

# Kaari Zabala: Change and Creativity

by Linzee McCray @seamswrite

If you notice something new about French General fabrics, that might well mirror a change in designer Kaari Zabala's life.

Two years ago, Kaari and her husband Jon moved to a home on an acreage about an hour north of her brick-and-mortar French General store in Los Angeles. They also added two new dogs, Gilly and Freddy, to the family. "We were ready for a shift in perspective and that's been reflected in our work," says Kaari.

## Mixing New with Old

And while French General fabrics continue to derive inspiration from French textiles of the 1800s and 1900s, Kaari's most recent lines share a shift in palette, adding new hues to the classic reds, pearls, and grays in her beloved previous lines. Bleu de France is colored in rich shades of French blues, while Chateau de Chantilly includes shades of clay and tea. "We've recolored these 19th-century prints to give them a fresh look," says Kaari. "They feel a little more contemporary, appealing to modern quilters as well as to those who've enjoyed our fabrics all along."



Jon & Kaari Zabala

Chateau de Chantilly is so-named because the textiles it's based on came from a *vide grenier* or "attic clearing" of a single chateau. "Every once in a while, a dealer will call and ask if I want all the textiles from a *vide grenier*," she says. "While we often mix and match, for this collection, we kept those fabrics all together." Kaari finds these bits and pieces while scouring the French countryside during her summers in France. She also offers week-long creative retreats in which participants shop the *brocantes* and flea markets, stay in a chateau and eat (and learn to cook) French meals, and spend time absorbing a stitching technique from a guest teacher.

## Vivé la France

This appreciation of France came to Kaari through visits to the country with her Francophile mother and it has colored Kaari's life for decades. She and her sister opened the French General store



4 Quilts in France

in Manhattan 25 years ago, then Kaari reopened it when she moved to LA in 2003. Fifteen years ago Moda approached her about designing fabric and she's since done 40 lines, including holiday fabrics.

Those quilting fabrics, as well as the interiors fabrics she designs for Fabricut, fill one of her favorite spaces in her new home, a dedicated studio that overlooks citrus and avocado orchards. Kaari's studio is bathed in natural light from six big sliding glass doors that overlook the swimming pool and orchards beyond, a big change from working on her dining room table. "It's a calm space where I can try out different techniques," she says. Studio tables provide ample surfaces for her efforts and may someday serve students in workshops.

## Passion Projects

The studio is also where Kaari delves into some of her other passions, including the six-year-old Navajo Quilt Project for which Kaari and Navajo quilter Susan Hudson gather fabric, sewing supplies, and finished quilts for the Navajo Nation. Kaari also



PS13940 The French Pocket Approx. 7" x 11"

collects late-18th century applique quilts and is documenting the techniques, fabrics, and provenance of her collection of 50 quilts for the California Heritage Quilt Project database.

Textiles obviously reign supreme in Kaari's life, and she's grateful to have connected with Moda. "I always thought 'antique fabric will run eventually out' and reproducing it created so many options," she says. "It opened a whole new world for us and I love seeing what people make, from curtains to little girls' dresses to quilts." Designing for Moda allows Kaari to continue her creative journey with textiles and to offer her vision to the quilting community.

For more with Kaari visit her website, [frenchgeneral.com](http://frenchgeneral.com) and follow her on social media @frenchgeneral.



Antique Quilts

Navajo Quilt Badges



*moda*  
FABRICS + SUPPLIES®



# Chateau de Chantilly



Chateau de Chantilly is a sweet collection of florals and small prints all found in an old chateau in the South of France. Sometimes on our French Getaway retreat, we are lucky enough to get an invitation to a private vide grenier - a clearing of the attic. When the stars are aligned, we often find a trunk full of 18th and 19th century French scraps that are perfect for our fabric collections and quilt designs. Bright shades of rouge, clay, pearl, tea and roche are combined to make a classic French palette with a fresh, modern appeal. - Kaari

**SEPTEMBER DELIVERY**

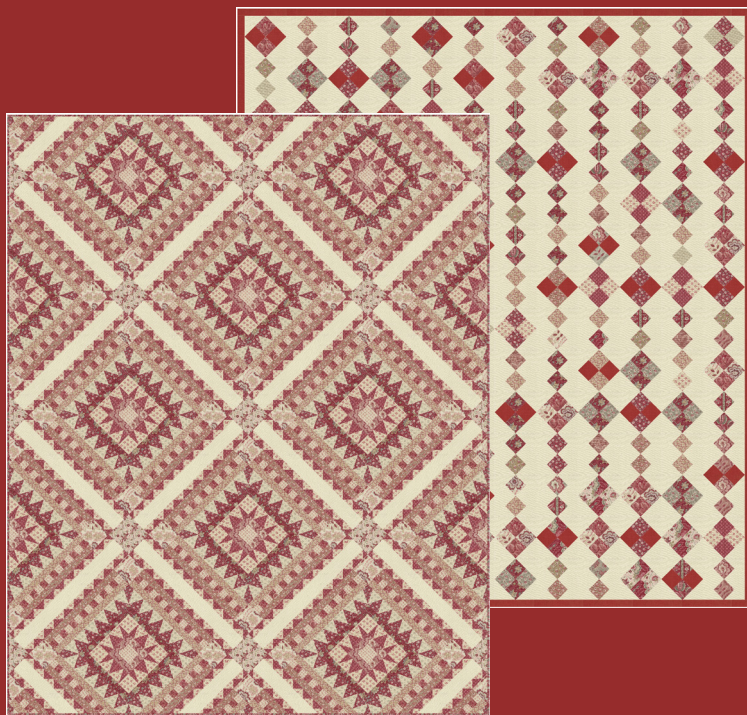




Montmorency FG CC003 71" x 82" F8 Friendly



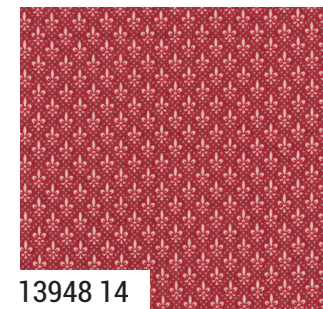
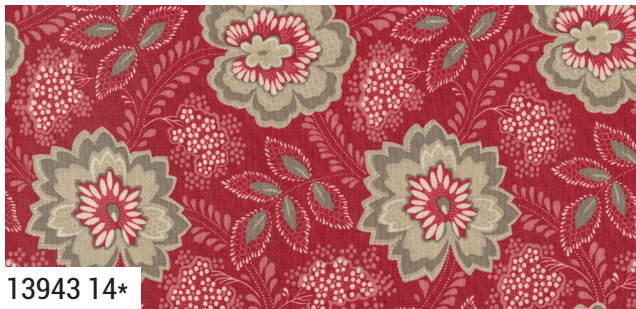
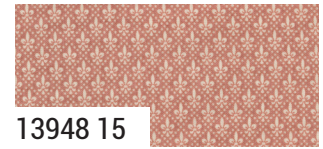
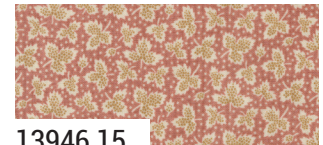
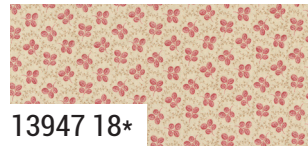
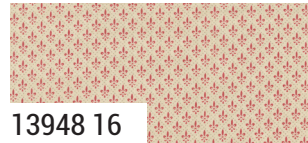
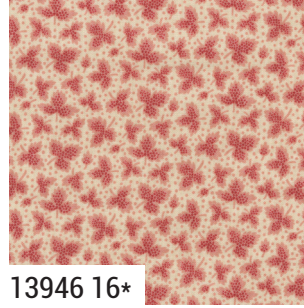
Chateau de Chantilly FG CC001 56" x 80"



Jacquerie FG CC002 68" x 85"

# Chateau de Chantilly

French  
General



moda  
FABRICS + SUPPLIES®

SEPTEMBER 2023 DELIVERY

# Chateau de Chantilly

**French  
General**



13940 11



13943 11\*



13944 11



13947 11\*



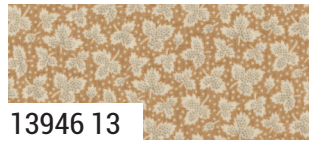
13945 11



13944 13\*



13945 13\*



13946 13



13943 13\*



13943 12\*



13940 12



13945 12



13944 12\*



13941 12\*



13948 12

**French  
General**

**SOLIDS**

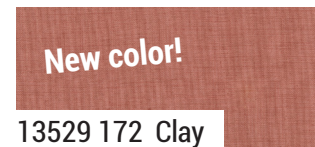
Included in  
assortments & precuts



13529 21 Pearl



13529 53 Tea



New color!

13529 172 Clay



13529 20 Roche



13529 23 Rouge

13940

Asst.  
15

Asst.  
10

Low Cal  
10

AB

F8

JR

LC

MC

PP

PS

SEPTEMBER DELIVERY

•38 Prints •100% Premium Cotton

JRs, LCs, MCs & PPs include 38 skus plus two each of 13974-11 & 18.