CREATE YOUR OWN HANDMADE QUILTS:

5 Hand Quilting Techniques from Quilting Daily

1. Art Quilting Made Easy
   Lesley Riley

2. Painting with Thread: Stitching a Story
   Ellen Scott

3. Home Free: Collage Your Way to Design
   Sylvia Naylor

   Natalya Aikens

5. Fusing 101
   Laura Wasilowski
To anyone who loves fabric and thread, making a handmade quilt is often the ultimate creative experience. The contemplative act of hand quilting—needle moving rhythmically over and under fabric—is a pleasure even for those who primarily rely on machine quilting enjoy. But you don’t have to know how to quilt by hand to create a handmade, quilted piece. Many contemporary art quilters add hand quilting and embroidery to their fabric art. The hand stitching lends a personal touch to a handcrafted quilt.

In our free eBook, Create Your Own Handmade Quilts: 5 Hand Quilting Techniques from Quilting Daily, we give you five different takes on making handmade quilts. In Art Quilting Made Easy, Lesley Riley shows how you can make a simple yet beautiful homemade quilt with a few simple tools. Lesley also describes how to hand quilt your piece in different ways to add dimension and interest.

If you enjoy a lot of hand stitching, you’ll love Ellen Scott’s technique for using stitching, scraps, and small embellishments to make a colorful narrative homemade quilt. In Painting with Thread, Stitching a Story, Ellen shows how this kind of quilt’s handmade appearance gives it a homespun, heartfelt quality. Sylvia Naylor’s homemade quilts are literally that: quilts depicting homes through fabric collage. The unique design method she describes in Home Free that begins with paper collage is easy to follow, especially if you think you “can’t draw.”

Another easy way to begin making handcrafted quilts is by starting small and using materials you have on hand, like Natalya Aikens does in Go Green: Eco-friendly Journal Quilting Techniques. Using her guidelines for making small, weekly handmade quilts with recycled materials will give you the freedom to have fun and experiment.

If you’d rather skip a lot of the functional sewing and focus on hand quilting the details, or simply don’t have that much time to sew, Laura Wasilowski offers a step-by-step guide to fusing quilts in Fusing 101. Her lesson includes a project for you to use your newfound fusing skills to make your own handcrafted quilt. So you can see, no matter what your interest, Create Your Own Handmade Quilts: 5 Hand Quilting Techniques from Quilting Daily will give you the tools and inspiration you need to create your own handmade quilts.

Pokey Bolton
Editorial Director
Something has kept you from making an art quilt. Maybe it’s the word “art” that has stopped you. Perhaps the endless products and embellishments seem overwhelming. Whatever the reason, there is only one solution—just begin. With a few simple tools, a little fabric, and a desire to play, you can create a small art quilt of your own design. Don’t let a lack of formal training hold you back. The most important quality that you can bring to your art quilt is your own vision.

An art quilt is an expression of your own individuality. It can draw on traditional patterns and techniques, but the end result is a totally new—unique to you—design. The beads, paints, transfers and other applications are there for your use if the spirit moves you—if not, save them for another day. In fact, because art quilts are not meant for “use,” and therefore will not be washed, you are free to experiment with

“Thinking Chair” • 7” × 12”
non-traditional methods and materials. There is no right or wrong. To get you started, I will lead you through the processes I used to make two small and simple art quilts. When you are ready to move on to bigger, more complex things, there are many excellent resources available (see “Resources”). You may even decide you want to take a class on design or learn about specific quilting techniques that will enhance your new passion. But keep this in mind—many wonderful art quilts have been created by self-taught artists and quilters. Don’t let a lack of formal training hold you back. The most important quality that you can bring to your art quilt is your own vision. Good workmanship is important, but it should not inhibit your creativity, especially when you are just starting out. Perfectionism should not be pursued at the expense of creativity, learning, and enjoying yourself. I like to tell my students, “If you’re not having fun, you’re doing something wrong.” Confidence, certainty, and expertise come from doing what you love over and over and over again. So let’s begin.

Art quilts generally follow the same construction techniques as a traditional quilt:

1. The quilt is composed of three layers: top, batting, and backing, also known as a quilt “sandwich.”
2. The quilt top is created by one of three methods: piecing, appliqué, or whole cloth.
3. The three layers are held together by stitching, tying, or fusing.

You do not need to own a sewing machine to make your first art quilt. Just like our ancestors, you can sew your quilt entirely by hand. But unlike those women before us, you can now create a quilt entirely by fusing. Fusing is a term for joining fabric using an adhesive material that is activated by heat from an iron. Quilt fabrics backed with a sheet of fusible webbing, such as Wonder Under, can be fused together to create a no-sew art quilt. Optional hand-stitching can add depth and detail.

Appliquéd Quilt

Appliqué is a French word meaning “to apply.” In an appliqué quilt, small pieces of fabric are applied to a larger, background fabric by sewing or fusing. Shapes can be recognizable, such as a door or tree, geometric, or simply freeform shapes. Traditionally, any fabric that lies under another piece of fabric and is not seen is trimmed away to reduce bulk when hand quilting. With my appliqué method, I find that trimming is not necessary. To prevent layers of fabric from slipping, I use a walking foot attachment on my sewing machine. A walking foot is an attachment or a built-in feature on your sewing machine that feeds the fabric layers evenly through the machine and prevents the layers from slipping. If you do not have a walking foot, use more pins to prevent slipping or puckering, or fuse all layers before machine stitching.

1. I scanned and printed an old photo onto fabric treated for ink-jet printers (see Resources).
2. Using the photo as a starting point, I chose a blue background fabric as the base for my appliqué because blue is complimentary to the orange in the photo and it provided a good, strong contrast. Three other fabrics in blue and orange tones were layered behind the photo to offset it from the background, and the composition was pinned in place. I tucked small pieces of my chosen border fabrics under the image to visually pull the outside edges of the quilt in towards the photo.
3. Using a straight stitch and my sewing machine, I stitched down all of the fabric layers to the background fabric, starting with...
the image and working outward. I started with the topmost layer, and stitched the exposed edges of every layer. This secured all layers underneath. This construction technique is similar to paper collage.

4. To mimic a border, I ironed Wonder Under to the back of the plaid fabric (a commercial fabric consisting of already pieced plaids.) Cut 4 strips, each 1.5" wide by the length of each side of the quilt top plus an additional 2 inches in length to make sure they overlap at the corners.

5. I used a simple finishing method to create the outer border, one that also serves as the quilt backing and edge finish: Cut a piece of batting 2.5" inches larger than finished quilt top. Cut backing fabric 3" larger on all sides than quilt top. Place backing fabric right side down, with batting on top. Fold backing fabric to front, mitering corners as if wrapping a package. Iron down. Place quilt top on top.

6. I removed the paper backing from the Wonder Undered strips and slid them under the quilt top edges and on top of the folded-over backing fabric to mimic a border. To form the border, I sandwiched the strips of fabric with Wonder Under on them between the quilt top edges and the folded-over backing fabric, then ironed them in place.

7. I stitched the quilt top to the batting and backing with a straight stitch going around the edges of the quilt top and again around the plaid borders.

8. To give the completed quilt a nice finished edge, I stitched around all four sides of the quilt 1/4" in from the finished edge, with a second line of stitching 1/4" inside of the first line of stitching.

9. I appliquéd a vintage leaf to the lower left corner of the image, with the tip of the leaf directing the eye towards the child’s face in the photo.

“Move Over Moon” • 9” × 14”
Whole Cloth Quilt

In a whole cloth quilt the emphasis is on the surface design of the fabric and/or the quilting stitches. Using paint, stamps, screening or transfers, a plain piece of fabric can be transformed into a work of art. The addition of quilting completes the overall design.

1. I scanned a favorite photo of mine into my computer and printed it onto an ink-jet transparency.

2. The image was transferred to fabric by applying acrylic medium to the fabric, laying the inked side of the transparency down on the fabric and burnishing the image to transfer the ink to the fabric. (See Quilting Arts Magazine®, Issue 11 for more on ink-jet transfers.)

3. I chose to machine stitch a red line around the images to add definition. This could have been hand-stitched or omitted.

4. Using the fluid acrylic, I randomly added color to the quilt top, leaving the paint concentrated in some areas and adding water to thin it out to make it more subtle in others.

5. I layered the backing fabric, batting, and quilt top to form the quilt sandwich.

6. I ironed Wonder Under onto the binding fabric. Four strips were cut the length of the quilt sides plus 1". Before removing the paper backing, the strips were folded in half and ironed. The backing paper was removed and the strips were ironed to fuse the binding to the quilt edges. Any additional fabric at the corners was trimmed away.

7. I chose to quilt this whole cloth quilt by sewing on buttons (button-quilting.) This was a decision I had made once the image transfer and painting was completed. I wanted an additional dimension and more visual interest for this simple quilt top, plus more color. The buttons served all three purposes. Three sizes of red buttons were sewn on with the largest at the bottom to provide visual weight and lead the eye upward.

First known for her Fragment series of small fabric collages, Lesley is now an internationally known art quilter and mixed-media artist, teacher, author, and founder of ArtistSuccess™. Visit Lesley’s website, LesleyRiley.com.

Whole cloth quilt

Materials

- Cotton canvas or muslin
- Copyright-free image
- Scanner
- Ink-jet printer
- Transparency
- Golden Acrylic Matte Medium
- 1” foam brush
- Golden Quinacridone Gold Fluid Acrylic
- Fabric scissors (Scissors that have been used to cut paper may be too dull for fabric cutting.)
- Backing and binding fabric
- Batting (commercial batting, flannel, or felt)
- Wonder Under
- Hand-sewing needle and thread
- Buttons or embellishments

Optional

- sewing machine
A FEW WORDS ABOUT QUILTING

Originally, small closely spaced quilting stitches were necessary to keep loose cotton batting from shifting around between the quilt layers. Naturally these early quilters wanted their stitching to be as attractive as their piecing and appliqué were, and they designed patterns for their stitches to take. The care and attention put into these stitches later became the basis for judging workmanship and mastery of the craft.

Quilting stitches also added another dimension to what is basically a two-dimensional surface and often complemented the design of the piecing and appliqué. With today’s technology in manufacturing, batting no longer needs to be stitched at such close and regular intervals. Many manufacturers now recommend stitching only every 6 to 12 inches.

Today’s quilters have the choice of using quilting stitches as an integral part of their overall quilt design or purely for functional purposes. If you love to hand stitch, a small art quilt can serve as a canvas for your stitching. Perhaps you want to use a machine, but are afraid of “ruining” your quilt; you can use simple straight-stitch quilting methods. Stitch-in-the-ditch hides your machine stitching in the ditch, or junction, where two fabrics are joined together. By following these seam lines, you can add dimension to the quilt surface and secure the quilt layers together. Stitching-in-the-ditch can also be done by hand.

Another simple quilting method, called the outline method, is to stitch by hand or machine, 1/4” from the ditch, or seam lines. Stitching can be done 1/4” inside or outside of the pieced or appliquéd edge. This method is easier than free-form or free-motion quilting and adds dimension and definition to your quilt top.

Two very simple methods that are perfect for anyone new to sewing or someone who does not have a sewing machine are tying and button-quilting. Tying a quilt is as easy as tying your shoe, but you do have to know how to thread a needle. A heavier thread, like Pearl cotton or embroidery floss, is usually used. Starting from the top, put the needle and thread through the quilt top to the back leaving a 4” tail of thread. Come back through to the front, close to your original stitch, and tie a double knot in the two thread tails. Using decorative thread, or thread in a contrasting color can add another element to the overall quilt design.

To button-quilt your quilt, sew on buttons in a random or planned pattern, stitching through all three layers of the quilt sandwich. You can hide your knots under the buttons. The color of the buttons can be subdued to blend in, or serve as an element of the overall design as in the quilt opposite.

And last, but not least, the easiest and most portable method, called stippling, is to quilt by taking random stitches across the surface of the quilt with a matching, contrasting or decorative thread. These randomly scattered stitches are similar to the tied method, but without the loose hanging thread tails. Pieced quilts and appliqué can be enhanced by background stippling. Many close stitches tend to depress the background and cause unstitched shapes to puff up. While a few well placed stitches are sufficient to hold your quilt together, you may find that you enjoy the relaxing rhythm of hand stitching.

—Lesley Riley
find narrative quilt making very exciting and satisfying. For me it has a kinship to other forms of needlework I greatly admire in cultures all over the world. It’s homemade, handspun, and heartfelt. I love the fact that I can take it wherever I go as I travel through the various parts of my life. It’s unique because there is no pattern, just the template of your visual voice and what you have to say.

My quilt pieces start out as a preliminary drawing. I compose a narrative scene with a variety of characters and objects. I am interested in the symbols that the subjects represent. It’s an illustration that is rendered with thread, paint, buttons, and beads. The finished pieces tell a story of real and imagined events.

I usually begin with a drawing from my journal. The process of constantly putting down visual ideas is very beneficial. It allows me to keep my imagination flowing and acts as a resource when it’s time to articulate a composition onto fabric. When I receive a commission,

I incorporate specific ideas from the client, such as special events or the individual’s favorite things. This dialogue adds a sentimental dimension, similar to a scrapbook or a charm bracelet. It’s a memento that is personal and often engenders a kindred feeling in those who view it.

- A 14” × 16” piece of white cotton fabric. (I prefer Kona Cotton.)
- Embroidery floss — a variety of colors specific to your piece
- Crewel embroidery needles — choose the sizes according to your beads and buttons
- Cotton batting (I prefer Hobbs Heirloom organic craft batting. The 36” × 45” size will easily provide enough material for 2 small quilts.)
- Czech glass beads, novelty beads, antique buttons, and anything else you may already have or can seek out.
- Sentimental material, scraps of fabric, or appliqué pieces from other projects
- Ultra-fine permanent Sharpie® marker (There are numerous colors to choose from.)
- Paint (Golden fluid acrylics, Jacquard textile color, or Liquitex medium viscosity acrylic artist colors all work well. All three companies have paints that provide good coverage and yet still allow you to comfortably needle through the material and batting.)
After I resolve the drawing, it is time to transfer it onto fabric. I use a black permanent ultra-fine marker for my rendering. You could also use a fabric marker that would disappear, if you’re concerned about any of the marker showing through your stitches.

DIRECTIONS

1. Start with white, 100 percent cotton cloth, or use a cotton bed sheet, pillowcase, or tablecloth.

I have found it easiest to needle through medium to lightweight cotton. If you prefer, you could also use a colored fabric.

2. Painting is optional, and you can do as much or as little painting as you desire, depending on the effect you want to achieve. If you do choose to paint onto the fabric, you can use either textile paint or liquid acrylic paint.

Note: Acrylic paint can be challenging to sew through if it is applied too thickly. I suggest you do a sample patch of paint on your material and see how it is to pull thread through the painted fabric.

Depending on how much you want the paint to factor into the piece, the paint can act as a background color or a decorative component. You can always adjust the amount of the painted surface showing later by using more or fewer stitches on top. If you choose to leave the cotton in its natural state, without paint, you will have to decide how close to sew your stitches in order to completely cover the surface.

Or, you can decide to allow more of the cotton surface to show through. As you can see there are many options; this is where personal preference and style can shine through.

3. You are now ready to pin the batting, cut to size, to the back of the material. Cotton batting composed of natural fibers is pleasant to sew through and it provides a good outcome when it is stitched to the top piece.

4. Start sewing with with an appropriately sized embroidery needle. The size of the needle depends upon the size of the beads, buttons, or other embellishments that you plan to incorporate in the design. Embroidery floss is an exciting thread to work with for this process because there is a large selection of colors to choose from to best express your piece.

5. Start the stitching process by filling in the space of the larger objects and background first, but sew in random areas across the entire surface to see how the color palette is taking shape.

I do not advise filling in one entire space at a time, because going back and forth from one area to another allows you to create a more dynamic result. This way you continue to make choices that best describe the expressive qualities of the objects and subjects you are portraying. With this method you can enhance, modify, or change something as you go along.
6. Do not separate the skein when you stitch unless you are working on very small areas or fine details. Use a running stitch, sew from front to back, or choose any other decorative stitch you desire. Make an effort to sew with various hues of a color, this way you can use brighter or lighter shades as a highlight and then deeper or darker shades for the shadows. In addition you may layer different colors on top of each other to achieve a dimensional effect.

7. To further add to the visual experience, accentuate sections with beads, buttons, or charms. When it comes time for the finishing touches, I often use the blanket stitch around the border. If you want more thread or more color, wrap the thread around the edge and provide a visual frame for your picture. You may implement these techniques in any way you like. Follow your own narrative and visual voice and literally try your hand at expressing yourself.


“Traveling Carriage” • Approximately 20” × 15”
Perhaps because I have moved quite a few times in the last decade, houses appeal to me as a design source. I wanted to create some little house quilts, but I did not necessarily want them to be a direct interpretation of a particular dwelling. So I decided to begin my designing with paper collage.

If you are one of those people who would like to work in a freer way, then this is the technique for you. If not, you might want to consider trying it anyway. Though many of us like to plan our artwork, doing so can close
us off to spontaneous possibilities and also cause us to over-think the process.

I have found that starting by making a paper collage frees up my designs and sparks my creative process. Here, I walk you through the steps I take: first, working spontaneously, I make a paper collage, and second, I re-create that collage in fabric.

Before you get started on these projects, consider the following tips:

- Allow yourself plenty of time. Do not start if you have to leave in half an hour for an appointment or if you intend to watch your favorite TV show in an hour.
- Get rid of all expectations of creating a masterpiece on your first attempt (although this might happen).
- Give yourself permission to play, to enjoy the process of tearing paper.

**Paper Collage Directions**

1. Collect your materials and remind yourself that you are just going to have fun. You may start with thoughts of a favorite color, a favorite style of house, or words such as “playhouse,” “greenhouse,” etc. Because my paper collages are meant solely for my use and not for sale or publication, I use magazine pages freely in my collages. Remember to use copyright-free images if your collage will be used for anything other than your own, personal use.

Note: To see samples of my paper collages, visit sylvianaylor.com.
2. When making your paper collage, think of the main structures of a house: walls, roof, windows, and doors. Avoid symmetry; think funky, whimsical. Construct the sides of your house with several different pieces of paper. Build each side of the house differently. The roof can be constructed with odd shapes. A scrap of paper could represent a chimney, or there could be a series of little shapes to represent several chimneys. Each window may be made from one or several pieces of paper placed at odd angles. The door can be one of many different shapes. Little pieces of paper may be placed anywhere to help balance your house.

3. If you like, squirt a few lines or drops of craft paint onto your collage, as I do, to simulate stitching lines.

4. Although you are creating a whimsical building, it is still a good idea to follow some components of design. If one side of your work is mostly shades and tints of one color, try to echo that color on the other side. Little bits of paper can be placed in empty spaces to create balance. They do not necessarily have to represent anything.

Do not feel intimidated by this little project. Just enjoy the moment without any great expectations. Remember that your paper collage is just a starting point.

**Fabric Collage**

Now that you’ve created your paper collage, use it as inspiration for your quilted house collage.

**Directions**

1. Select your piece of background fabric. I like to use plain cotton for most of my backgrounds in a color a bit lighter than the brown paper.

2. Now collect fabric scraps that look appropriate for your collage. At this stage I like to iron my scraps.

3. Tear or roughly cut your fabrics to simulate the torn paper edges or you can cut all of your edges. Just as in the paper collage, I like to construct the main building parts first.

   **Tip:** I suggest that you do not mix cut and frayed edges in one piece.

4. When you are satisfied with the main pieces, use a glue stick or pins to hold them in place so that they do not move while you continue assembling your fabric house.

**Materials**

- Brown parcel paper for the background, about 12” square
- Lots of colored papers from magazines (I like the inside pages rather than the thicker covers.)
- Glue stick
- Optional
- Craft paints
5. Take a look at your work. Sometimes there is too much background or negative space. I often use small pieces of sheer printed organza over some of these places. It has the effect of softening the background and changing subtly the appearance of the printed fabrics beneath.

It is important to secure the fabric scraps before you do any stitching. Place bits of fusible web behind the fabrics and place parchment paper over the whole surface to protect the iron from stray fusible bits. Iron.

Cut your batting and thin muslin backing. Pin, baste, or fuse the layers together.

Now for the stitching. You can set your machine to stitch in straight lines or use zigzag or a combination of both. You may also opt to work in free-motion machine embroidery. Some of the threads can match your fabric and others can contrast. Stitch in different directions. You may find it less intimidating to begin stitching on a fabric nearer the edge rather than in the middle. It is not necessary to stitch all around your fabrics. The idea is to stitch enough to hold the bits down and to embellish at the same time. Just try to have fun with your stitching.

To complete the work, you are going to stitch some straight lines on the background (negative space). Use a monofilament thread on the top and a neutral thread in the bobbin. I usually run the lines from top to bottom, with a few parallel to the roofline. These lines give texture to the plain background while holding some of the fabrics’ raw edges in place. I like to vary the spacing of the lines.

Complete your house quilt with a backing and binding. You can use the same fabric as you used for your quilt top or one that contrasts. Make a sleeve for hanging or make 2 tabs to sew to the top. All you need to do now is sign your quilted house.

Sylvia Naylor is a Canadian artist and educator. Sylvia loves to experiment with paints and stitches which has led to quilt art pieces and collages which combine paper and hand and free-machine embroidery. Visit her website: sylvia.naylor.com.

**MATERIALS**
- Paper collage for design reference
- Fabric for background, about 12" square
- Thin muslin fabric to back the batting
- Fabric for final backing and binding
- Scraps of fabrics from your collection
- Sheer, patterned organzas
- Scissors or rotary cutter
- Parchment paper
- Pins or glue stick
- Fusible web, such as Stitch Witchery, WonderUnder®, or Mistyfuse™
- Sewing machine and darning foot (optional)
- Thin batting, such as Warm and Natural®
- Assorted threads, including monofilament

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GO green

ECO-FRIENDLY JOURNAL QUILTING TECHNIQUES

BY NATALYA AIKENS

Inspired by Jeanne Williamson and her weekly journal quilts, I challenged myself to create a small artwork once a week for a year. For 2007, my goal was to make 5" × 5" weekly quilts with recycled items. My quest for a long time has been to make recycled materials look beautiful.

GUIDELINES TO HELP YOU MAKE SMALL, WEEKLY QUILTS FOR A YEAR

• First, do not stress over this project. This is a very important rule; life in general is stressful enough, so do whatever you can each week. This will help to keep the process of making art enjoyable. Some weeks are too busy for intellectual or elaborate art, so just make something easy. Try using a scrap of painted fabric and do some free-motion machine embroidery over it, with no particular pattern in mind. Or, just fuse some contrasting or complementary scraps together and do a few interesting stitches on them. The point is to carve out time every week to create art consistently.

• Second, stick to a small size, since small projects are easier to complete and they are less stressful. I happened to find a small photo album on sale, so I chose 5" × 5"
as the size for my quilts so I could store them in the album.

- Third, time is a flexible notion. If you don’t complete a weekly quilt in one week’s time, don’t stress about it and give up. If it’s Monday and last week’s journal isn’t done yet, it’s okay. And I can even take until Tuesday or Wednesday to get it done. I usually don’t, but just knowing that it’s okay if it isn’t done will keep me going in this project so I don’t quit altogether.

- Be creative in choosing recycled materials for your quilts. Sometimes I’ll use a plastic bag, sometimes I’ll choose scraps from a previous project. Try dryer lint as batting and choose alternate backing fabrics; no one will see them. As long as something is recycled, you have fulfilled your mission. And if you have managed to make something recycled look beautiful, then it’s a bonus!

- Use this journaling as an exercise to help find your creative voice. I work intuitively most of the time. Sometimes there is deep thought behind the art, especially when I am working from a specific inspiration for a bigger piece. Sometimes I literally throw things down and my eye notices an exciting element and I go from there. These small works of art are tools to train both your eye and your thought process to be able to focus better, and also to train yourself to listen to your intuition with an open mind.
Stay committed. In the first week I was feeling very hopeful about this New Year project and I was excited with my first weekly quilt. The pretty pink plastic bag, the white feather that my youngest pulled out of her pillow, brightly colored threads captured underneath the plastic, a scrap of sheer white organza finished off with blanket stitching in silk and rayon threads, and a bit of glamour with a few glass beads. These are just going to be beautiful, I thought to myself, but I was quickly stumped by week two. Realize that it may take you a few weeks to get into the rhythm of creating a quilt every week. Some weeks you may find your head is brimming with ideas to use in your weekly journal quilt, so much so that you don’t know which idea to use.

Tip: Write your ideas down so you can use them in future quilts.

Think of this endeavor as your own private “Project Runway” challenge. Perhaps you’ve got an hour right now; make a piece of art. Make it work!

### evolution OF AN ECO-ARTIST

I have always been interested in eco-consciousness. Back in my fashion design days I had been reading up on the ecologically correct production of fabric, recycling of fabric waste, and designing garments from organically grown cotton or hemp and recycled fabrics. A friend of mine and I actually sat down and researched the possibility of such a design firm, came up with a business plan and…nothing happened. Lack of funds was the main reason for this not coming to fruition, followed by the overwhelming amount of work it would entail.

Fast forward to a few years ago—the fashion career is long gone; costume career on hold; childrearing is at the forefront. I needed a creative outlet. I started making baby quilts and, remembering that I had made some art quilts long ago, I wanted to make art quilts again. A new creative urge was released, but another feeling started creeping in—all this waste, the scraps left over, the new fabric I wanted to buy, all the new toys, er, tools I needed…it just felt wrong. So I started collecting my scraps and curbed the urge to buy new fabric for every new project. Then I found my old file of ideas and research from that fashion eco-project all those lifetimes ago, and I saw the samples of fabrics I had made using plastic bags and junk food wrappers; it was a lightbulb moment! I can use all this in my art. I remembered struggling with how to make the recycled materials beautiful enough to want to wear them and realized that this task might be easier with non-wearable art, as the end product doesn’t have to be comfortable, too.

*Synthetic glitter print organza. Layered and freehand machine embroidered with metallic thread.*
IDEAS FOR RECYCLED MATERIALS

- Use plastics. Crumple, heat, color, and stitch plastic materials you see every day, such as grocery and produce bags.

- Think of dryer lint as art material. I collect the lint from my dryer after it's dried my girls' sweaters. I never even knew the bonus I would receive when I bought them brightly colored sweaters in different fuzzy yarns—they produce such colorful lint! I trap the lint between layers of sheer netting, organza, or chiffon. You can hand stitch, free-motion stitch, and even drip paint and dye over it. Also, try used dryer sheets as a backing fabric for your quilts. As a bonus, if you used the scented ones, your journal quilt smells like fresh laundry!

- Take papers from the backs of shipping labels and see what they look like after you crumple, wet, and then paint them.

- Don’t throw giftwrap tissue away. I rip tissue papers in small pieces and trap them between scraps of shiny synthetic organza and practice different hand stitches around them. I draw and paint on wrapping tissue and then see how it holds up to machine stitching—very well indeed.

- Save envelopes from overseas mail with all the different stamps and markings. Put Mod Podge® or a light coat of gel medium over the
stamps, allow it to dry, and then stitch the stamps onto fabric.

- Save ticket stubs from buses and museums to make a collage with fabric scraps and stitching.

- Use papers with printer errors. When my printer begins to run out of ink while printing sometimes I end up with sheets of illegible pages. Apply matte gel medium to these papers and stitch them to fabric for interesting patterns.

- A package arrives with something wrapped in white perforated paper for protection, and guess what? That paper looks good painted and trapped between sheer netting.

- Use and stitch paper towels that have been used to clean up painting projects. Oftentimes colorful combinations will appear on paper towels when you’re cleaning up after a project.

- Look at everyday objects as embellishments for your quilts. Found objects have always piqued my interest. I just could not throw away the tiny glass tiles from a rejected sample for our bathroom remodel. And now they are glued and stitched in a journal quilt.

- My kids collected bark and leaves on a walk; I put gel medium on them and stitched them to scraps of fabric and made a little nature collage.

Use your journal quilts to experiment with designs and techniques for larger pieces. I am starting on a series of large art quilts that will feature human faces. I am nervous about working large and making human faces out of fabric, so I practiced different techniques on a few journal quilts. What would happen if I painted first and then stitched over the paint? What if I just stitched without sketching first? What if I tried some punch-needle embroidery? After experimenting with techniques in a smaller format, you’ll have a better sense of what will work for larger bodies of work.

**Finishing your quilts**

Use these weekly quilts as an opportunity to play with different edges and finishes.

**Decorative stitching**

For example, you could do a study in the blanket stitch by stitching the blanket stitch in different thread weights, using different spacing patterns between each stitch, for an organic effect. Or you could sew several laps of straight stitching around the perimeter.

**Glues and adhesives**

Glue is good! Glue the edges together and then paint them with acrylic paint.

**Acrylic and fabric paints**

Simply paint the edges with a foam brush. If the batting starts getting fuzzy with the paint on it, tease it out some more and go for that hairy look.

**Frayed edges**

Unravel a few threads from the ends and now it’s a raw edge that adds more texture to your quilt.

Natalya Aikens’ fiber art journey is an exploration of her Russian heritage. Visit her website: artbynatalya.com.

Welcome to your Chicago School of Fusing Correspondence Course. In this easy, self-directed course you will learn the fine art of fusing in a fun and amusing fashion. Fusing is the transfer of fusible web (a dry glue) to fabric by means of an iron. Once the web is transferred to the fabric it can be cut into any shape you like and “re-fused” to another fabric. It is a fast, easy way to create fabric artwork and still maintain your sanity.

“Tea Party #1,” by Laura Wasilowski

- 8” x 9”
- Hand-dyed cotton fabrics by Laura; fused appliqué for fabric collage, free-motion embroidery.
As Dean of Corrections at the Chicago School of Fusing, I conduct a course in basic fusing knowledge called Fusing Etiquette 101. It is important for future fusers to embrace fundamental fusing facts before launching into higher-level classes such as strip fusing, collage montage, and iron maintenance and repair. A strong foundation in fusing etiquette will support a fuser through years of art building.

First we will discuss the basic rules followed by the fastidious fuser. Then we will construct a little fused quilt inspired by the little student housing buildings at the Chicago School of Fusing.

**The Rules**

Follow these fusing rules or else:

- Some brands of fusible are very difficult to stitch through or can change the surface of your fabric. Purchase Wonder Under® or Trans Web®, available in most of the major craft stores.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for heat settings and time recommendations for fusing. The instructions come with the web. Read them.
- Some fabrics with a permanent press or other finish will not adhere to fusible web. Choose 100% cotton fabrics with no finish; hand dyed fabrics work best.
- Wash and iron your fabric to remove any starch before fusing. Do not use fabric softener. (Note: permanent press finishes do not wash out.)
- Don’t worry about the fabric bubbling when you fuse; it will flatten out when the paper is peeled off and the fabric is fused to another fabric.
- Don’t worry about the web separating from the release paper before it is used. Just place the web on the fabric and the release paper on top and fuse into place.
- Fuse large sheets of fabric and store by rolling the fabric up with the fusible web paper (release paper) still on the fabric.

Background consisting of collaged fabrics overlapped and fused to a piece of release paper.

Larger elements of the composition are layered on top and lightly fused.
• Always let the fabric and web cool and rest at least 15 minutes before trying to remove the paper.
• Peel the paper off the fused fabric before cutting. This will save your scissors and cutting blades from dulling and save hours of tedious paper peeling.
• Always use sharp scissors. Dull scissors fray the fabric (and drive the Dean nuts).
• If you need to leave the paper on when cutting out a pattern piece, remove it by gently slicing the paper in the center of the fabric with the tip of your scissors and popping the paper off.
• Try to remove the release paper in one piece by first fanning a finger, then your hand, between the fabric and paper as if you were lifting cookies from a cookie sheet.
• Save the large sheets of release paper from the fusible web. This paper can be fused to over and over again. It is perfect for assembling fused collage and pattern making.
• When cutting a stack of fused fabric, do not place fused sides together or they may be difficult to separate.
• When fusing two different fabrics together and whenever possible, place dark colored fabrics on top of light value fabrics; dark fabrics may cast a shadow if placed under light value fabrics.
• Fuse elements “lightly” or with little pressure until you are satisfied with the arrangement. This way the elements can be easily removed or, in the case when using release paper, do not lose their fusibility.
• Save all your fused scraps. They are great for tiny elements and collage work.
• And most importantly, always keep your shiny side down. Do not allow the fusible web or the fused side of the fabric to touch a hot iron. Or else.

Chicago School of Fusing Student Housing Project

Your first assignment is based upon a rendering of the Chicago School of Fusing Student Housing Project taken from an actual photo of one of our student apartments located on campus. It is a cute little sorority house where members of the Big Iron Pressing Society or BIPS live. They often have parties on the weekend that are BYOF (Bring Your Own Fuse).

Directions

The Chicago School of Fusing Student Housing Project begins with a fabric collage background or large blocks of color that form landscape features like a sky, hills, and fields. The collage fabrics are overlapped and fused to a piece of release paper, providing a base for smaller details added later.

1. Select fabrics for the sky, hills, and fields. Fabrics should be distinct in color or value so there is a contrast between these three horizontal bands of color for your landscape.
2. Fuse your fabrics according to the manufacturer’s directions and the...
edicts of the Chicago School of Fusing Dean of Corrections.

3. Free cut the sky fabric to measure about 4” high by 9” wide. Do not use a ruler; just free cut a chunk of fabric in those dimensions with your scissors.

4. Using your rotary cutter, free cut the hills fabric into about 1½”–2” high by 9” wide. As you may recall, most hills are wavy and bumpy so cut them with peaks and valleys on the top and rolling hills on the bottom.

5. Cut the fields or foreground fabric to measure about 6” × 9”.

6. Place the sky fabric, hills, and fields on a large piece of release paper. Overlap the hill fabric on top of the sky fabric by about ¼ inch in the shallowest valley of your hills. Slip the fields or foreground fabric under the hill fabric by about ¼ inch. Lightly fuse into place.

7. Once your base collage landscape is made, the larger elements of your composition are layered on top. Select a fabric for the house that will contrast with the other fabrics and cut it out free hand. No patterns or drawings are allowed. Draw with your scissors.

8. Select another fused fabric and cut large trees out with a decorative blade in your rotary cutter. (I used a scallop blade.) Add a large pink sidewalk cut from fused fabric.

9. Arrange these elements on the landscape and lightly fuse into place.

10. Smaller elements and design features are layered upon this base. Free cut small windows and a door for the house. Add clouds, large flowers, and leaves in the foreground.

11. Once your composition is complete, peel it off the paper and fuse it to cotton batting.

12. Embellish with hand stitching using a size 8 or 12 perle cotton thread.

13. Add a backing fabric, trim the quilt square, and bind.

Congratulations! You are now a graduate of the Chicago School of Fusing!

Laura Wasilowski is a quilt artist, instructor, lecturer, dyer, and author of fun, fast, fearless fusing books. Visit her website: artfabrik.com.