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Go Fly a Kite: a Modern String Quilt

From ***Create Your Own Improv Quilts***

By Rayna Gillman

1-2 days *

Class Description:

Discover Rayna Gillman's totally new way to combine strips with negative space for this modern version of the string quilt. Slice without a ruler and be ready for a surprise or two.

Choose the color of the background. Slice off a corner of the square at any angle. Add strips in all solids, all prints, or a combination. Use a limited palette or go wild with scraps; no two blocks or quilts will be alike! It's addictive!

All levels.

Class Length:

1–2 days. The one day class aims for students to create a quilt top in a size of their choice, from a nine-patch to a twelve-patch or larger. The second day, students can explore a variety of block sizes, colors/values/solids vs. prints, and more. They may want to bring their quilt tops from the first day and make them larger or finish them.

Class Supply List:

- Sewing machine and quilting supplies (thread, needles, rotary cutter, etc.)
- 1 yd solid fabric for background in student's choice of color* (light to medium colors are best)
- Variety of strips in solid colors and prints, cut from $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide (in assorted colors and values)**
- 24" x 36" piece of 100% cotton batting or flannel and blue painter's tape for a design wall

*Note for shop owners and teachers: If you prefer to let students cut their squares in class, they may end up buying a background color they did not have at home and would like to use.

**Strips may be cut ahead of time or in class.

Classroom Preparation:

It will save some time if students come to class with sixteen 4 ½" or 5" or 5 ½" squares already cut. It's enough to get started, and students can cut the rest as they go. We are using squares anywhere between 4 ½"—5 ½" (You can decide in advance or let students decide individually what size they are comfortable with. Put together, they finish at approximately 8" x 8", 9" x 9", or 10" x 10". Exact size doesn't matter, as long as all finished blocks are consistent.)

Class Agenda:

Lesson plan for a one-day class.

TEACHER DEMO

To begin, you will need to make a couple of sample blocks (or more, if you can't stop yourself):

- 4 or more pre-cut squares 4 ½", 5", or 5 ½"
- Selection of strips (as above on supply list)

A. Demonstrate

Step 1: Stack two squares together and without using a ruler, slice off one corner at any angle. Repeat with the other two squares. Angles and sizes of cut-off corners should vary. (To keep it improvisational the rulers should be used for trimming only.)

Step 2: In advance, sew strips to each angle until you have enough to trim to the size of the square. (Depending on the varied widths of the strips, the size of the angle, and the size of the square, you can fit in anywhere from 3-5 strips before trimming.)

Step 3: Press strips toward the tip of the triangle (so that if there are any "ears" from strips, they will be cut off when the square is trimmed to size).

Step 4: Place ruler on square and trim 2 sides with strips to the size of the rest of the square. Repeat this process for 4 squares.

STUDENTS GET BUSY

1. Students cut a corner angle from the squares they have brought, two at a time. No RULERS, no thinking. Just cut. Sizes and angles will be random, since this is improv cutting.

2. Students add strips of their choice to the cutoff angle. All solids will give it a more modern look. Lots of prints and variety will give it a more playful look but still in a modern setting.

3. Trim (with ruler) to make a square of the size they have chosen.

4. Repeat until all 16 squares are sewn and trimmed. These will become the first 4 blocks, once they are sewn together.

Before the students sew the squares together, do the following demo, arranging blocks in different configurations.

TEACHER DEMO: Arranging the squares into blocks

Demonstrate with your 4 squares that there is more than one way to put them together. Depending on placement, the "kites" can look regular or irregular.

STUDENTS GET BUSY

1. Students should play around with their squares, arranging them into blocks of 4 as they wish. With 16 squares, they should have plenty of choices for arrangement.

2. If they are pleased with their arrangement, they should sew their squares together into 4 blocks. When they sew the blocks together, a secondary pattern will emerge from the solid background fabric.

3. Students keep going and repeat the process until they have a size that pleases them.

SHOW & TELL about 1/2 hour before cleanup.

If you have any questions, please email me at raynagillman@gmail.com or feel free to call me 973-454-8930 and leave a message if I can't answer. I will happily call you back. Have fun playing! Let me know how it goes and I would love to see pix!!

