Quilting Choices and Finishing Details

For the final installment of this series, let's talk about the quilting itself. Most shows define a quilt as three layers—the top, batting, and backing—held together with stitching.

The style, density, design, and thread colors are personal choices made by the quiltmaker. Whether you choose custom quilting or edge-to-edge quilting may depend on your design goals, your preferences, and sometimes your budget.

As you make quilting decisions, consider how stitching supports the quilt as a whole:

- Does the quilting add texture, visual interest, or movement?
- Does it fill negative space in a way that supports the overall composition?
- Does it contribute to the quilt's design, theme, or narrative?
- Does it enhance the piecing, or does it distract from it?
- Does the finished quilting help the quilt feel polished and complete?

A few workmanship details can make a meaningful difference in how the quilting is evaluated:

- Quilting motifs should be dense enough to hold the quilt sandwich securely together.
- Quilting density should be consistent and well balanced across the entire piece.
- Stitches should be even in length on both the front and back.
- Straight lines should be straight, and curves should be smooth.
- Starts, stops, knots, and thread tails should be hidden or neatly secured.
- All marking lines should be successfully removed.
- Accurate backtracking helps keep the quilting design clean and intentional.

NACQJ Certified Judges are not here to remake your quilt or tell you which choices you should have made. We are not the "quilt police"; we simply evaluate the quilt in front of us. Judge's comments are intended to encourage you in your craft, recognize excellence in workmanship, and help you identify areas for continued growth. We love seeing your creativity, hard work, and attention to detail. Have the courage to enter your quilts in a show and be proud of the time and care you have invested in your work.

Happy quilting,

Terri Miller, NACQJ Certified Judge