



# Janet Windsor

# Autumn Sonoma County

The change of seasons is subtle here in Northern California. The hills retain their brown of summer and the redwoods and pines are the same color all year. The ocean gets wilder and the blue turns a slate gray. In late autumn the rains come, if we are lucky. But the vineyards put on a blazing show. Harvest begins in September with the grapes dangling below the vines in rich blacks, purples, chartreuses, yellows and burgundies. After the grapes are picked the leaves begin to change in October and November from lime and emerald to gold, orange, deep rust, red. This is the palette I will use for my piece.





# Process

I always begin with photographs—these are from friends Jim Tackett and Kalynn Oleson. I comb through them looking for colors and color combinations. The subject of the photos is not necessarily what the piece will be about. Sometimes it is just about color. Although most of the time I look for photos which present the images I'm hoping to convey. Here are my primary influences for Autumn Sonoma County.



I definitely want to include the blue/ blacks and grayed purples of the grapes and look at the burgundies of the stems.



I like the juxtaposition of the yellow-green veining with the pinks and reds of the rest of the leaves.

I'm particularly interested in the interplay of the muddy browns and tans with the vibrant oranges, reds and limes.

The next step is to pull fabrics—my favorite part of the process. I usually will pick everything in my stash the I think will work and then edit as I go. I like to use a variety of textures (silks, cottons and velvets). I also use both commercial and hand-dyed fabrics. Some of the fabrics are dyed, monoprinted, silk-screened by me and others I have purchased. I use a mixture of prints and solids. After the fabrics are pulled, I cut a 4 or 5 inch strips from each and arrange them in color groupings and by value within each grouping. Now I can really see what I've got to work with. I don't make drawings or color mock-ups because I haven't found any medium that really replicates the colors of the fabric well. So all my composing is done on the design wall.



*First pulling of fabrics*

For Autumn Sonoma I want to think about the strips of color in the landscape (sky, hills, vineyards, fields) but I also want to convey the rhythms of the espaliered vines, the wires, the posts, the furrows, and the grass strips



*Now they're arranged by value within color families. Mixed color prints are separate as they can go with several different color families.*

between the rows. I'm not a fuser. I like to piece my works. I like the fact that, while it is an art quilt which would never grace a bed, it still makes reference to the heritage of quilting.

The piece will be 5 or 6 columns of colors moving from sky blues at the top through the golden and muddy browns of the hills, orange/rust distant vineyards moving into the brilliant reds punctuated by the black/browns of the wires and posts of the vineyard rows and greens of the grass strips between the rows of grapes.

So, the dilemma: I've never worked this big before, so do I compose the entire thing on the wall, or do I do each column individually and shift and arrange them against each other. If I compose the entire piece, that many strips will surely fall from the wall. I'm not much of a pinner. It's easier to shift things if they aren't pinned. I think I'll try working the columns within each color range and then I'll assemble the whole thing. I can always add or delete before the columns are joined together.

As I work, I use the reducing glass and the camera to get a better idea of how the values are working. Sometimes I put the photos in Photoshop and turn them to grayscale. I can see the values better without the distraction of color. I also like to view the work in progress in different lights: early morning, twilight, by artificial light. Sometimes I can spot things I don't like this way. So I'm going to leave the blues alone until tomorrow. Then if I still like them. I'll sew them together.



This is not a completely smooth progression of values, but I like a little variation which adds some sparkle. I do think I'll remove the piece in the upper right corner and the one partway down the second column—both are too distracting.



*Marking the dimensions on the design wall.  
Wow, this is big!*



*Starting the blues at the top.*



*The blues are sewed together and the greens and golds are auditioning. Most will get the part. I love thinking about the fabrics as I arrange them. I remember the days spent dying and printing and the trips all over the world where I've gathered these fabrics. I imagine our grandmothers must have done something similar as they pieced old garments into new bedcoverings. I love this heritage.*



*Auditioning the rusts and oranges*



From the chosen strips, I freehand cut two pieces together in a wallpaper cut. Then I sew them together and add the next strip in the same manner until I have part of a column assembled. Sometimes I need to add more strips to get the length I need and sometimes I substitute other fabrics as I assemble the columns. It's assembled a bit like an Excel spreadsheet, only much more interesting.

