



What's Old is New Again

The Vintage Linen Craze



Timeless Stitches — Quilt Capital of Kansas

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Last week I hosted a class on how to incorporate vintage handkerchiefs into a collage quilt. The six women who attended each brought hankies that were precious to them from their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and more. How many of us have vintage hankies or linens in our cedar chests or linen closets that are just sitting there? In today's world we rarely carry hankies anymore and fewer and fewer of us are using those precious hand embroidered and crochet lace edged dresser scarves that may have been handed down from prior generations. With a little imagination and creativity, not to mention bravery to actually cut up some of these precious items, you can create something beautiful that can be displayed and enjoyed in a whole new way.

In the last few years there has been a resurgence of interest in used vintage linens and finding new purposes for them. I was introduced to it by Kelly Cline of Lawrence, KS, who started the [Quilting Vintage](#) group on Facebook seven years ago. This group has exploded and is fast closing in on 24k members from around the world! These quilters share their own collections, those they rescued from antique or thrift shops, and their repurposed creations. The ideas and encouragement given to fellow group members is amazing as they take oft forgotten hankies or hand stitched linens and give them an entirely new life out of the closet.

My own fascination with vintage linens comes from the fact that I grew up embroidering dresser scarves and pillow case sets as gifts. I also learned to crochet doilies like those my grandmother used to make. I have a collection of family pieces that is slowly coming out of my mother's cedar chest and becoming beautifully quilted wall hangings. I've also been gifted pieces by friends, as well as finding pieces in antique/thrift shops in my travels. The time to pull more out and turn them into art quilts has come. Adding custom quilting to these pieces can totally change how you look at them. Often being mostly smaller pieces, they are a great way to practice your free motion quilting.



Many quilt shows now have entry categories specifically for vintage quilts. Some honor family heirlooms that were made by family long gone. Some are tops that were never finished that have now been quilted with a modern finish. Others are large or small quilts that include vintage linens and hankies. These are often just as spectacular as the recently made traditional or modern style pieced quilts. Many young people who may be cleaning out their parents' or grandparents' homes may not fully appreciate these precious treasures. I personally believe this is why so many of them are showing up in antique or thrift shops. Thankfully, there are people who do appreciate them and who are more than willing to rescue them, treasure them, and give them new purpose in a modern world.

If you are interested in exploring the rescuing and repurposing of vintage quilt tops and linens, my favorite people to follow are:

Kelly Cline: www.kellyclinequilting.com

Rhonda Cox Dort: www.rhondadort.com

Mary W. Kerr: www.marywkerr.com