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Learn Online with Canadian Teachers!



by Susan Purney Mark

As quilters, we are always involved with learning something new. Whether it is new techniques, designs from the latest books or a workshop with a famous quilting instructor, the ideas presented to us in a wide variety of media keep us making the latest quilt, art piece or wall hanging and supporting a multi-billion dollar industry around the world.

We all learn in different ways—from books, DVDs, guild workshops, large conferences and festivals and now, with the ever increasing growth of virtual learning, many of us are learning online. Do you wonder about a particular method of appliqué or the opinions about a new sewing machine purchase? Now we can simply search or “Google It” to instantly get our answers. There’s always an answer online for even the most obscure questions, why should quilting be any different?

Four well known Canadian quilting teachers have moved to online teaching, and each has tailored their approach in distinctive and different ways. Each teacher brings many years of quality instruction, and are presently sharing their unique styles and methods for online learning with thousands of quilters from around the world. What could be better?

Both Daphne Greig and Susan Purney Mark began working with Quilt University (QU) in its early days, when an online environment was unusual. Carol Miller, the owner of QU, developed an online place to teach quilting classes for all levels of quilters. Quilt University was a resounding success, providing access to workshops for quilters in all parts of the world. After Carol’s passing in

2013, Daphne continued on to the Academy of Quilting to continue providing classes, while Susan developed a series of video workshops that she posted online.

Pamela Allen developed her online presence after an unfortunate incident with US Customs essentially banned her from teaching workshops at guilds or festivals in

the United States. So she developed online classes as a supplement to that lost income. It has worked very well for Pamela as she can even teach in her “jammies!”

Like all teachers, Brandy Lynn Maslowski loves to travel across Canada teaching, but began to receive numerous requests to teach



Cubism Piece by Pamela Allen | TOP PAGE BORDER Fabric by Susan Purney Mark

by Skype or create videos for guilds that had no budget to fly her out. As a result she dove straight into the world of online teaching with live webinars, where students can chat online as they are learning.

Just as in a regular classroom, interaction with students and the opportunity to ask and answer questions is critical. Pamela sets up a private Yahoo group for each class. Students are invited to join and can stay on the group for a length of time after the class ends. For Susan, her workshops are set up in a password-protected webpage and students can comment and discuss right on the page. Photos can be shared and questions between each student work can be done in a separate section. At the Academy of Quilting, where Daphne teaches, each class has a classroom forum where the instructor and students can communicate. Students can ask questions, share information and learn from other students in the class as well as the instructor. A gallery for sharing photographs and those from current and previous students is also provided for each class.

Beyond her webinars, Brandy has also embarked on her 52 Weeks of Fibre Art videos on her YouTube channel. Brandy is also known for her Canadian Quilt Talk podcast, featuring a series of weekly podcasts on judging, interviews, and product reviews. The workshops are set up using a variety of different systems. Some use Yahoo Groups, or a combination of print and photos—even video learning is increasingly popular. For Susan, posting a couple of short workshops at no charge on Youtube and Vimeo is a way to introduce herself to prospective students. Brandy uses a combination of live webinar video with power point photos for clear close-ups of the techniques, and she focuses on doing the entire project online along with the students in the time allotted.

For each teacher, making the technology easy for the student is of primary importance. Students have a wide range of computer skills, so it's vital that they enjoy the experience rather than struggle with the technology. Basic computer skills and the ability to take simple photographs is generally all that is needed.

For the longer workshops, interaction with the students is always at least once daily during class time, which can be single- to multi-lesson formats continuing over several weeks. All messages are seen by all the students as well as the pictures. Pamela

responds several times a day when she notices new emails and other students are also encouraged to comment on any problems or critique advice or an art history lesson she may post.

Truly, there seems to be something to fit every student and every schedule! Many classes seem to follow a three to four week format with a new assignment to download or work on every week.

The range of workshop topics is as varied as any conference or festival; from paper piecing to PaintStiks™, from elements of art to machine quilting and from screen printing to Seminole piecing—there is a wide range of techniques for anyone to learn! Pamela has a strong art background and includes composition, contrast and still life as some of her topics, while Daphne is a well-known author and some of her workshops are developed from her patterns and books. Susan focuses on printing, wax resists and fabric dyeing, as she has trained in textile design. Teachers are always wanting to introduce subjects that both appeal and challenge their students, but most importantly, the learning should be fun! The advantages of teaching online include the ability to teach more than 24 students in a class, which is a common enrollment number at conferences. For Daphne it means that she doesn't have to pack up her supplies, print handouts and spend valuable business time travelling to and from a workshop. She has all her quilts and samples available to show students and can post additional photographs or instructions to the classroom immediately.

Each teacher stressed the importance of building relationships with their students, whether teaching online or in person. The students can keep in touch with their teachers through Facebook, newsletters and blogs. And where are these students? They are as close as down the street and as far away as Iceland, Asia and Australia. The students have fun meeting one another, sometimes friends or siblings sign up and take a workshop together. What a great way to be together when separated by distance! They learn about these teachers through magazines, books, associations such as Studio Art Quilt Association and internet lists. The resources are wide and varied.

Now why would you take an online workshop? First, it's a great way to learn from the best of Canadian teachers! Maybe you don't



Sample by Brandy Lynn Maslowski



Fabric Sample by Susan Purney Mark



Ripples Paper Piecing by Daphne Greig

belong to a guild or you find it challenging to get to workshops? Learn online! Perhaps you are a night owl and want to quilt to all-night radio? Learn online! You want to start and stop the video or work faster than other students? Learn online! Don't want to lug the machine and stash to a class? Learn online! The teachers would LOVE to meet you!