

**SEASONAL PALETTE - WINTER**  
**DECEMBER DAWN by RUTH POWERS**

I got my acceptance letter! Wow! So many entries and over half of them wanted winter, but I was lucky enough to get it based on the committee liking the “In The Bleak Midwinter” photo in my entry package.

They asked that my new piece should be in the same style. I had said that even in winter there is much color to be seen and the one they liked had sunset colors reflecting on the snow.



“In The Bleak Midwinter” 32 x 34” 2011

The first step was going through my photos for a likely inspiration picture.

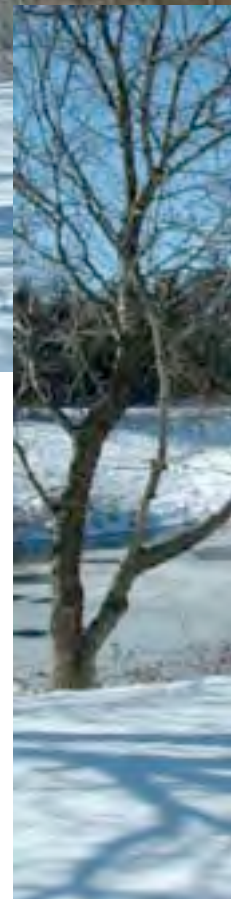
I cropped long narrow portions of several before settling on this one, which is a shot that I took across our farm pond in the snow.



I isolated this one tree to be the focal point.

Since I proposed that my finished piece would be reminiscent of “In The Bleak Midwinter”, I decided to change the time of day to dawn so I could get some nice reflections on the snow.

2.



Oct. 10, 2011

My work is machine pieced, in this case I will be using straight seams. Transferring the original picture to tracing paper, figuring out where the seam lines will go and dividing those into sewable sections comes next. I have to leave space at the bottom for the deer.

The finished piece needs to be 32 X 78" , so my working pattern will be about 36 x 85" since I know that my intensive machine quilting will take up several inches in the end.



When I am satisfied, the lines are transferred to overhead projection film and projected in the mirror image to freezer paper on the wall in the finished size, which will be cut apart to become the working templates. Freezer paper has a plastic side which will temporarily stick to fabric when pressed with a hot iron.

When these templates are ironed to the wrong side of the fabrics, cut with a quarter inch seam allowance and sewn, it will look like the original layout.

Oct. 11, 2011

I have a pretty good stash of commercial prints and hand dyes suitable for nature inspired work. One of the first things I do when starting a new work is to pull any fabrics that I think have possibilities of working into the piece.

My studio has good natural light from windows and overhead fixtures so I keep my fabric behind bamboo and canvas roll - up blinds to combat fading.



Much of what I choose will never make it in and more will be added later, but this is a starting place. The fabrics are all 100% cotton, mostly commercial prints, though I do sometimes use hand dyes. I use a lot of batik fabric because I love the variations of colors within a piece that lends itself well to the nature inspired work that I do.

Behind the cutting table, you can see the blinds in the down position.



When I was teaching in Springfield, Mo. recently, I found this wonderful panel.



(Winter Whispers by Michelle Mara, Wilmington Prints)

The scale seemed right and since my specialty is working with commercial prints, and even though I didn't know if I would be accepted into Seasonal Palette I just had to buy two panels just in case! I needed two panels so that I could accommodate the seam allowances and still have things line up. I would want to fracture the scene, maybe rearrange the figures and integrate them into the piecing.

Deer often frequent the area of our farm pond and I thought they would bring life to the composition.

Oct.12, 2011

The first step was to figure out how to place seam lines that would integrate this scene into the whole. I did this by tracing the print to freezer paper and aligning it with the full sized freezer paper pattern on the wall. Then I could plot out the seam lines to be able to cut and sew it to fit into the scene. I wanted to fracture the panel and make some changes in the placement of the deer. Luckily, the freezer paper allowed enough of the print to show through so that I could trace the basic outline of the deer!

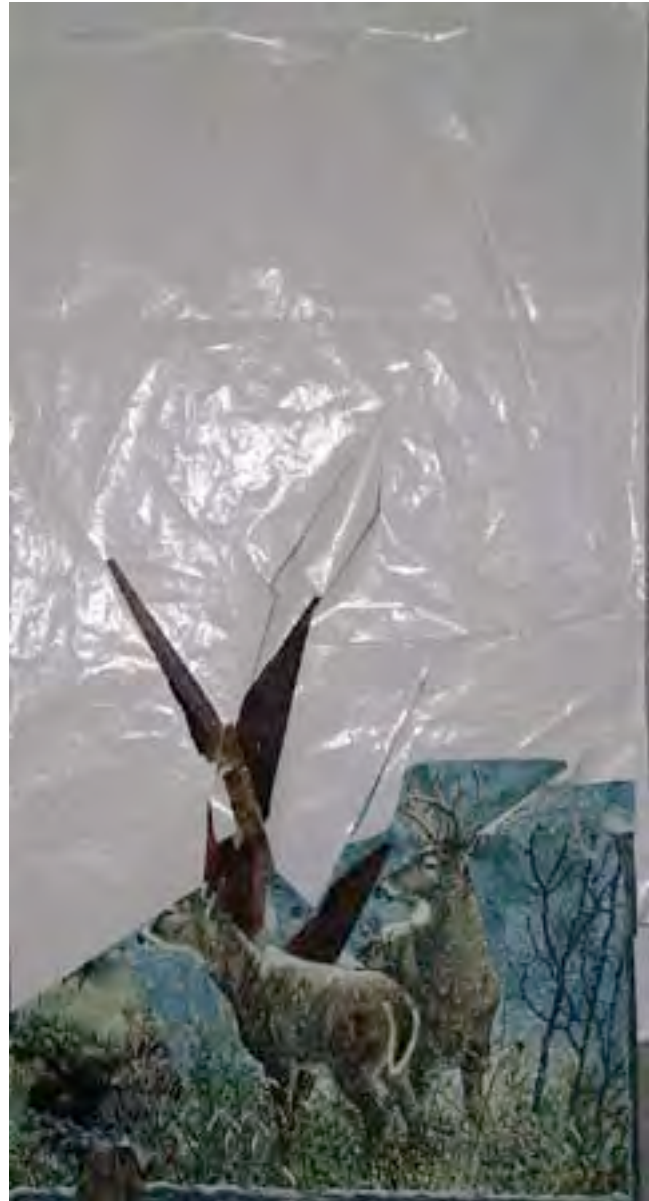


Oct.15, 2011

I started the piecing with the bottom of the tree area, so that I would have a base on which to add the deer.

It has not been without drama though. After several day's work, I was not happy with some aspects. I decided that the tree needed to be lower, more behind the deer allowing me to add more branches to the top of the tree to balance the composition.

I reworked parts and now I have the problem of fitting already pieced elements into a revised whole, but it will work out, I'm sure. I ordered more fabric from two different sources, as I found some sky and some coordinating foreground prints that might work in. The first arrived yesterday and the second is due any day now. It's a little difficult to plan without the fabric here so I am working on the parts where I feel safe, knowing I may have to tweak later. This has enough challenges to keep it interesting for me!





Oct. 27, 2011

The fabric came last week, I had ordered these sunrise / sunset fabrics for consideration for the sky. I do think they will work. Now I can be more confident in the selection of other fabrics for the scene.

I have chosen some orangey prints to give reflected highlights to the tree trunks. An old batik with both blue and orange will make nice reflections on the pond ice.

The distant tree line is the backside of another batik. It will look more like trees when the quilting is added.

I have integrated several other fabrics into the foreground to further fracture the panel, give added interest and tie into the piecing of the other prints.

Some peachy reflections on the snow have been laid in.



Nov. 1, 2012

Sewing some seams tightens things up. That brush against snow fabric with the peachy background was a lucky find from my stash. The rusty batik will help the background trees blend into the sky.



Nov. 11, 2011

Well, there has been a lot going on and I have been busy . Some days there is not time to sew at all, and some days time to manage only a few seams.

This week has been better and I have had a few days to really work at it. I am starting to lay in some sky color.

As I work at it, I am constantly tweaking and changing things so I try to avoid sewing all of the seams until I live with the fabric choices for a while but there comes a time when, just to get things in perspective, you just have to sew some seams! Inevitably then you have to UN sew some seams as choices made at the bottom affect choices made at the top and vice-versa. The long narrow layout (32 x 78") of this piece presents it's own challenges! Luckily the deadline is April, so I can take my time and enjoy the process.



Nov.13, 2011

I've been putting it off, but it is time to finish the integration of the deer into the main piece. Since I altered it by removing some from the bottom and adding some to the top, the seams no longer line up. I have to make some templates to transition between the two areas. This is not easy! You can see the registration marks on the back that help with correct sewing and some proposed seam lines that I have not used. As last minute decisions are made, often seam lines are altered, eliminated or even added!



In order to piece the ear in, I would have had to redo part of the tree, so I decided to appliqué that little bit. I replaced some of the dark fabrics that I had in the foreground that I thought were distracting.



It's time to actually cut some sky pieces. I need some nice strong color at the tree line to transition the tree line into the sky.

Nov. 16, 2011

I thought I would like the cloud print fabric that I had ordered, but I liked the striated batik better.



Nov. 21, 2011

The past week was spent tweaking the Seasonal piece, changing and adding fabrics. It is still in two pieces but bulky and awkward to work on. I think that I have at least one more change to make and then I will just live with it for awhile and see if anything else demands attention. At this point every change requires that I rip something apart and add in new, sort of like mending, which I hate.

That little place on the left will need to be fixed. The fabric that I was using there was not big enough and I was hoping that it would be in the “waste” area and to be cut away when I trim it to size, but I’m afraid it will be too much.

Last evening, I folded and put away all of the fabrics I was working with and swept up the bits on the floor, the studio will not look too bad for company on Thanksgiving!



Dec.1, 2012

Last week on one of the quilting lists someone posted that she was being sued by a fabric designer for having used that person's design in a piece that was published in a book. She wouldn't elaborate or name the designer. Since what I do is all wrapped up in using commercial prints, this was pretty scary! Especially since this piece I am currently working on features so prominently the use of a printed panel cut up and rearranged.

One has to wonder why they would produce quilting fabric and then sue you for using it, but crazier things have happened. I didn't even want to continue working! I wrote the designer and explained what I was doing and asked for written permission to proceed. It took a couple of days for the answer, during which time I imagined worse case scenarios, like "Now she knows what I'm doing and will be watching and waiting to sue me" But no. Michelle Mara was happy to grant permission. Monday I finished up the last of the seams and the top is finished. I think now it will be set aside since it has an April deadline and I'll be concentrating on a new piece with a January deadline.





Feb. 28, 2012

Time to get back to Seasonal Palette. I'm using Matilda's Own Wool for the batting and trimming it to a little larger all around than the top. This is the first time I have used wool but I have been hearing good things about it.



I prepared a back using another panel that I found online and purchased because I thought that it would be a good thing to show that I did not just use a printed panel as is, but how the panel looked before I cut it up and rearranged it.

In my stash, I found an old piece of fabric from the 80's from when I first started quilting, that was the perfect blue to compliment this piece. You can see a bit of the top peeking out there at the bottom as I am trimming to size.



Mar. 3, 2012

The three layers were pin basted and made ready for the machine quilting. I do free motion machine quilting on my Bernina 1260 with no stitch regulator.

I have spent the better part of three days now quilting on it and have about one third of it finished so I am in good shape to meet the deadline. Today I will finish the foreground and hopefully get started on the sky.



Mar 6, 2012

As usual, I am putting a lot of quilting on the seasonal piece. I think it is looking good and I guess I need to think up a name for it and stop calling it “the seasonal piece!”



Mar.14, 2012

I finished the quilting last week; it took so long because it's big (32 x 78" finished so I'm working at about 35 x 83") and I was putting in a lot of stitches, but also because I used so many different threads, so was constantly changing colors and burying ends.



I blocked and trimmed it for the binding over the weekend. Trimming was tricky, as it is so long, and the size requirements are precise! Measure twice and cut once didn't even feel safe. I measured at least four times. I was up in the air about the finishing - facing or binding? I decided on binding a little larger than usual at 3/8". That was sewed on yesterday and since when I do the binding I always incorporate the sleeve and the

documentation tag into the binding seam, I had to commit to a name for the tag. I settled on “December Dawn”. It is short and to the point.

Now all I have left to do is to finish the hand sewing on the back of the binding, the sides and bottom edges of the sleeve and two edges of the documentation tag, sign it, and it will be DONE!



Here you can see the machine stitched signature and a corner folded back to show part of the documentation tag.







From: Michelle Mara <maradeepforest@aol.com>

To: innokom <innokom@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Fabric

Date: Sun, Nov 27, 2011 3:51 pm

---

Dear Ruth,

Thank you for your inquiry and for your interest in my art. Yes, you have my permission to proceed with the quilt project which you described, using my fabric designs, and I wish you much success with it.

Best regards,

Michelle Mara

—Original Message—

From: innokom <innokom@aol.com>

To: maradeepforest <maradeepforest@aol.com>

Sent: Sat, Nov 26, 2011 6:20 am

Subject: Fabric

Dear Michelle,

I love your fabric. I am using Winter Whispers in a quilted wall hanging that I am making for a special exhibit at IQF in Houston which will travel for a couple of years to major quilt venues and probably be in a book.

I have purchased four panels as I am cutting it up and putting it back together in a different configuration. My specialty is pictorial quilts using commercial prints. You can see my work in the website below.

It is sad that it has come to this, but in light of the recent lawsuit against a quilt maker by a fabric designer, I am writing you to ask for written permission to use your fabric in this way!

Hope to hear from you soon,

Ruth

[www.ruthpowersartquilts.com](http://www.ruthpowersartquilts.com)

