

Hey everybody, welcome back to Man Sewing. I'm so glad you're following along. I've got another fantastic quilt tutorial for you today. Now the reason I say it's fantastic is because I think I came up with it right? And it's a funny little story that I'll tell as quickly as I can. I designed a fabric line years ago, so don't go hunting for it. And they didn't send me enough for my sample yardage. Right before the show that I was going to quilt the quilt for and go off and sell the fabric. And so I had to piece and curve and use little bits everywhere to use what I could in the fabric line to put together a quilt that looked a lot like this behind me here, right? So I want to walk you through the building of the background of the Dancing Dots quilt. If you look real carefully, there's both straight and some curved piecing in here, right? And then these circles are just simply appliqued right on top with fusible web. And then free motion stitched, again another great place to be practicing your free motion machine quilting. You really don't need much for supplies. You could certainly work from your stash on this. The very first one I did to build a background to put my fabric line on top of. Today I'm using, Kona, sorry, Kona Cotton comes from Robert Kaufman, is what I'm really trying to say. And it's called Overcast is the name of their color way. And then we're also going to use this really cool little print. This is Patrick Lose. And hey, Patrick, thanks again man. I love you out there. Another man that's sewing along and quilting along and designing. But he's got some really cool little micro prints we're going to use for these great dots in the background. So I could talk about it all day but I bet you want to see how this thing comes together, right?

So I've already unpacked these colors like this as I unpacked it. So I've rearranged it kind of looking from my darkest to my lightest in my values. I have between three and four of the strips of each of my colors, ok? So we are going to work across our palette right here going from dark to light. Just one strip at a time. And I'm going to take these. Now I've just unpacked this so I did forget to cut the selvages off so please cut your selvages off. So as I'm pulling these two up right now, I'm going to quickly and hopefully very straight, cut those selvages off. And I did it so you can't see it so we can't really tell, ha, ha! So here we go. I'm going to do a quarter inch seam allowance and I'm joining the 2 ½ inch sides together. And I'm going to literally do that where I go through and I go from dark all the way to light. So here would be my third one. With one strip from each color. And I'm just going to sew and sew and sew until, check this out, right? We have miles and miles and miles and miles and miles and miles of this fantastic one strip, right? That's 2 ½ inches long. Next step, I'm going to get this out of the way so I can show you. We're going to start cutting this back down. So I want you to get all of this together, at least one color section first so that I can go ahead and get myself cleaned up and show you what's coming next. Be right back.

Ok, now a lot of you probably don't have a 50 or larger cutting mat at home. But that's ok, we're just going to make single cuts through here. But I have marked, I marked on one edge of my table over here all the way down to this blue tape line and that is 50 inches. And the reason we want to go 50 inches is I want at least two colors to show up in each of my rows. Now look at the quilt with me real quick, please. If you see, right up here is probably a good place, you can see that there are one, and then two colors, one and then two colors in each of my rows. And I get that, like I said, by doing 50 inches. We're going to do some curve piecing so this doesn't have to be exactly 50 inches but I just taped, with my blue tape, where my mark is going to be. And now I'm going to come down here and I'm just going to cut. I do want you to keep these in order, ok? So this is going to be one piece here. And now I'm going to slide the other piece down. Some of you might want to cut just one at a time as you go. Some of you might want to cut them all at 50 inches. However you choose, just keep them in the color order because, if you also look at the quilt behind me, you'll see that the fabric feels darker at the bottom and then gets lighter at the top. And I just realized we have the quilt hanging upside down for you. Whoa, that will make you a little dizzy but at least we now have the quilt right side up for you. I'm glad you got a good chuckle out of that at home. Now back to what I was saying. I want to have the lighter fabrics at the top and the darker feel of the fabrics down below. And that comes through both the piecing and the position of our applique. We're still talking about piecing so we're getting ready to do that next first step.

Now I mentioned that I wanted to have two sections of color in each row. And the next step I want you to look at is when you're joining the fabrics, you want to put the same colors next to each other. So if you look real close, that is not correct. You want to take and spin this just like that so that the colors match up exactly. Ok? Because that's going to help that transition of the blend of color. The first seam I make is a straight seam just to get myself a little bit of bulk coming off of the border. So let's go ahead and do that. Now you will have done two complete sets of color, right? Because you're going to go from your dark at the edge to the light in the middle and then from the light in the middle back to the dark at the other edge. So I'm going to show you how to do a little bit of this straight piecing and a little of the curved piecing and I'm going to let you be creative from there.

Ok so we've just finished that first seam allowance for the straight seam, a quarter inch seam allowance. Now we're going to come on over to our ironing surface and we're going to press this out. And then I'm going to start doing some curved piecing. We have a real fun tutorial for our curved pieced quilt out there where I go in depth with the curved piecing. I'll show you a bit

more of that now. In that tutorial, though, I do talk about starting with like 22 inch strips for your practice. As you're working on curved piecing, the longer your strips, the more practice you probably should have. So watch that tutorial if you're uncomfortable with this also and you'll get some other tips I'm sure because I don't remember what I said back then. But I'll walk you through this as well as I can. Ok? So we now have that first straight one. And I'm going to rotate it because this is my dark, this is my "medium" heading towards my light. And I'm going to need one more strip at 50 inches. Nice little anchor there for me. Ok. Thank you for your help there.

Now, I don't need the ruler but I do need my cutter. I'm going to rotate this so that my colors are correct. And now what we're going to do, we're going to come down to this one end, and I'm showing you how to do this in case you don't have a very large cutting space. If you have a very large cutting space, please take the time to lay it all out. But it's not a requirement, ok? Now if you were using prints, these would be right sides up. If you're using solids, they're also right sides up. And you can tell that because you have your seam allowances face down, ok? So now I know my solids are right sides up. And you can see I've got a very considerable overlap, ok? And with that overlap, I'm trying to make sure everything is as smooth as it can go out here like this. And now the first cut is going to be about an inch and a half, maybe two inches worth of straight, because what I want to do is I want to have a great place to start at that quarter inch seam allowance. Now I've got my hands behind and I'm going to do a nice gradual cut. And I'm going to make sure that all of it stays together as I'm curving through here. The more gradual the cut, the easier the piecing is going to be. Make sure you're all the way through both layers. And just take it nice and slow. Really easy. And so what I meant by having a trick, you notice I'm holding both pieces at the same time and I'm just sliding them there onto my mat. And let's finish out to the end there.

Now with that, I'm going to remove one of the pieces and I'm going to let the other piece from below fall out of the way. And it doesn't matter if this gets disorganized because we did our straight cut at the beginning. And that's what's so important about that is I was lining myself up right at the beginning and now I'm just going to literally let these curves come together. And it's kind of a braiding technique, with your hands. So I want to go ahead and start right on that straight part, quarter inch seam allowance. Now I have each of the strips in my hand and I'm making sure the strips are not under my foot but on top of the presser foot because I've done that before too. And couldn't figure out why it wouldn't sew very well. So now I'm going to go nice and slow. Use your needle down for this. And then as I approach the curve, I'm just letting both fabrics weave together. And I'm just looking at the edge of my presser foot. No pins necessary. And now I'm coming out of that hip, down into the valley. Can you tell I used to work

construction? I use a lot of construction terms. Hips and valleys comes from roofing actually. And there we go, just like that. Nice and easy, right?

Now we're going to press this open like I said or press the seam. Now when I am ironing a seam open, I usually use the flat side of my iron. But right now, I want to use the tip of my iron to get up inside of that curve. So instead of using the butt end, I'm going to use the tip. And I'm going to start setting that seam and then pressing it back. Setting the seam and pressing it back. Right there. And look, that's turning out really terrific if you ask me. I love building quilts that are very organic. I love the challenge of a, it's like drawing with a sharpie marker. You're not quite sure what's going to happen. And I really don't like the use of my seam ripper so I try to make it work the first time through. Look at that. So how cool does that look, right? Ok.

So now in the quilt itself, let me show you again. What you've got going on, the first two pieces are straight pieced. And then I generally do a rhythm of about three pieces at a time. So there was a curve in here. I actually have another straight but it's curve, curve, straight. The reason I keep putting straights back in there is it gives me a little extra meat of fabric that I can keep curving through. So I've got a straight seam, a curved seam. I'll do at least one more curved seam if not two and then I'll put the straight on as I go.

So we've got the curves and as I said, I can straight piece here or I can do one last curve and then just keep on moving across where you're going to go from the darks at the edge into the lights. Right here is where I, be right back, would be using the next series where I had stitched the next series of colors together and then cut them all down. So literally you'll go all the way to here with that first strip you made. And then you go from here all the way to the way back out with the last strip you've made. If you want to do them in two sections, and then join them down the middle, that might be easier for you. I usually go from one end to the other. But both ways will definitely work. Keep track of your colors, ok?

Alright, so once you've got your entire background built, yes all of that. It's time to play with your applique. And of course you could use any shapes you like. But you know, every New Year's I bust out my circle cutter and have an awfully good time with this thing, right? So let me show you how I do this. And I, like I said, I use that Basically Patrick by Patrick Lose because I liked the colors and I loved the little bit of print that was inside. Now originally I started putting fusible web on all of the great colors but as I started laying them out, I realized I wanted to stay monochrome, using the blues and the purples. So what I'm going to show you is that I have already pre-fused a bunch of the five inch squares with fusible web on the back. If you're doing

that, you want to make sure that you've already pre-cut down your fusible web to the five inch square. Even just a little under wouldn't be a bad thing so that you're not getting any fusible web on your ironing board, ok? You've got your fabric face down so you're just going to put that fuse there. You're going to hit it real quick. This is the Heat and Bond Featherlight so it just takes a second, ok? So it's fused. Now once it's fused, we're going to use our circle cutter. Now the circle cutter goes from about an inch and half all the way up to, I think, something like seven or eight inches. It works great when you're making a big circle. The way it's designed to work is you're going to set your pivot point. And it's just going to rotate real nice and easy, ok. But the smaller circles take a little bit of initiative to get started, so watch this real careful. What you want to do is you want to set your pivot point, and I'm checking with my blade to make sure that I'm on the fabric all the way around. And now what I'm doing is I'm pressing down. I've got pressure coming through my knuckle here but I'm going to use this as my motor so the left hand is coming around to help because the smaller the circle, the harder it is to get started. Right? Once you have that, your circle pops right out like this. And in my quilt I just would cut a few circles at a time, making sure I had plenty of fabric all the way around. And I started by maybe making two or three of the small ones and then I would usually choose a new size. And the way you do a different size with your circle cutter, is you just move this part here, just slide that back a little bit. And then you're going to make sure you've got just enough room. You can always start with the left hand if you want. Oop, I must have slipped a little bit so I'm going to finish going all the way around the circle so it makes it nice. Like I said, I slipped a little bit. But I have a perfect circle when I'm done. So I just go through, let's close that blade before we walk away from it. Be safe, right?

So I just go through and I start positioning the circles. Now while positioning the circles I want you to think about a few things: number one, there's no pattern. So this is completely up to you and your creativity. So enjoy the process. But don't iron it right away. I want you to put all your circles out, and what I really do is I spend at least 24 hours looking at it. I mean looking at it and looking at it. And then go away and then come back and look at it again so you've got fresh eyes. Because you really want to get a good feel for the way you want your quilt to look. So look carefully, down near the bottom, I've put my darker, my larger circles and they are closer together. Up here in the top, I have my lighter or my smaller of my dark circles and they're further apart. And that helps give us our movement and our shape and our color value some real activity in there, right? So it's lots and lots of fun.

As you're approaching your quilt, just simply peel the paper off, right? And if you haven't seen this trick before, sometimes with a perfect circle it's hard to get an edge, so you can take a

straight pin, score it, fold it over, and it starts to peel right off for you. So I do want you to have the paper off all of your circles before you start to stick them up on your quilt, right? Don't let me forget that one. Before you start to stick them up on your quilt, now you make sure they're perfect. The next day you're going to iron them down. And once they are ironed down, all you're going to do is, starting in the middle of your quilt, I didn't say that quite right. What you're going to really do is you're going to make sure it is basted and backed first and then we're going to prepare to machine quilt it. So you've ironed your applique down, you put your backing, your batting, your top, it's basted. Now when we get to the free motion machine we're going to start in the middle area. And I literally just stitch around the circle and I go out into the field, and then I stitch around a circle. And I go out into the field. You could satin stitch or you could blanket stitch your appliques if you like. This is not going to be a washable project for me so this is going to hold up very nicely. And I was thinking in my free motion, I just love the free motion quilting that's going on out there in these "modern" quilts. So also, I wanted some linear look over here and I wanted some bubbly texture over here, so I was playing with introducing the straight lines in other spots. So this right now is one of my favorite quilts that I have quilted because I had so much fun playing with the design and the shape and the motif and the color. And I am so glad you were here all day today to see us doing that here at Man Sewing.