
Patchwork Improv: Exploring Angles with Sherri Lynn Wood

Chapter 1 - Patchwork Improv: Exploring Angles

Overview

(gentle music) - Hi, I'm Sherri Lynn Wood and I'm an artist, a maker, an improviser, a teacher, and author of "The Improv Handbook" and I have been improvising patchwork as life practice for almost 30 years. We are going to explore angles today. They can be very disorienting and that's what makes them so much fun. We'll be exploring angles using a basic ruler-free piecing technique. We'll be exploring everything we can do with angles and be making a sampler. We'll be taking a traditional block like flying geese and running it through a series of improvisational variations and finally we are going to dive into the improvisational process by getting lost in experimenting. After moving through this process of experimenting with angles, you'll have a deeper understanding of how patterns work.

Materials

- The best part of improv is you can use anything, and I've got a bunch of scraps here from my solids stash, little scraps, larger cut scraps. I have some vintage prints, calicos. I have some just individual strips that I've cut in my strip pile. And I actually have a few little pieces of men's shirts that are already in angles. We'll be piecing everything with a ruler-free method. So there's no rulers and no templates, but I am going to be using a rotary cutter, a self-healing mat, a pair of sharp scissors, possibly a seam ripper, chalk, some pins. I'll be using a neutral thread and a sewing machine and an ironing station.

Making a Flying Geese block the improv way

- We're gonna begin today exploring angles by just simply making a flying geese block. If you've ever tried to make a flying geese block as a traditional fixed pattern, you might know that there's at least eight different ways to do it. So how would you make a flying geese block without any instructions, rulers, or templates? Well, let's see what happens. So I'm gonna start with picking just two colors for my flying geese. I'm gonna maybe do a bright pink and a brown, and I think it's kind of fun to start this process with maybe just two colors. Of course, you could do all different colors, but for me, I like to add colors as I want to expand, and I'm just gonna try to make a flying geese without any rulers or templates, just as I imagine it, so the first thing I need to do, I mean, I could do half-square triangles, but I'm not going to. I'm just gonna cut out an angle. And now I'm going to sew that together so that I can make a flying geese block. I'm gonna cut out another piece for each side. I'm really just trying to make the flying geese without any rules and templates. I'm not making any variations. I'm just trying to make it kind of in a standard way. The basic ruler-free technique is just to cut things to match. You layer right sides up, cut to match like a puzzle piece, and then you flip right sides together. I'm gonna layer my pre-cut triangle in a way that kind of squares off a corner. I'll cut it this way first. And now I'm going to cut this exact angle here. I'm gonna cut it to match. I will get rid of this part here, and now I'm going to turn these right sides together and sew a quarter-inch seam. I don't need to back stitch. I'm just gonna sew the seam right through. There we go. Now I'm going to layer this on another piece. 'Kay, we'll see if I can use the piece I just cut. Oh yeah, that fits pretty good. Now I can actually make this pretty, almost exact without any kind of ruler or template. I'm just angling it up and now I'm gonna cut it to match. I'm gonna flip right sides

together, and sew my quarter-inch seam. Okay, let me take it to the ironing board. So I don't iron it in any one way. I basically just iron with, when I'm working with angles, in one direction. I don't iron my seams open. I just iron them to one side or the other. The reason I don't iron my seams open is sometimes, I might have to take a dart or make a change and it's easier to do that if my seams are going in one direction. If you see, I've made a pretty nice flying geese without any templates or rulers. It actually is rather precise. I might go ahead and trim off some little bits and ends. And now I'm ready to make some variations. You can make several of these to get used to making them without a ruler or template. I can make one with a half-square triangle real quick. So to do that, you would want a square. You can make a square by cutting it like this, and you can even do two at a time, and then I'm just going to cut it through. Now instead of making a typical half-square triangle where I cut things evenly, when I easily could do, I'm just gonna offset it just a little bit. And then you're gonna just, you know, alternate and then we're gonna do right sides together, cut to match. Flip it right sides together. I'm gonna make another round of those. I'm gonna need matching ones with matching colors to really make a true flying geese, although I could have a posed flying geese like this. Eh, let's just do that. I'm gonna trim it again, and I'm gonna iron them real quick. So I'm gonna trim these up, and then see, now, if they're a posed flying geese, they would probably go this way, so already I'm kind of making a variation, so I'll go ahead and sew that. I'm gonna have to cut them to match. You see how this bows out like that? If I were to sew this together, it would not lie flat. It would have a wave or a bubble, so I'm gonna layer this one over this piece and then I'm gonna cut it to match. And now I'm gonna flip it right sides together and sew my quarter-inch seam. I'm gonna go ahead and iron that. All right, so I have my second variation of the flying geese, okay? I'm going to change the color on my next variation, and I am going to use a wider proportion rather than a standard proportion for my flying geese. Let's do an angle that is kind of wide. It's pretty easy to corner these up and square off the corners. So I'm gonna line this up. I'm going to imagine this line coming across, right? And so I'm gonna cut this like this, and I'm gonna cut this down, and then I'm going to trim this little tag off here on the edge, and I'm going to now flip right sides together, and sew my quarter-inch seam. One thing to note is that when you're cutting angles, you're cutting on the bias. Let's look at the bias a little bit and see what that's about. When you look at a bias, I'm gonna cut a square here. You have a salvage edge that doesn't stretch at all. You have a cross grain that has a little stretch, but the bias is the diagonal. It's across the weave, so the weaves are perpendicular, salvage and cross grain, and the bias is the diagonal across those, and you see how much stretch there is? So it's very important, when you are working on the bias and with an angle, you typically are cutting on the bias, you want to make sure that you don't stretch as you sew because you can get some distortions that way. Again I'm going to angle this up. Now another trick is if you don't want your points to disappear, make sure you sew a little extra fabric up at the top so that your points don't disappear. Although sometimes it's really cool when your points do disappear, so later on when we're joining these, we can always cut off the points if they get cut off, that's okay, 'cause improv is not about perfection. Now we're gonna do another one. 'Kay, this time, I'm gonna start making some angles in a row, perhaps, so let me go and cut this to match. So I have another angle here and I have another piece. I'm going to have a little gap here, so before I sew it, I'm just going to pick maybe one of my little strips. I can audition strips. Ah, might as well go bright. I'm gonna add some red. You want to make sure your strip is going to go off the edge enough so that you can cut that full angle. I'm gonna recut this right here and then I'll cut this one right here. Now right sides together. I'm gonna keep building this row a little bit. Now let's see, I'm gonna just put this one down short. Like this, cut it to match. It's a skinny one. I'm gonna add

another piece to try to keep building on this. So you can see how freeing this is to just start building angles without any templates or rulers or worrying about things to match. I mean, the goal of improv is not perfection. The goal of improv is variation, pattern variation. I already see a whoopee moment. I'm gonna go ahead and cut this right here, and I'm just gonna extend my mistake even more by adding some other color here. So the goal of improv is not perfection. It's not about making our points meet. It's really just about pattern variation. So here's a tip to all of you who are new to improv, and if you consider yourself a perfectionist. Improv is not about being perfect. It's not about perfect points. The goal of improv is pattern variation. So if you can separate were it perfectionism or being perfect towards working towards your goal, then you can let go of the urge to make things perfect and just remember that any time you make a mistake, whoopee, you've worked towards your goal. You've made a pattern variation and that's what you want to do. So whatever you make is good. You're making a variation. Every time you make a mistake or you have an imperfect point that's a pattern variation and you're working towards your goal, so focus on that. Rather than the goal of perfection, focus on the goal of pattern variation. So now I'm gonna layer this again, and I'm gonna cut it to match. I might layer just a little bit over, cut it to match. I'm gonna add this. Sew my right sides together. And again, I can trim away, keeping that line of squared-off parts. Okay, and so I might decide that this is a complete little section right there, so I've made another variation. Now with two flying geese in a row with a few little inserts. So you just keep going and creating more and more variations. Let me take the couple that I have done to the ironing board that haven't been ironed. So you can see from the pattern variations I've made, then, once we're gonna start playing with these flying geese, we can start to, you know, we can compose with them in different ways. When you just use a couple colors or shades of colors, you see I have bright pink and then I have some variations of browns, you can see how things can line up in different ways and create different angles. You may want to make a whole bunch of sections and then, you know, we can move them around and compose with them and we're gonna do some more composing later on. I just wanted to show you how you can start to make variations and how that can flow. The next variation, I'm going to play with scale, so let's go really small and really big. I'm actually going to shift colors a little bit. I'm gonna stick with the brown, but I'm gonna throw in some other pastel-y color. Maybe I will do some small yellow, 'cause yellow is very intense color, and then I'll figure out a different color for my big blue ones. And this time, I'm going to just do something a little different. You might already have some scraps in your small scrap bin that's at different angles, so I'm gonna just gonna precut a few angles. So here's some angles, and because they're so small, I'm gonna go ahead and I'm gonna cut this one even smaller. I'm gonna go ahead and iron them so they're not wrinkled up on me when I'm trying to work with them. Let's do little teeny ones here. Again, I can square them off. And I'm gonna do a little bit of chain sewing. So sometimes, I just get bored doing the same old thing, so you know, throwing in something at a weird angle like that's kind of fun. All right, I'm gonna iron these. I'm gonna go ahead and put this in a long strip. I'm gonna put it like that. This one, I'm going to be a little less, I'm gonna do a little weird thing with this one, too. So I'm going to cut this one like this, and one thing I'm gonna do, so I'm putting this in an unusual set, and so I'm gonna have this one floating, but I can see this is kind of a straight edge, like creating a square, but when I do something at odd angles like that, I usually try to go ahead and cut in the line of my piece, the line of my thing, so I have a straight edge. I don't want to have any Y seam, so I'm gonna always try to be cutting things in a straight edge, so I'm gonna go ahead and sew that. At this point, don't worry if you don't know where you're going with this. Just remember that you're experimenting and exploring and learning more about how angles operate. I'm gonna go

ahead and trim this off. Okay, I'm gonna go ahead and just sew that on top of here, but before I do that, I'm gonna add a little bit of yellow here because I want to cut this off. Not everything you make is going to have to go into the final composition, so don't be afraid to just explore now. Again, I'm gonna just cut this down. I'm gonna take this 'cause I want to sew a straight edge there. Now I'm going to see if this will fit here. Not really. Let me just get a piece of something else that I can square this off with. Okay, so I think I'm just gonna go ahead and cut this in some way that's gonna end it. (chuckles) All right, let me iron this real quick. So this odd shape is kind of already a triangle, so I'm gonna just piece this into a bigger flying geese, which is a great way to get into our larger scale. I'm gonna go ahead and kind of cut it into a pretty good angle there, okay. So now let's piece that into a larger-scale flying geese and I'm going to, which color do I like? Ooh, I like that gray, that's kind of nice. So I'm just listening to internal cues, what I like. I don't really have to cut it to match. It looks like it's pretty much the right straight edge, so I'm gonna right sides together, and I'll sew it. I'm gonna go ahead and iron that. No worries if you get lost with your angles and they start going in all directions. Eventually, you just want to wack them off so they're somewhat squared up so you can avoid Y seams later when we're composing.

Exploring angles and edges

- Now that we've explored angles through the flying geese block, I want to start looking at strip piecing with angles and in particular using wedges. These are little plackets from the men's shirts and I'm going to just go ahead and trim those at different types of angles. You may have scraps in your scrap bag that are already in angular shapes that you can just kinda trim off a little bit. I like this idea of not having real regular angles like the flying geese angle, but something a little less predictable. So, I'm gonna start building on these shapes using a series of wedge strips. So I'm gonna begin with choosing some fabrics to cut some wedges out. We can do a variety of different size wedges. I'm gonna make 'em kind of extreme. Of course when you're doing this you could play around with wedges that are flatter or less extreme than this. There's oh so many options. Maybe we could throw in brown. I'm gonna just cut some strips, some wedges up to begin with. Oh this is a pretty color. Let's throw in a little yellow. A couple of yellow wedges. I'm gonna make these really long. Oh we got some pink stuff that's already in some wedges so let's go ahead and cut a couple wedges out of what's here. And I'm going to audition some different prints. I kind of want to do this one because it's got some lines in it so it might be interesting to see what happens with these lines and how they intersect if they're cut into wedges. And I guess we'll just cut 'em this way. Across the lines. Let's just start with more of a contrast. And I'm going to make this line here. This is gonna be a lot like a log cabin piecing type situation. (machine whirring) Now that I've got this line sewn, I'm going to cut following this line. So let me turn it in the right direction and do that. So imagine this line just being extended. And then we're gonna build on it as a log cabin. I'm gonna go ahead and put another orange one in. And you can see that my angle point is gonna shift. And I can decide whether I want my angle to be going way up here, or if I want it to be going over towards the side. I think this is kinda fun so I'm gonna do it this way. And I'll fold right sides together and sew my 1/4 inch seam. (machine whirring) Now I'm going to cut this. This has got a bit of an angle too. I'm gonna want to try to build some things going a little bit straight. So let's see what we can do to get it straightened up. I'm gonna add this here. And you see how it's going into a log cabin where you do like a half square log cabin. We've got this line and this line, now we're gonna sew on this line. This has a slight curve, but this is also kind of a natural fit. I love natural fits because it's when you collaborate with the patch work to make things just line up naturally. So this got a little bit of a

curve. I don't actually even have to cut it to match. (machine whirring) So I'm going to go ahead and figure out a straight edge on these. I'm gonna go ahead and trim this like that. And I'm gonna go ahead and trim this straight like that. Okay so I got a bit of a straight edge that's going up. I'm going to, oh, this is very curved right here. Almost like a Y curve. So to deal with that, I'm gonna layer this a little bit lower. I don't want to do this. I could do this. I could fill something in right there and do this. Actually, maybe I will do that. Okay, so I'm gonna fill in with a little bit of yellow here. A little piece of yellow. (machine whirring) Okay, so I should be able to layer this right on top following, oh, it's a little bit short. Whoopee, can't really do that. So I'm gonna still angle it a little bit like this. And I'll cut this to match. Yeah that's my, kinda my options. Let's see if I do it this way. All right. I'm gonna cut this to match. I'm gonna cut this straight up. And I'm gonna cut this along this line. (machine whirring) I'm trying to keep a straight edge here. So I'm gonna go ahead and cut this coming up. And I'm kind of building up. I mean this doesn't have much of a slant, so I'm gonna go ahead and slant it a little bit more here. My goal is just to build on this and see where it goes. You know once I put several of these together, I'll have some interesting angles intersecting. (machine whirring) Okay, now we've got something going on here. I'm gonna go ahead and sew that on this side. (machine whirring) Okay, I want to take this to the ironing board. Okay. So let's go ahead and trim it up a little bit. Okay. Now I could also start building on this other side as well. Let's do it with some orange maybe again. And I can just get kind of a diamond shape. I'm gonna do it like this I think. So I'm gonna go ahead and layer this at the angle that I want it at. Which is right here. Get rid of that. (machine whirring) Gosh this is getting so confusing. I love getting lost in angles. I thought I was building a straight edge. And I've totally lost my straight edge now. So whatever, whoopee! I'm just gonna see what we get. And at some point I'm gonna just trim this somewhat square. Okay. So I can see that this is a 90 degree angle so I'm gonna go ahead and try to trim this up a bit straight. It's still not completely straight. But I mean at the 90 degree angle, I'm trying to build like a column basically. So I could square this off. Maybe I'll put in, I'll fill in with some brown. Kinda like what we did with the flying geese where I'm squaring it off now. So however wacky your angles get, eventually you want to work to the square. You can square them off as you go in smaller sections or you can just keep building angles out in crazy ways until you eventually get to the size of your quilt. I like to square off in smaller sections so that I can compose with them later. Let's get this final piece on here so we can square off. I'm gonna get this into a straight line here. And let's cut that to match. (machine whirring) I'm gonna follow this line and get it in more or less a rectangular shape. Let's try doing one more very quickly. 'Cause that one was a very strange type of angle. I'm gonna start this one with having straighter edges to begin with. Whenever you struggle with something, you try it and you struggle with it, you always have an opportunity to do it a little bit differently the next time. I'm going to go ahead and line this up 'cause remember as I cut I'm gonna try to keep it in a line like this. So I'm gonna go ahead and position this one in this way and I'm gonna flip and sew. (machine whirring) Now let me take another wedge. I'm gonna go ahead and trim this up so I can see where the corner is. And then I can look at where my angles, that flattens it out a lot. That squares it off. I don't want to square it off right now. So I'm going to position it like this. I'm looking at where my point is going to end up. And I'm looking at this line being cut. All right. So I want to cut this. (machine whirring) Again, I'm going to get my straight edge here. And I'm building up. All right. Now let's see what I can do to get, I'm gonna try building on this side first. So I'm gonna go ahead and flip this and try it. (machine whirring) Okay, this angle I'm gonna go ahead and extend. And then this straight edge I'm gonna go ahead and extend. Now let's see. We're going to maybe cut this wedge to something a little more manageable. I'm looking at where my point might be. I'm

gonna do it right here I think. (machine whirring) Again, let's cut this. And let's cut this angle. Oops. All right. So you can see I'm squaring it up. We've got that. So I'm gonna go ahead and add one more color at the top here. (machine whirring) And I can again, square that up. So I'm getting my rectangle here. I'm gonna keep building this until I have a shape that I want to square off. (soft classical music) (machine whirring) (soft classical music) (machine whirring) (soft classical music) (machine whirring) (soft classical music) (machine whirring) (soft classical music) So now I'm finally gonna square this off the top. (soft classical music) (machine whirring) (soft classical music) (machine whirring) So I'm going to imagine my edge coming out here and going across there. (soft classical music) Okay. So let's go ahead and see what the other one looks like next to it. So that's pretty interesting. I'm not sure how all this'll go together in the final composition, but let's move on to another experiment with angles and then we'll use all of our pieces into a final angle sampler.

Stack and whack angles

- So for our next experiment with angles, I'm gonna do something that's commonly referred to as a whack and stack. Now, I have to confess, I haven't tried this at home, so I don't know what we're going to end up with. So I'm gonna pick out just three fabrics to do my whack and stack with. I'm gonna try to carry over one fabric. And I'm gonna do something a little bit different in that I'm gonna start with three triangular shapes that are all the same size. I'm gonna throw in a different print this time. I just need to do something really different, so let me throw in this crazy blue print. I'm gonna stick with some of the same colors that I've used earlier, so I'm actually gonna pick up kind of a purply pink color. And I want three fabrics that contrast with each other. I could do this with only two fabrics as well, but we'll try it with three. Now I'm gonna cut through all three layers at the same time. Okay, once I've got them cut, I'm gonna reposition them in altering colors. So I'm basically gonna get three sets. I'm gonna keep them in order, and I'm gonna quickly sew all these together. If you lose the order, whoopee, it doesn't matter. Sew 'em on backwards or in a different order. It'll all work out in the end. This one is so much shorter, I'm not sure why. Maybe I did get it out of order. So before I sew it, because I wanna kinda try to keep as much of my angle, I'm gonna go ahead and add a strip onto this edge as a filler. I'll trim it off a little bit. I'll just trim it even with this one. This seems to be happening with all of these, so I'm just gonna go ahead and add a little strip on each one of 'em. This is what improv's all about, making decisions in the moment. Sew this one here. I'm gonna add some of this green on this one. Okay, I'm gonna take these three sections now and take 'em to the ironing board. Just trim 'em one by one. Okay, let's see if I have anything interesting here that inspires me for a next step. Look at this here. This is interesting. This could be a block pattern that you could make into a fixed pattern and just repeat over and over again and create a whole quilt from it. That's one of the reasons I love doing improv is that even if I don't end up using the experiments in a finished composition, it gives me ideas. It generates ideas for new patterns that I might not have seen before if I hadn't just been exploring pattern in a playful way. So I see if I had another section made, I could do another three sections, and I'd have two more blocks made, and then I could put 'em into something. So that's something to think about. But maybe, I don't know, I want something a little more dynamic. Oh, let's see what happens if we do it this way. Oh, so now we're getting another interesting kind of thing happening with angles by turning these blocks around. So you can imagine doing a whole series like this, whacking and stacking and then putting 'em together and then seeing where they bleed and shift. Also, we could just make 'em into flying geese centers, right, by squaring 'em off. So I'm gonna just try one more stack and whack

going from a different angle. And maybe I'll just do one cut this time. Okay, and see what happens. Notice that when every time I whack and stack, the piece shrinks and gets smaller. Although I'm not entirely thrilled with the outcome of this experimentation with angles, I did enjoy the process, so now let's move on to the composition.

Composing an angle sampler

- Okay, it's composition time. We have our flying geese variations, our log cabin, angular, wedge-building things, and we have our whack and stack angles. So now the challenge is to see if we can work these into one composition. And anything goes here. We don't know where it's gonna go. We're just gonna let it flow and see what it happens. Okay, I'm gonna start by just looking at some of my favorites. I think this is my favorite. I'm gonna just play around with these a little bit. I'm gonna set my whack and stacks to the side and just look at, you know, just take a look at what I've got here and how things line up. I'm looking for bleeds, the way things, I mean, this just looks good just in a row. I mean, it looks like you can't even go wrong with this whole thing. (laughs) I'm loving this. Okay, so I'm gonna take these aside now. Now I'm gonna be looking at my flying geese variations. And one of the things I like to look for are natural fits. You see how that kind of curves a little bit and this curves a little bit. Kinda like that. I also look for bleeds. And a bleed is where colors bleed together. You see how the brown bleeds here and the pink bleeds here? You lose this cross cut, which is great. You're not quite sure where the seams are or how the order of construction flows. So I can keep building like this. I'm gonna play around a little bit with what I have here, and then I'll make a decision on how to put things together. But you really can't think it through too far in advance. I do recommend, though, that you play for a little bit and just see what starts to spark your imagination. When I have flying geese variations or anything angular, one thing I can do besides bleeds and natural fits, I can also orientation because you've got points, right? So you can look at what happens when you point everything up and how that flows. I can also look at those types of relationships in addition to things where things bleed and stuff. Okay, so these are these different parts. At some point, you might wanna commit to something and just build some of these sections into bigger pieces. So I'm gonna start with this piece here. I could either connect it this way, and then I have some more things flowing like that. And again, you don't have to use every single piece that you create. There might be some things that I end up leaving out. I'm gonna take these to the side, and I'm gonna now try to pull in these pieces 'cause I really want them. It's okay if they have, if they're distinct sections too because this is a sampler, after all. But I'm trying to think, are there places where I can naturally bleed into? Oh, that's kinda nice. See how these pinks? This is not a natural fit, but it's a great bleed. Sometimes there's trade-offs with the differences between natural fits and bleeds and things like that. I really this kinda thing going on there. At one point, you just need to commit. I'm gonna commit to this. It's a natural fit. Whenever I am piecing things together and I wanna make sure that I don't have any insets or partial seams. So in this case, I'm either going to want to chop this off once this seam is sewn, or I wanna add something here first before I sew this. And I think I'm going to just chop it off because it's so small an amount. I'm gonna go ahead and cut this to fit, and then I'll end up probably cutting that part off at some point. Now right sides together. (sewing machine humming) Okay, let's see, that kinda flows nicely into this color. Again, working with bleeds. See what happens if I put this here. Okay, I think this is kind of nice. This pink bleeds right into this section. So if I put this here, I'm gonna wanna add something here. I'm gonna go ahead and cut this off because I said I was, and I don't wanna be tempted to make it more complicated. Now, sometimes you may need to just fill in with, see if I can fit this here.

Oh, that's kind of a nice match right there with this section. So I'm gonna go ahead. A couple things I like about this matchup is that I have a bit of a bleed here where this light goes in. We've got positive and negative space going on. And it's about the right size. So you see I'm layering it and cutting to match. I didn't have to cut off too much, but a little bit. Now I'm gonna flip right sides together. (sewing machine humming) I'm gonna take this to the iron. See how nice it looks once you make the commitment and you actually sew the seams? It starts to change the whole piece once it gets sewn together. The thing you have to remember about improv is that you can't see the whole finished picture before you start, so you just need to make the best decision that you can in the moment. Make the best relationship you can in the moment. Follow your internal cues. Do what delights you. Do what feels like it flows. If you feel the flow of it, do that. You can also move on to things that scare you a little bit. But the main thing is you wanna make the best relationship you can in the moment and commit one step at a time and allow the thing to unfold in its own way. Okay, let's look at how we can bleed this section. And we might still end up using these somewhere. We don't know. Let's see how we can bleed this section into our next group of pieces. Let's see what happens if we put this in the center. Kind of, it's a bit abrupt there. I mean, I do like how this bleeds in here. Let's see what happens on this side. It's a bit of a natural fit, especially if I move it down a little bit. So I kinda like this because I see how the yellow bleeds in really well, and I kind of am getting my finished square edge there, which is kinda nice. Wonder what happens if we actually bleed these diamonds in together. And then I've got this unfinished piece here, and that kinda bleeds nicely up there. I'm gonna do something where I outline these with some dark brown strips and see if I can't integrate these shapes using a grid approach. I'm gonna create a grid of angles. Let's see if I can do it. (sewing machine humming) Let's attach another one. (sewing machine humming) Hmm, okay. I'm gonna fill in with a pink. (sewing machine humming) Ooh, I don't know. (laughs) Sometimes I make things and it works. Sometimes it doesn't. (sewing machine humming) Okay, I'm doing a lot of eyeballing in terms of my cutting, so we'll see, I might not have some flat things, but it doesn't lie flat, there are ways to fix that, and I'll show you. All right, I'm gonna go ahead and trim this off. I'm going to iron this. Before we go any further, I'm gonna show you how to take out any bubbles that occur because things weren't cut to match. A lot of times when you're working with angles, especially 'cause it's on the bias, you'll get these types of bubbles. So it's best to take 'em out as soon as you get them, and there's a couple ways to do it. Mainly it's about taking a dart. So you can take a dart right across the seam. You can see how this is where it wants to naturally bubble up. So I can finger press it like that, and then I can take a dart there to make it flat. If I'm gonna take a dart on the seam, I would take it right here. And the seam needs to go in the opposite direction of the dart. So my dart is gonna come this way, but my seam is going this way right now too, so it won't really dart. So I need to flip this over. This is the seam I'm talking about. I need to flip this over and press this seam in the opposite direction of the way the dart. See, right now it's going this way. It needs to go this way in order for me to do the dart. Now you can see the seam is pressed this way. It will be easier for me to take the dart right there. Now that the seams are ironed in the correct direction, I can make a dart on the seam, which would look like this. However, in this case, I actually like the way the block curves and the lines shift when I put the dart across the seam. So I'm gonna opt for a dart across the seam in this case. And to do that, I'm gonna finger press it. If finger pressing isn't enough, you can always take it back to the ironing board. Now when I flip it open, you're gonna see this little crease right down there. I'm gonna take that to the sewing machine, and I'm going to start right here and sew right on the crease, all the way to the edge. (sewing machine humming) Okay, I'm gonna take it to the ironing board. So you can see it's nice

and flat now. There no more bubbles. Now, you don't need to worry about any imperfections like a seam across or a dart across the seam because with improv, perfection is not the goal, so we're not looking for perfection. So when there is a little imperfection, like a dart or something doesn't quite line up, you might see it a lot yourself when you're doing it, but in the whole scheme of things, your piece, nobody's gonna see it. And probably at some point you won't even be able to find it to show it to anyone. Okay, so I'm gonna trim this off. I'm kinda liking this a little bit better. Let me see if I can add one more section of my whack and stacks. And I think if I can add one more section on here, I'll be satisfied with being able to work it into my sampler. Yeah, I like this kind of stained glass effect or grid effect, so I'm gonna do a little more of that. (sewing machine humming) Again, improv's all about making relationships in the moment. I like how these blues kind of relate in this section. And I'm filling in with pinks as a way to, it's almost like a bit of a procedure to pull together the composition. So I'm gonna be adding these pinks to fill in with. Even though I don't have a plan yet, I'm gonna hope that somehow I'll be able to bleed this into the rest of what I have going on here. (sewing machine humming) Now I have it turned in a different direction, which is not so bad. It's always good to look at everything you have whenever you bring it back onto the table. And if you change your mind and you like something better, you can go with it. I mean, this is kinda looking cool right now. I could imagine doing some more of these strips and just continuing with that. Let's see if I go back to what I had before. I kinda like this better, so I'm just gonna go with this. And I'm gonna pull it down a little bit. Cut to match. (sewing machine humming) Okay, I'm gonna take it to the ironing board. I'm gonna try to attach this now. We kinda know we're gonna go with that. I'm gonna see what kind of attachment I can do here with this. Let's see if I see any natural fits. Okay, that kinda looks pretty good to me. I'm gonna go with that. One thing I'm wondering, if I wanna put another dark strip in, maybe a little thicker this time. I'm curious about what might happen if I put a dark strip in here to keep this stained glass sample. Eh, I don't like that as much. I'm gonna go ahead and connect these and commit to them. Once your piece is bigger than your cutting mat, you're not gonna be able to use your rotary cutter. You can use your scissors to cut to match. So I can just take my scissors and cut the line all the way down. So there's no need to ever square anything off with a ruler, even when you have long seams. You can simply cut to match with your scissors rather than your rotary cutter. Now I'm gonna flip right sides together and sew. (sewing machine humming) I'm gonna give it a good press. For now I'm going to leave this section right here unresolved and move back to the rest of my composition. We had these two we liked up here. And we had this up here. Maybe we could do it. I'm looking for bleeds. We had this right here, I think. I think I had something like this maybe. Oh, yeah, I like that right there. That's kinda nice. There's a lot of natural fits. They're not exactly natural fits, but I'm seeing a lot of similar curves here. I like to work with natural fits because whenever things fit naturally, then I know I'm collaborating with the patchwork. The patchwork has a life of its own, even though I made it. After I make it, it exists as its own thing. So it's actually my collaborating partner. And it also takes some of the pressure off of me. It's a way of saying, "Yes, and," to the patchwork. It's saying to me, "I wanna fit together this way. "I'm curving this way and I'm curving this way, "and it fits naturally, so do that." And so I'm like, "Yes, and let's go with it." I'm gonna continue to build my composition and commit one step at a time. That I really like a lot. I love the way these things bleed and make this really interesting pattern. This hasn't been committed yet, so I'm gonna just turn it around and see if there's anything I like better. The one thing I really know is that I like these two combined. And I'm looking for how things bleed and go into each other, so I'm picking up this yellow bleed here. And how this ends off nicely. So I'm pretty happy with that so far. I'm not quite sure what I'm doing here,

so I'm gonna leave this part for now and let it rest, and I'm gonna just move over to this section. Let me put something in here to fill this up. Lot of times you have to build more things. I'll look and see if any of my chunks that I've already made kinda fit. That might end up going up here. I'm gonna audition some colors. I can definitely work with this again. I could do something completely different. Let me see what this bright blue looks like. So I'm gonna go ahead and fill this in with the blue, finish this off. I'm gonna move it all down here so I can see about where I need to go with this. (sewing machine humming) (sewing machine humming) To be honest, I'm feeling a little bit lost here in my composition, and when I feel lost, I often reorient myself to the pieces. So instead of building in one direction, I'm gonna turn it now and build it in another direction. And angles can be quite confusing, so don't get discouraged if this happens to you as you're building your piece. Just try to keep seeing it in different perspectives. Okay, I'm gonna make a couple commitments. I'm gonna commit this to this, keep this in one row. I like that. And it's a natural fit. You can see how these two kind of round up and fit naturally. I'm gonna cut it to match a little bit, but it's basically there. Okay. (sewing machine humming) Okay, gonna go to the iron. All right, and I'm gonna go ahead and commit this piece to this. I've got a little bit of an angle here, so maybe I'll do something to fill in right here before I commit. Trying to see if there's any of my little bits that will look good there. I think maybe putting this down here and creating an angle with this gray because the similar value might be kinda interesting as a way to blend these edges, so I'm gonna do that. I'll go ahead and position it where I want it and then cut it to match. Right sides together. (sewing machine humming) Let's iron it. Okay, now I'm gonna line this up. It's called the order of sewing. I always want to fill in before trimming away. I don't wanna have any partial seams, or I wanna try to avoid partial seams as much as possible. Okay, that looks really great. I'm going to go ahead and cut this to match. So at this point I've got a couple choices. I can just go ahead and follow this line. I'm gonna to, actually we'd cut this angle off. I could flip this on top and cut it this way, or I could cut right down the center. As long as it's overlapping and my cut cuts through all the layers so that they're butt up together, then I'm good. I think I don't really wanna lose too much of that point. I think it's kind of a cool thing. So I'm gonna go ahead and put this one on top and cut like that. Now, this is, I would say this is not really a Y-seam 'cause it's a bit of a curve, so I think that I can do that. But let me show you how you make registrations just in case you are doing something curvier and you're not sure. Once you flip it, you wanna have some guidance in how things match up. So I'm gonna put a few cross marks across the seams so that I can keep things in line. And especially right down here actually, I might just clip it a little bit because I know where it's gonna start. Okay, so when I flip this, you're gonna see it's gonna have this curve, so I'm going to make sure that I line up my registration marks and put a pin in each one so I can keep myself on track as I sew. I'll put a couple more in here. You can pin as much as you need to to support your best sewing. Some of you may need to pin more, others less. Typically as my seams get longer or if they have any kind of waviness in them, and especially working with angles because angles, you have a lot of bias, which means that the angles can stretch out as you sew, I do more pinning. Okay, and then this one is just gonna be. I'm just gonna round it around like a curve when I get to it. I don't think it's too sharp. It should be pretty easy to do. (sewing machine humming) With improv, steam is your friend. I love to have a nice steamy iron when I'm doing improv. All right, now that I've made a couple of major commitments, I feel a little more at ease in terms of the direction of where I'm taking it. And this is how improv works. If you have a lot of different options, it can feel overwhelming. But once you commit, you start to narrow your options, and the road and the direction forward becomes clearer and clearer. Okay, I really love how this darkness between these lines and this area and this frames

this. It gives you a new lead into a whole new type of angles coming in. So it's almost like a transition space that introduces from one to the next. So I'm definitely going to keep that there. And it also lines up here, which is great. Now, in terms of order of sewing, I'm going to keep this somewhere up here. And I may wanna keep my line. You see this can keep my line going that way. And then I can see where the other relationships are, like this pink, this orange. I can also move this down. I'm looking at different places where colors intersect. I could move it all the way to here. Kinda think I like this. It's got a good natural fit. These yellows are meeting up pretty well. They're not exact, but I like it that they're not exact. And it's got a great natural fit. Okay, so we still have some gaps, though, that need to be filled in. This is one right here. I wonder if our original flying geese might look good right here. I think that looks pretty good. Let me see how this one looks. That's a better fit because it's the same length, and I won't have to make any additional adds to it, so I'm gonna do that. So I'm gonna go ahead and sew this to this. (sewing machine humming) And take it to the ironing board. All right, so that line is ready. This'll be probably my last seam. What I need to do now is resolve what I'm doing with the rest of this piece. Am I gonna add something here, or do I wanna just at this point cut this off and end it like that? Let me see one other thing. I have a few more bits. Kinda like this. These are my little bits from my slash experiment. You know, though, it's pretty complicated already, this piece. That's not bad, actually. There's a lot of color that's going everywhere in this piece, so sometimes I like to make a shift in my composition where there's an area that's really different and maybe darker or lighter. And so I'm gonna build a dark piece to fill in right here. And I might already have a few things that I can use, even if it's something as simple as just filling in with a big chunk of fabric without any more lines in it. Think that's a little too extreme, so I'm gonna (laughs) put a couple more. I'm gonna go ahead and add these in. Let's see how this looks. Yeah, just having these two in. I'll put something here as a filler, or maybe I'll even end up cutting it a little bit down to this piece. So in that case, I might switch this one up a little bit. Then I can trim this off. So I'm gonna go ahead and commit, so the order of sewing is going to be to create this row, sew that to this section, and then I'll do this seam. I'll do this seam, and then I'll trim up I may end up having to add something right here too, so we'll see about that at the end. Okay, so the first thing is to line these two up and sew them. And there's a little bit of curve there, so I'm going to cut that to fit. (sewing machine humming) I'm seeing that there's actually really a bubble in here, but I have kind of already pressed a dart into it, but I did not, kind of unofficially I pressed a dart in it, but I didn't really sew it down. So I'm gonna go ahead and fix that right now. You see where that's bubbling up? So I'm going to finger press this a little bit and take it to the ironing board and get a nice crisp crease, and then I will sew right in the crease into the dart to take that curve out. Now, it is gonna change (chuckles) this piece a little bit. See what happened? See how it's curved now? But we can see what we can do in terms of arranging this. Let's go ahead and take that out. Okay. Okay, so the dart has been ironed in this direction. You can see the seam is going in the opposite direction. And then when I fold it over, you can see the crease, which is going to be the sew line for the dart. (sewing machine humming) Let's re-press it. Okay, and I'm gonna just take my scissors and recut down to 1/4 inch seam allowance, just to take out the extra bulk. All right, so now you see that it's nice and flat, but it has changed the trajectory of my piece a little bit. So let's see. It might be fine to just overlap this. And I will lose a point there, but I'm not too concerned about that. The other thing is is if I wanna keep it lined up, all I'd have to do is add a little bit of dark here. Or I could add another color if I wanted to. Yeah, sometimes it's fun to throw in a sliver of something new. So I can audition a whole 'nother color in there. Let me go ahead and cut this off. It just gets too complicated. So I'm just gonna add, I still like the way this introduces the

piece, so I don't really wanna bend it over like this. I'm gonna go ahead, in this case, add a little sliver of another angle right here, but I'm gonna use a matching fabric or one that's almost matching so that visually it reads the same. But this is already a piece that is, sometimes it's just easier. You just pick up a scrap, and you can just sew it right on. You don't have to cut anything. So I'm gonna do the easiest thing here and just sew this on and fill in this little gap. (sewing machine humming) Take it to the ironing board. And now we've taken out the dart. I'm gonna trim this a little bit, get it out of the way. And I can reline it up in the angle that I wanted to originally, and I have this fill-in area. Okay, now we can go back to building our last row. Let's see, what do I like here in terms of the angles of these two? I think I'm just gonna keep it just like that. It looks like, though, it's still curving a little, so I don't really wanna cut it off. So again, I'm going to add a little more right here of something dark. I'm just gonna add a little piece of this, actually do a triangle of it here. Take another wedge. All right, I like that. (sewing machine humming) I'm gonna continue to build this row out and attach it. Another trick for dealing with registration, and especially when you're working with larger sections, and if you're taking 'em up and off the design wall or on a flat surface to sew them and you wanna remember where things are going to go because the angles shift around, you can make a light line all the way up of where your pieces are gonna go. So that if I move this piece to cut it, I know that's kinda gonna, this is about where this other piece is going to position itself. And then I can move this and not worry about wondering, oh, how did I have that angle again? So another helpful composition trick. Again, you can see how this has gotten bigger than my rotary mat. So as long as I'm gonna line these up so they're overlapped completely. I can decide which layer I want to go on top. I can take a chalk again and make a line of where I'm going to cut later with my scissors. Me using scissors, if you haven't used scissors a lot, you may need to rebuild your scissor skills. So if you don't feel confident just taking your scissors to town with a long line like this, you can use your chalk like that, and then you can then cut right along the chalk line. Okay, now we've got it pretty much cut to match. All right, so I wanna flip right sides together and know that these lines are gonna line up. I could also, again, especially with all these crazy angles, is put a few registration marks to keep me on track with this. I'm gonna pin right in the registration marks. If you have any seams that you think might be splitting open, cross seams like this, you can always make your stitch length narrow, but if it's too late for that, you can pin on those seams so that when you're sewing they won't come open. Okay, that looks good. I'm gonna go take it to the sewing machine. (sewing machine humming) Okay, now you can see where this registration line's really come in handy for this next seam. I can easily line this back up. This time I'm just gonna cut it with the scissors. Okay, especially because this seam is long, it's a little complicated. It has some thick seams. There's a lot of bias edges. I'm definitely going to mark some registration marks and pin on this seam. Now I'm gonna flip right sides together. If I have a place like this where two seams are coming together to create bulk, I'll just flip a seam over to just reduce that bulk. Especially with angles I allow seams to go in any direction, mainly because when you're doing precision work, your angles are designed to all lay over the same direction and lie flat. But when you're doing this, we're not making points meet, so our angles can come into conflict at times. So it's better to just let them all have their own space, even if the seam has to twist like this. So you see how this seam's gonna twist when it irons? I'd rather have it twist in the middle of the seam than create a huge amount of bulk right in one point. It's a trade-off. There's another place where I'm gonna twist the bulk of the seam out of the way when I saw that 1/4 inch. I'm just gonna pin that from the back. All right, I'm ready to sew. (sewing machine humming) Let's take it to the ironing board. So whenever you're working with angles, there's going to be places when you have seams that are pretty bulky. And

instead of, again, trying to make the seams go in one direction, I just allow things to twist. So my seams are twisting. You can see the seam is going that way. This underneath is gonna be going that way. It's flatter, but over here it's flatter this way. And I just don't worry about that. That's not something that people do with precision piecing, but it works really well with improv to allow your seams to twist. See how nice and flat that is now? All right, we're getting close here. Got a bit of an unresolved corner, but I'm not even gonna worry about that until the very end because it's right on the corner. So I can always put an angle in there or cut it off, but we'll decide about that later. Right now I'm gonna make this commitment. It'll be our last major seam. Got a nice natural fit. I do have some places that I see that are pulling open where I could take darts, but I'm just gonna try to sew those right into the seam, just pull it over slightly and just sew it in as I go. So another thing you can do with these. Let me move this one out of the way 'cause I don't wanna cut it. When you're adding long rows like this, you may wanna trim the one edge 'cause you can see how this overlaps. I'm gonna just gently trim this as minimally as possible, just so I don't have any jagged edges. Now this part I'm gonna leave 'cause if I had a registration mark on it, I would cut it, but I can't remember exactly where it is. I can cut this edge off, though. Sometimes it's great to just clean up your edge a little bit. Just makes your piece look a little bit better. It looks pretty good. I'm gonna cut this to match and sew this final seam. (bright music) (sewing machine humming) Okay, last seam is on. I still have one corner. Before I decide what to do with that corner, I'm gonna go ahead and trim it up as much as possible. And I'm gonna try to do the minimal most amount. So I'm gonna cut from this edge to this edge as straight as possible, but taking off as little as possible to take that jagged edge off. And then we'll go ahead and do that on this corner. And then I think I'm gonna cut away. These three sides are in pretty good shape. This has got a little bit of a natural curve. I'm okay with just leaving that. I might cut it a little straighter. Might get a little bit off here. All right, so this edge. And then... I'm gonna go ahead and trim this up some more. Of course, you could choose to use a ruler to square up your final piece. I prefer to cut it by hand using my eye towards its natural shape. I have to decide what I wanna do with this. There's a lot of angles here. There's a big giant angle here. There's a angle going this way and an angle (laughs) going this way. And actually, that kinda makes me want to do what we did with the smaller scale wedge shapes and just fill it in with some sort of a solid color and just create this border on this side with two pieces, one going here and one going here. You see that? Let's audition some fabrics for that. First, I'm going to put out this blue, and it's really easy to audition. You can sometimes just get a big chunk. Okay, could also go with the dark. You can use a fabric you haven't used at all. Know what, I'm going with the blue. I just like the bleed. I like the brightness of it. It's kinda just what we did before. Make sure it goes point to point. I'm gonna cut it right to match. This is gonna come up that way. I'm just gonna leave a little hang. I'm gonna put a little mark with my chalk where it's gonna start. As I positioned it, you see I wanna make sure that if I pull this corner out, it comes all the way up. You don't wanna have a piece that's short here or something. I mean, if you do, it's okay. You just have to add another piece to get it squared off. But I'm gonna imagine this piece coming out and extending and coming to a point. Okay, and I don't think I need to pin this. I'm just gonna start it right where my registration mark is. (sewing machine humming) Okay, one more corner. (sewing machine humming) Gonna do a final trim. I'm just gonna keep the curved edge. Now that I've trimmed everything up, it's time for the final evaluation.

Final evaluation

- At the completion of every piece I like to do a final evaluation. And I ask myself these four

questions. What surprised me? Something that happened that was unexpected. What did I discover? Something that I learned that I didn't know before about the process or the outcome. What was satisfying about the process or the outcome? Or what was dissatisfying? And if there was something dissatisfying, what would I do differently next time? So let's take a look at this piece and see what we think. This thing was filled with surprises. First of all, it was an experimental process and the idea was to explore and experiment. So it's great that there were a lot of surprises. One of the discoveries was this wedge type chevron thing and I really love that. And I can imagine doing a whole piece, or even extending this piece to keep this motion going. And it's so easy for things to bleed in and out of that. I really love that. And it's something I'll take on to another piece, I'm sure. I do love this bit of bright blue popping out here that's kind of no where else in the piece. It does refer to the blue over here but it's very distinctive and it interacts with this really well. I like how the dark flows. So, for me, when I was working on this piece, I began to become very overwhelmed. It felt kind of chaotic. And so one of the things I learned was how to work with this darker material to kinda anchor it and give it a little bit of almost a frame or an anchor or a direction. And I'm very satisfied with how that came out. And I thought it was a good move. It might be something I'll do again in a future piece if called for. I'm very satisfied with how this piece ended up being finished in a simple way bringing this out into the border. Angles are very disorienting. I learned that. (laughs) And that's always something I've known but it always surprises me each time. I think with my experiment here, I wasn't as totally satisfied with my wack and stack experiment. Although I think that I might pick that up again and see if I can push it further. You may have done some experiments. You might have done some of the same things I've done, but you moved through it into a different direction, and you start experimenting in your own way. I mean you can continue to experiment with angles. I mean every day of the month you could experiment with angles if you wanted to. And there's so much to learn. The improv process allows for experimentation and that's great because with angles you really need to take it in many directions just as they point in many directions to see where it takes you. Improv process allows you to play with pattern in a way that gives you a deeper understanding of how patterns work. And more importantly, the way that you make patterns. The more you explore angles, the better understanding you will have on the ways that you can use them in future projects.