

Kathleen Loomis

BIG ICE

Imagine winter so profound that the snow never melts from one year to the next. Instead it grows deeper, deeper, the new snow on top piling so heavily on the old that the bottom layers are compressed into ice. The ice flows like a river across the land, picking up dirt and stones as it moves.

Eventually it reaches the lake or the sea, and large or small chunks begin to calve away from the huge frozen river. Some ice stays in small slushy heaps at the foot of the glacier; some floats away as icebergs, perhaps to travel hundreds of miles before they melt, perhaps sinking a ship or two along the way.









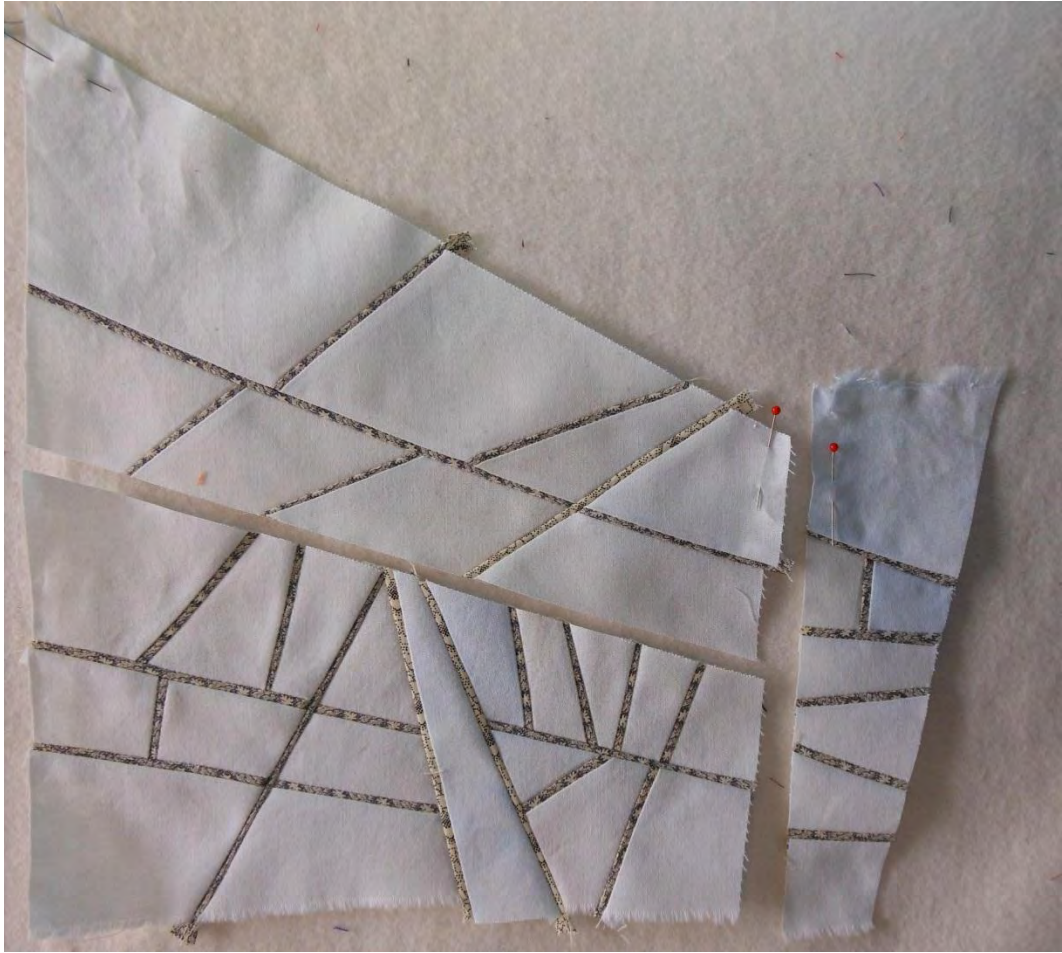
All these photos were taken last year on a voyage to Antarctica. I've always been a lover of cold weather and the big ice we saw, sailed around and walked upon was breathtaking. I was fascinated by the myriad of colors of blue in the ice, the veins of dirt, the complex fracture patterns as chunks cleave and break away. I attempted to depict these fascinations in my quilt "Big Ice."



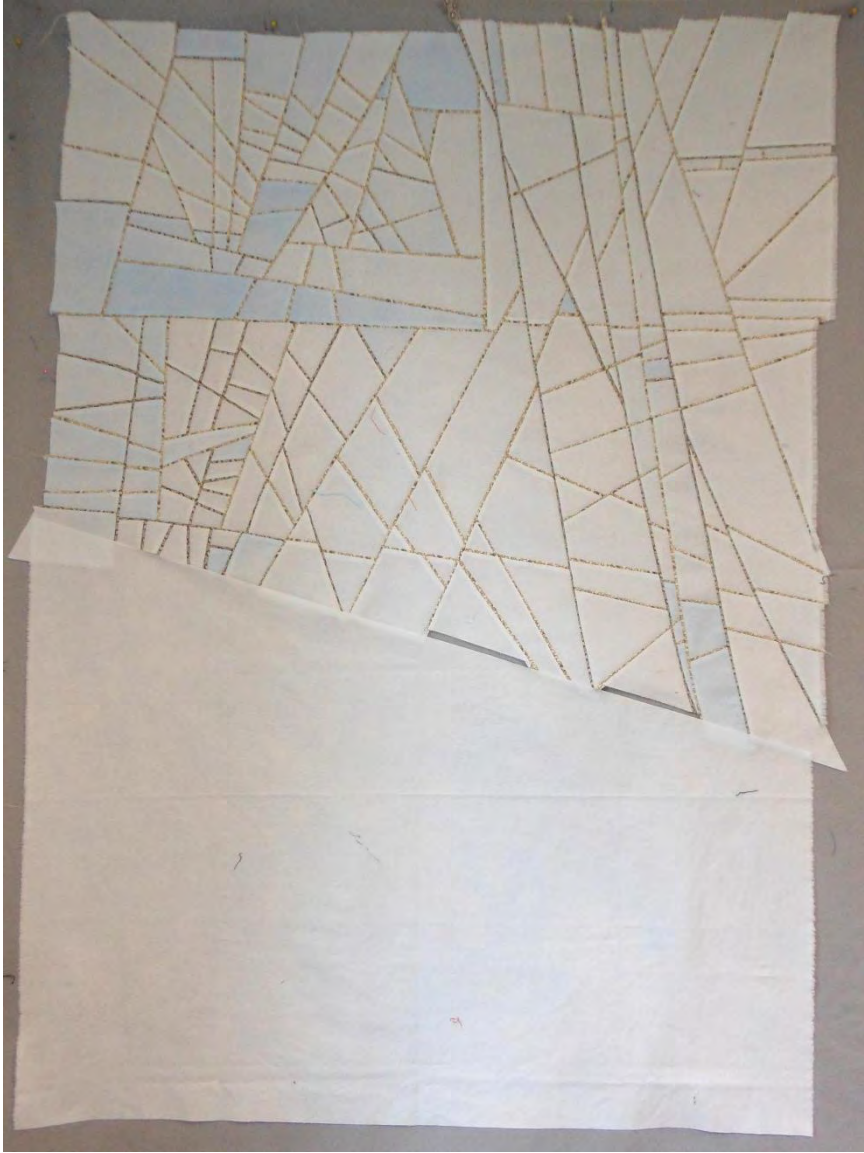
I assembled a palette of values in hand-dyed cottons, ranging from almost white to deep ocean blue. As it turned out, the deepest blue never made it into the quilt, and I needed to add more medium tones, but this was where it began.

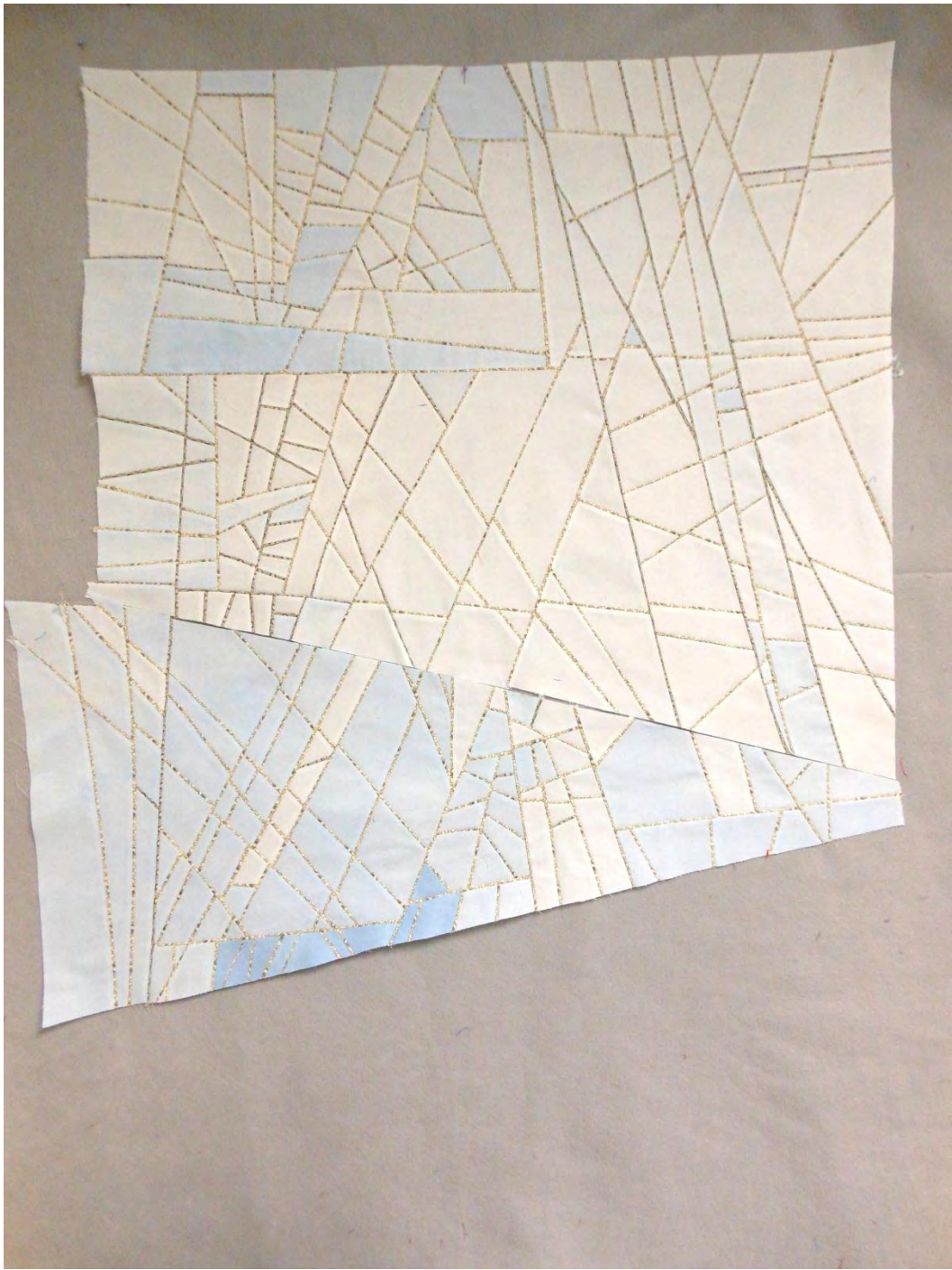


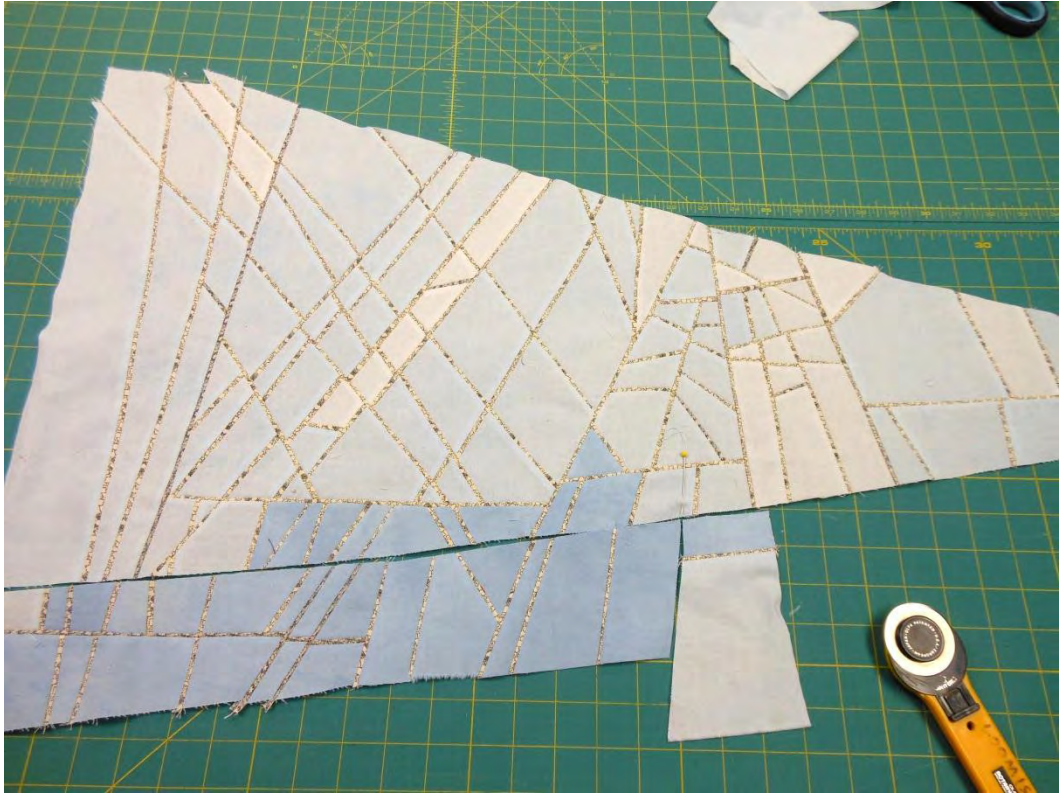
I started at the top of the quilt, constructing a fractured expanse with the two palest tints. After I sliced the pale ice fabric into segments, I inserted a very thin strip of gray fabric, to mimic the veins of dirt in real glaciers, and sewed the segments back together. Slowly the fractured expanse grew on my design wall.

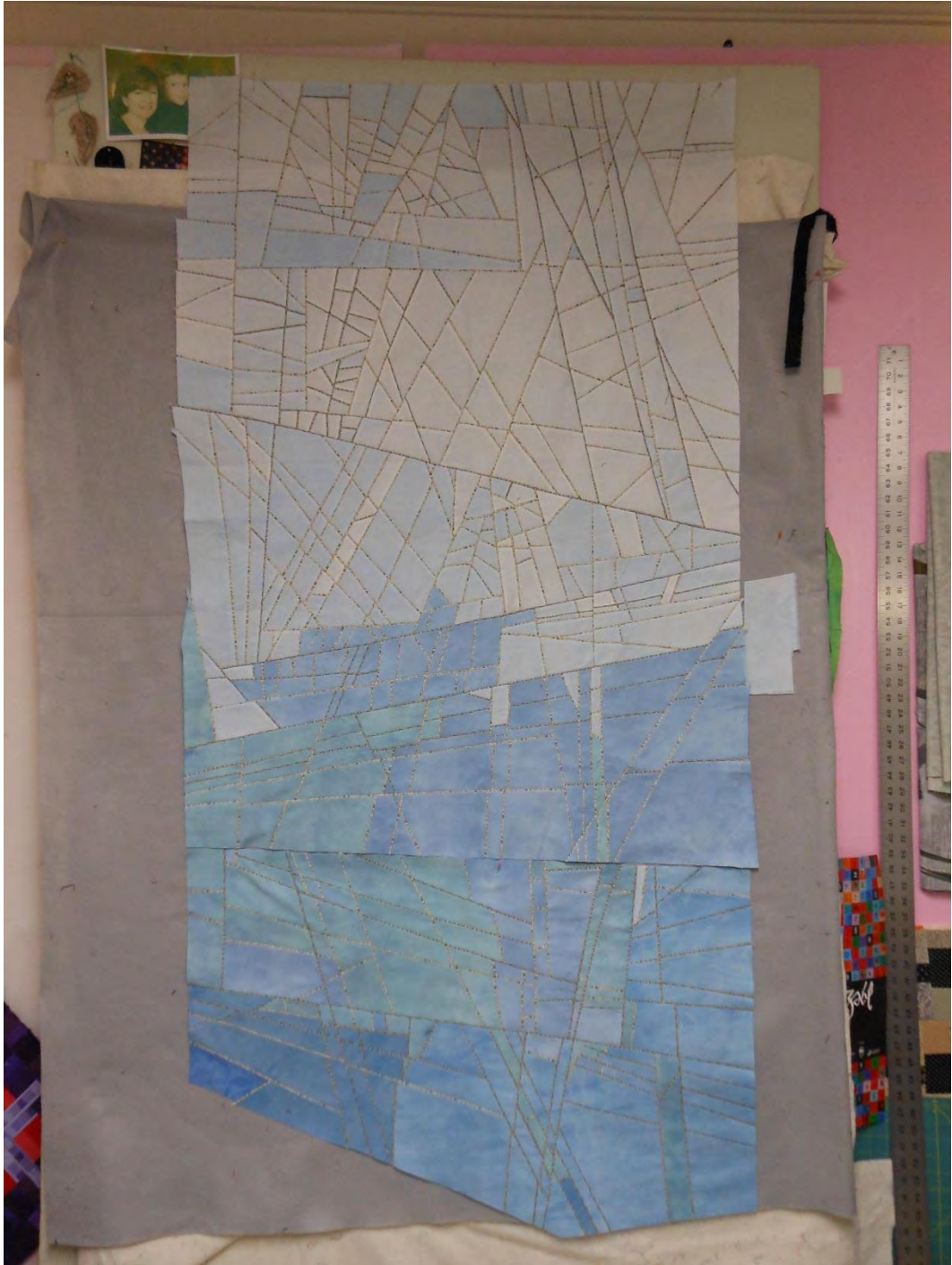












Perhaps you have noticed that the quilt grew organically on the design wall, from the top down, without a sketch or formal plan. I don't do sketchbooks; my inspiration and planning is largely verbal. The "sketch" for this quilt was something like this: "fractured expanses , shading from very light at the top through darker at the bottom, with areas of small, complex pieces contrasting with areas of larger, less fractured pieces."

As I neared the bottom I decided that the darkest blue from my original palette was too harsh, and I wanted to keep the quilt paler. I found additional medium values and finished the bottom segments in those tones.

