

Marilyn Belford

Class # 3: Realistic Fabric Portraits

Supply List:

- a clear color photo or slide
- muslin for the foundation
- 19" x 24" pad of tracing paper or size appropriate for your plans. Or a roll of the very thinnest clear vinyl (from JoAnns or WalMart)
- 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of transparency film (for overhead projector use) See note below.
- piece of foam core board large enough for the enlarged image
- graphite or other transfer paper
- drafting tape
- an ultra fine-line Sharpie™ marker
- paper scissors (not your favorite) for cutting fusible web and paper, and a fabric scissors
- tweezers (optional, but really helpful)
- repositionable fusible web (double-sided).
 - I use Steam-a-Seam 2 and Steam-a-Seam 2 LITE. You can purchase it by the yard from rolls at fabric shops. It also comes packaged as sheets in a plastic bag. I like to buy a little at a time (1 yard) because it has the tendency to dry out (more on that later on). However, if you have to mail order it, play safe and buy 2 yards.
- sewing machine (with feed-dog down capability)
- darning foot, quilting foot or embroidery foot
- appliqué foot
- assorted threads. See the note below on thread types.
- basic sewing supplies (pins, needles)
- needles should be Metallica, Metafil or Topstitch. They have a longer eye without added width and help prevent the fraying of threads. I generally use a #80 for the cotton lightweight threads (#60).
- lightweight tear-away paper stabilizer
- a few pieces of assorted fabric to practice free-motion stitching. Some solids, some large flower prints, and some large geometrics.
- Lots of bobbins to match the threads used.

Supply fee: \$0

Note: The transparency film can be purchased at any copy center or at an office supply or school supply store. If you have a slide, you can use a slide projector.

A computer with scanner and Photoshop program, and/or CorelDraw is useful.

FABRIC

You will need lots of assorted fabric pieces, skin tones and prints that read as a solid from a few feet away. Light mauves, light olives for shadows. Batiks that shift colors are good, as well as marbelized fabric, and fossil ferns. Please pre-wash all fabric.

These fabrics for faces are somewhat magnified so that you can see the print. Note the various textures and tones. You will be doing a lot of fussy cutting. For example, using fabric that shifts from a natural skin tone to an olive hue is good for shading in such areas as under the eye.



Assorted fabric for faces

These fabrics are good for hair, including cat fur. The first time I used cat fur for hair I had to close my eyes before I could cut the cute kitty cat into smithereens. Patterns of wood grain are marvelous, as are marbelized swirls. The fabrics on the right might prove nice for curls.



Fabric assortment for hair

A Note on Threads

There is a vast selection of thread types and sizes in the market place. There is cotton, rayon, polyester, silk, monofilament and metallic. Choose thread to serve specific purposes. Each type has distinct physical properties and characteristics. Polyester, for example, retains its round shape at all times, whereas cotton, rayon and silk tend to lie flatter on the fabric. I would choose the latter for shading and the polyester for distinctive outlining, as it will be more raised.

Thread size plays an important role in your choice of thread. The standard size used in regular sewing is usually 40 wt, sometimes 50 wt. Machine embroidery uses 60 wt and 50 wt. Heavy-duty sewing uses number 30. Sometimes you will see the thread size shown as 50/2. The top number is the size and the bottom number is the ply (the number of filaments wound together). The larger the size number the finer the thread.

For shading, I like to use number 60 (fine). With the finer thread, I can go over the same area with a second color (creating a blend) without adding bulk or stiffness. However,

color choice is my prime consideration, and if I cannot find the exact color I want in the finer thread, I will use any weight thread with the desired color. Just adjust the stitches accordingly.

Try to match the colors closely to the tones in the fabric you selected for the skin, hair, eyes and mouth. You might also want some colors that may be used to highlight something, like light shining on hair (usually a slightly lighter hue than the original), or a deeper color than the fabric to emphasize a shadow.