

In Sunshine and Shadow – Bryce Canyon Quilt Retreat 2009

Scrap Quilts and Finding and Using Unusual Fabric

Use it up, wear it out, make do:

We are faced with economic times much like our mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers in the past. Many of them used every tiny scrap of fabric available to them. Though we may not be personally experiencing such grave money issues that would necessitate conserving that drastically, I would imagine there isn't one of us here that isn't examining ways to use our resources more efficiently and that would include fabric. I believe this makes us relate to the Sunshine and Shadow theme in a more personal way.

Below are some quotes that best express my point of view for fabrics and quilting as my greatest love is for the scrap quilt.

Quotable notes from Roberta Horton in “Scrap Quilts, The Art of Making Do”

“I’m convinced that hiding inside all of us is a creative side which we don’t always access. Sometimes we don’t even realize it exists. Being creative merely means that we make our own choices, and we lean to be satisfied with our own images or our own version of how a quilt should or can be made.”

“I love fabric, so quilts made with a lot of different fabrics give me more to look at, more to love. I am forced to read the entire surface of the quilt to find all the variety in the fabric patterns and colors. It’s sort of like a treasure hunt. In contrast, I only have to read one of the blocks in a repeated block quilt if the fabric usage is duplicated. It doesn’t seem to matter how complicated and complex the construction of an individual block may be. Once is enough! That quilt maker wasted a lot of effort to entertain me; there’s nothing new for me to see. A pillow or cushion would have consumed as much of my interest and curiosity. . . . A scrap quilt is impossible to memorize. It would require a lengthy phone conversation to a fellow quilt maker to describe a good scrap quilt. Not so for the repeat-fabric quilt. All that would be necessary would be a short statement which includes the pattern, the block size, and a brief inventory of the fabrics.”

“Ofttimes I’ve admired a scrap quilt only to discover that I didn’t like some of the fabrics used in it. I probably wouldn’t have bought that fabric in the first place. At least, I wouldn’t have had certain fabrics touch each other in a shared seam. How could this be? It’s important to understand the relationships between fabrics. They don’t all do the same job within a quilt or a block. Some are there to catch our attention, others merely cover the batting. Some form a contrast so we can better appreciate the beauty of another one.”

That last quote brings me to express my love of vintage or unusual reproduction fabrics. I am always on the look out for that next fabulous fabric that will infuse my mind with ideas and propel me into my next project. Sometimes that vintage or unusual fabric indeed is NOT the more thrifty than walking into any quilt store and purchasing from the latest line of fabric but for me it makes my hobby more interesting, more creative, and relatable to my history. As Roberta Horton suggests, that special fabric can become the star fabric in the quilt and my scrap fabric can form the contrast to help bring out the unique quality of that special fabric. And by supplementing with scraps, that special fabric can become affordable.

Quote from Darlene Zimmerman on her web site:

How Many Quilts? After having been asked how many quilts I’ve made, who I’m making this one for, or that one for, or why, and how many quilts do I think I need . . . I came to the following conclusion:

I am a creator, an artist, just as much as a painter is . . . Does anyone ask a painter who he is painting for or why he is painting yet another landscape? How many pictures/portraits he has painted? How many canvases or paintings does he need? NO! Does a painter stop wanting to paint because he has reached some number that symbolizes the end of his need to paint? “Okay that’s #100, I’m done now . . .” I create because I am driven to create. My medium just happens to be fabric and thread instead of oil or acrylics on canvas . . . but I create for the same reason . . . to express myself, to

share myself, to experiment . . . Even if the quilt doesn't have a purpose, a recipient, a reason. Quilting is my voice. I Quilt therefor I am.

Bookmarks and finding vintage or unusual fabric:

Most sites are searchable. If I am doing a "theme" based quilt I will search using the key word for the quilt such as "kitchen fabric" or "valentine". For ebay or etsy.com searches I put in key words plus the word fabric. You can even search with using just "vintage fabric". I keep an idea in mind for a quilt and may look for months before I find what I want. Even just a hint of vintage or unusual fabric in every quilt adds personality. Sometimes you can buy scraps or charm packs with smaller pieces but greater variety. Be careful and know that not everything looks as good as the picture when it arrives. Once I ordered a kitchen themed fabric with a glaze coating on it that was a 40's vintage piece. I was really disappointed and put it away. Whitney (my daughter) encouraged me to wash it (I never thought it would come off) and when I washed it, it came out bright and white and has been one of my favorite pieces of fabric I ever bought online. Beware, some fabric has an odor, too. I look for fabric that advertises "non-smoking" in descriptions. Vintage fabric is not color fast so yes, it is best to wash it first. Whenever possible I use Pay Pal so I'm not giving out my credit card number to everyone in the world and it keeps me on a budget since I have it taken directly out of my checking account that way. However, it doesn't cost anything to internet window shop.

www.reproductionfabrics.com - gouped by years and type, some reproduction Japanese 30's and novelty, great site for civil war fabrics

www.hollyhockquilts.com; <http://glennasgabfest.blogspot.com> - some vintage fabric, feed sack, patterns, and reproduction fabric (she does design for P&B with reproduction feed sack) but she is redoing her site and going to sell at etsy.com so watch for her to get this set-up

www.antiquefabric.com - great selection from feed sack, turn of the century and up to 70's; pricey but sometimes worth it, large site and good for browsing or window shopping, but very time consuming because of size and how they group fabric

www.reprodepot.com - nice selection of import fabric and reproduction

www.quiltshops.com - excellent search engine for many stores, use thumbnails when searching, good way to find fabrics on sale since you can see what lots of stores have using the same keyword for your search

www.ebay.com - hundreds of thousands of fabrics for sale, you have to practice searching and watch often and learn the dance of the bid. Set limits on bids and don't get caught up in the heat of the last few seconds of bidding and overspend. Many of my vintage theme fabrics I have found on ebay. Be very careful when purchasing "used" fabric, sometimes linens and fabrics are worn and unsuitable but look bright in the picture. Search is very important - change the way you group words such as teapot or tea pot and feed sack or feed sack to find different pieces. Also search using words like tablecloths, napkins, and other sources of fabric for that very hard to find item.

www.rickrack.com - this is a site based in my home town-county in Pennsylvania, pricey but worth it sometimes for that special fabric, also browse her quilts and quilt tops for sale for vintage inspiration, this is one of my favorite sites

www.revivalfabrics.com - sometimes you can find good deals and some unusual fabrics

<http://www.feedsacklady.com/> - Darlene Zimmerman, feed sacks

www.kitty-craft.com - japanese import reproduction - (expensive)

www.superbuzzy.com - japanese reproduction (pricey)

www.etsy.com - hand made items and supplies, I always look here first when I'm looking for a unique gift, they also have vintage fabric and Japanese reproduction fabric - search the site much like you would ebay

<http://www.trueup.net/> - posts unusual fabric sites, fabric sales and latest information on textiles, everyday is a new tip or picture of unique fabric

<http://quiltinggallery.com/> - new site listing blogs in your area, news, free projects, tips and videos. It has a search for bloggers in your area

<http://quiltinggallery.com/quilting-bloggers/search.asp> . Search the side bar of this site for all kinds of information.

Quilt books – www.bestbookbuys.com and www.amazon.com for **used** quilt books and out of print. I will look at stores or catalogs for quilt books I might want and then I go to these sites to see if I can get the book used. Actually I never buy a new quilt book ever anymore after realizing the advantage of buying used books.

<http://www.oregoncoast.com/latimertextile/> - museum and gift shop, very fun place and you can buy vintage fabrics (charm squares) as well as enjoy the displays, Oregon has great quilt stores as well

<http://www.rmqm.org/html/shop.html> - many of you may have already visited this museum, they also have quilts for sale

If you take a vacation, preview your trip by looking online for quilt stores in the area you will visit or along the way. It is a fun way to bring your hobby into your trip and you will always remember getting the fabric from the vacation, it's a great souvenir.

Blogs – What is a blog?

A **blog** (an abridgment of the term **web log**) is a [website](#), usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject such as quilting; others function as more personal [online diaries](#). A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs and [web pages](#). The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Bloggers love comments, especially quilting bloggers.

Looking at quilt blogs is like belonging to the greatest trunk show or show-n-tell. Women from all over the world share ideas and show the latest “thing” in quilting. Women with similar interests connect with each other, make friends, and talk about their hobby. Many fabric and quilt designers have blogs and you can preview what is coming up and coming out from their workrooms. Be adventurous. Peek into the world of blogging. Bloggers often have tutorials, free patterns and giveaways. If you're not into blogs you are missing out. If you want to find out how to do something you can “google” _____ and the word “tutorial” and instructions can be found to learn just about anything. For instance a friend of mine has tutorials for applique on her blog <http://apassionforapplique.blogspot.com/search?q=tutorial>. Many bloggers also sell hand made items through etsy.com and I like to first look for handmade gifts before shopping retail.

My blog - <http://fredashive.blogspot.com/> My blog is updated 4 times a week with new projects, old projects, buys, finds and news. My side bar lists interesting quilting blogs to look at and also links to places to find fabric. I have several tutorials on my blog.

