

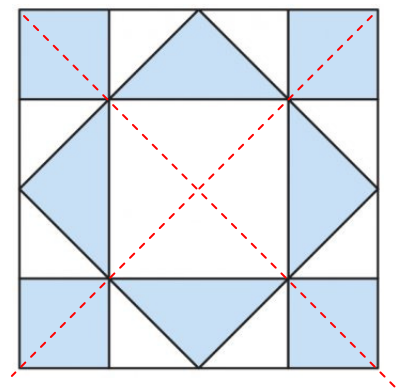
Getting Started Tips

When I started free motion quilting for other people the very first thing I did was to put the quilt up on the design wall and asked it to talk to me. Trust me, in the beginning I never heard a word from any of them! They just hung there waiting for me to come up with the perfect pattern.

It is a huge responsibility to come up with a quilting design because we all know it can make or break your quilt. No pressure here! Not all quilt tops are created equal. Some are beautifully pieced and some are “creatively” pieced but they all want to look good. I’ll pass on a few tips that have really helped me.

One of the best ways to design is to put your quilt up on a design wall. You get a much better perspective of the top when you can stand back and look at it. Sometimes it helps to take a photo of it with your cell phone...take one in color and one in black/white.

One of my most important designing tools is my ruler. When I’m designing a pieced quilt, the first thing I want to find out is if it is well pieced or creatively pieced. If it is well pieced, i.e., seams and points line up and seams are straight then the sky is the limit on what design I choose. If it is creatively pieced with botched points and wavy seams, then I am more likely to choose designs that may be more curvy in nature to take the viewer’s eye away from the creativity. I also lay the ruler across the blocks to see if I can add lines thru sections. In other words, do things line up? This is where the “well pieced quilt” comes into play!



Clear vinyl is a great secret weapon. I buy large rolls of heavy clear vinyl from Joan’s and cut it into large sections. I run either brightly colored masking tape on all of the edges or mark the edge with a bright red Sharpie marker. This is my stop sign telling me that the edge is coming up! I place the vinyl over the top of my quilt and then use a dry erase marker to start playing with designs. I treat it like a sketch pad...throwing ideas out there to see how they would look. Lines can be easily erased with a finger tip or a tissue. This is a great way to audition designs without having to erase marks off of your quilt or ripping out quilted lines with your seam ripper.

Quilting designs don’t have to stay within the seam lines. In other words, lines and designs can run ACROSS seams to create a beautiful secondary design! That’s an eye opener for many of my students.

Sunshine and Shadow

Our world is beautiful because of all the different textures, colors and contrast. Our quilts are the same way. We choose light, medium and dark fabrics for the contrast to help define a design. When we choose a quilting design we want it to pop or stand out and be noticed. We need to create shadow behind a design in order for it to pop.

This photo is a great example of how a detailed, textured background creates a shadow making the feathers pop or become the “sunshine”. Be sure to include both sunshine and shadow in your quilts to make them fabulous.



Basic Elements of Design

The Basic Elements of Design applies to both pieced quilt tops as well as wholecloth quilts.

There are four elements of design that I use all the time...

1. Focal Point
2. Movement
3. Dimension
4. Repetition

These elements are evident everywhere whether it is a beautiful photograph, a painting or a beautifully done quilt!

Each person sees art in their own way. It's important to remember that these four elements of design are not always present in art or your quilts. These are just guidelines to think about during your designing process.

Let's start with three prints that I use in my classroom lecture to help identify these elements in the "art world".

If you close your eyes, and then open them, what is the first thing your eyes go to?

For me it was the beautiful red flowers. This is my focal point.

I felt movement was created by the blue flowers branching off to the left and the greenery cascading down on the right.

Dimension was created by the flowers going over the top of the vase and the table going behind the vase.



or
of

The Peanut Butter Cup Theory

The Basic Three



In my world there isn't anything much better than a peanut butter cup.

Chocolate and peanut butter go VERY well together!

In the quilting design world strong geometrics and “soft stuff” also go together very well. I call this the “Peanut Butter Cup” theory.

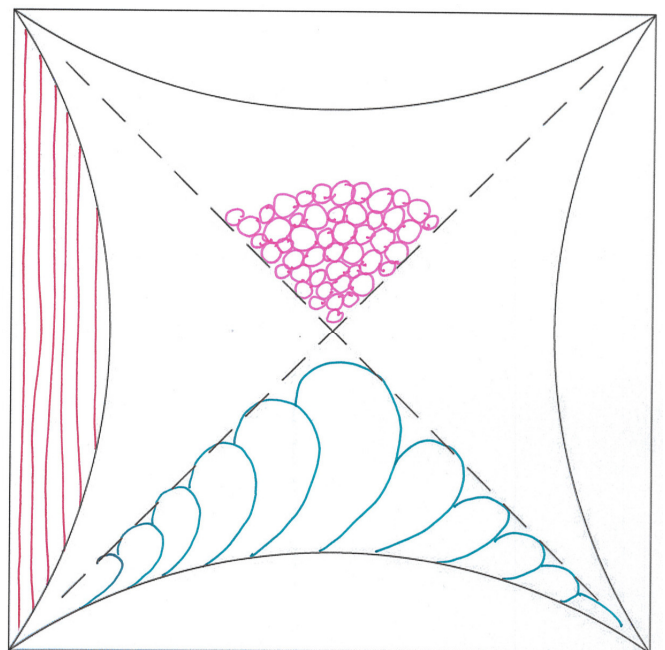
If you have a quilt top that has very strong geometric piecing, adding soft feathers, clam shells, pebbles/bubbles or serpentine lines will complement the geometric lines.

If you have a creatively pieced quilt top, using these softer curvey designs will take the viewer's eye away from the poor piecing. They will also nail down and flatten poofy areas.

If you have a quilt top that is full of soft curves, adding strong geometric repetitive lines will be a nice complement to the curved piecework.

I have three basic fillers that I use on nearly every single quilt I do...Free Form Feathers, Repetitive Lines and Pebbles/Bubbles.

These provide the “soft stuff” as well as the strong geometrics in any space. I will only be using these three fillers for the lessons in this book.

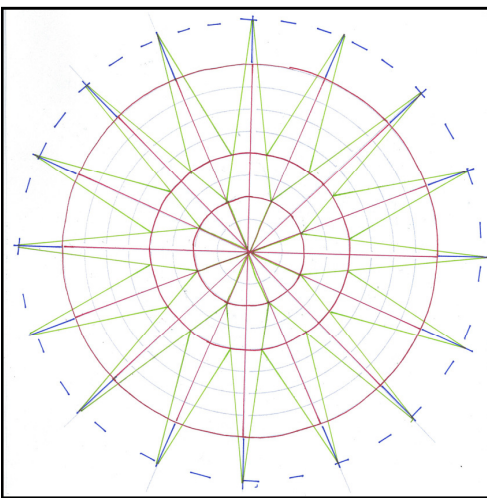


Traditionally Pieced vs. Wholecloth Designs

When I took the plunge from quilting traditionally pieced quilts to designing and quilting wholecloth pieces I was amazed at the similarity between the two types of quilts. With a pieced quilt you are planning your designs around the piecework. A wholecloth quilt is a blank canvas that you can do anything on. I found I kept going back to the designs that I was putting on the pieced quilts and putting them on my wholecloth pieces.

Pieced quilts can be quilted with large medallion designs as well as overall repetitive designs. The same can be said for wholecloth quilts. It is for this reason that I am combining the designing techniques for both quilts together.

Let's talk a bit about the difference between medallion designs vs. overall repetitive designs.



MEDALLION DESIGNS

A basic medallion is one large design surrounded by one or more borders. The design doesn't have to be in the center ...it can be off to one side, there can be multiple large designs or it can run off of the edge. This is totally up to you! Regardless of how you set your design you generally have a main focal point.

REPETITIVE OVERALL DESIGNS

A repetitive overall design means you are taking one design and repeating it over and over again until you have filled your space. My favorite repetitive shape is a square. This shape can be repeated square or on-point.

