



## Choosing Colour & Fabric for Patchwork.

Whilst the actual piecing of blocks for patchwork is important the thing that makes your quilt appealing or striking is the choice of fabric and the colours used. I hope to give you a few pointers here to help you out!

### What is a Focus Fabric?

A *Focus Fabric* is something that you can base your quilt around. It will “jump start” it! It will also help you to choose your other fabrics. It usually tends to be a large print with five or six colours.

A good test in choosing this *Focus Fabric* for your quilt is to step back a couple of metres, if the fabric still looks striking to you and you still like it... It's the one you need! Some fabrics when you step back will go wishy washy and lose their appeal. Colours can change at a distance as well and what can be a nice blue and yellow combination up close can become green.

### How to choose complementary fabrics

Because most of your fabrics will be cut into small pieces, it's sometimes difficult to predict the effect one fabric will have on another. Here follows some hints to help:

- ~ You need to pick fabrics that will either blend subtly or contrast sharply. For a soft look combine lots of small prints. Lots of large mixed prints generate excitement, while plain colours make a quilt that is bold.
- ~ Vary the size and texture of your fabrics. You can combine plaids, (being careful with the placement lines in these fabrics) prints, small, medium and large, and solids and stripes.
- ~ Its good to use tone-on-tone prints if lots of your fabrics are “busy”.
- ~ Its also good advise to pick some fabrics that you may not necessarily automatically go for, you can be surprised by the results.
- ~ You will find that in your complimentary fabrics there is one or two fabrics that you will automatically reach for when choosing fabrics for your pieces... be sure to buy a extra of this. (It will probably be the first complimentary that you picked.)
- ~ Solid fabrics are very strong. Either use several as in the Amish style of quilt or as an accent only. They can be good used as sashings.
- ~ Surprisingly off-white and white can be good used together.

- ~ Yellow dominates any colour. Pink is the next dominating colour.
- ~ Consider your darks and lights. A piece of red cellophane is a good help in testing the colour “value”. It takes the colour out of the piece of fabric and helps you to see the lights, mediums and darks.
- ~ A quilt is like a painting, not every colour has to match your room décor. As long as the quilt, overall, has the room tonings, that's all you need.
- ~ Avoid choosing all your fabrics from the one designers range... it will tend to blend... often too well. It will also look like a “famous designers” quilt! (I am guilty of breaking this rule though.....just make sure that you have lots of darks, mediums and lights!)

### The Primaries System

Another technique that I like to use is the *Primaries System*. This is where I base a quilt colour range on three or four primaries. Traditionally this is red, green, blue and yellow. Thinking outside of the square these can be;

- ~ Pink, pale blue, apple green and lemon for the pastels.
- ~ Country Red, Hunter Green, Navy and Mustard for the Country look.
- ~ Purple, Orange, Lime and Hot Pink for the Brights.
- ~ You can of course substitute other colours in the combinations. (Purple instead of Navy in the Country combination)

### How much to buy?

This is the age old question. If you really like something, but you're not sure how you will use it, the rule of thumb is to purchase three metres. This is generally enough to piece or border any size quilt.

For most other fabrics in a quilt 50cm – 70cm is a good size, although if there is a fabric that you know you will use a lot, buy 1 – 1.5 metres. Fat eighths and fat quarters are great for accents, or for those people collecting for an applique or scrap quilt.

It is a good idea to make up a sample block to see how your colours work before cutting up metres of expensive fabric!

I hope that this has been of assistance to you. Most important is to trust your instinct. In the shop get all your chosen fabrics together, then step back that two metres and check that you still like them.

**Most of all enjoy your Patchwork and Quilting!**