Preventing Shadowing in Quilt Tops

The second tip in my three-part series on quilt show readiness focuses on shadowing. Shadowing occurs when dark fabrics, threads, or batting show through lighter fabrics, creating distractions that can draw attention away from the quilt's overall design.

Contrast in color and value is important for visual interest, but unintended shadowing can affect the finished appearance of a quilt. A few thoughtful choices during construction can help keep light areas looking clean and intentional.

- Press seams toward the darker fabric whenever possible, taking extra care where seams join.
- Grade seams when needed to reduce bulk and limit darker fabric from showing through light areas.
- When appliquéing light fabrics over darker backgrounds, consider adding interfacing to the back of the light fabric to reduce shadowing and provide additional structure.
- Use piecing thread that blends with or matches the fabrics. For high-contrast fabrics such as read and white quilts, a shorter stitch length can help prevent thread from showing at the seams.
- If dark threads become trapped after quilting, gently remove them with a thread pick or sewing needle, or carefully push them back under the quilt top.
- For predominantly white quilt tops, choose all-white batting when possible. Cream batting or those with natural cotton seeds can show through white fabric and create a yellowed appearance.

By watching for shadowing throughout the construction process, you can help your quilt present as clean, intentional, and show-ready from the first glance.

Happy quilting,

Terri Miller, NACQJ Certified Judge