



On the Border February 2021

Borders, Borderless or Somewhere in Between

Presented by Lois MacPherson

Politically borders designate a 'stop-start' line, and as such we are very conscious of them. Last month Bill Spearman showed us a quilt where he had placed a definite inner border. He indicated that he had done so to contain that which he was illustrating in the centre of his quilt.

This year, as part of our Border of the Month, we have revisited pieced borders traditional and nontraditional. Now we encourage you to think of art pictures and of art quilts. When thinking about this I perused some art books and of the hundreds of pictures only a very few were shown with frames. When quilting traditional pieces we (almost always) think we need to add a border.

I ask why? Is it because we want to indicate a stop-start frame? Is it to contain our eyes and/or thoughts so we can attend to the centre of the quilt? Maybe both, or possibly because we are a traditional quilter and have always added a border.

Gloria Loughman, a renown Australian quilter (and a favorite of mine) in her book *Quilted Symphony* writes that a frame creates a sense of completion and depending on the colour can make an image larger and bolder



Photo of winter scene, panel,
source unknown

Gloria goes on to say “Be careful as unsuitable borders can really detract” .

Contrasting coloured borders can make your quilt seem smaller and defined. Small, similar coloured borders (or even just the binding) will let the design flow out into the border.



Photo of Cape Breton Trail, motivated by travel advertisement photo

I encourage you to think of nature. When you look out over a large body of water, a prairie landscape, a grove of trees, or a flower bed, do you see a stop-start line? Can we recreate the sense of visual expansion? **I say yes.** Go borderless.



Photo of seascape: Row by Row series. Pattern purchased at Sew Blessed Quilters, PEI.
Entitled 'First Day of Fishing Season'



One basic way to hide your unfinished edges is to sew four border strips onto the front edges of your quilt and then turn them under completely and hand stitch the inner edges.

Hint: Cut your strips on straight grain of the fabric. Hem the side that will be away from the edge before attaching it to your quilt. The top strip can be modified to accommodate a hanging rod.

Photo Elaine Quehl' s Collage Tree, created at Grand Quilt Guild workshop, 2017

Or is there a step between borders and borderless? Yes. Using your binding strip can create that sense of completion and if done discreetly will not create that stop line.

An alternative: Think of the art canvases that one sees in a décor shop (or at a thrift shop). The wooden frame can provide a firm backing to a quilted art piece. After painting the frame black, I have added Velcro pieces to the corners of the frame and to the corners of my borderless quilt and mounted it.



Photo – Amish Buggy. Created from a photo in a magazine, and photographer unknown at that time. Since creating this wall hanging I have learned the photographer’s name, Mike Grandmaise, when his photo was published in Our Canada, Picture Perfect 2010.

Photo – Ducks over Seascape, created by Lois

Or, wrap your quilt picture around the edges of a wooden frame and have a completely borderless project. I encourage you to think about your art endeavors and contemplate, is there an alternative to the traditional stop-start line.

In a future On the Border we will be discussing finishing an irregular shaped quilt.

Stay turned.

