

Joanna Figueroa Channels Autumn with Cinnamon & Cream

by Linzee Kull McCray @seamswrite

Joanna Figueroa's distinctive color palette is somewhere between pastels, primary colors, and dark tones. "I read once about 'forgotten colors' and that's how I think of them," she says of the aesthetic that she's dubbed Fresh Vintage. "They're colors used in late 19th-century labels and travel posters—slightly soft, slightly warm tones that I've updated for today."

That color sensibility is reflected in her new line, Cinnamon and Cream. It's also a nod to autumn, her favorite time of year. "The air is crisp, leaves are falling, it's soup and sweater weather, and the colors are just so inspirational," says Joanna of the collection that's a return to some of her warm fall favorites. "The line is an ode to the feel of fall."

Seasonal changes like these may be subtle in the San Francisco Bay area where Joanna lives, but creativity is strong. When she and husband Eric moved to the region in the mid-1990s, Joanna discovered Thimblecreek, a local quilt shop with a vibrant community that included future Moda designers Anne Sutton and Sandy Klop. It wasn't long before Joanna was an employee and teacher there.



A Pattern for Success

That's also when she realized she preferred creating her own patterns and began writing them for her students. At the same time, she started Figlets, a company named for the moniker she and Eric gave their three children. She sewed small items like table runners, pillows, and wall hangings and sold them at arts-and-craft fairs and collectives. Quickly, she realized the challenge of turning a profit and pivoted to pattern design. In 2002, Joanna started Fig Tree Quilts and attended her first Quilt Market with 24 patterns. "I can't believe I'm hitting my 20-year anniversary in the business," she says, awed by the passing of time and all that's transpired.



In 2004, Joanna met with Moda's then-design director Cheryl Freyberg. Joanna imagined it would be a quick introduction, but impressed by her design concepts Cheryl told Joanna, "We've been looking for something like this—you have two weeks to submit a collection." Joanna says "I said 'Absolutely, I can do that!' but at the same time thought 'I don't know how I'm going to do that!' It was trial by fire."

Now, nearly 50 lines of fabric later, Joanna is confident of the process and her style. She's also designed hundreds of patterns including those for mini-quilts, appliqué, bags, and more, including many for precuts. Traditional quilts inspire her, and giving them a fresh spin is her forte. Joanna's goal is to create patterns that look intricate and complex but are simple for quilters to construct.



Energy to Spare

Joanna thrives on creating new designs, seasonal projects, and block-of-the-month offerings. Recently co-authoring *A Scrapbook of Quilts* with friend Carrie Nelson let her dip her toe back into the book world and she enjoys

designing quilt-related products including enamel pins, zipper pulls, notebooks, and notions. She shares photos, videos, resources, and projects via Instagram and her Fresh Figs blog.

Joanna and Eric are about to be empty nesters—their daughter heads to college this fall, following in the footsteps of her two older brothers. But the couple won't be resting on their laurels: instead, they're renovating the 1,500 square-foot barn on a 10-acre farm they purchased about an hour from their home. They've installed floors and electricity and envision the barn as a teaching venue in the near future. "The property itself is a long-term project," says Joanna, who predicts a few goats and Highland cattle will share the acreage with them someday. "We have a lot of energy. I'm not sure we'll ever slow down!"



CINNAMON & Cream
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