

Golden Bridge

by Ann Johnston

The Story of a Quilt

How to make a quilt for a large bed, one that can be used for a long time, washed, and

sat on and one that makes everyone happy with how it looks, including me, is one big puzzle. When it came time to make a quilt for my niece Carrie and her husband Adrian, last summer, I was in the mood to make a monochromatic gold quilt. I wanted to make something that had personal meaning for them and for me. I started with ideas that would work in gold: mountains, sunsets. When I checked with Phyllis, her mother, to see if Carrie had anything against yellow, she gave me the solution — mentioning that Carrie likes my small bridge quilts and reminding me that Carrie and Adrian, had lived across the bay from the Golden Gate Bridge. Not only could I pursue my interest in bridges, but I could focus on one of my lifelong favourite places and they would bring a reminder of California and its sunshine to their future home, England.

The construction of something so large is daunting, even after the design is settled and sketched on grid paper, but my new studio makes it a lot easier. I quickly realized that the background would be more difficult to design and construct than the shapes of the foreground, and that I needed more fabric choices. So I dyed more golds in two-yard pieces, auditioned them and started.

It was my turn to put a quilt in the frame with my group, the Oswego Quilters, so as I designed the quilt, I planned hand quilting. I chose to use cotton sateen because they have told me so many times how soft it is to needle and I like how it reflects light and texture. I planned piecing and appliqué in a scale that would be enhanced by, as well as show-off the hand quilting. I chose wool



1. Golden Bridge, 94" x 96" (239 cm x 244 cm). Hand dyed cotton sateen, hand quilted by The Oswego Quilters. (Photo: Bill Bachhuber)

batting because it would be warm and light and give loft to the quilted shapes, as well as being easy on the quilting fingers. I marked it with chalk pencil and stretched it on the frame at Helen Grigg's house and with eleven weeks to go before the wedding, wondered if it would be done in time. We had eleven Tuesdays, but it only took seven! The hand quilting added dimension and detail that gives a lot of interest to the design.

We were all pleased — all the quilters and all the wedding party.

My photos overleaf show some of the steps along the way.

The majority of photos are by Ann or Jim Johnston



2. Carrie and Adrian on their wedding day



3. Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, California. Slide taken in 1973.



4. I outlined the size of the quilt on graph paper and drew the bridge so both towers fit on the top of the bed, water and sky dropping down on the sides and end. Above the original is an enlargement I used at every step



6. My low-water immersion process makes it easy to dye quickly. Each container has 2 yards, and about 6 cups of liquid. Varying the containers, where I pour the dye and the stirring, changes the way the dye flows



5. The construction of a piece about 8 feet on a side is daunting, even after the colours and design are settled. When I auditioned colours on the wall, I realized I needed more bigger pieces



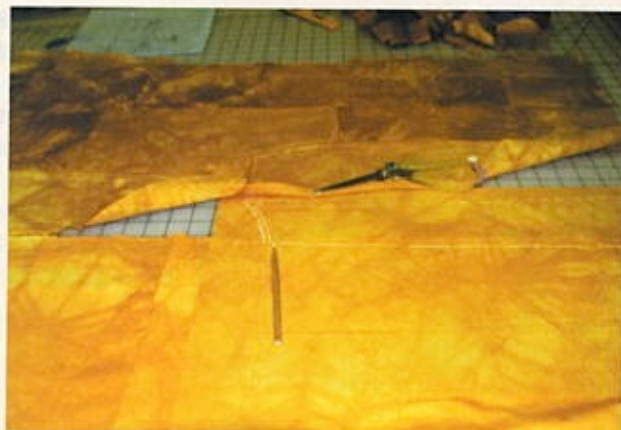
7. I used blue tape (low-tack) to mark the edges of the quilt and the grid lines in my enlarged drawing. 1" on the drawing equals 4" on the wall. I used cut off selvages to roughly outline the bridge



8. As I pieced, I could see through the parts I put back up, to plan where the seams in the background would be in relation to the bridge towers and to see what size piece to fit next



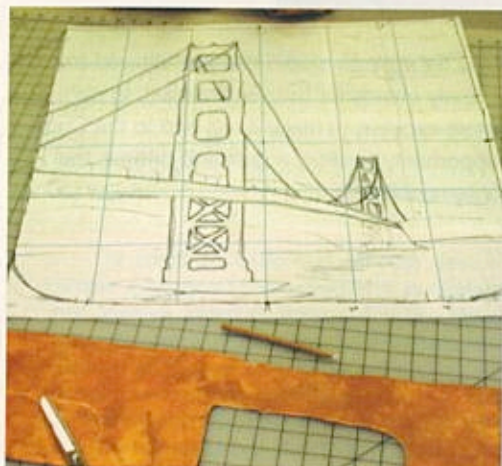
9. I used every inch of my sewing room for cutting, ironing and sewing. I tried out a colour for the bridge before I cut the actual pieces and before deciding what colour to use for the hills



10. Where the bridge meets the hills, I made the pieces of the water fit between the ridges of the hills by laying the well-ironed parts on the table and drawing the necessary seam lines



11. By the time the background was assembled, the selvages underneath were all out of place. I squared it with the edges and put blue tape on top to mark exactly where to place the bridge



12. I folded the fabric for the towers down the middle and drew the shapes with a chalk pencil directly on it using my enlargement for guidance. I cut through both layers at the same time to ensure symmetry



13. Between the table and the wall, the tall towers were hard to keep straight and vertical. I used an acid free, water-soluble glue stick to baste them in place

14. I finished the appliqué edges with a narrow satin zigzag stitch in matching cotton thread. The piece was so big, I wouldn't have been able to do this if there were more turns

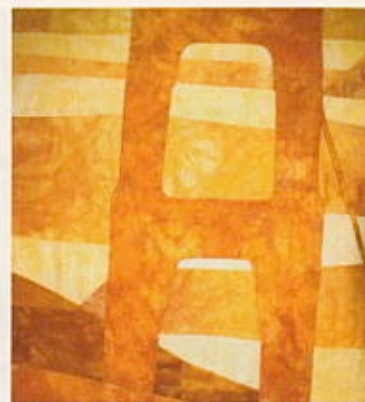
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15. In order to make a pattern for the bridge roadway, I put the fabric on the background and drew an approximate chalk line, cutting and refining the shapes according to my drawing, before gluing and sewing



16. I hung the quilt and pinned the long strips of the suspension cable at each end, gluing smooth curves, overlapping the towers where necessary and then sewing — the hardest part of the quilt



17. I marked features of the bridge using my drawing and photos with washable red and blue chalk pencils. I left out markings where it was for outlining appliqué or 1/4" distance from a seam



18. Helen Grubb and Helen Grigg quilting. The light from the window shows the shapes created by the quilting. The box is for the thread ends



19 and 20. The first day we fit 14 in around the quilt. As it got smaller we could only sew on the ends. We worked elbow to elbow, knee to knee and finished it in seven Tuesdays. Helen worked on it in her spare time between the Tuesdays and threatened us with no lunch one day!



21. Some of the Oswego Quilters on Helen's deck over Lake Oswego. Their quilting makes this quilt unique and special



22. Four of the fifteen quilts in my exhibit in Coos Bay, Oregon. I think Golden Bridge looks better on a bed than on the wall.

(Photo credit: Coos Art Museum)

I am extremely grateful for my new studio that has allowed me to expand my horizons, to my friends for their enthusiasm, to my family for giving me more excuses to make quilts and to the Coos Art Museum for the opportunity to show a quilt that bridges the traditional and the contemporary. **P&Q**

First, Ann learned to sew, then she learned to dye fabric. In between, she earned degrees in Literature and Geography, married, had two sons and taught school in several countries. By now, Ann has been making quilts and putting dye on fabric for over 25 years. Her years of experimentation have led to mountains of hand dyed fabric and quilts, thousands of miles of travel, numerous exhibitions and articles, four books and not a few aches and pains. Ann teaches workshops, lectures and exhibits her fabric and quilts both nationally and internationally.

For more information about Ann and to look at excerpts from her books: *Color by Design: Paint and Print with Dye* (AJ, 2001), *The Quilter's Book of Design* (QDP, 2000), *Color By Accident: Low Water Immersion Dyeing* (AJ, 1997), and *Dye Painting!* (AQS, 1992), visit her web site: www.annjohnston.net