

The Value of Value

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No matter how many quilts I make or how many years I've been quilting, there's always something to learn. Always!

I remember a quilt class I took many years ago—not about value, per se, mind you—where the teacher spent the first hour of the class having us sort our fabrics into seven piles; the first was light-light, the last was dark-dark, and the one in the middle was medium. And then we needed to create two piles that bridged the gap on either side of the medium—these were called light and light-medium on the light side and medium-dark and dark on the opposite side. Doesn't seem like a difficult task, does it, but it was challenging for almost all of us.

The benefit of this sorting exercise, however, was to expand our understanding of how to use a full range of value and its importance in that class quilt project. Oh, and by the way, in every quilt each of us made from that moment on.

And then I realized the bedrock of almost every good quilt making class includes lessons in value!

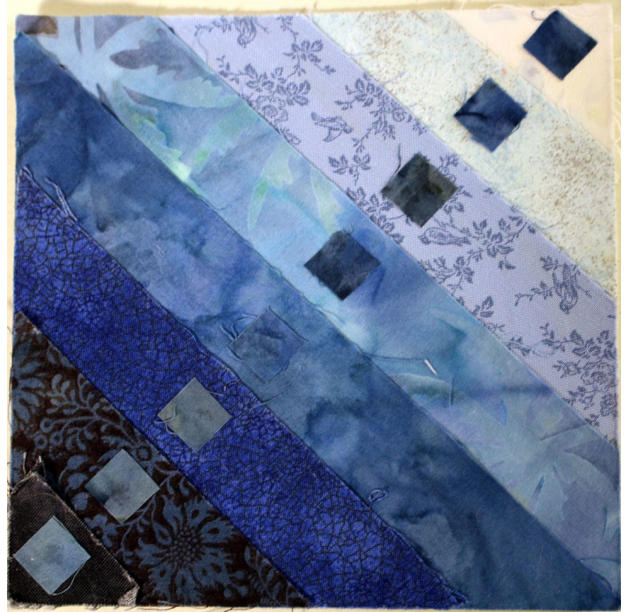
Fast forward to today and this confession: I am still a student of value and continue to learn. I know if I do not take that first important step to categorize my fabrics by value and use that range to evaluate my quilt design, the quilt may suffer.



Host Susan Brubaker Knapp and Grace Errea on the set of "Quilting Arts TV."

Good teachers make lasting impressions, though, and I still hear my teacher's voice in my head when I am sorting my fabrics by value. Good teachers also share examples and communicate clearly. I met Grace Errea on the set of "Quilting Arts TV" a few years ago, when she was there to film segments for Series 1800 and Series 1900. She approached each of her segments, her lessons, like any good teacher—she was well prepared with examples, she spoke clearly and eloquently, she made her 'lessons' fun for the viewer, and she was—and is—an expert on the subject of making fabulous quilts.

Grace has also written for [Quilting Arts Magazine](#) and I treasure her article about value. All of her tools and quilts show the importance of value but I especially love the example that The Blue Match Tool shows—small blue 'chips' of the same fabric are placed on strips of light, medium, and dark background fabric. It is amazing how the chip seems to lighten and darken and, yet, that color does not change, just the background does. What a great lesson to illustrate that value is relative to all of the fabrics you might use in your quilt.



The Blue Match Tool by Grace Errea

Grace created an entire online class, "Understanding Value in Quilt Design," where she goes into great depth in her lessons and helps viewers appreciate how to use value in their quilts. Her method uses a value range of eight fabrics and she demonstrates this with a Color Chart. I'm grateful every time I watch a video or read an article about important principles in quilt design such as value; I am reminded to practice those principles in my own work.

Grace's method really helps the viewer focus on value rather than color to create great quilts.

I love this quote from Grace's writing about value: "As you work, keep in mind that if something is working beyond your expectations, give value the credit. By the same token, if there is a problem, look for a value solution first." Wise and helpful words for us all.

The "[Understanding Value in Quilt Design with Grace Errea](#)" workshop will be running again soon. Don't miss it!