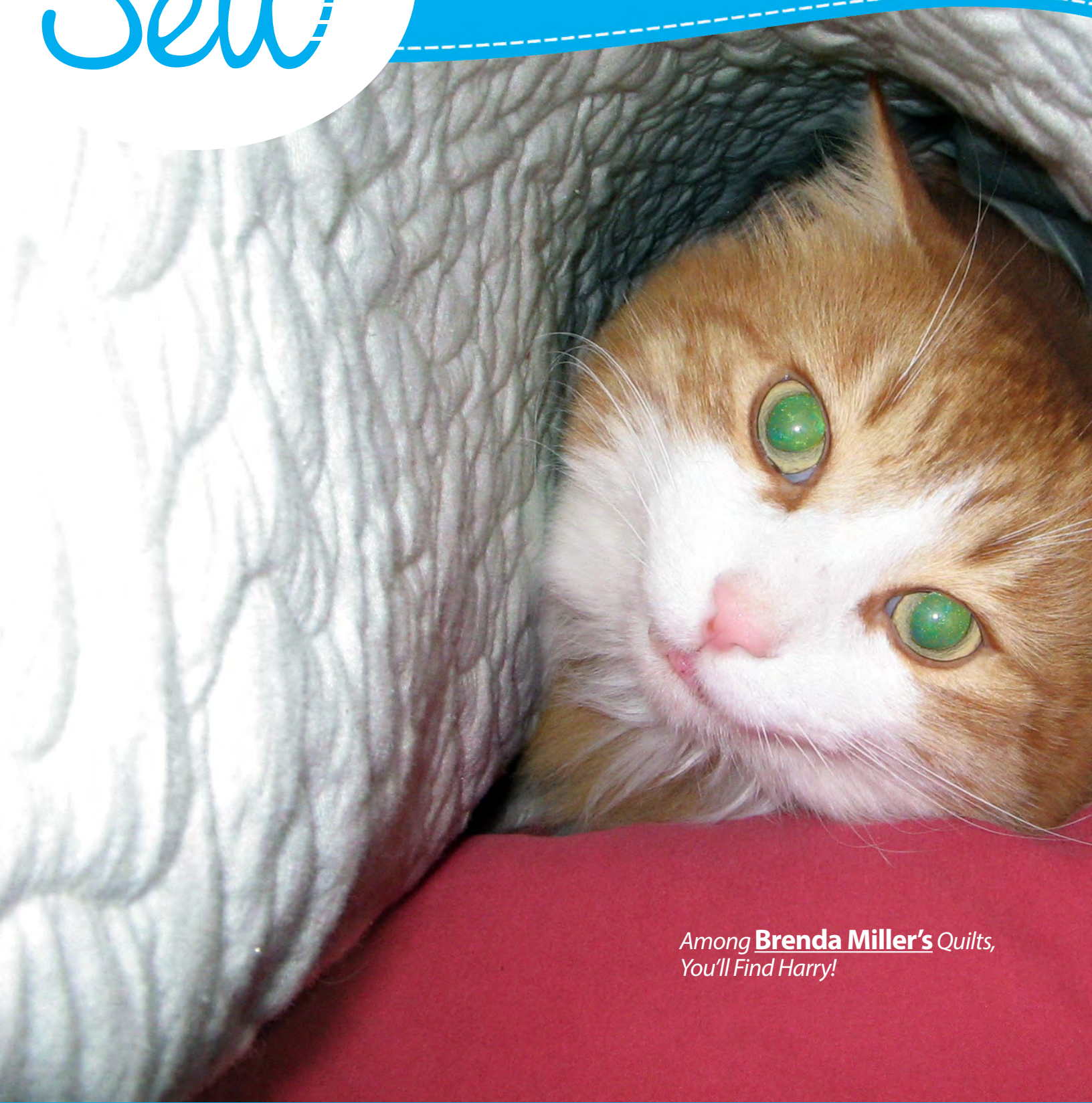




INSPIRED TO  
**Sew**

*A glimpse into the creative heart of today's  
most talented sewing & quilting artists.*



Among **Brenda Miller's** Quilts,  
You'll Find Harry!



*Rhonda with Brenda Miller,  
Creative Arts Business Summit  
March 2015*

When Brenda first started designing quilts and patterns, did she have any idea of the impact her passion would have on others? Brenda has a strong and loyal following that loves to share pics of their completed projects. You will want to sign up for her newsletter, just to see all the finished projects. Brenda's patterns are found in many North American quilt shops. Last year Brenda opened an odd, almost spam like email, that has expanded her design and quilt reach to China. Enjoy reading about Brenda's first quilt adventure to China as she packs for her second trip to China.

Fabrics, colors, patterns, textures speak a universal language. Enjoy a few pics from my recent trip to the American Sewing Expo in Novi, MI. Yes, I love seeing and talking to other creatives, that love fabrics and colors as much as I do. And, check out the features of the SCHMETZ Denim needle. I think you will be surprised by the point.

Sew SCHMETZ & Grabbit Too!

Rhonda Pierce  
Marketing Director & Editor  
SCHMETZneedles.com

### In this Issue:

- Sewing Star:** **Brenda Miller**  
Quilting Her Way to China  
Page 3
- On the Road:** **American Sewing Expo**  
Page 12
- Needle Points:** **Jeans Needle**  
Page 14

- Cover:** **Harry the Cat**  
Brenda Miller's four-legged assistant curled up in one of his favorite quilts.  
[www.amongbrendasquilts.com](http://www.amongbrendasquilts.com)

- Interview by:** **Rita Farro**  
[www.Ritassewfun.blogspot.com](http://www.Ritassewfun.blogspot.com)

- Layout/Design:** **Paul Ragas**

# What Inspires YOU to Sew?



There's an App for That!



Sewing  
Star



Brenda Miller

Issue 22





Brenda Miller & Harry

## Brenda Miller

Quilting is a creative outlet, a hobby that can be relaxing and artistic. It is always interesting to learn about the journey of others: Who or what their inspiration was; that moment in time when they took that fork in the road and turned their hobby into a business. Brenda Miller's story goes way beyond that. For her, quilting became her ticket to see the world. Quilting was her ride to China.

Brenda Miller of Ontario, Canada is the owner of **Among Brenda's Quilts**. She is a full time pattern designer, specializing in bags and quilts. In October 2015, Brenda will be making her second trip to visit China as an advisor to the Zhejiang Quilt Association. How did that happen?

Brenda always loved being creative, and she studied graphic design in college. After she got married, she had the usual assortment of pay-the-bills jobs. She was a real estate sales agent for 12 years, but she knew in her heart that she was not destined to be a Realtor.

One of Brenda's first quilts was inspired by the book **Lap Quilting with Georgia Bonesteel**. In the afternoon when her newborn son was napping, Brenda made blocks. She excitedly showed each completed block of that sampler quilt to her husband when he came home from work. It was a rush to be creating something so perfect, so beautiful and so useful. She still gets that same feeling with every quilt and bag pattern she designs.



Girlfriends Bag — Trish Connelly



Ellipse Bag — Ruth McLean



Voyager Bag



Voyager Bag — Leah Shuparski-Miller



Woolly, Woolly Bag — Carol Couse



Everything Goes Bag — Claire Marshall

In 2004, working as a Realtor, she sold a gorgeous circa 1869 Quaker General store to friends and fellow members of her local art group. Those friends started a quilt shop in the old store, **The Marsh Store** in Coldstream, Ontario, while living upstairs.

Brenda knew she wanted to break into this line of work. It became an obsession. She started by teaching beginners how to quilt. Those classes really took off and soon she was writing patterns for the classes.

She loved starting with an idea — sitting down with a blank slate and making that first sketch. She enjoys the process of

experimenting, trial and error, making things work. Those early designs became the foundation of her pattern business. As sales took off, Brenda's bag patterns became very popular.

*"I love designing bags because they are functional, beautiful, fashionable, and can be made entirely by the home sewist. A big part of my attraction to bag making comes from a childhood encounter with my great, great, great Aunt Tante Martha. She was a dressmaker par excellence from Berlin. One summer she spent a month with us. It wasn't long before she had both my Mom and I over to the local sewing shop picking out fabrics for new outfits. I can still remember the gorgeous blue dress with covered buttons she made me. The color and cut were absolutely*



Brenda in China.

*perfect. Along with the dress she also made me a terry cover-up. Using the leftover fabric from this project Tante Martha showed me how to make a tote bag with a zipper. It was a great beginning for a little girl interested in making things from scratch. I consider Tante Martha one of my pennies from heaven."*

The inspiration for Brenda's bag making often comes from fashion. Lately the style that interests her the most is Japanese Street Fashion. What young Japanese and Chinese women are wearing is very young, fresh and bold. Last year, while in China Brenda did some serious people/fashion watching. Again, China . . . .

In the summer of 2014, Brenda received an obscure email that looked like spam. After some investigation, she realized it was a legitimate invitation to attend the *China International Quilt Festival* sponsored by the Chinese Government in October 2014. The purpose was to introduce quilting and the quilting industry to China. In North America, we think quilting is universal but it is a new consumer concept in China. It is interesting to note that back in 1999, when China first became open to imports from the Western world, the first things that sold were bicycles and sewing machines.



**Brenda in her booth,  
China International Quilt Festival.**

The people who invited Brenda were tasked with the job of bringing quilt experts from other parts of the world because there is no quilting industry in China. The quilting display was a very small part of the show and included Brenda and about 10 other booths with quilting related products, exhibitors from other countries, and antique quilts from an American collection.

Brenda displayed her bags and quilts so the show attendees could see the possibilities and finished projects. The vendors at the show were mainly manufacturers of various types of fabrics. Anything from faux leather to lace was available to be purchased in bulk. However, there were no quilting cottons

available for sale. Even though China is a manufacturer of greige goods and finished quilting cotton, that product is for export to the west.

The buyers at the show were mainly manufacturers of finished goods like clothing, household goods and drapery, although the show was open to the general public with many college students attending.

Some manufacturers expressed an interest in purchasing finished pieces like the quilts and bags Brenda had on display. This led to an ongoing discussion about marketing finished goods using Brenda's patterns in China.



**Brenda in the classroom with three sewing machines.**

As a guest of China, Brenda was required to do a presentation on how we use quilting to build sales and community. She talked about quilt guilds, our network of fabric shops, consumer quilt shows and classes.

Holding a class in China, via interpreters, was a unique experience. When a lecture or class is offered in China there is no registration and no fee. People just show up for free as they showed up to the festival itself. Brenda's Chinese hosts estimated the class might draw 20 people. When 50 arrived it was a real scramble. Brenda decided to have the students work in pairs to make the project. The majority of the class was

college students enrolled in the newly formed quilting class at the local textile and fashion college. Others were the wives of the various dignitaries attending the show. Brenda's class was filmed and broadcast to the sales floor.

Although she knew the students would not be bringing sewing machines to class, she was surprised they didn't bring any basic supplies. No scissors, thread, pins or needles. Fortunately, she had brought extra, but imagine 50 students sharing three spools of thread, hand sewing needles and a couple of pairs of scissors. Brenda passed out six pins per person. There were three sewing machines and two irons in





Brenda and her Chinese students.



the room, and even though there were no ironing boards she was grateful! The studious young people picked up concepts very quickly. Many bags were entirely made by hand.

Brenda has been invited back to China this October in the capacity of an advisor to the *Zhejiang Quilt Association*. Teaching three classes, addressing the International Quilt Academics, judging and showing a number of her quilts and bags are on her agenda for the four day show taking place in Shaoxing City near Shanghai.

Brenda has turned what was once a dream into a true business that consumes her from 9 to 5 five days a week. She has three employees to help with the day to day jobs giving her more time for teaching and pattern design. She says, *"I can't imagine a life doing anything else. My latest project (yet to be released) is my Urban Computer Satchel. I'll be packing one this October and taking it with me as my adventures in China continue!"*

When asked what quilting has contributed to her life, Brenda talked about one of her favorite quilts, ***Pennies From Heaven***.



**Pennies from Heaven**

*"I used to walk my dog Hershey in the evening along the fence rows and meadows near our home in Strathroy, Ontario. The sun would sparkle off the leaves of the trees creating what my eyes perceived as sun spots — pennies from heaven. In the fall the Monarch Butterflies would congregate in the majestic old maples before migrating. Over time the meaning of the quilt has changed for me. I had a former student, Heather Campbell, very talented in bead work who offered to embellish the quilt. Heather has since*

*passed away from cancer. She was a penny from heaven, a sweet girl who died too young. Time with my family, my friends, my pets, being outdoors, are all pennies from heaven. The point of the quilt is that we should cherish the little things in life, those sweet and fleeting moments. The people I've met through quilting and the opportunities given have become very dear to me."*

 — written by Rita Farro



**Urban Computer Satchel Bag  
Coming Soon!**

### **Brenda's Needle Tip**

*I sew using a lot of batik fabrics where skipped stitches can sometimes be a problem and have found that the SCHMETZ Topstitch 80/12 needle eliminates this problem entirely. It's also great for sewing with foam stabilizers that are often used in bag making. All this makes the SCHMETZ Topstitch 80/12 my "go to" needle for professional results.*

### **Brenda's 12 Tips for Bag Makers**

Visit Brenda's web site for the FREE tips — [www.amongbrendasquilts.com](http://www.amongbrendasquilts.com)!

# On the Road



Haberman Fabrics



Kwilt Art Optical Illusions



Soutache Ribbons



Bridal Fashion Fusion  
*Ruth Ciemnoczolowski*

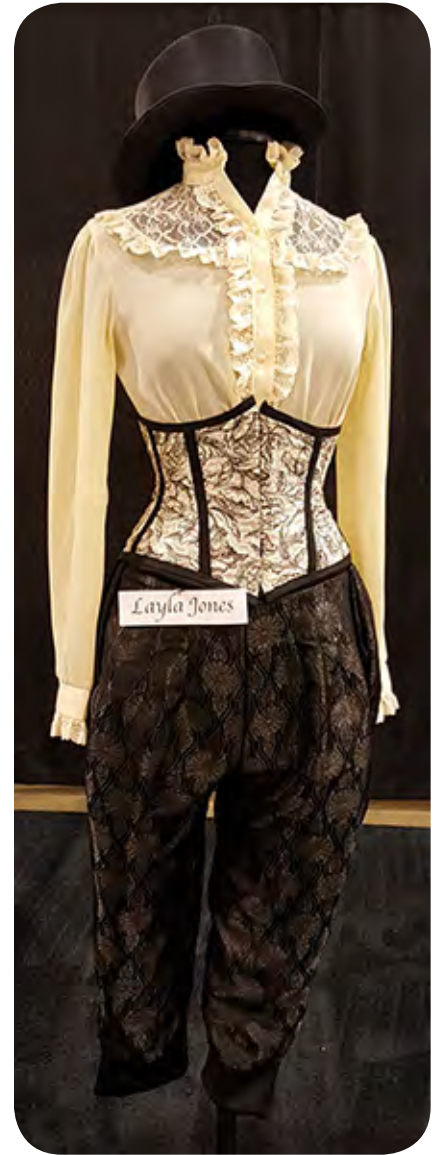
Inspirational pics from 2015 American Sewing Expo.



**Chic Batik, The Challenge**



**Steampunk**  
Kendall College of Art & Design  
Grand Rapids, MI



**Steampunk**  
Kendall College of Art & Design  
Grand Rapids, MI

[www.americansewingexpo.com](http://www.americansewingexpo.com)

# Needle Points with Rhonda



Jeans needles have an upper blue band

Lower color band indicates needle size

## Jeans/Denim Needles

The Jeans Needle has a modified medium ball point and a reinforced blade. The advanced point design is a SCHMETZ exclusive. Use this needle for penetrating extra thick woven fabrics, denims, or quilts with minimum needle deflection, reduced risk of needle breakage and skipped stitches.

Sizes: 70/10, 80/12, 90/14, 100/16, 110/18, 4.0/100



## Compliments of Your Local Retailer

Click to Replace with Store Logo  
Size: 250 x 250



[www.SCHMETZneedles.com](http://www.SCHMETZneedles.com)

