

Quilt Backs: A Design Element!

by Cindy Scraba

Do you give special consideration when planning and designing the back of your quilts? I recently embraced this very topic while applying some basic concepts. The back of this fun quilt offered a 50" x 50" creative play space. You are welcome to apply these ideas into your future quilt backs!

I consider the backs of quilts to be another design opportunity to add whatever one desires to boost a quilt's personality. When designing my grandson's first quilt, my intentions were to keep it simple, while incorporating other elements to capture his interest. Be sure to listen to the little voice saying: *Don't worry about what others will think!*

BOOST YOUR QUILT'S PERSONALITY

Quilting lines, especially on a child's quilt, speak volumes about the quilt's personality. Consider integrating your fabric choices and quilting lines with the pattern's theme. You should have a winning combination—especially when it's whimsical. This colourful school of preppy whales appears to be showing off their synchronized maneuvers. They created the bubbly borders and the horizontal rippled lines by themselves—really!

DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR QUILT BACKS

Notice how the two elements featured on the backside create a wholecloth quilt effect. The vertical border stripes were created from piecing together individual squares with a half inch strip of black between. I had a stack of precut squares in my modest stash, with bright tones from light to dark, similar to the whales. The



The front of the quilt.

main reason I added this patchwork was functional. I needed to extend the original 44-inch fabric width adequately beyond 50 inches to allow enough wiggle room for quilting. Guesstimating how much extra width needed was a challenge, assuming some quilting shrinkage... the patchwork strips made the width workable. The colourful borders provide such a vertical focus they need to appear straight alongside the binding trim. I measured (more than twice) and then threw caution to the wind. Lady Luck was on my side.

Can you spy the three grey-eyed whales in this quilt? Even errors can be design elements!

On the backside, the black whale was hand appliquéd over a front whale (swimming in the same direction) and doubles as the quilt label. I've discussed the ink-jet printable label method in a previous *Canadian Quilter* column; however, this time I pieced the (off-white, cotton lawn)



The back of the quilt.

label within the whale block! It was fun to use another ombré batik fabric to repeat the gradation theme and create a sense of speed with the circles. Perfect® Circular templates, by Karen Kay Buckley, were used to audition the scale and position of the trail of bubbles. These items were hand appliquéd, which prevented unwanted stitches interrupting the whale show on the front.

To maximize the “oomph factor,” I chose wool batting for the dimensional texture. The shapes of whales jump out by simply

outlining them—each with a quilted smile. Have you noticed one *unquilted* whale in the centre? I noticed it when focusing the camera lens! The extra challenge to manage the bulky wool batting and the extra time to quilt it (in straight stitch



EDUCATION & INSPIRATION

are the focus of my column, thread talks and workshops.
Cindy Scraba www.CindysThreadworks.com



mode with a walking foot) was worth it.

If you're curious about what threads were used: Superior® So Fine! polyester thread #50/3-ply, top and bottom, for quilting. The piecing was performed with zero drama. The charcoal tone blended perfectly, completing the simple quilting lines and generating the high-loft effect I wanted.

A COMMERCIAL PATTERN VERSES YOYO METHOD (AKA You're on Your Own!)

I'm grateful for prolific, talented, pattern designers, who invest creativity and time into fabulous patterns for our convenience! I enjoyed the advantages of a commercial pattern instead of being bogged down with calculations and design decisions—not my department. Using a pattern allowed more creative time to plan the quilt back while I stitched a profusion of pieces into blocks.

The *Preppy the Whale* pattern is designed by Elizabeth Hartmann. Products mentioned in this article are available from www.cindysthreadworks.com. 🍁