

PROMISES & POSIBILITIES: DESIGN IN ACTION

The purpose of this class is to take an in-depth look at the **arrangement and organization of visual elements** that make a successful composition or design; and to study the raw elements of design, and see how they can be put to use in the process of quilting.

The class will begin with interactive discussion around the notion that the basic design elements are used in all design universally. Using slides and other visual material, we will study the **purposes** and different types of design and the **process** of design before looking closely at the **elements of design**, namely, line, mark, texture, shape, and color.

The arrangement of elements in the design space will include discussion and demonstration of proximity, overlap, transparency, contrast, repetition and rhythm, symmetry, asymmetry, focal emphasis, balance, positive and negative, and underlying structure.

Paste-up exercises using inexpensive art supplies and/or fabric scraps will form the basic activity of this section of the class, but students have the option of enlarging one or more of the small pieces.

An example of one of the exercises would be:

“Choose any geometric shape, eg a circle. Do several small paste-ups using circles. You may use a template to make perfect circles or cut freehand. What difference will that make to the look of your work? What will the result be if your circles overlap, or are cropped at the edge of the paper, or are concentric or eccentric? Is the negative space pleasing to your eye? What are the value changes? Are they light on dark, dark on light or a series of subtle medium values?

Now consider translating into fabric. What difference would the fabric texture and color make? Could you use transparencies? If you enlarge your design, how would the increased scale affect the positive and negative shapes? Would you break them up further and how? What techniques could you use? What could you do with embroidery, quilting or embellishment to enrich your circles? Which one do you like best and why?

What other artists have used circles? Consider, among others, the work of Sue Benner, Australian aboriginal artists etc “

The practice and desirability of **critique, comparison and analysis** will form the final part of the class as students assess their own work and that of other class members.

By the end of the class students should have:

- An in-depth understanding of the elements of design
- Seen examples of how they have been used by other artists and craftspeople around the world, with particular emphasis on quiltmakers.
- Have made a series of paste-ups many of which will be suitable for translation into fabric.
- Have actually translated one or two into small fabric works.
- Have the option of making a larger piece
- Have developed and refined the process of critically assessing their own work, and can discuss the direction in which they want to develop it.

SUPPLY LIST

- Sewing machine. Cleaned. Oiled and in good working order. Bring manual and kneelift if you have them.
- Extension cord with appropriate adapter/multiplug.
- Normal feet for your machine (**optional:** embroidery or other specialized feet).
- Machine needles. Choose according to your fabric: Universal (Schmetz 80 for cotton, 90 for heavier fabric, 60 for silk or very thin fabric. (**optional:** specialized needles, e.g. metallica, embroidery, etc.)
- Thread: neutral sewing thread of your choice (**optional:** specialized threads, e.g. metallic, embroidery or heavy thread)
- Pins.
- Rotary cutter (with sharp blade), cutting mat and plastic rulers of your choice.
- Notebook/Journal with your choice of writing implements
- **Optional:** Tracing paper, applique paper, stabilizer of your choice.

Art materials: A variety of inexpensive art materials that you can cut or tear and paste. These should include:

- *Paper*- several sheets of basic black, white and grey or beige paper, legal-size or larger. This will be used both as a base to paste onto and to cut up, so have some that are firm enough to paste on to.
- Anything that you can easily cut or tear, such as; magazines, newspaper, tissue paper, cellophane, textured or corrugated paper, foil (a good use for all those chocolate papers!) tracing paper, brown paper, wrapping paper etc.
- *Pencils*, felt-tip pens, markers, crayons, anything you can mark with.
- Paper scissors
- Glue of your choice.

Fabrics: Choose a palette that pleases you and bring a variety within that range. Make sure you include warm and cool variations of your chosen palette as well as some contrasts and a good value range. Bring whatever excites you in hand-dyed and commercial fabrics, in solid colors, subtle and/or strong textural prints, tone-on-tone prints. Make sure you have a good range of lights, mediums, and darks. Include neutrals, related colors, and contrasts, 100% cotton is advisable, although you may choose to bring some specialist fabrics, like silks and sheers or papers that might add subtle differences and enhance how color or shape is perceived in your window-based design.

PREPARATION:

This is the fun part even before the class! Look at windows everywhere and take pictures. Collect images and bring your variety and ideas to class. You may want to find words, poetry, or writing that suggests new views and the symbolism of looking in and looking out. You do NOT have to come with a design all worked out but just bring lots of images and ideas.