



Bruce Seeds has given up his day job to make one-of-a-kind quilts. bruceseeds.com

Sewing Seeds

BY NAN BIALEK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN BISHOP

For some time, the artist in Bruce Seeds of Shorewood was waiting patiently as he devoted his working life to architecture, computer technology and Web site design.

It peeked out briefly when Seeds was a student at Brookfield East High School in the 1970s. After taking several drafting courses, Seeds signed up for an art class. The instructor took a look at his paintings and wondered aloud, "Bruce, where have you been?"

But the artist took a back seat as Seeds pursued a career in architecture, which quickly focused on computer-aided design.

Seeds capitalized on his technological expertise, which led to helping construction and design firms computerize their businesses. Along the way, he also taught himself how to create Web sites for some of those companies.

Last year, as the economy began to take a beating and Web site clients began to pull back, Seeds recalled a quilting book his mother had purchased called "One Block Wonders."

"I only needed to know a basic stitch and I had a sewing machine," Seeds says, "so I took it upon myself to make one for the challenge."

Seeds rose to the challenge with a quilt he calls "Bloom," a vivid kaleidoscope of reds, purples and greens, which, when viewed from a distance, reveals an image of a rose.

Seeds began sharing his quilting projects on social media networks. Midway through his second quilt, a friend of a friend saw his postings and wanted to buy Seeds originals as Christmas gifts for friends and family. But Seeds had only one-and-a-half quilts in inventory, so the opportunity quickly passed.

"At that point, I said, 'You know what? If it's even possible that it happens again, I want to be ready.' I'm pushing the pedal to the metal and I'm not going to stop until I complete 10 quilts by the end of 2009."

By the end of the year, Seeds was stitching quilt No. 13, and more than 250 Facebook fans are now following his work and watching videos he created to document his progress. Friends and fans offer opinions on the designs and help name the completed pieces.

The process, Seeds notes, requires no blueprint and no pattern. The design emerges and is refined as he cuts about 9 yards of fabric into panels, then stacks them and aligns them into layers. Seeds cuts the layers into equilateral triangles and arranges them into hexagons.

That's when the fun begins. Seeds plays with the hexagons, putting about 200 of them up on a huge swath of black fleece hanging on his dining room wall until he finds an arrangement that works.

"You really don't ultimately know what you have until it's done," Seeds says. "It forces me out of my Type A 'control everything' behavior. It forces me to stay in the moment."

The artist who was long dormant in the architect and Web designer is now in full bloom.