

A Year-Long Sewing Project!

I started this landscape quilt last January and finished it in December. So whenever I get asked how long it takes me to complete a landsc



ape quilt, I hesitate to say! I certainly didn't work on this project every week of '11, probably just a total of six to seven days. Once the designing was complete, I procrastinated—or should I say—found other things to sew. As the holidays approached, I had a goal—finish that landscape quilt. When the last stitch was sewn, I gave it the name Blue Birches.

The design is simple—three birches with a few wayward twigs. The background and border fabrics were purchased at separate times from [Laura Wasilowski, of Artifabrik](#). Imagine my surprise going through my stash to find these companion hand-dyed fabrics that gave the sense of winter. Brrr, you can almost feel the chill in the air. I knew these fabrics were ideal, since my inspirational photo—the scene outside my home sewing studio window—looked a little like this fabric. (This year we don't have any of this beautiful snow!)



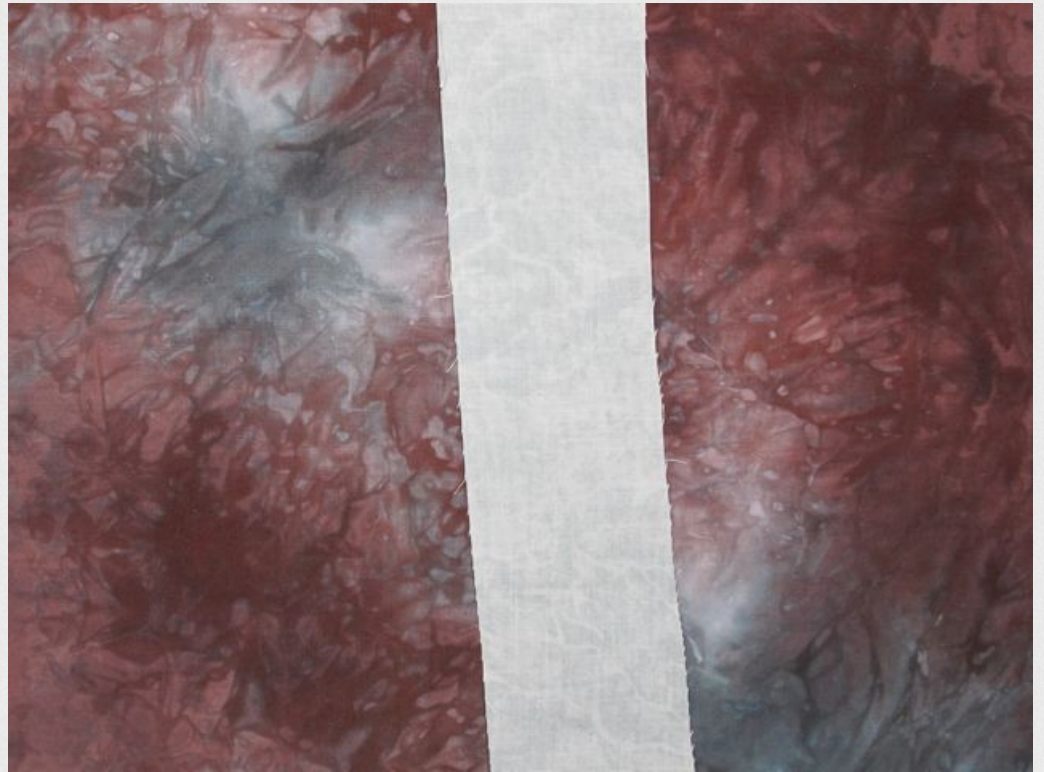
Then it was time to find birch-tree fabric. A mottled pale blue fabric was chosen (printed in 2000, according to the selvage). Not your typical birch-type fabric, but then I wasn't after realism. I knew that most of the designing would be accomplished by drawing on the fabric—a technique taught to me by my all-time quilting buddy, [Natalie Sewell](#). I gathered permanent (the operative word being permanent) [marking pens](#) and [oil pastels](#).



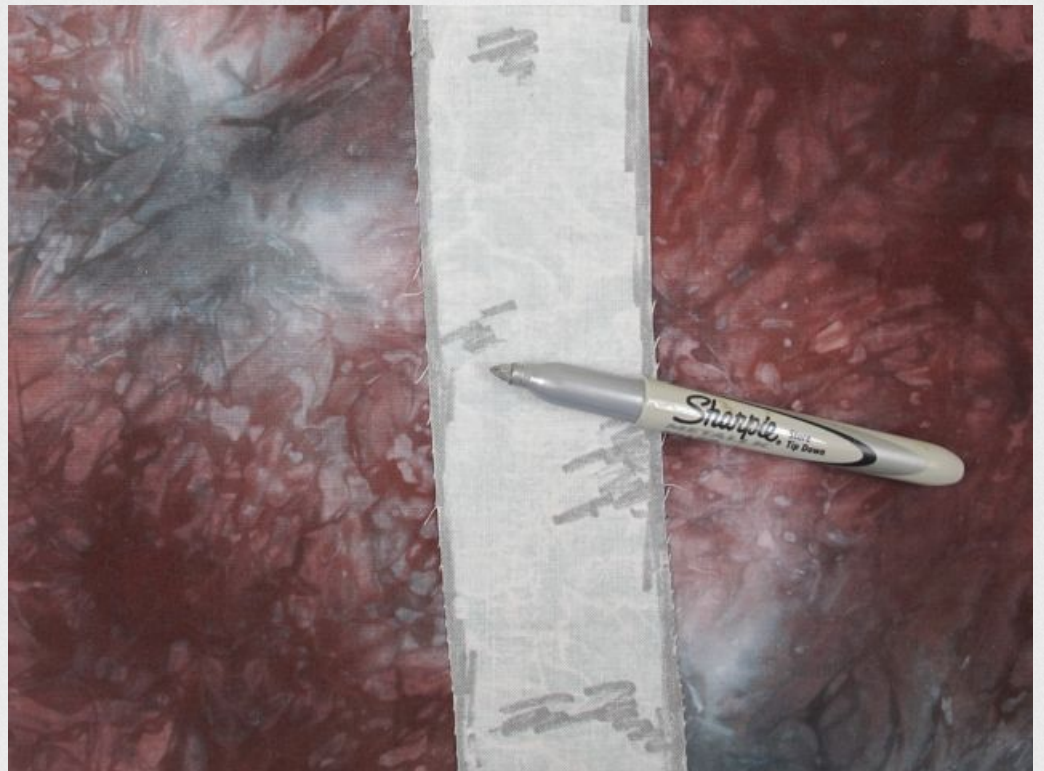
Natalie and I recorded a 3-part TV series, [Landscape Quilting Workshop](#), last year. I took a few photos to show the process of designing the birch trees. It's the same process that we detail in the workbook. Here's a tutorial on how to shade the Blue Birches. Use grays and black marking pens instead of blue and navy. You're the designer, design away!

How to shade birch trees:

Cut a tree shape, using a craft glue stick, apply to the background fabric. (I didn't have any leftover background fabric, so my sample shows the tree design on the darker hand-dyed fabric.) It doesn't look too exciting at this point!



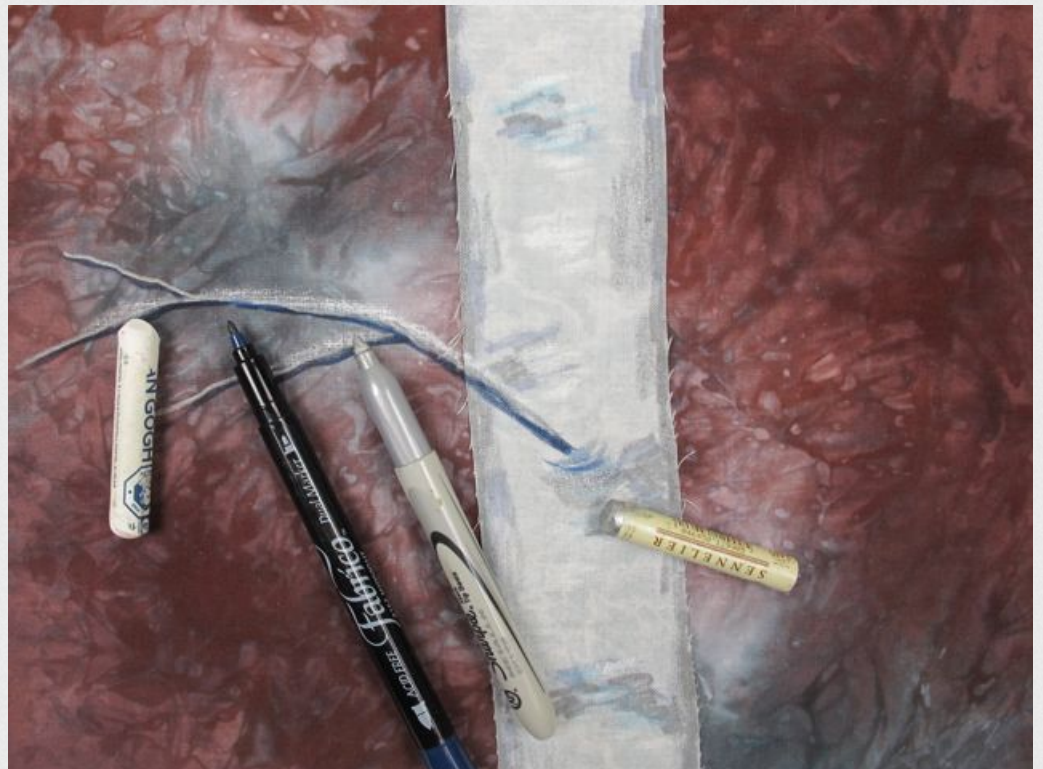
Next, using a gray Sharpie, one of the greatest shading markers; shade the sides of the tree and add bark imperfections.



Add more shading with a blue marker. Then, blend the colors with the oil pastels. The fabric tree is starting to look like a tree!



Add a branch. You'll notice that the narrow branches of most birch or aspen trees are black or dark in color. I first drew the navy branch, added highlights to the top of the branch with the gray Sharpie, and then added the appearance of snow with the white oil pastel. On my actual quilt, I also added slivers of white fabric to indicate a build-up of snow on the larger branches.



I also drew in twigs on the original quilt, a combo of a black lines highlighted with a brown marking pen. Tiny fussy cut leaves complete the twig effect.

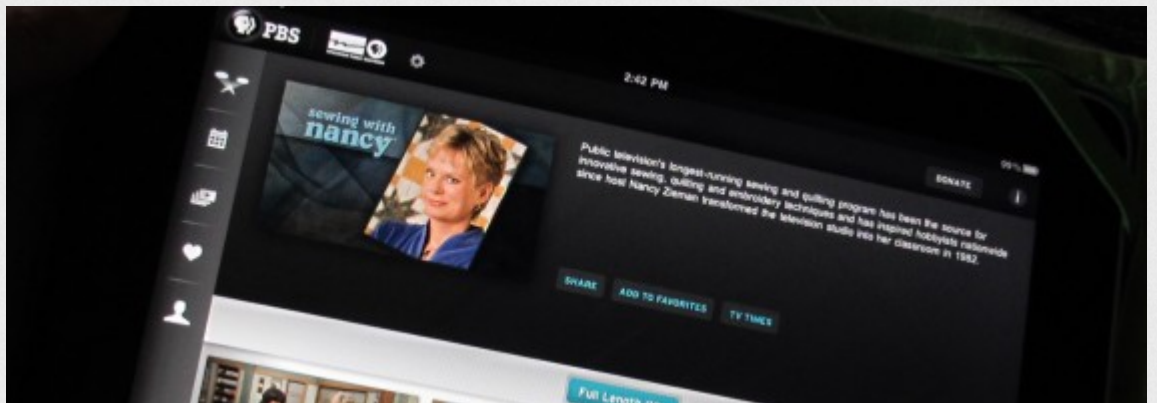


You may not be a mid-western winter fan. Yet, all shading techniques—dark trees or light trees—are done in the same manner. Natalie and I show you all the details in our [workshop workbook](#). Our suggestion is to make 6" x 8" samples, not 30" x 40" wall quilts as pictured above. It's a great way to become comfortable with the process! Hope you enjoyed my little tutorial! Designing landscapes is such an enjoyable process for me. Designing makes me happy!





You can watch our segments of the [Landscape Quilting Workshop online](#), on PBS, or on DVD.
Or, watch on your iPad, iPod Touch, or iPhone. [Download the app!](#)



Bye for now,

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