

Being an accomplished fabric artist is a dream etched in my brain. The notion is partnered with the need to give birth to a colorful female character that takes me on a journey in adventures while creating a novel series. Carolyn Keene's "Nancy Drew" adventures are examples. So far, I have the character's name; I just need the fabric in which she moves, listens, speaks, and survives. In essence, it is all that other stuff that makes a book a book, a quilt a quilt and an art piece a piece of art. This is the difficult part: making fragments into a whole. Often listening to an artist about the quilts made or about the artwork created can squash any hope to fulfillment on our own part. It's just too difficult; too out there. Often I think that I am not an ARTIST. I do not have what it takes to turn a fat quarter into a fabric postcard.

Being an artist takes work. Perhaps, that is the reason my series is still plotting along. "I can make seven or eight examples of my design," confides a friend. "I know the final example when I get there. But, I am toying with the placement for weeks, sometimes for months," she adds. Designing fabric art is a challenge.

Instant gratification is only in the books or in the movies. Ideas for placing fabric to make a splash of color for trees, for sky, for a dream can come with leafing through art books and learning new methods of technology. Perhaps we need to be willing to try new methods, to toss out that which we do not like and to start fresh. Sometimes though I wish that I did not toss out those first attempts like a well know quilter tosses unused scraps over her shoulders. What would they look like now? Could I use them in an art piece?

"I save all my scraps," says a quilter. "I have a bin for two inch pieces and another bin for larger ones. Sometimes those pieces come in handy when I am doing "Dear Jane" blocks or making hexies. I just need a larger studio so that I can keep more of those scraps."

The more you sew the more you create scraps. When your studio is the kitchen table scraps can have a different meaning. Saving that kind is just too unthinkable. Using fabric scraps may ease the creative mind, though. Thinking small may bring on a flash of splash. Thinking small may tap into the tiny bit of artistry forming in the right side of the brain. Place a one inch triangle scrap of blue fabric on a 4 by 6 inch of muslin and stitch it down any which way. Then add a slightly bigger piece of a round red scrap nearby and stitch it down. Add yellow, green, purple pieces of one to two inch scraps and stitch. Create. When the muslin is covered then the art piece is finished. You may have a glob, but it is your glob. You may have a mosaic fabric art piece which can double as a postcard when sewn or ironed onto a 4 by 6 inch size of fusible. That is creating.

Creating is a challenge. Often, we do not take up a challenge. Challenges are for those other quilters; they are for those that are talented in designing their own work. Creative challenges are for everyone. Tennis legend Arthur Ashe once said, "to achieve greatness, start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."

Take the challenge and create.

Lana Russ

