

Transparency

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Amaze your family! Fool your friends! They will be *very* impressed when you show them a block or quilt that incorporates the illusion of transparent color. In this special effect, one color appears to lie over another, and where the two colors overlap, a third color is formed. It takes "just-right" fabrics for successful transparencies, but when it works, wow! We start with a crash course in color, then make three simple blocks, followed by two more challenging ones.

Supply list

Rotary mat, ruler, and cutter (treat yourself to a new blade)

Two regular-size glue sticks or one large one (make sure it's fresh)

Fabric—1/4 yard pieces are fine, or scraps that are at least 9 inches square.

You'll need a wide variety of fabrics, from all around the color wheel. Following is a list of the twelve colors on the wheel with just a few common names in parentheses to help you visualize what they look like. (In reality, there are *many* versions of each color.) *Try to bring at least one light, medium, and dark for each color listed here—you'll have greater success (and more fun) with lots of fabrics!*

- Yellow (primary yellow, daffodil)
- Yellow-green (olive, apple green)
- Green (grass green, mint)
- Blue-green (turquoise, teal)
- Blue (primary blue, slate)
- Blue-violet (periwinkle, iris)
- Violet (purple, eggplant)
- Red-violet (magenta, fuchsia)
- Red (primary red, brick)
- Red-orange (terra cotta, salmon)
- Orange (pumpkin, spice)
- Yellow-orange (mango, cheddar)

Avoid fabrics that are very light or very dark. They tend to read as white or black. Organize your fabrics by color. When in doubt, bring more fabric!

Very important note: In addition to the colors on the color wheel, bring a variety of multicolor fabrics, in particular pieces where the colors look a bit mixed, swirled, or otherwise combined in a contemporary way (as opposed to a realistic floral, for example.) It's best if multicolor fabrics contain only a few colors. Avoid "muddy" batiks; they're already too "mixed up." ***Study my examples to see what kinds of fabrics work.***

I provide the printed sheets for the mock-block exercises and a mini color wheel. (If you already have a color wheel, bring it.) I also provide a “fabric library,” arranged by color, for you to use if you get stuck using your fabrics.

Big hint: Fabrics that are mottled or “shot with light” are wonderful for creating transparencies. Batiks and hand-dyes are great, but any fabric that has the sensation of light coming from behind or shining through from above has possibilities.