

Before there was quilting, there was no color. Trees were just trees, the color green. Just green. The sky was blue, sky blue. And buildings were brown, as drab as the people scurrying into them.

Then Quilting rose up from the gnarled tree branches, gathering fabric pieces together for a homemade quilt. That's when color came to play into this world, into me. Of course, choosing the fabric pieces took time. Still does. What complimentary color blue goes with green or teal or orange? What tone of red goes with green without looking like a Christmas tree?

"Use the Color Wheel", suggests a quilt shop owner. "Here is a small one. I will include it in the stack of batiks when you finish choosing them. See how it shows you which complimentary colors you should purchase?"

"No," comes the reply. "How does this thing work?"

The eyes of a fellow quilter listening in on the conversation narrow like the wide eyes of my second-grade teacher, Mother Mary Immaculata, when someone misbehaved. My blue eyes automatically shifted to look at the toes of my shoes. This time I was wearing brown Birkenstocks, back then my toes were covered with black and white saddle oxfords. Color me chastised and put the color wheel into my sweaty hands.

After decades of using (misusing) a color wheel, the colors of the world grab at me, snatching at a wondering eye to gain my attention as we speed in our blue car down the freeway. Trees are now cast in dark green adding distance, lighter green is up front and yellow is embedded in and around the foliage. The trees have come to life, dancing as the colors of the wind skips from branch to branch.

The blue-sky swirls into pinks, yellows whites and greys. Trees stretch so the tips tickle the clouds. They scamper toward the next village.

Rainbows add charm to our rainy and sunny days giving a seven-color delight with the red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet spectrum, a color wheel in the sky. Since we can only see a rainbow if the Sun is behind us and the rain in front of us, the color rain is good, refreshing, adding a deep blue hue to the landscape.

My color wheel is usually lying in wait with the quarter-inch ruler and the cute little gismo that attaches to the sewing machine allowing ease to stitch together curves. They sit among the items in the "try real soon" box, seldom seeing the light of day. They live in a colorless world.

Yes, the art of quilting has changed colorless surroundings to colorful corners of my world. People are now dressed like crayons standing tall in a box each awaiting a turn to become a living color wheel.

Quilting has opened that box of vivid, happy colors. If only I would use the color wheel.

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