

Quilt Shows: Improving Your Chances to Win

Written by Carol Larimer

The next quilt you enter in a show may have a ribbon on it! Wondering what you can do to improve your chances for winning an award? The truth is that some quilts lose out from the lack of attention to details, details that are not difficult and do not require great skill.

Here are some things to remember:

- Inspect your quilt thoroughly before it leaves home!
- Remove any pet hairs. Remove any quilt markings that are obvious.
- Make sure it is clean, and free of odors, especially if you have a smoker in your home.
- Run your hands over both sides of the quilt, checking for thread tails, crossover threads, quilting knots popped out, forgotten basting threads, pins, or plastic tacks from basting guns.

- Strive to make piecing intersections meet precisely; sew all seams securely with thread color that blends.
- Square up the quilt top before attaching the borders. Measure borders to correct size before attaching.
- Borders should hang straight and flat without waving/wobbling.

- Hand-sew appliqué pieces with small/close/tight stitches, using a thread color to blend with the appliqué.
- Machine-sew appliqués neatly - without frayed edges.
- Strive to keep applique points sharp and curves smoothly rounded.
- Embellishments/embroidery/beading, etc. need to be secure, neat, and appropriate to the piece.

- Binding should be filled with batting, even in width, and have flat smooth connections. Diagonal joins lie flatter and smoother. For binding pieced from multiple multi-colored sections, butted joins are ok. Make square binding corners stay 90° square.

- Make quilting stitches even, consistent, smoothly rounded on curves, and straight lines stay straight.
- Machine quilting starts and stops should be unobtrusive. Avoid creating thread nests on back.
- Help your quilt lie flat and smooth by evenly distributing the quilting overall.
- The quilting designs are an important component to the total composition. Quilting designs should enhance and relate to the quilt top pattern – and they should fit and fill the spaces.

- Design elements are important, as well as color and workmanship, to create a visually appealing piece.
- Enjoy the process. Do what *you* love in the colors that are *your* favorites.

Don't be afraid to enter your quilt in a show! Remember that no one aspect is likely to make or break an entry.

- Quilts are judged on what can be seen. A judge is looking for all that is right with the piece and is not trying to check for every detail that is not perfect!
- An award on an entry means when all things are considered, *it is the best in its category on that day.*
- A show needs lots of entries and they can't *all* win a ribbon. But the quilters who design, construct, and complete those quilts ARE winners to those who come to view the show. Do show and share your quilts.
- And, consider having your quilt judged; your quilt just may be a winner!

Carol Larimer is a professional quilt show judge certified by the National Quilting Association since 1998. She judges traditional and modern quilting of all kinds, as well as innovative/art quilts - at local, regional, and national level quilt shows throughout the United States. Contact Carol at clarimer@suddenlink.net