



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



# **Fabric Panels**

*"We've Come a Long Way Baby!"*





Fabric panels are no longer the cheater panels of yesteryear. Fabric companies and designers have upped their game, giving panels a whole new attitude whether you are thread painting or looking for a fast project.

I love fabric panels! Above I am pictured in my living room with a Frond Design Studios panel. I love the vibrant colors and the sense of awe visitors have when viewing for the first time. That panel anchors the room and it gave me a chance to experiment with free motion quilting while using some of those fanciful threads gathering in my stash.

Fabric panels can be part of your creative journey! Give them a try. And be sure to view issues #31 & #32 of **SCHMETZ Inspired to SEW** to learn more about how Loralie Harris and Joyce Hughes develop fabric panels. Sew SCHMETZ & Grabbit Too!

*Rhonda*

Rhonda Pierce  
Spokesperson, SCHMETZneedles.com  
info@SCHMETZneedles.com

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

- Pictures:** **Rhonda Pierce & Rita Farro**

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

## What Inspires YOU to Sew?



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There's an App for That!



Sewing  
Star

# *Fabric Panels*

Issue 33





## Fabric Panels

Yes, YOU Can Color the Dream Pillowcase Panel!  
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If you were a girl in the 1970's, you may have loved Joni Mitchell and tie-dye, or maybe you were a Cher fan and bell bottoms and fringe were your groove. "Groovy" was a word you actually used.

While we were watching movies like *JAWS* or *Annie Hall*, there was a quiet revival taking place. 1976, America's Bicentennial year, saw a rebirth of our national interest in quilting. If you want to learn more about the mover and shakers of the movement, read the excellent **American Quilting: 1970-2000** by Eleanor Levie (2004).

In those early days of the revival, piecing an entire quilt was out of the question for most modern women. It is hard to remember, but we didn't have access to rotary cutters or mats until the

1980's, which is why printed fabric panels played an important role in the initial resurgence of quilting. Many of us would be embarrassed by those early cheater quilts. We cringe when we remember using poly/cotton sheets for our quilt backs. But there is no question that 1970's fabric panels served a purpose. They were the ON RAMP for today's quilters and they helped spawn an entire industry of quality cutting tools, notions, patterns, books and beautiful, coordinated 100% cotton fabric collections. When it comes to fabric panels — to quote a famous Virginia Slims campaign — YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY.

The last two issues of **SCHMETZ Inspired To SEW** featured fabric panels.





Loralie with her “Dog Gone” panels. Imagine these doggies traveling the world!”

Loralie Harris of Loralie Designs says her whimsical fabric collections always begin with a panel. *“The panel is the star of my play.”* Once she knows who the star is, she gleefully casts the supporting characters. The coordinating fabrics could be stripes, flowers or polka dots — and there is always a “tossed” version of the original panel. Loralie says, *“The inspiration for a panel can come at any moment! The most mundane, ordinary notion can strike and explode into a lively, fun story when illustrated in a panel. The ‘Nifty Nurse’ panel, my first panel is an example with each block expressing a different personality of a nurse which we have all experienced! This panel has been in print now for 13 years unchanged. My newest panel comes from my collection ‘Dog Gone,’ the story of cute little doggies traveling the world with each block set in a different iconic location on the planet. A companion poem tells the fun tail!”*

During the recent Spring International Quilt Market, Rhonda Pierce, (editor of this magazine) attended the Joyce Hughes Schoolhouse session. In the last issue of **SCHMETZ Inspired To SEW #32**, we shared the panel artistry of Joyce Hughes, a fiber artist from Pennsylvania. Starting with a simple fabric panel, Joyce adds thread, fiber and texture to create a unique work of art worthy of a gallery showing.

Using her unique thread painting techniques, Joyce created stunning art from Northcott fabric panels. Rhonda fell in love with the Northcott booth, photographing their impressive fabric panels.





Northcott Panels, Spring 2016 International Quilt Market

Although many companies are creating fabric panels, Northcott has a unique history and point of view. According to Deborah Edwards, Design Director of Northcott, *"Panels have always been featured in our collections, particularly juvenile collections."*

*Today's fabric panels are very different from those of the 70's, and we do consider them works of art. As technology allows, our panels are becoming more creative and complex. Digital panels are not limited to 24" or 36" and there is no limitation on color. In some instances we create running yardage that looks like a panel; this allows quilters to customize the size of their quilt."*

At Northcott, panel designs are created by the designer who creates the collection whether they are in house or independent artists. Sometimes a collection starts with the panel, other times the panel evolves after the coordinates.

According to Deborah, *"We are focusing more on how panels can be used in different ways, either as a complete unit or deconstructed to create something completely new. People have less and less free time and panels allow them to make interesting quilts quickly. One of the biggest benefits to starting with a fabric panel is that the design choices have already been made. Without the panel, selecting fabrics for a project could take many hours, and it isn't a process everybody enjoys. Panels get them RIGHT TO THE SEWING PART."*



Mary Mulari & Chatterbox Apron Panel by Penny Rose Fabrics.

Mary Mulari is a new player in the fabric panel world. Mary has written dozens of books covering a wide range of sewing topics: Sweatshirt makeovers, appliqué ideas, embroidery, home dec, and quick gift ideas. She has developed a very popular line of apron patterns. In 2015, she created a line of fabric based on her most popular apron pattern, The Church Ladies Apron.

For 10 years, the Church Ladies apron was Mary's best-selling reversible apron pattern. She thought it would be a good choice for an apron panel since it fits on a yard of fabric. She also liked the idea of featuring several fabric prints on the panel so the apron would have coordinated parts, such as the neckbands, pockets, and ties, when it was sewn together. Making the panel the center of a fabric collection means that the reverse side of the apron can be made from one of the coordinating prints.

Mary proposed the idea to Penny Rose Fabrics, a sister company of Riley Blake. She worked with the fabric designers to collect vintage floral prints and the result was a collection with an updated vintage look. Mary Mulari's delicate hand-lettered instructions are recognized by sewing enthusiasts all over the world who have been loyal fans of her patterns and books since the 1980's. Her hand-lettering became her personal stamp on the Penny Rose apron panel.

Several buyers of the panel have said, "This is just like cutting out paper dolls!" All you have to do is layer the panel over one yard of the coordinating fabric and cut on the lines to "release" the two layers of the apron from fabric. You'll have an apron made of first quality fabrics, a terrific gift to give at a bridal shower, birthday





Lilly is learning to cut with the new SCHMETZ scissors.

celebration, or any reason at all. Mary suggests using a piece of leftover fabric to trim a kitchen towel and adding it to the apron gift.

Apron panels make an excellent beginner sewing project because they're so easy to cut out and sew together. Making the aprons reversible means you don't have to sew all that pesky bias tape around the edges — a challenge for many who sew. Plus, a reversible apron is more durable and allows the option of wearing the apron on either side.

Mary Mulari's second apron fabric panel collection, the Chatterbox Apron, will be available in September 2016. It has three colorways for the apron along with 18 coordinating prints.

Lillian is seven years old. Grandma Rita gave her a Featherweight sewing machine for her birthday, and it's time to learn and practice some basic sewing skills. Cutting was the first big hurdle. Children are used to those rounded paper scissors — but making the transition to a REAL FABRIC SCISSORS was a scary idea for Grandma. And the question is — cut what? Sewing a mini-quilt would be a great first project, but the process was overwhelming. First, she has to pick out a pattern for her project, choose the fabrics that would go together, then measure and mark the little pieces, and cut straight lines. It didn't sound like much fun.






Lilly learning to cut & sew in the real world.

Then, Grandma Rita found this FABRIC PANEL!! It's called "Made with Love" designed by Greta Lyn for KANVAS Studio in association with Benartex. The cutting lines are printed on the fabric — so all Lilly has to do is make the scissors work (and keep her fingers out of the way).

Whether you are an accomplished quilt artist, an experienced seamstress or a rookie sewist — you should take another look at fabric panels. Today's fabric panels are no longer just a quickie quilt. They can be the basis to create the most interesting, one-of-a-kind projects or gifts. Used intact or cut out and strategically placed, or even combined with other panel parts, the sky is the limit.

 — written by Rita Farro

**Fabric panels are bountiful. Start your search at these sites, then buy from your local quilt shop.**

[www.benartex.com/kanvas](http://www.benartex.com/kanvas)

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

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

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

[www.rileyblakedesigns.com/pennyrose](http://www.rileyblakedesigns.com/pennyrose)



# Needle Points with Rhonda

Metallic Needles  
Aqua Band

Size 80  
Orange Band



## SCHMETZ Metallic Needles

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