What is Modern Quilting?
Overview

- Early Influencers of Modern Quilting
  - History of Modern Quilting
  - Birth of Modern Quilting 1998-2004
  - 2005: The Landmark Year
History of Modern Quilting
History of Modern Quilting

• Modern quilting did not start out of thin air.
• Modern quilters are not the first to do many of the things they are doing.
• A number of factors facilitated the movement.
  1. Cultural shift toward recognizing quality design
  2. Amy Butler and the changing fabric industry
     – Availability of modern fabric, both design and color
  3. Affordable digital cameras
  4. Internet & social media
     – Craftster, Flickr, blogging, Twitter, message boards, online bees
• An article with more in depth information:
Early Influencers of Modern Quilting

• Amish quilting
• Many early influencers were art quilters
• The Quilts of Gee’s Bend
• Nancy Crow
• Gwen Marston
• Yoshiko Jinzenji
Birth of Modern Quilting: 1998-2004

• 1998: Denyse Schmidt is featured in Martha Stewart Living magazine.
  – “Each quilt displays a chic, modernist aesthetic.”
• 2002: Yoshiko Jinzenji first publishes Quilt Artistry.
• At this time, the online modern quilting community is dissipated and unorganized.
  – Modern quilts occasionally show up on Craftster and Flickr, but are not categorized as modern.
• The price of digital cameras is over $250.*

The Landmark Year: 2005

• 2005: Two instrumental books are published:
  – *Denyse Schmidt Quilts*, by Denyse Schmidt
  – *The Modern Quilt Workshop*, by Bill Kerr & Weeks Ringle

• First usages of the word “modern”
  – *Martha Stewart Living* describes Denyse Schmidt’s work.

• In 2005, the average price of a digital camera drops below $200.
  – This affordability speeds the proliferation of quilting images online. In other words, more people are showing their work.

• Two quilt-alongs jump start the online community.
  – Kim Kight organizes *The Modern Quilt Workshop* quilt-along
  – Sarah Minshall organizes Quilts by Denyse Schmidt
Organizes & Formalizes:
2005-2009

• Early 2008: Rossie Hutchinson (r0ssie) starts the “Fresh Modern Quilts” Flickr group.
  – Provides first loose organization to the movement and helps begin a definition of the aesthetic.
  – Facilitates the rise of blogging.
• April 2008: Kim Kight starts blogging at True Up, creating industry and consumer attention to modern fabrics.
• October 2008: Susanne Woods is hired as the acquisitions editor at C&T Publishing and launches the Stash Books imprint.
• Winter 2008: Quilting Arts launches *Stitch* magazine.
• October 2009: Alissa Haight Carlton and Latifah Saafir start the Modern Quilt Guild in Los Angeles, California.
MQ Movement Today: 2010-2015

- More than 150 guilds worldwide
- Dozens of modern quilting books
- Several e-zine and print magazines devoted to modern quilting
- Wide selection of graphic modern fabrics
- Modern Quilt Guild Showcase at Quilt Festival
- QuiltCon since 2013
- Increasing “Modern Quilt” categories at national quilt shows
- Museum exhibitions
- Weekend sewing events and retreats
- Press features in the Wall Street Journal, Martha Stewart Living, LA Times and more
The Future of Modern Quilting

- QuiltCon
- Progression of the work and design aesthetic
- More people adopting and influencing the movement
- Local modern quilt shows
- Changing social media landscape
  - Blogger -4% versus Pinterest +1,047%
    - (The Social Media Report, Nielsen)
  - Mobile, mobile, mobile!
- An aesthetic evolution is visible when looking at QuiltCon entries year over year.
MQ Philosophy Definition

• Modern quilting embraces a “no rules” concept.
• Modern quilting emphasizes freedom in how to construct quilts.
• Modern quilting respects the dogma of traditional quilting, but doesn’t always follow it.
• Modern quilting is about the journey, rather than how you get there.
• Number one rule: be nice! Modern quilting is personal expression.
MQ Design Aesthetic

• **Modern quilts are made to be used.**
  – Function and form go hand-in-hand.

• There are some rules, but looser than traditional quilting.

• Influenced by the modernist and post-modernist movements in art, architecture and interior design.

• Making a quilt in modern fabrics does not make it modern.

• Modern quilting is **NOT** art quilting.
  – If the world of quilting is a stool, modern quilting is the third leg between traditional and art quilts.
  – Art quilting is to fine art as modern quilting is to graphic art.

• “Modern quilting is like porn, hard to define, but you know it when you see it.” –Shelly Sutton
Philosophy & Aesthetic Relationship

- Modern quilting is more than a philosophy. It has a quantifiable aesthetic.
- Common misperception: If you follow the philosophy, you are automatically a modern quilter.
- New traditional quilters (nowadays) often use traditional and art quilt design elements, but firmly follow the philosophy of modern quilting.
- Some quilters who do not follow the modern quilting philosophy and follow most traditional quilting construction rules are considered modern quilters.
MQ Design Elements

- Use of negative space
- No borders
- Minimal
- Bright and graphic color palettes
- Improvisational piecing
- Grid work
- Asymmetry
- Modern traditionalism
- Exaggerated scale
- Pixelization
- Texture
- Less is more
Negative Space

- Expansive negative space organizes the subject and captures attention.

From left to right: “Fissures” by Debra Jeske (Seattle MQG), “Amazonia” by Nathalie Bearden (Individual Member), “Boats, Boats, Boats” by Brenda Ratliff (Ann Arbor MQG)
No Borders

• There are rarely borders in modern quilting unless the borders are part of the negative space.

From left: “Emergent” by Kari Vojtechovsky (Individual Member), Colorado 4x4 by Stephanie Ruyle (Front Range MQG) and “What’s the Frequency, Love?” by Sheri Cifaldi-Morrill (Southern Connecticut MQG)
Minimal

- In general, the more negative space, the more minimalist a quilt becomes.

From left: “Breathe” by Leanne Chahley (Edmonton MQG) and “Curious” by Amy Friend (Seacoast MQG)
Graphic Color Palettes

- Modern color palettes are often bright, but can also be graphic.
- If other design elements of the quilt are strongly modern, color becomes less important.

From left: “Bridges” by Jacquie Gering (Kansas City MQG), “Crossing the Line” by Corinne Sovey (Austin MQG), “Indie” by Phoebe Harrell (Charleston MQG)
Improvisational Piecing

- Construction rules go out the window
- Influenced by Gee’s Bend, Gwen Marston and Denyse Schmidt

From left: “For Tanya” by Emily Coffey, “The Rabbit Hole” by Nydia Kehnle and “Score for Strings: City” by Sherri Lynn Wood
Alternate Grid Work

• Alternate grid structures are frequently used in modern quilting.

Grid Work

- Traditional quilting generally follows a predictable grid structure

Traditional Gridwork  Alternate Gridwork
Grid Work

- Traditional quilting generally follows a predictable grid structure

From left: Percolate by Emily Cier, Starfall II by Faith Jones
• Traditional quilting generally follows a predictable grid structure

From left: Percolate by Emily Cier, Starfall II by Faith Jones
Asymmetry

- The subject is not always centered and symmetrical.

“Ascend” by Nicole Neblett (Triangle MQG), “Quilt for our Bed” by Laura Hartrich (Chicago MQG)
Exaggerated Scale

- Increasing block size or components of quilting
- Often combined with alternate grid work or negative space
Exaggerated Scale

- Increasing block size or components of quilting
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“Blue Pinwheel” by Barbara Perrino (Individual Member)
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Pixelization

- Related to scale
- Distorting an image or idea to a fundamental digital composition.

“Pixel Pusher II” by Caro Sheridan (Boston MQG), “Holy Sh*t Sherlock” by Kristy Daum (St. Louis MQG)
Modern Traditionalism

- Applies other modern quilt design elements (negative space, scale, grid work and more) to traditional quilt blocks in a restrained, impactful way.

“Deconstructed Lonestar” by Amy Struckmeyer (Chiago MQG), “Refresh” by Anna Boenish (Seattle MQG)
Texture

- Straight lines create dynamic texture.
- Stippling/all-over-filler becomes background.
- Feathers, McTavishing and other flourished quilting are hard to pull off in a modern context.

“Diving Geese” by Katie Pedersen, Quilted by Krista Withers (Seattle MQG)
Texture

“Intersection” by Neva Asinari (Central Jersey MQG), “X Quilt” by Stacey Sharman (Individual Member)
Stuff to Google

- “The Gap” by Ira Glass
- Creative Inspiration
- Creative Thinking Exercises
- “Grids Are Good” PDF
- How to Use Negative Space
- Elements of Design
- Udemy’s Graphic Design Courses
- Skillshare Design Classes
- Lynda Design Classes
Non-Quilting Books to Read

- *Interaction of Color* by Josef Albers
- *Art and Visual Perception* by Rudolf Arnheim
- *Picture This* by Molly Bang
- *Design Basics* by David Lauer and Stephen Pentak
- *Design Elements: A Graphics Style Manual* by Timothy Samara
- *Making and Breaking the Grid: A Graphic Design Layout Workshop* by Timothy Samara
- *Envisioning Information* by Edward Tufte
- *Principles of Form and Design* by Wucius Wong