

Ultimate Photo Quilts

5 WAYS TO MAKE PHOTO AND PICTURE QUILTS



1 READ, CLICK, PRINT: A COMPARISON OF PREPARED INKJET FABRIC SHEETS

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GINNY ECKLEY

Go to any quilt show and you'll find that quilts incorporating photographs are very popular.

Nowadays, it's a snap to scan your favorite photos into your computer, then print them onto fabric that can easily be incorporated into a quilt. But how do you make your photo quilt stand out from the crowd?

In this free eBook, you'll discover a number of creative techniques and tips for artfully incorporating images into your quilts.

The easiest way to apply photos to fabric is with prepared inkjet fabric sheets. So let's start with Jennifer Rapacki's review of these techno-art wonders, "Read, Click, Print: a Comparison of Prepared Inkjet Fabric Sheets."

Now, perhaps you'd like to design and create your very own colorful fabrics but don't want to invest in the cost of painting or dyeing supplies. Diane Doran shows that it's a cinch to digitally alter images to create colorful cloth by simply using your home computer and printer.



Or maybe you'd like to make an abstract quilt depicting an urban or countryside scene, but don't know where to begin. Inspired by the grassy hillsides of her British homeland, Marie Roper shares her methods for creating unique, embellished landscape pieces.

Pamela Price Klebaum illustrates a playful approach to enhancing your digital fabrics with stamps to create unique quilted imagery, while Ginny Eckley gives tips on several surface design techniques, including inkjet printing on pretreated fabric to achieve sharp, crisp images.

So get out your box of favorite photographs and get ready to play!

Warmly,

VIVIKA HANSEN DENEGRE
Editorial Director

Quilting Arts MAGAZINE*

ULTIMATE PHOTO QUILTS

5 WAYS TO MAKE PHOTO AND PICTURE QUILTS

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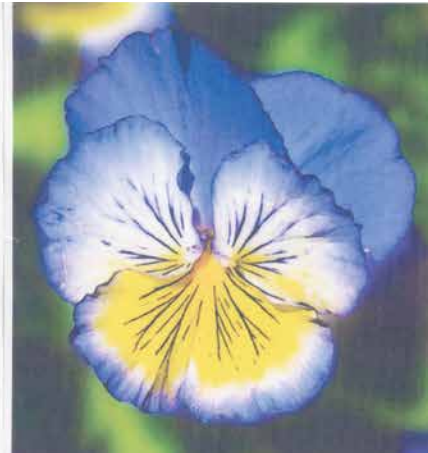
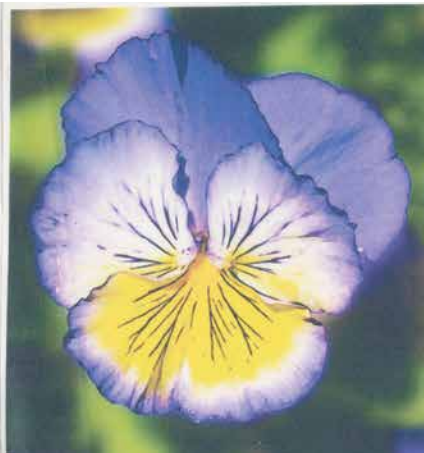
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READY, CLICK, print!

A COMPARISON OF PREPARED INKJET FABRIC SHEETS

I love using my own imagery and photographs in my quilts. With a home inkjet printer and specially treated fabric, anyone can make this a reality. You can prepare your own fabric using Bubble Jet Set® or, as I prefer for convenience, you can use commercially pre-treated fabric sheets.

BY JENNIFER RAPACKI

ADAPTED FROM
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There are many pre-treated fabric sheets commercially available and they are all convenient to use. But prices vary widely between brands, from \$1.55 to as much as \$4.60 per sheet. What could cause this disparity? Is the image quality different between brands, or are they virtually all the same?

I decided to answer those questions for myself. I printed the same image on several brands of cotton fabric sheets so I could compare the quality of the images, ease of use, and price. The products I tested were Blumenthal

Cotton Poplin, C. Jenkins Miracle Fabric Sheets™, EQ® Printables Cotton (200 thread count), Jacquard® Cotton Percalé, June Tailor® Colorfast, and Printed Treasures®.

Methods

The test fabric sheets were printed with an HP® Photosmart D7260 printer using the default photo paper setting and 150 dpi resolution. While the drying time instructions for the various brands ranged from 1 minute to 24 hours, I decided to let all the test samples dry for 24 hours, and followed the individual manufacturer's instructions for heat setting.

All of the instructions mention rinsing after printing to remove excess dye. For the rinse, I totally submerged the



FIGURE 1 From left to right: June Tailor Colorfast, Printed Treasures, Blumenthal Cotton Poplin, C. Jenkins Miracle Fabric Sheets, EQ Printable Cotton 200 Thread Count, and Jacquard Cotton Percale. All of the fabrics were allowed to dry for 24 hours before being rinsed in tap water then blotted. Two brands required heat setting: C. Jenkins and June Tailor.

sheets in a pan of tap water and then used a towel to remove the excess water from the fabric sheets.

Results

All of the fabric sheets received the image well, but as you can see from the test prints, some kept the dye better than others after rinsing. (Figure 1)

The Blumenthal and C. Jenkins brands released quite a bit of dye in the rinse and lost some detail in the final photo. This was also the case with the Printed Treasures fabric sheets. The loss of dye that occurs during rinsing results in lighter colors. This may be a desired effect if you prefer muted images.

Very little dye was washed away during the rinse of the EQ Printables, Jacquard, and June Tailor Colorfast sheets. The color and detail remained excellent on all three brands, but the Jacquard sheets had the brightest white areas of all of the brands tested.

Keep in mind that results may also vary depending on the printer you use. I made a quilt in 2008 with

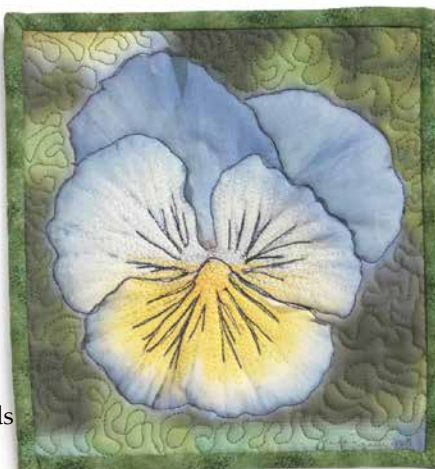


FIGURE 2 This sample was made in 2008 using a different printer and a Timeless Treasures fabric quality were achieved with Jacquard Cotton Percale sheet.

Printed Treasures inkjet fabric sheets for a class sample. (Figure 2) This sheet was printed with an HP Deskjet 930 printer. The Printed Treasures test sample printed on my newer printer has a bit more color depth than the original version. The second version of the pansy quilt was made using the Jacquard Cotton Percale. I'm really pleased with the dark, bold colors of this version. (Figure 3)



FIGURE 3 The bold colors and clear image quality were achieved with Jacquard Cotton Percale fabric sheets, the most affordable brand tested.

In the end, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. All of the images printed on the prepared fabric sheets are beautiful, and any one of them would make a nice addition to a quilt. It is up to you to decide which you like best and which is the best value. 🌸

authorblurb

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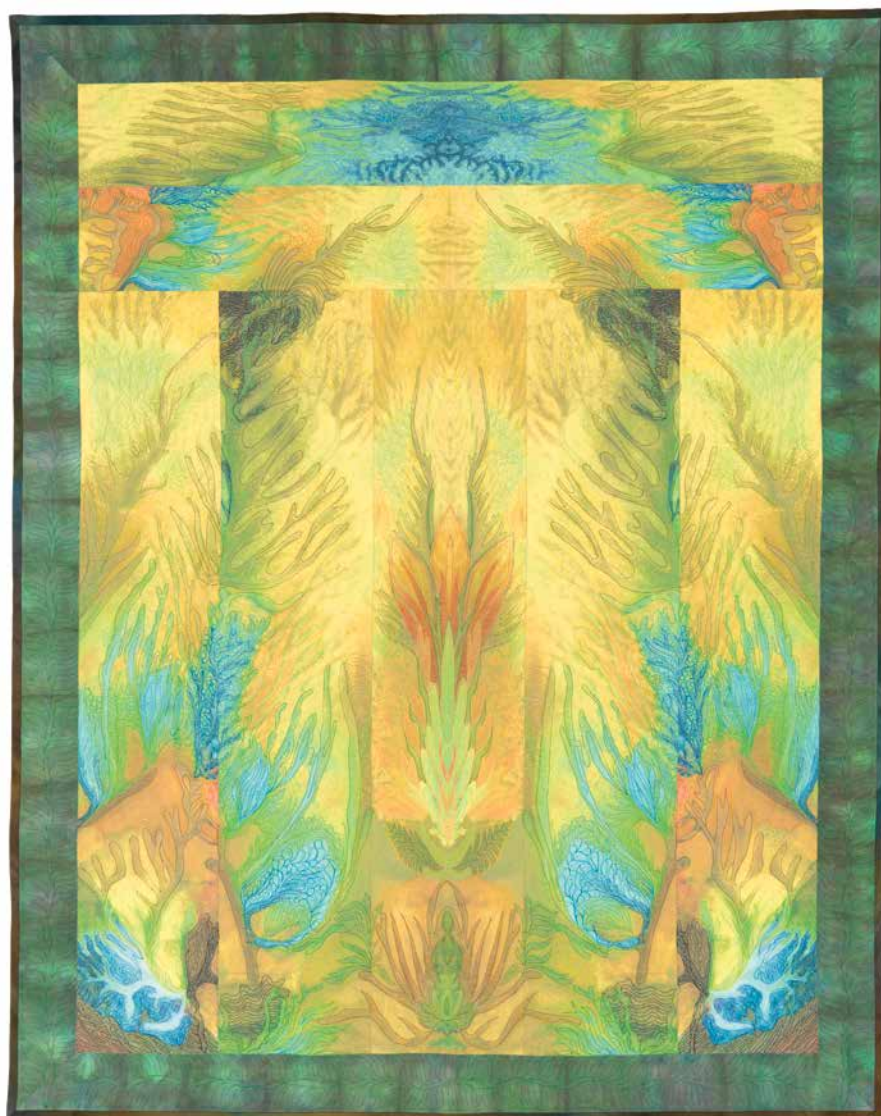
DIGITAL playtime

Create colorful fabrics with your computer

BY DIANE DORAN

As a longtime crafter and sewer with no formal art training, it didn't occur to me that different paints applied to different types of papers would provide a variety of interesting effects. When my children were in preschool, they'd come home every day with fabulous new creations, joyously and freely coated with tempera paint. When I looked at these works of art very closely, I was fascinated by the separation of color that often occurred. This led me to experiment with an assortment of paints and papers and a mix of techniques used by stampers and other paper crafters. Inspired by the results, I challenged myself to get the same results on fabric.

I had dabbled with paints on fabric on many occasions, but found fabric paints changed the hand of the fabric and did not work well with the heavy quilting that I so love to do. The solution I came up with was to paint on paper and then scan the results into the computer at a very high resolution. By manipulating the scanned image and then printing it



"Grotto" • 52½" × 41½"

on fabric, I can have the best of both worlds.

You can yield fascinating results ripe with possibility for transfer to fabric using inexpensive art supplies you probably already have on hand.

Unlike monoprinting, where what you see is what you get, my prints/"paintings" are just a jumping-off point. The pattern is my primary focus, and I can change the scale and color endlessly on the

computer. Many of the patterns that fascinate me are on a very tiny scale—perhaps all contained within an area measuring 2" × 2", or less. By scanning these designs at a high resolution—as much as 1,200 dpi—I can produce a result that's more accessible to the viewer. If the design is still not large enough, I can continue to enlarge it, using my photo-manipulation software. Since the designs themselves are abstract, losing some of the detail is not a big concern.

Tempera and acrylic paints

Tempera and acrylic paints have a thicker texture that is well-suited to creating distinct patterning. Both types of paint can be used on freezer paper, inexpensive drawing paper, overhead transparencies, and sandwich wrap. Keep in mind that the thicker texture may mean that some of your pieces will take longer to dry before they can be scanned into the computer. This is especially true for paints applied to smooth surfaces such as transparencies. When scanned at

a high resolution, the texture of the paper will also be apparent, adding another layer of interest.

NOTE: When using acrylic or tempera paints, I make an effort not to over-mix the paint on the paper in order to achieve more separation between the colors and thus more distinct patterning.

I dabbed tempera paint onto the shiny side of freezer paper, folded it in half, pressed it together, and then pulled it apart. This resulted in beautiful organic shapes. (Photo 1)

When the same technique is used on cotton fabric with thick textile paint, the result is very different. The paint wicks through the fabric and, though still interesting, the design loses its crisp patterning. (Photo 2)

For my purposes, using the freezer-paper method (and then scanning and printing the design onto fabric) works far better than using the direct-to-fabric technique of the second example.

Water-based markers

Try using water-based washable markers on watercolor paper. Scribble, spritz with water, and watch the magic happen. If the paper curls up, once it's dry it can be pressed in a heavy book overnight to flatten. Not pleased with the results? Repeat the process, or use your art as a layer within the photo-manipulation software of your choice. Different brands of markers, and sometimes even different colors of markers, react differently when spritzed with water, so try experimenting to see what different effects can be produced. (Photo 3)

You can use the same technique on inexpensive cardstock (rather than



Photo 1

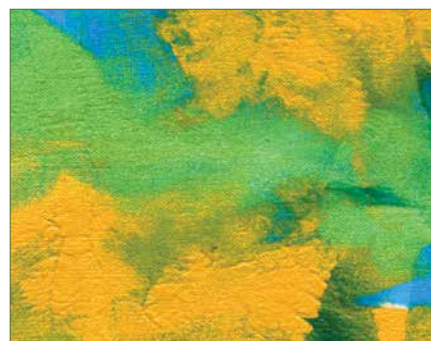


Photo 2



Photo 3

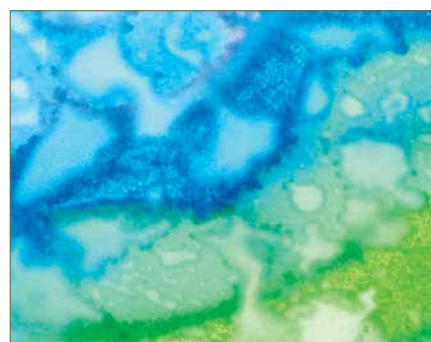


Photo 4

OPTIONS

- Duplicating the image repeatedly could result in a border print or a kaleidoscopic effect. (Right)
- Scanning paintings is a terrific way to achieve a more painterly look when creating digital collages using a variety of image types.
- Paintings that have less patterning can be used to create wonderful backgrounds.





"Under the Rainbow" • 41¾" × 56½"

paper). Notice how the ink creates interesting pools of color. (Photo 4)

Watercolor paints

How about children's watercolor paints on the same types of paper? I love the textured look created with watercolor paints on watercolor paper. (Photo 5)

Ink pads

Borrowing from my stash of rubber-stamping supplies, I swiped pads of pigment inks randomly onto cardstock. Though perhaps not a composition in and of itself, it could certainly make an interesting background. (Photo 6)

Altering scans

Have you ever taken a photograph and been disappointed with how the colors turned out? The same thing has often happened to me when I've scanned my art. The simplest thing you can do is experiment with your image

using your software's auto-correction settings. Increasing the saturation, as shown in Photos 7 and 8, can also make a big difference.

The image I used in "Grotto" was originally ½" × 2½" (Photo 7); I upped the saturation and enlarged the scan to approximately 8" × 28". (Photo 8) You can see it in the finished quilt as the two vertical panels, mirror images of each other, on either side of the central panel.

Modifying the colors in your art can become addictive. Try changing all the colors at once, and then try modifying them separately. I often save many intermediate steps when manipulating images, as all I'm using up in the way of supplies is computer memory. "Grotto" and "Aqua Leaves" both had minimal manipulation of the original scanned images. (Primarily the saturation was upped and the scale was dramatically enlarged.) Other times, I've extensively modified

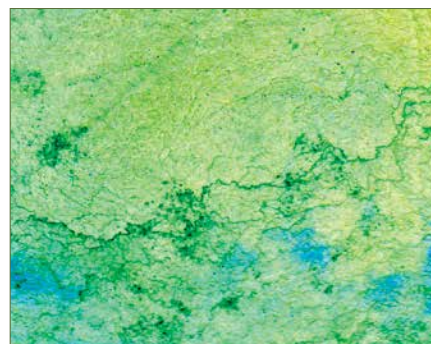


Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

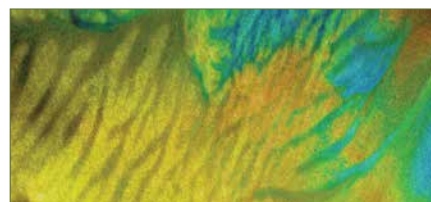


Photo 8



"Aqua Leaves" • 17¾" × 16½"

and layered images to reach the final design, as for "Under the Rainbow."

How do I use these digital designs?

My quilts are compositions in and of themselves that result from a print/painting. I like to create the central image, then border it with fabrics I've hand dyed, either those I have on hand or those I've dyed to match. The smaller quilts are a single piece of fabric with borders added on, while the larger quilts are several printed fabrics seamed together to create the whole and then bordered. Someone else might use fabric created this way in appliqué or piecing.

Printing

My favorite fabrics for running through the printer are silks and EQ Printables. If a print needs a little extra oomph, I sometimes pump up the colors with a little colored-pencil work.

I find it enjoyable to use more than my hands in painting. Manipulating images digitally is a lot of fun, too. It can be relaxing, and you never know what you'll come up with. Allow yourself a little digital playtime and see where it takes you. 🌿

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M A T E R I A L S

- Silk fabric and/or EQ Printables inkjet fabric sheets
- Tempera or acrylic paints
- Water-based markers
- Watercolor paints
- Freezer paper
- Watercolor paper
- Inexpensive cardstock
- Water for spritzing
- Pigment ink pads
- Photos
- Computer with photo-editing software
- Scanner
- Printer (I use Epson® printers with pigment-based inks.)

Optional

- Colored pencils

scanning the HORIZON

incorporating digital images
into landscape-
inspired design

Herefordshire, where I live, is a beautiful county on the border of Wales and England. The land that straddles the two countries—with distant hills, soft green valleys, and craggy outcrops of rock—enchants me, most of all when the gentle light of spring sunshine filters through the sparkling air. Gold, peach, and myriad soft greens set off by the greys and lilac of the far away hills; these colors lift the spirits after the winter.

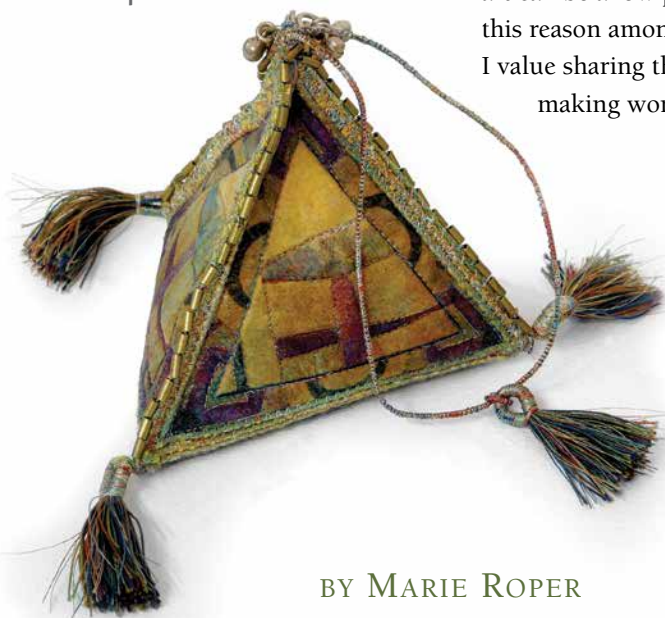


These delicate pyramid pieces were inspired by photographs Marie had taken of the Herefordshire landscape.

Teaching embroidery and patchwork, as well as creative computing at several levels up to Diploma level City & Guilds, is quite demanding, and I find that making time for my art can be a low priority at times. For this reason amongst many others, I value sharing the challenge of making work for new exhibitions

with my fellow members of the exhibiting group SiX. We usually work independently because we are all so busy but we love to get together occasionally to talk about what we are doing and eat cake.

My method of working has two strands: First I dye and collect many fabrics, inspired by the colors and textures of



BY MARIE ROPER



the countryside where I walk with my husband as often as possible. Then I start to cut and piece the fabrics together, making complex fabrics with which to work, a technique I learned in a two-week class with Nancy Crow. This process is the equivalent to sketching. After time spent walking and observing, I bring back mental and photographic images that I then play with in the studio, sometimes leading to a finished top but not always. Some are left at this stage as complex fabrics to be incorporated in later projects when they become treasures of unexpected color combinations and delightful shapes. I have huge stashes of complex fabrics that I treasure.

On finished tops, my quilting is done mainly by machine, inspired by the marks and tracks left by the use of the land by man; ploughing patterns, sheep walks, fencing, and forestry all leave signs on the landscape, which I collect as inspiration. Hand stitching is then added to increase texture and add subtle touches of color.

The second strand of my work is to use these fabrics and pieces to incorporate into my digital work. I photograph or scan them and in conjunction with landscape photos and my artwork inspired by the landscape, creating images on my computer to use with my fabrics in different ways.

I use Paint Shop Pro® 7, 8, and 9 software to produce complex images, layering scanned, pieced work, and artwork with photos to extend the range of images. Some of this work goes into my books, some becomes part of my stitched work, working alongside my dyed and collected fabrics or on its own in small items.



Marie found an old, dilapidated map among her late father's belongings and realized its potential for beauty. She first dyed cotton scrim and other fabrics, distorted them to give an aged effect, then applied them to the map with gesso. When dry, the first layer was painted with transparent acrylics, then the gesso was sanded away to reveal some of the town images beneath. Afterwards, digital images printed on fabric and scraps of artwork were added. Machine and hand stitched.

I have several favorite methods for adding digital images to fabric:

- Direct printing onto pre-prepared fabric sheets.
- T-shirt transfer prints (I have sourced some in England that are so soft and fine that the texture of silk can be detected through them).
- Printing onto Tissutex, tissue, or paper, which is then bonded onto fabric using fusible web.

Tissutex, also known as Abaca paper, is a tissue paper that has strength when wet, making coloring it with paint or dye much easier. You can also use the tissue from the inside of new shoes or that comes wrapped around garments. Both of them are easy to use, but you need to support the tissue by affixing it to ordinary paper to pass it through the printer.

Directions

1. Using a glue stick, apply glue to the paper support, then smooth the tissue onto it.

2. Trim the tissue to size if it overhangs the support, then seal the leading edge with masking tape to insure it doesn't kick up under the printer head.
3. Make your print.
4. Generally I would crumple the tissue and perhaps rub it with a small amount of wax after printing and before bonding. This creates a much stronger and softer fabric that can withstand an amazing amount of manipulation (rubbing it with a perfumed candle is pleasing as the scent lasts quite a while).

NOTE: I use an Epson printer with DURABrite Ultra® inks for longevity.

5. When the tissue is dry, carefully remove it from the support and iron the fusible web onto the back of the image.
6. Apply your image to the supporting fabric and now treat the tissue as you would any fabric.

NOTE: It is good to experiment on many kinds of paper for printing from the computer. There are many prepared papers to use, but sometimes it is good to try out some that aren't meant for digital printing.

- Try printing on old bits of paper that may have accidental brush marks on them.
- Try brown paper. It takes the print in a very unusual way, looking immediately old and interesting with the faded bits of old paint making shadowy marks. I have used brown parcel paper under my artwork to protect the work surface and the resulting accidental marks are fascinating.

It is sometimes the unintended bits that really excite me, not unlike my complex fabrics. That is serendipity, together with the importance of recognizing the potential of these happy accidents.

The pieces of work shown here are mainly hand-dyed, with some commercial and digitally printed fabrics. They are machine pieced and machine quilted with hand stitching added to further embellish or emphasize the lines. ♦

marieroper-marie.blogspot.com



Above: "Offa's Landscape" 39" x 39" • A photograph of Offa's Dyke (an ancient Stone Age ruin that runs the length of the border between Wales and England) was scanned into the computer. The digital design was printed in different scales on Tissutex and then bonded to silk. Machine pieced and quilted.

Right: Detail from "Offa's Landscape"



ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2009

SCAN, print, STAMP, & stitch

BY PAMELA PRICE KLEBAUM

one person's debris is

another's art



"Magnolia
Leaves Redux"
12" x 12"

"DETRITUS" is a word that has always intrigued me. Technically, detritus is loose fragments that have been worn away from rock. Generally, it is leftovers, debris. But who decides that something is debris? It seems that one person's debris is another's...art.

It all started with a run in the park with my black Lab puppy. We came upon some young magnolia trees that had produced and dropped some stunning leaves, a subdued array of hues, shiny and leathery. I gathered them up, sad that I could only find four. As an art student, I have learned that one of art's mantras is the power of odd, not even, numbers.

I envisioned creating a small quilt that would incorporate printouts of my scanned leaves (manipulated in Photoshop), but I wasn't sure how it would come together. After a bit of experimentation, I created elements that evolved into a satisfying piece. In addition to incorporating various digital leaf images (printed on a variety of inkjet fabric sheets), the piece also includes fabric stamped with a similar motif, plus quilting and embroidery that highlight and enhance the leaf design.

DIRECTIONS

Digital Play

1. Scan your treasures. I scanned the magnolia leaves leaving space for a fifth (phantom) leaf.
2. Play with your image in Photoshop. I was intrigued by the interplay of the curved shape of the leaves as they intersected with the linear veins. I cropped the image closely to highlight that interplay.
3. Play with color combinations. I chose a variation of my beloved complementary colors, copper and turquoise. I also used the layering and opacity tools in Photoshop and produced this result (see top left image on the next page), which struck me as playful and happy.

More digital play produced another color variation (see bottom left image on the next page), which might be good for printing on fabric, but it seemed too dark for what I had begun to envision. I tweaked the image more (see right image on the next page), and it looked like a family of leaves.

From Computer to Fabric

1. Once you have created a few images that appeal to you, print them on fabric to see how they'll look. I printed my two favorite images, one on cotton and the other on silk. The printed fabric was less vibrant than the image on my computer screen, certainly not strong enough to impart the playful, colorful image I had imagined would be the focal point of my piece. I set aside my cotton and silk printouts and continued experimenting.
2. Print your design on some ExtravOrganza. I did this thinking that if I layered it over the silk piece, the effect would yield a more vibrant image. I was wrong—the result was rather ethereal, but it was a nice unexpected result.
3. Determine whether you wish to layer your printed ExtravOrganza design on one (or both) of your previously printed fabrics. Using Mistyfuse, fuse the layers together. I fused my ExtravOrganza piece on top of my silk piece and left the cotton piece as it was (it had slightly more saturated colors).
4. Select your favorite portions of each printed piece, cut them out,

and stitch them together to make the focal point of your piece. I cut a square from the silk/organza piece, and I cut two strips from the cotton piece. I stitched the cotton strips to opposite sides of the square piece.

Stamping and Finishing

1. For added interest, carve a stamp with an interpretation of your image. I carved the magnolia leaves, using my Speedball linoleum cutters and the buttery Mastercarve Artist Carving Blocks.
2. Select a color for stamping the image and stamp it onto a clean piece of fabric. I chose a chocolate

MATERIALS

- Leaves
- Computer and scanner
- Photoshop®, or other photo-editing software
- Color Plus® inkjet fabric sheets, 8½" × 11" (1 sheet of cotton twill, 1 sheet of silk satin)
- 1 sheet of ExtravOrganza by Jacquard®
- Mistyfuse™ fusible webbing
- Staedtler® Mastercarve® artist carving blocks
- Speedball® linoleum cutters
- Textile paint (I used brown Jacquard paint.)
- Cotton fabric for border
- Skeleton leaves
- Acrylic paint, diluted with water
- Foam brush, small
- #5 perle cotton and embroidery needle

Optional

- Plexiglas®

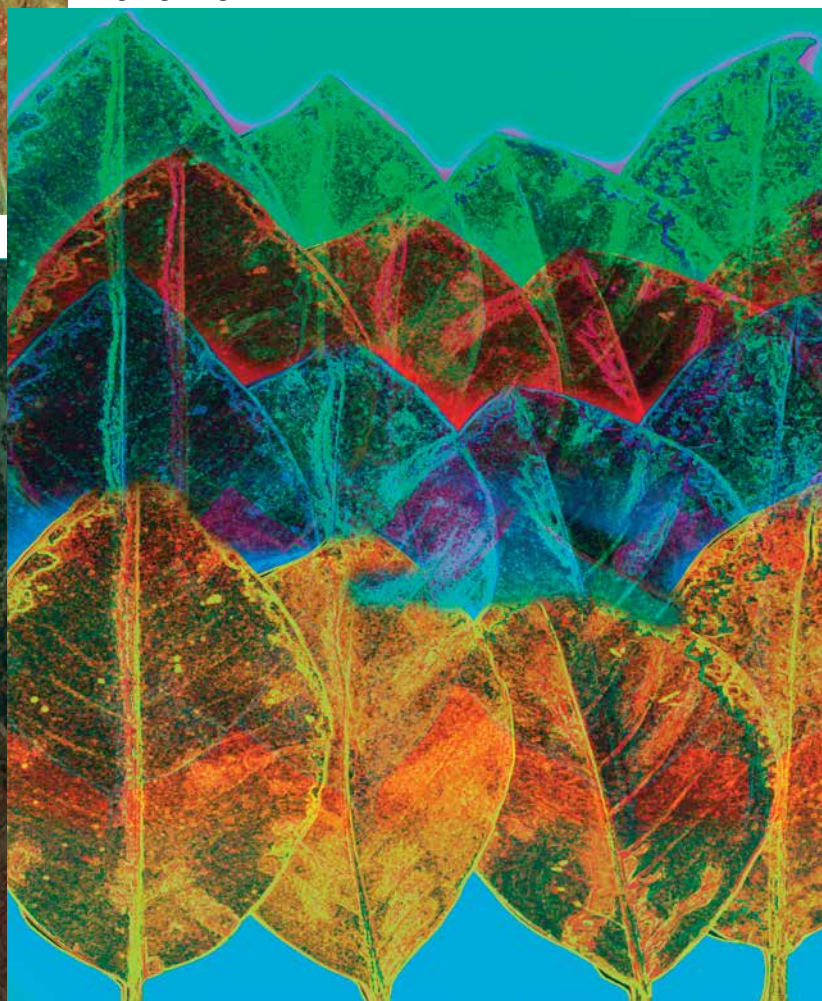
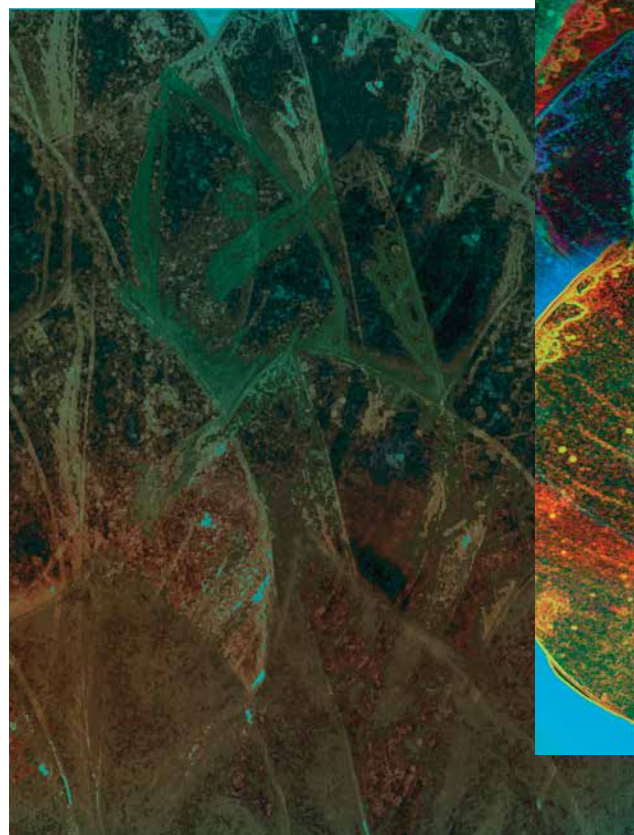


brown textile paint and stamped onto a pale azure blue solid, leaving room between the stamped pattern for quilting some magnolia leaf shapes and to provide a place for the eye to rest.

3. Cut strips from your stamped fabric and sew them to the top and bottom of your piece to create a nice border.
4. Add some quilting, highlighting the lines of

your image. I quilted the magnolia leaves, real and imagined.

5. Dig through your stash if you feel you need to add depth. My piece seemed to lack a focal point. I stared at my stash closet and remembered some skeleton leaves I had purchased months ago. I painted three leaves with diluted acrylics, two in my favorite blue, one in pale green.
6. Attach your additional fabrics or fibers as desired. I used Mistyfuse to affix the leaves to the piece, using the silk setting on my iron.



7. Use hand stitching to highlight your focal point. To bring the leaves forward, I outlined them with a running stitch using #5 perle cotton.
8. Finish your piece as you desire. I added a backing and binding. Then I mounted my 12" x 12" quilt on Plexiglas®.

Now I have a sweet homage to my runs in the park with my puppy and a testament to my new adage that one person's detritus is another person's art! ♦

pamprice.blogspot.com



OPTIONS. for imagery

BY GINNY ECKLEY

ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
SUMMER 2003



"Endangered Warblers" • 84" x 71" • Hand painted on silk, quilted, and embroidered.

There's a myriad of choices for today's quilter who wants to include images in their work—three that I am continually drawn to are painting, printing, and silk screening. With the variety of products available in the market today, all of these are viable options, but which to choose?

My work is nature-based, and for the most part the designs are realistic. After designing a new piece, I think through various paint, embroidery, and printing processes to determine what will most effectively portray my ideas. I used to do quite a bit of piecing and layering, but as my painting skills have improved, I now paint larger areas and enhance them with machine embroidery. Silk is my favorite canvas—it takes the paints beautifully and has a luminescent quality.

PAINTING ON SILK

Much of my work involves hand painting. Paint tends to run on silk (unlike cotton), and precautions must be taken. First, I recommend stretching the fabric in a frame. For small pieces, a plastic embroidery hoop will do. For larger pieces, I use an Arty frame. Made of plastic parts, it is durable and easy to clean. Both the width and length can be adjusted, and each side of the frame has rows of holes that make it easy to re-stretch your fabric. If an area has a lot of paint, it may sag, but by simply moving a peg back a hole, the fabric can be kept taut. Best of all, it



Using Photoshop®, I added a yellow border and text to a digital image I had taken. After printing it out using my inkjet printer and allowing it to dry, I touched it up with a fine point black marker and sponged the ground area with brown Setacolor transparent paint.

all comes apart for easy storage. The frame comes in two sizes, 24" or 35", and has an extender kit for larger work.

Another way to keep paint colors from running into each other is by precoating the fabric with Jacquard® No Flow. If I am doing a lot of detail work, I let the first coat dry and brush on a second coat. No Flow is applied after you stretch the fabric and before

you trace your design. It must be dry before you start painting.

Resist can also be used to separate colors. My favorite brand is SilkPaint!® Resist. It is a water-soluble product, which works best on silk. You pour it into a plastic ½-ounce bottle, add a fine metal tip, and draw with it. With your fabric stretched and the design traced onto the fabric, the resist is applied over the design

lines. You do not have to wait for the resist to dry before painting. The resist lines act like a dam, allowing the paint to flow up to the resist and stop, confining the paint. Wherever the resist is applied, the fabric will be white, similar to batik. The width of the line is determined by the size of the tip, how quickly you draw, and how hard you squeeze the bottle. The tips come in three sizes: 5mm, 7mm,

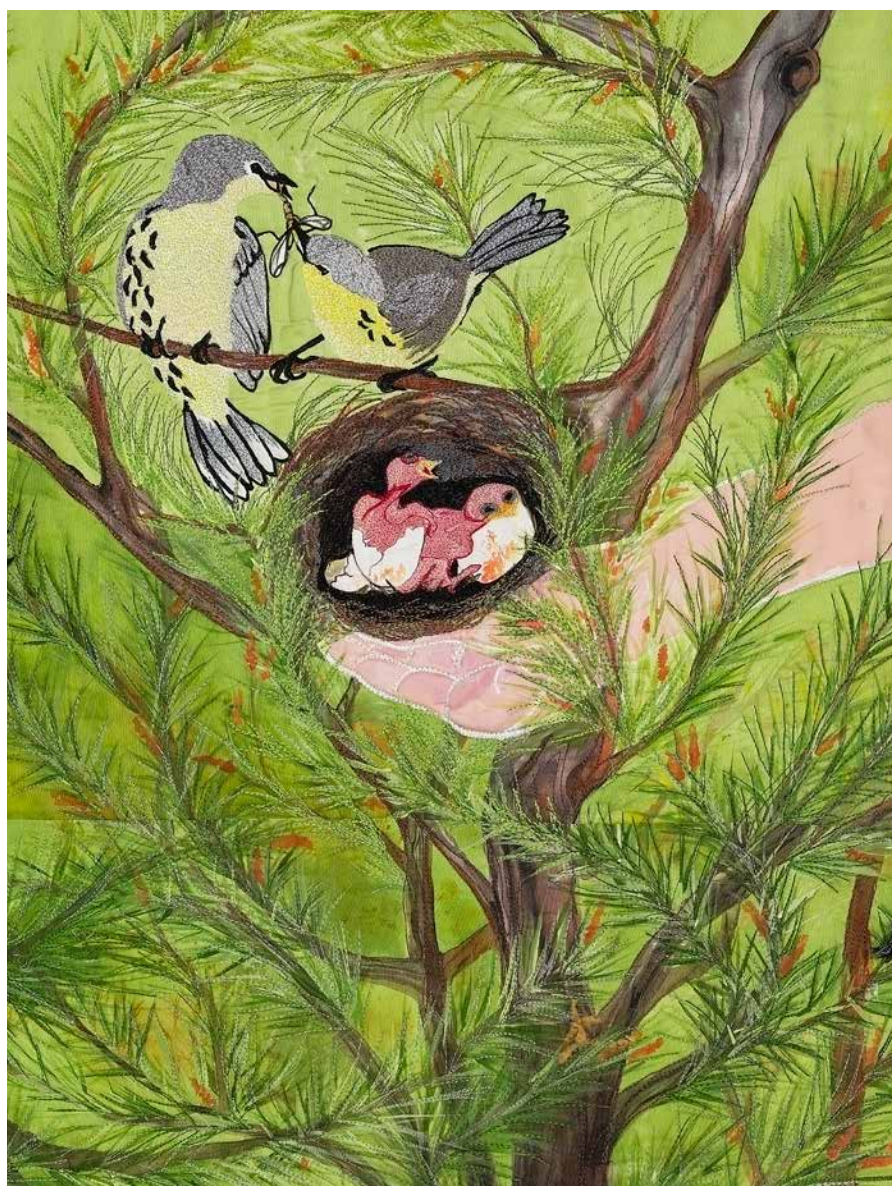
and 9mm, with 5mm producing the finest lines.

My favorite paints are Pebeo Setacolor Transparent. The colors mix beautifully, and can be layered on top of one another without a heavy build-up. Many people describe them as watercolor paints for fabric. The fabric remains soft, but the colors are vibrant. If you love pastel colors, mixing the Setacolor Transparent Medium with the paint will give you

light colors, but the consistency of the paint will remain the same. Most of the time you can use water to lighten a color, but if too much water is added, the paint will run.

Once you've finished painting, let the paints set or air cure for 24 hours. Then remove the fabric from the frame, place a press cloth over the fabric, and heat set with an iron. Your paints are now permanently set and you can rinse in cool water to remove the resist or No Flow. It is important to remember to heat set the paints before you rinse, or you can lose some of your color.

Detail from "Endangered Warblers"



INK-JET PRINTING

When it comes to organic shapes, I can draw. However, for machines or buildings, I prefer to take a digital picture, transfer it to the computer, and print the image on fabric. There are a number of transfer products on the market that involve printing the image onto transfer paper and pressing the transfer onto fabric. This tends to stiffen the fabric, however, and if the transfer is later touched with an iron, the design can smudge, distorting the image. Instead, I prefer to transfer the image directly using my inkjet printer, eliminating the adhesive layer used in transfer printing.

To print using your inkjet, you can buy sheets of fabric that have been pretreated, or use Bubble Jet Set® to pretreat your own fabric. Fabrics with a high thread count and smooth texture, such as Pima cotton, will result in an image with greater definition. The process is easy, and the results are amazing.

tips FOR USING BUBBLE JET SET & RINSE

This is a process that involves coating sheets of fabric in a solution, drying them, pressing them onto freezer paper, and trimming them with a rotary cutter to fit into your printer tray. After printing, the freezer paper is removed, and the fabric is placed in a rinse solution. Complete directions are on the bottle, but here are a few tips.

Fabric Preparation:

- I recommend using PFD (prepared for dyeing) fabric or prewashing your cotton or silk.
- The size of your fabric is determined by what your printer will take, the standard being 8½" × 11". Cut your fabric a little larger, roughly a ½" both in width and length.
- Following the directions on the bottle, pretreat the fabric for five minutes. Each 32-ounce bottle can print between fifty and sixty 8½" × 11" fabric sheets.
- Besides printing individual images equal to the size of your paper, you can print a continuous strip by setting your printer to a banner setting, the standard being 8.5" wide and 40" long. This is perfect for printing scarves or quilt borders. In this case you would cut nine-inch long strips, and set your printer to a banner setting.
- Once the fabric is dry, press the shiny side of the freezer paper to the wrong side of the fabric, using a dry iron. If you iron from the wrong side of the paper, it keeps your iron from sticking to the freezer paper. Be sure and check for air bubbles or creases in the fabric. If there are any, lift up the fabric, and press again. Also check for loose threads or lint, as they will leave a white spot and can clog the ink heads.
- Use a rotary cutter to trim the fabric-backed paper to fit your printer tray. Make sure the corners have a strong bond and don't curl. You can lay books on top to flatten your paper; some recommend trimming just ⅛" off the corners for easier feeding into the printer.
- The freezer paper can be used again, as long as the fabric is still bonding with it.
- I have found that letting the inks set for three days and then heat-setting before rinsing with Bubble Jet Rinse produces the most colorfast prints.



"Hungry Warblers"
16" × 17"
Hand painted on silk,
embroidered, and quilted.

If you love taking digital photos, this is an easy way to transfer your images onto fabric.

The obvious advantage of the pretreated fabric is time. Not only is the fabric treated, but it comes backed with freezer paper and cut to fit your printer. While it is less expensive to treat the fabric yourself, all the manufacturers, including the makers of Bubble Jet Set, believe the pretreated sheets provide a sharper image. The main reason is that they have more control over the treatment process, resulting in a more consistent coverage. Pretreated sheets cost anywhere from \$1 to \$9 per sheet, depending on the fabric and the manufacturer.

If you are concerned about the longevity of your images, invest in an inkjet printer that uses pigment inks. Both the Epson C80 and C82 use pigment inks, which are more stable and therefore more lightfast. Epson ink heads can clog, however, so using a lint roller on the fabric before feeding through the printer helps keep them clean. Archival inks (the highest quality) are available, but mostly for the large format printers.

The sharper your image and the higher the resolution, the clearer the image will be on your fabric. Scanning at 360 dpi will produce great images, but often I enlarge images, reducing the resolution to half that, and I still get good quality images. As with most processes, you'll need to do tests to determine what works best for your equipment. I had no trouble putting the fabric, backed with freezer paper, through my HP printer. However, when I put it through my Epson, I had to adjust for the added thickness



by changing the print lever to an envelope setting.

While it may seem logical that in order to get the best image you want to set your print quality to the highest setting, you will end up with more ink than the fabric can absorb, causing the image to appear fuzzy and out of focus. At first I couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong, but then I tried using the plain paper setting rather than the photo or inkjet paper settings. I could not believe the difference.

Always print your design on paper first to check your margins and image. Then place the prepared fabric into the printer one sheet at a time to prevent any jamming. Note whether your printer takes the paper face up or face down, and load the fabric sheet accordingly. Once you have printed your image, I recommend allowing it to air dry for 24 hours. Another artist, Pat Mink, recommends air drying for three days, and heat setting before rinsing. This lets the inks adhere to the fibers, and reduces the risk of colors running.

Rinsing, the final step, bonds the dye molecules to the fabric and removes excess inks. Each manufacturer has slightly different directions; some require simply rinsing in cool water, while others have to be steam set. Bubble Jet Set should be rinsed in a separate solution, Bubble Jet Rinse®.

*Above: "Warblers in the Woodlands"
45" × 43" • Hand painted on silk.*

*Left: "Warblers Feeding a Cowbird"
18" × 16" • Hand painted on silk,
embroidered, and quilted.*

SILK SCREENING

While silk screening can be quite time-consuming as well as costly, another way to transfer detailed images onto fabric is with thermofax printing. This is a fantastic process that makes silk screening easy.

It is perfect for producing an image multiple times, and is fine enough for printing text. The thermofax machine is an infrared transparency maker. Developed in the 1950s, it was designed to copy, make stencils, and laminate. A special polyester screen and a photocopy of your image are placed together into the machine. The photocopy must be made from toner inks using a laser printer or commercial copier; inkjet inks will not work. The light inside the thermofax heats the toner and burns the image onto the screen. The screen is then taped onto a plastic frame. The frame is placed on top of the fabric, and paint is squeezed



through the screen, creating your image on fabric.

The machine itself is rather expensive, approximately \$800 new. However, there are a number of people who will print the screens for you. Welsh Products offers all the screen printing supplies, and sells both new and reconditioned machines.

Silk Screen Tips:

- The paints used should be thick. I use Setacolor paints, and add Setacolor thickener. If the paint is thin, it tends to bleed.
- Your printing surface needs to be padded—a layer of batting, such as Pellon® Thermolam®, works well.
- Smooth fabrics print most clearly, so fabrics should be pressed to remove any wrinkles.
- The best way to apply the paint is with a squeegee, held at a right angle to the screen.
- It is wise to check the side of the screen facing the fabric after a few prints to make sure the frame is completely clean.
- This is a messy process, so make sure to have lots of paper towels on hand.

Both silk screening and inkjet printing have given me new ways to express my ideas on fabric. Each allows me to produce multiple images faster and more accurately than if I had painted the same images with a brush. I encourage you to explore these

techniques, and you will discover new ways to express your artistic visions. 🌿

fabricpainting.com

Sample of a silk-screened bird. The screen was created using a Thermofax machine. Branch was added using black paint and fine brush.