

Pattern of the Month

50/50 Block: Rectangle in a Square

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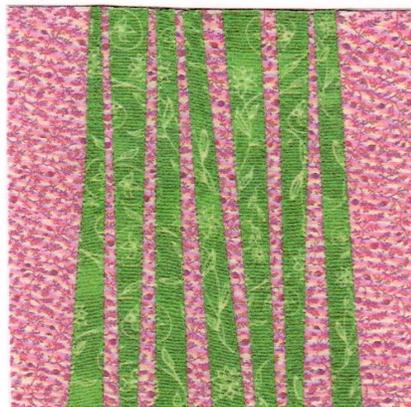
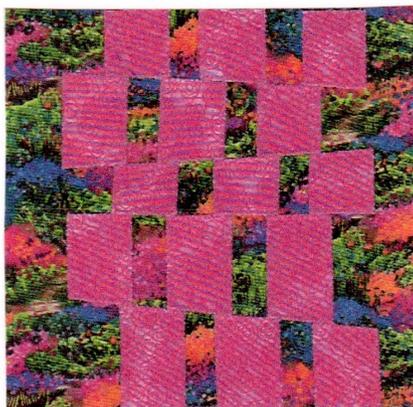
Last summer I became involved in a project that asked for blocks which were made of two colors, blue and red, in equal amounts. Lots of them together, several thousand in fact, read as being Violet, for the Violet Protest, now on exhibit at the Phoenix Art Museum.

I had great fun figuring out how to get that 50/50 division of colors, and I very quickly made use of the only math that makes sense to me: geometry. All the blocks were 8" x 8", or 64 square inches. If I used one color as the background, I could applique the other color to cover 32 square inches, 50% of the background.

The simplest way to make that 50% was a rectangle, a 4" x 8" rectangle. But how boring is that—a rectangle in a square? BUT, if I cut that rectangle apart into smaller shapes, and used every single bit of those cut up pieces, I could move the pieces around any way I liked, and have the right amount of both colors.

I've developed an applique method that I prefer, which uses fusible interfacing, but the fabric layers are not fused to each other. The interfacing is fused to the applique fabric in the required rectangle size. When the rectangle is cut apart into the desired shapes, they can be machine appliqued with either a zigzag or blanket stitch with matching or contrasting thread.

If you prefer hand applique, cut up the interfacing first, then fuse it to your top fabric with spaces left for cutting the pieces apart. Turn edges under, and hand stitch.



Cutting sizes for 50/50 Rectangle in a Square Block

12" finished block: background—12 ½" x 12 ½"; rectangle and interfacing 6" x 12 ½"

9" finished block: background—9 ½" x 9 ½"; rectangle and interfacing 4 ½" x 9 ½"

8" finished block: background—8 ½" x 8 ½"; rectangle and interfacing 4" x 8 ½"

As you can probably see, any size block is possible. Just cut your finished size background to include seam allowances, and include seam allowances on the long dimension of the applique fabric and interfacing.

Below are some possible "cutting up" diagrams for the rectangle. Move them around on your background until you like the arrangement, then pin in place. Stitch, using preferred method.

I also used some directionally patterned fabric on one of my samples, and cut it apart along its own design pattern. I then chose to soften the edges with a bit of trimming. Yes, this removed a bit of fabric from my perfect 50/50 balance. But keep in mind, we are making quilts, not building skyscrapers. A small alteration here or there will not cause catastrophe.

