

AMERICAN QUILT RETAILER

HELPING THE CREATIVE TEXTILE RETAILER IMPROVE BUSINESS PIECE BY PIECE



Quilt
Market
Spotlight:
Pittsburgh, 2009

Gray markets:
gray area

FREE-to-use pattern
speedbumps

Bonus FREE-to-use
pattern online!

**pillow
speedbumps**



PIECE BY PIECE from the publisher

I've read recently that "thrif is the new black." What's so new about this? Black is classic, versatile, practical and always dependable. And, as a close friend said, "I can decide to look 10 pounds heavier — or I can wear my black pants!" True, right?

This issue includes the Spring Quilt Market Spotlight, starting on page 24. Market in Pittsburgh was good, quiet perhaps, but good. I think the shock of last winter's financial plunges is leveling out. We're in what's being called the "new normal," and in our industry, things are okay, far better than other industries. Quilting and sewing have always been based on thrift and practicality. Quilting is a way of using up, making do. Sewing is a way to create something special, something made in a unique way, something that can't be bought. The pages of the Quilt Market Spotlight are full of projects with purpose. They are things your customers can make and use. Things your customers can make and give.

American Quilt Retailer has some of the best columnists, and at this point in each issue's production, I love to see what they have prepared for you. Ashley Smith's "Straight From the Hip," on page 18, talks about browsing blogs to learn more about young sewers. I do this, too! It's a nice lunchtime pastime. Anna Maria Horner's blog (www.annamariahomer.blogspot.com) is where I first noticed the appeal of zig-zags. Last winter she offered free directions and online visuals of "Folk Dance," her version of the old "zig-zag" quilt. Then, I started seeing zig-zags, rick rack, bargello, flamestitch and lightening bolts everywhere. It was all the inspiration for my own version, "Speedbumps," which is the FREE-to-use pattern in this issue on page 44. I got so carried away with zig-zags, we are even offering a second FREE-to-use pattern, "Pillow Speedbumps," using rick rack and linen, only available to our readers on our Web site. The pillow and quilt are featured on this issue's cover with special directions for use on page 43.

Joanna Figueroa of Fig Tree Quilts won a booth award at Quilt Market in the "merchandising" category. This is why she writes our "OnDisplay" column — I like to find experts! So, in this issue, she shares how you can create displays from her winning booth. See page 32. We also have a new columnist — Linda Griepentrog. Linda has many years of experience in sewing, our industry and journalism, and we think you'll like her new column — "Snippets." (See page 8.) I've always wanted to bring you these small bits of information, and Linda is the perfect person to do so.

Jim Salinas talks extensively on the benefits of pre-cuts and how to merchandise them in "Just Ask Jim" on page 10. Roseann Kermes talks about gifts in "Make it happen" on page 30. Helping your customer check off her holiday gift list is more smart marketing. Whether they make gifts or purchase ready-made gifts, let them look to you for ideas. Liesl Gibson of Oliver + S has written a special feature on "Merchandising for children's clothing." See page 40. Younger women want to learn to sew, and sewing for their children is creative and practical. Are you tapping into this market? Ann Logue, our freelance journalist, has researched and written an excellent piece on the gray area of "gray markets." (See page 20.) Todd Gibson, Liesl's husband, talked with me at market about this new "gray" retailing. I think Ann has done a good job explaining it and pointing out your options.

Keep your best efforts focused on what your customers need, and what you can do better than any other retailer. Be "thrif" your customers can count on. Stock the good-quality basics, variety not available elsewhere, and concentrate on offering friendly, knowledgeable service. Until next time — gratefully,



Joanna Figueroa of Fig Tree Quilts

American Quilt Retailer always tries to relay accurate and useful information to the best of its ability. However, all of the articles are meant to help guide you to become a better-informed business person by seeking out professional answers for your own individual business needs. *American Quilt Retailer* holds no responsibility for any financial consequences and only hopes you'll find generous financial gains from the information presented.

by Joanna Figueroa



merchandising goods with dynamic displays

Translating market booth displays to work for you

When Susan and I had a minute to chat during Spring Market in Pittsburgh, she asked if I would base my next OnDisplay article on my market booth. As we looked around, we both realized that there were many ideas that I had utilized in my booth that could easily be translated into effective store displays. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I saw that most quilt and fabric stores could be arranged as “rooms”— each with a different style and color palette. The same elements that make a successful market booth will make successful displays, vignettes or “rooms” in your store. Each area creating a different picture, using different fabrics and products, would stand on its own as a place with a certain feel, appealing to a certain customer. In marketing, it is the feel that is created that will often help customers to connect enough to make a purchase.

Folding camp beds can easily and inexpensively be set up to create mini-bedrooms throughout a store. Everyone loves to see a quilt on a bed, but the sheer space that is required for this kind of a setup is often prohibitive. In a 10-by-15-foot space, I easily fit three camp beds with three air mattresses along with three wooden French sidewalk chairs that served as bedside tables. The setup was not only simple, but inexpensive and completely versatile. Your beds could be rearranged, changed seasonally or dismantled in a manner of minutes. Not only useful to display quilts, the beds can show off pillowcases, throw pillows, bedskirts, bed trays and baskets filled with patterns and other goodies.

To add accents of light, I suspended simple hanging lamp fixtures from



Fig Tree Quilts' booth from Quilt Market in Pittsburgh. Camp beds with air mattresses display quilts, and French sidewalk chairs make bedside tables. Joanna hung small light fixtures and displayed a quilt on the floor like a colorful rug. The wire book display rack prevented too much traffic on the quilt. The small painted step ladder held small items. And, Fig Tree Quilts won the “best booth” award for “merchandising!” Congratulations!

the “rafters” above each bed. Make small, custom-covered fabric lamp shades and cover the hanging cord with a shirred fabric sleeve. Find an electrician to rig up this simple idea. Just be sure to check with your building’s electrical and fire codes. You’ll find your hanging shades attract so much attention, you’ll soon be asked to hold class or demo on how to cover a lampshade with fabric.

Another great idea is to place a quilt on the floor. I realize that this makes some folks shudder, but the idea definitely plays into the principle I am always encouraging of using the unexpected and most unused portions of your store for the most eye-catching displays. A quilt on the floor is not a hazard to your customers (or the quilt) as long as you strategically place some book or pattern racks along its edges and corners so that people notice to not step there. It will give folks a whole new perspective on the project and increase your display space.

Other small detail from my booth setup that could easily be used include using small wooden easels as pattern holders; decorating with simple sprigs of artificial fruits to add accents and interest to a display; using chairs not only as bedside tables, like I did, but also as little tables throughout the store in any nook and cranny that allows it; and, finally, cover and frame various size art canvases with new or upcoming fabrics. Display them throughout your store individually or in groups as fabric advertising.

As you think of what ideas might work in your own space, just remember to think of the store as a grouping of rooms and work to fill each room with many different details, each space telling a different fabric and product story.

*Joanna Figueroa is the owner and designer of Fig Tree Quilts and Fresh Vintage booklets. She designs fabric for Moda and lives in San Leandro, Calif.
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