

*Feathers, feathers and more feathers. That's right the most controversial of all motifs in the machine quilting world right now. Some people love them and some people not so much. But I'll tell you this, I think they're terrific both the traditional and the wacky feathers so I want to walk you through today some of the skills and drills you're going to need to make some really cool feathers. And as we're on it right now let's talk about it. I've got some awesome printouts that you can print out in the description below so that you can follow along in these drills. Let's get started.*

*Now before we dive into the feathers I want to point out real quick, with all free motion machine quilting you might have some skipped stitches, some broken thread, some shredded thread, some broken needles. It happens to all of us. We've got a really cool quick tip for you here at Man Sewing. It's another video. We have a link down below under the description below as well. And you can print out this compass chart that will talk to you about the different ways your body mechanics may be affecting things like thread and needle breakage and shredding. So anyway, that is there for you as well. But today's focus is on the feather.*

*And there's a couple of keys to the feather that I want to talk about so definitely take the time to print out the printables below so you can follow along. And these little lines, these little arrows are kind of the movement. Now with all free motion machine quilting one of the tricks to try to be able to do the entire movement without starting and stopping. So I really encourage you to take the time with a pencil and trace over these lines several times and you'll see it's one continuous motion. Do it without lifting your pencil so you ingrain your brain to do it while you're doing your free motion machine quilting as well.*

*Now if you'll look at my sample I have here, in breaking these down, this was really fun because I didn't know how to describe the feathers very well. I had been sewing them, obviously not great for awhile but I didn't know how to talk it through so here I am now going to try to give you the description and then I'm going to show you how at the machine. Don't worry about this yellow thread right here. This yellow thread is just an example of what happens if you start free motion machine quilting and your presser foot is in the up position. So this is the back of the project. This yellow thread was from the needle and that's no tension whatsoever versus bad tension. So I just wanted to point that out to you. I put that there on purpose so you would know what to look for if you were having issues with that. It's not a problem with your machine, you just need to rethread and start fresh.*

*Now with our feathers, what we're going to do is we're going to start in one spot. We're going to build a spine up and back down and then we're just going to echo around the spine. One of the keys, and we're starting with a basic feather. I want to point this out right now. This is a heart shape, a half heart here and here's the other half of a heart, because when we're doing feathers we want to try to be able to duplicate what we do on one side, and that will be natural, on the other side. And not all of us have an easy time translating that symmetry.*

*So I'm going to slide the quilt out of the way here and we're going to start right in on the first feather drill. I do love these Machinger's gloves because they give me nice traction on my fingers so I have good control. My feed dogs on my sewing machine are down because we're in free motion mode so I'm in control of all of my stitch length and my stitch quality. And I also have one of these slippery mats here on the bed of my machine called a Sew Slip mat and what that does is it allows the fabric to move nice underneath the bed of the machine. So we're going to start at the bottom of the spine with our feather today. And I'm going to take and put my presser foot down. I'm going to take one single stroke here by hand and then pull slightly. Whoop. Missed it, let's see if I can get that again. I'm trying to bring our bobbin thread up for us. A lot of times though I'll use the thread cutter on this machine and so the bobbin thread tail is so short that I can't grab it. But there's another trick. So I pinched it with my scissor, brought it back up. Now I have both thread tails right where I want them. I'm going to go ahead and lower the presser foot, take a few stitches in place just to lock that in and then we're going to begin traveling up the spine. So I'm just going to do kind of a gradual meandering motion and right now I do not want to stop in the arc if at all possible. I can stop up here at the tip. But it's hard if I start or stop somewhere along this angle to keep it really consistent looking. Cut those threads out of the way. I'm up at the top of the spine right now so I'm going to come back down. And I like to start skinny and kind of make that tunnel a little wider as it goes down to the base. And for this feather I am not going to seal off this bottom yet. We can later but I'm not going to do it yet. And now I'm going to start coming up creating those half hearts. So I'm on the pointy part of the heart going to the bubble. So pointy, up to the bubble and stop. And then pointy, up to the bubble. And I'm just going to do this shape all the way up the spine. If I start touching the spine I want to keep touching the spine. As I get toward the tip of the spine, my actual heart shapes get a little bit smaller. Notice where I'm stopping my needle to reposition my hands. And then as I go around the tip, a lot of times I'll just make one arch.*

*Now for me this is where it gets tough so I'm a little bit less left handed then I am right. So in my brain I'm taking a moment and saying I'm going to go around the bump back to the point this time so it's opposite. Still small ones to begin with. So the bump down into the point. And I'm*

coming into that point and then the bump and into the point. I think the real feather pros try to make sure that those points try to line up on both sides of the spine. I'm just trying to get back to the bottom myself. And the feather itself plays nicely with the concept of creating loft in our quilting as well as crushing down the outside to create that puckered effect. Here I am coming in at the bottom. Now that I am at the bottom, I want to echo around those half hearts to give a little more character to my feather. So I'm going to just, this time I'm going to kind of keep an equal distance. And I'm watching the actual presser foot around my stitching like I do when I'm doing my echo quilting. I'm not watching the actual stitching itself. So I'm just mirroring the bumps I just created. I'm going to work my way up to the top and back down. A lot of times folks will make another feather in the opposite direction out of the base. And that is why we didn't want to seal off that bottom area. Watch this. If I wanted to come down now, I could come into this spot and then I could begin my spine going the opposite direction. We'll do a mini one. Come back down and the whole process starts over again.

Let me show you here on the beast, our sampler quilt we've been playing with for a while. I'm hoping you can see all of this feather. It's a very simple basic feather with a little extra, a diamond up there just to make it kind of skateboadereesk or radical if you ask me, right? So again I've just come up one side, back down and up the other. And that is a real simple way to construct the feather themselves.

Now let me cut this thread real quick and let's talk about something fun we can do with these feathers, right? Or I should say it's all fun but something else we can do with these feathers. Now another one of the drills that is in those printables below is this one right here. And if you look at it, what it really is helping us do is helping us mask and mirror more of the pointy swirls back and forth as we go. And I'm going to show you how to stitch this one. But you'll just notice it's a little bit more radical in a couple of different ways. The spine is thick, excuse me, skinny, thick, skinny again. That adds a little bit more creativity I think. And then the swirls get pretty aggressive and we can do a lot with that. Once we can get creative on the fly with our feathers then we can get into things like this. Same feather design. I put a crazy little sunflower at the top. And then as I was saying earlier the key to some of the feathers is doing some of the stippling or some micro fill around the outside of the feather to create the loft in the feather itself.

So now let's come back in here and we're going to do a radical feather. And I'm doing this live so we're hoping it goes well. I'm, I'm nervous. I'm sweating bullets, right now. Now let's bring that thread back up. I did use that thread cutter so we'll see if we can get a hold of that little bobbin tail. Nope, I lost it but here's the other trick. All you have to do if you're using thread

*cutters is just drop a few stitches. That tied it in. And now we're going to start up our spine again. The top of the spine is a great place to stop. We cut our threads. Now this time I'm going to keep it pointy at the top. Coming down. Let's get really radically wide, back down to small. I even crossed my line, no problem there. So I'm going to start up this other side. And now I'm going to do like a really crazy wave or swirl so I can come all the way around. You can do whatever shapes you want here. But whatever I do I want to be able to duplicate it. So I'm up and around. Or do them all different which is also my definition of consistency. So you can see I'm just playing here. Not all feathers have to look like feathers. This one I'm coming around the top so who knows what I'm going to do. Let's put another spike on it. There we go. Now here's the key though, this is what I want to work on. I want to work on coming back around. So my eyes are looking at this tip and I'm thinking to myself, I'm going to come the opposite direction around. You can see where that stop wasn't the best there. Back around. And then once I get that motion I'm actually almost watching the other side of the feather to help me keep on target. I do personally struggle a bit in one direction versus the other but here we go. We just keep working our way around it. All the way around until we get to the bottom. And of course if you struggle keeping your motifs similar don't get as rowdy. Don't get as radical and that's just fine. And we come around here. Work our way out of that swirl again. And now I'm tied off and can start doing all of that micro filler and all of that stitching around the outside edge.*

*Now when I started this whole series of free motion tutorials, the big challenge was, well Rob what happens when you're not doing it on a little 12 by 12 inch sample, right? So you see this wonderful quilt we've been working on for quite a while now. This is our sampler quilt. And here is this big long feather. And I've been sewing on the other tutorials to the point where if you saw me marking this out for motifs, I had marked a feather in here. So it is time for me to go ahead and pop these safety pins out. I've quilted up to that point so I'm not worried about the basting any longer. So I can take these three pins out and I'm going to leave that one up there, ok? And that one is not going to be in my way either. And now for this, what I want to do. I'm on the edge so I don't have to worry about rolling the quilt in the bicycle clips or anything. But watch all of this movement around the rest of the table. I am literally picking up the quilt. This is what we call the fluff and stuff. I'm getting all of the weight of the quilt up on the table because I've got this long movement I want to try to do. I'm actually, even though when I'm thinking about my spines I'm also often thinking up and back down. The movement of this quilt, it's going to be easier if I think side to side. So I'm actually positioning myself in here. And I'm checking the weight of the quilt right now to make sure that I can move freely without any hang ups while I'm doing it, ok? I'm going to do one long feather on this. I want to get nice and comfortable so I can really see what I'm doing because this is the real deal ladies and gentlemen.*

*And I'm going to start by setting that first stitch kind of in the middle of the area because I want to have plenty of room on both sides to create the feather. Presser foot down, locking in that thread. And now I'm going to slowly begin my way along the spine. If I need to stop to reposition my hands . With a big quilt what I don't want to do is jerk the quilt around when I start up again because we're going to see a big whammy stitch that will show that we moved. So I'm not pulling too tight on the next stitch. And now my hands are secure. And I'm coming out. I'll have to do the same again, watching the corners here. Oops, well I'm going to leave that. That is that whammy stitch I was talking about right there. It happened. And that's ok. I'll show you how to fix it here in a second. I want my feather to come around this corner so I have to do a little bit more planning. And I'm coming around here. Loosen that fabric so you don't get the whammy stitch. Whoa! Hit the gas. And here we go at our stop point. Now from here we're going to come back down the spine. I'm going to keep it skinny for quite a while if at all possible. I'm actually doing echo quilting right now so I'm just watching the edge of my foot. You can probably see the stitches in the window of the presser foot as I come along. Now we're going to start to get a little bit wider. Give our spine a little character so now that first stitch is on the outside of the presser foot . This is going to be one ginormous feather. I might have to come back season 15 or something to finish this one. Almost back to our start point. And I'm going to stay really wide because that was just started happening on our project. And now we're going to start building those swirls. Again we're something the loft of the quilt is not getting away from myself. Now I know where I'm going so I can adjust the quilt. And another thing I want to point out. It is absolutely ok to rotate your quilt as long as your needle is not moving, ok? We don't want to try to rotate the quilt while the needle is moving. Only when the machine is stopped.*

*Ok so here we're going to go, start following that spine back up. And because it's such a big feather I'm going to do my basic heart shape again. So I'm at the tip going up to the bump. And this time I'm going to try to leave a little bit of a gap at the spine. So I'm not touching the spine. And I'm also trying to confine myself within the stitching that was already created in the seam allowance of where the light gray and the dark gray fabrics are meeting. We're just going to slowly work our way up. It's very easy to stop at the points of our hearts to reload our hands and adjust what's going on. And then of course I will go on and do the same thing down the other side. Always keeping the organization of my quilt nice and fluid so I don't have those spots in the stitching where it looks kind of like I hit a wall or things got a little jerky. And if you're enjoying this feather tutorial, I would like to encourage you to check out some of our other tutorials if you haven't already seen them. We're calling them the skills and drills sets. And we're*

going to walk you through a lot of different motifs. It's starting to get a little narrow so in my mind I'm thinking, whoa let's watch out what's going on because we've got to come all the way around this hook still. So I'm going to start to open up my hearts a little bit. I think funky feathers add a lot of character to quilting myself. I get a kick out of them. Now I'm going to want to show you this trick right here too. Remember I talked about that whammy stitch. So I hit the whammy stitch that I had done earlier, not the worst one. And I'm actually going to kind of come in and almost hit it so that I'm taking my eye and making it look like it's intentional. And if you're doing your first feather ever right now don't panic, it gets easier and easier. Some of my very first feathers were done just a few months ago and I'm already enjoying the look of them a lot better here. I'm starting to narrow it down here a little bit as I come into the top. But my motif has stayed the same. Those half hearts and then one fun one at the tip. And here we go, we're going back down and around.

Ok now I want to point out earlier I did not pull this pin but I'm getting really close to my presser foot so I want to take the time right now. Pop this out of here. Obviously it's well secured because we've already put that stitching in. And now I'm going to finish that last heart shape or half heart shape, into my mix here. If I want to come up and make it look like a touch, no problem. Now I'm going to begin my echoing. And I'm just going to simply go up and follow all of those bumps all the way up and around and back down.

But I just want to show you how easy it can be even on a very large, look at this thing, very large quilt if you just look at it one section at a time. Get your quilt organized. Get your body mechanics just right. And do what you're good at already and enjoy the quilting process. So we love that you've enjoyed all of this series here at Man Sewing. We have had a blast putting this quilt together. In the comments below I would like to know what questions you still have about free motion machine quilting. I know you're waiting for some machine maintenance videos out there. We're working on those as well. So keep these specific on motifs and stitches and tension. And I'll do my best to get all your questions answered right here at Man Sewing.