



Your Quiltmaker Story: Kat Rusk

1) I am a PhD in Viking Archaeology (University of York 2005). I make my home with a wonderful English husband Tom Rutledge, our son Harry, and four cats. Each of them contributes greatly to my quilt-making, not the least are the four Quilt Inspectors!

2) I am a native San Franciscan but I lived abroad in Europe for nearly a decade. I met Tom and had Harry in England. I also spent a good portion of time in Denmark learning Danish and doing fieldwork in France, Greenland, and Iceland. I love to travel and meet new people. It is very exciting to see how everyone else deals with the challenges of life.

3) My earliest memory of quilts is staying with my grandmother Liza Bean (my mother Charolette Rusk's mother), who we all addressed as Nana. Nana had a collection of old quilts she had from family in Oklahoma. They were made of muslin and scraps in old-fashioned patterns. They were also worn to death and feel apart after several decades of washing. My Aunt Nita Bobka was a gifted seamstress who lavished hours on making doll clothes for my Barbie when I was small. Aunt Nita also branched out into crochet and tatting. Mom herself was also a seamstress who specialized in making fun clothes for my brothers and I.

4) I first learned to quilt under the tutelage of Mary Mashuta at Mercy High during an Intercession quilt class in the late 1970's. She found my challenge color straight out of the box: bright hideous orange! It was what was available at the time but it still makes me shudder. We learned machine piecing, applique, cutting out piece templates from cereal boxes and basic theories of color and design. I was a horrid student who lagged behind everyone else, especially with the applique. My Aunt Sue Fox (Mom's older sister) has also picked up the quilting bug at this time and was keen to show me all the possibilities she had discovered. I didn't really get into quilting but Mom took to it immediately. I helped her make a few quilts like a Trip Around the World for my brother John. When I was accepted into grad school in London, I left behind an Applecote that I had cut out but not pieced together. I made the mistake of asking Mom if she would mind "Just putting it together". I haven't heard the end of this yet. She is no longer worried by setting in collars as it was all curved piecing. The quilt ended up with me in York, England and I still have it today. I really started quilting myself during my doctoral studies. The stress was intense and I needed to do something soothing. Mom sent over a small selection of supplies one year as a Christmas present. When I returned to the States I joined the Quilt Guild and started taking classes with Caroline Lieberman. I have been at it ever since.

- 5) My favorite quilts are made using reproduction Civil War fabrics or with romantic French florals. They are always pieced and in traditional patterns. I prefer smoky colors to brights or lights. Machine piecing is my preferred method but I have known to indulge in hand-piecing as well.
- 6) I have not kept track of the number of quilts I have made. My quilts are made for special events and only for family other than charitable donations.
- 7) I have not sold any quilts, it would be like selling one of my cats! Quilts for charity are a very different matter. I delight in helping people who are in difficulties and if any quilt of mine can ease their way I am thrilled to be of service.
- 8) I have a few quilts scattered around the house. I prefer my quilts to be used, as Nana did hers. I have been given a few quilts: the pride of the collection is a Pineapple quilt Mom made for Tom and I as a wedding present. We bring this out only on state occasions. Otherwise it lives in my cedar hope chest. This one is too good to use and I hope to pass it down to Harry when it is his turn to start his family.
- 9) I select my fabric with a particular project in mind but I have to love the fabric as well. I know others such as Alex Anderson have said that fabric love is not strictly necessary but I disagree. If I am to spend the time, effort, and energy in making a quilt it should be a pleasure to do. I can't delight in fabric whose best use is curtains for an RV!
- 10) I have made a number of quilts as part of a team in Caroline's quilting class. Our last effort was a selection of jelly roll strips we made into a French Braid quilt that was given to charity.
- 11) As mentioned above, my official quilting teachers have been Mary Mashuta and Caroline Lieberman. My *unofficial* teachers have been Mom, Aunt Sue, and many, many classmates. I am also a fan of the Missouri Star quilting videos on YouTube. I am willing to learn whatever I can from whoever is willing to teach.
- 12) Although I have been asked to teach quilting I have very rarely done so. I did help a fellow doctoral student wrestle with a commemorative she was making for her parents' wedding anniversary. I also guest taught Caroline's classes last year on sashiko techniques which was great fun.
- 13) I did enter a quilt in the quilt challenge at the Guild's show two years ago but I do not like my quilts out in public. Having been through the grading process most of my life I feel I can survive without anymore.
- 14) As I do not enter my quilts in shows I have not been given any awards for them.
- 15) None
- 16) None
- 17) My advice for future quiltmakers is: jump right in! Seize on an aspect that thrills you. It doesn't matter what you choose so long as it is something that calls to you. Do it without fear. Be willing to make mistakes, that is when you learn deepest. Do it without the expectation of recognition or reward but only to please yourself. Be sure and sign your work!

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