

Right
Early Snow

Below right
Catch the Winds

All quilts shown
are by Ann Lauer,
Grizzly Gulch
Gallery



Living the Life

Grizzly Gulch Quilts

Gillian Cooper talks to the designer
behind the Early Snow pattern

March's issue included an article by Margeret Wilson about her serendipitous finding of quilts in Canada, I was intrigued by the pattern she had bought, *Early Snow*. So I contacted the company who produced it, Grizzly Gulch Gallery, and had an email chat with the owner and designer, Ann Lauer, to find out more about it. Sometimes technology can be a wonderful thing!

BEARS AND MOUNTAINS

Firstly, I asked Ann about the unusual name of her company. It turns out that Grizzly Gulch is the area where she lives. 'Gulch' is a v-shaped valley and this gulch is in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, above the small town of Helena in Montana, USA. This isn't gentle rolling hills like we have in Britain, this is real

mountainous terrain. It sounds an idyllic location. Some of our readers may also see deer daily around their houses (I sometimes see them near my home), but how many of us have moose wandering by occasionally? In the spring and autumn, Ann cannot put out bird feeders in her garden as they may attract black bears! Ann sounds passionate about her home, saying that the beautiful natural setting provides her with endless inspiration. I'm not sure how much work I would get done if I had an 8 foot glass door in my studio giving such a wonderful view. I have a feeling I would spend a lot of time just looking at it.

Ann's working day has settled into a productive rhythm. She starts working in the studio each morning, taking a break in the late afternoon, to take her dog for a long hike or,



as now, a cross country ski, through the forest. When we were chatting, she said there was about 18 inches of snow on the ground with another storm on its way. Getting out into the wilderness gives her a chance to get away from the project she has been working on and think about it from a distance. She finds this helpful and when she returns to the studio, she is fired up again, ready to proceed with a fresh approach.

PRIOR LIFE

Before moving to Montana, Ann lived in St. Louis, Missouri, where she started and ran a designer studio making original custom fabric art pieces for commercial and residential clients of interior designers. These were often contemporary designs that were up to 12 feet in size. However, the draw of the outdoors was strong and four years ago, she moved to Montana so that she could be surrounded by the outdoors that she loves. At the same time, she made the decision to return to her main love and specialize in quilts for beds and walls, using her 25 years of quilting experience. She put together her strategy to make this possible and now designs quilt patterns for other quilters. This gives her art quilts the widest exposure possible and allows her to experiment with a multitude of techniques and to work with major fabric manufacturers designing patterns for their latest fabric designs/collections. It was one of these patterns that Margaret purchased in Canada.

QUILT PATTERN BUSINESS

Ann was kind enough to explain how this business works. The quilt pattern designing business centres around two International Wholesale Quilt Markets. One is held in May in the northern part of the US, this year it is in Portland, Oregon, and the other in October in Houston, Texas, just before the huge International Quilt Festival. The fabric manufacturers send her fabrics so that she can use their new collections in her patterns. Although this sounds amazing - can you imagine being sent fabric to make your quilts from - often the fabrics are not available until a week or two before the Market. Ann then has a mad rush, working night and day to get the quilts made and the patterns printed in time for the Markets. Also, this means that Ann does not necessarily get to select the fabrics with which she has to work, adding an extra challenge. Ann is passionate about colour and it can be testing because it forces her to work with colours and patterns that she might not normally select.

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This is only her second full year as a quilt pattern design company, but already she has 40 patterns in the line. They are basically divided into three categories: pictorial using raw edge appliqué with all images drawn in reverse in the pattern, geometric designs featuring large prints that are too nice to cut into small pieces, and Bargello and other quilt-as-you-go designs. Many of these Bargello designs also have raw edge appliqué added to the Bargello design. This is one of Ann's favourite techniques combining abstract design and appliqué; Ann uses strip piecing to make the background, and then appliqué pieces are laid over the Bargello to add realism to the composition. *Early Snow* is an example of this technique.

WHERE TO BUY

All of the large national distributors and catalogue companies in the US carry Grizzly Gulch patterns. Some

of them sell internationally to shops outside of the US, so you may be lucky and find Ann's patterns in a quilt shop, although I couldn't find any listed on the web in the UK. Grizzly Gulch does not have a specific UK distributor, so this could be an opportunity for some enterprising distributor out there as Ann would be interested in working with someone from the UK.

You can see Ann's patterns and buy via her website www.GrizzlyGulchGallery.com. Although the checkout portion is not set up for international use at this time, Ann is happy for you to email her a list of any patterns you like and she will work out the cost including international postage and any relevant import taxes. ♦

Above left
Afternoon Delight

Above right
Love that Print

Below
Up Stream

