



Painting With Fabric

*Creating Art with
Fabric Collage and
Landscape Quilting*

By Jeanine Malaney



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Preface

Painting With Fabric is my technique of creating artworks with fabric utilizing fabric collage, raw edge appliqué and free-motion quilting.

I have lectured and given demonstrations of my technique for quilt clubs and artists. I have also taught one-on-one in my home studio setting. Though I have been asked many times if I would teach a hands-on workshop, I always decline. My reason is this: my technique of *Painting With Fabric* is by definition a unique art form utilizing the medium of fabric. Every painting I create in fabric collage is unique because of fabric choices. The only way I could teach many in a classroom setting would be for me to create "kits" ahead of time. This would violate the uniqueness of this technique! There are many appliqué' wall-hanging kits already available for purchase at your typical quilt shop. For example, McKenna Ryan designs and kits are fabulous. This would be another way you might start this art form, by practicing with a commercially available kit. My technique of fabric collage allows individual creativity and hence each painting is truly original and unique.

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Table of Contents

Preface	ii
About the Author	iii
Chapter One - Introduction and Inspiration	1
I Painting With Fabric	1
II Introducing Me	2
III Getting Started	3
IV Equipment List.....	3
V Design Wall.....	4
Chapter Two - Design and Composition	7
I Finding an Inspiration	7
II From Inspiration to Design	7
III From Design to "Canvas"	8
A. Example 1 Layering	9
B. Example 2 Layering	10
C. Example 3 Layering	14
IV Choosing Fabrics	18
Chapter Three - Sewing to Stabilize.....	21
I From Design Wall to Sewing Machine	21
II Working with Monofilament Thread	21
Chapter Four - Sewing for Dimension.....	25
I To Border or Not to Border.....	25
II Layer and Pin with Batting and Backing.....	25
III Enhancing with Quilting.....	26

Chapter Five - Finishing Touches	29
I Painting to Add Detail and Shading	29
II Squaring Up	30
III Binding	30
IV Signing Your Art	30
Chapter Six - Care and Framing.....	33
I Hanging Options.....	33
II Care.....	33
Chapter Seven - Step by Step Summary	34
<i>Painting With Fabric</i> Technique of Fabric Collage.....	34
Chapter Eight - More on Design and Composition.....	35
I Elements of Design.....	35
II Inspiration: Deciding What to Create	35
III Composition: A Good Foundation.....	36
IV Light: The Magic	38
V Color: Your Palette	38
VI Layering Techniques.....	39
VII More Design Tips.....	39
A. Sky.....	39
B. Water	40
C. Mountains -- Rocks and Cliffs.....	40
D. Trees	41
E. Anchoring	41
F. Horizon	41
G. Focal Point	41
H. Shade and Shadows.....	41

Chapter Nine - More on Fabric Selection	43
I Sky.....	43
II Water.....	44
III Mountains and Rocks	45
IV Ground, Sand or Greenery Background.....	46
V Bushes and Trees.....	47
VI Flowers	48
VII Figures/Animals.....	49
VIII Buildings	49
IX No No's	50
Chapter Ten - Painting on Fabric	51
I When and Why to Paint	51
II Shading with Paint.....	51
III Painting in Detail.....	53
IV Painting in Highlights	54
V Buying Paints for Fabric.....	56
Chapter Eleven - Professional Touches	57
I Borders with Mitered Corners.....	57
II Making Your Own Binding with Square Corners	59
III Dowel Sleeve Tips	64
IV Quality Features Checklist	64
Chapter Twelve - Step by Step <i>with</i> Illustrations.....	65
I Find an inspiration; sketch a design or layout; plan for layering	65
A. Inspiration	65
B. Layout	66
C. Layering plan	66

II Start with "canvas" on design wall	66
III Choose fabrics and layer for focus, perspective, contrast, light/shadow	67
A. Fabric selection - fields	67
B. Fabric selection – trees	67
C. Fabric selection – buildings	68
IV Layout with pins and then glue-stick all.....	69
V Baste on machine with monofil thread and free motion foot.....	74
VI Repeat above steps as needed.....	74
VII Paint in further detail and shading as needed	75
VIII Press and square up	75
IX Optional: Add borders that coordinate and/or calm; press	77
X Layer and pin with batting and backing.....	79
XI Quilt to enhance dimension and highlight features	80
XII Press and square up.....	81
XIII Add binding, sign and/or add label to back.....	81
XIV Frame or add sleeve to hang from dowel.....	82
XV Enjoy for many years!	83
Chapter Thirteen - Unique Designs	85
I Photo Interpretation	85
II Your Unique Fabric Stash	88

Chapter One - Introduction and Inspiration

I Painting With Fabric



Aaah, Denali

35 x 43

My inspiration comes from a lifelong fascination with the landscape of the American West, its wildlife and legends, cowboy and Indian lore. My style is representational, rediscovering the serenity of the traditional classics, yet with a contemporary flare being big and bold and emphasizing the play of light. Please visit my online gallery at www.PaintingsWithFabric.com to see more of my art.

You can apply my same techniques to a more contemporary or even abstract style if that intrigues you more. Modern art has been a tangent from traditional art but both are valid forms of expression. For examples of more contemporary works, see Julia Berkley at <http://juliaberkley.blogspot.com/> and Sue Gilgen at <http://gilgenart.com/gallery.htm>. Though not quite the same technique as mine, they offer ideas for design.

Chapter Two - Design and Composition

I Finding an Inspiration

Deciding what to create is often a big challenge. Ideas can be found in magazines, your own photos or scrapbooks, calendars, notecards, travel brochures, etc. Look for drama, excitement, light play or maybe serenity and calmness. With practice you will begin to see compositions all around you. You can take photographs of scenes or objects of interest. If you have some drawing ability, you can even sketch original creations or combine ideas from different sources or different photos. Set aside a box or folder and start collecting pictures of interest. This is fun to do while watching TV, cutting pictures from magazines. Be sure you do not use your fabric scissors for cutting paper as paper will dull them.

For me, what brings me joy to paint, what I feel a lot of emotion about, are scenes which calm, comfort, renew, or inspire. I see God's majesty in nature and I focus on mountains, lakes, streams, and trails, wildlife, endangered species, red rock formations in the southwest deserts, and even cactus like the quirky prickly pear or giant saguaro. I am attracted to old fences, horses, cowboys, Indian lore, ranches, old churches, trains. Another of my hobbies is studying cosmic and quantum physics, so I am exploring ways to represent these topics in my art.

You do not need to figure this all out before beginning to create; start with one idea and meanwhile build your inspiration folder. You will find your style emerge with time and practice.

II From Inspiration to Design

You must start with a plan; from your inspiration photo or photos, do a layout or composition on paper. You do not need to have artistic drawing ability, you can use words or even just circles and arrows and numbers. What you are doing is identifying your main objects so that you can plan for layering. Unlike piecework in a quilt top, this technique I am sharing is layered collage. So for instance, if you are doing a landscape, the farthest plane is the sky, so this fabric must go down first; then maybe a layer of distant mountains. Next might be hills and distant trees, then a house or cabin or whatever is your focal point with some mid-way trees or plants. The last (top-most) layers would be the foreground. For the foreground and maybe even for the mid-ground of the landscape, I usually add a ground background of general greenery (or desert beiges) as a backdrop to those close-up trees, grasses, or flowers and to fill the gaps.

A. Example 1 Layering

Here is a simple window box we saw at Kalaloch, Washington which is on the Pacific Ocean edge of Olympic National Park.



The Inspiration Photo



Painting

"Cabin at Kalaloch"

16 x 20

IV Choosing Fabrics

Selecting fabrics and building your stash is another enjoyable part of this hobby. In every town I travel to, I check out the quilt shop if available. Each shop carries some unique fabrics. I only use 100% cotton since it then handles and behaves uniformly. With experience, you may wish to experiment with other materials. I also recommend buying from quilt shops; though more expensive (average \$10/yard) than Wal-Mart, the quality is better. These shops get first runs. Many also offer hand-dyed cottons and batiks not found elsewhere. Usually you only need to buy 1/4 yard, though I usually buy 1/2 yard of material for skies or borders. I buy several yards of muslin to use as a "canvas" and for backing. Sometimes I buy fun prints on sale for backing but I like plain, cheap muslin best because you can easily see the quilting on the back side which is interesting for show and tell. You do not have to wash these fabrics before using them, though you will probably have to iron them when ready to use. I use Warm & Natural cotton batting. It is thin and not too puffy for these wall hanging works of art.

With experience, you will recognize what sorts of colors and prints are useful to you and hence you can collect and build a stash not specific to a project. Then you are prepared for most any design you want to do without having to make a special shopping trip. Batiks are wonderful for this artform. They can be shaped into mountains, rocks, forest background, etc. Some fabrics can be used on the reverse side for a quieter effect, such as for a reflection in water. Some fabrics will have flowers or animals to cut out and use. Fussy cutting these objects is another activity that is good simultaneous with TV. Beware of busy, repetitious prints. They do not reflect reality in nature. Learn more about fabric choices in Chapter Nine – More on Fabric Selection.

It is most helpful to organize your stash by useful categories, such as: sky material; greenery material; flowers; trees; mountain/rock material; ground/sand; and figures/animals or whatever objects useful as cutouts. I sorted my stash initially into shoe boxes. Now I use the drawers of a spare dresser. Very handy!

Chapter Five - Finishing Touches

I Painting to Add Detail and Shading

Using fabric paint or fabric paint markers is totally optional. It allows you to paint in some detail or shading that you could not achieve with fabric pieces. This can be done at any stage from layout to before or after quilting. Some fabric markers are actually fabric dyes (read the label carefully). These are good for shading but beware, they "bleed" through the material quickly.

One example of paint use is to mark cliffs and ridges in a batik material to better indicate mountains. Another example is to shade one side of brown tree trunks to show the shaded side, away from direct sunlight, by darkening it with darker brown or even purple. Sometimes you can add fine lines, such as for thin branches, with the fine tip end of fabric markers. In Chapter Twelve - Step by Step with Illustrations, I present many more before and after examples of adding details or shading with paint along with photos for clarification.



Along the Animas River



22 x 29

Chapter Nine - More on Fabric Selection

Here are some examples and discussion of good and bad prints for use in landscape collage.

I Sky

The sky is usually your lightest value, except Western skies can be an intense cobalt blue. Figure I-a fabrics are all great for skies. The second one down is hand-dyed without



Figure I-a Great sky fabrics

a pattern. I can place the light section of it (see right edge) at the horizon for realism or stitch around it for a cloud. Likewise, I would make clouds in the bottom three. Beware of printed sky materials as shown in Figure I-b. Each looks much too fakey, unless you use a small amount for a small sky or camouflage with trees so that the repeated pattern is not obvious.



Figure I-b Sky fabrics with caveats



Figure II Great water fabrics

II Water

These six fabrics are great for water. They might also work for sky. Likewise, the sky materials above might work for water. The bottom material in Figure II is actually the reverse side of the one above it. Use both alternately to show a play of light upon part of the water.



Figure II-e Fold straight up to form corner angle



Figure II-f Fold down over itself



Figure II-g Start sewing from the top



Figure II-h Sew on down the side

Connecting with a smooth hidden seam. To connect the two ends, fold each back and press leaving a ¼ inch gap between the two folded edges (Figure II-i). Open up the top end. Mark with pen the cross formed by the creases on the wrong side (Figure II-j). Line up the 45 degree line on your ruler with the outer edge of the fabric and with the left edge of the ruler at the center of the cross (Figure II-k). Draw the diagonal line with pen through the cross (Figure II-l). Fold the free end over at that diagonal line and press (Figure II-m). Open. Now do the same (Figures II-k through II-m) with the lower strip but opposite diagonal so it will fold over to the right (Figure II-n). Press and open. Pin and sew together on these press lines, right sides together (Figure II-o). Hint: Baste or pin first to check that you have it correct! Trim excess. Press and complete attaching this section to the collage piece.

Chapter Thirteen - Unique Designs

I Photo Interpretation

Many of my designs are extrapolated from photos. I utilize my husband's photography from places we've experienced together. Your experiences will be unique. When using a photo for inspiration, here are two important things to remember:

- A. Get permission if using someone else's photo. Photographers are artists and own their work.
- B. Study and simplify. A photograph contains much more information than you can reproduce in fabric! You must first decide what will be your focus and then eliminate most of the extraneous detail in the photo. This is a most important step for if you skip this step, your design will meander as you work to "copy" the photo. This will probably result in a poor composition. I usually try several sketches. If you do not have drawing ability, you can "cut and paste" to create your composition; ie., cut up the photo and rearrange just the pieces you want to use. Or use markers to block out details in the photo itself.

On the next few pages are some examples of designs I created and the photos I used for inspiration. You can see more on my website www.PaintingsWithFabric.com Enjoy!

The first examples shown on the next page are a triad of scenes from Arches National Park in Utah. Each is 12 x 12 inches and the three are meant to hang in a grouping. From top to bottom, they are "The Three Gossips", "Window Rock", and "Delicate Arch".



El Rancho Pinoso

25 x 42

El Rancho Pinoso II

25 x 42

Photo "El Rancho Pinoso" near Pagosa Springs CO