

YOUNG IDEAS, OLD TRADITIONS

For Quilters World Magazine

by Kim Hanson

Take a moment to close your eyes....visualize what *you think* a quilter looks like. Is she old and grey, hunched over a humming sewing machine? If that image is indeed stereotypical, it is rapidly vanishing as vibrant, younger quilters emerge – skilled, passionate and opinionated quilters who are only in their 20's and 30's.

These quilters rock! They love what they do and are working hard to infuse novel and new traditions into an age-old craft. There is the perception that quilting is a dying art....“nobody *quilts* anymore!” But, these women are proof-positive to the contrary. They describe quilting as their therapy; lovingly stitching personality and joy into their work.

Learning to Quilt

Online “how-to” videos are abundant; it's easy to access all types of quilting videos that demonstrate a specific technique. Craftsy (<http://www.craftsy.com/>) is popular as a teaching tool for new quilters, as is Missouri Star Quilt Company (<https://www.missouriquiltco.com/>) with its often humorous, instructional You Tube quilting videos.

But, when it comes to passing on a true passion for learning how to quilt, Mom's the Word. Younger quilters often credit their mother or grandmother for initiating their love of quilting. Sure, they can sit down at the computer and learn techniques to their heart's content....but there must first be that passion that ignites their interest to move forward, learn and create. Most often, it is mom that provides that spark.

Telene Jeffrey of Gauteng, South Africa is Lady Jane Quilting (www.ladyjanequilting.co.za). When she was a young girl, her parents purchased a Bernina dealership, naturally immersing her in all the sewing world had to offer. Imagine the joy of living surrounded by all types of quilting patterns and fabrics! Needless to say, her parents were instrumental in Telene becoming the amazing quilter she is today.

Insert Image: Photo_1_SomeKindofWonderful

Caption: Telene Jeffrey's award winning quilt...first prize innovative small category, South African National Quilt Festival 2015.

Insert Image: Photo_2_FreetoExpress...Me

Caption: Wall hanging displaying applique techniques, 3D fabric work and free motion quilting, made by Telene. Exhibited at International Quilt Convention Africa 2013.

Insert Image: Photo_3_FreeMotionQuilting

Caption: Telene's hand-guided, free motion quilting design stitched on a customer's quilt

Erin Brophy's (elbrophy@msn.com) experience is similar to Telene's; her mother-in-law purchased a fabric store in Westchester County, NY and hired Erin as an employee. Over a period of time, she ruefully learned first to sew and then to quilt mainly to enhance her employability. As she became more proficient and experienced, Erin found herself drawn more and more to quilting and she's very confident now when counselling new quilters at work.

Jennifer Lipman (chattyscraper@yahoo.com) is delightful – outgoing, funny and socially inclined. Growing up in Arizona, she learned how to quilt from her mom. As a child, however, she was far from a convert. Jennifer could not see any fun in quilting whatsoever – “I mean, why would I want to measure and iron in my spare time?” she wondered. As she grew into an adult with children of her own, she began to experiment making easy rag quilts and watching You Tube videos for instruction and inspiration. Once Jennifer discovered pre-cut fabrics and batiks it was over – she was forever smitten! Now, instead of looking at quilting as work, Jennifer admits to a “wonderful, Zen feeling” while she's cutting, pressing and stitching.

Insert Image: Photo_4_Bubbles

Caption: Jennifer Lipman's first art quilt, featuring raw edge applique, couching and decorative stitches.

Britney Chrisinger (britneychrisinger@yahoo.com) a young woman from California, learned to love quilting through her mom. Britney discovered that quilting with her mom carved out time they could spend together. Although not an avid online instructional video fan, Britney does take the time to watch an occasional video when the need arises. She says, “I have to be careful watching them...they can be addicting with all of their templates and tools!”.

Insert Image: Photo_5_AmericanaBeauty

Caption: Americana Beauty is completely paper-pieced, even the borders. Britney gained a ton of confidence working to create the curves in her quilt.

Quilt Patterns

Younger quilters have a fresh, modern attitude towards our favourite pastime. Quilts that come together easily are definitely favoured. The prevailing attitude is quilting is meant to be fun, not at all a chore. Younger quilters admit to being easily bored...if a pattern gets too difficult or complicated, or if they are forever looking at the same fabrics, frustration sets in and they may just abandon the project altogether. The general rule of thumb is “quilt quickly”.

While the debate swirling around traditional v. modern quilt patterns is irrelevant to young quilters, *most* do prefer a modern bent or traditional patterns that come together very easily. Gina Tell (ginatell@me.com) of Texas says, “I like the unique, loud color, and clean lines of modern quilt styles”.

Insert Image: Photo_6_SummerPebbles

Caption: Gina's purple and aqua summer wedding quilt. She quilted a distinctive, free motion design in the shape of pebbles. Machine embroidery by Gina.

Pairing a traditional pattern with modern fabrics can successfully mesh old with new in a strangely satisfying way. Clean lines often dominate a younger quilters work, however traditional style blocks with a modern twist also flourish.

Katrina Lloyd (klloyd76@gmail.com) on the one hand, professes a love for traditional quilts. On the other hand, she follows the work of modern quilter, Camille Roskelley (<http://www.camilleroskelley.typepad.com>) whose first book entitled “Simplify”, is the motto for a generation of younger quilters.

Purchasing Habits

Quilt shop owners take heart! Younger quilters are definitely shopping at your stores and learning shortcuts and new techniques in your quilt classes. Although shopping online for notions, batting and backing is favored, they admit to craving the sights and sounds of their LQS. Younger quilters, much like their older counterparts, wish to experience how the fabrics feel before they purchase. Britney says, “there is something wonderful about being able to touch the fabric and see it with my own eyes”. There is also a value-added social component to the LQS. Often, younger quilters do not have quilting friends. Attending

their LQS not only provides them with the latest and greatest fabrics, patterns and treasures, but is also the backdrop for meeting new quilting buddies.

Guilds?

There is a general, prevailing opinion among younger quilters that guilds are not for them. Anecdotal evidence of feeling unwanted or unwelcome is prevalent. Guilds may be too stringent...too many ties that bind. There is an expression, however, of younger quilters wanting to connect with others who love the pastime as much as they do. Perhaps a new type of quilting group will emerge? Perhaps, simply a group of like-minded individuals seeking both companionship and an interest in sharing their projects, stories and ideas.

Having heard all the negativity surrounding established quilt guilds, there is one younger quilter who loves them, just as they are. Jeena Lugo (jeena@alwaysunderpay.com) belongs to five guilds already and is thinking about joining a sixth!

Dedicated Work Space

Juggling the challenges of raising small children, work, and finding time to stitch, Jeena rises daily before 6:00 a.m. to quilt and says, "I do my best work in the morning when the house is quiet and my mind is clear". Britney quilts in the afternoons when her daughter naps and in the evening when the little one is asleep for the night.

These women are expert at stealing time and workspace in their homes to house their quilting addiction. A spare bedroom, living or dining room may serve as their sewing studio. Perhaps, even, a kitchen table? Jessica Johnson's (jessicapoc1@hotmail.com) kitchen table is covered with her quilting supplies, ironing board and sewing machine. She quips, "needless to say, my family doesn't eat there!"

Telene is blessed with a home studio she refers to as her "haven", measuring a whopping 22'x16'. Wow! She is the envy of us all.

There is no doubt - the wonders, delights and pleasures of quilting are sure to endure. Here's hoping that younger quilters, like their own moms, will take the time, love and energy to teach their children all that is wonderful about our favorite pastime.

