Designing from Nature

Quilts you design are a great complement to the wonderful range of traditional (and modern!) quilts that entice us. Our most memorable quilts are often those that speak to special times, places, things, and people in our lives. Using your photographs as the place to begin the design process offers a personalized and memorable look to your quilts. Based on the design methods developed by Ruth McDowell, this class takes you through the design process – from photo to pictorial quilt. This style of quilt emphasizes the use of patterned cotton fabrics in unique ways yet is grounded in traditional piecing methods. The result is a quilt design with a somewhat abstract quality that is uniquely your own.

To begin, select images or objects that inspire YOU. Often photos that you've taken or objects that fascinate you are excellent choices. Distinct subjects in a photo (a flower, plant, person, animal, etc) work best with this design technique. Landscapes are picturesque but don't tend to lend themselves readily to this design approach (I'll explain more about this in class). I often take my best photos at local parks, in my neighborhood, in my yard or at local garden centers. Real objects or large sized careful freehand drawings prepared in advanced are also excellent quilt subjects.

Select a variety of photos to consider for your quilt design. If you have them, bring several photos of the same subject as well as photos of different subjects. When working from a photo, bring to class a large copy of the image to work from (11" x 17" or 12" x 18"; working with bigger enlargements than this can be cumbersome). Inexpensive photo enlargements are available from various sources. Photocopier enlargements also work well. I usually make enlargements of all the photos I am considering before deciding on which one to use for the quilt.

We will discuss the design issues that are presented for the photos you've brought along.

A Word About Using Photographs

Your own photos are *the* best source of images for quilts. Your direct connections to the photos you've taken make them memorable. You may also find photos by friends or family a good source; use them only with permission.

Every image available on the internet was each taken by someone, and in nearly every instance photographers do not intend or explicitly do not allow you to use them without their permission. The vast majority of photos, even on sites like Flickr, are copyright protected. All forms of print media use copyrighted images. Respect copyright rules. If you don't see explicit permission (noted as copyright free and royalty-free) posted with a photo or on a website, assume you can't use it.

There are a few internet sites that post images in a "creative commons". In these instances, the photographer has posted a photograph to allow others to use it for any purpose, copyright-free and royalty-free. If I am searching for inspiration, I stick to "creative commons" websites or other websites that post "Public Domain" photographs and check their rules carefully before downloading images. Respect the rules. You are required to seek written permission from the photographer if you are considering using an image. It is illegal to do otherwise.

Please do not bring artwork (photo, drawing, quilt or painting) by another artist with the intention of copying without written permission.

Empty Spools Seminars

Designing from Nature

If your photo includes people, we will be using Ruth McDowell's approach and will not be piecing facial features. I also keep a digital camera handy when working on a quilt. As I cut fabrics for each piece, I'll photograph the quilt. The camera records what I've done. As I change fabric choices, I will take more photos. Switching back and forth between photos allows me to see which fabrics work best. Its also fun to record the designing process!

SUPPLY LIST

Photos

Bring a variety of photos from which to choose, several photos of the same subject as well as photos of different subjects. We will discuss the pros and cons of translating different images into a pieced quilt design. Some images work better than others, so it's important to have several different options from which to choose. Have the photos enlarged to 11" x 17" or 12" x 18", this is a good size to work from to develop the pieced design (working with bigger enlargements than this can be cumbersome). Inexpensive photo enlargements are available from various sources, such as Costco. Photocopier enlargements also work well. Do not bring original photos since we may be drawing directly on each photo as a working copy.

Fabrics

You will see that my patterns combine a wide selection of fabrics that enhance the look of the quilt. The image (such as a chicken, flower or bird) will use anywhere from 8-20 different fabrics, mostly in small pieces. Some fabrics will be repeated in the quilt, others may appear only once. The backgrounds will also typically feature 3-6 different fabrics that have a similar look. In some instances we will be looking for specific features in a patterned fabric — for example something that suggests the shape of an eye, or feathers, or fur or a stem. Patterned fabrics with multiple colors add texture and dimension to the quilt. We will be playing with different combinations to see how these fabrics look next to each other. Having lots of patterned fabric choices from which to choose is part of the creative process for these quilts and helps bring these designs to life. It's the seemingly odd combinations of fabrics that bring texture and depth to your quilts, and will work well.

BRING LOTS!! Lots and lots of patterned fabric. A fat quarter or less is probably as much as you will need of any one fabric. Bring you largish patterned fabric scraps (though the strips found in jelly rolls are often too narrow). I routinely pull 50 or more fabric choices from my stash for the main subject of my quilts and additional fabric choices for the background. Having a wide variety of fabric choices to key to this style. When choosing colors, keep in mind that a red poppy will also have bits of orange and yellow, and perhaps hints of purple and gold and green in it, so look for fabrics that have hints of other colors. **BRING YOUR STASH!! However, note that we will NOT BE USING solid or tone-on-tone fabrics that "read" as solids.**

LARGE prints, medium prints, small prints, batiks, plaids, stripes, prints with many colors, bold fabrics as well as pastels — I pull them all. Each different kind of print will add something different to the overall look of the quilt. **Look for printed fabrics where the print clearly contrasts with the background.**

Empty Spools Seminars

Designing from Nature

Before class, visit my website and spend some time looking at the range of patterned fabrics used in my quilts to get an idea of what to bring: **www. AnnShawQuilting.com.** Also look at Ruth McDowell's website to look at the fabrics she uses in her gorgeous quilts: **www.RuthBMcDowell.com**

You will also need the following supplies:
For the Master Design:
• Tracing Paper (11' by 17" or 14" by 17" sheets)
• Pencils/sharpener (I prefer a mechanical pencil with 7mm lead)
• Good Quality Eraser (like a Pentel Black Pearl)
• Ruler (18" plastic ruler is ideal)
• Paper Scissors
• Blue Masking Tape
For Freezer Paper Template (the above supplies plus):
• Freezer paper
• First Aid Cloth Tape (found near Band-Aids in your drugstore)
• Sharpie brand Ultra Fine-line permanent marker (Black only!!)
• Highlighters (several colors)
• Color pencils (7 distinct colors for making tick marks) (Note: Ink Pens, Gel Pens, Sharpie Permanent Markers or Crayons <u>will not work</u>)

Design Wall: There will be large foam design boards available for our use. If you are driving, consider bringing 3 foam boards (30"x40") along with medium size binder clips. I find this size fits in my car and I'll show you how to connect them to make a larger design wall. It's a convenient way to get your project home easily.

Sewing Supplies:
• Paper and Pencil to take notes
• Paper Scissors (to cut apart freezer paper templates)
   • Rotary cutter, 12" (or longer) rotary cutting ruler and cutting mat
• Fabric Scissors
• Pins (LOTS!! Pincushion overflowing with 200+ , 1" or longer Ballhead Pins are ideal)
• Basic Sewing Kit
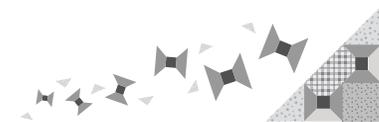• Several Ziploc bags (quart and gallon size)

OPTIONAL SUPPLIES:
Sewing machine and supplies: (bobbins thread, needles etc).
Depending on your design, you may or may not reach the point of beginning to sew it together. You will be completing fabric selections by the end of the workshop though most students will not begin sewing. Bring a your machine if its convenient, but leave it in your car the first few days of class. You should be comfortable using your machine. **Before coming,** check to be sure that it is in good working order.   **If you are considering renting a machine, experience from previous classes suggests it's unlikely you will use it.**

Digital Camera: If you have a small digital pocket camera, bring it! Using the camera on your phone or tablet also works well. It is very helpful to take pictures as we work through the fabric auditioning process.

Optional Books: *Design Workshop*, by Ruth B McDowell, C&T Publishing, *Piecing Workshop*, by Ruth B McDowell, C&T Publishing, New, used and print-on-demand copies of these books are available from various on-line sources

Empty Spools Seminars