

Coloring can be fun.

We learn to stay between the lines when we color in our first coloring book. Looking back to that long-ago art shows our progress. It began as hard work. Controlling our fingers and our hands to keep the color inside the two lines was difficult.

Coloring a pre-printed design can be a form of art, though. This is according to a student teacher during a second-grade class in 1956. "Look class," says the teacher trainee, "she colored the Hula skirt on the Hawaiian girl too light. Don't you agree?" This began my aversion to coloring. I colored that hula skirt a deep deep red and then showed it off before tossing it into the trash. I stopped coloring.

(Coloring is akin to driving a car. We must stay between the lines. So, it seems that driving a vehicle is a prerequisite to coloring! Or is coloring a picture is a prelude to driving?)

Learning how to color again is work, even if the crayons are colored pencils. Filling in the open spaces with color is so yesteryear. Been there, done that. But today, staying between the lines can be task difficult. Add too much water to the pencil flecks and the paint seeps, blends, washes outside the line into the neighboring petals.

"Here's what you do," she, who knows the art of coloring, instructs. "Take a sharp tool (an art knife, or a paring knife from the kitchen drawer) and use it to scrap off flecks of color from the pencil tip." The idea is easy. The color pencil flecks fall onto the waiting paint plate. Add the water and the paint extender. Both enhance the color making it a bright, a no-nonsense color on your pre-outlined fabric pattern on cotton. More water can make a lighter mixture ready for an Ombre affect. The flecks of color become your paint.

Taking a class with other quilters learning the ins and outs of coloring a chosen patten on fabric is a bright and a colorful experience. We are one as heads bend and a right or a left hand grasps a flat tip paint brush coated with colorful paint. Fingers await inspiration as to how to put life into a drawn flower. Paint the petal blue? Or paint the leaf blue? Start at the top of the flower, or start in the middle. You get to choose.

Putting the color to the pattern is the fun part, concedes the instructor, a fellow quilter. She tells us that using a color wheel when choosing more color to the fabric art can teach us to enhance our art. She circles the room of 10 or so soon-to-be coloring experts. "Looks good," she says to each student. "It can be fixed with thread embroidery," she soothes if our paint seeps outside the flower line.

In the end, vivid colors brighten our day. Outdoors, the yellow sunshine casts red and pink garden flowers in the spotlight. Inside the classroom our blue petals, green, purple and orange leaves, our spinning wheels, and all of our painted artistic designs bring smiles to the brush holders.

We carry our bright colorful fabric artwork out into the sunshine. Smiles give credit to the instructor, the keeper of the secrets to coloring a masterpiece. We drive our trophies home and put them down to dry. We even watch, cooing to them. Coxing them to dry soon. When ready, we set the color with a hot iron. Coloring between lines is worthwhile in driving and in coloring.

Coloring is fun, again.

Lana Russ

