

A free project, compliments of...

Terri Stegmiller

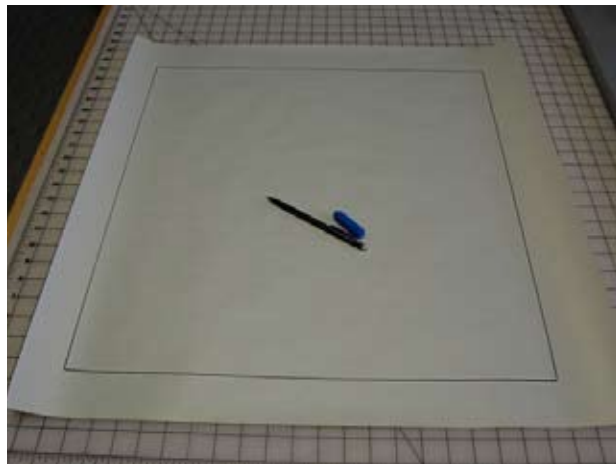
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Mosaic Collage *An art quilting technique*

I really enjoy the look of art that is called decoupage. Where small pieces of papers are adhered to an object, usually covering that object entirely. The end result reminds me of glass mosaics and collages. That's where the idea came for the name of this technique. I had wondered for some time how I could create this look, or something close to this look, in fabric. I'm not positive how long it took me to work through the process in my brain, perhaps maybe a few months, but I was quite pleased with my results.

Step 1 - Prepare Your Pattern

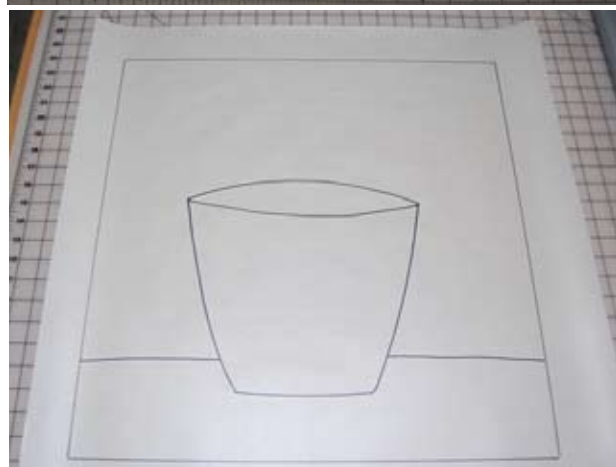
Start with a piece of drawing paper that is slightly larger than the quilt you want to make. If you don't have paper that is large enough, you can tape pieces together until you have the size you want.



With a ruler and black permanent marker, draw the outside edges of your quilt. In the example, I have used my 20" square rotary cutting ruler to create my outline.

With a pencil, sketch your design. I find that simple shapes and designs work well with this technique. Details can be added later, but you can draw them in at this time if you choose. Once you have a design you like, go over the pencil lines with the black permanent marker. I like using the Sharpie marker with the "fine tip" as it gives a bold enough line to trace. You can erase the pencil lines if you desire, after you have gone over the lines with the marker.

My design is a simple vase on a table. My finished quilt will have flowers in the vase, but I have not drawn those in my design as they will be added later.



Supplies

Drawing paper
Pencil
Eraser
Black permanent marker
Ruler
Batting
Mistifuse fusible web
Goddess Sheet or Reynold's
Parchment Paper
Fabric
Coordinating threads
Scissors and/or rotary cutter
Sewing machine
Acrylic paint - black and white

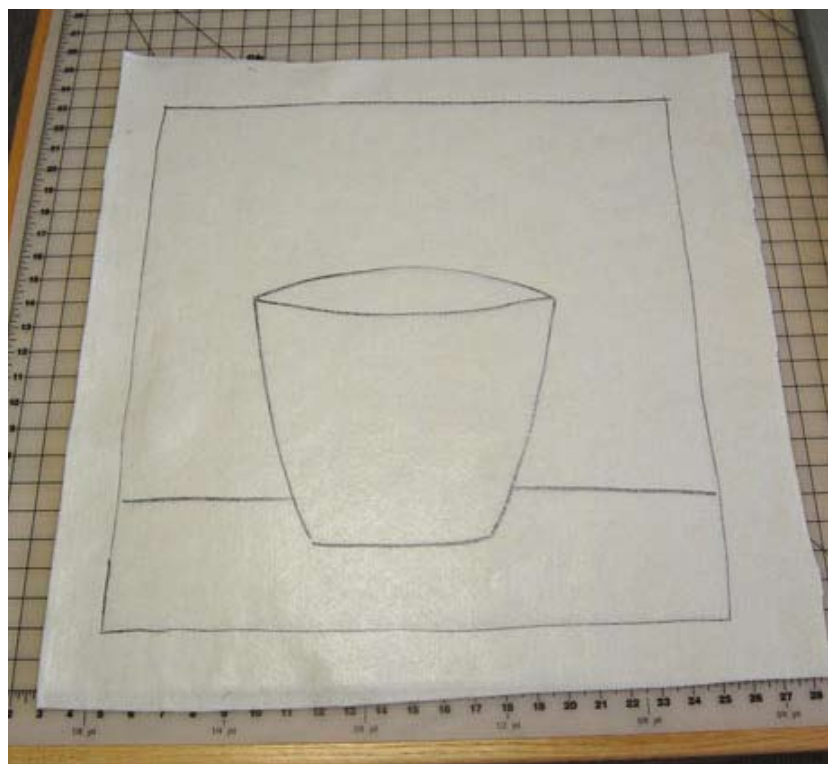
Step 2 - Prepare the batting

Cut a piece of batting a few inches larger than the finished quilt size. Remember that the batting shrinks a bit when the quilting is added.

Cover the batting with Mistyfuse fusible web and press with your iron to bond in place. Remember to use a Goddess Sheet or Reynolds Parchment Paper to protect your iron and ironing surface from any fusible web.

Note: There is an alternative method to adding the fusible web. Read Step 4 for more information on that.

Place the prepared batting, with fusible side up, over your drawing. If you have trouble seeing the marker lines showing through the batting, you can tape both the pattern and batting to a bright window to help.



With the black permanent marker, trace your lines onto the batting. You are actually drawing on the Mistyfuse layer.

Step 3 - fabric

Now it's time to choose your color palette. When I make these mosaic collage quilts, I typically am working with my fabric scraps that are left over from other projects. I keep my scraps separated by color in plastic tubs. If you don't have plenty of scraps to work with, you can also use charm squares, jelly rolls, or other pre-cut fabric packages. If you have a fabric stash, you can simply cut a 1" to 1.5" strip from the fabrics you wish you use. This is what I do when I don't have enough fabric scraps in a certain color. Remember that you can also use the back sides of fabrics. The back sides tend to be a shade or three lighter and this will give you more options.



Cut your fabric into chips. I started calling the fabric pieces "chips", as they remind me of the glass chips you use in mosaic work.

You can cut your chips into any size you like, but try to maintain a similar size for the chips. Some variation is fine.

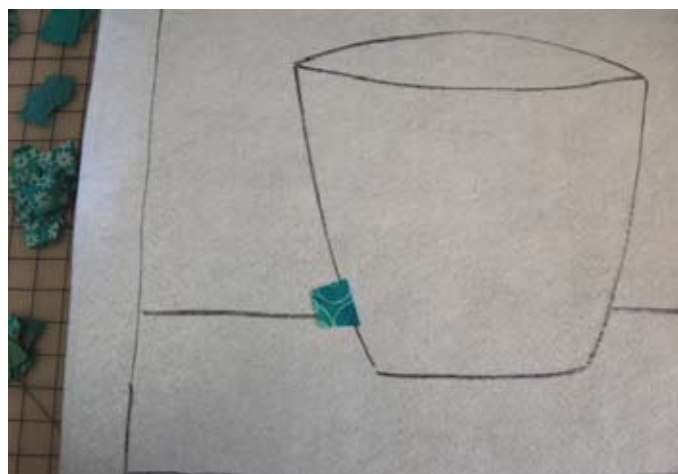
When cutting the chips, I use either the rotary cutter or a scissors. I find that I tend to cut with the scissors when I'm cutting odd shaped fabric scraps. When I'm cutting chips from strips of fabric, I find it quick and easy to rotary cut them. And if you want to get the job done quickly, layer several strips and cut through them all at one time.

The photo at right shows how I arrange the chips once they are cut. I group them into small piles and place them on my work area next to the quilt that I'm working on. I typically only cut chips for the color that I need at that time. You certainly can cut your chips all at one time for your entire quilt if you desire. Sometimes you may not cut enough chips to cover an area. Keep your original fabrics handy so that you don't have to go and dig them out of your stash again.



I work with my batting placed on my ironing surface. This way I don't have to move the entire thing when I want to iron the chips and risk having chips move or fly away.

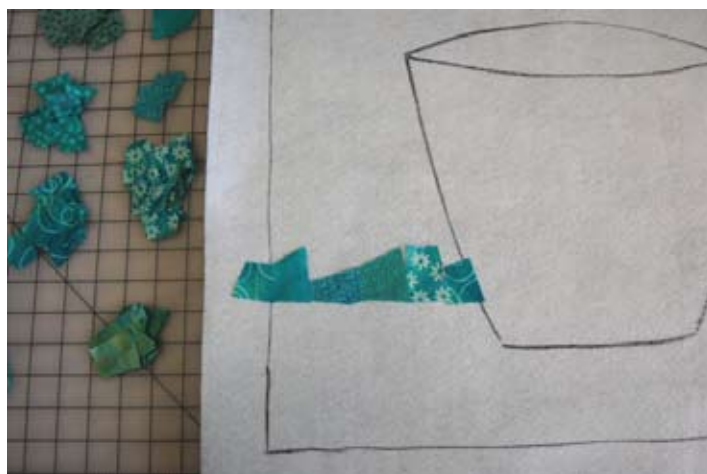
Now it's time to start placing the chips on the batting. I always start with the part of the design that would be the farthest away from me. In my example, the wall behind the table and vase is the part of the design that is farthest away. I work from back or farthest away to the frontmost, or closest objects. Start placing the chips on the batting. I am overlapping the other design elements because when I place the fabric chips down for the vase and table, they will overlap the background wall.



As I work I like to think about light and shadow. I try to use darker fabrics where I think shadows might be and lighter fabrics where more light might be.

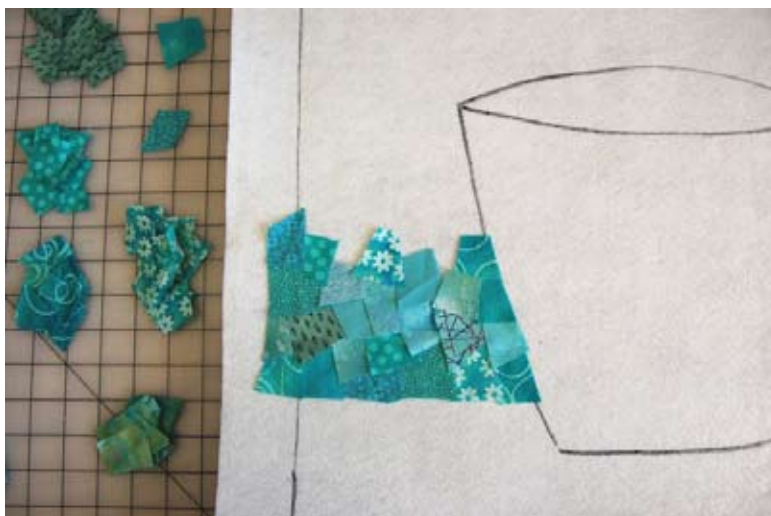
Continue placing your chips down on the batting. Overlap the previous chips by 1/8" or so. I don't stress about how much overlap I have. Try to avoid too much overlap. I have, at times, not had enough overlap of my fabric chips and when I'm quilting there will be some batting showing or peeking out. That is why you want some overlap, so the batting doesn't show.

In the photo at right I have continued placing chips following the table top line. Notice that a fabric chip extends beyond the border line on the left. I always place chips beyond the border because as



you quilt the project, it will shrink a bit and if you are trying to achieve a certain finished size, this will help.

Here you can see I've continued placing fabric chips down to create the background wall. When I get to a point where I have a few chips down, I cover the area with my Goddess Sheet or Reynolds Parchment Paper and press to fuse down the chips. I find if I fuse the chips down occasionally, I am less likely to find them out of place if a disaster strikes. After pressing I let the Goddess Sheet cool, peel it away carefully, and then continue placing chips.



Continue placing chips and pressing occasionally until you have your section filled. Notice that the outside border line is completely covered by the fabric chips extending beyond the line.

Now I can start placing chips onto the next area of the design. In my example the table is the next area to cover. After the table is covered I move onto the vase.



Step 4 - quilting

My quilt is ready for quilting. You may have noticed that I don't have any flowers on the quilt at this point. I prefer to quilt the background of the quilt before I add the flowers and stems. The reason I like doing it this way is because I hate trying to quilt neatly around all the flowers and stems. I will add the flowers and stems after all the background quilting is done.

Before I start quilting, I add backing fabric. I have basted it on with Mistyfuse so that it won't slip or move.

I typically start the quilting in the center of the quilt. In this example I am starting on the vase. I usually free-motion quilt, but will occasionally quilt with a machine-guided straight stitch using my walking foot.

The quilting on these mosaic collage quilts can be frustrating and here is why. In the photo at right, you can see the presser foot is starting to go under the loose edge of the brown fabric.

This happens a lot because these fabric chips are overlapping the other fabric chips and they are not fused down completely where there is overlap. So I do a lot of starting and stopping and presser foot lifting in order to complete the quilting on the quilt. If you have a darning foot that is not open like mine is, you may avoid a lot of this frustration.

Now you may ask, why don't I apply the fusible to the back side of the fabric and then cut the fabric into chips. Then the entire fabric chip would be fused down. I have done it this way and it works great! But I really like to use up my fabric scraps and because the scraps are in so many different sizes and shapes, it's much too difficult to get fusible onto them before fusing them down. So there are really two ways to go about adding the fusible web—fusing it to the batting or fusing it to your fabric.



Here is my quilt after I've finished the quilting. Now I'm ready to add the flowers and stems.



For the flowers and stems I applied some Mistyfuse to the back side of my chosen fabrics and cut the shapes free hand. I placed them onto the quilt and once I was happy with the arrangement, I pressed with my iron to fuse them in place. Next I free-motion stitched around the flowers and stems.

Here is how the quilt looks with the flowers and stems added (top right photo). Also notice that I have squared up my quilt edges.

All that is left now is to add the binding.

Many times I will also add some paint for added shading and highlights. I like the extra depth this creates. I lightly brush on black or white paint in the areas where I want more emphasis. You can see those results in the bottom right photo.

An alternative method to building your design directly on your batting is to build your design on a lightweight interfacing. You would first fuse all your fabric chips onto the interfacing and this then becomes your quilt top, which then gets layered with your batting and backing fabric to create the quilt sandwich. The photo at the bottom of this page shows the lightweight interfacing I use. Note that it is somewhat transparent. This is a good thing when transferring design lines to the interfacing. I prefer to use the interfacing method when I'm working on a larger quilt and I also prefer to add the fusible web to my fabric first when working with the interfacing. If the interfacing isn't large enough for your quilt size, simply overlap it a couple of inches and use some Mistyfuse to bond them together.



So you can see there are many different variations to working with this technique, whether you add the fusible to your batting or your fabrics; the point at which you add your focal elements; the addition of paints; and more. I think after working with the technique, you will start to develop your favorite method and perhaps adjust some things to make it work for you. Have fun and happy creating.