

# Focus on the Improv Block

From *Artful Improv*  
By Cindy Grisdela

## **Class Description:**

Make an Improv Block the center of your composition and add your own borders—maybe curved strips or asymmetrical open space with or without insets—it's completely up to you to make your quilt your own. This process can be adapted to any size quilt—use your imagination!

This is a good class for students new to the improvisational process but should be interesting enough for more experienced quilters, too.

## **Class Length:**

4–6 hours. A four-hour class will focus on making the block and setting it for a smaller quilt. A six-hour class can also discuss quilting and finishing ideas. Or you could break it up into two or three 3-hour classes, with the first class to discuss the general ideas and start on the Improv Blocks, the second class to design the border options, and the optional third to explore quilting and finishing ideas.

## **Class Supply List:**

- Required text: *Artful Improv: Explore Color Recipes, Building Blocks & Free Motion Quilting* by Cindy Grisdela
- Scraps for the Improv Block in solids or fabrics that read as solids, such as tone-on-tone or small-scale prints (include warm colors, such as red, orange, and yellow, and cool colors, such as blue, green, and purple, in a variety of light, dark and medium tones, plus a few neutrals)
- 3–5 fat quarters as background options for asymmetrical borders, curved stripe borders, or inset strip borders
- Sewing machine in good working order
- Scissors
- Rotary cutter and mat
- Ruler for squaring up central block
- Coordinating thread

- 16" x 20" piece of batting to use as a design space
- Portable iron (if not providing one in the classroom)

**TIP:** Shops could provide grab bags of scraps or prepackaged charm packs. Layer cakes or jelly rolls could also work.

### **Classroom Preparation:**

It's helpful to have extra table space for each student OR wall space where they can tack up their batting to create their designs. An iron and ironing board should be available in the classroom.

### **Class Agenda:**

1. Emphasize that this class is about each student exploring their creativity and making an original design. This is a "no rules, no pattern" approach, so specific measurements are not provided. There are no mistakes, just learning opportunities!
2. Talk about choosing a color recipe and adding the spark with a contrasting or complementary color—see "Creating a Color Recipe," p. 16.
3. Demonstrate the Improv Block technique. Allow students time to create one or more blocks.
4. Demonstrate the curved strip and inset strip techniques. See p. 62 for instructions on making individual angled stripes for insets.
5. Talk about setting options. See *Red Totem* on p. 4, *Red Hot Chili Peppers* on p. 8, *Building Blocks* on p. 31, *Grape Harvest* on p. 54, and *Marbles and Chopsticks* on p. 59 for examples of setting and border ideas.
6. Discuss "Questions to Ask," p. 35, as students work on their designs.
7. If time allows, discuss quilting and finishing ideas from the appropriate chapters in the book.