



Kaye England

Being in the right place at the right time set Kaye England on a path of creativity – and she hasn't looked back.

By Hayley Penrose

It all started with a friend and an antique quilt for Kentucky-born designer Kaye England. After purchasing the quilt, she then showed it to her friend, who happened to be a designer, who said it would make a “wonderful fabric collection.” The rest, as they say, is history.

Growing up in a family of needleworkers, there has always been a crafting influence in Kaye's life, but it wasn't until the 1980's that she began

quilting and fabric collecting in earnest. “I'm not really ‘clear’ when this all happened,” she reflects. “Things fell into place after I opened my first quilt shop and had my first fabric collection. My first book was published around this time, leading to 15 books and numerous patterns over the years.”

Not one to shy away from a busy schedule, Kaye currently produces three or four fabric lines a year and makes as many as 30 quilts over the same period.

Not only does she design for Wilmington Prints, but she also heads her own publishing company, Kaye England Publications. At a point in her career where she can spend more time at home, Kaye enjoys making use of her sewing room and studio. “Space is there anytime I get the urge to sew, design and create,” she muses. “I'm sketching, drawing or planning often. Graph paper is my best friend in this department and is almost always lying around whenever a thought appears.”

With all that time spent designing and creating, you wouldn't think there would be time for anything else but, being an early riser, Kaye also manages to put in many hours on her farm, home to eight llamas and three goats. Her ‘barn duties’ include cleaning and trimming hooves, settling disputes over food and mowing the pastures or lawn. “I love gardening,” she adds. “I have way too many beds to tend but with slowing down my travel schedule, more time to enjoy this hobby.” Kaye also finds time to scrapbook, journal and play piano.

Quilting and fabric design, however, remain her number one interest, and have done ever since she made her first quilt, a log cabin design, and designed the ‘Callie lu Sunflower’



Fall Frolic range

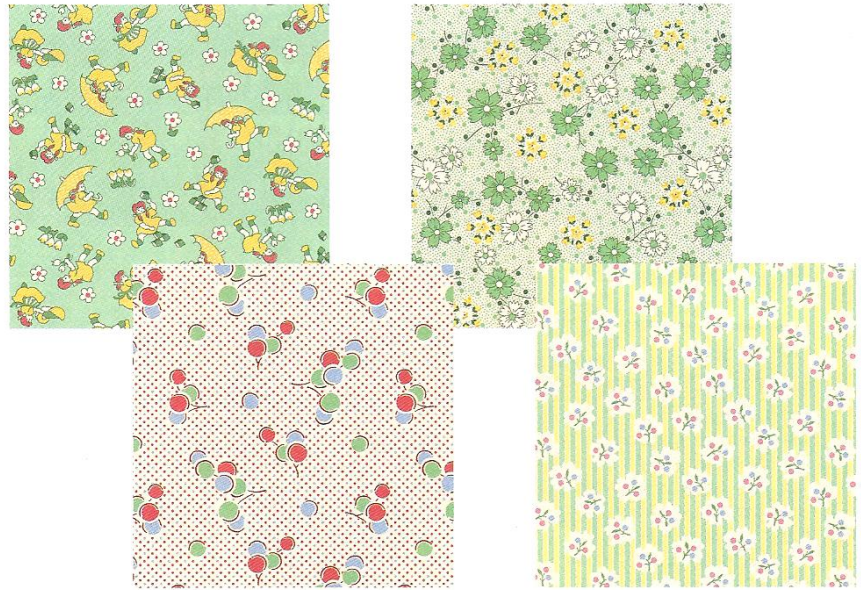
DESIGNER PROFILE

quilt, which launched her lengthy career in re-creating new designs from vintage fabrics.

Her career has definitely not been free from designing disasters and disappointments. "Like many, I have certainly thrown more than a few [designs] away. I have no issue with piecing a block, deciding it didn't work and then tossing it without a glance," Kaye explains. "As for a major project, they all worked in my eyes, however, the real test is how it works in the market and that is sometimes a different story. I strive to create something with good content and design then it's in the hands of others."

Inspiration comes easily to Kaye as she is constantly absorbing ideas from the world around her to develop her designs. As for her greatest tool – "I would say my 'mind', by that I mean the ability to look at and create a change in design." There are many other designers who have caught Kaye's eye over the years, although she tries not to emulate them in her own work. "I adore many and have been influenced by many but I would not single any one person out as a favourite [although] Mary Ellen Hopkins had a great influence over my piecing life and how I view patchwork," she says.

To those interested in design and wanting to join the industry, Kaye's one



Spring Showers range

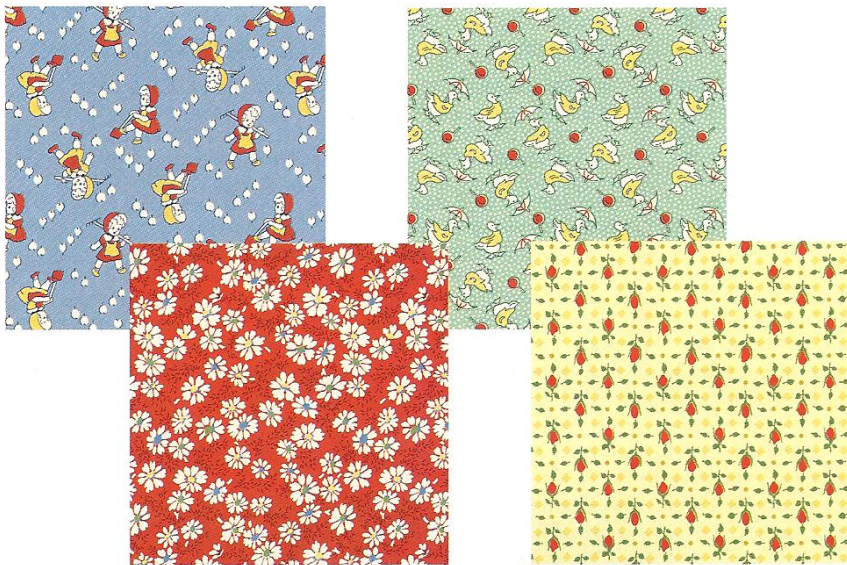
piece of advice is to follow your heart. "The industry can be fickle, requiring some change in your work but ultimately it has to be something you enjoy," she notes. The patchwork industry though, is here to stay according to Kaye. "I do think it is enjoying a productive growth with a new generation of designers and sewers and I have no doubt it will continue to grow."

Kaye is currently preparing for a new book, a new DVD and new projects for her annual shop owner seminar in January. "I am always working on

something, or more than a few things," she says, and it is this energy and passion that sees her family describe her as inspiring, loveable and busy.

Over the years Kaye has spent a lot of time travelling throughout the United States and internationally, running workshops and giving lectures where she showcases her fabrics, patterns and quilts alongside her own thoughts and outlook on life. Through her teaching and travelling, Kaye has met many quilting enthusiasts from beginners right through to the very experienced. "I have had the luxury of teaching in every state in the US and many foreign countries," she recalls. "My life has been enriched by making new friends around the globe as I travel and teach. I've loved everywhere I've been but home is my favourite."

While it is not without its challenges, Kaye could not imagine doing anything else. "This career path has genuinely been a journey of excitement and enrichment. All my travels, people I've met, students I've enjoyed teaching and sights I have seen, all serve me daily. I can't imagine a different journey."



Summer Days range

For more information on
Kaye England and her designs,
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