

Less-Than-Perfect Fabric Selections? Salvage That Quilt!

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We have all done it — picked what we thought would be the perfect fabrics for our quilt, only to get the top done and realize that it does not shine the way we had thought it would. Disappointing, for sure. But hopeless? Perhaps not.

What can be done when you have picked less-than-perfect fabrics for your *Hawaiian* or *2 Fabric Appliqué Quilt*?

Here is what Janice recommends:

1. Take the best quality photo you can of the quilt.
(See: "[12 Tips to Better Quilt Pics](#)" on the [How To and Ideas](#) page on our website.)
2. Print several copies of the photo; then, using colored pencils, chalk pencils, or colored marking pens try different color or shading options to modifying the offending fabric.
3. When you have determined what you think might be a good solution, use the appropriate medium to fix your problem fabric.



2. The little photo pinned to the left is of the original quilt. The little photo above it and to the right shows what the quilt could look like if the too-light flowers were colored darker, to blend better with the overall value (darkness) of the appliqué fabric.



3. Using Shiva Paintstiks, the large blossoms were colored a darker shade of pink, and the small flowers were colored a medium purple. This helped a lot, though it could be that darkening the light flowers even more would help. But for now, we are happy with this one.



1. The problem with this Oriental print fabric is the light flower blossoms that demand your visual attention, detracting from the total look of the Kimono. These large, light blossoms are too light, they are visually disturbing — very pretty, but disturbing.



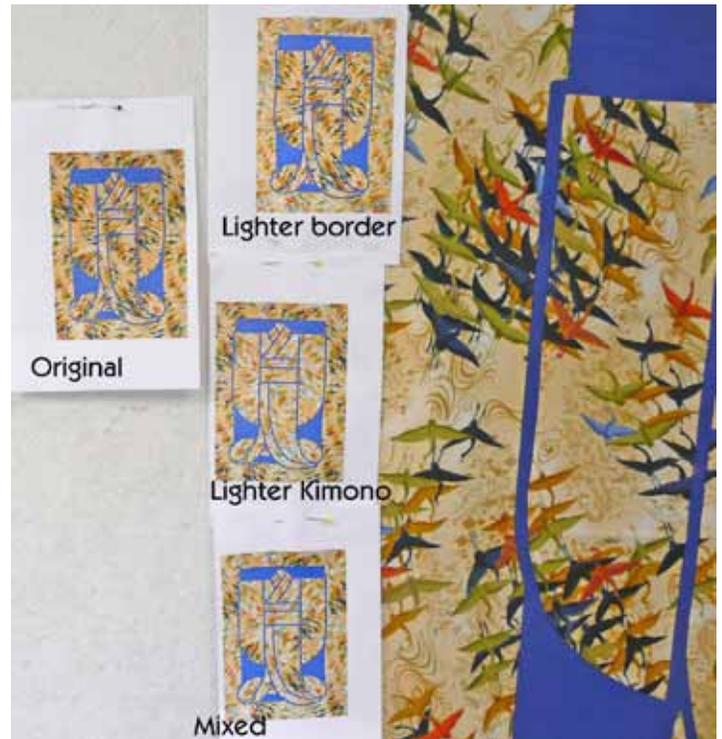
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Before

1 ♦ The problem with this Oriental print fabric is the darkest blue birds are so dark they draw the viewer's eye to look at them, and thus, not at the Kimono. In this quilt, the dark images are visually distracting and need to be toned down.



2 ♦ Using a chalk pencil, three options were tried on the printed photos. The top one lightened the dark blue birds in the border area only. In the middle photo, the dark birds in the kimono were lightened. And, in the lower photo, some, but not all, of the birds in both the kimono and border were lightened. After looking at these three options it was decided that all the dark birds needed to be toned down, or lightened.



After

3 ♦ Using Setacolor Opaque Shimmer Gold with a dry brush, light paint strokes were applied over the dark blue birds. Because, in this case, the gold paint was such a close match to the gold on the fabric, the painting did not require much precision. Care was taken to only lighten the dark blue birds, not to completely paint over them. A dry paint brush, one without much paint on it, and a light stroke is all it took to achieve this effect. See close-up at right.



Now that the dark blue birds have been muted, the Kimono becomes the focal point, not the fabric. One further step could be to darken and dull the blue background fabric, causing it to recede further into the background.



Hopefully these two examples, using the same quilt pattern with different problem fabrics, will help you to consider options for your not-so-perfect fabric. Rescuing an unfinished quilt from the bottom of a drawer, and bringing it new life is wonderfully rewarding. Give it a try! Then, send us before and after pictures of your salvaged quilts. We would love to share your quilt with others who could benefit from your clever solutions.

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Techniques to consider:

1. Fabric markers
2. Shiva Artist's Paintstiks
3. Dry-brush painting
4. Embroidery
5. Appliqué
6. Thread or yarn
7. Beads or sequins

Other suggestions:

- Place a sheet of clear plastic over your quilt on a design wall. Use *wet-erase markers* on the plastic to color problem areas of your quilt to see what will help. Carefully remove the plastic and clean it with a damp paper towel, away from your quilt or fabric.
- Use scraps of the problem fabric to appliqué patches over the problem areas.

Resources for fabric markers, paints, tools, supplies and more specific how-to information:

- Dharma Trading Company. www.dharmatrading.com
- Cedar Canyon Textiles. www.cedarcanyontextiles.com

FABRIC SELECTION TIPS to help you avoid disappointment from the beginning:

- Choose two fabrics that contrast strongly with each other.
Contrast is created either with value (light and dark) or colors that are far from each other on the color wheel (blue and gold, for example).
- Choose fabrics that are solid, near-solid, or with very subtle prints that read as nearly solid from a distance.
- Avoid fabrics with distinctive, high-contrast prints (the problem we had to solve in the two Kimono quilts in this article).
- If one fabric has multiple colors choose a second fabric that does not have any of the same colors. Remember, you want maximum contrast.
- If you do have a busy fabric, it is generally best to use it as the appliqué. Your eye will be drawn to the busier fabric and it is less confusing if that is the appliqué.
- For good visual examples, look at the fabrics on the [Fabric Finder](#) page and at the [Fabric Packs](#) on our website.

Written and photographed by Janice Lee Baehr. Quilts appliquéd by Nancy Lee Chong.

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