

Unsewing on an important fabric art piece leaves holes where colorful thread rested. And those holes leave question marks. What can be done to hide the holes? What can be done to add to the artwork and in so doing hide the needle marks? Should it be left alone? Will everyone notice? Should it not be entered the portrait challenge at Washington Stars Quilt Guild?

Of course, the portrait challenge should be entered. The only quilt police are ourselves and, of course, anyone else taking a close gander at the area with the holes. "What happened here?" comes a question as the scrutinizer lifts up her eye glasses to take a closer look at the artwork. "Well," says a quilter, who is happy to notice that other quilters show the same "techniques." "The piece is finished."

And so, it goes on and on in the imagination of the art piece creator. She may think that perhaps this challenge art piece is not good enough to enter into the "show 'n tell" at quilt guild. The quilter thinks so long and hard on that possibility of negative comments that artwork is not completed or if the piece is finished the quilter refuses to enter the challenge piece.

Family members oooh and aaah over the completed portrait at a gathering. "I thought that it was going to be huge," says a daughter. "I thought, when I saw it on-line that it was a bigger than a baby quilt. But, no. it's small." The 14-inch by 16-inch art piece is smaller than the guideline of no bigger than 16-inch by 24-inch. The portrait challenge art piece can be as small as feasible. "She is so cute," says a friend of a friend. "If you ask me if you should change her face or add anything to the portrait, I will tell you NO. It is complete the way it is," she adds.

And that is that, thinks to creator. I have permission to call the piece "Finished." She may or may not keep tinkering with it, though. Afterall, there are months left to make the art work stand up and have everyone take notice. But perhaps not. Being judged by family is one thing but being judged by quilters at a quilt meeting and perhaps at a Quilt Show is another thing.

Creating a challenge art piece is just that...a challenge. It should be fun. It should be a learning experience. It's all in the math says one quilter. It's the adding of this, the taking away of that and can even be the multiplying a many of these and those. Perhaps, that will make sense to some quilters and will confuse other quilters. I can hear her say, "Math plays a part in our everyday lives, why not in quilt creativity?"

Whatever the outcome, the decision to take on the "Portrait Challenge" is made. And the opportunity to learn how to use an imagination and stretch the brain cells fills months and months of trial and error. Taxing the brain cells, though, fills holes in our creative thought process. Quilting keeps us happy.

Unsewing is the challenge.

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