

HOW TO BIND A QUILT: 12 NEW Quilt Binding and Finishing Methods for Your Art Quilts

from *Quilting Arts*



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Let's face it: Conceptualizing and making an art quilt is fun. Finishing and putting a binding on it isn't (at



least for me). If your studio is anything like mine, it's harboring a heap of unfinished quilts, just begging to be completed so they can be released and

appreciated by the greater world.

Not to worry, this eBook has come to the rescue! In the pages ahead, you'll find 12 creative—yet easy—ways to finish those quilts. For instance, take Sarah Ann Smith, who shows a few finishing techniques, including how simple it is to create a perfect binding for quilt tops with curved edges. Sherrie Spangler cleverly demonstrates a nontraditional method for framing a quilt top simply by

stitching it on top of a backing fabric with raw edges.

Have you ever tried to finish a small art quilt with a zigzag stitch along the edge, only to have the corners come out an utter mess? Terry Grant has come up with a smart (and simple) way to finish those small quilts and have their corners stay clean and neat. Lyric Kinard lends her art and design expertise and offers several methods for presenting and mounting your works of art so that they shine.

So get out your unfinished quilt tops; with all of these options, I'm confident you'll find the perfect finishing method to complement them!

Cheers,

POKEY BOLTON
Editorial Director

Quilting Arts

MAGAZINE®

HOW TO BIND A QUILT: 12 NEW QUILT BINDING AND FINISHING METHODS FOR YOUR ART QUILTS

from QUILTING ARTS

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QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE®, P.O. Box 469087, Escondido, CA 92046-9350

ON THE edge

BY SARAH
ANN SMITH



ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2007 AND
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2007

The mini-quilt shown here illustrates most of the binding challenges you will face, including standard edges and corners, inside and outside curved edges, and a point.

“What if” may be the most useful phrase in an artist’s vocabulary. What if I used a pillowcase back instead of a bias binding? What if I used a sheer fabric instead of cotton or silk? How would it look if I stitched an accent line inside the bias binding? In this article, we’ll look at all of these options for finishing quilt edges. When you’re ready to use one of the techniques, be sure to read through all of the steps before proceeding.

Sometimes one alternative is clearly better looking or more suitable to the intended use of the piece, but other times the answer is what looks best to you. The question then becomes, “How do I choose?” The answer is: “Make visual decisions visually.” Copy that sentence, post it front and center in your studio, then abide by it.

Once your quilt is nearly finished, set out your fabric and fiber options and really look at them. Do you—gulp, gasp, gleefully watch the “quilt police” shake their heads—leave the edges raw with the batting artfully hanging out, perhaps painted? Do you enclose

the edges? If your quilt is designed for the wall, you can use any edge-finish (or lack thereof) you want. If you are making a garment or bed/lap quilt, you’ll want a durable finish that will stand up to washing and the wear and tear of use.

DOUBLE-FOLD BIAS BINDING

The double-fold bias binding with a mitered corner is probably the most familiar edge finish for contemporary quilts. For demonstration purposes, I created a mini-quilt that illustrates

most of the challenges you will face. The sample quilt includes standard edges and corners, plus inside and outside curved edges, and a point. To bind a curved edge smoothly, you must use bias (fabric that is cut on a 45° angle to the woven edge)

PERFECT *miters*

For Sarah’s instructions on how to make a perfect miter with any width of bias binding, check her blog entry dated July 20, 2007. Go to sarahannsmith.com and click on the Blog link.

because bias stretches. The narrower the binding, the easier it is to get it smooth and flat, especially on curves. A double-fold bias will wear substantially longer than a binding cut on the straight of the grain, so it is particularly good for garments and bed/lap quilts that will get a lot of use.

MAKING THE STRIP

1. Cut your binding strips 6 times the width of the desired binding, plus $\frac{1}{4}$ " (add an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ " wiggle room if desired). For a binding that finishes at $\frac{3}{8}$ " you will need $2\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide strips (not including wiggle room).
2. Sew your binding strips end-to-end, using diagonal seams with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance, until you have the length of your quilt perimeter plus several inches.
3. Fold the strip in half lengthwise, finger-pressing or *lightly* pressing with an iron.

ADDING THE BINDING

1. Align the binding raw edges with the quilt raw edge and, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance, sew the binding to the quilt, beginning at least 4"–6" from a corner, and leaving a tail of about 4"–6" (on large quilts, leave a tail of about 12"). When stitching is about 2" from the corner, place a pin to mark $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the corner. Stitch up to the pin and backstitch. Remove the pin. Remove the quilt from the machine and cut the threads. (Diagram 1)
2. Fold the binding up to make a 45° angle as shown. (Diagram 2)
3. Fold the strip back down (covering the 45° fold). Align the new fold with the edge of the quilt and align

Diagram 1

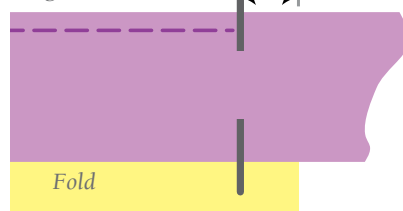


Diagram 2

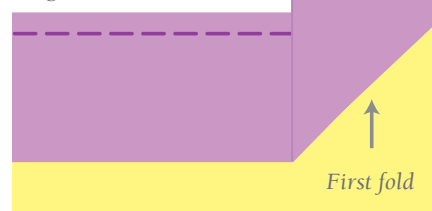


Diagram 3

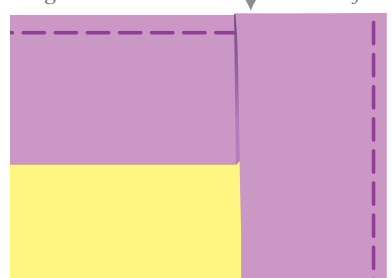


Diagram 4

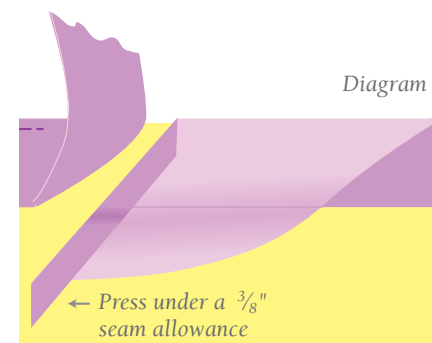


Diagram 5

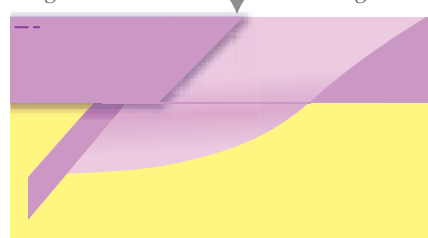


Diagram 6



the strip with the next side of the quilt. Starting at the corner, stitch down the next side. (Diagram 3) Repeat at the remaining corners.

4. Stop stitching about 4"–6" from where you began; backstitch. Remove the quilt from the machine and cut the threads. (Diagram 4)

JOINING THE TAIL ENDS AND FINISHING

1. Press under a $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam allowance on the beginning tail. Tuck the ending tail inside the beginning

tail. Allowing a $\frac{1}{2}$ "–1" overlap, trim away the excess. (Diagram 5)

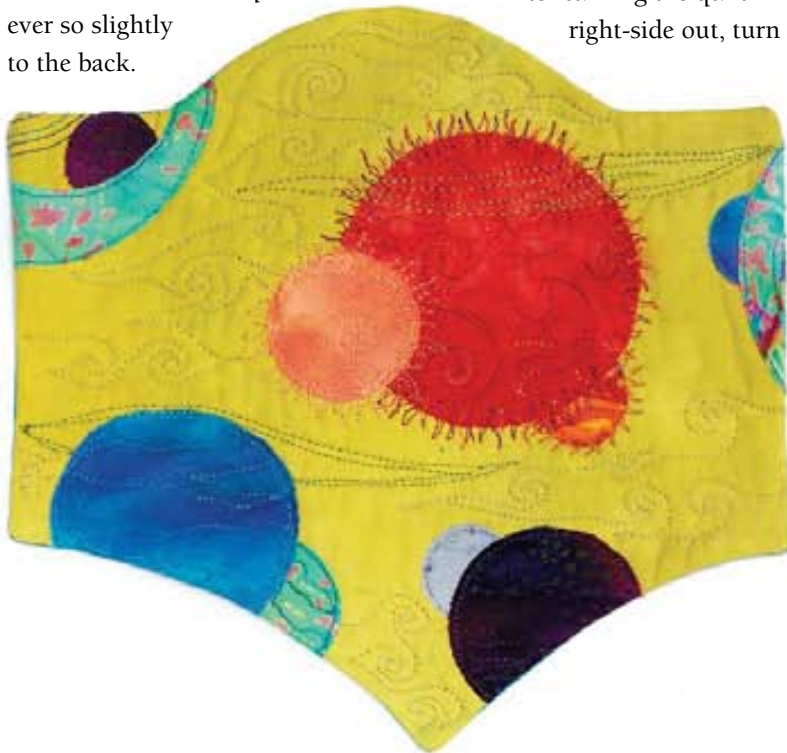
2. Refold the beginning tail so the ending tail is tucked inside; pin. Finish the seam. (Diagram 6)
3. Turn the binding to the back. Fold the mitered corners in opposite directions on the front and back to balance the bulk.
4. Blindstitch the binding to the back using an invisible hand-appliqué stitch or stitch in the ditch from the front. Blindstitch the join.

tips

- I like to start the binding on the lower left side, where the join is relatively unnoticed as the eye travels in its accustomed path (from left to right and top to bottom) across a quilt.
- Loosely run the binding strip around the quilt to make sure a seam doesn't land on a corner (too much bulk); if it does, adjust your starting point slightly.

PILLOWCASE FINISH

Sometimes a quilt is done just as it is, and a bias binding (either matching fabric or contrasting) or any other noticeable edge-finish would detract from its composition. In this situation, consider a pillowcase finish, which turns the front of the quilt ever so slightly to the back.



A subtle line of color can be added by using a triple-stitch in the ditch where the binding meets the quilt top (see the red stitching along the binding of this piece). For a perfect finish, sew in the ditch before hand sewing the binding to the back; this will cover the line of machine stitching. For a faster finish, after sewing the binding to the front, pin it to the back and stitch in the ditch from the front, catching the binding on the reverse.

The pillowcase method (also called the “escape hatch” or “bagged back”) is a great option when you have lots of knots and threads from doing extensive beading or hand embroidery, because it covers the entire back.

THE PILLOWCASE TECHNIQUE

There are two ways to turn a quilt with a pillowcase backing:

- Leave an opening along one side. After turning the quilt right-side out, turn under

the edges of the opening and stitch the opening shut.

- Slice an opening in the center of the back, as I did on this piece. This is called the “escape hatch.” You can hand stitch or fuse the opening shut.
1. Complete all work on the quilt top. Cut batting the same size as (or slightly larger than) the quilt top, and do most or all of the quilting (a piece of cloth under the batting is optional at this point).

tips

With the pillowcase method presented here, the front of the quilt is turned slightly to the back, ensuring that the backing will not be visible from the front of the quilt. Here are a few hints to keep in mind when using this method:

- Before trimming your finished quilt top, decide where you want the edges of your finished quilt to be, and plan for a $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam allowance. This will ensure that you don't hide part of what you intend to be visible when approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the front is rolled toward the back.
- It is difficult to get sharp corners with a rolled edge, so consider rounding your corners to make things easier.



For a quick and easy finish, try the “escape-hatch” method (see *The Pillowcase Technique*). The opening is fused closed, then hidden under the label.

NOTE: I do some additional quilting after adding the pillowcase backing to keep the backing in place (see Step 10).

2. Trim the quilt top and batting, being sure to allow for a $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam allowance. (The extra $\frac{1}{8}$ " is for the “roll” toward the quilt back.)
3. Cut the backing exactly the same size and shape as the top.

shortcuts

To speed up the process, use fusible web on the backing (before you stitch it to the quilt), using one of the following methods:

- For the escape hatch method, apply fusible web extending 1" or so around the planned escape hatch location.
- For small quilts, apply fusible web to the entire backing.

For either method, sew with the fused backing on top and reduce the presser-foot pressure so the fusible adhesive doesn't bunch up under the presser foot. To reduce drag, place tissue paper or tear-away stabilizer over the fusible; remove the stabilizer once stitching is complete.

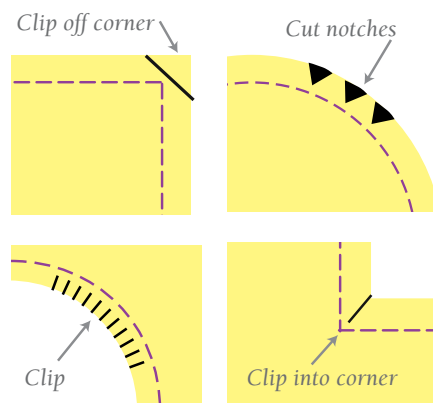
4. Trim $\frac{1}{8}$ " from all edges on the backing.

NOTE: If you will be using the escape hatch method, apply fusible web to a section of the back and cut the opening now.

5. Place the backing on the quilt, right-sides together, and sew along the outside edge using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance, easing the top and slightly stretching the back to fit.
6. Trim away as much batting as you can from the seam allowance.
7. Trim the outside corners to reduce bulk when turned. Clip all inside curves and cut notches in all outside curves. Clip into inside corners.

TIP: Avoid clipping into the stitched seam. If the fabric is raveling a lot, use a short stitch length to reinforce the seam and use a no-fray product where the clips approach the stitching.

8. Turn the quilt right-side out. Use a point-turner, blunt-tipped large knitting needle, or a crochet hook to ease corners.
9. Iron the seam allowances toward the center of the quilt as follows. Roll just a smidgen of the front edge of the quilt to the back; this is



called “favoring” the edge. When seen from the side, you won't see the backing/facing, so it gives a clean, professional finish to the edge of your quilt or garment. Use an up-and-down (not sliding) motion with a dry iron to set the seams in place.

TIP: If you rest a piece of wood or a heavy book on top of the area you just ironed as it cools, it will “set” better and stay where it belongs (instead of trying to uncurl).

10. Stitch the side opening or escape hatch closed (or fuse it). If the backing is fusible, iron it now. You may wish to add some quilting or stitching to keep the backing in place, as I did here, especially if your quilt backing is not fused.
11. Sew or fuse your label over the escape hatch to hide the slash.

SHEERS

Quilts bound with sheer ribbon are lovely, but the ribbon can be expensive, poor quality, or difficult to find. I developed a method of using sheer synthetic fabrics to finish the edges, providing a subtle visual “stop,” yet allowing the viewer to see the composition extend all the way from edge to edge. I use a heat tool to cut and sear the edges because sheers fray a lot. You can also rotary cut these strips and allow the edges to fray, or use tulle (netting) or stretch mesh, which will not fray. Because this piece has curves, I cut my strips on the bias. For a quilt with straight sides, you may cut the sheers on the straight grain. Because sheers can be fiddly, I use a wrapped corner instead of a mitered corner.

DIRECTIONS

1. Rotary cut your binding strips at least 2" wider than the desired width. For a $\frac{1}{2}$ " edge, cut strips $2\frac{1}{2}$ "–3". Cut a separate strip for each side of the quilt (cut each strip 2" longer than the quilt side).
2. Fold the binding strip in half lengthwise and insert the quilt, easing the binding fabric until it is snug against the raw edge of the quilt; pin. Repeat on the opposite side. (Photo 1)

TIP: Spray baste the inside of the sheer to make pinning easier.

3. Topstitch the binding in place, sewing $\frac{1}{2}$ " (or desired width) from the quilt's raw edge, then trim the ends of the binding strips flush with the quilt.
4. It is necessary to trim away the excess width of the binding strip (on both the front and the back of the quilt). First, secure your quilt to an ironing surface by pinning on both sides of the stitching line, stabbing the pins through the binding and underneath the excess fabric. Carefully lift the excess fabric and cut/sear the excess away, leaving $\frac{1}{8}$ " beyond the stitching. (Photo 2)
5. Position binding strips on the final 2 sides of the quilt, pinning from the middle and working outward. Trim the excess binding strip length, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ " extending at each end (for wrapping to the back of the quilt).
6. Wrap the $\frac{1}{2}$ " excess strip length to the back and fold it up on the back. Repeat on the other end.
7. In the same manner as above, topstitch and trim away the excess binding strip width.

NOTE: If you sear too close to the stitching, your sheer may pull loose. Also, you might melt your threads. Practice on a scrap and on the back side of the quilt before working on the front. Keep the heat tool somewhat vertical or you may accidentally melt the binding with the hot shaft of the tool.

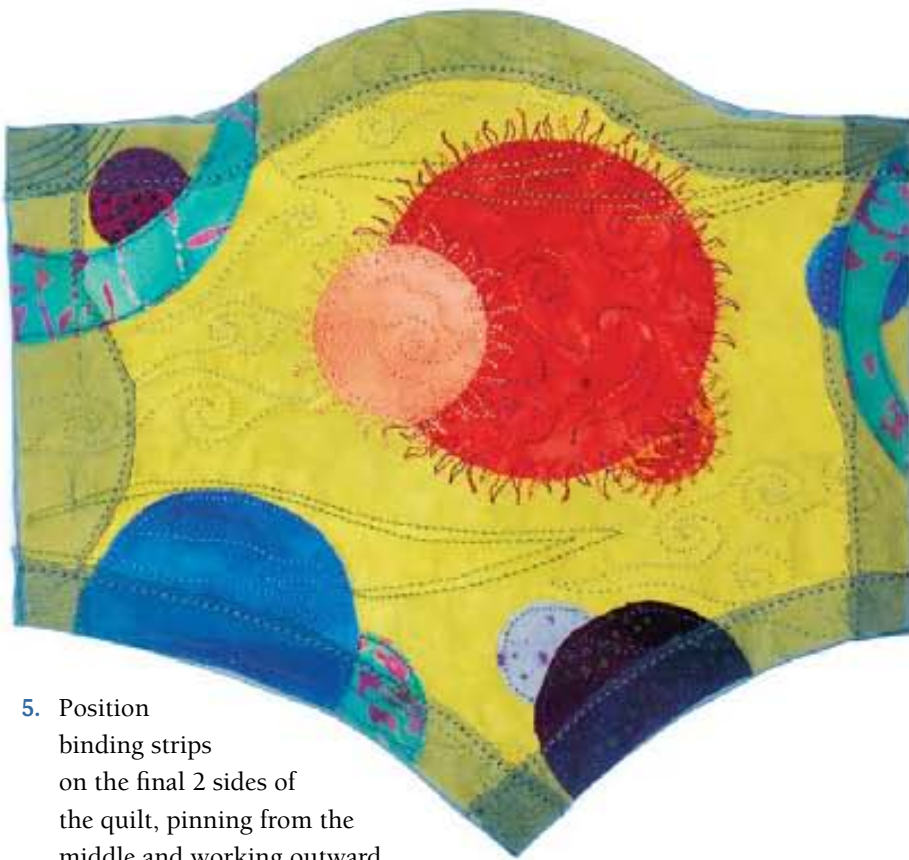


Photo 1



Photo 2





WRAP-AND-TUCK

With the Wrap-and-Tuck method, the backing is wrapped around to the front, so it's important to select a backing that will make a nice frame for the front. The wrap method solves two challenges presented by highly irregular quilt edges. First, it provides stability to design elements that extend beyond the quilt top so they don't sag or flop. And second, because

it creates a straight line across the top, it makes it much easier to add a sleeve and hang the quilt.

NOTE: *You need to decide on this technique before you have finished quilting. Leave ½" unquilted all around the outside edge so there is room to tuck the fabric under the quilt top.*

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the backing and batting oversized. (The excess required depends on how far any

“poking-out bits” extend beyond the central background; see Steps 2 and 3.) Layer and baste your quilt sandwich. Complete most of the quilting, leaving at least ½" margin unquilted around the edge of the central design.

2. Trim the batting into a rectangle so that all the “poking-out bits” are supported by batting.
3. Trim the backing, ensuring that it extends far enough beyond the edge of the batting to wrap over



the exposed batting and tuck underneath the quilt top (with at least 1/4" tucked under the innermost part of the quilt top).

4. Fold opposite sides of the backing inward, wrapping it smoothly around the edge of the batting and



tucking it underneath the quilt top; press the folds.

5. Fold the corners to create miters; press.
6. Fold the remaining sides inward; tuck under the quilt top and press the folds.

what if?

You can gussy up the edges where the wrap tucks under the top with satin stitching, couched yarns, embroidery, beads, or other decorative details.

7. Pin, baste, glue, or fuse the edge of the quilt top to the wrap, making sure the corners stay nicely mitered.
8. Complete the quilting. Be sure to quilt the new frame and the "poking-out bits."

SATIN STITCHING

Satin stitching, a tightly packed zigzag stitch, is a familiar stitch used in many fabric postcards and Artist Trading Cards (ATCs); it works as an edge-finish on larger pieces as well. It can be tricky to get a dense, classy result, but with practice and a variety of techniques, satin stitching offers a pleasing edge-finish option. The following are the strategies I recommend. In general, I make two to three rounds to cover an edge. For the first round, a narrow width and somewhat open-length zigzag is used to secure the three layers of the quilt. Wider, tightly packed stitches are used for the subsequent round(s).

DIRECTIONS

1. Starting with your quilted sandwich, secure the quilt top and backing fabrics to the batting along the edges of the quilt by fusing it, or use wash-away tape. (This is not



You can use the same thread all the way around or change thread colors to blend with the fabric, as I did here. I wanted a variegated look at the night sky's edge, but not a stripe, which happens when you machine zigzag stitch with variegated thread. To avoid the stripe, I used free-motion zigzag stitching with variegated thread.

experiment

- Try different thread colors, stitch widths, stitch lengths, and tension settings.
- If your edge wants to ripple or stretch, or the stitching wraps too far to the bottom side, try stitching with a piece of wash-away stabilizer under the edge. To remove the stabilizer, tear away as much as possible, then spritz with water to dissolve the remainder.

necessary if your quilt top is fused and/or densely quilted—every quarter inch or closer along the edges.) If the fabric isn't secured to the batting, it has a tendency to lift up or wiggle out from under the satin stitching.

2. Make test samples using different threads and stitch settings, and experiment with wash-away stabilizers.

TIP: Do a test to be sure the stabilizer will wash away completely.

3. Use an open-toe embroidery foot. (This foot allows you to see what you are doing and has an area scooped out underneath to permit dense stitching to pass through smoothly.) If possible on your machine, reduce the presser-foot pressure just a little; or use a free-motion quilting foot, but keep the feed dogs up. (The front-to-back motion of the feed dogs helps you keep an even line with free-motion zigzagging.)
4. **ROUND 1:** If you are using a wash-away stabilizer, place a strip under the edge. Use a narrow

width and somewhat open length zigzag to secure the 3 layers of your quilt. On the featured quilt, I used a 2.5 width and a 2.0 stitch length for this round.

5. **ROUND 2:** Set your machine to the desired stitch width and length. In this case, using a 40-weight Rainbows™ trilobal polyester thread from Superior Threads, I used a 3.5 stitch width and a .35 length—even shorter than for a buttonhole. If you use a fine thread, such as regular 50-weight sewing cotton, your stitch length may need to be even shorter.

TIP: If, after Round 2, there are bits of batting showing, use a fabric pen or fabric paint to darken the batting along the outside edge.

6. **CORNERS:** I stitch up to the end of the corner (or “poking-out bit”), pivot with the needle on the outside corner, then make sure to overcast the previous stitching. When possible, I try to do a few stitches on the diagonal to create a mitered look and fully cover the corner.

7. **CURVES:** There are 2 ways to turn satin-stitched curves: needle-down-pivot or on-the-fly.

- a. Most appliqué books teach the pivot method where you stop with the needle in the down position along the outside

(convex) edge of the curve, lift the presser foot slightly and pivot the piece so that your satin stitch will slightly overlap previous stitching. This is repeated until the curve is rounded.

- b. I get smoother curves when I turn curves on the fly, in other words as I am stitching. I grab the edges of the quiltlet and “steer” the edge as if I were holding a steering wheel driving down a winding road.

Try both and see which works best for you.

8. **OPTIONAL:** Depending on how the edges look after 2 rounds and how you want them to look, do a third round of satin stitching.

what if?

What if you sew embroidery floss or perle cotton around the satin-stitched edge, like a barber's pole? What if you change thread colors along the edge, creating long, irregular dashes of color, echoing colors in the quilt?

On this piece, I painted the edges of the branches instead of stitching them.



COUCHED YARNS

Using yarn on the edges of quilts is one of my favorite techniques. A single, thick strand of a bulky chenille yarn creates a nice frame, plus it is quick to apply and uses a lot less thread than satin stitching. You can also combine yarns, thick or thin, to create the perfect edge for your piece. For the winter scene, I twisted three slightly different purple yarns to create one strand with enough presence for the edge.

DIRECTIONS

1. Select a stitch that goes to both the right and left of a center line. This line can be imaginary, as it is in the center of a plain zigzag, or it can be a stitched line, as in the stitch that I call the “railroad tracks”

or “ladder” stitch. A three-step zigzag also works well. You can even use a decorative stitch; my machine does one that looks like a checkerboard—it gives a fun “dots and dashes” look to couched yarns. Make some test samples using different yarns and stitch settings. Try my suggested stitch width and length on a scrap, and adjust to suit the thickness of your yarn, quilt sandwich, and preferred look. (Diagram 1)

TIP: *It's important that your stitch swings from the outside edge of the yarn, on the right, into the quilt sandwich, on the left, with the center line (real or imaginary) running along the raw edge of the quilt.*

2. Use an open-toe embroidery foot to provide the best visibility. As with satin stitching, if your quilt top is not fused and/or densely

what if?

Instead of having an invisible join, what if you leave the ends dangling? Or start a new strand of yarn at each corner and knot the yarns at the corners? Or string beads onto a strand of perle cotton, twist the perle cotton with a thicker yarn, and every so often slide a bead up into the area being stitched (being careful not to hit the bead with the needle)?

quilted, it's helpful to fuse, securely spray baste, or glue the fabric to the batting to secure the layers.

3. Whether using one strand of yarn or several twisted together into a single strand, hold a couple of inches of the yarn behind the presser foot and stitch a bar-tack (zigzag stitch) at your starting point.



I twisted three yarns together as I applied them; you can vary the twist from loose to tight. It can get tricky, especially on a large quilt, to twist several yarns as you stitch. Instead, you can sew the yarns into one combined strand first, then apply them to the edge of the quilt.

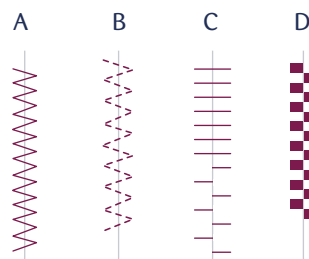
Diagram 1

A: Zigzag, 3.5 wide × 2.5 long

B: 3-step zigzag, 3.5 wide × 2.5 long

C: Railroad or ladder, 3.5–4 wide × 2 long

D: Checkerboard, 4.5 wide × .35 long



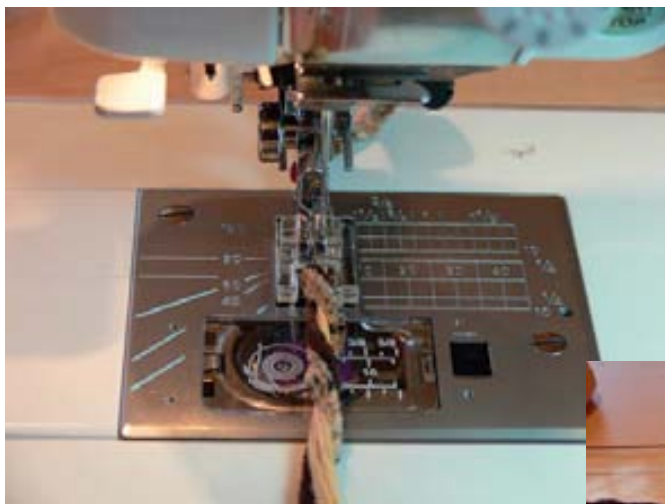
4. The “line” where the yarn butts up against the outside edge of the quilt is your center line. Adjust the stitch width so that the needle swings from the yarn onto the quilt enough to secure it. Use a bamboo skewer to guide the yarn as it feeds under the presser foot.
5. At the corner, pivot with the needle down on the outside

edge of the quilt, with the yarn wrapping around the outside of the needle. This will create a sharp corner instead of a rounded, squished corner.

6. As you reach the starting point, trim away the original tails. Continue stitching until the yarns overlap at least 1/2". Secure the ends with a bar-tack (zigzag) and clip the ends.

How many different kinds of bindings are there? Lots! There are also many variations on the themes I've shared in this article, and you can always use more than one technique in a quilt. Ask yourself “What if...?” Then, take out some fabric and fiber, and see how it looks. Remember: “Make visual decisions visually!” ✨

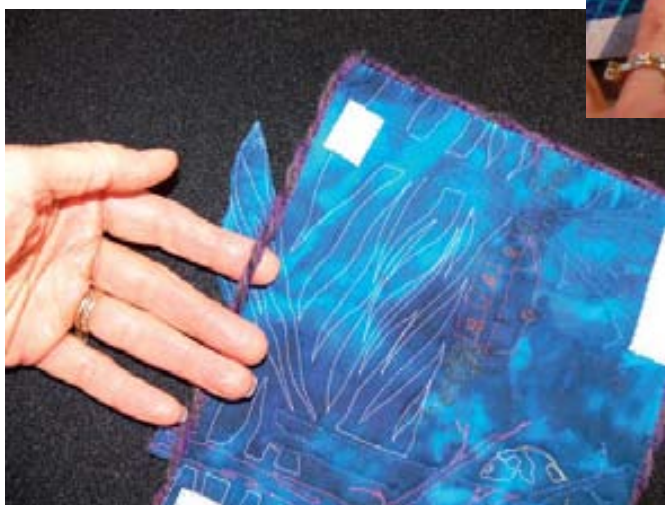
To see more of Sarah's work, visit sarahannsmith.com.



It can get tricky, especially on a large quilt, to twist several yarns as you stitch. Instead you can sew the yarns into one combined strand first, then apply them to the edge of the quilt.



I twisted three yarns together as I applied them; you can vary the twist from loose to tight.



You can couch the yarn around the outside edge of any “poking-out bits” or, as I did, carry the yarn behind those spots.



*“What is Life?” •
21" × 21½" •
Unbleached cotton
Osnaburg by
Roc-lon®, frayed
and washed in the
dryer. Background
and backing fabric
act as a frame.*

When I started quilting years ago, I dutifully finished every quilt with a neat, traditional binding. Then I left precision piecing and began doing improvisational, layered work with a lot of raw edges and texture.

Traditional bindings, with their evenness and predictability, didn't suit my new style, so I began experimenting on my own with alternatives. My goal was to give a looser, creative feel to my quilt edges without them looking sloppy or unfinished. I started paying closer attention to raw edges, tearing them on grain and raveling them as much or as little as each quilt demanded. I didn't want exposed batting to look like an accident, so I shaped, tugged, and painted it. Instead of just letting quilting tails dangle randomly, I planned my quilting with dangling starts and stops in mind. Sometimes I even add a fringe of extra tails. Without being bound by traditional rules, I find it much easier to let the “art” of the quilt continue out to the edge.

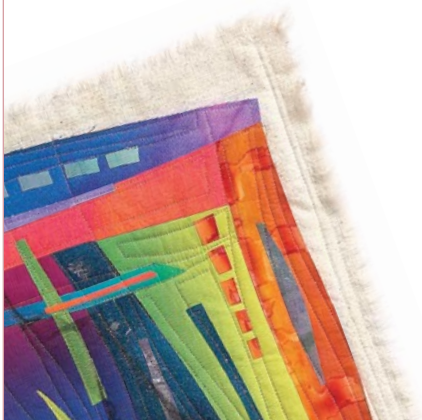
NOT bound by tradition

BY SHERRIE SPANGLER

ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
FALL 2005

GENERAL TIPS

- Tear backing and background fabrics, rather than using scissors or a rotary cutter, because tearing gives a softer edge. Further fray the edges by pulling threads by hand or tossing the fabric in the washer and dryer.
- If the backing fabric will extend beyond the edges of the quilt top, acting as a frame, make sure the backing looks good on both sides. Solid colors, hand-dyes, and batiks are perfect, but avoid anything with an obvious “wrong” side.
- Batting has such an interesting texture that it’s a shame to hide it, so I let it hang out. Any type or color can be used, depending on the look you want. I usually use unbleached Warm ‘n’ Natural® because I like its flatness and off-white color. Sometimes I use a fluffier batting, or black or gray, and sometimes I paint it.
- Soften the edges of exposed batting by trimming them irregularly and then gently tugging on them, thinning out some areas.
- Quilting thread tails can be a decorative edge element. If the tails look too messy, bury some or give them a haircut.



TECHNIQUES

BACKING FABRIC AS A FRAME

1. Choose a backing fabric that looks good on both sides. Tear it several inches larger than the quilt top.
2. Cut batting slightly smaller than the quilt top if you don’t want batting to show. If you do want it to show, cut it larger than the top but smaller than the backing.
3. Quilt without going into the backing frame. Thread tails can be left as a decorative element.
4. As an alternative, use background fabric from the quilt top as the frame. Tear the top and backing the same size and cut batting at least a ½" smaller all around. Extend quilting lines into the frame, encasing the batting.

EXPOSED BATTING

1. Cut batting larger than the quilt top. You can trim it back later if too much shows.
2. Quilt without going into exposed batting.
3. Trim batting. You might want just a few tufts poking out, or maybe an even ¼" all the way around. I often have the batting wandering in and out from between the top and backing.
4. If you plan ahead, you can paint the edges of the batting before you layer it. I usually finish the quilting first and then paint exposed batting with fabric paint and a small brush. I don’t worry about heat-setting unless I plan to wash the quilt.

RAW WRAPS

1. After quilting, trim quilt to desired finished size.
2. Cut or tear strips of “binding” fabric in various widths and lengths. Sheers, tulle, and painted cheesecloth work great.
3. Press strips in half lengthwise, wrong sides together, and wrap around quilt edges, overlapping strips and pinning as you go.
4. Run meandering lines of machine stitching through all layers, then press lightly.

OPTIONAL: *Instead of stitching the binding on, tack with buttons or beads.* ♦

To see more of Sherrie’s work, visit sherriequilt.blogspot.com.

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A BIG FINISH for your **small** quilts

ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
APRIL/MAY 2008

BY TERRY GRANT

When I started making fabric postcards and small quilts, I searched for ways to finish the edges neatly. Traditional bindings seemed too heavy for most small pieces. I liked the look of a zigzagged or satin-stitched edge, but I could never get them to lie flat or look neat, and turning the corners was a problem. The stitching seemed to hang up on the corners, and often the corners would get chewed up by the needle pushing the fabric down into the machine. I wanted a narrow finish, scaled to the size of a small work. I wanted a clean, straight edge that would give my piece a precise, finished look. After some trial and error, I developed some strategies that produce a neat zigzag finish for my small pieces.



"Green Beans" • 4" × 6"

1. Start by making the piece larger than you intend the finished size to be. I like to start with a piece that is $\frac{1}{2}$ "–1" bigger in each direction than the finished size.
2. After the piece is quilted, use a ruler and a permanent marker to mark the final size on the top of the quilt. (Figure 1)
3. Leaving approximately a $\frac{1}{2}$ " of floss loose at the beginning, lay a piece

MATERIALS

- Your quilt
- Ruler
- Fine-point permanent marker
- Sewing machine with a zigzag stitch that can be adjusted in width
- Perle cotton, size 5, in a color that you want for your edge
- Matching thread
- Sharp scissors



"Small Frog, Big Pond" • 9" × 9"



Figure 1

of perle cotton on the marked line and zigzag over it. Use a narrow zigzag that just covers the width of the perle cotton. By doing this before you cut the edges off, you can get it nice and smooth, with neat corners. Hold the perle cotton taut against the marked line as you stitch. (Figure 2) I use a stitch-width setting of 1.5, but you can leave the stitch length at whatever the default is on your machine. If you are comfortable using a cording foot, that is fine too; however, I find turning corners with my cording foot is awkward so I prefer to use my walking foot and carefully stitch over the perle cotton.



Figure 2

TIP: It's best not to start and end at a corner. The start and stop are less noticeable along one of the sides.

- When you get back around to the start of the stitching, cut the perle cotton so the end butts right up to the start and then stitch over it, taking a few extra stitches beyond the start. The raw ends will be virtually invisible. (Figure 3)



Figure 3

- Next, carefully trim the excess fabric off, as close to the stitched perle cotton as you can get without cutting the stitching. (Figure 4) If you happen to snip 1 or 2 stitches, don't worry. Small errors will be covered later.



Figure 4

- Using a hand-sewing needle threaded with a heavy-weight thread (I use buttonhole thread), take just one stitch through each corner of your piece. Cut the thread off, leaving 2 long tails at each corner (each about 3" long). These

thread tails are going to prevent the problems that often occur when you stitch around corners.

- Zigzag over the perle cotton and the edge again. As you approach a corner, grab the thread tails and use them to guide the stitching up to the corner. Stop, with your needle down at the corner, pivot, and use the thread tails to pull the corner gently toward the back, under the foot, while you smoothly stitch into the next straight side. (Figure 5) When you are finished, you can just pull the thread tails out and discard them.



Figure 5

You can stitch around the piece several times if you want more coverage. A few stray threads may pop out of the sides in several places. Carefully trim them off. I use black for my edges more often than any other color, as I did for the "Green Beans" postcard, but I have also used other colors, such as the light blue I used for "Small Frog, Big Pond." You just need to be sure that your thread color matches the perle cotton as closely as possible. ✨

To see more of Terry's work, visit andsewitgoes.blogspot.com.

ADAPTED FROM
 QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
 FEBRUARY/MARCH 2008

PICTURE IT framed

BY LYRIC KINARD



mounting
 or framing
 turns projects
 into 'art'

A piece from "Small Works" • 10" × 8" × 1 3/8" • This 5" × 7" quilt is mounted on a painted gallery-wrapped canvas. The machine quilting design continues onto the canvas and around the sides; it was drawn with a black permanent marker.

Have you ever finished a gorgeous little piece of fiber art, proudly shown it to a friend, then cringed as you heard, "That is the prettiest potholder I've ever seen"? If so, don't throw up your hands and write your friend off as a numskull who doesn't appreciate fine art. There are many, many people in the world who have no frame of reference other than the potholder with which to compare a 6" × 6" piece of fancy fiber art. My own dear husband, who has always supported my artistic endeavors, shocked my socks off when I showed him my first experiment with framing a small piece by saying, "Wow. It looks like real art." So what did it look like before? A potholder? Well, actually, perhaps it did.

The presentation of your artwork says a great deal about your feelings toward it. An oil painter does not throw her masterpiece into a cheap poster frame and call it done. She searches carefully for the finest frame that will complement the artwork. The frame, after all, becomes part of the work in the same way borders or a binding finish a quilt. Mounting and/or framing your fiber pieces elevates your work to "art" with a capital A.



This piece measures $9\frac{3}{8}'' \times 11\frac{3}{8}''$ (framed). The quilted piece was machine stitched to heavy watercolor paper—just outside of the marked line that indicates the size of the mat opening (shown in inset; see “Framed with a mat”).

PRESENTATION

When you choose to frame or mount your artwork, there are several things you must consider.

DO YOU WANT TO SHOW OR COVER YOUR EDGES?

- If you don't mind covering up your edges, frame your art. One advantage to framing is that you don't have to finish the edges of your work.
- If the piece already has a border and is bound, another mat or frame may be redundant. You might consider mounting your work as described on page 20.
- If the piece has borders and finished edges (but no binding), you might want to frame it without a mat.

- Irregular or wavy edges look lovely mounted on Plexiglas or on a painted or collaged gallery-wrapped canvas.

DO YOU WANT TO PROTECT YOUR PIECE WITH GLASS OR NOT?

- Glass protects your work from dust, smells, liquids, kids, etc.
- Spacers can be used either between the mat and the glass or between the work and the mat to accommodate dimensional or embellished work.
- Though expensive, you should consider non-glare or UV protective glass.
- Note that glass can separate the viewer from the tactile nature of fiber art, which is, after all, one of the primary reasons most of us love this medium.

SHOULD YOU USE ARCHIVAL MATERIALS?

It is best to use acid-free mat board, mounting board, or foam board.

HOW LARGE AND/OR HEAVY IS YOUR PIECE?

- The smaller your artwork, the more it needs a mat or something to frame it and set it off, giving it importance.
- The larger your piece is, the more support it will need.
- Heavy embellishments benefit from being sewn to a mounting board.
- Very large quilts stretched around bars need cross supports as well.

FRAMED

The easiest way to frame your work is to take it to your local frame shop and let them do it for you. However, it's best to call around first and find someone familiar with textiles. I've seen artwork hot-glued to a backing board—the horror! You can also frame your work yourself; it really isn't that difficult to do, especially if you make your artwork the size of a standard pre-cut mat or frame.

FRAMED WITHOUT A MAT

Take your art with you to help you choose a frame that will complement your work. Frames come in as many styles as your artwork. Don't skimp on quality. Remember that how you present your work says a lot about

how seriously you take yourself as an artist. Once your piece is mounted according to one of the following options, place it in its frame, with or without glass, according to your preference. Note that Options 1 and 2 require the use of a backing board for pieces larger than 5" × 7" (to provide added support).

OPTION 1: Cut a piece of heavy watercolor paper to the interior size of your frame. Use a fusible web to attach the back of your artwork to the paper. Trim the fiber art to the size of the paper and insert it into your frame.

OPTION 2: Cut a piece of heavy watercolor paper to the interior size of your frame. Machine stitch your work right along the edge of the watercolor paper, using a heavy needle and a long

stitch length. Stretch the cloth a little as you go to keep the artwork taut. Trim your artwork to the size of the paper and insert it into your frame.

OPTION 3: Cut a piece of acid-free mounting board or foam board the size of your frame minus a tiny bit. Wrap your artwork around the edges and sew the turned edges, taking long stitches from edge to opposite edge of the fabric until it is stretched tightly around the board; insert it into your frame.

OPTION 4: Sew your piece directly to an acid-free mounting board or foam board. This is a good option if your artwork is heavily embellished. Cut your board to the size of your frame and, using an awl or a small nail and hammer, punch holes around the edges of the board. Heavy

A 5" × 6¾" quilt mounted on mat board (9⅞" × 11⅜" framed). See "Framed, no mat, mounted on mat board." The back of the piece (inset) illustrates the starting point for the stitching (top, near center) and the ending point (upper right corner).



embellishments can use a few holes underneath them as well. Using a strong thread and needle, sew your artwork through the holes in the board.

FRAMED WITH A MAT

Carefully choose the color of your mat as it will become part of the overall composition. When in doubt, choose white (it won't clash with your client's couch). A large mat can set off a small piece beautifully. I especially like a small piece in a gallery-cut mat where the bottom of the mat is longer than the other three sides. It is as if the art is up on a pedestal saying, "Look at me, I'm important!" A mat also gives your artwork a little space if you are using glass. Adding spacers either behind or in front of your mat will provide even more depth to your presentation.

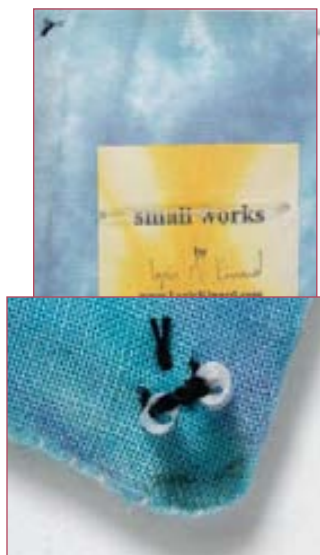
When using a mat, you can use any of the options listed above to mount your work and get it ready to frame. You must, however, cut your paper or mounting board to the size of the frame and center your artwork on your mounting board, according to the opening of the mat.

FRAMED, NO MAT, MOUNTED ON MAT BOARD

With this method you have the advantage of a frame and the added border space of matting, while also showing the edges of your artwork. Carefully choose the color of your mat board; it will become part of your composition.

1. Cut the mat board to size for your chosen frame.

2. Center your artwork on the mat and carefully mark just under the edges.
3. Use an awl or a small nail and a hammer to push 2 holes into the mat every $\frac{1}{2}$ "–1" inside your marked line.
4. Using a strong, matching thread and a needle, come through the back of the mat, catch the very edge of the artwork, and come back through the second hole to make a knot.
5. Without cutting the thread, move to the next hole and repeat the process.
6. Set your mat board into your frame with or without spacers and glass, according to your preference.



A piece from "Small Works" • 5" × 7" • Mounted on an 8" × 10" piece of Plexiglas. The quilt is stitched to the Plexiglas at each corner. The hanging wire is attached to the Plexiglas near the center of the back.

MOUNTED

Mounting your art allows it to sit on top of a surface that separates it from direct contact with the wall. The mounting surface can become a frame for your artwork or it can disappear, causing your work to "float" in front of the wall. These techniques work very well for pieces with wavy edges as they won't need to conform to a frame or a mat.

PLEXIGLAS®

Before you choose Plexiglas as a mounting surface, remember that you will be able to see the wall color through it and consider how that will look with your artwork. You can easily find someone to cut $\frac{1}{4}$ "-Plexiglas and flame polish the edges for you by looking in your local phonebook or on



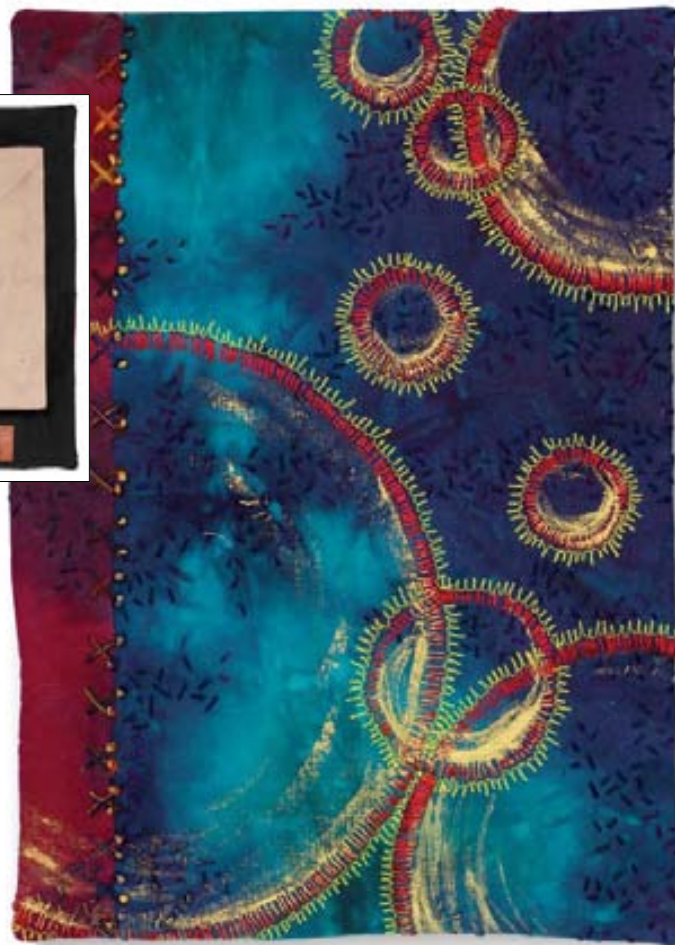
the Internet under “plastics.” Flame polishing creates clear edges on the Plexiglas rather than the opaque edge caused by cutting.

To mount:

1. *Do not* remove the protective paper from the Plexiglas.
2. Place your fiber art where you would like it to be, either centered or above center.
3. Outline your art with a pencil.
4. Remove your artwork and mark 2 dots (diagonally, about $\frac{1}{8}$ " apart) in each corner. These dots will show you where to drill the holes through which you'll stitch your artwork to the Plexiglas. (Step 9)
5. Mark 2 dots on the Plexiglas for your hanging wire or fishing line.
6. Using a small bit in your power drill, slowly and carefully drill a hole at each dot.
7. Lay out a towel on your work surface, to keep your Plexiglas from getting scratched, and remove the paper.
8. Using strong fishing line or picture wire, make a loop through the 2 holes you drilled in the center. It should be tight enough that the wire/fishing line won't show above the artwork when it is hung. Remember that many people hang wired works on a picture hanging hook that will add up to 1" of hardware above the hanging wire.
9. Using a needle and strong knotted thread, attach your work to the Plexiglas by turning the corner of your artwork back and just catching the edge of your work.



“Circles” • 7" x 10" •
Mounted on
5" x 7" wrapped
stretcher bars (inset).



Thread the needle through the corner holes then come back up through the Plexiglas. Repeat several times, then knot the thread on the back of the quilt. It's a little tricky to do, but you can get it with practice.

10. Spray glass cleaner onto a cloth and use it to clean your fingerprints off the Plexiglas. (*Do not spray directly onto the Plexiglas.*)

From now on handle the piece only by the edges. Also, be sure to carefully wrap your piece in Bubble Wrap® or cloth when storing and transporting it in order to keep the Plexiglas from getting scratched.

WRAPPED STRETCHER BARS

This method brings your work away from the wall, giving it more presence without adding anything beyond the outside edges of your art. It also creates that wonderful depth shadow on the wall. Pre-made stretcher bars can be purchased in sets at many art or craft stores or you can make your own with 1" x 1" lumber, using a saw and a few nails.

1. Assemble your bars just smaller than your artwork.
2. Cut a piece of cloth large enough to wrap around the bars and staple, tack, or fuse it onto the inside of

the bars. I always use a tightly woven black fabric so that it will “disappear” behind the quilt.

3. Lay your artwork face down and place the wrapped stretcher bars face down on top of the quilt. Use straight pins to hold the 2 together.
4. Using black thread, hand sew your quilt to the top edge of the stretcher bars, just catching the back of the quilt. Hold up the stretcher bars and look to see if your piece hangs straight before sewing down (at least) the bottom corners. For larger pieces, I sew all 4 edges to the fabric-wrapped stretcher bars.

GALLERY-WRAPPED CANVAS

This is one of my favorite methods. You get to play twice, once with textiles and again while painting or collaging the canvas. The canvas becomes an extension of your quilt. I usually use at least a 1"-thick, pre-stretched canvas that is stapled or attached with a spline on the back rather than the sides of the stretcher bars.

The back of this piece shows the hand stitching that secures the quilt to the gallery-wrapped canvas.



RESOURCES

FRAMES, STRETCHER BARS, HARDWARE, MATS, BOARDS

- americanframe.com
- dickblick.com
- jerrysartarama.com
- lightimpressionsdirect.com

GREAT IMAGES OF FIBER ART MOUNTED ON PLEXIGLAS ON MELODY JOHNSON'S BLOG

- fibermania.blogspot.com/2005/07/how-to-mount-quilts-on-plexiglass.html

1. Prepare your canvas in any way that complements your artwork. Paint it or collage it with luscious handmade papers. Make it plain, textured, or patterned. Remember to paint or collage the sides of your canvas as well. You could simply cover the canvas with fabric that is pulled to the back and stapled. Use your imagination.
2. Let any paint or adhesives you have used dry completely. Then lay your artwork on the canvas and use straight pins to hold it in place.
3. Using a needle and thread, hand sew the quilt to the canvas. I usually need a thimble to push the needle in and a rubber finger to pull it through. ✨

To see more of Lyric's work, visit lyrickinard.com.

