way. The quilting represents the shooter on the front and the teacher on the back, with the appliqué pieces aimed at them. Imagine bringing a stapler to a gunfight. But I never want to see a gun on the front of this quilt. What I want is the AR-15 taken off the other side. Our children deserve better than the nightmare we tolerate.

▲ MQG EXCELLENCE AWARD

Anechoic

JANICE REIMER • INDIVIDUAL MEMBER
63" x 63"

"Anechoic" is the result of a doodle session that turned into a summer of foundation paper piecing. This quilt was a lesson in color theory and pulled me in creative directions that were out of my comfort zone (hello bright bold colors). Each color quadrant has elements of the other quadrants in them by incorporating their colors into the quilting thread and binding.



PEOPLE'S CHOICE

White Bubbles

IRINA TIMOFEEVA • INDIVIDUAL MEMBER • 74" × 81"

QUILTED BY NATALIA MOSKALEVA

We are surrounded by illusions every day. This work is an illusion as well. You see blue triangles but in fact, they are just circles. This quilt—made with traditional patchwork techniques—does not look traditional at all. I was inspired by Varvara Stepanova, a Russian textile artist, who created constructivist textile patterns over 100 years ago that look modern even today.



BEST HAND QUILTING

Solomon's Stripes

ETHYLENE ZIEGLER • LOS ANGELES MQG • 73" × 74"

Inspired by an Anni Albers color study, I originally set out to design a quilt using only three colors with the Kona Color of the Year, Crush, appearing in all of the blocks. The block design I came up with is a combination of two of my improv favorites—strip piecing and quarter-square curves. The fourth color was added by chance when I ran out of Crush and found a color in my stash with the same value. Hard to believe, but if you take a photo of the quilt in black and white, it will look like the three-color quilt I originally had in mind.

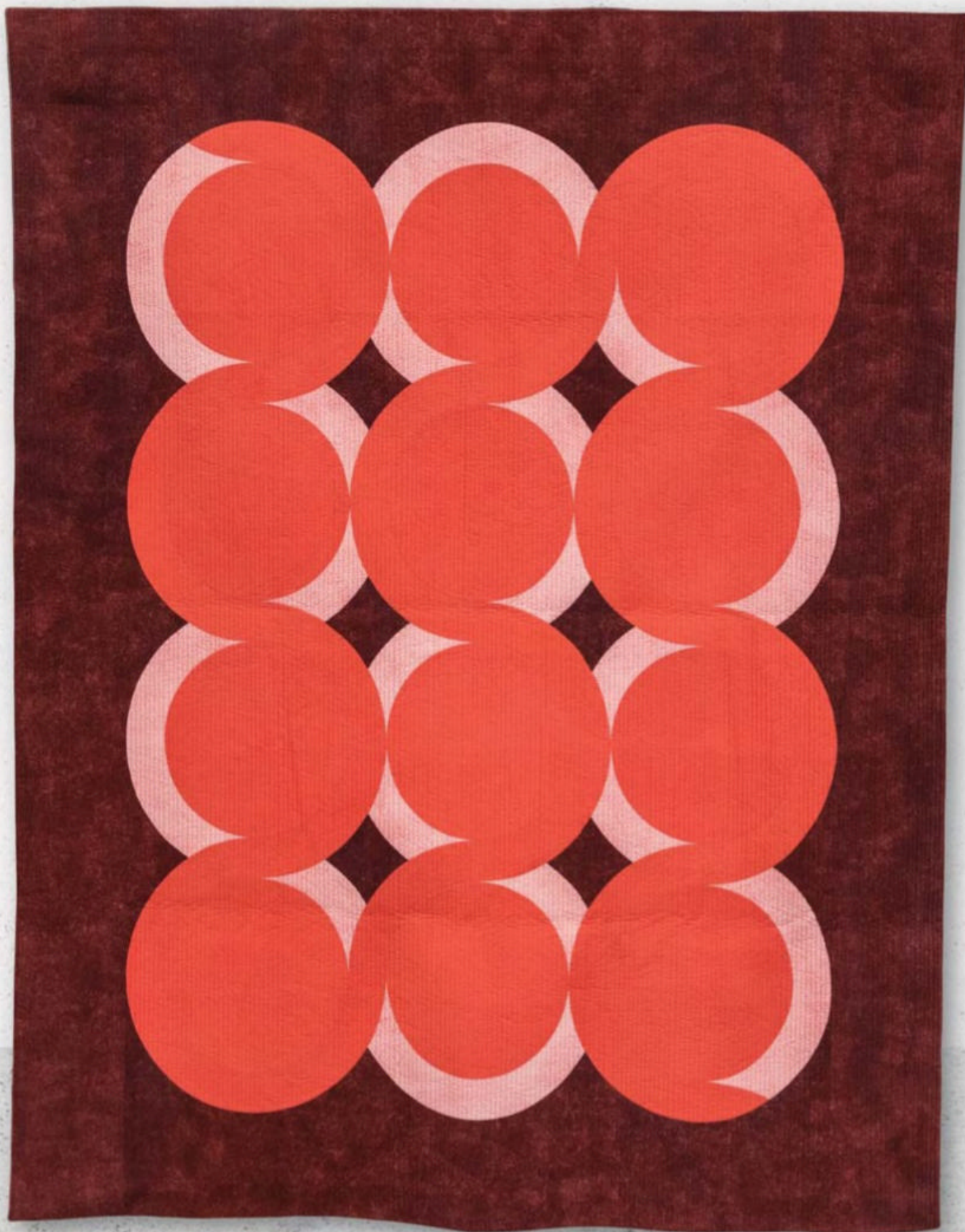


BEST MACHINE QUILTING

Cloudy Night Sky

YVONNE FUCHS • INDIVIDUAL MEMBER • 48" × 60"

"Cloudy Night Sky" is a study in how atmospheric and lighting conditions are important in order to see the stars at night. Clouds and light pollution often obscure from view the stars that we know are shining down. With just a slight shift in conditions and lighting, the stars pop out to greet us. 'Quilt as desired' can be some of the most intimidating instructions in a quilt pattern, and quilts with lots of negative space can increase the anxiety and pressure to get it right. I created this design in order to write an article sharing the process I use to develop a quilting plan that transforms the negative space into a secondary design element. I could not wait to turn the quilt and quilting plan I created as a process demonstration into reality.



BEST ORIGINAL MODERN DESIGN

Candy Pop

KELLY SPELL • INDIVIDUAL MEMBER • 58" × 73"

Pink and maroon candies dance in a sea of red. I made this quilt to push my design and piecing capabilities into new territory. All of the fabric is hand-dyed or hand-printed. Construction of the quilt top required techniques similar to that of a Double Wedding Ring motif, with the added challenge of an 18-foot-long serpentine swirl. Cut from a single piece of fabric, it winds its way up and down three columns of circles.



JUDGE'S CHOICE:
STACEY A. WATSON

Scrappy Manhattan

CLARA STOIKOW • INDIVIDUAL
MEMBER • 22" x 53"

This quilt shows a map of Manhattan, one of New York City's five boroughs. The street grid was machine quilted. The main roads were highlighted with the help of appliquéd cords. Narrow elastic bands were appliquéd as motorways and tunnels. I used dark gray fabric for water (the East River, Hudson River, Harbor). It was quilted with short running stitches, following the outlines of the shore in the direction of the water flow. This created a dense texture, from which the colorfully pieced Manhattan stands out well. Since the focus of this quilt is on the island of Manhattan, the surrounding neighborhoods were meant to look more subtle. They are an improv pieced patchwork of white and white-patterned fabrics, hand quilted with a diagonal grid of white running stitches. The hand quilting is intended to bring the different fabrics together to create an even, reserved background.



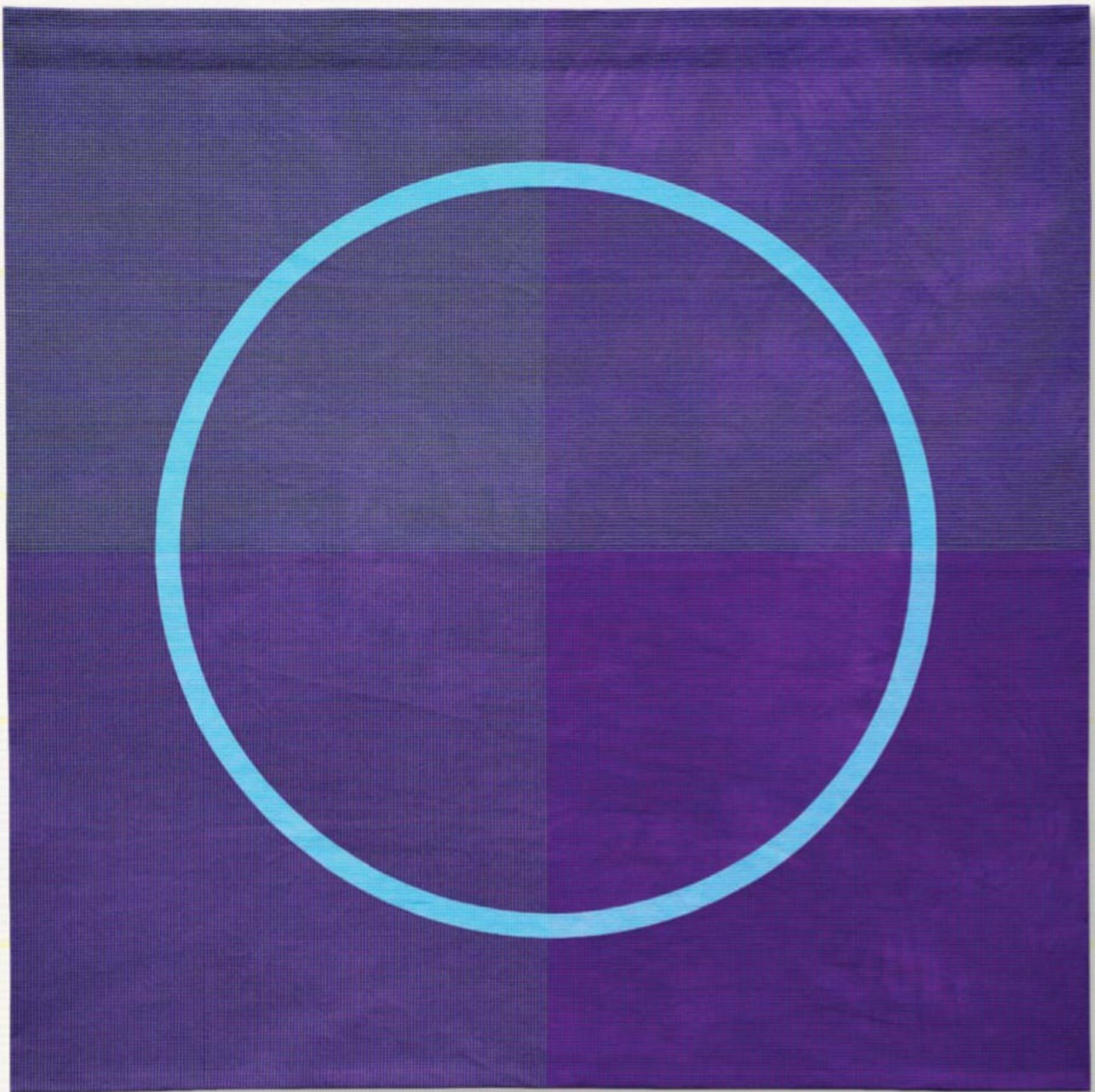
IMPROVISATION, FIRST PLACE

Reconceived

JENNIFER CANDON • CAMBRIDGE MQG • 99" × 100"

My preconceived ideas of a composition often get in the way. I am learning to have faith in myself as an artist and to give up control. I increasingly appreciate that artwork evolves and becomes its own thing during the making process. I began work on this piece with a completely different composition and color scheme in mind. As it grew, technical and design realities made me realize that my original conception was not the best path forward. I gave up control and followed a new direction—one that was unclear from the outset but became an improvisational collaboration between the materials and maker. By letting go, the piece is strengthened. Quilted textile mural, sewn with my hand-dyed linen, upholstery fabric and quilting cotton.

Photos courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted



*"Aura No. 1" • 80" × 80" • Audrey Esarey
International Quilt Museum Collection*

MINIMALISM

The Cutting Edge of Modern

by Teresa Duryea Wong

the definition of modern quilting has swerved and swayed for the last several years as quilt artists push the edges and break the molds. Among this transformative shift in what is and is not modern, one category continues to astound us with its incredible originality and creativity: Minimalism.

Making minimalist art is one of the most difficult genres to get right. It requires discipline, a strict vocabulary, and a keen eye. Minimalism is extremely hard to define because, basically, it is art that has been pared down to its least complicated elements. Because minimalist art is a radical reduction of color and pattern, it can seem cool or expressionless at first. But if you give it time, there is deep beauty, quietness, and visual stimulation in minimalism.

Two modern quilters who are producing some of the most stunning minimalist quilts today are Audrey Esarey and Carson Converse. Their quilts are technically impeccable and simultaneously exude a mature, minimalist aesthetic. Because of these two and many other talented artists, QuiltCon's Minimalist category is one of the most dramatic and innovative genres in modern quilting today.

It Starts with Discipline

Anyone who has followed the principles of Marie Kondo and her tips for tidying up knows how hard it can be to clean out your closet. Imagine applying those same principles to minimalist art where the success or failure of a piece hinges on the artist's ability to reduce the clutter. Doing so takes serious discipline.

Both Carson and Audrey have the discipline to approach their quilt making with intense study and experimentation before they make the final artwork, including making countless samples and quilt studies.

"My process involves a lot of trial and error. I make hundreds of samples each year. I might start with a range of threads to narrow down color family and value, then keep refining until I find a color, or colors, I'm happy with," Carson says.

Seam reduction also matters.

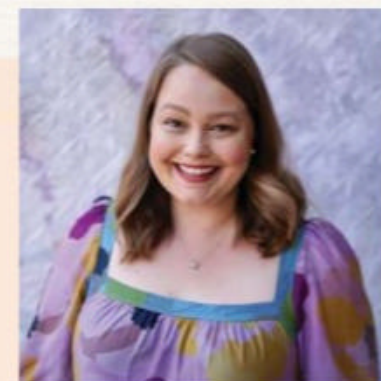
"When a straight quilting line travels across a seam line, there is a slight shift in the quilting line, which emphasizes the seam," Audrey explains. To fix this, she studies her construction options and devises ingenious ways to piece her designs while severely limiting the number of seams, as well as the shadows of seams. As a result, Audrey's quilt surfaces appear flawless and the visual noise is reduced.

Strict Vocabulary

Like a great poet, a minimalist artist must also be dedicated to a limited—but powerful—vocabulary. Rather than a dictionary of words, the minimalist artist must rely on a small catalog of simplified geometric shapes—the cube, square, triangle, rectangle, circle, and so on. Knowing how to use those shapes effectively is

what separates the ordinary from the extraordinary.

The other half of the vocabulary is color, or the absence of color. A considerable amount of minimalist works are created in the black, white, and gray palette because those colors exude the cool vibe of reduction.



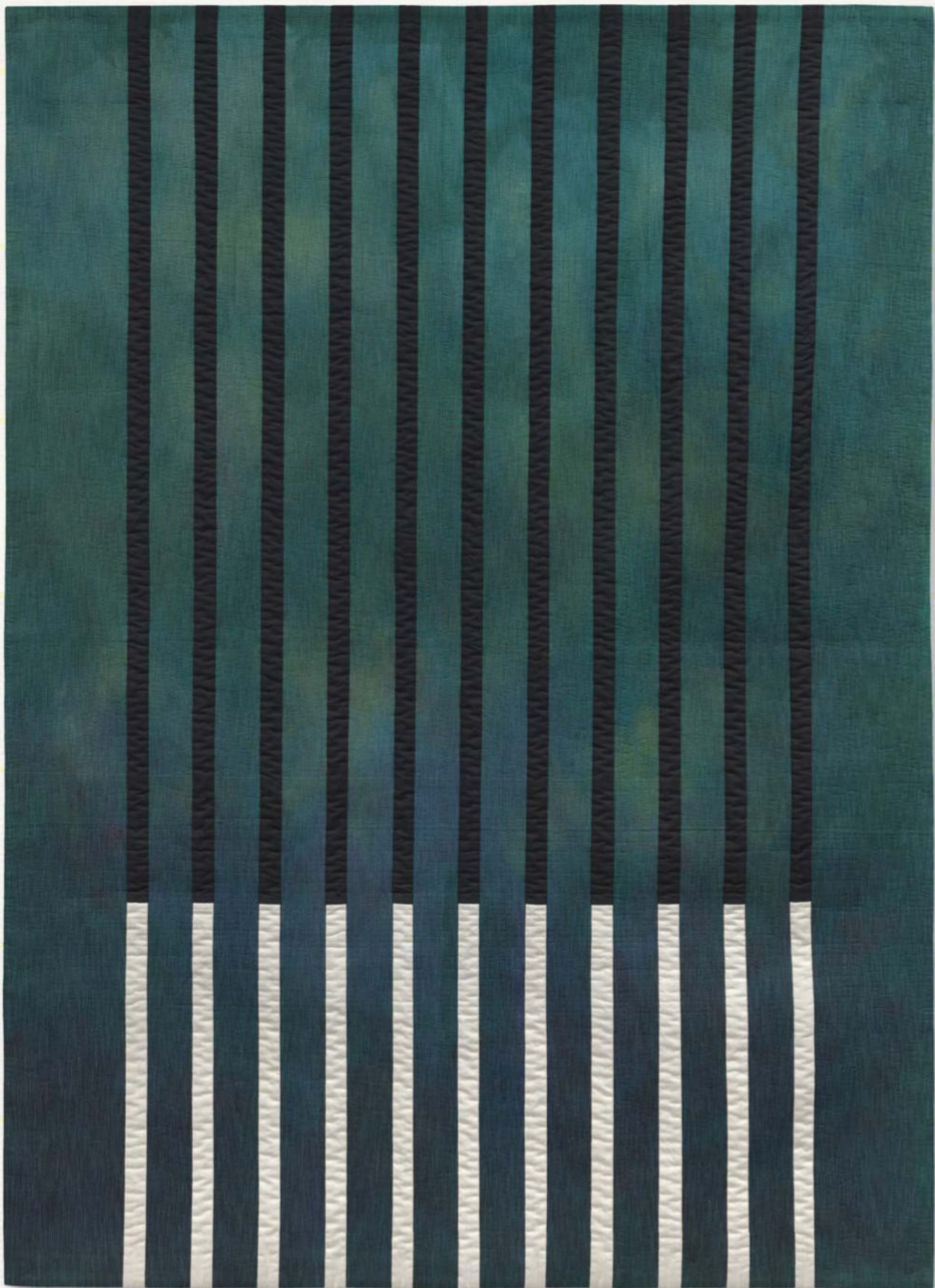
"In a minimalist quilt, there is no place to hide."

—AUDREY ESAREY

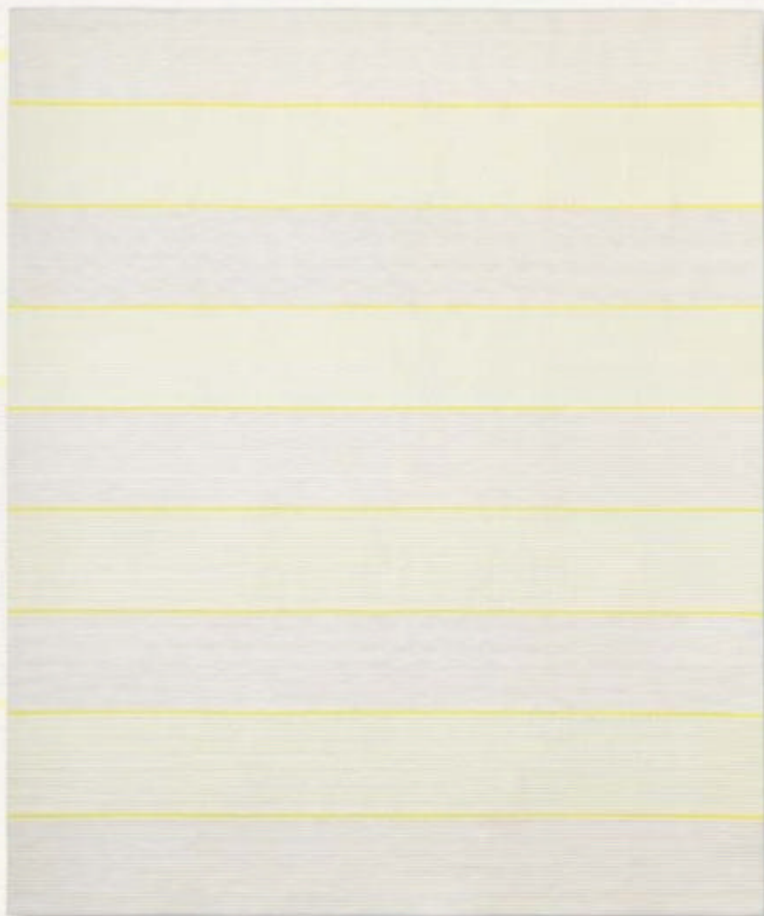


"Corset" • 54" x 54" • Carson Converse

Photo by Stephen Petegorsky



"Forest Through the Trees no. 3" • 42" x 59" • Carson Converse
Private Collection



"Passage No. 1" • 43" × 52" • Carson Converse



"Passage No. 3" • 49½" × 54" • Carson Converse

The term cool—or coolness—was first used to describe this art in the 1950s, and it meant the absence of warmth. Both artists use this constricted palette often, and by working through these cool colors, they have created stunning pieces.

"When you limit the design and color palette you can more deeply explore the nuances and interactions between colors," Carson says. "When I'm editing quilts, I'm thinking about which elements are necessary to maintain an interesting visual dialogue, and which elements are just creating noise or distracting from the concept. I'm looking for some dialogue and things that don't fully agree with each other. But ultimately, the elements should enhance each other, not overpower."

But sometimes, Carson will pull in a strong color to sit alongside her subdued palette. A strong green was employed in one of her "Forest Through the Trees" series and the

result was breathtaking. This is a piece that seems quiet at first, but the longer you study it the louder it speaks to you. She has also used allover color—reds, blues, and yellow—with equally stunning results. These painterly quilts are intense studies in line, space, and nuance.

"I'm often trying to convey a feeling of awe that I experienced at some point, even though I know my work will never come close to the original emotion I felt. Rather, it's about the challenge of translating that experience into art and sharing it with another human being," she says.

Modern quilters today have shown us that strong color combinations can be used with stunning effect in minimalist art, as long as there aren't too many colors. Audrey Esarey's "Aura No. 1" is a brilliant example of how to limit the number of colors, but still use vibrant, unexpected colors—in this case purple and



"Minimalism is like hosting an intimate dinner, while maximalism is like New Year's Eve in Times Square."

—CARSON CONVERSE

turquoise. The decisive palette made this particular quilt a showstopper. It's no surprise it was awarded first place in the Minimalist Design category at QuiltCon 2023.

Keen Eyes & Strong Editing

Just having discipline and a strong vocabulary is not enough to create great minimalist art. The maker must also know how to edit.

“I evaluate each piece with a critical editing eye. I ask myself, ‘Is this design element necessary?’ And ‘Does this enhance or detract from the visual impact of my quilt?’” Audrey explains. “I edit every part of my process—including the shapes, color selection, number of seams, and finishing plans.”

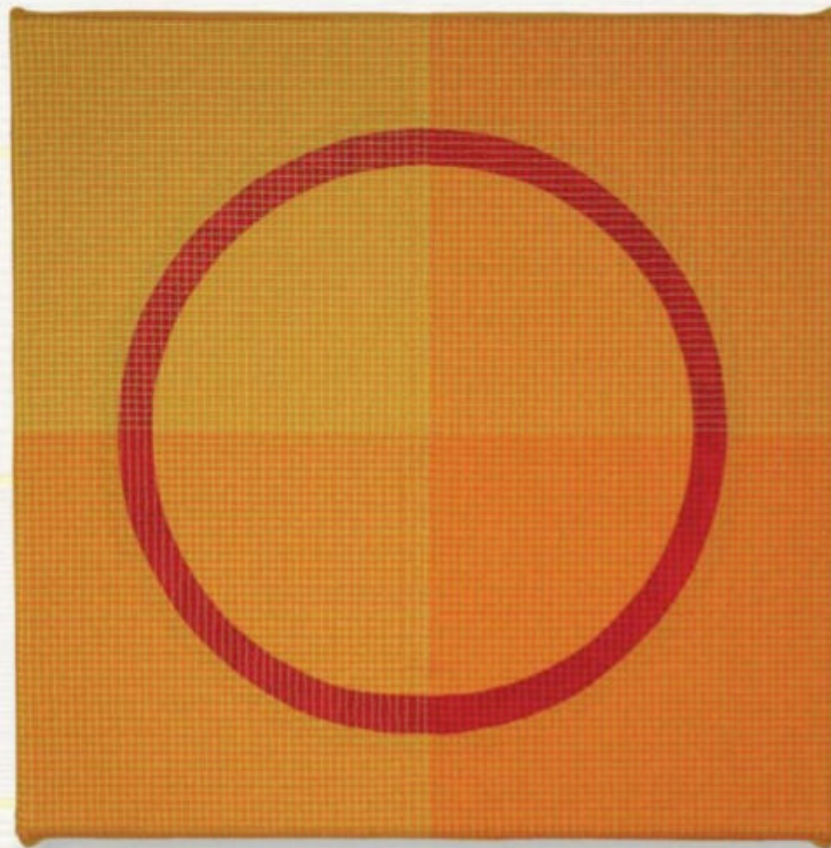
Audrey also pays particularly close attention to the quilted line. “Quilting is an opportunity to add another layer of design to the piece,” she says. “Stitching can be the main design element or a matter of functionality. In the last three to four years, I’ve been treating quilting somewhere in between by using bold thread colors, dense stitching lines, and accent quilting for added visual interest or to emphasize a pieced design element. Quilting is also an opportunity to add texture to the surface, and it differentiates the art quilt from any other medium!”

Learning to edit what inspires you also requires a great deal of tenacity, otherwise too many ideas can spoil the intent.

“Inspiration can come from anywhere. There will usually be a moment that sparks an idea, a news story, something I see in daily life, a dream, or a moment that occurs during the process of making,” Carson says. “But inspiration is so much more than a single idea, it’s really a combination of all our life experiences and interests. This is why editing is so challenging. Editing is a skill that I intentionally make time to practice and is something that I see going beyond the aesthetics—it’s about mindfulness and learning to let go of the things that don’t feel authentic or important.”



*“Watercolor Study No. 6” • 30" × 28½" • Audrey Esarey
International Quilt Museum Collection, #2021.027.0001*



“Aura Color Study No 4” • 12" × 12" • Audrey Esarey

With Audrey, Carson, and so many other talented makers committed to this genre, QuiltCon’s Minimalist Design category will certainly continue to be the cutting edge of modern. 🌸

WANTED: *You and Your Work*

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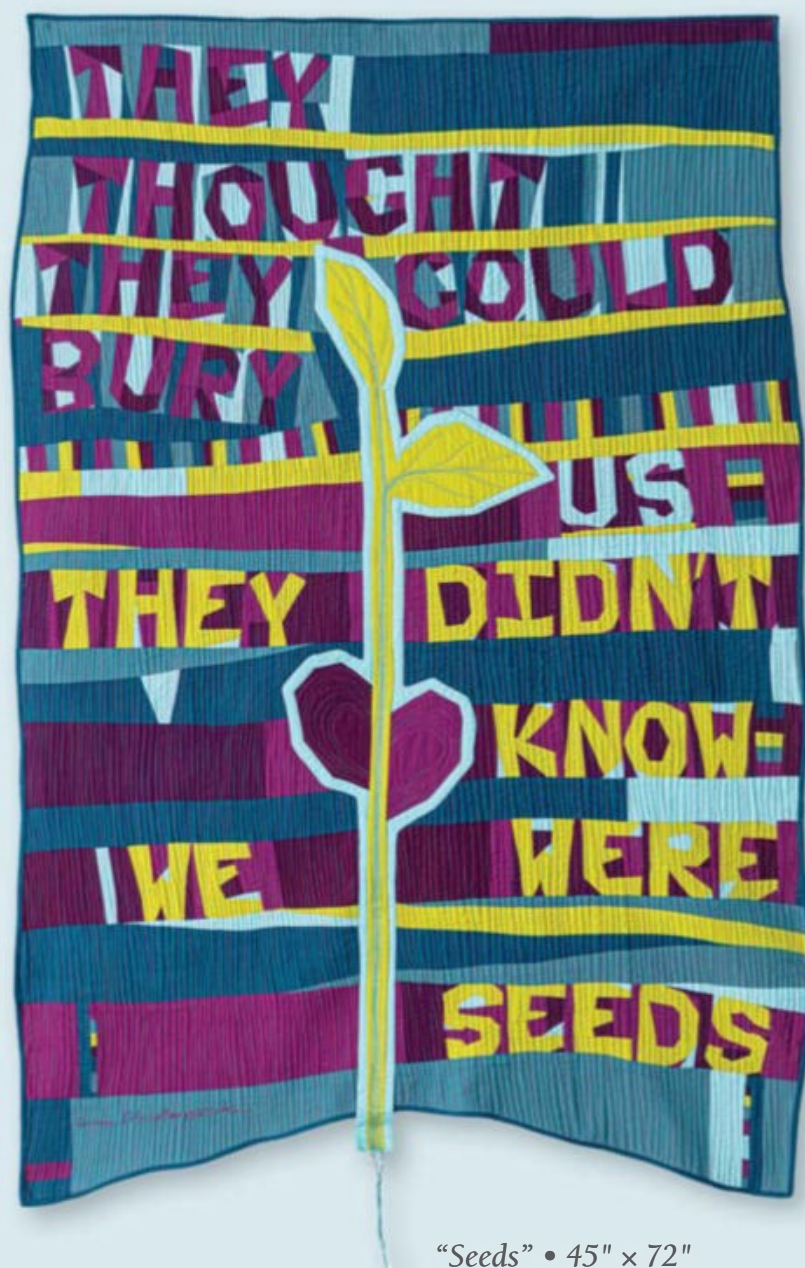
Counterclockwise
from top, artwork by
Susan Price, Kestrel
Michaud, and Diana S. Fox

Making a MESSAGE

Foundation paper piecing and improv meet with thrilling results

by Lisa Thorpe

Not long ago I was looking for creative inspiration and I stumbled on the graphic work of activist-artist Corita Kent, also known as Sister Mary Corita. She created screen-printed art of bold images and messages of love. I decided to try my hand at a message-driven quilt inspired by her work.

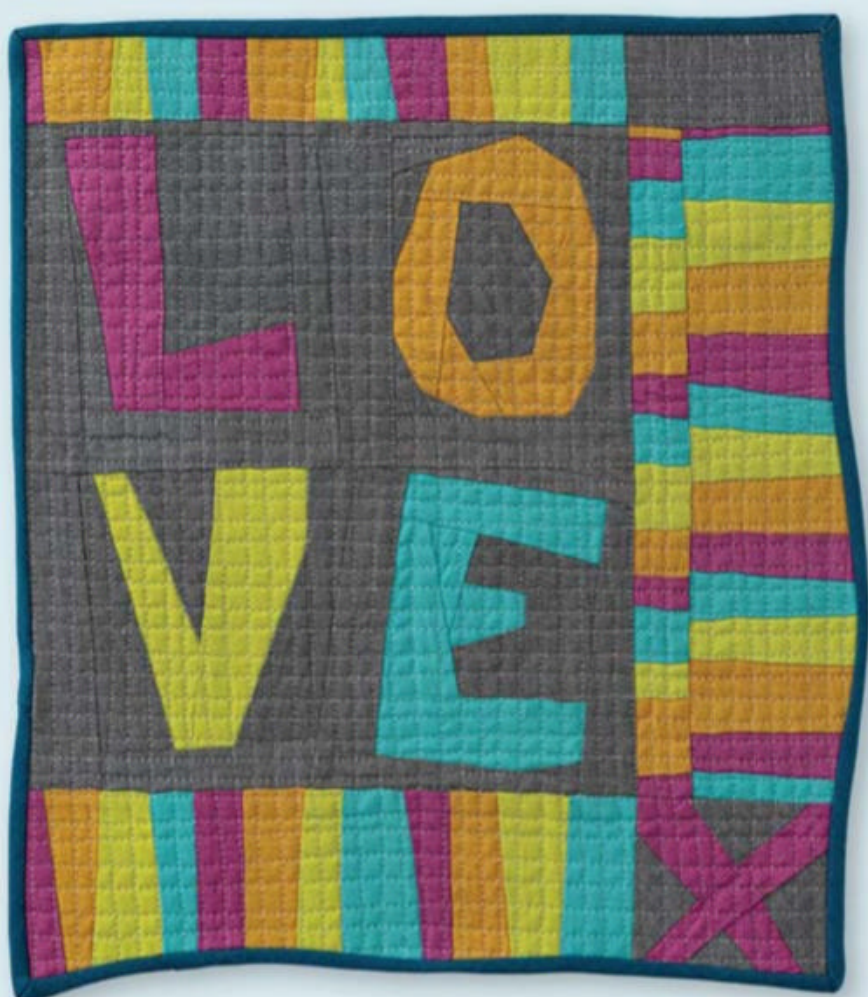


"Seeds" • 45" x 72"

As I explored and researched, I remembered a quote from the Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos I had scribbled down once; translated, it went something like this—"they thought they could bury us; they did not know we were seeds." If this quote sounds familiar, you might associate it with the United Farm Workers movement of the 1960s and '70s.

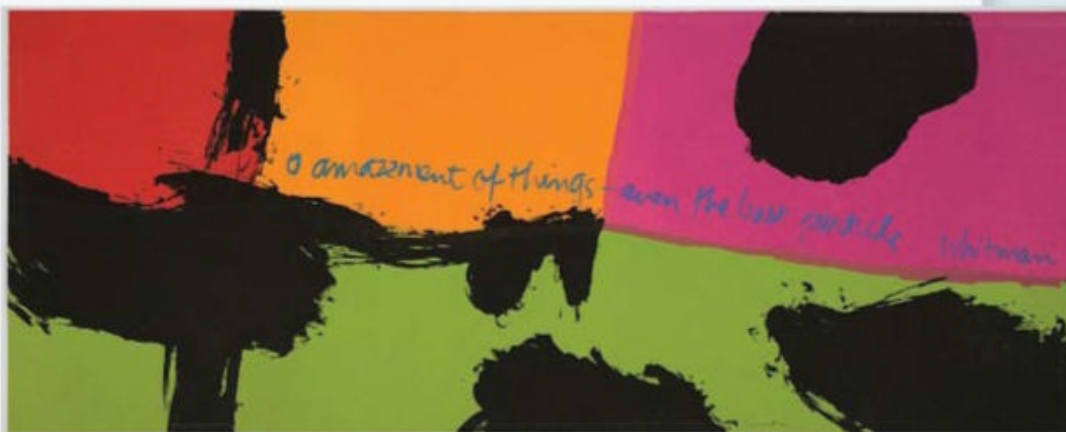
This wonderful quote seemed perfect to base a graphic word quilt on. I wanted to reference the bold, graphic, free-flowing designs of Sister Mary Corita in this quilt plus create pieced letters that wouldn't be too stiff and structured for working in an improv mode of construction. Combining foundation paper piecing and improv quilting together may seem like an oxymoron. What follows is how I merged the precision of paper piecing with the playful organic structure of improvisational quilting to solve that conundrum.

"Love" • 12" x 15"



Throughout the 1960s, her work became increasingly political, urging viewers to consider poverty, racism, and social injustice. In 1968, she left the order and moved to Boston. After 1970, her work evolved into a sparser, introspective style, influenced by living in a new environment, a secular life,

At the time of her death, she had created almost 800 serigraph editions, thousands of watercolors, and innumerable public and private commissions.



"o amazement" (1969) • Sister Mary Corita • 28¼" x 11¼"

Lisa's Process in Creating "Seeds"

Some find improvisational quilting daunting and don't know how to start. My approach to improv work is to choose a set of criteria to work within that gives me enough structure to get started with lots of freedom to play.



My criteria: I determined four elements—the quote, graphic inspiration, size (I wanted a large, door-sized finished piece), and color palette (I chose the Windham Artisan Cottons 2024 Fabric Challenge from QuiltCon). I did a rough sketch of where I wanted to go and in using the quote, the image of a seedling was a natural.

This sketch was not a pattern, it was a way for me to organize my thoughts about color distribution and word placement. The sketch was a beginning, not the end.

It's lovely to let loose from perfection—which I'm not good at anyway—and let the wonky playful process unfold. Creating an improvisational quilt doesn't mean there was no plan. It just means I didn't quite know how it

was all going to come together and I made choices along the way. It's like going on a road trip without your GPS, like the old days. You don't know how many twists and turns there will be, there might be detours for unexpected vistas or you might even get lost for a while but in the end, you'll get there, enriched by the journey.

I love how this large quilt reflects the graphic, word-rich posters made by Sister Mary Corita. I love the inspirational quote popping with color, the wonky words and stripes covered in dense of quilting, and I love the waving, wandering edges. I hope, if Sister Mary Corita and Dinos Christianopoulos were alive, they would love it too! Thanks to them for the inspiration across time and space.

DIRECTIONS

Print the letters

We will create a piece with the letters L-O-V-E to illustrate the steps.

I think Sister Mary Corita would approve. You can pick your own short word, if you prefer.

1. Make a plan. Improv aside, I needed a way to piece the letters. I did some searching on the internet and purchased a pattern by Sugaridoo.

NOTE: Sugaridoo's instructions are for standard paper piecing but I modified them to use a freezer paper method instead.

2. Determine the size of the letters. I wanted a finished letter at about $3\frac{1}{2}" \times 4\frac{1}{2}"$ so I scaled the letters down to 75% for printing. The smaller letter size meant I could print on a half sheet ($5\frac{1}{2}" \times 8\frac{1}{2}"$).

NOTE: See "How to Adapt the Size of a Printed Object" on page 48 to see how I did this on my printer.

3. Once you are happy with the size of the letters, print them onto the paper side of freezer paper sheets precut to fit in the printer.

Get ready

1. Choose the fabrics. I used a neutral gray with a selection of lively pastel colors. Contrast between the letter and the background is important. (figure 1) I suggest practicing with easy letters like "L" and "V" that have fewer seams before moving on to more complex letters like "E" and "O."
2. Cut fabric strips for the paper piecing. If you have never done foundation paper piecing with freezer paper, I suggest watching some videos on the internet—that's what I did. Most tell you to cut fabric to the size of each numbered piece, but I found this to be tedious, so I cut all my fabric to $3" \times 6"$ strips. (See "Fabric Choice Tips.")

NOTE: If you are creating larger letters, you'll need larger strips.

MATERIALS

- Downloadable foundation paper piecing alphabet pattern (I purchased and downloaded "Funky ABC—Alphabet Pattern" by Sugaridoo.)
- Freezer paper (I used Quilter's Freezer Paper Sheets cut in half to $5\frac{1}{2}" \times 8\frac{1}{2}"$. Make sure your printer will accept cut pages; some printers 'prefer' a full $8\frac{1}{2}" \times 11"$ sheet.)
- Inkjet or laser printer
- Quilting cotton (See "Fabric Choice Tips.")
- Batting (I used the thinnest cotton I could find.)
- Backing
- Binding

Optional

- Paper-piecing ruler with $\frac{1}{4}"$ lip (I use Add-A-Quarter™ ruler from CM Designs.)

Stitch the letters

1. Fold along all of the pattern lines before you start. This pre-creasing is helpful as you work.

NOTE: On the pattern I used, the background color is white and the letter color is blue.

2. Fold the line between section A1 and A2, align the fabric for section A1—wrong side touching the shiny side of the freezer paper—so it more than covers the A1 space, and press from the paper side of the pattern to adhere the fabric to the unprinted, shiny side.

NOTE: For the letter "L" this is the gray background fabric.

3. A2/A3 will be fuchsia fabric. Place it under the gray A1, right-sides

Fabric Choice Tips

- Freezer paper piecing can be a bit of a puzzle when you're starting out. I suggest beginners use a cross weave cotton like Windham Artisan or a solid dyed fabric. It's easier to learn the paper piecing technique this way because the front and back of these fabrics are the same and you can't get confused about right-side up or wrong-side up when stitching—a common dilemma.
- To make the $12" \times 15"$ LOVE quilt shown here: Cut 4 gray background strips $3" \times 6"$. Cut 4 strips in each letter color (fuchsia, mustard, green, and blue) $3" \times 6"$. The leftover fabric will be used for improv play and to complete the quilt as shown.
- A $\frac{1}{4}$ yard or fat quarter of each letter color and $\frac{3}{4}$ yard of contrasting background color (gray) were more than enough for this small quilt.



figure 1



figure 2

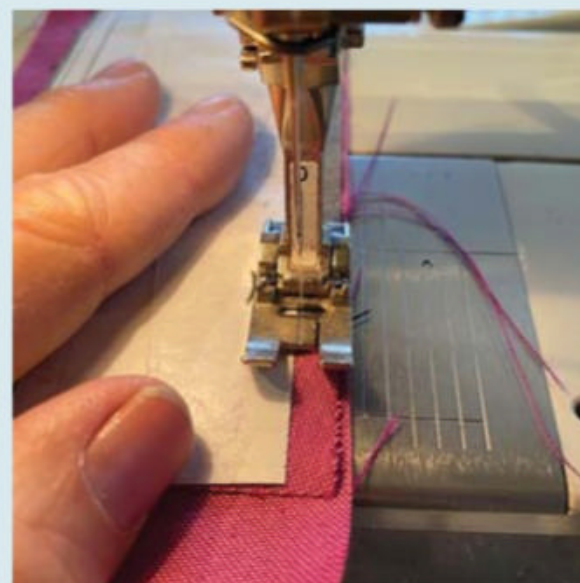


figure 3

Process photos courtesy of the artist

together. (figure 2) Fold back the pattern along the A1/A2 line. Using an add-a-quarter ruler or regular cutting ruler, trim a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance of fabric; away from the folded paper line.

NOTE: Since I decided A2 and A3 would be the same color, I used one large piece to cover both units and avoided a seam through the A2/A3 patch, as the pattern called for.

4. Stitch right along but not through the paper fold. (figure 3)

TIP: If you sew a tiny bit on the paper, it's ok; you can tear it away later.

5. Press the seam open.
6. Continue until the letter is done. Now on to the next letter until the 'message' is complete.

Add the improv element

The logical next step might be to stitch a line of letters together into words but here's where the improv fun comes in. And because this step is improv, I'll provide some tips and suggestions as to what you might want to do next—

you may want to create a small quilt as I did or arrange things completely differently. You decide!

- Sew strips of background fabric around all outer edges of each letter. This both creates a larger patch plus provides some 'breathing room' or framing between the letters when you sew them together.
- Audition the letters in a variety of configurations until you're happy. For my quilt, I decided on a 2x2 configuration of the letters.
- Stitch the remaining pre-cut, colored fabric strips and trimmed off bits into wonky rows to add in and around the letters.
- Play with the components you have created plus the remaining fabric until you have a pleasing layout that moves your eye around the quilt and then brings you back to the central reason for the art—the words.

Finish the quilt

This quilt top will have a lot of seams and lumpy bits, which calls for dense quilting to get everything down in a tidy, unifying fashion. Press well

before layering and basting. I used the thinnest cotton batting I could find to avoid creating added bulk.

1. Remove the freezer paper.
2. Sandwich the backing, batting, and quilt top to prepare for quilting. Baste as desired.
3. Machine quilt the artwork. Bind or finish the edges.

TIP: I chose a 60wt gray thread and stitched a $\frac{1}{4}$ " grid overall to give subtle structure to the design.

I pondered squaring up the quilt into a tidy rectangle, but in the end decided that would be at odds with the whole free-flowing vibe of the design and I chose to embrace the woozy, wandering edges on two sides. I bound with a bias-cut cotton in a darker color to give the edges a bit of weight. ✨

Resources

"Funky ABC—Alphabet Pattern" a downloadable paper-piecing pattern by Sugaridoo. sugaridoo.com

QuiltCon's Windham Artisan Cotton 2024 Fabric Challenge. quiltcon.com/windham-challenge

How to Adapt the Size of a Printed Object

Determine the size of the letters you want; if they are different than the pattern you have purchased, you'll need to enlarge or reduce the pattern to suit your project and needs.

I wanted a finished letter at about 3½" × 4½" so I scaled the letters down to 75% for printing. The smaller letter size meant I could print on a half sheet (5½" × 8½").

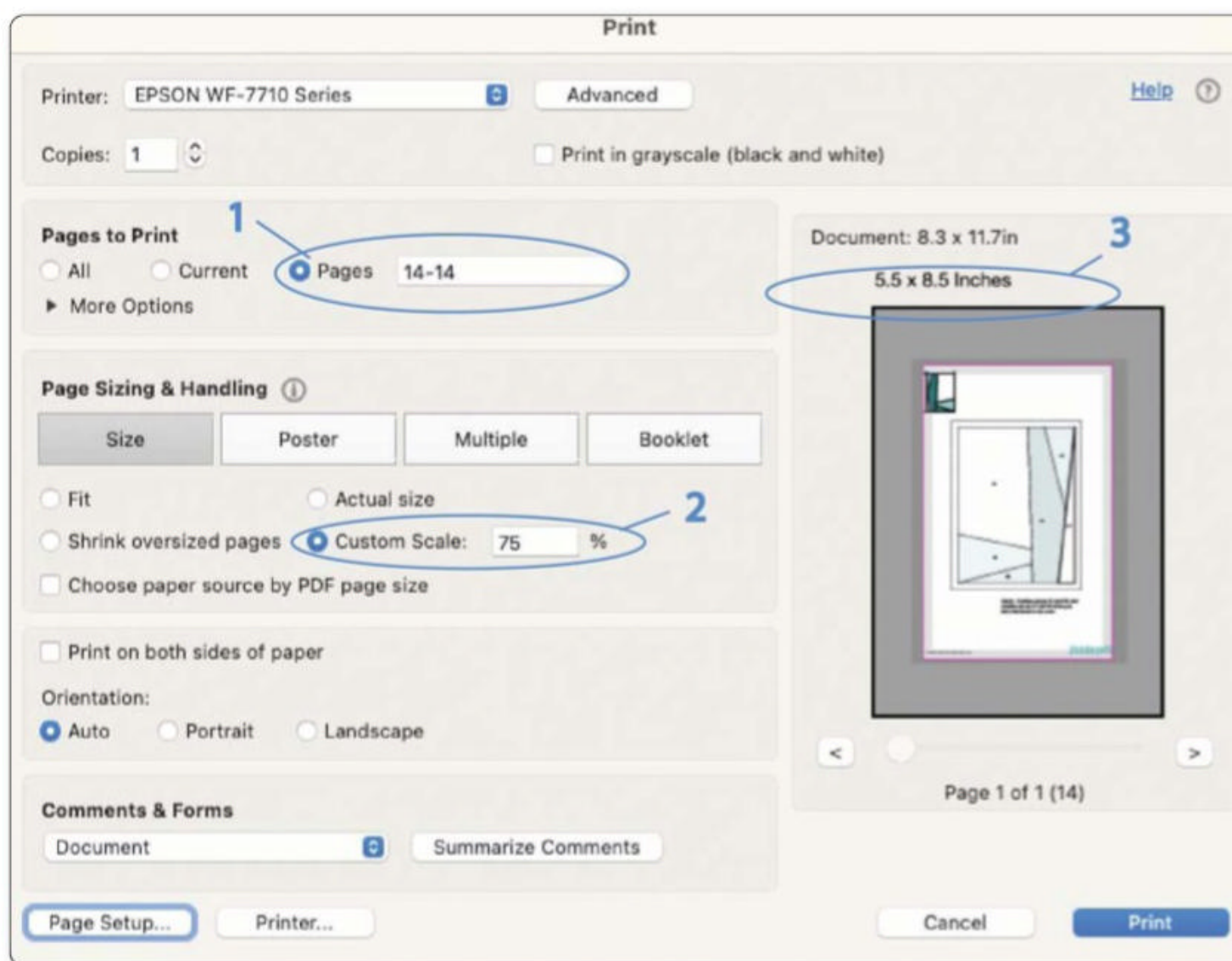
Print on the **rough side**, not the shiny side, of the freezer paper.

1 Within **Pages to Print**, select 'Pages' you are printing (here I was printing the letter L, page 14 of 14)

2 Within **Page Sizing & Handling**, select 'Custom Scale'—I used 75%. You can go larger or smaller—print on plain printer paper until you have the size you want so you don't waste the freezer paper. When you have the letters printed, trim them all down with ¼" extra all the way around the box.

NOTE: Do not follow the lines around the letter box—if you shrunk or enlarged the space, this line will no longer be ¼"; use a ruler to obtain a proper ¼".

3 This shows the measurement of the item.



This image is from the print command window on my computer.



Bounty All Around

RESULTS FROM THE 'FARM TO TABLE' READER CHALLENGE

In this issue of QUILTING ARTS, we celebrate the bounty of nature and the creativity it inspires. For this challenge, we invited readers to celebrate their connection with food. As many people strive to eat locally—good for our health and the planet—we note there is a resurgence in small farms and a focus on community and home gardens.

We challenged our readers to create a small art quilt that featured local food product(s) from their region so we could feature a visual smorgasbord of nature's bounty and color. We hope you enjoy the following pages of original art.

Steve's Dino Kale

7½" × 10" • CHERRI ANN PEARSON
ORANGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Every year, my husband Steve plants a small garden with lots of kale. Late in the fall, the dinosaur kale turns the most spectacular colors. I love how something delicious and nutritious can also be beautiful when everything else has gone by.

Cotton fabric, acrylic fabric paint, polyester embroidery thread, free-motion stitching.



Moonshine

9" x 12" • SHIRLEY SELLERS • NEWPORT, VIRGINIA

My geographical area is not known for any one specific animal or vegetable product, however, there are many local producers of moonshine which is made of corn and barley. My quilt depicts moonshine in its typical quart canning jar as it is often sold in the backwoods. The ear of corn and the jar are dimensional.

Batik fabric, organza, Kona Cotton, metallic thread, clear vinyl, poly stuffing; raw-edge appliqué; free-motion sketching.



Carnival Corn

10" x 11" • KATHERINE DOSSMAN • BELTON, TEXAS

Texas has many carnivals for people to enjoy and one of the best parts of going is the food. The smell of the butter and crunchiness is wonderful!

Cotton fabric, Texture Magic™, 12wt thread, bias tape piping, Lumiere® paint, Tsukineko® ink; couched, hand embroidered; big stitch quilted.



Farmer's Market Bounty

9" x 12" • CINDY LOPER
GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Our Nevada County farmer's markets feature many heirloom tomatoes as well as plants. Using my photos from the markets as well as my own homegrown tomatoes, I experimented with photo transfers. This included first using art apps to digitally enhance some pictures. Because I've had trouble with freezer paper methods, I applied liquid fabric stabilizer on cotton fabric to put through a printer. I also stabilized silk and chiffon on lightweight, double-sided fusible web leaving the back paper on for easy feeding through the printer. With this I ended up with non-fraying, repositionable 'decals.' Finally, I printed on a dissolvable paper, pinned it to cotton and batting, and stitched around the outlines. After removing the paper, I colored the images with my favorite pencils.

*Cotton, silk, chiffon, hand dyes,
Terrial Magic, Steam-A-Seam 2°,
dissolvable paper, Inktense pencils.*



Swiss Chard

9" x 9" • JENNIFER MESSER
NORWALK, IOWA

We have raised garden beds at our home in Iowa and grow many different varieties of vegetables to eat and to share. After the spring lettuces, peas, and radishes are done, we plant several summer crops to ensure a continuous harvest. I love taking pictures of the veggies in our gardens to photo journal the growth and changes through the year. This quilt is inspired by one I took of some Swiss chard. It captured an abstract view of the chard's green, puffy leaf and the bright, striped colors of the stem. Yummy for the eyes AND the tummy.

Batik fabric, fusible web, interfacing, fiber fill, cotton batting, cotton thread; free motion stitching, raw edge appliqué.



Walla Walla Sweets

12" x 12" • ROXANNE PILLO
BURIEN, WASHINGTON

I live in Washington state where the Walla Walla onion is our state vegetable. These large, deliciously sweet and mild onions are only available at local farmers markets and grocery stores summer to early fall. I look forward to their arrival each summer and am sad when their season ends. Due to their high water content, Walla Walla onions don't store long term so they are truly a summer seasonal delight. Grown in the Walla Walla Valley of southeastern Washington, these onions are hand harvested due to their delicate nature and develop their sweet flavor from the low-sulfur content of the local soil. I tried to capture the papery, flaky, parchment-like skin of the onion by using layers of fused and stitched raw-edge appliqué.

Commercial fabrics; machine pieced, raw edge appliqué; machine quilted.



Oops

9" × 9" • JUDY O'CONNOR
CHAFFEE • LENEXA, KANSAS

Just when the final egg was
rolling into the winning
position of the Tic Tac Toe
board game, it broke!

*100% cotton fabric, ink, watercolor
crayons and Inktense pencils;
thread painting.*



Love New England Lobsta!

11" × 11" • SUSANNA BURNS
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

I grew up in Lanesville, a little town on the
coast of the North Shore of Massachusetts,
midway between Gloucester and Rockport.
Even though I was a very picky eater as a
child—usually spaghetti, spaghetti, and
spaghetti—my favorite food was lobster!
I doubt that this very weird food would
have been a favorite on my childhood
menu if had not grown up in a location
where it was everywhere, in abundance.

*Vintage red flannel, vintage black silk, vintage
Clarence House "Le Mer" remnant, vintage glass
beads; embroidery thread; polyester batting.*



Imaginary Carrots

11" x 11" • MARY FOLEY GORMAN • KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

When I shopped at my local farmers market, I saw carrots in numerous colors: orange, yellow, purple, and white. Those gorgeous roots ignited my imagination and led to my little quilt.

100% cotton fabric; machine appliqué.



Peppers

8½" × 11" • CHERYL GOODWILLIE
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Rarely in the Midwest where I live is there a garden, plot, or pot that does not contain sweet bell peppers. This easy-to-grow garden staple flourishes during our warm, humid temperatures in June through August. By the end of summer, an abundance of sweet peppers of all colors reward even a novice gardener.

Cotton fabric; watercolor painting, raw-edge appliqué, machine thread sketching, French knot embroidery.

Huckleberry Heaven

11½" × 9" • FAITH BRYNIE
BIGFORK, MONTANA

Huckleberries grow wild in the mountains of northwest Montana. Local pickers compete with the bears in pursuit of the harvest. The results are the legendary huckleberry jams, jellies, and preserves of the region.

Background fabric featuring symbols of Glacier National Park; 3-D appliqué.





California Grapes

10" x 12" • LORI WISHEROPP • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Grapes are harvested in many regions of California. I was inspired to create this art quilt when winetasting in the foothills above Sacramento. Free-motion quilting helped make these grapes look plump and juicy.

Fabric, felt, Jacquard® paint; Gelli Arts™ gel printing plate printing with bubble wrap and actual grape leaves, blanket stitching; free-motion quilted.



A Dive into Dextrin!

Custom design and paint
fabric using resists

by Cindy Lohbeck

making a quilt from a stack of fabric I dyed myself has always been an incredibly empowering experience and I've worked this way for a long time. About six years ago, however, I was searching for a new way to transform my quilts into unique reflections of my crazy imagination—work that would require far more than just color. I envisioned characters, themes, textures, and patterns!

Deep down, I knew resist dyeing was my calling but I had sworn off forever getting batik wax out of fabric due to the amount of time and effort it takes. My solution came in the form of corn dextrin and potato dextrin. Mixed into a paste and applied to fabric, they are excellent resists. In addition, both are great to work with—they are



"Charmed, I'm Sure" • 31" × 21½"

easy to mix, easy to apply, non-toxic, highly sustainable, and super easy to rinse out.

Dextrin is a simple carbohydrate that is extracted from starch using hydrolysis (water). There are three main types of dextrin—brown, yellow, and white—coming from wheat, corn, and potato, respectively. While all dextrin comes from starch, there are differences between these types. Brown wheat dextrin is largely used in adhesives and paste and is not suitable for resists on fabric—but corn and potato dextrins are wonderful to work with!

DIRECTIONS

Mix the dextrin pastes

I mix about a cup at a time as I prefer to work with it when it is fresh—

I find it gums up over time. I work with an electric tea kettle at my workstation so I can add water as needed. The pastes can be saved, however. Other artists make larger batches and store it for later use—after storage, it may need a little reconstituting with hot water.

1. Label 1 container “CORN” and the other “POTATO.” You will work with one powdered dextrin at a time, mixing up a batch of each.
2. Add 5–6 tablespoons of corn dextrin powder to its labeled container.
3. Slowly incorporate warm (not boiling) water, a few tablespoons at a time. Stir, add water, and stir some more until you get the consistency of smooth, thick custard.

Corn or Potato?

Both of these dextrins are widely available in powder form. They share many things—being great resists when applied to fabric tops the list—but they behave differently on fabric.

Corn dextrin becomes a yellow transparent gel when mixed with warm water. It is easy to see where it has been applied and how thick it is. It will dry in a solid sheet and, generally, leaves very clean lines—this makes it great for stenciling.

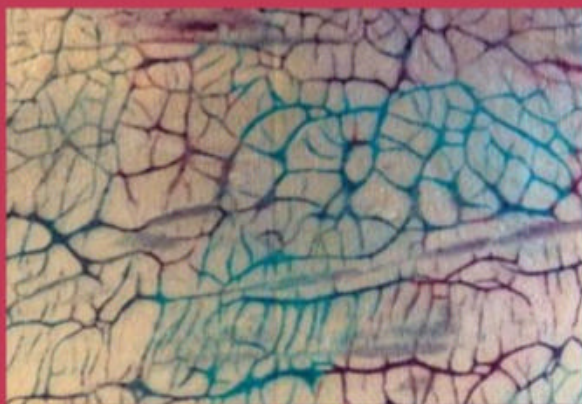


figure 1

Potato dextrin is a white gel and, therefore, a little difficult to see once it is applied—is it where you want it and how thick of an application did you make? These ‘challenges’ are worth it, however, once you get the feel for working with it—the magnificence of potato dextrin lies in the crackling that occurs when it dries and is dye painted! (figure 1)

MATERIALS

- Corn dextrin
- Potato dextrin
- Mixing cups (2-cup size works well) and spoons
- Prepared-for-dyeing (PFD) fabric (I use cotton or rayon; they both work well for this process.)
- Freezer paper
- Print paste or sodium alginate (I buy these from PRO™ Chemical & Dye—the ‘SH’ formula for cotton and the ‘F’ formula for silks and manufactured fibers.)
- MX fiber-reactive dye (in powder form)
- Respirator or dust mask and plastic gloves
- Containers and utensils dedicated to mixing powdered dye
- Stencils
- Temporary repositionable spray adhesive for fabric
- A squeegee or rigid card for screen printing
- Paintbrushes
- Spray bottle
- Soda ash
- Textile detergent or dishwashing liquid (I use Dawn®.)

Optional

- Plastic squeeze bottle (like those used for condiments)

CAUTION

Always wear a respirator or dust mask and gloves while working with powdered dyes. All tools used in this process must be dedicated to non-food use.

4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with potato dextrin powder and its labeled container. (figure 2)

NOTE: Different consistencies provide different results using different tools. If the mixed dextrin is thin, it is great for squeeze bottle applications but tends to spread when used with stencils. Thicker dextrin takes longer to dry, but will prevent dye seepage from the back and be easier to use when screen printing with stencils. You'll need to experiment a bit. Also, with potato dextrin, a thin, overall application on the fabric will result in tiny crackle effects, and a thicker application will result in larger, chunkier crackled images.

Prepare the fabric

1. Cut the PFD fabric into a size you like to work with such as fat quarters or 12" squares. Cut freezer paper sheets a little larger than the fabric cuts.
2. Iron the waxy side of the freezer paper to the backside of the fabric. This gives the fabric stability and protects the work surface. Use a press cloth so the freezer paper does not stick to your iron.

Stencil with dextrin

My favorite way to use dextrin is to screen print using stencils; I find corn works best.

1. Apply a light mist of repositionable or temporary spray adhesive to the back of the stencil and firmly press it to the fabric. Pull the dextrin over the stencil using a squeegee or a stiff plastic card (such as a recycled hotel key). (figure 3)

2. Carefully remove the stencil and allow the dextrin to dry completely on the fabric.

NOTE: The drying time will depend on how thick you applied the dextrin as well as the humidity in your area. Don't be concerned if the fabric curls as the dextrin dries. That is very common and part of the process.

Other ways to use dextrin

1. For an all-over crackle print, paint a uniform layer of potato dextrin paste on the fabric; it will naturally crackle and shrivel the fabric as it dries. Once it is completely dry, wrinkle and scrunch the fabric before painting dye paint on the crackled surface.

The dry dextrin only allows dye through the fine cracks.

2. Fill a plastic squeeze-tip bottle and write or draw with thinned dextrin. Keep it warm so it will flow better. Clean the tip after every use as it clogs quickly. For fine metal tip work, sifting the dextrin right before mixing will help.
3. Paint with it—you can also brush it directly on fabric. Try different brush sizes and even small paint rollers.



figure 2



figure 3



Samples of potato dextrin (left) and corn dextrin applied to fabric through a stencil.

Create dye paint

As dextrin is water soluble, these fabrics cannot be immersed in a vat of dye. Instead, create dye paint with powdered dye and a thickener like print paste or sodium alginate.

1. Make the thickener.

- To make thickener using sodium alginate, start with a cup of warm water and add $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of sodium alginate at a time to it, mixing continuously, until you use about 1 full teaspoon. This takes time to fully develop.

- To make thickener using print paste, start with 5–6 tablespoons of paste powder and slowly add water—warm or room temperature—1 tablespoon at a time, mixing continuously, until you have about 1 cup total.
- In both cases, the paste begins as a lumpy texture resembling applesauce. Continue to stir until you have a smooth, thick, creamy, and transparent paste. The paste(s) will continue to thicken over time. Both of these recipes make about 1 cup of print paste.
- Leftover thickener can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks.



figure 4



"Babes & Bubbles" • 23" x 32"

NOTE: To create the dye paint, we will 'paste up' the dye. Recognizing that a regular liquid dye solution would make our print paste too thin and we would never get dye powder to fully dissolve in thickened dye paste, this alternative is the best of both worlds.

2. Put on the dust mask and gloves.
3. Place 1–2 tablespoons of water and 1 teaspoon–1 tablespoon of dye powder in a fresh, clean, dedicated container. Mix well.

NOTE: Generally, cold or room temperature water works best. The amount of powdered dye depends on how deep you want the color to be. Once the powdered dye is completely integrated into the water and the bottle of remaining dye powder is securely capped, it is safe to remove the dust mask.

4. Add a few tablespoons of thickener to the dissolved dye and mix well. (figure 4)
5. Test the mixture on a scrap of fabric to judge its consistency—you will be painting with it so it should not be too thick or too thin. Add more thickener a teaspoon at a time if it seems thin.

If it seems too thick, add a few drops of cold water and stir until you reach the consistency you like. This is an inexact process that may take some experimentation but that is part of the fun too! Be patient. Take notes. Bring your student-self to the process.

6. Repeat steps 2–5 for additional colors.

Add color to the fabric

Now the fun *really* begins! When the dextrin is completely dry on the fabric, it's ready for painting with the thickened dye paint. Do not remove the freezer paper from the fabric; this will help protect your work surface and add stability to the painting process.

1. Create soda ash solution by mixing 2 tablespoons of soda ash powder with approximately 2 cups of hot water in the spray bottle. Be sure to fully dissolve the soda ash in the water so it doesn't clog the sprayer.
2. Lightly mist the fabric with soda ash solution but do not saturate it. Soda ash activates the dye for colorfastness and also allows a paintbrush to flow more freely over the surface of the fabric.

NOTE: Try to avoid spraying directly onto the dextrin areas

to preserve the dried dextrin—although a little spray-over won't be enough to destroy the resist designs.

3. Apply dye paint onto the fabric with a paintbrush, brushing over and around the dried dextrin.

TIP: Paint streaks can become a beautiful part of the design so blending your strokes is optional. I love this effect! (figure 5)

Finishing

1. Place painted fabric pieces flat to cure in a nice warm area with circulating air. Do not cover with plastic or other material.
2. Once dried, peel the fabric off of the freezer paper and rinse by hand under cold running water.

NOTE: Cold water rinses out the bulk of the dye, removes any leftover soda ash, and begins to soften and remove the dry dextrin.

3. Switch to hot water, add a bit of textile detergent or Dawn dishwashing liquid, and 'shampoo' the fabric into nice suds. This will remove any remaining dye and dextrin. Rinse well.

NOTE: DO NOT soak the fabric! Soaking encourages any loose color to bleed right into the areas you wanted to resist the dye.



"Jelly" • 29" x 42"

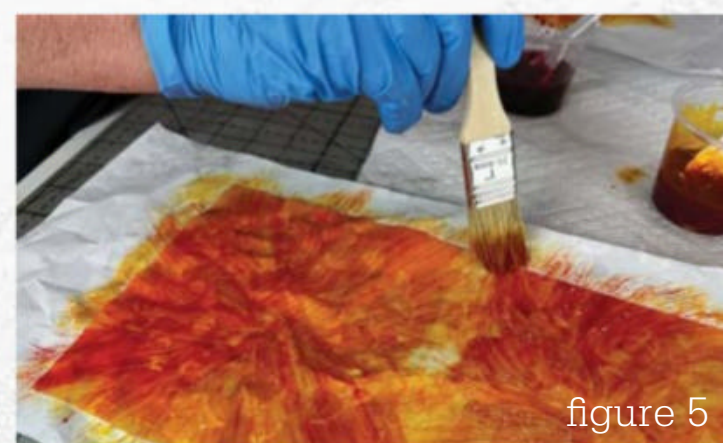
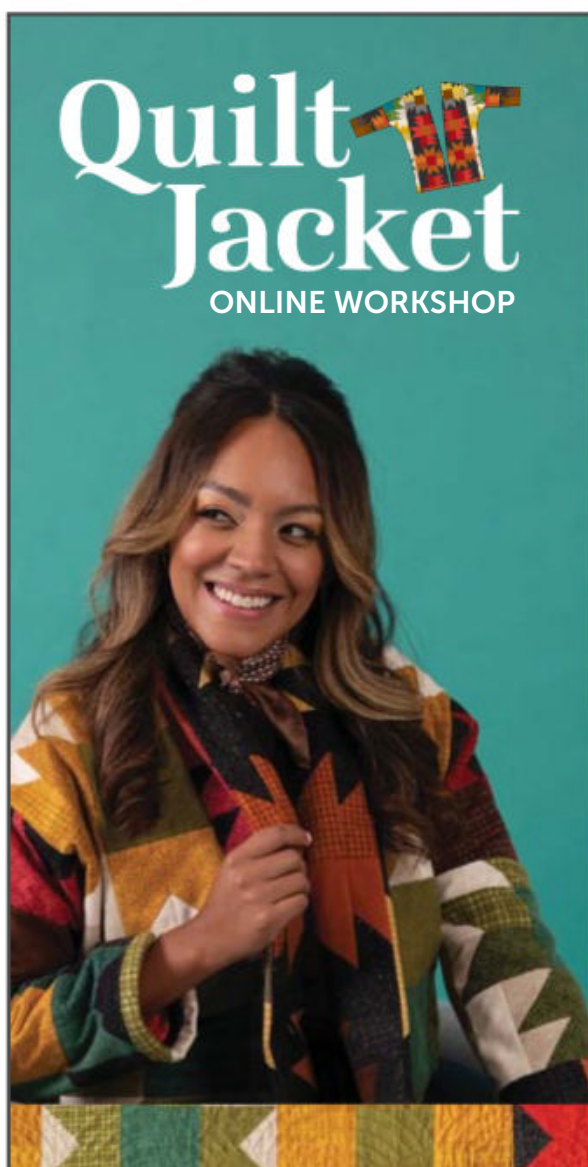


figure 5

4. Lay flat to dry and enjoy your beautiful prints! 🌟

Resources

PRO™ Chemical & Dye
Corn dextrin, potato dextrin, print paste,
sodium alginate, MX fiber-reactive dye
prochemicalanddye.net



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"Carrot on a Stick"
20" × 60½"

The Skinny on QUILT DÉCOR

Make a statement with this
playful design idea

by Eleanor Levie

I'm often inspired by my environment, inside and outside of the home. Marrying my observations with some of the resources I have available—from the kitchen and the sewing studio—this project emerged.

I decided to make a long and skinny quilt and chose a simple, organic motif—there are so many: a leaf, a pine tree, a banana, a chili pepper... you can see where I'm going, right? The outlines of these subjects are not complicated to draw and detail can be added with fabric, quilting, and embellishments to suit your taste and skills.

I have used these finished pieces both as wall art and as table runners. You decide!

Felt Facts

The benefits of working with felt as a base are numerous and it has lovely body for a project such as this where we are not adding batting or stabilizer—the felt does it all!

Basically, felt on a bolt is either acrylic, 100% wool, or a wool-rayon blend. Craft felt is significantly less expensive than wool felt and I use it strategically in my work to cut costs.

If you will be using your piece as a table topper, follow the tips here to felt/pre-wash the wool or wool-blend felt so you can machine wash the completed piece later if it ever gets dirty.

Craft felt

- Craft felt—aka acrylic or polyester felt—is a very budget-friendly purchase and usually comes 72"-wide on the bolt. You can wash it and dry it, and it will not change in size or texture. I often use craft felt as a base or background.

- Since craft felt is a petroleum-based product, look to reduce your carbon footprint by buying an eco-friendly version; I've found a great selection from Kunin® Felt. All of their products are USA-made from Eco-fi®, which is their own fiber made from recycled plastic water bottles.
- Never apply a hot iron directly to craft felt—due to the plastic makeup of this textile, it will melt under the heat of an iron, leaving a shiny or even burnt surface. Use a damp press cloth on top.

Wool felt

- A wool-rayon blend of felt is much less expensive than 100% wool yardage and it can be felted in the same way. Blends are usually 20%–35% wool and 65%–80% rayon and 36" wide off the bolt.
- You can create your own felt from 100% wool woven fabric. Put it in a washing machine with the highest agitation and the hottest water,

then put it in the dryer on a regular setting. This image shows a yellow-orange piece of wool before and after felting. (*figure 1*)



figure 1

- Get large pieces of wool for a song—at the thrift shop! If the label says 100% wool, buy that dated skirt, those tired-looking trousers, or that frayed bathrobe. Take the garment apart at the seams and felt the pieces.

The best thing about felt of every type? Cut edges don't ravel. They don't need to be bound, faced, or satin-stitched to stay crisp and distinct.

MATERIALS

- 1 yard paper-backed fusible web (I use Pellon® 805 Wonder-Under®.)
- Cotton fabrics in a color range for the motif
- ½ yard wool-rayon blend felt (I find this at my local quilt shop, craft store, or online.)
- ½ yard acrylic felt, 72" wide, in 2 different colors that contrast with the motif
- Long, slim drawing paper such as butcher paper on a roll (the approximate width and length of the finished quilt)
- Permanent black marker

Optional

- Rick rack, trim, satin cord, thread jumbles—anything that can be sewn down to create a 'carrot top'

DIRECTIONS

Create the motif

1. Draw the outline of a long skinny leaf, tree, or vegetable on the butcher paper—my example is a carrot. Try some different curves to slim or fatten the shape.

TIP: For a sense of dimension, add thin shapes inside that echo the overall contour—include the highlights and shadows that will give the motif character. Consider a long, slim shape along one side where you can feature lighter-colored fabrics where the light would hit the object—the highlight. Add a long, slim shape along the opposite side to render in a darker fabric—the shadow.

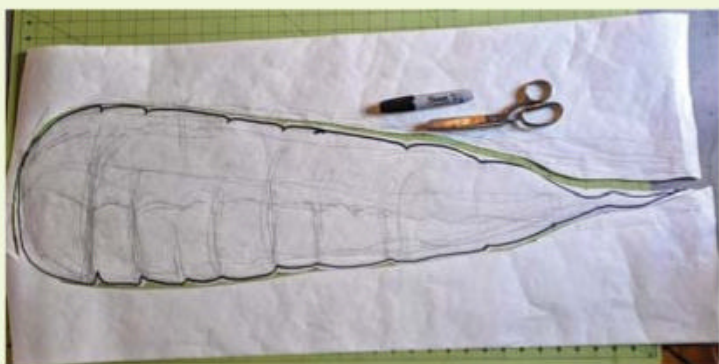


figure 2



figure 3



figure 4



figure 5

2. When you're satisfied with the design, go over the lines in permanent black marker. Cut out the overall pattern. (figure 2) Use the pattern to cut one large piece from prefused cotton fabric for the carrot base. Set aside for a later step.
 3. Place paper-backed fusible web on top of the pattern, with the rough side facing up. Trace the separate interior shapes (highlight and shadow pieces) onto the rough side with a permanent marker. (figure 3) Cut out the fusible web $\frac{1}{2}$ " beyond the pattern shape outlines.

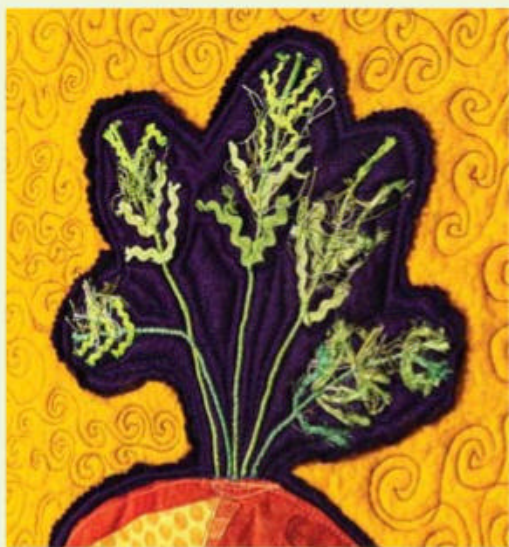
TIP: This way, the shape will be as you see it; no need to mirror image.
 4. Fuse the rough side of the fusible web shapes onto the wrong side of the cotton fabrics following the manufacturer's directions. Allow the paper to cool, remove the release paper—the permanent marker will transfer enough to see it—then cut out just inside the transferred line. Fuse smaller shapes onto larger ones.
 5. Place the carrot base—cut in step 2—onto a work surface. Do not remove the release paper from the carrot base just yet. Position the highlight and shadow shapes onto the carrot. Use the drawn pattern as a guide. Fuse the accents to the base. (figure 4)
 6. To make the motif pop, fuse it to a contrast-color craft felt. I used purple behind my orange carrot. Trim the craft felt $\frac{1}{2}$ " beyond the motif. I like to use pinking shears. (figure 5)
 7. Topstitch the edges of all the cotton fabric shapes.
- TIP:** I use a 30wt thread on top and a 50wt thread in the bobbin.

Assemble the quilt

1. Cut a rectangle of preshrunk wool felt that is at least 2" wider than the motif; the motif can extend beyond the top and bottom for visual effect, if desired. This is the yellow behind the carrot.

TIP: If you wish to be conservative with the wool felt—to have extra for other projects—consider cutting out a portion of the center that will be under the main motif.

2. Layer the wool felt and motif onto a background rectangle of another piece of craft felt cut at least 2" larger along the sides and extra-long at the top and bottom. This is the green beneath the yellow wool/carrot motif. Cut a second, same-sized rectangle of craft felt and set it aside for now.



Adding Greens to the Carrot Top

Now, you may be creating an entirely different vegetable or motif but if you're working on a carrot like I did, you may want to add 'greens' to the top of it in step 6 on page 66, before you trim away the contrast-color craft felt—or whatever addition may enhance your preferred shape if you are not making a carrot.

For the carrot top, I arranged rick rack and satin cords to resemble the stems and zigzagged them onto the craft felt with matching thread. I then snipped pieces of the fibers and placed them in V-shapes at the top of the stems to look like the tops of the greens and zigzagged these in place, too. Add thread jumbles and zigzag them down. I left some bits not completely stitched down to look 'tufty.'

When trimming the background felt around the 'greens,' I left a little extra felt and didn't cut too many details.

3. When the composition is to your liking, use pins to secure the felt units together and temporarily remove the motif. Using 30wt thread, topstitch or blanket-stitch the wool felt to the craft felt along the edges.

4. Place the motif back onto the felt background. Stitch the motif through all layers—you are both decorating it and attaching it to the background.

TIP: Use decorative stitches, zigzag, or straight stitch to enhance the composition. I added curved lines of stitching across the motif to represent ridges and veins of the carrot.

5. Free-motion stitch curlicues or other shapes onto the wool felt background.

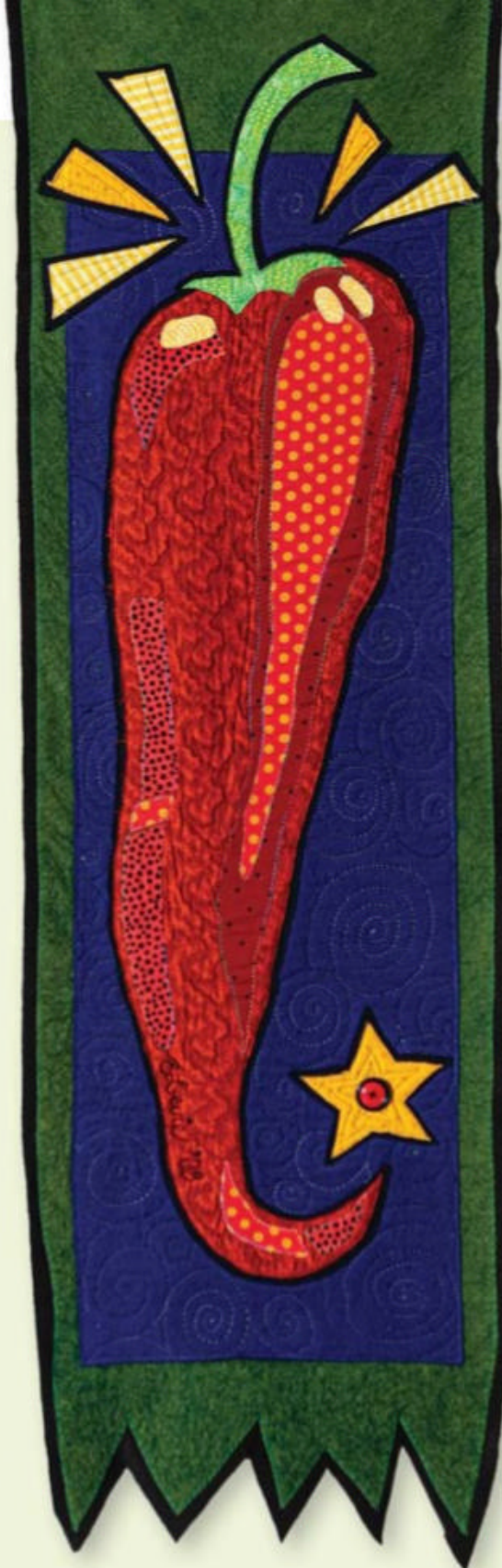
TIP: I used a contrasting colored 30wt thread.

6. Place the quilt on top of the second, same-sized rectangle of craft felt set aside in step 2. Topstitch around the motif, around the wool felt background, and along the edges of the two layers of craft felt. This adds a nice, clean backing to the piece. Add additional quilting to the craft felt background, if desired.

7. To hang the skinny quilt, add a sleeve. 🌸

Resources

BenzieDesign.com
wool/rayon blend felt



"Pepper Upper" • 18" x 56"



Get more *online*

Eleanor demonstrated this technique on "Quilting Arts TV" Series 3100, available November 2024 at quiltingarts-tv.com.

Highlight, Midtone, Shadow

Value makes all the difference in successful quilts

by Kestrel Michaud

When it comes to making representational art quilts, consistency is key. To that end, I've created rules and guidelines to help me keep a consistent design throughout the artwork.

The most important rule is highlight, midtone, and shadow—a more detailed way of assessing and referring to value. Following this rule will ensure your designs are full-bodied and look like they have volume, which is an important part of making realistic work.

We will refer to my orchid photo throughout these steps to clearly show this technique. Of course, you may choose your own photo.

Kestrel's Top Photo Tips

Three things to keep in mind when selecting a photo to use for this project:

1

Start small.

2

Choose a simple subject on a plain background.

3

Look for obvious lighting.

"Orchid Flower"
12" x 12"



Photos courtesy of the artist

MATERIALS

- Orchid photo—your own, an enlarged photocopy of this design (which you may use for your personal use only), or a copyright-free design
- Fabrics, 9 fabrics for the orchid components plus background and backing fabrics (I use batiks because I love their texture and tight weave for reduced fraying.)

TIP: Read the full directions before choosing fabrics to understand the color and value changes needed. The background should provide high contrast to the orchid design. The backing may be any fabric; it will not be seen from the front of the quilt.

- Fusible web (I use Wonder-Under®.)
- Batting
- Parchment paper or silicone pressing sheets
- Threads (match color of thread to fabric, one for each)

Optional

- Digital drawing tablet, if you work this way (I use an iPad® with Concepts app and Procreate app for drawing.)
- Colored pencils

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the design

The rule is that every ‘object’ gets assigned a color and that color is then broken down into three values: the highlight, the midtone, and the shadow—also often referred to as light, medium, and dark. For the purpose of this rule, an object does not have to be one single thing. Let’s apply this rule to the design of an orchid.

From this point, the orchid flower will be broken down into three objects:

- All five white petals are one object.
- The yellow portion of the orchid lip is one object.
- The pink portion of the orchid lip is one object.



figure 1

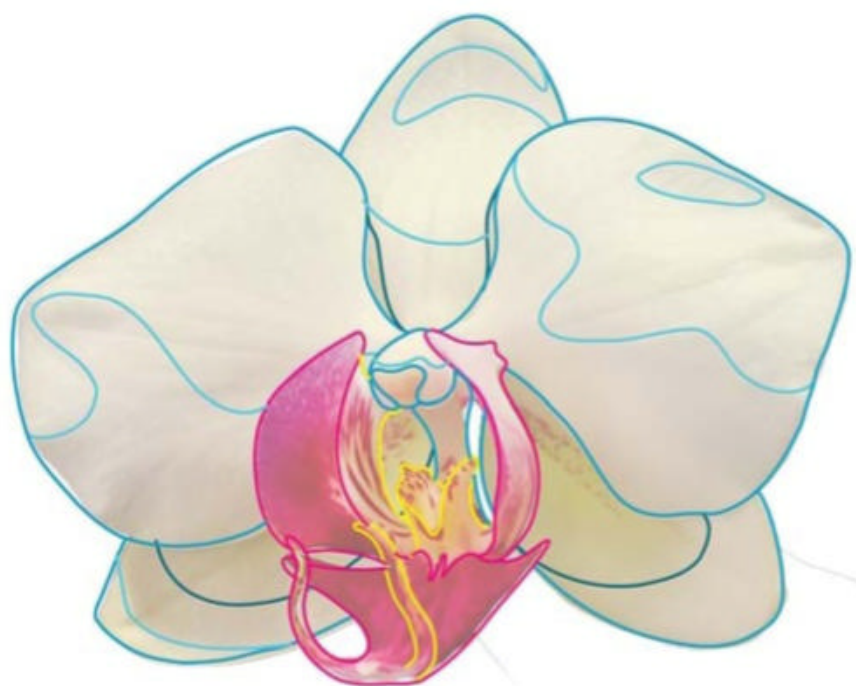


figure 2

1. Draw or trace the outline of the entire orchid. The lines in the examples are color-coded according to which object they belong. I chose to ignore the spots of pink on the yellow portion of the orchid lip because they would be too small to cut out of fabric. (figure 1)

NOTE: I work digitally but drawing on paper works well, too.

2. Starting with the white petals, draw a line anywhere you see a separation between highlight and midtone (indicated by lighter blue line), and midtone and shadow (indicated by darker blue line). Each petal can have up to three values, but this is not a requirement. Three of the white petals have only two values. (figure 2)

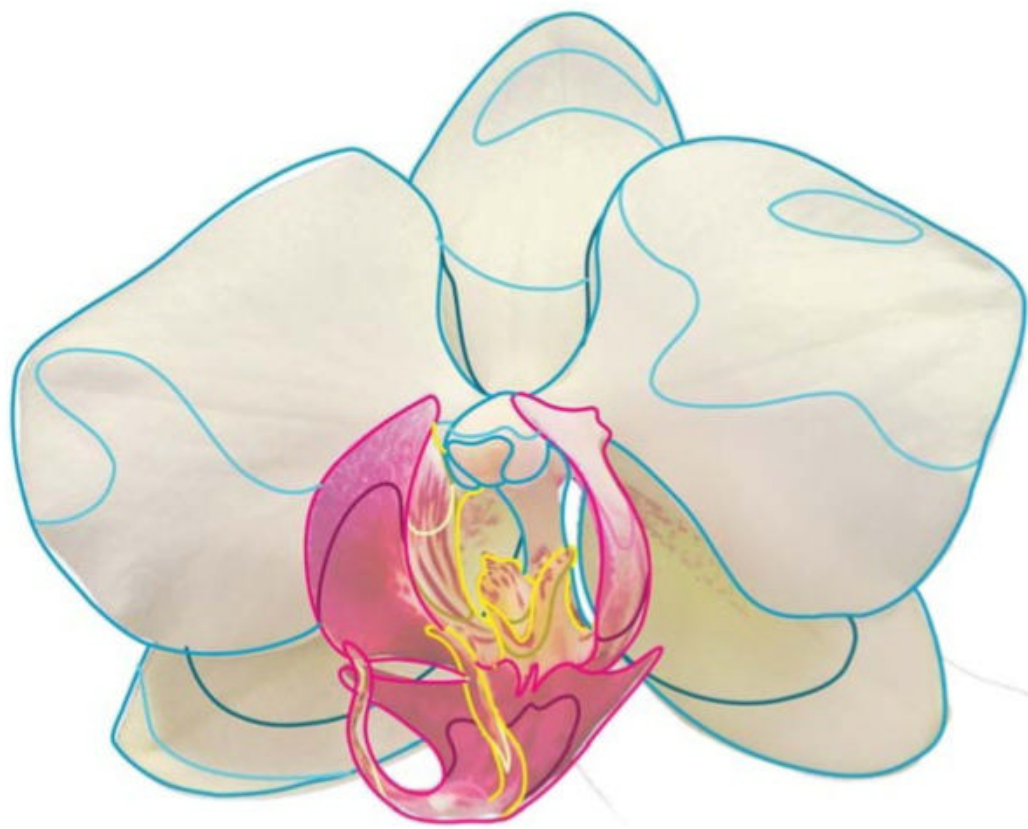


figure 3



figure 4



figure 5



"The Arrival" • 65" × 43½"

3. Moving on to the yellow portion of the orchid lip, draw a line anywhere you see a separation between highlight and midtone (indicated by lighter yellow line), and midtone and shadow (indicated by darker yellow line). Repeat for the pink portion of the orchid lip. (figure 3)
4. The example was drawn digitally, so I was able to add color to show the highlight, midtone, and shadow of each object making up the orchid. (figure 4) When working on paper, use colored pencils, if desired, to define the different values.
5. To finish the design in fabric, choose one fabric for each value in each object. That means this orchid will use 9 fabrics. (figure 5)

Prepare the fabric

1. Following the manufacturer's instructions, adhere fusible to the reverse side of each fabric except the background and backing.
2. Make an additional photocopy of the orchid pattern and cut apart the pieces to use as templates or use a lightbox or sunny window to trace the pieces onto the paper backing of each fused fabric.

NOTE: Be sure to add seam allowance to the edge that will touch another piece. Generally, you want the darker fabric to be cut 'on the line' and the lighter fabric to be layered under it. Not all of the edges need a seam allowance; just those pieces that touch one another.

3. Arrange the pieces into a composition, using the orchid pattern and a lightbox to guide placement. Remove the release paper from the fusible.
4. Using parchment paper or silicone pressing sheets—above and below the design to protect both the iron and ironing surface—fuse the pieces to create the central image of the orchid.
5. Place the orchid on the background fabric. Fuse.
6. Create a quilt sandwich with the quilt top, batting, and backing. Baste as desired.

Quilt the image

When quilting a design created using this method, I recommend trying to match the value and color of thread to the value and color of the fabrics. Following the highlight, midtone, shadow rule will create a representational design. Using thread that doesn't match the fabric could stand out, diminishing the realistic effect.

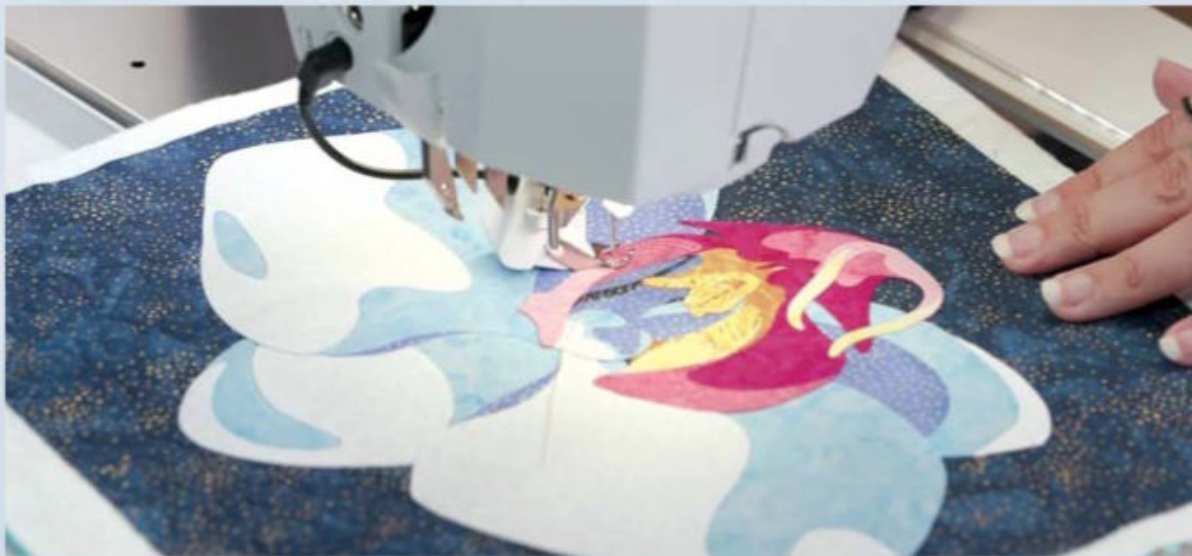


figure 6

1. Choose a thread and section of the quilt to begin. Free-motion quilt along the contours of the section. Use stitch to enhance it. (figure 6)

TIP: I keep about $\frac{1}{16}$ "– $\frac{1}{8}$ " of space between my quilted lines. I like fairly dense quilting.

2. Move to a new section of the quilt and switch thread color. Continue until all portions are quilted.

NOTE: Don't forget the background, which will probably require its own thread color.

3. Finish the quilt as desired. 🌟



"Beauty Queen" • 48" x 36"

Breaking the Rule

There are two exceptions to this highlight, midtone, shadow rule.

1. Using fewer than three values

The only time this is acceptable is if the pieces of fabric in question are going to be too small to cut and quilt. However, dropping one of those values will begin affecting the overall realism of the design, so this exception to the rule is best avoided if at all possible. (figure 7)

2. Using more than three values

I do this all the time because I have found that adding more values gives even more detail and realism to my composition. My design sweet spot is to use a fourth value—what I call a deep, dark shadow—to add detail to the darkest areas. (figure 8)



figure 7



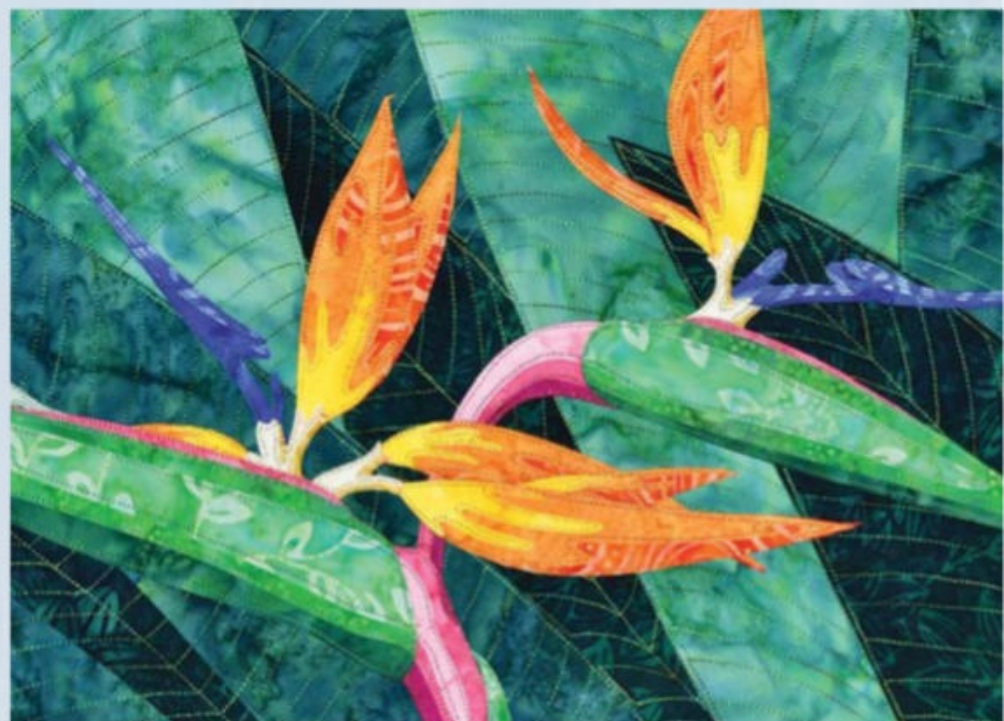
figure 8



Get more *online*

Kestrel demonstrated this technique on “Quilting Arts TV” Series 3100, available November 2024 at quiltingarts-tv.com. Check with your local PBS station for when it will be shown in your area.

Right: “Birds of Paradise—Dark Background” (detail) • 22" × 11"



Color Me!

Three fun techniques for making artful cloth

by Rose Legge

I came to the world of art quilting as a lifelong artist who discovered a love for fabric's soft texture and the vibrant glow of hand-dyed fabric. I often work on larger pieces for shows, but I always have a stitched fabric journal in progress on my workroom's back table that I return to as my other projects allow. This is a fun, lighthearted pastime just for me and is often ongoing.

It's such a pleasure to create fiber art for the joy of creating; when I have no goal other than the gratification of using bits of my hand-dyed fabric and playing with the imagery of things I love. I am often inspired by birds or other elements of nature. Some of these creations make their way to my work.

Here are a few fun surface design techniques to try. The resulting fabric may inspire your next fabric collage or fiber art piece.

*Editor's Note:
Rose uses these
and many other
surface design
techniques to make
captivating fabric
journals. Many of
the featured photos
represented are from
her "Things with
Wings" journal.*





MATERIALS

- 1–2 yards PFD (prepared for dyeing) white cotton fabric
- Plastic sheet
- All-purpose liquid dye in desired colors (I use Rit®.)
- Small or travel-sized spray bottles
- Lace
- Spoons
- Small whisk
- Sodium alginate
- Soda ash
- Urea
- Respirator or dust mask and plastic gloves
- Powdered fiber-reactive dyes (I use Procion® MX.)
- Measuring spoons
- Medium-size glass jars or plastic containers
- Stencils in leaf or nature patterns
- 12" × 16" silkscreen
- Squeegee and/or recycled plastic card

CAUTION

Always wear a dust mask and gloves while working with powdered dyes. All tools used in this process must be dedicated to non-food use.

DIRECTIONS

Spray dye technique

For this exercise, we are using lace fabric as our ‘stencil’ but this technique works well with other stencils, too—either commercially available ones or those hand-cut from freezer paper. The resulting fabrics add a soft touch to my collages and journal pages.

1. Protect your work surface with the plastic sheet.
2. Cut or tear a piece of PFD fabric to work with such as a fat quarter or fat eighth. Place this on the plastic followed by the lace.
3. Mix a solution of about half Rit dye and half water. Fill a small spray bottle halfway with the solution.
4. Shake the spray bottle to blend well.
5. While moving the spray bottle and holding it at an angle, begin spraying on the lace. (*figure 1*) Move the lace to another portion of the fabric and continue spray dyeing. Cover as much of the fabric as desired.

NOTE: Blend two or more colors together to get the exact shade you want.

TIP: Use a somewhat light hand and don’t oversaturate the lace or the dye will likely bleed on the fabric and obscure the pattern of the lace. Experimenting with various textures of lace will provide different results.



figure 1

Process photos courtesy of the artist

6. Repeat steps 1–5 as desired with different colors of dye and lace.

NOTE: When you are done with this technique, you not only have new spray-dyed, stenciled fabric but you also have colored the lace with dye which, once dried, can also be used in your artwork!

Small-swatch dyeing

Another method I use frequently is small-swatch dyeing, a variation of low water-immersion dyeing. I first learned about this from *STITCHED TEXTILES: FLOWERS* by Bobby Britnell and I’ve adapted this technique for my own use. It results in a variegated blend of analogous (next to each other on the color wheel) hues on one piece of fabric that read as a solid color—it’s perfect for use in my stitched journals and other work.

1. Cut 4 pieces of PFD fabric, about 10" square. Soak for 15 minutes in warm water and then squeeze the water out.

NOTE: They will be crinkly but that’s okay.

2. Put about ½ cup of warm water in a glass jar and add ½ teaspoon of

urea and 1 teaspoon of soda ash. Stir to dissolve completely, then add about ¼ cup of cold water.

NOTE: The whole idea is to have just enough water to barely cover the fabric swatches.

3. Put on the respirator or dust mask and plastic gloves.
4. Measure ¼ teaspoon of fiber-reactive dye powder and mix it into the glass jar until dissolved.
5. Jam one wrinkly piece of fabric firmly into the jar with a spoon—the wrinkling results in lovely color patterns. (figure 2)
6. Take another piece of wrung-out fabric and scrunch it down on top of the first one with the spoon so that it's soaked in the dye water. (figure 3) Add ¼ teaspoon of a related color of powdered dye on top and agitate with the spoon to incorporate it in the water. Don't mix it in completely because

you want the different colors to interact.

NOTE: Colors next to each other on the color wheel work best for this technique—like amber, then green, then blue. Complementary colors tend to make mud.

7. Repeat step 6 with the remaining two pieces of soaked fabric, one at a time. Switch colors of dye powder, if desired. Add a little more cold water to the jar if needed to keep the fabric and dye moistened. You can remove the dust mask after all of the dye powder is integrated and the caps are back on the jars of dye powder.

NOTE: It's amazing how much fabric you can shove into a jar for this technique!

8. Allow the fabric to soak in the jar for at least 3 hours. With gloves on, rinse the fabric squares thoroughly in cold water. (figure 4)

Deconstructed screen printing

For funky, interesting fabric, make deconstructed screen prints. It's unpredictable but always artful and beautiful. I've had many occasions when the results haven't been what I expected, but I ended up loving the imperfections. The beauty of this technique is in the results—the patina created as the dye breaks down truly becomes art cloth.

1. To create thickened dye paste for printing begin by making a thickener; whisk 1 teaspoon sodium alginate and ¼ cup tepid water in a clean container until there are no lumps. Add small amounts of water slowly until you have about ⅓ cup total and mix until totally smooth—no lumps! Allow it to set up for 30 minutes until it becomes clear.
2. Put on the respirator or dust mask and plastic gloves. Mix ½ teaspoon of dye powder into the thickener and stir until completely



figure 2



figure 3



figure 4



figure 5



figure 6



figure 7

integrated. The thickened dye paste is now ready for use.

3. Place a commercial or hand-cut stencil onto the back of a silkscreen.
4. Spread the thickened dye paste through the stencil with a squeegee or recycled plastic card. (figure 5) Carefully remove the stencil and allow the paste to dry overnight.
5. The next day, put a plastic sheet underneath the screen and turn it right side up, with the dye paste side down on the plastic.
6. Make a batch of print paste: Sprinkle 1 teaspoon sodium alginate over $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and whisk to incorporate. Let it sit for 30 minutes or until the thickness is like runny honey. Finally, whisk in 1 teaspoon soda ash and $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon urea until thoroughly mixed.
7. Tear or cut 5 or more pieces of PFD fabric about the size of the screen. Put 1 piece under the screen.
8. Wearing gloves, place 3–4 spoonfuls of the print paste along the top edge of the screen. With the squeegee at a 45-degree angle, apply firm pressure and pull the print paste along the screen. This will activate the dye. (figure 6)
9. Repeat for the remaining pieces of fabric or until the dye is used up.

You'll find some prints are more saturated but you'll continue to get interesting prints.

10. Allow the prints to cure for a few days before rinsing—this allows the dye to really bond with the fabric. (figure 7)

These fabrics can be used in your artwork in many different ways—as backgrounds, appliqué, layered with other fabrics, and more—and are beautiful in fabric journals or any other style of fiber art you wish. 🌿





Artful Zippered Pouch

ANNOUNCING OUR LATEST READER CHALLENGE



Original prints by Simone Deckers,
pouch by Tara Glastonbury

BETWEEN SUMMER TRAVEL AND HOLIDAY CHAOS it can be calming for the mind to set aside some time for deliberate creative play. Our latest challenge gives you a chance to do just that and it's bite-sized and achievable even during the summer hustle.

We challenge you to make an Artful Zippered Pouch to show off your art skills, try a new technique, or incorporate some handmade fabric, embellishments, or satisfying summer hand stitching. This pouch is a canvas to let your work shine.

We don't mean any ole zipper pouch, mind you. Think of this creation as a mini art quilt with a zipper. Your Artful Zippered Pouch should have a zippered opening along one edge, at least one side of the pouch must feature an art quilt-like element, and it should be functional—in that items can be placed inside and the pouch zipped closed.

Take some time this summer to get back into the studio and dust off that sewing machine or hand stitch while in an Adirondack chair by the lake. Try something new and tell us about it! Please include an artist statement with your submission about your journey with this challenge. Read on for the details.

Rules

1. Create a functional zippered pouch no longer than 10" on any edge or diameter based on the theme 'Artful Zippered Pouch.' Incorporate an artful element plus quilting by hand or machine on at least one side of the pouch. The finished pouch should be flat—for ease of shipping. Lining is optional. Embellishments, if used, must not protrude more than ¼" from the surface of the pouch. If you use a commercial pattern, credit the designer.
 2. The feature side of the pouch must be an original design and be free of any text or images protected by copyright unless you have the expressed written permission from the person or institution that holds the copyright and you include that written permission with your submission.
 3. To be considered for the challenge, attach two jpeg images of your completed entry to an email—one of the entire pouch (feature side only), including all four of the outer edges, and one of a detail—by **August 2, 2024** to **QAchallenges@goldenpeakmedia.com** with 'Artful Zippered Pouch' in the subject line. Include in the email your name, city/state/country (if not U.S.), email address, title and dimensions of the pouch, a statement about its story—no longer than 150 words, please—and the materials and techniques you used to create it.
 4. You may submit more than one entry, but each entry must be in an individual email.
 5. To learn tips for photographing your Reader Challenge submission, visit **quiltingdaily.com/photographytips**.
 6. On **August 7, 2024** we will post the finalists at **quiltingdaily.com/artful-zippered-pouch-reader-challenge**. Please check this post, as artists will not be notified directly.
 7. If you are a finalist: Put your name and contact information on your pouch—we recommend a pinned or sewn label on the back. This will not be displayed in the magazine. For safety, place your entry in a plastic bag before packing it for shipping. We reserve the right to keep and possibly display your Artful Zippered Pouch until March 2025. Your pouch will then be returned to you.
 8. Finalists' artwork must arrive in our office by **September 6, 2024**.
- If you have questions, contact us at **QAchallenges@goldenpeakmedia.com**.

mark your CALENDAR

AUGUST 2: Emailed submissions are due with two jpeg photos.

AUGUST 7: Names of finalists will be posted at **quiltingdaily.com/artful-zippered-pouch-reader-challenge**.

BY SEPTEMBER 6: Finalists' pouches must be received in our offices.

DECEMBER 2024: Look for a gallery of Artful Zippered Pouches in the Winter 2025 issue of QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE!

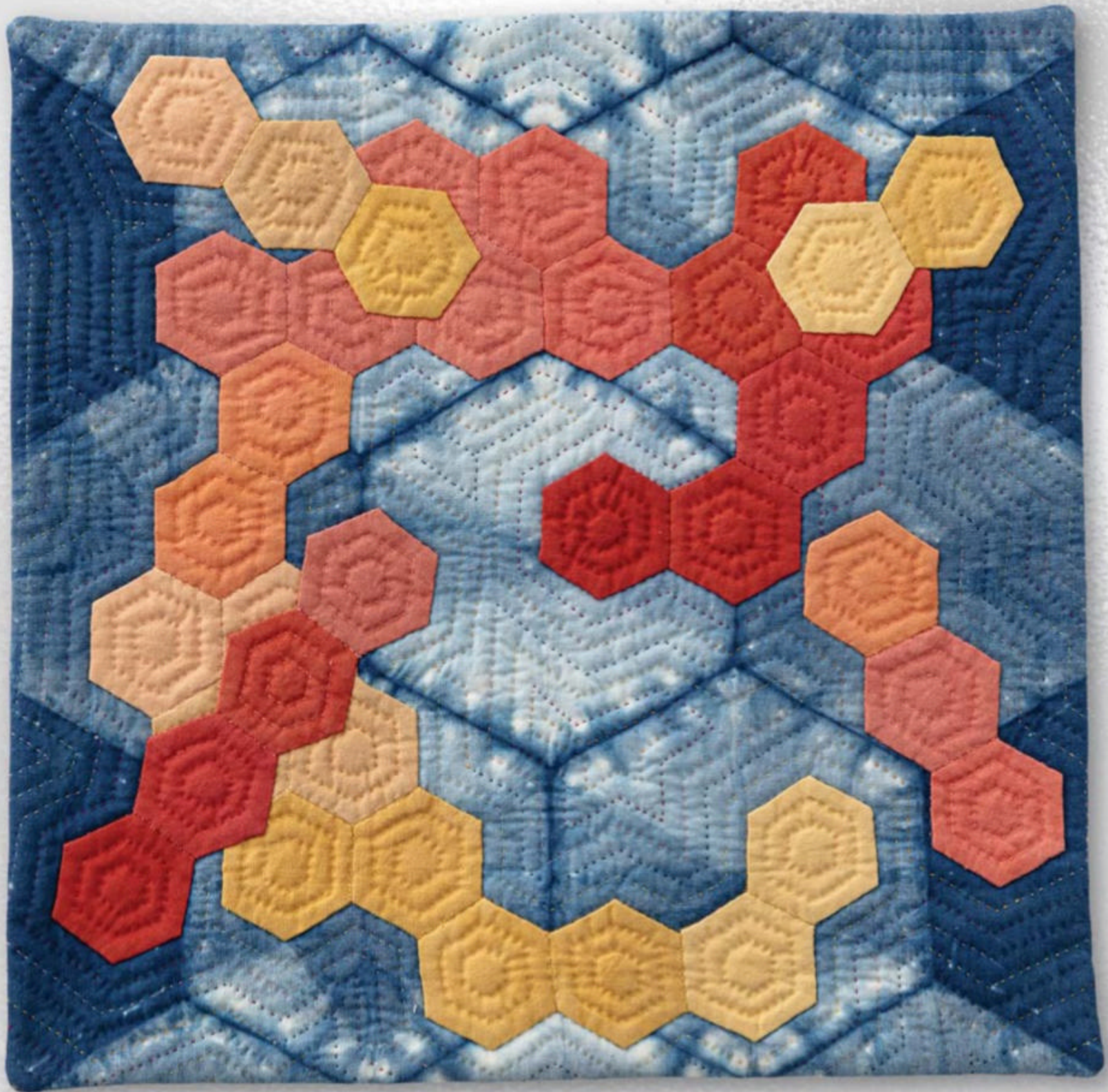
NOTE: By submitting your Reader Challenge entry, you confirm the originality of your design and authorize Golden Peak Media to publish your artwork in an upcoming publication and promotional materials, on our websites and in other e-media, as well as possibly display it at shows and other venues. Golden Peak Media will not be held responsible for loss or damage due to circumstances beyond our control.



READER CHALLENGE INVITATIONAL

Part 2

FOR ONLY THE SECOND TIME in QUILTING ARTS history, we invited a select group of past Reader Challenge participants to submit their best work for a special gallery. We were so impressed and moved by the entries we received, we decided to feature our readers' work in TWO separate galleries. In the Spring 2024 issue, we presented Part 1, comprising half of the selected quilts. We are pleased to present the rest of the quilts here for your enjoyment.



Double Hexies

13" × 13" • SUE HUNT • SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

This quilt represents a lot of my favorite quilt-related things to do—shibori, natural dyeing, and hand stitching—all with hexagons. The background is indigo dyed using a new-to-me shibori technique. The English paper-pieced, hand-appliquéd hexagons were hand dyed with combinations of only natural madder and weld. The piece is hand quilted using commercial quilting thread. All fabric and threads are 100% cotton.



Red Bird and Berries

18" x 18" • SUSAN PRICE • SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

I made "Red Bird and Berries" for this showcase. I enjoy playing with these original cyanotype prints and shibori fabrics from my stash, figuring out which pieces fit and play well together. Some of the cyanotypes are traditional blue, others are bleached to a gold color. The shibori pieces were dyed in indigo. The rust-colored pieces are the result of printing with a Thermofax screen as a resist and then overdyeing. The bird was printed with a Thermofax screen and fused in place and beads added to represent berries. Both hand and machine stitching were used.



Wild Rose in the Wind

18" x 18" • YOSHIKO KOBAYASHI • KATANO, OSAKA, JAPAN

In early summer, I often see a lot of small white flowers in the fields along country roadsides. I noticed the beauty of the wild roses at close range. I wanted to express the beauty of the wild rose in the refreshing breeze.

Techniques include pieced background, raw-edge collage, hand embroidery, machine thread painting, machine quilting with cotton fabrics, a few of which are three dimensional.



Purple Scribbles

16" × 16½" • SHERRI LIPMAN MCCAULEY • LAKEWAY, TEXAS

My forte is painting on fabric with a syringe. This piece was created with black paint on a white background. To add additional interest, I inserted a few curved purple lines. The quilted lines are in a fashion I refer to as 'scribbled lines.' The stitching is free-form and does not follow a concrete path. I chose this piece for the showcase because this is my favorite method of creating art quilts. My initial layer begins with gestural marks of paint. Additional piecing and stitching are added to enhance the design. Machine pieced, painted, and machine quilted.



Reflections of Maine

16" x 12" • KATHY WRIGHT • GALES FERRY, CONNECTICUT

Walking along a beach in Maine, we happened upon catamarans lined up for a race. The day was breezy and the water was rough, throwing waves and foam high up on the beach. Stunning reflections shone on the wet sand. This was the first time I worked with silk, and was pleased with how it portrayed the luminous appearance of wet sand.

Cotton and silk fabrics, quilter-painted fabric, interfacing, fusible web, polyester and cotton threads, permanent marker, acrylic textile paint; fabric painting, thread sketching, raw-edge appliqué, free-motion quilted.



Just Hanging Around

18½" × 14½" • LYONS BURKE • RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

This quilt is of crab pot buoys used on the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia and Maryland. My husband and I like to cruise in our sailboat on the bay and I saw these buoys hanging on a shed in a marina that we stopped in overnight. I snapped a picture of them and decided to reproduce them in fabric, albeit in different colors, after taking a class with Michelle Jackson on art quilts. I used all commercial quilting fabrics which I first fused down and then stitched around the raw edges. I sewed down every strip of that lattice before applying the buoys! I faced the edges for finishing.

I chose it for the challenge because I did it recently and I worked hard on it and really liked it. It brings all our summer trips back to me.



Bonefish

16¾" × 18" • DEBBIE WATKINS • MONTROSE, COLORADO

"Bonefish" was inspired by a photo of wooden cod hanging from a horizontal line in Nova Scotia and a challenge to use 1930s fabric. I don't 'do' '30s fabric! My background fabric was woven using 2 squares of fabric cut into strips—one fabric of colorful horizontal lines and another which was improv-pieced. The bonefish are a combination of turned-edge and raw-edge appliqué and are swimming through my woven sea. I added stab stitch embroidery and a flange to highlight the bonefish.



Lemons

16" × 16" • KATHERINE DOSSMAN • BELTON, TEXAS

I created a new piece for this challenge. I used torn fabric strips for the main elements and appliquéd them onto the quilted background.

Cotton fabrics and thread. Beads, Shiva® Paintstiks® and 12wt thread. My favorite finishing techniques are hand embroidery and beading.



Flora on the Fence

9½" × 12½" • CHERYL GOODWILLIE • KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers, her head cast as a concrete planter, hung on the fence where I once lived. One summer she would hold a mass of cascading vines, the following summer lush lavender spikes, mums, or asters in the fall, and their dried up leaves and stems in the winter. Over the years as Flora hung on the wooden fence, moss and lichen settled in the cracks and crevices of her face. I photographed her in all seasons, in various light conditions and assorted angles. She became my muse and I knew one day I would re-create her using needle and thread.

Rusted cotton, tea-stained muslin, organza; watercolor paint; machine thread sketching, hand embroidery.



Nota Llama

10" x 16½" • DOLORES FEGAN • STANFORD, KENTUCKY

I've been wanting to make an animal piece that looks like it has long hair, so this public domain alpaca image was just the ticket. I drew this on muslin and then freehand cut fabrics for the fur. The background is made of odd size blue scraps pieced together. I used lots and lots of thread colors and layers for the desired effects. Extra batting was added and then quilted around for areas like the eyes that I wanted to pop out. The ear tufts and beard have bits of Filaine thread and alpaca wool couched on.



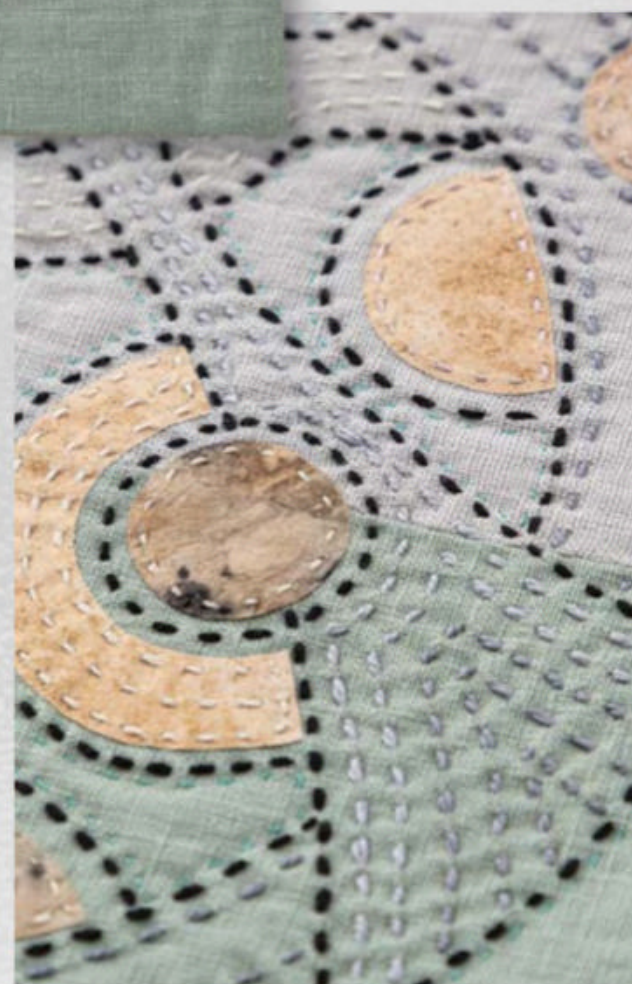
Wellsprings 1

9½" × 10¼" • RITA SUMMERS • ST. MARY'S, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

What began as doodling became my inspiration. As I stitched, I realized that the shapes and lines were like water features in the landscape—some dry, some flowing, some still. Water is life, representing refreshment and survival both in a literal and symbolic sense. I have lived through drought, and we rely on rain for our home's water supply. The title of this work expresses the importance of water in the environment, and the longed-for times of refreshment in our lives.

After hand stitching some linen samples together in sets of four, I drew lines and shapes (mostly circles) directly onto the cloth. I cut more shapes from earth-painted and eco-printed papers and fused them in place. I then decided to outline them with the most basic of stitches, using repetition to accentuate the shapes and to add texture.

Silk, linen samples, earth-painted and eco-printed papers, perle cotton, stranded embroidery thread; earth paints; hand quilted.





Capitol Corridor

14" × 17½" • RICK WARE • GRAND BLANC, MICHIGAN

In September of 2022, I was part of a quilters' tour that visited the American Quilters Society show in Des Moines, Iowa, and the International Quilt Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska. We also visited the state capitol building which is one of very few that are not derivative of the United States Capitol. Being a retired architect, it was significant that both the capitol and the IQM were designed by prominent New York City architects—Bertram G. Goodhue in 1920 (capitol) and Robert A.M. Stern in

2005 (IQM). While reviewing my many photographs from both structures to inspire an entry for this challenge, one especially stood out in its geometry and lighting—a corridor along one of the four courtyards of the capitol.

My quilt is thread-sketched wholecloth. I enlarged the photo and traced the outlines in pencil onto white fabric then shaded with fabric markers and colored pencils; machine quilted over the traced outlines with mostly 60wt and a few 40wt threads. I added a few details with an ultra-fine point marker. The edges are finished with a facing hand sewn to back.



“here the frailest leaves of me” • 20" × 20"

Art quilt: Used tea bags, fusible batting, machine stitching.



“may I not lose this sense of awakening” • 8½" × 11¾"

Stitched collage: Eco-printed papers, khadi paper, found feather, used tea bag papers, used tea bag strings, used tea bag offcuts, hand stitching.



*“the random years”
20" × 39½"*

Mixed media wall-hanging: Vintage and recycled materials, eco dyes, rust prints, found objects, art paper, used tea bag papers, used tea bag strings, vintage coat hanger, machine stitching.

DECONSTRUCTION Using Tea Bags for Fiber Art

by Rita Summers

I love a cup of tea! I have it black and strong, and I usually sit one beside me when I’m making art. A chance remark by my friend Lauree opened my eyes to new possibilities for my beloved cuppa.

I was visiting her one day and noticed containers of used tea bags on her windowsill. When I asked her why, she said, “Did you know that used tea bag paper is great for stitching?” No, I didn’t know, but that started me on a fascinating journey of experimentation.

My attention was also caught by the fact that it was already dyed and provided another opportunity to prevent waste, which fits in very well with my upcycling, zero-waste art practice. I now

Photos courtesy of the artist

MATERIALS

- Used tea bags (from black tea only; no milk or sugar added)
- Tray or containers for drying
- Containers or bags for storage
- Hand sewing supplies
- Scissors for paper, scissors for fabric
- Paper-backed fusible web
- Thin fusible batting
- Parchment paper
- Other fabrics, papers, substrates and/or batting as needed for the designs
- Double-sided tape
- Glue stick
- Leaves or other shapes/templates for appliqué designs

Optional

- Backing fabric
- Sewing machine with free-motion capability and walking foot quilting

have containers of dry, used tea bags waiting to be deconstructed; tea bags that have already been deconstructed; and even bags of used tea bag strings (more about that later).

I have been able to incorporate used tea bag papers in art quilts, mixed-media art, art journals, and even sculptures. They are great for appliqué and can be stitched together to make larger pieces suitable for backgrounds. I prefer to fuse them to fabric with fusible web or onto thin fusible batting before stitching, just to make sure they hold together.

In the works shown in this article, I have mostly used tea bags as appliqué, however, you will see that I have also used them to bind edges, as collage, and as backgrounds. You can even dye them. I certainly haven't finished exploring the possibilities!

DIRECTIONS

Deconstruct the tea bags

1. After enjoying a cup of black tea, squeeze out any excess liquid from the tea bag.

TIP: Encourage your friends to save their tea bags for you, thus increasing your stash more quickly.

2. Place the damp tea bags on a tray or plastic container (no lid) and place them in a sunny spot. Leave them undisturbed until they are completely dry. (figure 1)
3. Take each tea bag apart gently, removing strings and staples, if present. (figure 2)



figure 1



figure 2

NOTE: Some tea bags have seams which need to be opened up so the 'fabric' becomes flat; others won't come apart without damaging them so you might need to cut the seams off instead. Save these offcuts also.

4. Empty the contents of the tea bag into a separate container. The grounds can be placed in a compost bin or scattered in the garden.
5. Press the resulting flat tea bag papers with a **medium hot**, dry iron. **They are now** ready for **use** or may be stored for later.



Rita's Top Tips for Working with Tea Bags

- Make sure the tea bags have room for air to circulate between them when you are drying them, otherwise they could get moldy.
- Some tea bag papers have a polyester content which melts when you iron them, so test them first. I tend to avoid those—but they can shrink in interesting ways if you iron them between sheets of parchment paper. Play with them a bit to see how they respond to heat, etc. and then decide whether you wish to use them or not.
- Khadi paper is a type of rag paper that I love to work with; mine was made in India. It has a lovely texture and weight and I use it often.

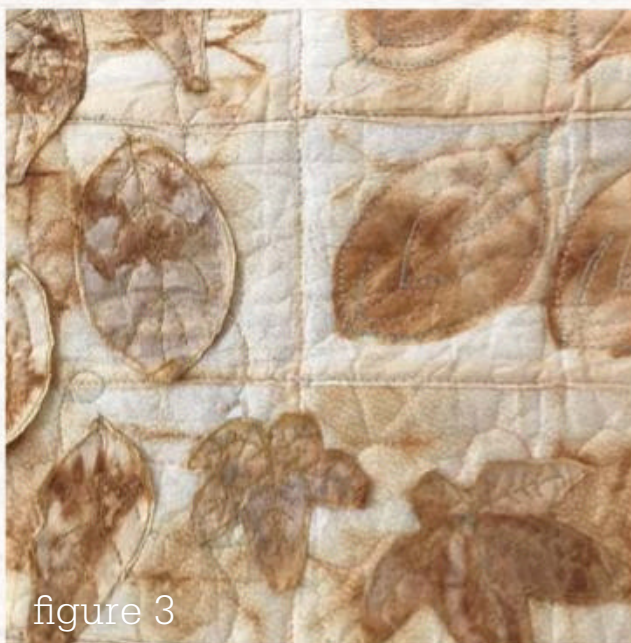


figure 3

3-D Anyone?

To make 3-D appliqué leaves, fuse 2 layers of tea bag paper together and draw leaf shapes onto it. Stitch the outlines only, then cut them out just outside of the stitched line.

Arrange the leaves onto the background and stitch the veins only to fix them in place. The edges will be free and give a 3-D effect.

Use deconstructed tea bags in your art

As a background

A good example of this can be seen in this detail shot of my work titled “here the frailest leaves of me.” (figure 3)

1. Fuse prepared tea bag papers onto thin fusible batting. Butt the edges of the tea bags up against one another to create a somewhat solid surface.

NOTE: Whenever you use fusible products, place parchment paper over and under the project when fusing to protect the iron and ironing surface.

2. Add a backing. I usually fuse this on.

TIP: Since I have a large stash of tea bag papers, I often fuse them on both sides of the fusible batting, with one layer becoming the backing ‘fabric.’ Since this side will be rarely seen, however, a piece of fabric can be substituted.

3. Machine stitch along all the tea bag paper edges from the front.

Continue stitching to machine quilt through all layers. I used a simple meandering pattern.

As machine-stitched appliqué

Figure 3 also shows the appliqué pieces I added to this quilt.

1. Create leaf shapes by tracing real leaves with a pencil onto 1 layer of tea bag paper adhered to fusible web.
2. Cut out the leaves and peel off the paper backing.
3. Arrange and fuse them to the background with a hot iron and parchment paper.
4. Free-motion machine stitch around the fused leaves and outline the veins.

As hand-stitched appliqué

It is easy to sew through these tea bags to create hand-appliquéd details; notice the black elements in this detail photo of my work titled “no tears.” (figure 4) You can use fabric or paper as a background. Cotton is

probably the easiest and firmest fabric to use initially, but don’t be afraid to experiment with other substrates.

Unless you reinforce it with something, the paper backgrounds need to be reasonably firm; I mostly use watercolor or khadi papers.

1. Place the tea bag paper—an open, single layer tea bag or an unopened double layer type of tea bag—on the project. If needed, hold it in place with a glue stick dab or adhere it with fusible web.

NOTE: Do not use pins with this medium if it can be avoided. They will make holes in the delicate tea bag paper that are difficult to eliminate.

2. Hand stitch as desired. Use any thread you like and a sharp needle that will puncture the tea bag paper without tearing it.

TIP: I like to keep things simple and often use a running stitch in my work but experiment with other stitches, too.

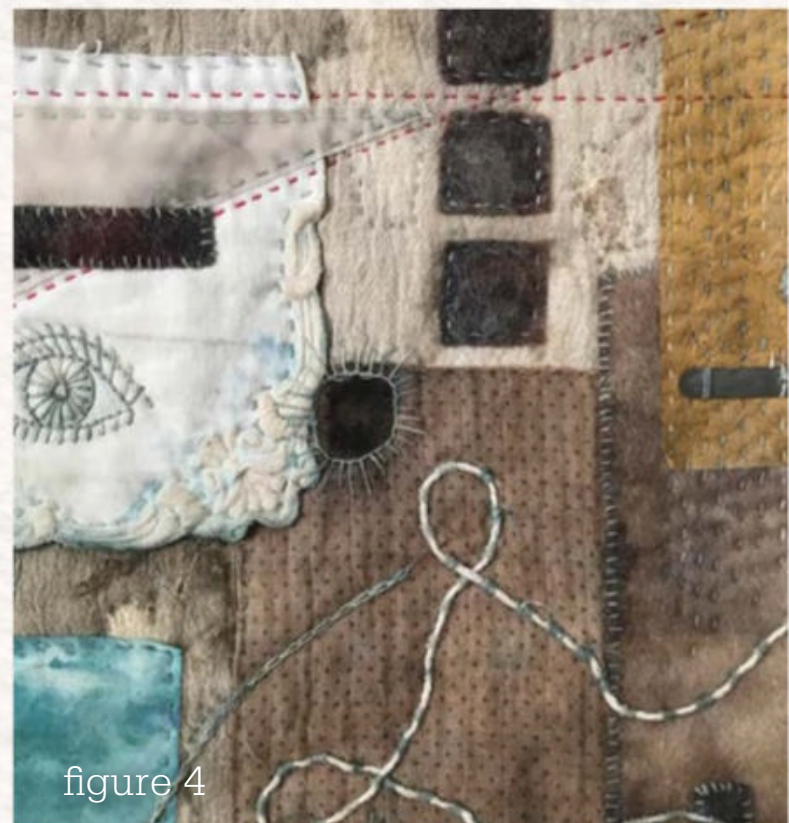


figure 4

3. Try stitching with, couching, or otherwise adding the saved tea bag strings to your work. (figure 5)

As a binding on a paper project

A good example of this technique can be seen in this detail photo of my work titled “the random years.” (figure 6)

1. Fold the tea bag papers in half lengthwise.

TIP: I use opened-out single layer tea bags for this.

2. Line them up along one side of the paper section you wish to ‘bind’—this needs to be a firm art paper or thin cardboard.

NOTE: If the paper is thin, consider glueing or fusing it to another layer of paper or even fabric for more stability.

3. Use a glue stick to hold the tea bag papers in place (front and back), and slightly overlap the short edges. Trim to fit flush at each end.
4. Straight machine stitch down the inside edge of the ‘binding’ to hold the tea bag papers in place, making sure you catch the tea bag paper on both the front and the back. Use a longer stitch length than usual so the paper does not tear. You can also use a wide zigzag or a very simple decorative stitch—this is a little easier to stitch but choose whichever stitch based on the look you prefer.



figure 5



figure 6

Tips on Dyeing Tea Bag Paper

I love the natural look these dried tea bags provide but they are fun to dye as well.

- Experiment with either commercial or natural dyes—tea bag paper takes color well.
- I use natural dye only; the yellow shown here came from weld plants that were given to me from a friend’s garden plus an alum mordant. I have also used Tasmanian blackwood leaves or native cherry bush with an iron mordant to dye them dark green, or eucalyptus leaves and iron for gray shades. Experiment with native plants in your area of the world; I live in Tasmania so my sources may be much different than yours.
- Empty but do not open out the tea bags so that they will be stronger for the eco dyeing process.
- Simmer but don’t boil them. Allow them to cool in the solution before removal.
- Try a cold dye process by making the dye solution, allowing it to cool, and then steeping the tea bags until they obtain the depth of color you are looking for.
- When ready, remove the tea bags from the dye solution and squeeze them gently to remove the excess liquid. Wear plastic gloves to avoid tinting your skin.
- Lay them out on an old towel to air dry, then open them and press them.



5. Repeat on as many edges as you wish. I did not cover all of the sides in this piece.

As collage

1. Arrange the tea bag papers on a paper or card substrate as a feature element or alongside assorted papers and other materials as desired. (figure 7)

TIP: Small collages placed on folded cardstock or watercolor paper make lovely greeting cards!

2. When you are happy with the design, adhere the tea bag papers with double-sided tape or glue stick.
3. If desired, add stitch to highlight some areas of the design, either by machine or by hand.
4. Experiment with other substrates such as stretched canvas, canvas board, journal covers, journal pages, and more.

While I encourage you to try out the ideas and methods described here, don't be afraid to experiment and ask yourself "what if?" Sometime wonderful things happen in art when you don't know where they will end.

For me, being creative means going with the flow and following my intuition. Ideas can come from anywhere and the possibility of using tea bags in my art was totally unplanned and unexpected. The journey so far has been a lot of fun, and I don't think it's finished yet! 🌱

Resources

To see a video of Rita deconstructing some tea bags, visit her YouTube channel and select "Tea bags! Deconstruction for Your Art."

www.youtube.com/@gonerustic



figure 7



"focus 2" • 11" x 11" including mat board

Collage art: Eco-printed papers, earth paints, used tea bag paper, vintage sheet music, old dictionary pages, stamped text, journaling excerpts.



“Gifts From the Universe:
Tree Rings 3” (detail) • 59" x 69"

Tree Ring *Inspiration* by Diana S. Fox

I BELONG TO AN INVITATIONAL FIBER ART GROUP called 4 Common Corners. As a group, we encourage one another as artists and often challenge group members with themed projects. One such recent theme was “the wisdom of trees.”

I thought long and hard on this one and admit I was a bit stumped on what I wanted to create—yes, that pun is intentional. But seriously... I really felt I needed to physically immerse myself while I contemplated my design so I sat in the wood pile on our property and tried to become ‘one with the wood’ through observation and drawing. I used the art technique of *frottage* to create rubbings from the cut ends of trees to inspire me as well.

While I studied the rings and cracks of these tree ends, I absorbed the importance of how tree rings hold all the data, the DNA, of the tree and provide so much information. I wanted to honor that in my project.

The art pieces I came up with incorporate modular tree ring units in a variety of sizes, each one resembling a ‘slice’ from the cut end of a tree. By reinterpreting the concept, while paying homage to the original, you **can** create artwork that is flexible and customizable. These pieces can be as large, small, or numerous as you wish. Using scraps to create the project is a wonderful way to be environmentally conscious and to create a harmonious composition.

I hope you enjoy this technique—and I bet you can’t make just one!

Thoughts on Fabric

When selecting scrap fabrics for this project, the most important things to consider are **value** and **texture** more than just color. Yes, trees are often brown-ish but you can choose other colors and prints—we know a pop of unexpected color here or a plaid fabric there can often add sparkle and interest to a fiber art composition.

I love using very textured materials in small amounts, too, like burlap and netting.





MATERIALS

Makes one tree ring

- 1 (6") square of very stiff fusible stabilizer or interfacing (I use Pellon® 72F Peltex® Ultra Firm Two-Sided Fusible Stabilizer.)
- Thread: black plus assorted browns, variegated or solid (I use 40wt or 50wt.)
- 12" × 6" brown or tan base fabric
- Fabric scraps in beige, yellow/gold, dark gray, black, and more (I usually use cotton but have used recycled clothing, silk, and polyester, too.) See "Thoughts on Fabric."

Optional

- Substrate for mounting and picture-hanging hardware (I use inexpensive wooden discs and small stretched artist canvas.)
- Fabric glue

DIRECTIONS

Cut the pieces

See "Pro Tips from Diana" for thoughts on cutting and sewing.

1. Fold the 12" × 6" piece of fabric in half like a book, wrong sides together, so it measures 6" square. Insert the 6" square piece of stabilizer into the fold. Following the manufacturer's instruction, press to activate the fusible stabilizer.
2. Draw a 5½" circle onto the sandwich and cut on the line. This piece is the base.

TIP: Don't be concerned about cutting an exact circle—a slightly organic shape is desirable in this process. I often cut freehand without drawing first.

3. Cut a piece of scrap fabric into a circle, slightly smaller in diameter than the 5½" circle. Cut a ring from the circle, approximately ¼"–½" in width. Place the ring onto the base.

NOTE: Consider value contrast with the background of the base—the ring should be visible against the base.

4. Cut another circular piece from a different scrap fabric—smaller than the first ring, also considering value. Place this smaller ring inside the first ring on the base.

TIP: There should be a small amount of space between each ring.

5. Continue in this manner until you get to the middle, adding a complete circle, approximately ½" diameter, in the center.

Sew the rings

1. Using a walking foot or straight stitch foot and a coordinating thread, baste the cut rings onto the base. Begin on the outer edge and sew into the center in a continuous, spiral motion and then reverse the process, sewing back out from the center to the outer edge again. Try to secure most of the loose edges of the fabric rings with this stitching.

TIP: This does not need to be precise—you're basically just tacking everything down—but I do not remove these basting stitches; I believe all of the stitching enhances the final tree ring. Choose a neutral or lighter thread color if you prefer this basting to disappear somewhat.

2. Once the rings are basted, continue adding plenty of additional stitching. The thread will add texture as will the raw edges of the circular rings. Consider changing thread color, too.

TIP: Again, I sew in a spiral to the center and out again, but this stitching is denser than the basting.

3. Add thread painting with black thread going across the ring. This creates the design element of cracks or veins in the tree ring.
4. Finish the outer edge with a satin stitch.

TIP: I often satin stitch two times around the edge of each tree ring for a nice, full look.

Variation on a Theme

Once you've tried this technique, you may get a 'what if' feeling for different ways to work with and create these tree rings. For example, try clipping into the sewn ring—from the edge toward the center or snip a piece out of the middle—to replicate how some trees evolve over time as they decay. (figure 1)

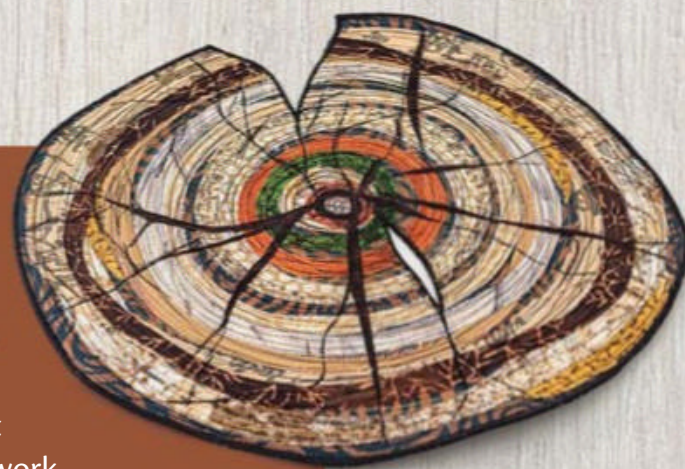


figure 1



Pro Tips from Diana

- I eyeball the cutting of the rings. I move the fabric toward the rotary cutter as I'm cutting. If you are not comfortable using a rotary cutter in this manner, scissors work too. Safety first!
- Once I cut the first outer ring, I often continue cutting smaller and smaller rings from the same fabric, ending with a circle for the center. I save these for use in creating other tree rings.
- I don't use fusible web or pins to attach the rings to the base before sewing. I tried that but found it didn't help enough to warrant the extra time and expense. Instead, when I'm at the sewing machine, I press down on the rings with my fingers as I'm sewing, 'wrangling' them under the needle. If there is a fold or a pucker, I'm not too concerned—this adds to the organic look I'm going for.

Project inspiration

Here are a few ideas for using completed tree rings in various ways.

- Mount the finished tree ring to a wood disc, an actual tree ring slice, or artist canvas with glue. (figure 2) Add a hanging hook to the back. If you have several mounted this way, they make striking wall art when hung together like my work, “Forest Bathing.”
- Sew fabric rings onto card stock to create a unique greeting card. (figure 3)
- Collect several rings and sew them together to create an art quilt such as my work “Gifts From the Universe: Tree Rings 3.”

Making these tree rings is fun and can be addictive. This is a great project to use up scraps of fabric and thread. 🌲



figure 2

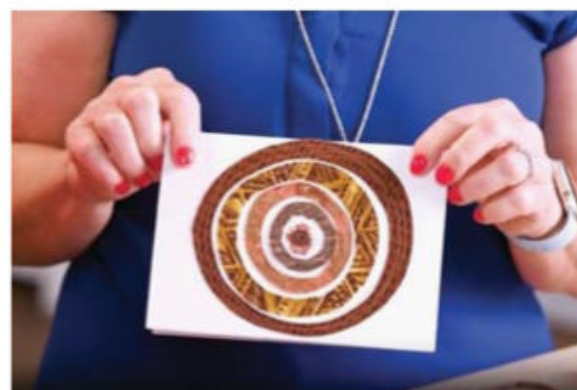
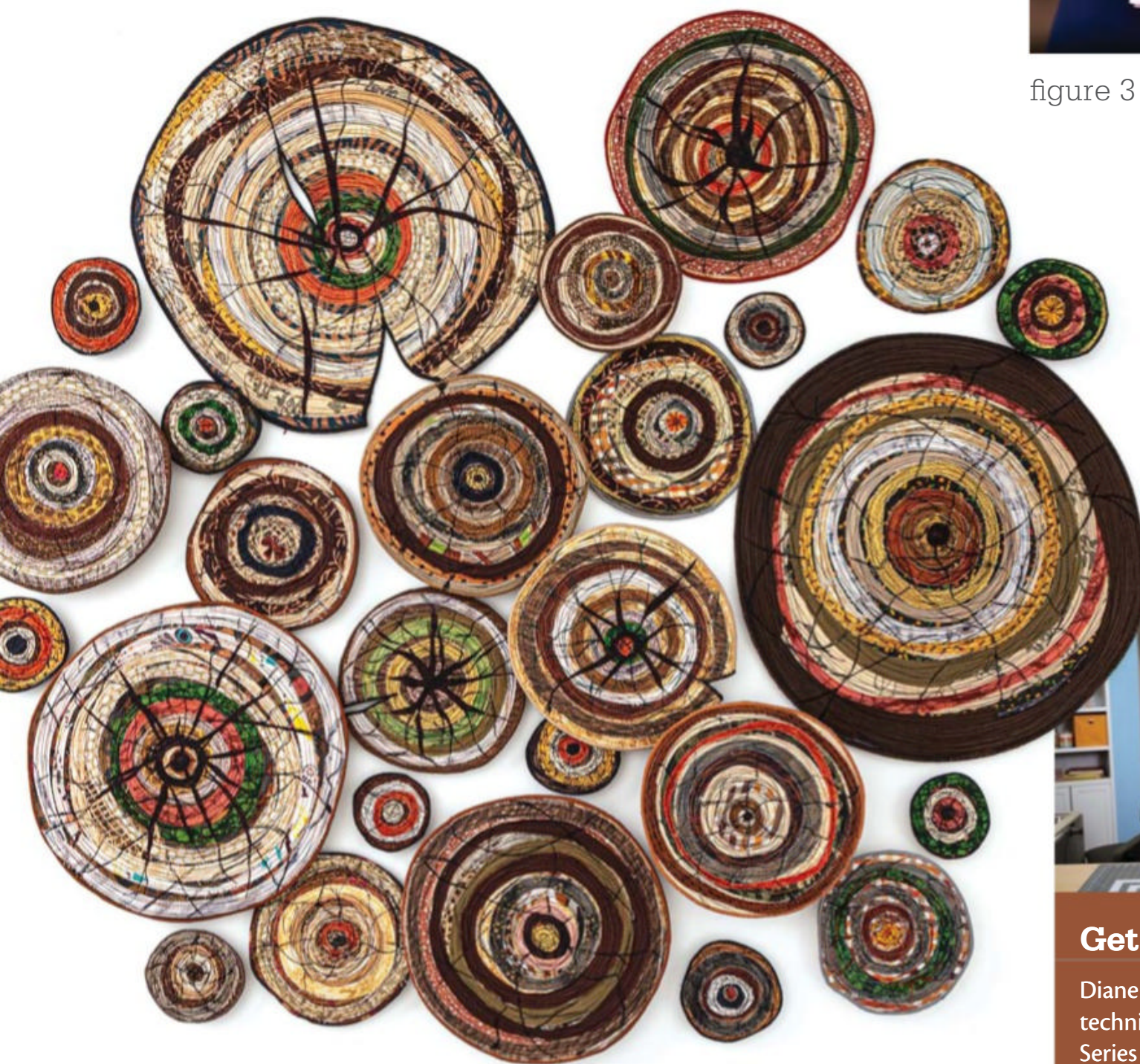


figure 3



“Forest Bathing” • a flexible assemblage



Get more *online*

Diane demonstrated this technique on “Quilting Arts TV” Series 3000, available now at quiltingarts-tv.com.

Imagining ITHAKA

Viewpoints artists bring
poem to life

AS A GROUP, THE INTERNATIONAL FIBER ARTS collective Viewpoints recently began working in a series inspired by C.P. Cavafy's poem "Ithaka" (translated from Greek by Edmund Keeley), symbolizing the destination of a long journey. Cavafy was able to create a simply beautiful poem, inspired by Homer's "Odyssey," making a metaphorical interpretation of the mythical story of Ulysses as the purpose of life.

In the context of the poem, Ithaka can have many meanings: it can represent the process to achieve a goal, to recover something lost, or even the act of going through life from beginning to end, to finally return to the origin. The poet speaks to us about the importance of enjoying the path to our own Ithaka, whatever it may be.

The concept of Ithaka embodies wisdom—of what we learn along our path and our existence, of what we accumulate little by little in the backpack of our experiences and our memories, which we always carry with us.

If life is a journey in search of happiness, then happiness is in the search itself. Ithaka is both a journey and a goal.

What is your Ithaka?

—MERCÈ GONZÁLES AND CECÍLIA GONZÁLES, VIEWPOINTS MEMBERS

With "Ithaka" as inspiration, each artist created six works over 18 months—one every three months—to share in Viewpoints' online gallery. The series is now completed.



Photos courtesy of the artists

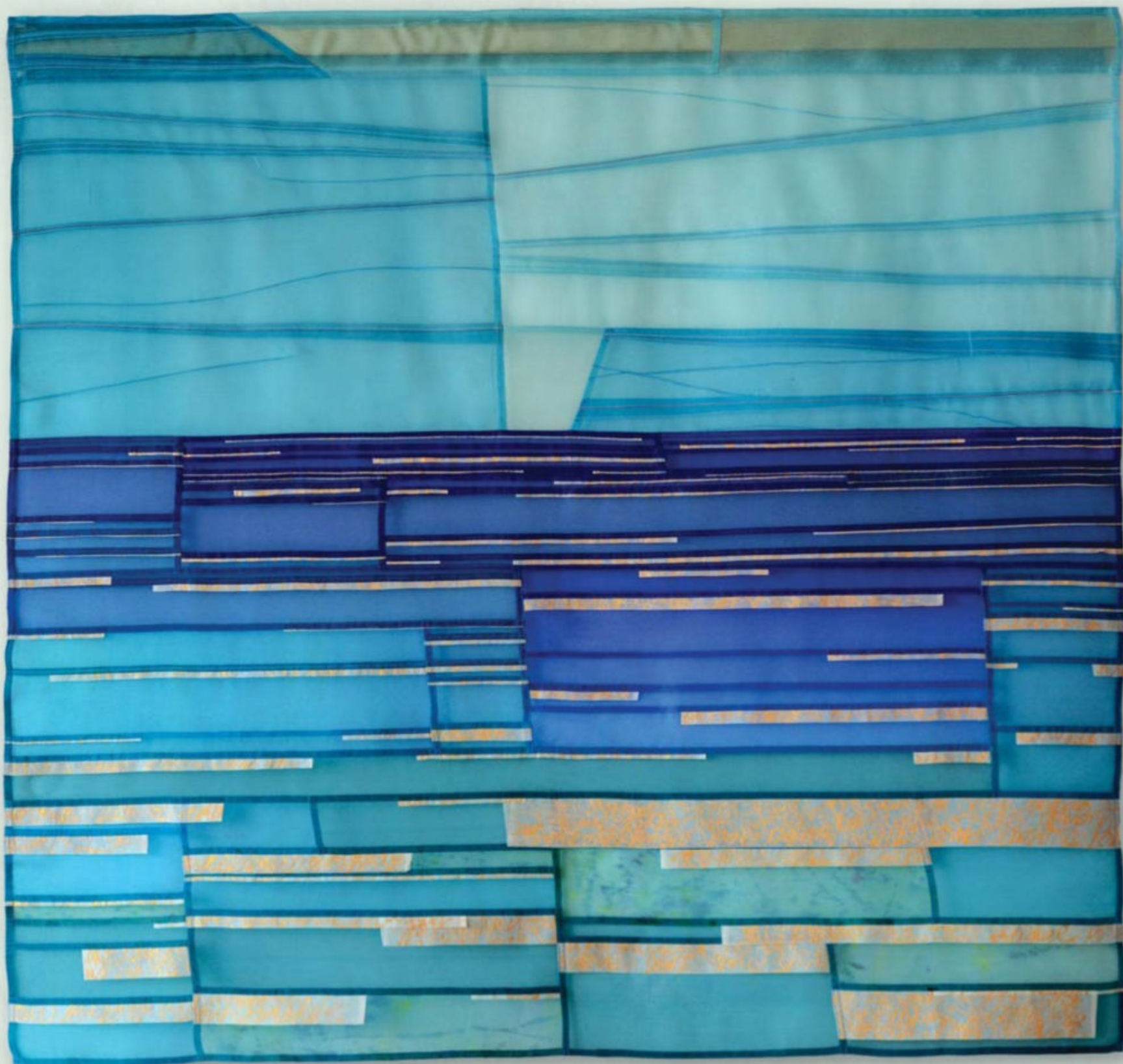
Golden Valley

SUE DENNIS • KINGS BEACH, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA • 19½" x 40½"

Blackdown National Park is a land of discovery.

As I entered the valley the heady, sweet scent of flowering wattle filled the air. An explosion of golden yellow balls greeted me on either side of the walking track and filled me with awe and wonder for such sun-kissed proliferation. The Ithaka poem talks about the joy and pleasure of new discovery and of sensual perfume. This golden valley certainly was all of that to me.

Cotton, silk, dye, textile ink, batting, various threads; hand dyed, hand printed with wattle, hand painted, hand stitched; machine quilted.



Beginning the Journey

MERCÈ GONZÁLEZ • BARCELONA, SPAIN • 40" × 38"

As the poem "Ithaka" by C.P. Cavafy says, I am inside the journey, wishing it to be long and to take me to unknown places that surprise me. I travel, grateful to have the ability to continue to be excited. It has been years since we embarked on this journey with my sister and, looking back, I am impressed by where we have come and the potential we have to develop. We have also achieved a synergy in which we feed off each other's creativity and bring out the best in each other. I move between two worlds, since I have been learning calligraphy and Chinese painting on paper for years and, on the other hand, I am passionate about silk painting, the color and the possibilities it has given me to develop my work. What attracts me to Asian art is the simplicity of the lines, the balance, the full and empty, the search for the essence, and I think that is where I find myself; in that search and in what each of my passions can contribute to the other.

Hand-painted silk organza; my own creasing technique, machine sewn, hand embroidered.

Being Simple is Being Good

HSIN-CHEN LIN • TAINAN CITY, TAIWAN • 43" x 43"

Embrace simplicity. There is no need to show how smart and capable you are. Enjoy being simple and dealing with daily life at ease. Take things as they come. This work is to celebrate simplicity and feeling comfortable. It is good to experience the bliss of being simple.

Recycled fabrics, fabrics dyed by the artist, silk, gauze, beads, metallic thread, Romanian thread; entirely hand stitched, hand embroidered; hand quilted.



Voyage

TERESITA LEAL • BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA • 31" x 40"

Travelling through life toward a sweet homeland to calmness and satisfaction, we go through different landscapes, swift voyages, rough mountains, and green valleys. We see rainbows, sunrises, and sunsets; light and darkness will mark our way toward the final destination of a long journey.

Hand-dyed and commercial cotton fabric; raw edge appliqué, machine stitched; machine quilted.





Discovery

KATE THEMEL • CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT • 30" × 40"

After an encounter with a whirlpool, a sunken ship has settled on the ocean floor. It's become a home for barnacles, coral, and other sea life. Years have gone by. Its former crew is gone and forgotten. But for an adventurous diver, this broken vessel brings a happy surprise and the joy of discovery.

Hand-cut pieces of fabric; raw-edge appliqué; quilted with hand-guided free-motion machine stitching.



Keep Your Thoughts Raised High

ALICIA MERRETT • WELLS, SOMERSET,
UNITED KINGDOM • 18" x 40"

A creative journey should always be an uplifting one. Any steps should be seen as positive, not obstacles or failures.

A step that is perceived as holding us up or going backwards can instead be a step sideways that leads us to an even more exciting journey.

Created from digital 'paintings' altered and collaged in an iPad, commercially printed on fabric, layered; machine quilted.





Lamellae

BETTY BUSBY • ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
41" x 42"

I've continued my journey up into the underside of common mushrooms. Lamella has meaning in several applications; it refers to a thin membrane or layer. Fungus gills are often referred to by that term and I've abstracted their patterns in this piece.





▲ Bliss

MARTHA WOLFE • DAVIS, CALIFORNIA • 45" x 40"

Homer refers to the "rosy-fingered dawn," emphasizing the possibility of each new day. A new beginning to life's journey. My days frequently began with coffee with my cat, Tate. A time to consider my plans or quietly meditate. A lovely ritual.

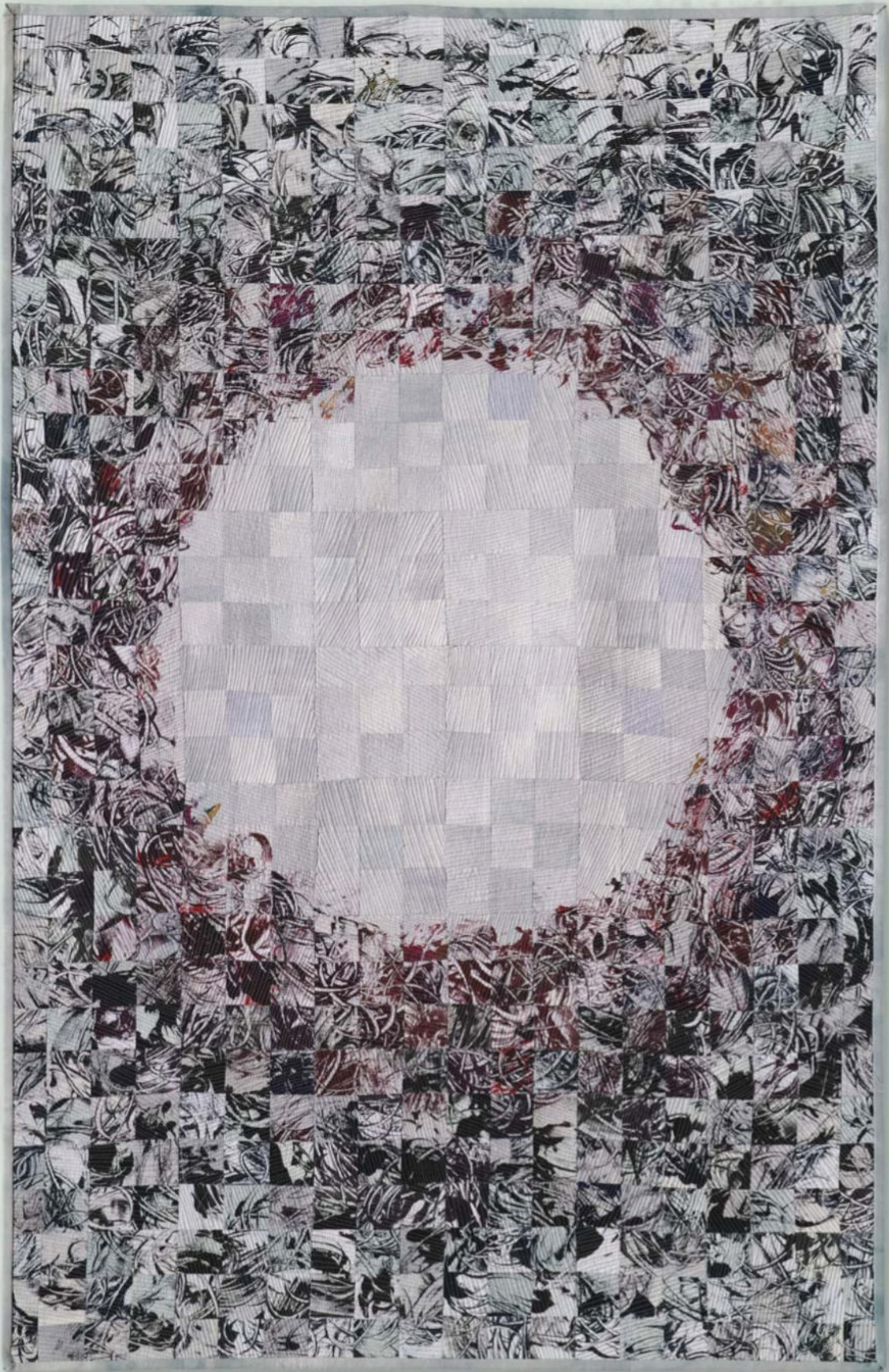
Hand-dyed and printed vintage linens Machine-pieced and raw-edge appliquéd. Machine top-stitching and quilting with hand-embroidery details.

Calm in the Chaos ►

MISIK KIM • SEOUL, KOREA • 31" x 47"

A strange world has come to us that we have never experienced before. Everything in peaceful daily life has changed. This was Chaos. We adapt in this chaos and live in that world. I enjoyed this feeling and tried to express it with quietness. I am getting used to this strangeness. I live a different daily life in a different world. And I tried to express this feeling.

Cotton; monoprinted, painted, machine pieced; machine quilted.



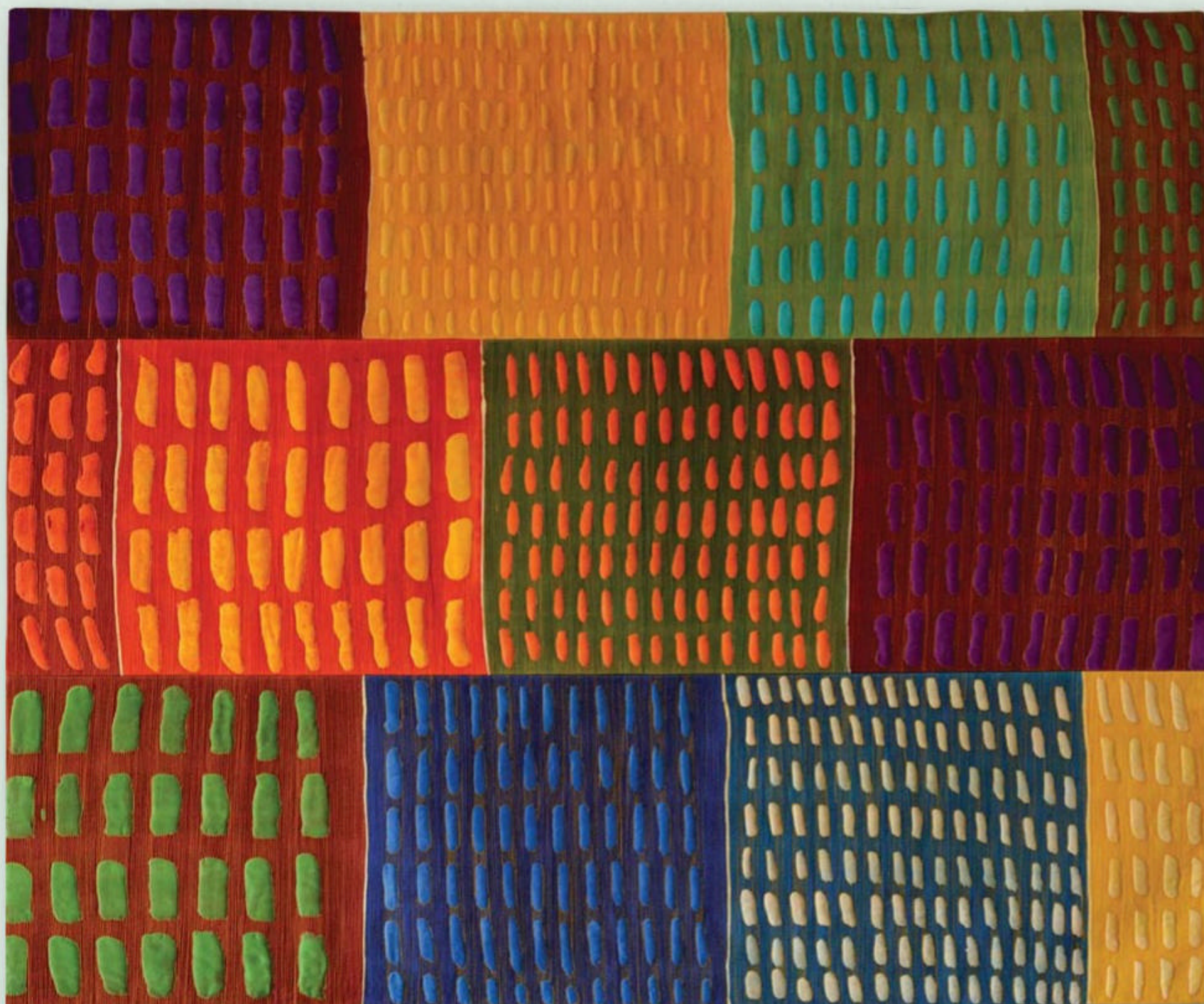
Discoveries Along the Way

LISA-MARIE SANDERS • COCOA BEACH, FLORIDA
44½" × 43½"

The Ithaka phrases “full of discovery,” “many fine things,” and “coral, amber, and ebony” influenced my choice of specific fabrics, palette, and the random approach to construction. Where possible, I tore fabric to create the strips. When I cut, it was freehand with scissors. I wanted there to be frayed edges and uneven lines—similar to the path of discovery which can be ragged and winding.

Cotton, rayon, polyester and acrylic upholstery fabrics, commercial cotton, velvet, mesh, and acetate; appliqué, fusing, couching; free-motion quilted with polyester and metallic threads.





Penelope's Path

CECÍLIA GONZÁLEZ • BARCELONA, SPAIN • 52" × 44"

My material is silk, but my passion is textures. The fabric is both language and surface. Each stitch brings me closer to what I have learned from my mother, who in turn learned it from hers, creating a chain of knowledge that goes back to the past, but that remains. And this knowledge I use to make my work and thus vindicate a feminine way of making art. In silk there is space for all colors. And I paint and play with them to trace codes, maps, cartographies, and paths. Then the thread traces furrows, stitches, reliefs, and textures. Brush, paints, silk, thread, or needle are my tools. Color and textures are my codes of expression.

Hand-painted silk; batik technique; free-motion machine quilting.

the last word.

BY J.R. ARMSTRONG

Photos courtesy of the artist



I hear several people lament how awful it is finding a quilt in a thrift shop or second-hand store—or, worse, the garbage. They wail about the fact that someone took time, energy, and money to make this for a certain person and here it is.

Did the person not appreciate it? Did they die and this is the best their family could do with it? Someone put a lot of love into this and look where it landed!

I, too, have thought these thoughts. I've even been the recipient of two very old and worn-out quilts that my brother found at the Salvation Army and used to haul furniture for a friend and when they were done, offered them to me—or were they so bad he should throw them on the trash heap, he asked? No, I took and cleaned them, and have loved both knowing full well the work that went into them—they are completely hand done.

Another friend, after having bought a house that came with a lot of furnishings, looked out the window and saw her husband rolling a barrel toward the curb for garbage night. Across the face someone had written “Antique Quilts.” She immediately rescued the contents for me and, yes, we both wondered—the quilter and the non-quilter—why the kids wanted nothing of their parents.

We are all assuming quilts like these were made for other people and that the quilter got no joy from it.

So lately I've rethought this scenario asking myself, “why do I quilt?” Very few times am I doing it for someone else. Most of the time, I have seen a quilt that I want to duplicate with my own fabrics, I have fallen in love with a certain pattern, or I have an idea on how to tweak a pattern and give it my own interpretation.

I have made what I believe are some beautiful quilts. But do my kids want them? No. Sure they took their favorites but the rest I can dispose of as I see fit.

And this is what I have seen fit to do. I have written out instructions (besides verbally telling my daughter), that after I'm gone my kids and grandkids get first pick (glory be, they might want to actually add to their very small piles) and after that I have a list of friends who I would like to have something personal from me. These are people who I think will appreciate them.

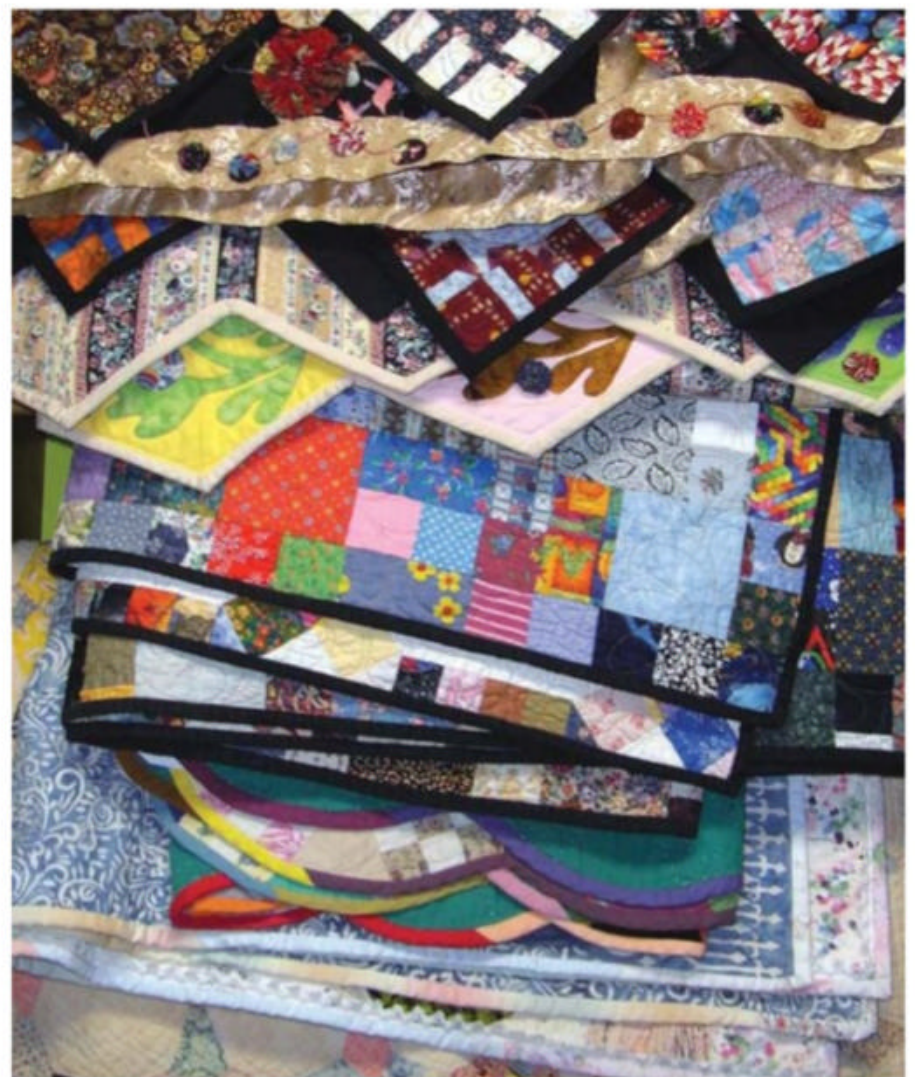
What's left—yes, I've made a lot, as most quilters have—can go wherever, with my blessing: family shelters,

veterans' and nursing homes, the fire department to give to people who have lost their homes and everything in it, and so on.

I made these quilts for myself. To satisfy my creative outlet. It's wonderful that others love them, too—somewhere down the line someone will find these discards and grab them up. So many of us have found these orphans, taken them home, and found a spot in our heart for them. And maybe, at some point, they will wonder about the person who made the quilt and realize that person was creative and would be happy to know that their quilt landed with someone who has loved it, slept under it, cried with it, and felt better snuggled up inside it. Even though we've never met.

So, the objective has been fulfilled. Someone does love them; someone feels loved in them. Isn't that all that matters? 🌻

Have you started thinking about your own creative legacy? Submit your complete essay (up to 800 words) along with a low-resolution image to qasubmissions@goldenpeakmedia.com with “the last word” in the subject line.



A collection of quilts from J.R.'s house.



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