



SHARING MY PASSION

A Conversation with Tamara Kate

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Based in Montreal, Tamara Kate is a licensed fabric and product designer, quilter and illustrator. Spending her youth in the Caribbean plays a large part in Tamara's design aesthetic, which is greatly inspired by nature, colour and pattern. An early passion for sewing, watercolour and drawing led to an education in textiles, graphic design and art history. Today, Tamara plays on all of these influences to tell stories through pattern and quilt design. She creates work that is fresh, joyous and youthful, with a touch of whimsy.

Oh Canada!

I love detail and texture and nature is a great source of inspiration for me.

How long have you been an artist?

Growing up in a family of creatives meant I practised some form of artwork for as long as I can remember. In my teens, I did ink drawing and watercolour painting, then attended the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, with the intention of studying graphic design and art history. I was quickly captivated by the textile studio and switched my major to weaving. Sadly, I haven't returned to weaving for a very long time now, though my loom sits waiting for me in the basement.

Tell us about your attraction to design.

Graphic design has been a constant passion throughout my life. I am greatly attracted to a good, bold image with strong balance and an interesting colour palette. I love detail and texture and nature is a great source of inspiration for me. All of these elements come into play when I design fabric or a quilt.

How did you become involved in textile design?

About six years ago, I was feeling creatively sapped and decided to set myself a challenge to learn how to put a design into repeat (a necessity for fabric design) and to design a new pattern every week for a year. My platform of choice was Spoonflower, an online textile-printing company offering custom printing to the public (www.spoonflower.com). Spoonflower hosts weekly design contests with a given theme, so I simply needed to dive in. I learned so much over those 52 weeks. At the end of the year, my work was noticed by Michael Miller Fabrics, who offered to license my work on an ongoing basis.

To anyone wanting to pursue a creative business path, I cannot stress enough the importance of putting yourself out in the world. Don't wait with the idea you're not good enough yet. Jump in and start building your community of like-minded souls. You will gain the skills and confidence along the way—it is while doing that we improve. You never know where the journey may lead you!

When and why did quilting become a passion for you?

My first fabric collection with Michael Miller was shown at *Quilt Market* in spring 2013. I had to fill a booth with enough projects to show my vision of how my fabrics could be used, in order to inspire buyers to want the collection for their stores. I can honestly say I entered quilt making out of necessity—at the time, I didn't >



Flight Patterns fabrics, my first collection with Michael Miller.



know anyone I could ask to create quilts for me. It was a very intense, steep, learning curve—I made loads of mistakes.

Once the 2013 market was over, I realized how much I enjoyed the process. I found my tribe with my local, modern quilt guild (Montreal MQG) and submerged myself in this new mode of design and making. Now, quilting is an integral part of my life and my business. I make quilts for each new fabric collection I create (my twelfth collection will be hitting stores January 2019), I design and make quilts for other businesses and, occasionally, I even find time to make quilts for myself and those I love.

What is your favourite part of being a teacher?

I have been teaching quilting, periodically, since fall 2016. Of all the different facets that make up my quilting life, I absolutely love teaching. Sharing my passion with a group of individuals, who are enthusiastic about creating, is a joy. Seeing the lightbulb go on in the eyes of students when I talk about my vision of working with colour, describe a trick for making a technique easier or describe my process of designing a certain type of quilt, is so gratifying.

Tell us about your workshops at Quilt Canada 2019.

At *Quilt Canada 2019*, I will be participating in two ways: I will have a booth in the Merchant Mall area of the show, selling my fabrics, and I will be teaching five different workshops.

Two of the workshops are technique-based paper piecing; students should get well on their way to completing a small-sized wall hanging. In *Paper Piecing a Modern Alphabet*, we create a fun, graphic alphabet. In *Paper Piecing the Maple Leaf*, we create an iconic, colourful and patriotic maple leaf.

In the third workshop, *Making a Traditional Block Modern*, I will share techniques and tricks I commonly use in order to make a more modern-looking quilt while using a traditional block. Students will be encouraged to create their own unique quilt using a *flying geese* block.

The fourth workshop, *Pixelation with the Big and Juicy Quilt*, is all about making a visually arresting quilt with the simplest of blocks—squares—in a restricted colour palette. >



Back to School, detail.

Lastly, *Embroidery for Today*, will be a more physically relaxed workshop based on another of my passions, hand embroidery. I will teach my five favourite stitches and students will start working on their own unique take on a small piece I designed and printed especially for this class.

What advice do you share with first-time workshop students?

Technically speaking, I always emphasize the importance of good, basic quilting habits: iron your fabrics, both before you start and as you sew; cut accurately, unless improv quilting; and respect the quarter-inch seam allowance. If you have these guidelines ingrained, the making and creating process will be much more enjoyable, because you will be eliminating a majority of problems quilters encounter. Most importantly though, my greatest hope in teaching each class, is that students leave with a greater sense of confidence to trust in their own vision and make projects uniquely their own. ✦



ABOVE *Big and Juicy*

BELOW *Words of Wisdom*, detail.

