

Postcard Quilts

By Joyce Compton

Postcard quilts may be realistic, playful, symbolic, or convey a pictorial message to the recipient. It is a great way to play and experiment without investing a large chunk of time. Sometimes great designs come from this play, where you are just "cutting and pasting" fabric bits to your quilt canvas (described below). During this "play" time, you may work without thinking too much about your "design". This allow creativity to flow.

The method used to make "postcard" quilts is based on techniques learned in Sue Benner's Landscape class. It is used ot only for small quilts, but quilts of any size I like to experiment with designs in this way. It gives one the opportunity to audition designs and colors prior to making larger quilts.

Supplies:

Fusible web: Wonder Under from Pellon 805. This fusible does not have "dots" of glue; it is like a web, so doesn't show through.

Batting: Recommended batting: Quilter's Dream 100% cotton; use either of the two lighter weights. This batting has no scrim or waffle weave so works better with this technique.

Fabric: Fabric for backing and lots of fused fabrics and fabric scraps. Scraps are wonderful for these projects. Silks, polyesters, rayon, sheers, tulle, etc. all may be used. Add trims, ribbons, yarns, etc., for embellishments.

Thread: Quilting threads in a variety of colors. Variegated thread, if desired. Bobbin thread.

Misc.: Cutting board, rotary cutter, paper and fabric scissors, ironing surface, iron, Teflon pressing sheets or parchment paper, sewing machine.

Quilt canvas:

Make your "quilt canvas" by choosing a backing fabric for your postcard; fuse it to the Pellon 805. Remove the paper from the fused fabric. Lay out a piece of Quilter's Dream 100% batting. Cover with the fused backing, fused side down. Fuse the backing and batting together by ironing the backing to the batting to make a "canvas" on which to build your quilt. Cut a number of canvases from your backing fused/batting to the desired size. You now have a completed canvas. Postcards can be as small as 4" x 6" (or even smaller if you wish). I like to work in a 6" x 9" format.

You may now begin to compose your postcard. **Cut out shapes and/or strips of fused fabrics to use to build your composition.**

Creating a strip landscape:

Cut strips of fabrics to use in your composition. If using a rotary cutter to cut strips, take off the paper backing on the Wondr Under before cutting strips. If using scissors to cut shapes it helps to leave the paper on. When using strips to build your composition, it is best to start from the top and overlay your strips approximately 1/4". This prevents batting from showing through when you quilt. Working from the top down helps to develop the landscape with good perspective, as perspective needs to be done from the background to the foreground.

Consider making an **abstract landscape**: make just the suggestion of a landscape. **Color** can be realistic, enhanced, or totally fictitious. You can stay in the same values or push to other values. **Abstract flowers** can be used in landscapes, e.g., Queen Anne's Lace can be cut from strips.

Cut and collage:

1. You may choose to make a scroll of fabrics you plan to use in the quilt. Iron a variety of fabrics that you plan to use in your landscape onto a roll of W/U – sheers solids, and prints. Cut off the W/U and roll up until ready to use.
2. Cut out curvilinear haps and arcs; assemble onto the quilt canvas to create the background, mid-ground and foreground of your quilt. Build layers. Using this collage technique, you may create a landscape with opaque fabric and sheers, overlaid with petals for flowers.
3. You may also collage on release paper. Iron the shapes onto parchment paper or a Teflon pressing sheet. Once you have completed one or more units, remove from the paper and fuse to the quilt.

Making landscape quilts:

You may want to choose an inspirational photo. Choose a part or all of the photo to use in your piece. Consider reducing the photo to the essential elements. Check the effect of asymmetrical and symmetrical. Consider using a close up. To isolate small areas of photos, use L-forms as framing tools. Make a quilt from the area you like best.

1. You may abstract your piece by using strips in your construction. Here are some suggestions for strips to use:
 - a. Sky shaped strips
 - b. Wave/water strips
 - c. Gentle waves/agitated water
 - d. Hills
 - e. Fields
2. Start with smaller shapes in the background and larger in the foreground. Drawing-scribbling, practice abstracting and simplifying the design.
3. Do a fantasy landscape using unrealistic colors, abstracted shapes.
4. Abstract-experiment, look for patterns, striations.
5. Consider curvilinear lines going across the quilt with some vertical lines, irregular lines for foliage.
6. How much sky do you want in relationship to the foreground? Consider atmospheric perspective to create depth and obscures, hazy, more blue.

Remember you may use any design(s) to make your postcard including traditional quilt block patterns, abstract geometric designs, whimsical designs, cartoons, etc. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination. Please just play. It is fun to just cut out a bunch of shapes from your fused fabrics and grab them at random to see what develops. Since you don't have to iron the shapes down until you are happy with the design, it is easily changed. You can even use the leftover scraps after you have cut out shapes in your design. Allow yourself to go back to

kindergarten and play. You will be amazed at how much fun you have and what wonderful postcards you create.

Completing your project:

When you have layered all the pieces on the canvas and are satisfied with the design, fuse it together by ironing it onto the canvas. It is important to have parchment over the design and under the batting when doing this step. This will prevent getting fusible on your iron or ironing surface.

Quilting:

You are now ready to quilt your postcard. Your design will be enhanced if you follow the shapes and lines used in the composition. Changing thread colors will help to bring out the design. You may like Aurifil 50 in a few basic colors for the bobbin, Stitch over every piece you fused on the quilt using a sharp needle

Blocking:

1. Block for the first time after finishing the design, right before quilting, Steam it using a pima cotton press cloth.
2. After quilting steam the backside of the quilt, then the front using the press cloth.
3. Trim
4. Do the binding and steam again. The satin stitching may cause some waviness.

Binding:

Sue Benner recommends using a satin stitch binding. Go around the quilt using multiple colors or four different variegated threads. On the first go around, stitch so the satin stitch is just beyond the edge of the quilt to overcast. At the end of each go around, change threads. Do this a total of four times. You may also fuse on a fabric binding or a traditional binding.