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# QUILTING DESIGN

## Ideas

In the previous issue of *Love of Quilting*, I showed you how to use motifs from fabrics to create quilting designs. Now I'll show you how to use those designs you've found hidden in your fabric.

**H**ave you ever thought about using the motifs in fabrics to create your own quilting designs? In my previous article, I showed you how to use floral, novelty, and baby print fabrics to trace designs. (See *Quilt Yourself a Garden* in the May/June 2014 issue of *Love of Quilting*). In this article, I'll show you how to use those designs on your quilts.

If you're a longarm quilter, you can choose to draw design elements on long paper rolls to create your own unique pantographs. I've traced a few butterflies onto paper to show you how, turning the butterflies in different directions to make them more random (*Photo A*). Of course, once you trace your first butterfly you can enlarge it using a copy machine if the original fabric design is too small. Then use the newly-sized drawing to trace additional shapes onto your paper. Add the single individual elements first so that you can place them where you want them. Then connect the designs using your favorite method such as loops, swirls, or other meandering methods.

If you sit down to quilt, try tracing the design onto water-soluble stabilizer. Stabilizer is available in clear plastic rolls as well as in paper form (some can even run through your computer printer!). You can stitch right through the stabilizer and tear off as much as possible when you're finished. Any remaining stabilizer will dissolve during the quilt's first

washing. You can also cut your shape from sturdy card stock or template plastic and trace around it directly on your fabric, using your favorite marking tool.

Busy floral prints are common backing fabric choices. The variety of colors helps hide any inconsistency in quilting lines or even tension issues on the back of the quilt. However, you can also have a lot of fun using that backing fabric as your overall quilting design—just turn the quilt over and quilt from the back! Since the fabric already has the design spacing figured out for you, all you need to do is stitch around the design elements and you'll quickly have a creative quilt design completed with no marking at all.



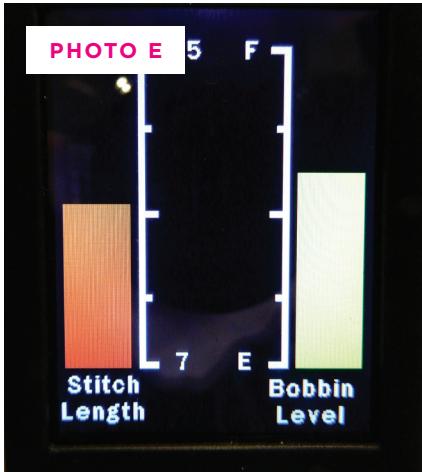
You can have lots of fun outlining the shapes on the backing fabric. Don't worry about being precise, and don't quilt over every single line in the print. Keep thinking "outline only," adding only enough quilting detail to convey what the shape is supposed to be. If you add too much detail, you'll lose the image on the front of your quilt, and it will look like scribbling instead of a discernable design.

If you sit down to quilt, simply layer your quilt in the opposite order—place your quilt top face down on your table and tape it in place along the edges to keep it smooth. Lay the batting over the quilt top, and then follow with your backing fabric placed right side up. Use safety pins to secure the layers as normal. Since your bobbin thread will now be the thread that shows on the quilt top, choose a thread that blends across all areas of your quilt. Test your tension before you begin, and adjust it so that your bobbin thread pulls up into the quilt layers. This might mean that you must loosen your bobbin case tension and tighten the top tension.

Stand up machine quilters can also use this technique. Normally the backing fabric is cut about 4" larger than the quilt top all the way around to make loading easier on a longarm frame. If you turn the quilt sandwich upside down on a longarm frame, the quilt top will be too short to reach to the canvases easily compared to the backing fabric. Here's an easy way to tackle that obstacle. Cut two lengths of water-soluble stabilizer—I used Sulky's Super Solvy (*Photo B*)—each about 6" longer than the width of your quilt. Use your regular sewing machine and baste the stabilizer to the top and bottom of your quilt top, keeping your basting stitches inside the ¼-inch seam allowance where the binding will go (*Photo C*).

Load the quilt sandwich so that your quilt top is upside down, pinning the edges of the stabilizer to your leaders instead of the quilt itself (*Photo D*). Lay the batting over the quilt top, and then load your backing fabric, right side up, over the batting. Pin the backing fabric in place instead of basting





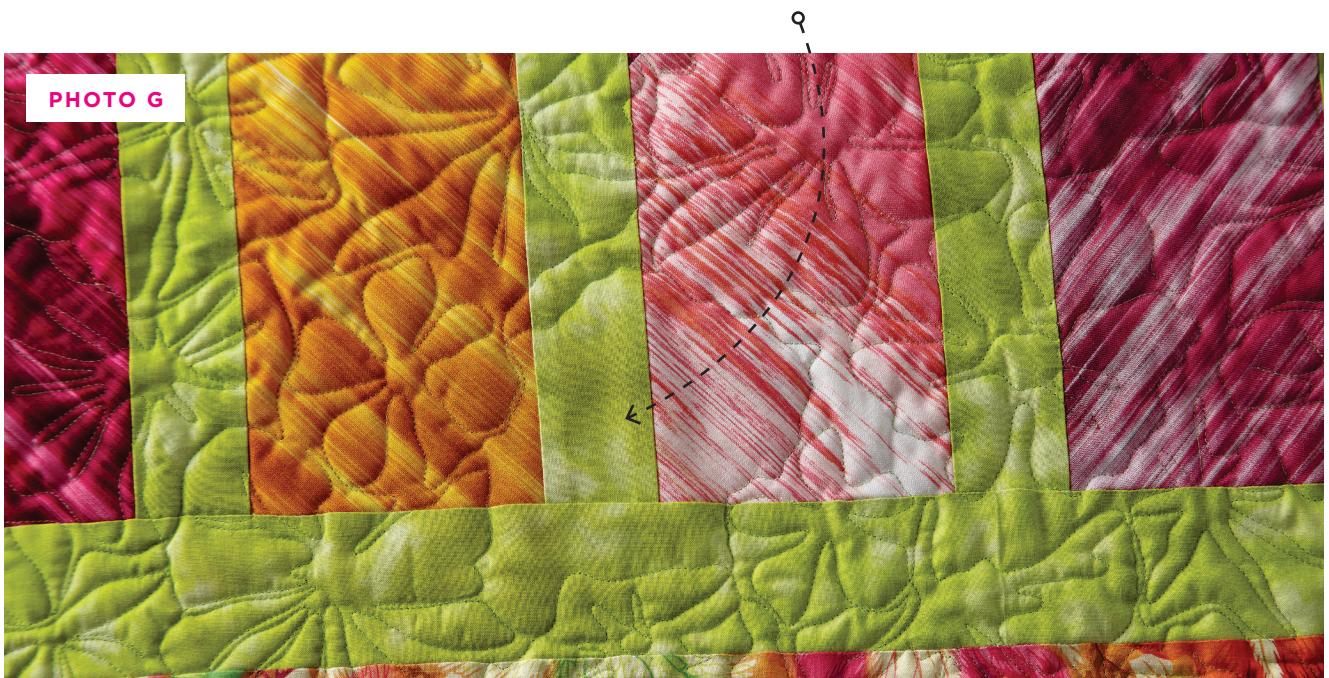
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with your longarm machine to avoid accidentally tearing the stabilizer with your stitches. Remember that your bobbin thread will now show on your quilt top, so select a thread that blends with all your fabrics. Adjust your tension to pull the bobbin thread up into the layers of the quilt. This may mean loosening your bobbin tension and tightening your top tension. On larger quilts, having a feature such as a low bobbin indicator (*Photo E*) is especially wonderful for this technique!

Here's another hint shared from personal experience that serves as a good reminder, whether you're quilting your project "upside down" or in a standard manner on a frame. I mounted my quilt to my longarm frame using water-soluble stabilizer as described, and had lots of fun outlining the great flowers on the backing fabric. I was very pleased with how

things turned out, and in my excitement I quickly pulled the quilt off the frame and tugged the water-soluble stabilizer off the quilt. I held it up to admire my work, and then my enthusiasm quickly sank when I spotted a flower that I had missed (*Photo F*)! You can clearly see the missed spot on the front of the quilt, too (*Photo G*). In my excitement, I cruised past a very important step in longarm quilting—unless you want to remount the quilt all over again, check for missed spots before you take the quilt off the machine!

If you struggle to come up with ideas for quilting your projects, try using fabric motifs to find the inspiration you need. Chances are the designs in your fabrics will be perfect complements to your quilt.



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