Anatomy of a Quilt with Liza Lucy

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Most people who make their first quilt are making it as a gift. It's usually a mother or grandmother making it for a newborn baby. Or, in my case, it's sewing together 25 bandanas for my college boyfriend's waterbed. It was the 60's. Quilts are useful. They are beautiful. They adorn our homes. They keep our loved ones warm. They can be a memorial to someone we've lost. And, most of all, they can be really simple to make. Today we're going to talk about the anatomy of a quilt. What is a patch? What is sashing? What is batting? What is binding? It's so simple that I hope at the end of this, you're going to want to pick up a needle and make your first quilt.

Chapter 2 - Quilt Examples

Anatomy of a quilt

- Patchwork quilting is, comes from a make-do tradition, taking small fragments of different fabrics, sewing them together to make a whole. This is a particularly simple quilt. It's made up of what are called nine patches. That means there are nine squares sewed together to make a whole block. Each one of the squares is called a patch. They're sewed together in rows, making a nine patch block. This block is just made from a single fabric. When you make a patchwork quilt of this type, you make lots of different nine patches, alternate it with a single solid patch. Once the blocks are sewed together, to make the center of the quilt, then borders are added to make the quilt larger, and as large as you would like. When the top is finished, you will layer it together with batting in the center. It's sometimes called wadding. Usually made of cotton or polyester, sometimes wool, sometimes bamboo and even silk. And that is what is in the middle. On the back is a single piece of fabric, usually. And that is called the backing. So you've got a top, wadding in the center, and backing. The three layers are basted. And only then is the quilt put together into a quilt. The stitching that holds the three layers together permanently is called quilting. Only once the three layers are put together with the quilting stitch is it a quilt. Up till now, it's been a top, a backing and a batting. Once the three layers are put together and completely quilted, the last step is to add binding. Binding is made from the same fabric as the quilt, usually doubled over, usually cut on the bias. And it is added to the edge of the quilt as the last step. The binding on this quilt is this rust color fabric. One of the nice things about a double binding, and putting it on last, is the first thing that wears out, especially on a child's beloved blankie, is the binding. And it can easily be removed and replaced with new binding.

Historic quilt examples

- Here are some examples of some antique quilts that I've collected. All of these, except one, are just tops. I like to collect tops because they've never been used, and so they're usually in very good shape. Each one of these represents a different technique. This quilt is made in a manner that is often called either string piecing or is a crazy quilt type. You will recognize this is a block. It is surrounded by sashing which is a plain fabric often that it separates blocks from each other. The way this block was constructed was that the quilter first hand pieced tiny little fragments of fabric and made a large sheet of fabric, so, a large sheet of fabric made of assembled tiny pieces. And then she took a template, this shape, and cut out her pieces. You'll notice this, this, this, this, and so

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on are all the same shape. This one is a mirror image of that. But basically, her template looked like this. So, this is often called string piecing. Sometimes, it's a type of crazy quilting. But you'll see that this patch is made from a single piece of fabric and this patch from many. This was hand-constructed. This is another good example of a hand-pieced top. This is from the 1800s. I'm very fond of this quilt because I think it's really eccentric. I've never seen one like it before and probably never will again. It is hand pieced, and if you look carefully, you can see each loving stitch made by this quilt maker. It's not exactly perfect, and I guess that's one of the reasons I love it. Patchwork, to me, should look human made. If it were perfect, it would look machine made and that doesn't interest me a lot. So this quilt tickles my fancy in many, many ways. What is wonderful about a make-do tradition is if you want to use a fabric and you don't have enough, you just find two similar pieces and sew them together and then cut your patch. This quilt is one of my favorites. It's also my favorite block. It's called the log cabin. You've probably heard of log cabin quilts before. This log cabin quilt is from 1840. Actually, it's a top, not a quilt. Um, a log cabin block is made of concentric rectangles. So a block is from here to here to here. They're big squares. They start with a center, and then they become surrounded by rectangles. So, she keeps going around and around until she gets it as large as she would like. When she got out to here, she didn't quite have the right measurements. So she added an imperfect sliver to fill in, to make the block the size she needs. Most log cabin blocks have a light side and a dark side. Traditionally they have a red center. This one, I happen to love because it's got a brown polka dot center. Because there's a light side and a dark side, the blocks can be arranged in various sets. That's how you set them together. And in this case you'll notice she put the four dark sides of these four blocks together giving the impression of a dark diamond set in a light square. Depending on how you arrange these blocks, you can come up with diagonal sets. You can come up with concentric squares. Log cabin's very easy to turn into a wonderful optical illusion. This log cabin quilt was constructed differently. It was made in the 1930s. It was done with a method called foundation piecing. There is a plain fabric on the back that the strips, the rectangles are sewed to and flipped over. We will be teaching you in Quilting 101 how to do foundation piecing. One of the more interesting things about this quilt is that most log cabins will start with a small square and then are surrounded by larger rectangles. This one starts with a very large square in the center. And I guess I love it because, well, there are polka dots. This pillowcase was made from a fragment of a crazy quilt. Crazy quilting was very popular in the Victorian era. Um, lots of times, crazy quilts were made from fabrics that shattered because of the different chemicals that were used to dye the fabric. So, they're often in bad shape. And I think it's wonderful that this one has been given new life as a pillow. I know cutting up old quilts is sometimes verboten, but I think it's been given a new life and it lives in my family. Crazy quilts were made from various fabrics, velvets, silks, cottons, novelty fabrics, and then put together with beautiful embroidery stitches. This is a sentimental favorite. My family was in the pajama manufacturing business a century ago, and this, I think, may have been a memory quilt. It is made from men's pajama pockets. I have a romantic idea that this may have been a memorial quilt where a woman had taken the pockets from her husband's pajamas and sewed them together to help keep her warm as he had done for many years.

Applique examples

- Another way of making a quilt is to use a method called appliquÃ©. AppliquÃ© can be done by hand or machine. It tends to be slower than piecing, although not always the case. And appliquÃ© means to sew on top, to apply to another surface. So often, you'll choose to do appliquÃ© when

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you have circles and shapes that are way too hard to machine-piece or to piece by hand into square shapes, rectangles, diamonds, and so on. I'm gonna show you two kinds of appliquÃ©. Two are by machine, and two are by hand. The first was designed by Kaffe Fassett, and it is called Rice Bowls. It was a design that he did after seeing a still life in the Pacific Northwest of rice bowls. This is a hand appliquÃ© quilt. What you have are blocks that repeat the same rice bowl over and over, but in different colorways. The background of each block has a wall and a floor, a stripe and a solid fabric, and that's sewed together by machine. It actually sits behind this rice bowl, and then the rice bowl, which is a shadow, a foot, a bottom of the bowl, and the inside, are appliquÃ©d by hand to the background, as are the circles on the border. Once the top has been completed, you put it a backing, wadding, batting, on the inside. It is quilted and then bound just like you would with any pieced quilt. The next quilt I'm going to show you is just a top. It has not yet been layered with backing and batting. The design is done by an Australian artist, Kim McLean, and she adapted an antique pattern called Lollipop Trees into this wonderful Lollipop Tree pattern. What is fun about this design, this very funky adaptation of Lollipop Trees, is that the fabrics are fussy-cut. This means the details in large-print fabrics usually are cut out so that they make a separate kind of design, a reflected design. So you can see this rose here and this rose here are a matched set. The way I approached this pattern was to make each lollipop tree its own color story. I think of this as my sort of pink pastel one, and this is my sea blue one, and I did each one of them individually, and I think they hang together beautifully because the stems and the backgrounds are the same, and there's a kind of pallette that runs through. I know that most people are shy of appliquÃ© 'cause they think it's terribly hard. This one is extremely easy because of their nice, big, smooth edges. There are no tricky corners or points to achieve, and that's what makes appliquÃ© a little tougher. So if you want to try hand appliquÃ©, I can't recommend a pattern better than this one. It's easy, it's fun, totally entertaining. I made this. It's got 16 blocks, and I can't figure out how I want to quilt it yet, so right now it's still a top. This is another pattern by Kim McLean. It's taken from a traditional pattern called a Princess Feather. A very good friend of mine appliquÃ©d this by machine. She used something called fusible web, which we'll talk about in Quilting 101. But basically, the top fabric is adhered to the background fabric by the use of a interfacing that is like Scotch tape on two sides, and you iron it down. Once the piece is ironed down, it is machine-stitched, and this is called a buttonhole stitch, to the background. This last piece that I'm going to show you is machine-appliquÃ©d in the same way, but using something called a satin stitch. So each of these circles was fused to the background, and then, by machine, if you look, there's a wonderful, contrasting halo appearance, and that was done by picking a contrasting thread and putting the machine on satin stitch. If your machine can do a zigzag, it can do this. AppliquÃ© is probably just as old as patchwork. After all, it comes from a tradition of making do. If you got a hole in a garment, an appliquÃ© or a mending piece of fabric was sometimes put over the top for practical reasons. This is how I dealt with that exact problem myself. My daughter made a quilt for her dorm room, and I really wanted to make it special. She was going away to college for the first time, so I pieced the backing very carefully. And as I was trimming it, I cut a hole in it. So, here's my seam. The hole was here. And so, to deal with it creatively, I found the same fabric in a different colorway and appliquÃ©d the chartreuse flower in the middle. Instead of just hiding my problem, I turned it into an artistic endeavor.

Patchwork piecing examples
- The simplest patchwork quilts are made of squares. This quilt couldn't be easier. Wonderful for a beginner. It is machine pieced. There are nine-patch blocks alternating with a single square. It's

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made up of only squares, and those are the easiest quilts to make by machine, and by hand. And so if you're going to choose to do a beginning quilt I encourage you to look at any pattern that is made with just squares. If you don't have a machine, you don't have to be discouraged. This quilt is made entirely by hand. It was made by Kaffe Fassett. He does not operate machinery. And so this was all hand-sewn, into the log cabin block. And you've seen one of those before. This one's a different variation in that the rectangles that surround the square are done in concentric sets. All done by hand, very simple. Also a very good beginner quilt if you don't have a machine. I have another quilt that is made primarily with squares. The squares are set on point. This means that the squares instead of being set straight, are tilted so that they are like diamonds. Improvisational quilting can be great fun. This is a quilt that Kaffe made. Small little cot cover. And what he did, was take a foundation piece of fabric just a big piece, and started to slap down shards of beautiful fabrics. The edges are raw. And then he simply took his needle and quilted it. So it is a very fast process, all by hand. The next quilt is one of my treasures. The quilter I admire most, died last year. Her name was Anna Williams. And she was a woman who worked instinctively at her sewing machine, no pattern. And this is one of Anna's blocks here. And this is the sashing. It's very hard to see how simple it is until you get a long shot of this quilt. And I want to show you that we are hand quilting this. It is basted together the three layers: the backing, the wadding and the top with safety pins. And we're in the process of hand quilting Anna's quilt. So up till now I've showed you only well, mostly square shapes except for the applique. Another popular shape is the 60 degree diamond. This quilt was made using patches of 60 degree diamonds, to achieve this zigzag appearance. So a patch in this case, instead of being a square, is this shape here. So this is a patch. These are smaller little shards that he used as fillers. But here is another 60 degree patch. These are all the same size. And the effect is this fabulous zigzag. It was inspired by the work of the Missonis, who do wonderful zigzag textiles. So we called this quilt Rosita, named in honor of Mrs. Missoni. The same exact shape diamond is used to make this blue confection. This quilt is what is called a one patch. The entire quilt is made from exactly one template, one patch. And it is here, this diamond. The diamond can be put together of six identical ones making a star. You can see it here with three of them together, making a baby block. And the way this is configured when you see the long shot will be miraculous. The design is from a quilt that is the Victoria and Albert Museum, That was done in all silks. And I think usually the antique quilts are more beautiful than what we've made. In this case I think we did it justice, it's one of our best.

Other piecing examples

- There are so many to make quilts, so many different approaches. Here are some different ones. This quilt was done using a method called string piecing. A long strip of this fabric was sewed to this one, this one, this one, this one, this one, this one in long strings or strips. Sewed them together making a large sheet of fabric and then cut the triangles from the assembled piece of fabric. So this is a string pieced group of solids. String pieced group of stripes and so on. I've heard that the reason it's called string piecing, and I'm not certain it's correct, is that because it was traditionally done with very skinny strips of fabric probably from the hems of dresses, that were strings. This is another string quilt, lot of fun to make. I took lots of skinny strings, sewed them into large pieces of fabric, and then I cut this quarter circle from the large piece of fabric. There's another one here that's a little harder to see. Again, made with little shards strings of fabric. And both of them were set down on this plain fabric. The semicircles were appliqued by using rickrack along the edge sewing it down to the background fabric. This is just a square of patchwork. Then another square of

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patchwork. Another one, another one. The way you get these wonderful circles is by having them come together into this point. When I was done with this quilt I did something that I should do on every quilt and so should you and that is, I made a label. Because quilts have been made for centuries it's wonderful to find a quilt with some historical references. So as you can see, I've made a label here with my machine. The name, who made it, and most importantly the date. One more thing, if you intend to hang your quilt on a wall or put it in a show it will need a sleeve put on the back that is hand sewn here and here and a rod will be put through it so it can hang on a wall. A way to do really tricky points is to use a method called paper piecing or foundation piecing. Each block has a paper foundation piece in which lines are drawn on which are your sewing lines and the fabric is layered on the other side. On your machine you sew on the lines. That's very hard to explain and so in quilting 101 we will work together doing a foundation paper piece and you will learn how to do this very easy technique to get a very tricky block. We did it the same method in this quilt which is called Penance. Done exactly the same way. You sew on the drawn line here and here and here for instance and the result is getting these wonderful sharp points. This is a technique used for people who really love precision. One other cute thing about this quilt is the use of a very traditional finishing called prairie points. And because we had so many triangles here, so many triangles on the border, we thought why not just overdo it. Anything worth doing is worth overdoing. One last technique we'll show you today. This is called English paper piecing. English paper piecing means wrapping or basting fabric around cut pieces of cardboard. These are all hexagons and the hexagons are sewn by hand to each other to make these flowers. And as you can see this one was done with fussy cut fabric. Each piece is identical, each hexagon, giving you a wonderful kaleidoscope. This one, for example, is done in a scrappier method as is that one and this one. The last quilt that I'm gonna show you incorporates English paper piecing, machine applique, piecing, hand piecing, hand applique, the works. And it is this wonderful mariner's compass medallion. This beautiful top has been done by friends of mine. It's also designed by Kim McLean, the same one who did the lollipop trees. This is a traditional medallion quilt, it's called a mariner's compass. These points were done using paper piecing. This was done in the same method as this in an English paper piecing method. The sashing was put on by machine piecing. The applique here was done by machine by fusing fabric to a background and doing a machine buttonhole stitch. And so on throughout the quilt, these were pieced by machine. Again, an English paper pieced flower. And quilt making is a made do tradition and when you combine all of these different techniques you can truly make do and come up with a spectacular quilt.

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