
Love Letter Quilt Top: A Daily Practice with Heidi Parkes

Chapter 1 - Love Letter Quilt Top: A Daily Practice

Overview

- Quilts have a long history of showing love, and that's why I designed the Love Letter Quilt. (upbeat music) I'm Heidi Parkes, and I'm a quilter from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (upbeat music) This is a block-based quilt pattern, and each block will be an opportunity for you to express your own creative response to a prompt. My blocks will feature applique and embroidery, including the satin stitch and the stem stitch. Before my birth, my grandma Mimi organized a collaborative baby quilt for me. It's made with different blocks from friends and family and includes embroidery, applique, and trapunto. It made me feel loved and reminded me of my extended family. This pattern coincides with my 10 year anniversary as a quilter, and I'm dedicating this particular quilt to myself and self-love. (upbeat music) You can dedicate your Love Letter Quilt to someone close to you, to someone you have yet to meet, or to someone who's inspired you greatly. (upbeat music)

Day 1 - Material and fabric choices

- Here are the materials that you'll need for the love letter quilt. You'll need a stack of fabric in colors that you feel are connected to the person you're dedicating the quilt to, or just fabric that you happen to have, anything that's nearby. At some point, it would be nice to have a fabric that is like a record of that person or that has a connection to them. I have some scraps from a skirt that I used to wear about a decade ago that has showed up in a lot of my quilts. I also have some drapes that match the couch that was in my house in my childhood home, so it's very cool archival fabric connected to me and my childhood. And here's some fabric that I dye with avocado. That is a frequent kitchen scrap in my house. I have cut some of the fabric in advance to be a six-inch-by-eight-inch base. You're welcome to cut some of your fabric in advance as well, but depending on the prompt, you might change your mind as you go, so you're welcome to wait to cut things till later. I have a variety of thread. My favorite thread is DMC Pearl Cotton Size 8 and I've got a lot of that. I also have a little Valdani Pearl Cotton because the colors are so pretty in that brand. The sashiko thread that I have is from Daruma and Cosmo and I like those threads again because of the color. But my favorite is the DMC Pearl because it's so strong and there's a really great variety of colors. I have a lot of embroidery hoops. They need to be small enough that they'll work with fabric that's cut to six by eight inches. On occasion, we're gonna need some paper to plan things in advance. I have some design velum but you could also use tracing paper or tissue paper. And I have some regular paper that I'm going to use. I have a few marking tools for working with fabric. These are both Sewline brand. I have a white chalk for working on a dark surface as well as an air erasable pen for working on a brighter, lighter fabric. I have a hera marker because it just presses into the fabric and creates a dent, and that is extremely easy to remove. You don't have to remove the mark but it can be a very helpful guide occasionally. For drawing and planning, I have a black pen. It's a Micron plastic nib archival ink pen as well as a mechanical pencil for threading your needle. You might want to use a needle threader. I really love this needle threader from Bohin. I don't normally pause to use a threader but it works really well with the combination of thread and needle that I use. It's worth the extra money. And I have a small needle threader that has some thin wire on it, and you need the particularly thin kind of needle threader and one that is metal or in plastic. The fragile ones that come apart right away will definitely come apart with this type of thread. I have a milliners

multi-pack from Dritz This is my favorite brand. I find that the needle pierces through the fabric really well with this needle. I use the three smallest needles which are a size nine, seven, and five. I generally don't use the size three for this type of work. The Milliners needle is particularly good because it has a small eye on the needle. It's the same size as the length of the needle rather than being really large and harder to pull through the fabric the way that an embroidery needle is. But because we're not quilting, we're piecing if you want to use a sharp needle or an embroidery needle or something else that you prefer, that is totally okay. I like to keep my needles in my handmade needle case. And here I have a lot of straight pins. I use the long straight pins and the smaller applique straight pins and I sometimes use safety pins so I have a nice collection of those as well. If you want to make my needle case you can find that class here on Creativebug. The edge of the needle case is also the way that I like to bind quilts, so it's very helpful when you get to the end of this quilt as well. I like to use thimbles when I'm piecing fabric and sewing and embroidering, and I use two kinds of thimbles. The first is a pushing thimble. This has a metal tip. This is the Clover protect and grip thimble and it has a silicon edge. I'm a size small and I use it on my ring finger to push the needle in the fabric. It works a lot like a hammer so that I'm not squeezing the needle, sending it through the way that pliers would. The thimble for pushing can also be used on a middle finger and on an index finger. So see what feels good for your hands. The other thimble that I use is a gripping thimble or a pulling thimble. This one is from a brand called Little House that is in Japan. I love this thimble. I use a size medium on my index finger, and it helps bring the needle to the other side of the fabric. So this pulls it through and the pushing thimble pushes it into things. The brand that I also like as a pulling thimble is the Clover brand. It's a little bit easier to find and it works really great as well. This is a size large and I can wear it on my thumb or my index finger. We'll need to do some cutting. And to do that, we'll need a clear plastic ruler. I like to use that for cutting my blocks of fabric to six by eight inches. And it's also very helpful for marking things. It works really well with the hera marker. For a straight line, I can press alongside the ruler to get a good edge. I'll use a rotary cutter to cut fabric especially if I'm looking for a very straight line. And I like to use a scissors large scissors for cutting fabric. And I like to use the small rabbit shaped scissors for cutting thread. Within this quilt pattern. It's really fun to reference specific things like someone's face, a body of water For me that will be Lake Michigan, or an astrological sign. When you want something precise and accurate it can be great to take a photograph or find an image on the internet, print it on paper and then have that printout to work with. So consider using that. You might even want to access a window or a light table to transfer it to your tracing paper.

Day 2 / Block 1 - A dedication

- Block one is a dedication to the project. So you might have been thinking about your top five people that you might dedicate your quilt to. I know for me, as I think about this, I've chosen to dedicate the quilt to myself as a self-love quilt. I think it's particularly appropriate as I'm sharing about myself and teaching everyone this technique. But if I were to make the quilt pattern again, I might dedicate it to my mother or to Georgia O'Keeffe who's an inspiring artist to me. And as I sit down, this is a really potent moment to seal that intention of who the quilt is for. And there are a lot of ways that you can respond to the idea of dedication. For me, I'm gonna dedicate it with a letter, the first letter of my first name, which is an H for Heidi. I remember back in elementary school noticing my mom turned me onto the idea that in all capital letters, Heidi, the name is symmetrical vertically, you can fold it in half. And so I get a lot of joy out of the letter H and how it could be an I on its side. So think about your person that you're dedicating the quilt to. Is there something special

about their name or a letter or an initial? They might have a really beautiful signature. Maybe even an illegible signature, and that could be something that you could translate really accurately. Here on Creativebug, I have a hand embroidered label class and you could use that to accurately transcribe their handwriting. And it could even be something like "Dear" and their name or a famous signature. So consider what feels authentic if you have their fingerprints, something like that could be playful way to dedicate it as well. Let's get started. For my H, I'm going to use a base fabric and I'm going to applique the negative space behind the H. So as I look at this six-inch by eight-inch base, I'm going to applique the top of the negative space and the bottom of the negative space. I like to use a half an inch seam allowance. You are welcome to use a quarter of an inch or a half an inch. It's entirely up to you, but you do want to anticipate what your seam allowance will do as you plan to sew things together. So I don't want to make a super skinny H because later, a half an inch of this will disappear and it might disorient or make the letter look strange. So anticipate that seam allowance and the part of the fabric that's going to disappear. I'm going to freehand because I really like to sew that way. I'm gonna use the corner of my fabric and I'll cut out a nice strip. As I lay this on here, again, I'm gonna think about the seam allowance. So half an inch will disappear here, half an inch will disappear on this side, and that looks like a good piece. I've measured my fingers before, and I know that my pinky on its side is exactly half an inch so it's a good window for me into what that seam allowance will do later. You can try to play around with your finger and a ruler to see if you have an easy way of referring to half an inch as you go. Here, I think this will be a good size for the top of that H once I account for the seam allowance and I'm going to cut these to be two identically sized pieces of fabric that I'll applique to create an H. So it might look a little funny right now but that's because of the seam allowance and the proportions are gonna change as I go. This is a great way to show you how I would applique a square. You're welcome to use any techniques that you like, so don't feel that you have to use applique to create your letter. For my thread, I like to use my body as a ruler as well. Usually I'll take from my hand to the middle of my neck when I'm working. I'll cut my thread with my small scissors and my favorite needle from the multi-pack is the size seven, so I'll grab one of those. When I thread the needle, I like to look at the tip of the thread as though it's a speck of dust between the pads of my fingers. I don't wanna hold my fingers with nail to nail, but instead with pad to pad. As I look through the eye of the needle, then I can line it up with that tiny speck of the thread and maybe pull it through with the rest of my fingernail. Remember that you can use a needle threader to do this job too. Before I tie my knot, I like to stagger my threads so they're about a hands distance apart and then I find the place where I want the knot to be at the end of the long tail. I'll bring these together to create a plus sign with my finger. A little thread sandwich. To form the quilters knot, I need to take the thread from the long side, not the short side and wrap it three times towards the tip of the needle. I'll pinch that coil of thread holding it. I'll send the needle in the direction that needles love to go with the eye going through that coil and pull all the way through, and then it forms my quilters knot which is a lot like a French knot. It's such a fast and efficient way to thread a needle that I really love to use it all the time. Now I can fold my fabric edge over as I begin to do the applique to create my letter H. I'll put my thimbles on. I'll connect the eye of my needle to the end of the thimble. I like to hold my needle with my middle finger. But again, see what feels right for you. And I'm gonna do a top stitch here, a running stitch that you can see visibly across the top of the applique. I love doing visible hand piecing because I think it shows my hand as a maker and it allows the viewer to understand the time and the energy that went into making the quilt. Once I've pulled the needle through, I need to make sure I ungathered the fabric so that it doesn't pucker or stretch. As I approach the corner, I want to

make sure that I leave enough fabric for my seam allowance to come through. And here I like to dog ear the corner first, creating a little triangle fold, and then I'll tuck that edge under that gives it some space. Since I've already sewn up to the edge, I'll make sure that that's running parallel with the edge of my fabric so I get a nice square looking H. And I'll continue to sew along this edge. This next corner, I'm gonna do exactly the same way. I'll create my dog ear with that triangular fold and then tuck the edge up and under. Here, it's a little more important that I also smooth the fabric down. I could even finger crease the fabric just to make sure I'm getting a nice flat edge. Certainly, if you like how it feels to have a pin to help you hold things flat, you're welcome to use a straight pin here. I just find that they're not 100% necessary so I skip them for things that are little like this. As I'm doing my applique, you can notice that I like to get a lot of stitches each time I pull the needle through. And then here that gripping thimble is very helpful pulling to the other side. At the end of a piece of applique or any kind of sewing, I like to close it with the tailor's knot. To form a tailor's knot, I create a loop that goes up above my stitching and I send the needle under and through that loop. I hold the loop steady and then I'm able to send my thumb down to hold it in place as I gently slide that knot snug to the fabric. When I form a tailor's knot, I always do it twice and that forms a really nicely sized knot with this type of thread that won't pop through. I'll trim the thread again. And now I can do the exact same type of sewing on the other side to get the opposite part of my H. I'll show you a couple other ways that I've formed the letter H. This is a fun contrast because here I appliqued the negative space. It was a lot faster to do. In this option, I appliqued the positive space of the letter H. I didn't need to sew along the edge because the seam allowance when I sew the blocks to each other will hold that part down. But I did do a lot more lines of applique. Here for this cursive H, I used a technique called couching. It's an easy technique to look up and I placed some yarn in the shape of a letter H and then I used my pearl cotton to hold the yarn in place. On the back, you can see all of that stitching of the pearl cotton as it follows the H. These are all great ways to create a letter H. I love seeing the difference of this really bold solid colored green on a white background compared to this more subtle more nuanced floral and geometric patterned. H. As you have fun with this pattern, you are welcome to make more than one block if you get really excited. It can be fun to have options to swap out. Or eventually, maybe you would make more than 20 blocks for your quilt. It's really easy to add an extra row of four at the bottom so you don't need tons of extra blocks to grow the quilt if that's what feels right for you. But certainly, just one block dedicating your quilt and getting started is more than enough. As you think about the idea of dedicating and creating a purpose for your quilt and your actions and you commit to this daily practice, it can be a lot of fun to share it on Instagram as well. You can use #LoveLetterQAL. QAL means quilt along, so we're gonna be quilting together and sewing together. It can join you with a larger community. Creativebug also has a gallery where you can share your progress.

Day 3 / Block 2 - Sew a meditative stitch

- One of my favorite things about handwork and slow stitching is the opportunity to get into a flow state and relax into a meditative stitch. This is an opportunity for you to include contemplating the person you love, sending them that energy of meditation and thinking about them. We're gonna do a very simple running stitch for this step, and it's an opportunity to get into the zone and think about them, and hopefully what you make will be an artifact of that loving energy and thought about the person that you care for. For fun, I'm going to use this needle threader this time. There are two holes in it and the larger hole fits the Milliners needle. I'm placing it in with the eye side down, and now I'll send my thread snugly down into this groove. I press the button and it pops the

thread all the way through. I'll pull the thread till the tail comes through, and then I can remove my needle and it's been effortlessly threaded for me. It's up to you to decide if this is a good investment for you. Now that my needle's threaded, I'll tie my quilter's knot, and I'm gonna use this fabric that's been dyed with avocado pits and peels for block number two. I'm using my embroidery hoop to hold it stable for the stitches, and it's up to you if you would like to stitch with or without a hoop. Both are great ways for forming the running stitch. With my thimbles ready to go, I can begin stitching. For this type of intuitive running stitch, you're welcome to go in any direction. I don't often like to overlap rows of things, so I probably won't do that, but there's nothing wrong with that at all. You're very welcome to overlap the lines. You are welcome to go in a spiral or circle or create some kind of pattern, or you can just go back and forth and back and forth. You can use perfectly straight lines, or you can stitch with curved lines or a wavy line. As you think about the person and hold them in your mind's eye, this can be a great way to just invite and stay curious as you do some stitching. As I do the running stitch on an embroidery hoop, you can see that I use my non-dominant fingers to press the fabric up and down. I like to have a little bit of slack in the hoop that's not pulled super taut, and here as I pierce into the fabric, I press up in front of the needle, and then as I send the needle to the front, I'm pressing up on the needle itself. I like using a hoop for this type of stitch, because it holds everything taut and I don't need to worry about things gathering or getting squished together. Because I'm thinking about myself for this particular love letter quilt, I'm using a lot of my favorite things. This combination of fabric and thread is a favorite. The thread color is number 606 from DMC, and I'm using the size seven needle, which is my favorite. And I like this hoop, because it allows me to relax a little bit more when I'm sewing. I have even on occasion practiced this without looking at my stitches. Can be a really fun experiment to sew without looking, so I can fix my gaze on something special. I could maybe look in the mirror as a self-love letter quilt for this. I could look out the window, enjoy my favorite view. I could certainly be looking at my favorite TV show or listening to a song that I know that I love. There are a lot of different ways to get into that really relaxing flow state and to do a meditative stitch with the person you love in mind. This can be a really fun block to take your time on, because these stitches are so addictive when you're in that flow state. I'm gonna show you some examples that I spent more time on. This is an identical situation of using red thread and the avocado fabric, and I did look at what I was doing as I was stitching, and that's part of why the stitches are so close to each other. This one will be a wonderful surprise as I continue to do more sewing without looking. This other piece I did was straighter lines, and I was using up all the little tails of thread. As you can see in my needle case, I don't always finish a thread once I've tied it on, because for example, with this mint green, I got to the end of my letter H and then I was done. So I used it as an opportunity to finish all the loose little threads on the back of my needle case here. The colors are entirely up to you, and any time you feel called to change directions, or approach, or color, that can be a wonderful surprise that adds a lot to the piece that you're making.

Day 4 / Block 3 - Embroider a birthday

- Today's block is an opportunity to embroider the birthday of the person that you love. There are a lot of ways to do this, and I encourage you to focus on their birth rather than their current age. The current age will change and change and change, but a moment of birth is timeless, so that's a big part of this particular block. I was born on December 13th in 1982, and that makes me a Sagittarius. There are a lot of ways to depict a constellation or astrological sign, and I'm gonna go today with a bow and arrow because I identify a lot with that feeling of being an archer. I love to focus in on

something and pursue it. I'm a very tenacious person, goal-oriented in that way, and it's one of the things that I enjoy about the idea of being a Sagittarius. That is not for everyone. If I was making a love letter for my boyfriend, I would not identify him as a cancer. He does not particularly like astrology. So, think about the person that you love and how you could depict their particular birthday. There are some other fun ways that I could show my birth. Number one, my mother likes to tell me that I was conceived in Hawaii, and I think that's such a fun tidbit to know, so I could do a map of Hawaii. I was also born in Chicago. Apparently, it's a Chicago thing that you know what hospital you were born at. So I was born at Northwestern Hospital and something connected to that or even using the color purple, which is a Northwestern color, could be fun. The idea of being born in the winter is something that, for me, feels really special. So I could think about winter colors, or snowflakes, or snow storms. I also love being aware of the time of day when I was born. I was born at 9:15 PM, and thinking about being a night person and starting my life in the middle of the night is kind of cool. I'm a night owl and I love to sleep in, and that time of day is something I could highlight. Another cool feature is thinking about the moon phase of your birth. I was born under a new moon, so the moon was very dark when I was born, and that, I think, also contributes to the idea of being a night person, someone who was born in the winter, at night, on a new moon. There is no darker moment to enter the universe than when I did. So, all of those things could be really fun starting points. As I start out with my embroidery, I have got an embroidery hoop set up with this green color, and I'm gonna begin with the bow and arrow. An arrow is an opportunity in a work of art to add to the visual movement of the quilt that you're making. So I'm thinking a little bit about an upward trajectory of my arrow. So here, I'm starting at the tip and I'm gonna go in and do that in a red color. And I'm doing my arrow, so far, with a running stitch. I'm doing a running stitch because that creates a lighter line and maybe evokes the idea of speed. The bow will be in a solid line for my stitch, and I think that will have a more stable stationary feeling to it. That's the end of the arrow, but I think I can do some black for my bow as well. I could have certainly printed out an image of a bow and arrow and gone that route, but I do like the spontaneity of just going for it. As I now create my wire on the bow, I'm gonna use the back stitch, and that will create a solid line. The back stitch is one where I go into the most recent stitch and then I go out forward of that stitch. So every time I pierce in, it's backwards, hence the word back stitch. And I'm able to make a nice line here for the string on the bow. To finish, I'll pierce through to the back and I'll tie my tailor's knot. For the arrow, I wanna use my favorite shade of red to create a special looking tip and feather for the end of the bow. I'm going to sew a triangle in. And to do that, I'm gonna go from side to side with the base of the triangle, and now, I will pierce through to create the tip to show the direction. I can go, again, with the back stitch. And this time, I'm stab stitching rather than using the sewing method, 'cause that, I think, will let me be a little more precise with this type of direction. I'm going to sew improvisationally or intuitively now to fill this in, so I'm not using any special particular stitch, but just adding a little bit of thread to fill in that outline of an arrow. I'll tie off with my tailor's knot again. The feather at the end of the arrow will be a nice stack of stitches, and this I would say, again, is going to be a relatively intuitive stitch of trying to create a few parallel lines. You don't always need to know the name of a stitch in order to make it, and I encourage you to be really playful as you make things, any kind of up and down, in and out, that will all leave a mark and look really great. Ironically, while I'm good at things that are theoretically connected to a bow and arrow, I am not great at aiming or that kind of long-distance motor skill of getting a basketball into a hoop or catching something if it's thrown at me, but I do have great fine motor skills for sewing and for embroidery, writing, drawing. Here, I technically could make the loop for my bow in either direction,

and I can think about it logically, which would put it here, but I can also think about aesthetically what would look more beautiful or more interesting. I think I'll go with this more compact, logical direction. Let's see, I think I'll do some running stitch here, but I might do a couple rows of running stitch and that will create the illusion of that wooden bow being a little bit thicker and more visible. I'm using a brown color for this. So I've done one row of running stitch, but now I'm gonna thicken it up with at least one more row. Looking at this, it feels a little bit incomplete. I'm gonna jog over and add some intuitive stitches to create the handle for the bow. So this is probably a lot like a whip stitch. I think it is a whip stitch, but it doesn't matter so much that it's a whip stitch, what matters is that it's looking like a handle to me. And I'll close my embroidery with my tailor's knot. And I pop this out of the hoop. I think it'll change the way that it looks quite a bit too. And I love that. I think, to me, it looks a lot like an actual bow and arrow and I identify that quite a bit with my astrological sign. I made a block previously of a real constellation that I found online, and I used the tissue paper technique that I use in my Hand-Embroidered Label Class here on Creativebug, and I simply traced the design of the stars. It took a long time to embroider and a lot of effort to do it accurately compared to what you just saw with the bow and arrow. And here, I kind of struggle to remember which way is even up versus down. So to me, this simpler approach makes me think a lot more of being a Sagittarius and was a lot easier to make. So, it's a nice lesson that the more difficult or more work or more challenging version isn't necessarily the best or most effective route.

Day 5 / Block 4 - Embroider an animal

- Block four is an opportunity to find an object or an animal that connects to the person that you love. I love bunnies and rabbits and hares, and my baby quilt was one of the first moments, when I was around five and starting to be able to identify people, where I noticed this embroidered bunny on my baby quilt was made by Aunt Lori and she embroidered the words, oh, little one, welcome to life. This block-based quilt is something that invited me into the world and was really a love letter to me while I was still in the womb. And it's part of why I like bunnies so much. I had a stuffed animal named Bobby who was a bunny. And my love of bunnies has just grown and grown since then. That's part of why I have a lot of objects in my life, like my scissors that are things with rabbits and bunnies on them. As I've made quilts, they are a returning, reoccurring theme. And this particular quilt is one that I made in 2020 as a daily practice over 100 days. Every day, cheating a once in a while, I added to the quilt top. And on a very special day, I took a lot of time to do a detailed appliqued rabbit here with some blue fabric that I dyed myself. I went online, I found a nice silhouette of a bunny that I liked. I altered it a little bit to make the ears bigger, and then I put it on the quilt. Another bunny that's made an appearance is this one. I was teaching a quilting class upstate on Madeline Island, and my friend Zach Foster took a photo of bunny that was hanging out underneath my car, and that inspired me to put this bunny on my quilt. I embroidered it mostly with the chain stitch but also some satin stitch and some seed stitch, and it's just, it's such a sweet bunny by this dandelion that I really love too. This is a quilt that is part of my scavenger hunt quilt pattern. And there's a prompt in that one to choose an animal or a plant that you connect with yourself as the maker. And here I included rabbit ears, so I didn't represent the whole animal, but I used applique just to add the ears. I also highlighted some of my favorite rabbit fabrics in this block. It's a chronological block, and all of the fabrics are artifacts, things that I remember when I purchased them. And you'll recognize this cherry fabric as something from my baby quilt. I went through and I found these really beautiful super special fabrics that I bought when I was in Seoul, in Korea, and I made blocks with those two fabrics of bunnies. So there are a lot of options. You can find a print or

a fabric that has an object that reminds you of the person that you love. You can also embroider or applique something. Not everybody is as passionate about a particular kind of object as I am. So you can also look to a lot of everyday items. Is there a particular coffee cup that someone uses, or they're really dedicated to a brand, maybe they love a particular brand of scissors. When thinking about your loved one, you could consider their job and if there's a tool of the trade. Do they always have a clipboard or a ruler? There are also things that you can think about from their leisure time. Do they have a sport that they like, and there's a baseball or an object that they use a lot? There also might be a particular passion of theirs. My mother and my aunt are both great cooks, and my mom loves to bake. So I would think about something specific to baking for my mother. My aunt loves to cook dinner things, and we have a Wednesday night pizza night tradition. So if this was a love letter for my aunt, I might think about the pizza peel or a pizza cutter or some kind of tool associated with making the pizza, because that's something she loves. My brother is a very talented photographer, so I could think a lot about a camera as something for him. So think about your person and consider what object or tool of the trade or animal that they love, and that can go on the quilt. As I set out to embroider this, I could take a lot of time and find an image and print it out and trace or sew through some paper. I could also use an erasable chalk to outline something. But for me, I love to be surprised. And maybe that's even part of what I like about bunnies is they're a domestic animal, and I can be out on a walk or near my house in my backyard and I get surprised, like, oh, there's my animal that I love right in my own house or in my own backyard. And so for me, sitting down and feeling really curious about what my hands might stitch is a really, really happy place for me. So I'm going to just intuitively sit down to start making a bunny and be surprised at what I get. But you are welcome to take any route that you want. It can be fun to even trace the specific object or use the silhouette of the object. If there's something, you know, like a coffee cup, maybe you want to trace the actual edge of the cup, and you could work with just a silhouette or you could show the inside, the guts of the thing that you're making. I like using the running stitch 'cause it's so fast and efficient, and I think it creates a really beautiful design as well. So here, hopefully you can tell, I'm starting with the bunny's ear. And I think I'll use that slight whip stitch to go in and just darken, darken the inside of the ear a little bit. When I was little, my mom did a fair amount of embroidery for me as well, and she had a framed embroidery of three bunnies that said, les lapins, in French. And I wish that I still had that. It's something that, at some point when I was growing up and becoming a big girl, I stopped having in my home. And it's a nice way to just think about those things that I kept and didn't keep. I do, I love the memory of that bunny embroidery from my mother. I chose blue, I think just intuitively. I thought it would show up well. Using a really light color wouldn't show up very well against this white fabric. But I didn't have a particular symbolism or deep thought about using blue. I have a lot of favorite colors. That's something that's hard for me to choose. I've got a favorite thread color which you know already. My favorite fabric color that I think I return to a lot is yellow. And if I'm just out in the world thinking about favorite colors, usually it's chartreuse, that spring green color. I was talking with one of my nephews recently and he asked me my favorite color and I said, "Chartreuse." And my brother very wisely asked, "Do you know what color that is?" And he did. He knew what color chartreuse was. So I feel like I'm doing my job as an aunt very effectively. Here, when I toggled from ear to ear, I had about a one-inch gap in the thread, and that's about the maximum distance I like to have as I change directions. So now as I continue with the side of the rabbit's face, I've tied off a knot and I'm gonna continue over here. Sometimes rabbits can be like a little blob, if you think about a big, fuzzy rabbit. So I think I'm not gonna define a separate face here, but instead just go for a great big, lumpy bunny

body. I'll add a couple whip stitches for the little feet. And I find that when I'm stitching, I come up with imagery that's very different from what I would draw with a pen in my hand. There's some other prompts coming up. We will focus on drawing and give ourselves an opportunity to do that. But here it's that wonderful mystery of, what do you get from bringing a needle to a thread, feels special to me. Here I'm thinking about the cotton tail. I love the big, puffy tail of a bunny. So I'm going for something that will hopefully look like an asterisk. So really puffy, fluffy bunny, hopefully. Oh yeah, I'm feeling very good about that. He needs a little face. And generally, when I do a little dot, I like to put a tailor's knot. I find that I do them so frequently, and they create a nice little eye. Or if I'm embroidering text, they work really well for dotting a letter or creating a period. And then I'm gonna make a little triangle nose, and I think I'll do a similar triangle to what I did for my bow and arrow. Maybe that will even become a smaller theme in the quilt. It's nice to think about ways to create rhythm or repeat things. And the image of a triangle might be a little surprise that comes up for me. Oh yeah, that's a cute little triangle nose. And then I'm gonna give him that little dashed smile. And now I'll do the other side of the mouth. And as I'm looking at this bunny, I think whiskers are in order, and I think those will be nice in a different color. So here I'll tie off my mouth. Cut it with my bunny scissors. When making decisions about colors, especially when I put a lot of energy in already, my favorite way to do it is just to lay a little bit of that thread out and I can compare how they look. And here, I think that yellow is looking really sweet for a whisker. It's probably not the color that I would've guessed. I was at first reaching to grab a gray. And the whisker is a delicate thing, so I'm gonna try to make some very tiny running stitches. And I think those will stand out special. For a tiny stitch, the needle is a preview of what that stitch will look like. Yeah, and that's gonna be pretty subtle. I like creating a reward for the careful viewer, that if you look close, there's a little something extra. I'm toggling over to the other cheek, just backing my needle up on occasion to get those small stitches. The more I pull it backwards, the smaller the stitch. Oh yeah, that's a very cute bunny. Probably the fattest bunny that I've made so far in all my quilts. I pop him out of the hoop, lay that flat. I really like how that turned out. I made a different version of this prompt earlier, and it is with my rabbit scissors and a sewing needle, so it's a larger needle than what I actually use. But I filled in that stitch to show a needle. And the scissors, I made it by tracing the actual scissors with my air erasable marker. And then I filled in the stitches. Here I have a satin stitch and a stem stitch and some variations of the whip stitch for the body of the rabbit. This one took longer, but honestly, again, between the two, this one might be the sweeter one that I enjoy even more.

Day 6 / Block 5 - Who am I the maker?

- Identify yourself as the maker, that's the theme for block five today. There are a lot of ways that you could achieve identifying yourself and a few of them are to sign your name, if you usually sign something. If you like me, often put an animal or an image on your quilts like a rabbit, maybe you could add your image rather than the image connected to the person you're dedicating the quilt to. What I'm gonna do today is to trace my hand. For me, I think a lot about my hand being visible in the work that I make, that's why I like using a thick thread, that's why I tend to do visible stitches like the running stitch on top rather than something invisible. And for me, showing the hand, allowing the hand to come through as part of how I know it's a Heidi Parkes quilt. So think about what would be truest for you as a way of letting the viewer of the quilt know that it was made by you and that you are the lover creating this love letter quilt. I want to be precise and have this look like my hand rather than just a hand. So I'm gonna begin by tracing my hand with this air erasable

pen. I'll set my hand down on some fabric and I've cut it to be the same width as my base fabric, six inches across, and I can do any hand position that feels right and my hand can be any height. I could even not do my fingertips if I wanted but I'm gonna go for just a pretty standard hand shape. As I do this, I want to have my fingers spread out enough that I have a seam allowance that I can turn under. Something like this would be a very challenging hand position because I need the fingers to separate but there's not very much fabric to turn under. An easier way to do a hand would be to avoid turning under the spaces between the fingers at all. Here, creating some space, making sure I have some seam allowance is gonna work really well for me. These air erasable markers are something that I use on occasion, especially if I'm doing it on the edge, and then that edge will eventually be mostly turned under. It creates a really smooth lasting line. It's something that would be very hard to get a mark with a hair up marker by creating a dent in the fabric. I've been slowly experimenting with getting more and more open to using marking tools like this. Here, you can very clearly see my hand and that mark will last anywhere between two hours and two days. It has a lot to do with the humidity, I think. Now I'm gonna cut around the edge. I want to leave space for a seam allowance and this might need to be a smaller seam allowance than half an inch. You can be a little bit delicate getting in there and turning fingers. When I get to the insides of the fingers, I'm gonna wait to split them all the way, so I'm just doing this easier way of cutting it first. Now that my hand's cut out, I can match this corner that doesn't need to be turned under with the corner. And again, I can check how it's going to read compared to the seam allowance. This finger might get cut off or be very close to the edge, so because of that, I'm gonna drag it down a little bit and then later, I can trim this part of the hand off. I can think through the same thing for the thumb, it's a little close. This looks right, and I'll put a pin in to hold it in place. This is something that you could try to iron the edges under, but it can be very picky work and really easy to burn your finger as you're doing it. So I like to not iron under the edges, but instead, to just turn the edges with my fingers as I sew. I also think there's a delicacy here in showing a hand that will lend itself really well to using a ladder stitch rather than the running stitch. So here, I'm trying to follow the bend of my knuckles. I want to make it as accurate as possible. I can turn as I go, or I can also put a few pins in just to get myself started. These applique pins are nice and small. You're less likely to poke yourself with them and especially the thread is a little less likely to get caught on them. For the ladder stitch, I want to come up next to the applique and then I'll send my needle through just the applique. I'm piercing in immediately opposite where I came out, just the backing fabric, and I'm traveling along only the crease in the applique itself. Now I send the needle down to the back and then up next to the applique again. So from the back, you can see that my needle is through there. I'll pull through, and you'll have lots of opportunities to see me continuing with this stitch. In just the applique and perhaps I'll turn this a little more, really getting that nice bend of my thumb joint down and up next to. The ladder stitch can vary in how visible it is. When I go into the applique, I do it slightly to the top of the stitch and that adds just a little nick of color right there. If however, I wanted to not see that when I enter the applique, I can enter just below the crease or exactly on the crease and then that little nick of color won't show up. So it's entirely up to you if you want it to look like the applique is just floating on the base fabric or if you'd like to see those stitches. As I start to turn the corner of the thumb, it's a tighter curve. It takes a little bit more skillfulness than just doing a relatively straight line. I want to carefully turn those edges under. It can be very easy to have the fabric create a line that looks more like a triangle than a curve. And rolling the fabric between my fingers can help to soften any of those triangle folds that start to show up. I can also start to have my ladder stitch be a little shorter here. When previously my stitches were about an eighth of an

inch long, maybe now I drop down to a 16th of an inch for the stitch so that it holds everything a little bit more securely in place. A lot of folks have probably heard the phrase, needle turned applique, and that's a slightly different tradition of using the needle to create the turn. I find that I'm the most comfortable creating the turn with my fingers, so that's why I say finger turned applique. As I approach the inside of the thumb now, I need to create some extra slits in the fabrics so that it can open up. You'll notice that there's just no way to stretch that down low enough to be able to turn under completely there. So I'm going to use my scissors to snip all the way to that curve. And then as I get into some of the softer parts of the curve, I can snip it to almost that line. I like to think of this technique as creating something that looks a bit like the rays of a sun or a carrot on its way in there. Now I can fold right up to that edge and continue my ladder stitch. Now that I'm on top of these cuts that go all the way to the edge of the line, I'm gonna turn everything under. And I find that it works the best if I change my stitch from the ladder stitch to the whip stitch. It's going to hold everything much more securely, and I love the idea that I'm doing a more time intensive stitch just in the place that really needs the extra security, that feeling of giving the stitching what it needs. So here I'm going no longer with the ladder stitch, I'm not traveling in the fold or the crease of the applique. Instead, I'm whipping around the edge. From the back, the stitch looks very different. You can see I've got my running stitch when I do the ladder, and now it's shifts to a diagonal line when I'm doing the whip stitch. And here I'd like to add a few more applique pins for myself. I think that'll keep everything laying flat and smooth. I'll do this whip stitch as long as I feel like it needs that extra bit of security. And I've got those close stitches that go all the way to the edge, and then I can return to my ladder stitch. I love the precision and the contrast of having some blocks look a little bit whimsical or simple to sew, like the rabbit that I did yesterday, contrasted with things that are very precise that require a lot of technical skill like this particular block. So this might not be a really technical block for you. Maybe you're doing something that's a lot more intuitive or relaxed, but keep this technique in your back pocket because it may feel really appropriate and helpful for something else that you'll do going forward. I'm almost out of thread and I'd like to show you the way that I change thread because I think it's pretty savvy technique. I'm gonna go through to the back where I can have my knot hidden, and with my new length of thread, I'm going to create a slip knot. A slip knot is something that you might use a lot if you do crochet. I'll hold the thread tail between my index and my thumb, and I'll wrap the thread around and over. And I'm gonna very lightly temporarily nip onto that with my thumb. I'll reach through the top of this loop, grab the long side of the thread and start to pull it through the loop. When I get here, I'm gonna release that light hold that I had with my thumb, and I can pull both tails opposite the loop in my left hand, and I'll close this knot close to the short tail. The slip knot can easily slip closed and open and that's what makes it the slip knot, and it makes it very easy to then pass over this tail that I have. I'll slide it closed, and now I can do a shoelace knot or a square knot to hold that in place. So two of that type of knot, just a double knot, anything that feels easy and secure, and then I can thread my needle and I can continue sewing. I'm going to pause here though, I'll share with you a finished block of my hand. You can see here, I changed thread colors about the same moment, and I changed from green thread to this red, white, and blue thread. And I can continue to have a lot of whip stitches in the webbed areas of my fingers. I wanna show you how I would cut to get into this area. I like using my smaller snip scissors for this, I think I can be a little bit more precise. And I wanna have equal space on both sides of my finger and snip all the way to the bottom. And then when I get here, I turn the edge and finger pressing, drawing my fingernail along the edge, can be very helpful for getting it to hold for me and not keep flipping open or back on itself. And then as

you can see in this finished version, there's a lot more whip stitch holding those webbed spaces together. There are lots of ways of doing this invisibly where you don't have a visible whip stitch but frequently that involves super glue, nail polish or some kind of fusible webbing. And I have a very personal aversion to glue and having sticky stuff on my hands, so that's part of why I choose to use the whip stitch instead. But when you get to picky moments like that, it's entirely up to you what technique feels good to have a nice precise piece of applique.

Day 7 - Hand yoga

- On every seventh day, we are going to rest and take a break for hand yoga. There's a lot of squeezing, pushing, pulling, and intense movements involved in sewing, and I've found that pausing to do hand yoga on a regular basis keeps my hands feeling really great and pain free all the time. My favorite hand yoga sequence is one where I begin with my palms together. This is Anjali Mudra, it's a prayer position and part of what I like about it is it balances the left and right sides of the body. The right side is known as the sun side of the body, and the left side is the moon side, and it keeps in balance action, and rest. So here, just inherently, palms together is a wonderful place to be, really soothing for the nervous system and for the hands. We'll take this a step further, relaxing our wrists and moving from side to side. You can move a little bit faster, and then try out moving a little slower. And there's no one right or wrong way of doing this, so try to tap into your own body and what feels good for you here. We'll return to center, pause to notice the difference, and then we can begin to flex forward and backward. This is a wonderful stretch for the thumb. Sometimes that can get sore if you're on your phone a lot, and I love this one for relaxing my thumb. We'll return again to center, and now I'm gonna twist side to side. Ideally, this movement is coming from the wrist more than from the elbow. We'll return again to center. And now I'm going to spread my fingers wide and bring them back together. This is an excellent movement for joint health. It's especially good if you do a lot of gripping and pulling things that are tight on the fingers. I'll return to center, and now I'll keep the pads of my fingers together as I balloon my palms apart, and return. This one's particularly nice to match with the breath. You can inhale and balloon your hands open, and exhale together (inhaling and exhaling). I'll return to center, and the opposite movement of this is I'll keep my palms together and spread just the fingers apart. This can look really different on different people, so don't worry if your fingers stretch further apart than mine or not as far. But ideally, you're keeping your whole joint space in contact. We don't wanna turn it into a wrist movement. Return to center, and now interlace your fingers. For me, I happen to land with my right thumb on top. A lot of people land with their left thumb on top. This is more genetic than having anything to do with your being right-handed or left-handed, so it's a fascinating thing to know about someone, if you can find out if you're a loved one laces their fingers left or right side up. It's a nice tidbit to know about them. But we'll alternate, and just honor that the funny feeling side will feel a little funny, and you wanna be gentle there. And then we'll land with the natural side up, and gently squeeze, pulsing the fingers together. And then we'll take the opposite side and much more gently, because this is gonna feel strange, pulse the fingers together. We'll return to center again. And to seal this practice, I like to dust my hands off as though I was just baking a cake. So if I've got a lot of flour, I can dust them off, get rid of any stagnancy, and then, as though I just finished washing my hands, wiggle them dry, and rest my arms at my sides, enjoy having nice straight elbows, and again, pause to feel the difference in your yoga practice.

Day 8 / Block 6 - I love you 'this big'

- Especially with little kids, it can be really joyful to say things like, "I love you this big." And that's what we're getting into in this block. How big is your love? There are a lot of ways to show that. One is with the solar system. I love you all the way to the moon and back. It can be so fun to depict the moon. And in this particular quilt that I've pulled out, I've shown the phases of the moon. I was tracking time in the month of October when I made this. I could imagine something with the solar system where you were showing an above ground vision or maybe a little dotted line traveling from the Earth to the moon and around and back again. There are a lot of simple and playful ways that you could show loving someone that big or that far. Another element of this particular way, that I've shown the moons is the density of my stitches. You can stitch so much and spend a lot of time on something and that time could show the intensity and denseness of your love. Here I have some parallel stitches that are very densely stitched together. And then up here I have some concentric circles and I think those are also a really beautiful way to show dense stitches. Another quilt that I think shows the idea of loving so much is this quilt that I made when I was traveling in India in 2019. I was making some trapunto here, and this is a scrap fabric from an open weave bag so you can see through it which is a really fun detail of transparency. And inside of these bits of trapunto, they're filled with thread scraps. You could use any material you want. Sometimes I like using the cotton from a vitamin bottle to stuff things. You could use fabric. You could use polyester fiber fill. There's an element of trapunto that feels a lot like a stuffed animal and that puffiness of loving so much or being the adored comfort animal. So here I like this three-dimensional trapunto aspect of the big puffy block on your quilt showing love. A great example of really traditional trapunto is in my baby quilt. This example of balloons was done by my mom's friend Patty. She did a trapunto ear for this elephant. And I'm so in love with the simplicity of the silhouette that I know it's an elephant, but similar to my bunny that I embroidered. It doesn't have a head separate from its body. This is filled probably with polyester fiber fill and it's a wonderful puffy balloon. - My Aunt Becky, her last name is Moose Bruger. And the moose that she made for me has these wonderful trapunto ears as well as this trapunto body that she embroidered over. And both of these I think, show big, giant animals, a huge elephant, a huge moose. And that helped to show the bigness of their love when they made the blocks for me and my baby quilt. As my response to, "I love you this big," I've done something very different. Rather than putting a lot of labor into something, I've used a precious fabric. I think a lot of us have fabrics that are too beautiful to cut or you don't know what to sew with them because it would all detract from the beauty of the fabric rather than add to it. This is a very special place mat. It was mailed to me by a student in one of my diary quilting classes, and she gave me two of these place mats in mint green 'cause she saw that I was using a lot of mint green at the time in my quilts. And an item like this that is a gift, I think inherently has this message of generosity and love. And then to have the courage to cut into something that was hand sews and really beautifully made long ago has that feeling of being challenging to give up or to commit to a project instead of keeping it with its limitless potentiality as something in my stash. So here, I've just cut it into a six inch by eight inch rectangle and my job is done. This block is complete and I've committed to using a precious fabric to show how much I love myself.

Day 9 / Block 7 - I love you 'this tiny'

- It can be a lot of fun to love so big, but I find that also the tiniest things are the things that truly endear someone to us. So today's theme is, "I love You this Tiny." I have a couple quilts to show and then I'm going to share a technique that is very special to me. In my baby quilt, my grandmother was the most skillful person who worked on the quilt, and it was her that organized the quilt. And

she showed her love in a lot of the tiny details that she put into her blocks. Number one, she signed her whole name with her signature, Marian Montgomery, and the year 1982. On this block where the theme is the Letter U, she's highlighted this frog and like what a cute little detail to go with the theme of an umbrella for the Letter U to have a frog out in the rain. She's used the blanket stitch to create a puddle. And all these teeny tiny raindrops, they help to show the usefulness of the umbrella. I think that a quilt in itself is protective and sheltering in the same way that an umbrella is. And by showing all these tiny little raindrops that she's embroidered, it adds to the specialness and care and protective energy that's held in this block that my grandma made. And what makes it that chef's kiss detail is the tiny things. Another quilt that has a great tiny detail is the one that I just showed about love being big. Here on the edge, I used this beautiful vintage fabric that has different fruit assemblages with strawberries and apples and pears and grapes in it. And it had a hole in it. And rather than say, "Oh, that red fabric is too old. It already has a hole, maybe it won't be part of the quilt," I decided to put some care and thoughtfulness into the fabric. So I used a darning technique and wove vertically and horizontally to cover the hole that was in the fabric. I find details like this to be such special evidence of the maker. There are a lot of vintage quilts where maybe there's a block that's just two inches by one inch in a courthouse steps pattern, for example, and someone's taken the time to match a print and sew it together and piece two pieces of fabric to make that tiny little block, those moments of care from a maker give me the feels. And I always feel the love with those tiny details. This block-based quilt is about my love of winter. It's 36 blocks, all unabashedly, adoring winter, and perhaps feeling frustrated in the summer. And this particular block is one that depicts a star or a moon at night and the winter sky. And I love this little tiny dot of applique in the bigness of the dark sky behind it. So this type of block can be really special to show how tiny can be really important and powerful. About two years ago, my friend, Adriana Torres, who lives in Argentina, who I teach with sometimes on Zoom, taught me a new stitch. She taught me the Danish knot. And when I think of Adriana, I picture in my mind her saying, "I love tiny stitches." And so I thought to connect with her in this block was very special and reminds me of that friendship and how a single tiny stitch can be really powerful. I'm gonna do a small row of the Danish knot. To make the Danish knot, it's helpful to plan in advance and begin with a single stitch, like a running stitch, as the starting point for the knot. So here I'll do a row of four stitches going across. And now, I can begin to turn these stitches into triangles. So here, from my last running stitch, I'm gonna pop up and create a triangular shape. And now, I like to form this knot by sending the eye side of the needle underneath my stitch and to the left of where my needle came out last. So here, you can see the sharp pointy part of the needle is up, and I was easily able to slide the eye underneath the stitch. I'll pull that all the way through. And now, I'll come again down the stitch eye side first. But this time, I'm going to the right of the needle, and I'm reaching through the belly of the thread, pulling that up. This creates a beautiful triangle shaped knot. From here, I'm going to go back into the same hole that I came out when I formed the tip of my triangle, and I'll repeat that for four stitches. To the left and through to the right, through the belly of the knot this time, and then onward to the next tip of the triangle. It can be nice to think of a poetic number, like maybe there's a special significance of four. The thing that comes to my mind first is that I'm part of a family of four, so it's me and my brother and my parents. If I had a different number that was really significant that could be special to choose, I was born on the 13th, so that's another relatively small number that I like. I hear this row of four Danish knots helps show off that beautiful triangle shape that they create. I'll close with a tailor's knot. And this is the kind of block in a quilt that even though it didn't take a lot of time and there's not a whole lot of stitching, people zoom in and fawn over the tiny little detail in that block.

Here's an example that I did with more stitches. I've got 36 Danish knots altogether, which is still pretty tiny in the scope of the block and has that really detailed zoom in look. And I'm noticing as I'm working on this quilt that yet again, the triangle is emerging as a shape that's showing up from the point of my arrow, the nose of my bunny, and now the triangle and the danish knot. So it's really special to see how sometimes things like that emerge as you're working, even though it's not a conscious thing that you're trying to put into the quilt.

Day 10 / Block 8 - Time together

- As I think about the people that I know and love, oftentimes I find that I can associate a particular time of day with them. I think people who love and know me will often associate me with evening time or nighttime. I feel like I come alive in the later hours and enjoy having more social interaction then, and love the feeling of being up a little bit late. When I think about other people I know, I had a past boyfriend who loved sunset and thought that that was his time. And even if I wasn't with him, I would think about sunset, I know who's happy right now. Or my mother, I think gets really into dinner and dinner time and I associate that probably just from my childhood of eating dinner with my mom as a time of day connected to her. So think about the person that you love if there's a time of day that you connect to them. Some of my favorite times might even be something like tea time. Some people are often a little early. Other people are often frequently late. And something about that buffer of when they're ready and when things happen or when you expect them can be interesting in relation to time. So think about meals, days of the week, moments of the sun or the moon, and what feels right for your person. I'm going to be depicting a full moon on a dark night sky. And if you look at the quilt that's behind me, it's a quilt that has a few special dark blocks in it. They're not 50-50. It's maybe five out of 25 that are a dark block. And for me, that adds a very special kind of punctuation in a quilt. It looks a little bit special and has that satisfying balance that maybe a squeeze of lime or that extra sprinkle of salt or hot sauce can add to something that makes it feel satisfying. I'm gonna be using a blue velvet as I get into my night sky and there's something really luxurious about evening and velvet and coziness being in for the night. For my moon, I'm going to be using a piece of very transparent fabric. I'm not sure exactly what it's made from, maybe linen. And this holds a crease really, really well. I like the contrast of the luxurious, soft velvet with this very stiff, transparent fabric. And I like that we're gonna see a layer of the seam allowance through it that will create a kind of glowy look. like the night moon. I'm using a very small embroidery hoop and to me top right corner feels like a good spot for a moon to be in. This would certainly have worked as well for that. I love you this tiny piece, or I love you this big if I was loving someone to the moon and back. So if you missed something previously, you might be able to add it in with this particular step. I'm using this really beautiful, bright yellow to hopefully create some of that glow for the moon. And I'll form my knot on the back and I can stitch around here, oh, I need my thimble. It's amazing how much easier it is to sew when I have that thimble to help push things through. To avoid tangles, it's also helpful to press my thumb flat on the thread as it's drawing through and that helps keep it from snagging. So I'm finger turning this circle, and when I'm sewing a circle, I can't get a whole lot of stitches each time I pull the needle through because the needle is straight and my moon is curved. So about three stitches is really all I can get in there. When you're doing little things like this too, try to be thoughtful that you're not accidentally sewing your block that extra fabric into the hoop. I do love using a really teeny tiny hoop when I can get away with it. It makes me feel a little more dextrous with my fingers like I can reach better. This, I think, could be a fun opportunity as well to do a variety of stitches. As I'm adhering the applique down, I'm doing a

running stitch but I think I'll use a whip stitch and perhaps even a seed stitch to quilt over the applique, to add to some of that nuance of the moon. There's so many beautiful myths about who lives on the moon, if it's made out of cheese, maybe even if there's a rabbit on the moon or a cow jumping over it, so leaving it as just plain applique feels like a missed opportunity to me when it could have something a little more exciting going on on top of it. This dark blue velvet is a fabric that I got from Edie Ure. She and I were supposed to teach together in France in June of 2020, and that didn't happen. But before then, she had mailed me a whole bunch of naturally dyed fabrics that we were going to teach students how to dye. And then, I was gonna guide them through making a quilt. And it's just a gorgeous color. I think she probably made it with indigo. It might even be organic velvet rather than synthetic. She said that velvet takes the dye a lot better than cotton. I know that fibers with protein in them also take natural dye a lot better than cotton does. So it's a very special fabric, maybe a little bit of that flavor of I love you this big in order to use a special fabric for this quilt. So there's a lot of overlap with what the different blocks mean. And if you have a way of signifying love that's really important to you, consider ways that you can squeak it into the quilt even if there isn't a prompt for it. So this whip stitch that I'm doing, my needle is diagonal and you can see how the stitches that I'm forming are looking a lot like the rays of the sun going around. And I like that the moon is the recipient of sunlight. So having a kind of a miniature sun inside of the moon feels pretty sweet right now. But here as I'm accumulating a whole bunch of stitches in here, you can see that it's looking much more special than it did when it was just plain fabric appliqued in place. Perhaps as I do the center of the moon, I'll do a seed stitch. A seed stitch is random stitches where they go, every which way inside. A lot like the seeds on a sesame seed bun going every direction. And that looks really beautiful and complete. I'll flip it over to do my tailor's knot. You can really see the blue dye so much differently on this side that isn't a velvet side. And it's fun how a block like this can be so simple and yet look different each time you do it. So here my first try at my sample, I went for more of a centrally located moon and I did concentric circles all the way around. And it's fun to see the difference of this slightly smaller moon in a different location, and with the three different stitches: the running stitch, whip stitch, and seed stitch.

Day 11 / Block 9 - An artifact

- An artifact is something that can add a lot of personality and detail and specificity in a quilt. There are some reoccurring characters in a lot of my quilts. I've used my mom's tablecloth in probably eight quilts already. I've used a green tennis racket, dress scrap from making a shirt for myself in a lot of quilts, and there's a yellow polka dot skirt that I started to cut up back in 2017 that's made many appearances in my quilts as well. If you are making a quilt for a loved one and you have some sewing skills, it's possible that you've hemmed some pants for someone or sewn them something and there's a particular fabric that really makes you think of them. Also, if they have clothing that they used to wear and now they're ready to donate it to Goodwill. It could be a prime opportunity to grab some of their clothing with their permission to cut up and put into the quilt. If your love letter is, for example, to Georgia O'Keeffe or Leonardo da Vinci or someone who you've never had the privilege of meeting and getting an actual artifact from them, you could try to replicate something or think about a photograph of them. If I were doing a love letter to Andy Warhol, I could find a fabric of Campbell's soup and use that fabric in my quilt. So, be creative. If there isn't a physical artifact yet, put your thinking cap on, be creative. I'm sure that you'll be able to find something clever that has the feeling of being a historical bit of history or proof of their existence in the world. I'm using two very special fabrics. One is this polka dot fabric from an Ann Taylor LOFT

skirt. I cut up the skirt, because I was thinking about past Heidi compared to present day Heidi. I bought this skirt when I was a high school art teacher and wanted to look a little extra professional and that was the kind of thing that I wore at the time. Now that I'm a professional quilter, I find myself wearing stretch pants and clothing that I've mended or crocheted myself or quilted myself, and I don't wear as many things from brands like this. So it was really special in this quilt to juxtapose old Heidi as this skirt with new current day Heidi, and I pulled the yellow waistband out of the skirt and I used to create a circle at the top of the quilt to represent me. This is a skirt that never really fit very well. It was always a little bit too small for me. So the pink circle that you see next to it is my natural waist that I formed by wrapping a piece of thread around my waist to be like an artifact of current day Heidi. You can also see on it that there are places where the polka dots are showing through and other places where I used the back or the inside of the fabric. Can you see this pretty hourglass pattern coming through? I loved about the skirt that it's a color palette that I still really, really like, but the shape of the skirt, the length, the comfort were all things that were no longer appropriate for me and that I knew I was never gonna wear again. When I think about past Heidi, an even deeper dive into past Heidi is my childhood home. My mother kept a lot of things and she was really into upholstery, and this is some floral fabric that I have from the drapes that matched our upholstered hide a bed that was in the playroom where we had our play mobiles and lots of children's toys that we got to spend time with. The hide a bed is so vividly in my mind when I look at this fabric. I think that happens to a lot of people that you can smell a particular smell, and it takes you back, like you're instantly there. And for me to see this floral fabric, I am instantly back in the playroom with my Barbie dolls and my guinea pigs. So I've done a technique called fussy cutting where I'm cutting out a particular part of the fabric rather than just taking what I get from the corner. I moved my fabric swatch, my clear ruler around a few times till I found this spot that I think really beautifully shows the ribbon and the flowers in the print, and I'm going to appliquÃ© a little bit of this skirt on it, and I think I'm just gonna sew down a few things and see where it takes me. I'm not sure how much of the couch I'll cover up, but it'll be a nice surprise as I add to it. So here I'm gonna use an embroidery hoop that's big enough to go around the appliquÃ©. I think I'm almost, I've almost run out of bits of this skirt, but it's in several very special quilts, and it's one of those hallmarks where you see it and you think, "Oh, that's, that must be a Heidi Parkes quilt." The quilt that I was just showing you that has the skirt on it from the first time I worked with that fabric was in QuiltCon from the Modern Quilt Guild's quilt conference in 2017, and one of the judges for that particular conference was Mondo Guerra from "Project Runway", and I vividly remember sitting on a different burgundy leather couch with my mom when we would watch "Project Runway" every Thursday night, and he was in the series then. And he gave me a Judge's Choice award for that quilt back in 2017, and it was so special and I loved that he as a fabric designer, responded to that quilt so positively, because it had a garment in it. There's a spot where you can see the zipper in the quilt and forms a bit of a skirt shape, and it was just such a special moment for me. This is a thicker fabric as I'm getting to the corner, and I'm noticing that the corner just looks a little pointy or poking out. One of the techniques that I like to do for that area is to add a whip stitch in the corner. I'm going around a few times that same whip stitch that I've used several times previously that holds the corner down a little more securely and looks really satisfying. Here I'm continuing to finger turn. And I love that this is one of my favorite thread colors, this yellow, and it is absolutely identical to the yellow in the skirt. Maybe the thread that I'm using can represent current day Heidi. So we have Heidi as a child, Heidi in her 20s, and now with me putting it together, Heidi in her 40s. When I add things this way, I like to stay curious. So now that I've finished appliquÃ©ing my first piece, I'm

gonna take a peek at it with fresh eyes to see what my next right step is. Looking at my scraps, I see that this long skinny strip would look great, and that's one of my favorite things in a quilt is a long skinny strip. So I'm gonna sew this strip to the edge, being mindful that I'm gonna lose half of an inch of it in my seam allowance. Because I want it to hug the edge here, I'm going to use some straight pins to hold it in place. I like a long straight pin when I'm doing that, because I can go up and down twice and it holds it more securely. Now I'll use my yellow thread again with a running stitch, and this'll be a nice fast line. Sewing without a hoop for me is almost always faster than with a hoop, because I can stack a lot of stitches on the needle each time I pull it through. This is the kind of thing too that I'm not, I'm just thinking about sewing the shapes in place, but later I might surprise myself, and think, "Wow, this looks like the layout of the living room where the hide a bed would've been," or maybe it will look like a letter. There can be sometimes something more subtle or unconscious that comes through that adds a lot to the quilt. This is also, as I think about the composition of my block quilt as a whole, it's a nice opportunity to use a print and a floral again. I haven't used one of those since I did my dedication block with the floral as a background. So as I'm considering the overall composition and how this will look beautiful as a block-based quilt, it's really helpful to think that I've found an opportunity to incorporate another floral print, so I don't need to cover too much of it up, just enough to have that nod of two artifacts, the skirt and the hide a bed. I always like to sew first and then trim the excess off after. I find that it's a little less stressful for me. Looking at this, I feel really satisfied. I think I've got both kinds of fabric. I could keep adding more and more and more, but I don't know that that would make it better or more beautiful in any particular way. I've made another block for this prompt using my skirt and also a tennis racket fabric that's in a lot of my quilts. This one, I pieced together as four separate smaller blocks to form almost an egg shape, and at first I thought this, it would be this orientation, because this is a shirt and this is a skirt, but feels so top heavy that way. So having it surprisingly on its other side, it looks almost like an egg and it's kind of a charming little shape that I've made. Remember, that seam allowance will cut in, so it'll go right up to the edge, but these are two different ways that I have worked with fabrics that are artifacts.

Day 12 / Block 10 - Anniversary

- A very important way of celebrating love can be with an anniversary. I remember as a kid when my parents would celebrate their anniversary and I think too about a birthday being a celebration of an anniversary where you might pay more attention to how old someone is right now, rather than as we did in our earlier block, just focusing on the moment of birth. Today for block 10, I'm going to do a 10-year anniversary. And for me, this September of 2023 is my 10-year quilt-aversary. I made my first fabric quilt, hand quilted, in 2013 and fell head-over-heels in love with quilting. Nine months later, I quit my job to be a professional quilter. It is the hardest and fastest love affair of my entire life. So, the 10-year quilt-aversary feels really, really special to take note of. If I were thinking about an anniversary for someone, perhaps who lived over 100 years ago, or has a more distant relationship to me than just I've known you for 10 years or you were born 40 years ago, there are a lot of other ways to mark that moment of anniversary. There are things like a paper anniversary, or a gold anniversary, or a silver anniversary, so it could be a lot of fun to look up something like a silver anniversary being 25 years and then maybe you'd use a metallic silver thread to depict every 25 years that have passed since you met that person, or knew them, or loved them. I really enjoyed reading Oliver Burkeman's book, "4,000 Weeks", and I think it's a lot of fun to think about a lifetime and how many weeks it is compared to how many years as well. For this prompt, I'm gonna make

some embroidered tally marks, but you can track an anniversary any way that you want. There are so many beautiful ways of creating a calendar, or looking at the phases of the moon, or paying attention to other markers that would help a person track an anniversary. I recently had my three-year anniversary with my sweetheart Beau, and in the quilt behind me, I used black tally marks to mark out all three years. I marked every single day, so 365 times three, and it was wonderful to do that as an applique on the black quilt because I was able to take it with me to a lot of places to do that embroidery. So something like that, while it looks really laborious on the finished quilt, it actually is me sneaking in time where I can sew, where I otherwise might not have been able to work on any sewing because things could be too bulky or too large. I'm gonna get started with my embroidery hoop and I'm using my avocado fabric again. Because this is celebrating my quilt-aversary, I think it's appropriate to use this mint thread because I like this color a lot, and I recently put it in the quilt with that mint place mat that was gifted to me. When I do tally marks, I think it's important to use the back stitch and do a couple stitches, rather than to simply make a really big stitch. I think that it lays a little flatter and it's less likely to get snagged or tugged on something. So here I'm gonna do either two or three stitches for each tally mark and then I'll just toggle over to start the next tally mark as a place for my stitches. This is also, as I'm working on it, I'm realizing kind of a charming color combination because avocado, when you eat it, looks a lot more like mint green than pink, and it's one of those magical natural dyes where you take a black skin and boil it in a pot, and then the fabric comes out and it's pink and you just never, I at least, would've never guessed if I hadn't tried it myself. And that's something that I learned because I'm a quilter. Here as I get to four, I can go across now and add my slash to create number five. And I'll just continue with the back stitch, taking relatively tiny stitches as I go across. Get to the end here, and I think I can just stretch my thread a little bit and begin the next tally mark. My thumb is an inch, so that shouldn't be too long to have dangling on the back. I'll do my next set of tally marks and this block will be complete. Here as I get to the end, it's very satisfying that I've somehow winded up with the exact right amount of thread and it's a nice opportunity for you to see the tailor's knot without a needle. It looks a little bit different here. I create a loop that goes up, same as before, but now I wrap that thread around and I pass it from finger to finger to get it through. Before with a longer thread, it's much easier to send the needle through. And then I hold it down with a finger, slide through, and again I do that two times to form the right sized tailor's knot. I made an earlier version of this step with a 40-year tally mark. I just turned 40 in December, and I decided to change colors every time something important happened in my life. So, I feel like turning five was a big moment in life. I had a lot more freedoms at that age. Then I shifted to this dark green, and when I was 13, my parents got divorced, which I was very excited about. It was good for everyone involved. Also, 13 is my golden birthday, because I was born on the 13th. So, at that moment, I shifted to a yellow-golden thread. Then when I went away to college, very exciting moment in life, I switched to that favorite red color for me. Then I was a high school art teacher for nine years, so that must be this mint area. Maybe this dark green is when I broke up with my boyfriend who I'd been with for 10 years. And then this one line of yellow is the year that I lived in Chicago while I was freshly living my life as a quilter. This peach is when I moved to Milwaukee, and then this red is the time that I've known Beau, those three years that I represented with 1000 plus tally marks. Looking at these two side by side, I think there's really a lot that's special about going into detail and mapping out many phases of my life, but also something really special about mapping out my anniversary as a quilter and my anniversary of being connected with something that I love. Both will be really visually appealing on the quilt and I'm very curious to see this step, so make sure that you use

#LoveLetterQAL to share the story behind the anniversary that matters in your quilt.

Day 13 / Block 11 - Best traits

- A beautiful part about knowing someone well and loving them is being able to identify a trait that they have, something that they consistently do a way of being in the world. There are a lot of traits that I admire in my loved ones. I can think about traits that my mother has, my boyfriend my brother, I can even think about my niece, Penelope. She's a pug and she has a lot of traits around snuggling and being affectionate and attentive. And as I think about myself for this quilt and a trait that I possess I think a little bit about my Sagittarius block and how I was thinking about having my eye on the prize and being committed to things and staying focused. And I think another representation of that kind of tenacity is something that I latched onto while watching Outlander. One of the characters says frequently, "I'm like a dog with a bone." And that is meant to imply that he just never lets go. He keeps working on things and working on them and working on them. And that line has been a little bit of an ongoing joke since I had my sweetheart Bo watch Outlander with me. So I'm going to depict myself as having a dog bone and being like a dog with a bone. It's a fun detail as well that I was born on the Chinese calendar in the year of the dog and I feel very connected as well to things like loyalty and certainly adore my niece Penelope. She's such a great dog. Another way that you could depict a trait is with words and I wanna show you that on this quilt first. On this quilt I've used the back stitch to show the words "Sweeter". And then I also used the running stitch to do the word "Sweetheart". I love the way how it curves up and kind of arcs around and is really taking up a lot of space on the quilt. Can also see that here for "sweetheart", I used cursive and for "sweeter" I used printing. They're both in my real handwriting. And again, you can find that on the Creativebug class for the handwritten embroidered label if you'd like to do it the way that I do in this sweeter technique. I believe that for sweetheart, because it's such big letters. I think I just freehand embroidered the word sweetheart. Another fun detail on this quilt connected to traits is my calendar. A habit and a habit tracker is a good way to create a trait. We aren't stuck with the traits that we have, and so if you're looking at someone you love, some of their traits are inherent. They just are that way. But other traits are earned. They've made a commitment and done a lot of work to identify with a particular trait. I know for example, my sweetheart Bo he's the reason why the word sweetheart's on here. He identifies as an athlete and he uses that label for himself as a way to consistently show up and work out and exercise. And he marks things down on the calendar and he very strategically works out either three or four days a week with his leg days and arm days and all of those special details. So if I were to think about a trait for Bo I might use a calendar and mark the days that he works out as his trait that I really admire that he's worked to cultivate in himself. And those are two really fun ways that you could think about traits in your quilt. Now I'm gonna get started on my dog bone. I really, really love the work of Sally Mann. She has a book called "Hold Still". Sally Mann is an American photographer in the South and in PBS Art '21 there's an episode that I used to show to all of my students in my 3D art class that I taught when I was a teacher where in part of that episode she's photographing dog bones. So when I was thinking about how to do this and how to think about a dog bone at first I was considering like a real bone maybe from a cow that a dog would chew on. And then I thought, no the Sally Mann type of dog bone is the dog bone for me. And those were raw hide dog bones. So I have this really playful way that I'm excited to use of creating a dog bone where I'm using this stiff transparent fabric the same kind that I used to make my moon. And I'm going to fold a raw hide dog bone out of it. I'm gonna begin by folding it in thirds to create a long strip and I'll finger press the edges so that it's a little easier to

manipulate. And now I'll make the fold that consistently shows up in a raw hide bone. It's just a knot. I'll fold that flat and I'm gonna set this dog bone on my quilt, and I'm gonna be mindful of the seam allowance. So remembering that the composition will change a little bit and I am a big fan of something that I like to call safety pin applique. I use safety pins to hold a piece of fabric or something down. I typically do this if there aren't any raw edges. So if you look behind me, that quilt has a lot of handkerchiefs and tablecloths and lace on it. And all of those items I simply safety pinned in place on the quilt. And I let the quilting hold them down. Here, just a few safety pins will hold this in place. And then when I start quilting that will be enough to hold this dog bone down. So not only am I tenacious and like a dog with a bone but I also love to do things efficiently. I like to be economical with my time. When I first started quilting I would use a stopwatch to see how long it took to do a row of quilting, and it just thrilled me to shave off five seconds on a row. So making this quickly and efficiently to represent a dog bone also feels like a very Heidi move, cutting off the edge there. And you can see each time you do something like this it turns out a little bit differently. So my previous attempt was a slightly larger dog bone and I used more safety pins, so it's a smaller one and I think they both look great. So no additional sewing is necessary. This block is done until we get to the quilting phase. When I quilt it, I'll have quilt backing fabric the cotton batting and the quilt top. And at that time, when I'm quilting across everything I'm going to make sure that I quilt down the layers of fabric and remove these safety pins the same way that I remove the safety pins that I used to base the quilt to hold that quilt sandwich together. I love how effortless this is. It's really fast and easy and a great surprise for your viewer.

Day 14 - Hand yoga

- We are two weeks in, and now it's time for another hand yoga break. Today, we're gonna do some joint lubrication. The joints can get sticky or tight when you're sewing. Some folks get trigger finger. Other people get a really sore stiff thumb. And these movements are gonna be wonderful for addressing that. I'm gonna begin with my hands, palms down on my table. I'm gonna send them wide and then bring them together. This is a beautiful movement that I learned in occupational therapy when I needed some help with my hands. It's very similar to last week when we opened and closed our hands with palm to palm. Now, we're gliding against the table on a different surface. I'll flip my hands with palms facing up and gently open and close them. Ideally, I'm opening and closing my hands about 70% open and 70% closed. Usually with that squeezing, pulling, I'm using a hundred percent strength when I'm sewing, although I do try to remember to have as gentle a grip as I can when I'm holding things. This is a beautiful contrast to that kind of action. Very gently, gliding, lubricating my joints. My occupational therapist, Jennifer, would say, "Motion is lotion." Now pivot my hands so the palms face each other. I'm gonna hinge just at the big joints, sending my fingers vertical, and then horizontal. You can watch your timing here. Nice and smooth movements. If you're looking to slow down, you can even sync with your breath. Inhaling up and exhaling down. (breathes deeply) Similar movement, we're gonna focus on this next row of joints. This one's a little bit more challenging. Do your best. If you're not getting it to look the same way that mine do, you can just picture it in your mind's eye and send your attention, your awareness, your love to that first joint in the finger And relax. I'll move on to a massage for my joints. I'm gonna begin with a counterclockwise motion around this joint on my thumb, and then I'll shift to clockwise. You can do this for any and all of the joints in your hand and all of the joints in your body if you'd like to. You can even get the joints on both the inside and the outside. Counterclockwise first. That's the moon energy. And clockwise second. That's the sun energy for thinking about the Ida and the Pingala in

Ayurveda and hand yoga. So, continue on at your own speed and do as many joints as you would like.

Day 15 - Composition check-in

- Today is a composition check-in. We are making a 20-block quilt. We've got 11 blocks done, and this is a really pivotal moment to start to think about the color palette, what's going on so far, and to start dreaming up, what do you want to add? Because you have a lot of creative freedom in each of these blocks, and you get to control, in many cases, if you're doing embroidery or applique, if you're using a print or a solid. So much of the block is up to you, and so I want humming in the back of your mind some of the things about the fabric and the composition at this point. If you take a look at what I've spread out on the table here, I have all of my blocks set out in the order that I made them, and I wanna start playing with the order of them to see if there's a different composition from just chronological that would be more interesting, as well as placing in some of the other fabrics that I want in the quilt, to see how they radiate. Especially with my moon, with the dark background, that stands alone so far as a dark color, so I'm really longing to get a little bit of this blue polka dot into the composition as well as maybe using a little more of my blue velvet. As I look at this chronological composition, the first things that stands out to me is this arrow is sending the viewer's eye visually off of the quilt, so I immediately have the impulse to bring it down a little lower. I'm also trying to remind myself as I look at this visually that it's only half of the quilt, so some things can be as low as four rows down. As I continue to look at it, I am worried then about is the arrow facing this rabbit and how are they interacting? In a previous quilt of mine, there's a portrait of my face and I'm looking into the quilt from the left, and there's a chicken and it's in the bottom right corner, looking into the quilt from the bottom right, and so there's this nice juxtaposition of me looking at the chicken, and the face of the rabbit, being an animal, is again something that the viewer's eye is going to jump to and notice. I'm seeing as well that it's the only piece that's on a unbleached white background, and that also causes it to be a focal point similar to the blue, being at the highest ranges of value with the lightest light and the darkest dark. So if this starts to move around, some interesting things could happen. This hand, also, I feel like could be somewhere else. These two mints together. Like, do I like the idea of having a cluster of mint, that that could make a shape? Or is that something that I would want to break up a little bit? So here, it's just a wonderful opportunity to start to think about the quilt in the dimension of being four rows, five columns. And letting go of any attachment to being chronological. Now I can start to set some goals for fabrics that I want to invite into the quilt. I very much want to add some more dark colors. I can see how those play. I also am noticing this floral with the pink stands out a lot, and I wonder if it needs a friend with this red, that being in the burgundy and red category. Would that work nicely? Or even a friendship here with the blue floral and the pink floral, 'cause both of those have applique on them as well. That's kind of nice right there. Also, in the story that it's telling about the person that I love, who is me, it's a nice beginning point, because it's this childhood fabric, this artifact, so I kind of enjoy that in the beginning at the top. I wanna remember as well what it'll be like to have more of these neutrals around. I can think about if I like that green or if it's too loud, and I think my initial reaction is too loud. So maybe even though I pulled this from my stash initially, I might not want to introduce that color to my color palette. I wanna take a photograph of this to remind myself how I laid things out, 'cause in a moment, I'm gonna stack it up and put it back in a different area of the studio, and as I take a photo, it can be very helpful to shift that photo to black and white and see what it does to the values in the quilt. It can help me know how things are looking. I also, for me at

least, quilts live so much on the internet and as photographs. Most people are gonna see the photo long before they see the quilt in person, and it's helpful to check in and see how it looks on a screen, how it looks tiny, compared to just in reality. I often discover things and learn things about the work in that way. So today, have some fun laying things out and get a good sense for yourself of what colors you want to add and remove from the fabric pool that you made. Maybe you even wanna hunt through your stash. You're starting to think about other fabrics or other colors that would be beautiful to introduce. Have a lot of fun. And remember, post those photos online, hashtag #LoveLetterQAL and share how the composition is coming along.

Day 16 / Block 12 - Special skills

- Block 12 is about skills. The person that you love is probably very skillful and talented at something. There are lots of different kinds of skills in life, so think big. It doesn't need to be the thing they're the best known for or the first skill that you think of when you picture them. You can make a list even to list out and consider different skills that they have. As I sat back and thought about the skills that I have, I came up with the skill of my voice. Speaking, talking, it especially as self-love felt like a really good skill to focus on. Sometimes, if I've been talking a lot all day or sharing a lot on social media, I'll have almost like a sharing hangover and I'll feel a little bit dizzy or worried. Did I say the right thing? Did I offend anyone? And I need to calm down, re-center, maybe do some sewing and remind myself that most of the time I'm really good at speaking and that I haven't over-shared or over-talked or offended. And that balance of worry and being skillful felt the most loving and the kindest to me as a skill to highlight. I've taken a photograph of my mouth slightly open and this printed out is going to be a template for me to begin to stitch. With this light table, I'll be able to focus on the outline of my mouth, and right now, this photograph is the way that the photo looked when I took it and I don't want to put a reverse mirror image onto my quilt, so I need to be attentive about mirroring or flipping, to make sure that everything looks right and accurate when I'm done. I'm going to begin by finding the edge of my lips. It can actually maybe have been easier if I had printed this in color, but it is in black and white. Depends on if you're using an image at all if you want to use this technique. It could be nice to try it both ways, in black and white or in color. I find sometimes this sketchy line can find a truer edge than just one single line. I'm going to outline the teeth also. Teeth can sometimes be intimidating in a portrait. They can look a little bit funny, so I'm just trying to trace them as accurately as I can and trust that they will be fine. Flipping that over now with the help of the light table I can really easily see this outline. I'm gonna make one smooth line of my lips. I could sew through this computer paper or I could transfer this again onto some paper that will be easier to sew through. And I've got a little bit of tracing paper ready to do that. Just check that I like how it looks too. I can always go through and adjust because of some of those shadows. That looks right. Trace through this tracing paper. If you're doing a longer project, it could be nice to use a little bit of tape to hold it in place. Things like this can wiggle, but being just lips it's not moving on me too much. (paper rustling) And what's worked out great with working on the back of my face is this is now a mirror image of how I want my lips to look. I'll turn off my light table and get that out of the way. Here I can tear this down to a smaller size. (paper tearing & rustling) On my fabric, if it has a pretty side or a right side, I'd want to be attentive of that. This is the back of the fabric. I'll use a straight pin to hold it in place and then I can put it inside of a hoop. I wanna make sure that I'm thinking compositionally about where it is on the block. Could be on the bottom, the top, could even be a sideways mouth, but here, centered feels right to me. This straight pin will hold it steady. I'll put my embroidery hoop on here and it can be

helpful to remember that this is the back as you're sewing. To place it in the hoop the way I would normally orient with the spring-loaded part of the hoop on the front of the fabric. This is ready to be sewn through and I've got a nice finished version here that I filled in with the running stitch. When you look at the back, you can see that my lips are oriented here and I've gone through a little bit of whip stitch to make sure that the edge of the lip was accurate and then I filled in with this running stitch. Eventually I'll go through and rip away the extra paper because I don't necessarily want that in my quilt sandwich forever. Once in a while, a little piece will get stuck and you can use tweezers to remove that. And this one is more challenging than this will be because I used computer paper on it. So just very, very carefully, I can go in with my scissors to start to loosen up, poke a hole in that paper, and then it'll continue to rip out of the middle. (paper tearing) And if you want to see more details on this technique, I used this transfer method in the Creativebug class that I taught on a handwritten embroidered label. By embroidering my mouth for this quilt block, I will have a continual reminder of my skillfulness with language.

Day 17 / Block 13 - Location, location, location

- Today's prompt is to locate the person that you love. You can think about this in the past, the present, or the future. Maybe they're longing to go somewhere, or perhaps they live in America, but you know their heart is in Paris. The idea of locating someone could become somewhat abstract if that feels good. You might also think about someone from the past. Maybe they lived their life in Chicago, but they've passed away 100 years ago. And then you can think about, where are they now? Are they in the sky? Or whatever fits your belief system about the afterlife. For me, I grew up in Chicago and lived in the Western suburbs for a long time. But in 2015, I moved to Milwaukee, and I've loved living in Milwaukee. My mother is from there originally, so it felt, in many ways, like going home. I, therefore, have always lived hugging Lake Michigan, and that feels like a timeless way of locating me, even though I've been in two different states as home. I'm using a different tracing technique today to get an accurate representation of Lake Michigan. I'm using my iPad as a surface, and I've traced, with tracing paper and a mechanical pencil, around the perimeter of the lake. And this will easily flip so that I can see through the back of it and show the perimeter of Lake Michigan. Again, I've set up my fabric so that I can see the front is on the front side of the embroidery hoop, and I'm going to put, right orient, this is Lake Michigan, right here is Door County, Wisconsin, flipping it and flipping my hoop. And I'm going to orient the lake here, of course, being very mindful of the seam allowance. And now I'll use a straight pin to hold things in place. This is a really nice complex perimeter, and I'm going to use the running stitch to be fast enough to be able to go around and trace this accurately. I've chosen this beautiful Sashiko thread. It's blue with little hints of red, I think that will look really special, and have enough contrast that you'll visually be able to see it. I can begin anywhere, but I think it makes sense to begin near Milwaukee. And with the running stitch, I can look just at the back at my drawing and stitch all the way around. I do need to remember always that this is the front, and pay attention to how that front is looking. I'm gonna stitch around the edge, and here in just a couple minutes, I have made a very accurate representation of Lake Michigan. Oh, that red, I think, really looks great, and I'm going to rip my tracing paper off. It pulled just a little bit, and if that happens, I like to use the eye of my needle to even things out. So here with the eye side, I can go under some of the other stitches, and smooth things, stretch a little. This normally doesn't happen, and I think it's because I usually sew more densely. So had I filled the lake in, it wouldn't have stretched so much. Going to just inch this around. I love when things happen when I'm demonstrating, because then it can be a good model

for how you troubleshoot any problems that come up. I'm going under with the eye of the needle, adding that thread back to the bottom. There we go. It's laying flat. Remember, this is the front. That's what Lake Michigan looks like, and this is something that I love to do when I am making quilts, especially with my quilt-iversary coming up, my 10-year. I made a really important quilt in 2014. It's the quilt that's over my right hand shoulder. It was a quilt that I made when I was still a high school art teacher, and being a block quilt, it was so easy for me to prep a couple blocks in the evening, and then have them ready to take to school and sew. There's a lot of downtime as a teacher, especially in the spring. I vividly remember proctoring official exams for the state and doing my embroidery while I was there. Some of the most special embroideries on that quilt are an aerial map of my childhood home where I lived for about 25 years. Another important map is the home that I was living in at the time that I made the quilt. You can see the train tracks have been highlighted with a lot of extra back stitching, and there's also a river that I highlighted for Naperville, Illinois, where I lived. Then to give the viewer the sensation of familiarity, the way that I recognize those two locations, I also did a map of the Arc de Triomphe and the Seine River in Paris, France. I think that's an iconic intersection, because it looks so much like a spiderweb, and people who dream of France or who have been there might be able to have that same feeling of recognition. The river in that one is filled in with a dense running stitch, and I think it makes a beautiful contrast. If I wanted to add more to my Lake Michigan representation here, I could very easily fill it in a little bit more densely with running stitch, just the way that I did in that piece. Beyond filling it in with a running stitch, I have another example that I made with darning. This took me several TV episodes to fill in, but it's a beautiful technique, and I feel like the abstraction that came from it being challenging, different directions of darning in here add to the feeling of a water current or the wind, or things moving around. I taught darning in a previous Creativebug quilt pattern with the story quilt in the daily practice. Today is day 17 in this quilt pattern, and day 17 in that quilt pattern, coincidentally, is where I demonstrate the darning technique. So if you're curious about how to fill something in with darning, and you're watching a good TV show, you're in for about three hours of sewing, you could use some darning to fill in a location like this as well.

Day 18 / Block 14 - Secret codes

- Today's block centers around secret codes. I think the more and the longer I love someone, the more I have and develop secret codes with them. It could be a language that you use or an inside joke that originates from a movie or a habit. I think that secret codes could even show up in your text messaging habits or the way that you write to each other. So consider if language would be an appropriate way of depicting this prompt. For me, when I think about secret codes, I like the idea of considering my past quilts and the way that I am as a quilter, that certain things can be like a secret code or an Easter egg. For folks who know my work and are familiar with my quilts, one of the things that I like to do is to employ transparency. So you look at a quilt and there's a layer of transparent fabric, either silk or maybe an old curtain or some kind of open weave fabric that you can look through and things like that often connect to memories or a foggy memory or link to the past. So the savvy viewer, someone who's familiar with my work might know that and pick up on it. There's also a very special scrap that I brought along with me. This reminds me immediately of making the story quilt pattern here with Creative Bug. It was a very special piece of fabric that was a gift from my brother and my sister-in-law in 2015 and then I finally cut up this half quarter fabric and put a really, really big piece of it on the story quilt. You can look back and see all of the different variations that people have made in that quilt pattern with #DailyPracticeQAL. And if you

look back through and notice you'll see this fabric. So I'm going to make a piece today that has that secret code of adding a similar fabric in this particular quilt with this scrap, I'm gonna begin here with a piece of unbleached cotton muslin, and I'm going to use this scrap to create a composition on the block. It's a big scrap compared to the size of the block so I will have to cut it down a lot but I'd like to do that a little bit minimally so that some of the shape is still revealed. I also wonder if I want to keep the salvage in here or if I want to remove that because some other part of it is more interesting. I also love that this is gonna be a nice pop of color in the composition of my overall quilt that I'm making right now. Something about this little curve, this bulge is calling out to me. I also like the way that's folding a little bit so I'm going to cut my scrap here, and then maybe I can get in just a little bit more. Also, this is the least useful part of the scrap and that's another nice cue of it being the right part to use because this is bigger, has more potential to go in another quilt and be another special moment of hearkening back. Here, I'll cut this one off right here. And it's such a pretty block with the grid. That's why it called to me. That's why it felt like a special fabric. So I think I'll cut this up just a bit more. I wanna keep it laid out in that same order. This could be a lot of little pieces. I love a little piece. Maybe that's part of the code too is just my undying affection for little pieces of fabric. Yeah, that looks really fun to me. Now, rather than having to applique all of this down I'm gonna put my silk chiffon. It's a different type of fabric from the linen open weave that I used with the dog bone, but very, very similar idea to the dog bone. This is something that is gonna be held in place with safety pins, and then when I quilt the quilt I'll pull out those safety pins and hold things in place just with the quilting. So no glue required, no stitching or invisible things. Just this piece of silk is gonna hold it down, and I think that the transparency of the silk is muting this yellow and it's gonna marry this fabric with my existing color palette really well as well. I don't want things to shift here. So ideally, I'm going to anchor every piece of fabric with a safety pin, getting that nice and square and I'll do this big piece first. A lot of times you can get two pieces of fabric anchored with one safety pin if they're close to each other like that. I think that's gonna look amazing and I love how fast and easy this technique is. I prepared a similar block to this in advance. I spent 17 hours mending these jeans for my sweetheart Beaux, and I used a very special striped fabric. It's a really pretty mix of blue and gray and white stripes. These scraps are the exact shape that they were in when they became scraps from cutting away the excess fabric from the patches on the back. I arranged them here into an interesting composition and so it has that secret code of scraps and being a potentially familiar fabric as well as a little message of love and caring for someone important to me. The block itself is really similar. It's the same base fabric, the same kind of silk and I put a safety pin through every piece of fabric so it doesn't wiggle around on me. As you think about secret codes, remember that it doesn't have to take forever to create something special, but you could also have a lot of fun with text, a special fabric, or anything that brings in that playful quality of a secret code.

Day 19 / Block 15 - A chair

- [Instructor] Block number 15 is a two-parter, so we will be working on this tomorrow as well. As you can see from the quilt over my left shoulder, I have had chairs on my brain a lot lately, and I think it's a beautiful idea of a stand-in for a person, thinking about the figure and where they might be, where they can rest. There's so many wonderful ideas too around thrones or a place to be at ease. Rather than making a whole big house, you can contain something in a chair and create an idea for them. So our prompt today is to create a chair for the person that you love. You could even extend it into a love seat or a couch for them, or even a swing, perhaps, if you know that they love

to sit on a swing. I am going to work with a real chair that I use in my studio/living room, and it is a blue velvet chair. So it's a wonderful tie-in, it's a way for my composition to use blue velvet again. I like to warm up for things like this that are accurate by making a drawing first. We've done a lot of tracing lately and while I could make a super accurate chair, I think it's going to feel more whimsical, more beautiful, more artful to have a slightly abstracted chair from a drawing that might potentially look a little bit awkward. A big part of drawing is looking. Looking at this photograph, it helps flatten the chair, and I found it a lot easier to draw the chair on the iPad rather than drawing the chair in person in my studio. With it flattened in the photograph, I can start to see the angle of the seat cushion. I can see the way that this ruching looks in the upholstery, and I can also get a really good sense of what direction the legs of the chair are going. So, they are at a slight angle, but I get a very good sense of the fore shortening, how small this back leg should be compared to the front leg. I'm gonna give it a whirl, making a drawing. This edge is so flat that that's what's calling to me as the first part of the drawing to make. It's also in the center of the chair, and it helps make sure that I'm not gonna go off of the piece of paper. And now I'll make the cushion, getting that little swoop in for the shape of the chair. I wanna notice how far over that square part comes, and I'll make this nice big loop, and then arc this above and around, come into the side here, this, oh yeah, that's looking really nice. I can add in more detail to that edge later, but I'm gonna go in and decide now, noticing, especially, this leg comes down a lot lower than that leg. I like these little gold bottoms on the legs, and anything that looks a little bit not right or awkward to me, that really does make the drawing even more satisfying to look at. The scallops from the way that the upholstery fabric is folded are so satisfying and pretty. Because it's a drawing in preparation for an embroidery, there's a lot that you don't need to worry about too much too. It will get resolved once it is an embroidery. Here I have three different views of my chair. They're so sweet. I like how this one's a little more forward facing. This one, the legs kick out diagonally in a really satisfying way. I can use these as a model for how I want my applique to look. This will be my base fabric. I think the blue velvet will stand out really beautifully on this linen because the velvet is a thicker, substantial fabric. I think it looks a lot better than being on a white muslin 'cause the fabric's so flimsy, the sturdiness of this linen will look really good. I'm very interested in embracing the potential awkwardness of the shape, so I could sketch something out or I could even cut out the shape of the chair from the paper. I could go in with my scissors and cut that shape, but I think it will be fun to cut it out with my eyeballs, with no tracing paper involved. I wanna begin with this swoop, keeping in mind that it's consistently, well at least on these two, dipping over. And of course, I want to also be mindful of the seam allowance. So here what I'm cutting out, the finished chair will be smaller. I'll go up all the way there. Okay, so this is going to be a really good shape for making my chair. I'm gonna get the angle correct, and I wanna make sure that I'm laying it out, being mindful of that half inch seam allowance, as well as thinking about having enough space for the legs of the chair. I'm gonna use two straight pins to hold this in place. I've got this nice gold thread from Valdani ready. This will be the legs of the chair and this will be all the other parts. So I've got my bright, gold thread ready to turn the edges on the velvet. I could use a hoop for this or I could do it without a hoop because it's so close to the top, I think it feels just as easy to do it with no hoop. As velvet, I definitely would not iron this in advance, and I think anything this small, it might be resistant to ironing in advance. So here I'm turning the edge and I want to be mindful that nothing's gonna poke out and fray later, that I'm turning enough of the edge that it's secure. This kind of puffy fabric, I can move between the whip stitch and the running stitch quite frequently to get it in place. I'll continue finger turning this applique to go around the perimeter of my chair. I already love this chair so much. (laughs) There's

such an awkwardness, and I can really see the potential once it has the embroidery of these stitches here and the legs on it. We will continue the chair tomorrow.

Day 20 / Block 15 - Chair continued

- Continuing with block 15, I'm going to add some embroidery to my chair. I'll add this embroidery hoop so that I can easily accent the chair first and then add the legs. Love how puffy and ruffled this velvet is looking. I've got a knot on my gold thread and I'm going to begin with the arc around the back of the chair. I think a running stitch will do the job really well in that I don't need to add anything more complicated than that. That's helping to shape the inside of the applique here. If I want it to be more defined, which maybe I do, I can just do another row of running stitch behind here to create a double line. Now I'll add the three-dimensional edge at the side and notice how it gets thicker closer to me. It's a little foreshortened at the edge of the chair and I can see some of these details of how I drew it as well. And I think just 'cause it's easier than tying or maybe equally as easy as tying off, I'll do another double line to get myself up to the top to add that ruffled area. So here I'll make this outer shell. As I'm looking at it, I can tell I made the chair quite a bit taller than the real chair is. There's something nice there though, like a space to rest my head. I'm gonna go back and forth now, adding these ridges all with the running stitch. I think it's just a wonderful fast stitch for adding detail like this. And I'm going to invest quite a bit more time in filling in the legs of the chair. So I don't wanna spend too long on this part. It's looking so beautiful on the back now too. It's a reminder that I could have done everything as just embroidery with no applique and it would be another beautiful way to make a chair. I'll move my hoop down now so that I can do the legs and I can see that whole area. I'm excited to use this twisted thread. It's a navy blue and a gold strand spun together and I've doubled it up so that it's two lengths together with a knot holding them because I want a nice thick line to create a solid filled in leg. To me with the velvet on top, I think it would just look a little too flimsy if it were a line drawing and not filled in at the bottom. I'll begin with this far leg and I really like the way that on this drawing it goes from wide to skinny. So I think I will aim to replicate that aspect of it. I'm going to use a stitch called the stem stitch. It is the reverse of a backstitch, meaning that the wrong side will look like a backstitch and the front is going to be extra thick with multiple layers of thread. To create the stem stitch, I need the belly of the thread, the loop that hangs down on the bottom and my needle is always going to be going the opposite direction that I want the line to be. Now that I've done my first stitch, I'm going to go forward and then back out from the last place that I stitched with the belly below the needle. I'm pausing here to check the proportion and I want to use this gold thread to make the gold bottom, so I think this is long enough for my chair leg. I think I'll do a more simple backstitch to toggle over to the other side and starting out with that skinny line here, I'll work on my stem stitch. If you mess up at all, it took me a moment to get reoriented. I'm just filling in things solid, so nobody will know. Now I'm aiming to get a little wider, just like my drawing and I'm going to start to fill this in. Doing more stem stitch here, making sure I get up underneath the velvet as much as I can so that it doesn't create a gap in between the applique and the embroidery. Some other great stitches for filling things in if you have something solid that you'd like to fill it in would be the chain stitch or the satin stitch or a seed stitch is a wonderful random way of filling things in. I used the seed stitch on the inside of my moon several steps ago. Okay, that looks really nicely filled in. I'll tie my knot on the back and I'm going to shift over to my lighter gold thread to use the satin stitch for the bottom. Because I'm filling things in solid here, I'm also going to tie my knot at the bottom of both tails so that I'm working with a double thickness of thread. For the satin stitch, I'm wrapping round and round kind of like a

corkscrew. It's very, very similar to the whip stitch. The thing that makes it the satin stitch is that each line of stitching is touching the last line of stitching so that it fills things in completely. And then for the satin stitch, I can go back over it a little bit too just to make sure that it is filled in in really nice and solid looking gold and finished here. I'm going to pause to look at this leg and I have a finished chair that looks really similar but also really different. And that is how it will look if I continue with my stem stitch and my satin stitch to complete the chair. This makes me want to make a whole quilt of just chairs but for now, I'm just going to include this one special chair in my love letter quilt.

Day 21 - Hand yoga

- We're taking another yoga break and today it's chair yoga. We'll begin by rooting into our tailbone, and then inhale, lifting our spine and our arms tall. I like to root into my sit bones from here and then lift with my ribs. I'll send the right side of my body longer, getting a stretch from sit bone to fingertip. And then the left side of my body, rooting again into my sit bone up through the fingertips. And now both sides, rooting down and reaching tall. I'll exhale to rest my arms back down to my sides, pausing to notice the difference. I can roll my shoulders a few times, forward, up, back, and down. Once more, I'll extend my arms wide, this time forming a letter T, and I'll shift my palms to face the earth, so that I can flex at my wrist. This is a much more intense wrist stretch than what we did with palm to palm at our heart. So be gentle on yourself as you come to this vertical position. If this feels funny for any reason, you can always form a letter A rather than a letter T. We'll return to center here and we can pivot our arms forward and back, creating a nice rotation all the way through the arm. And we'll rest down. Your arms might be feeling tired like mine now. I'll do a little more for my neck. I'd like to begin by pointing my chin skyward. And now tuck my chin down. Return to center. I'll move from right to left a few times. Return to center. I'll rest my hand on the crown of my head and I'll gently lean towards that left side. I can exhale and soften here into my neck, perhaps tilting a little taller or down. See what kind of stretch feels right for you here. I'll support my head as I return to center and then exchange hands. Once more, I'll exhale as I lean to the right, softening my left shoulder. And once more, I can explore if tilting my gaze skyward or earthward feels good. Return to center. Gently soften the right arm down to my side. And now from center, I'll reach my left arm back and around, creating a twist, hopefully getting some support from the back of the chair. (instructor breathes) And twist all the way now to the other side. Again, using the back of the chair for support. And return to center. And once more, I'll roll my shoulders. And if any other movements feel good to you, follow your intuition and you can practice them now. And remember, anytime you see a chair, it can be a mental cue to continue the habit of practicing yoga and stretching your body, especially if you've been spending a lot of time sewing.

Day 22 / Block 16 - A plant

- Plants can have a deep connection with love. Certainly red roses are a big stereotype in the love category, and then different colors of roses have other types of love and meaning like a yellow rose for friendship. There's a lot more to plants and love besides just roses though. I have a plant that I was given from my mom when I moved out of home when I was about 30 years old and that plant is one that I've kept alive and so I care for the plant. It's a recipient of my love, and it's also a reminder of the care that my mom took in helping me create a home out of my house. I've embroidered and appliqued my pathos plant from my mom many times, and I'd like to show it to you on this story quilt that's from my class with creative bug. This is an embroidery that I made of the plant that my

mom gave me. The heart-shaped leaves always make me so happy and I think I formed them with the Danish knot so it's another great way to use that particular knot. I also used applique and a double row of running stitch to create this larger zoom in of the leaves on the plant. This quilt also has a plant with these yo-yos that I used to create the buds of flowers and they're blooming from the top of this hill. They're more of an imagined flower rather than based on a particular specific flower. This quilt has a lot of embroidery in it and a lot of plants. And my favorite is this pair of dandelions. I have a yellow dandelions that is in its more pedal state and then I've also made a dandelion that is ready to make a wish and blow all of those seeds into the air. I used a lot of different stitches to create it. The back stitch, the running stitch, this is a stitch that's common in crazy quilts. And then up here I stitched an asterisk and put a tailor's knot inside. The center of the standalone is made with darning thread weaving. This last quilt that I want to show you is with a medicinal plant. When I'm feeling sick, I like to take elderberry syrup and here I've made a lot of teeny tiny circles that are applique of elderberries, and I used my quilters knots and tailors knots to create the tiny little stem to show that it's a plant. Thinking about edible plants opens up a whole new realm of love and plant connection. You can also see this very familiar fabric that was in the H when I dedicated my quilt. Today I'll be doing something like that because I have a beautiful floral print fabric and I'm simply going to fussy cut a special part of this fabric to be the entire block of the quilt. Another nice, effortless solution. I love how the colors in this floral print relate to my composition. And having another simple block like this will create some wonderful visual balance with the love is so big block that I made from a place mat.

Day 23 / Block 16 - Love languages

- For me, a quilt about love would be incomplete without mentioning the love languages. This is a book that I read and really enjoyed and have taken the self-test many times. My preferred love language is touch. When someone hugs me or holds my hand, I feel really loved. And I think that's echoed in how much I love touching fabrics and being around things that feel good on my skin. The other love languages include quality time, gifts, words of affirmation, and acts of service. I do all of these things in one way or another and I also receive them as love in one way or another, but sometimes one is the strongest. I think, for example, that my sweetheart Bo connects the most with quality time and acts of service. When I cook things, he appreciates it so much, and we almost never cancel plans on each other. We keep our commitments to spend time together. When I think about my dad who passed away in 2018, he was a great gift giver. He was a woodworker and made things on the lathe and cut things out of wood and made them for me. And that love from him echoes over the last few years since he passed away in me having a couch that we made together and a bed that he made for me, and countless bowls and wooden things that are really useful to me. Even the framed quilts behind me are stretched on pieces of wood that he cut out and gave to me. There are many ways to express this, and for me, I think the fingertips are gonna be an important way of doing that. I'm gonna make an embroidery with my favorite combination on this quilt, creating more rhythm and unity within the composition of avocado fabric and red, orange red thread. And I'll make an outline of my fingertips. I'm gonna fill them in with a special knot that I learned recently. It's called the Colonial Knot, but when it's formed, you make a figure eight or an infinity symbol. And to me, that feeling of infinity is going to connect to the timelessness of love and to spending quality time with other people. I'm going to begin by placing my fingertips in a cool arrangement here on my fabric. And then I'll use the hera marker to create a dent in the fabric so that I know where to embroider my knots. I think the hera marker is a perfect tool for marking the fabric here, because I

need to mark on the surface, and I don't want any kind of pen to show through one day, depending on the archival quality of that mark. This piece of plastic is just denting the fabric a little bit, and it's letting me know approximately the size and shape of my fingertips. I think the thumbs should be a little bit extra big as well, so you can tell it's a thumb. It creates a very subtle mark, but when the light hits it right, I can see enough to know what to do. I'll use my embroidery hoop to keep everything taut. And I'll begin with the biggest finger, my thumb. I'll come out from the bottom. And to form this infinity knot, my needle comes from the left and around, and then the string in my left hand reaches up and around. So you can see a figure eight wrapping around the needle. Now I'll tighten up that figure eight, pierce my needle in close to where it came out, but not in exactly the same place. And with the thread snug to the fabric, I'll pull through. It creates a beautiful little button. And an extra plus for my touch love language is that these knots feel so nice to run my finger against in the finished project. A knot like this can be a little bit tricky to master, but when you do a whole bunch of them on repeat like this, they get easier and easier each time you form them. I'm gonna continue making these figure eight knots for all of my fingertips. Here's my final block, and I think it's gently evocative of fingerprints without being too obvious, and I love that it's referencing touch in many ways, because I've made something that's just so tempting and satisfying to run my fingers against.

Day 24 / Block 18 - Heroes

- My mom, grandma, great-grandma, and I all love Georgia O'Keeffe and have been very inspired by her. I recently read a biography about her and was very excited to learn more in depth about how she became who she was and I was in Santa Fe recently and finally made my way to Abiquiu where she spent a lot of her time and was truly in love with the southwest. The landscape there hit me and was so beautiful. I got to see some examples of her clothing there and found that she wore a lot of navy blue and white polka dots and had some bandanas like that. I've been hunting in my composition for an opportunity to add some more dark blue and to incorporate my polka dot fabric. So this is gonna be a great opportunity for me to use that and get that color into my quilt as we come down to the final few blocks. Our theme today is heroes, and I think that heroes shape who we are in a very powerful way. If you can learn who someone's hero is, you can understand a lot more about how they became who they are and then probably understand better how they became the person that you love. I'm going to get started by making a circle applique with two different kinds of polka dots. I'm gonna cut out part of my circle from this large polka dot pattern. And now I'll cut out a bigger portion of the circle with this smaller polyester fabric. I love the contrast of a linen base, a polyester silky print, and then this thicker cotton fabric. It's gonna be another beautiful thing for texture. I will now sew these two polka dots to each other using a running stitch, and this is a little bit rare for me to be piecing pretty to pretty and then opening up. You could use a straight pin in the mix here, but it's so short that I think it'll be easy to sew without any pins. When I was in Santa Fe, I went to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum there and it was beautiful to see more of Georgia's abstract paintings and the crystal collection that she had from walking around outside. It can be easy to associate her with only flowers and her work is so much bigger and more complex than that as well as her skill with sewing. She sewed a lot of her clothes herself and that's where this inspiration for the polka dots is coming from. If you look over my shoulder, you can see that I have previously made a flower quilt, very much inspired by the closeup of a white flower that she made in a different painting. I'm at the end of this row of stitches. Cutting off my knot, I can finger press this open and then I can applique this circle onto my base fabric. Here's a finished version that I've

already turned the edges under and sewn down with a running stitch.

Day 25 - Composition check-in

- There are only two blocks left in this quilt top, and today is another moment to lay things out and check in with the composition. I've spent some time fiddling with my blocks, and found an arrangement that I'm really enjoying and I'd like to share with you a little bit about why I like it. Especially when I look at this on the screen on my phone, I love the way that this circle, the chair, and the navy blue stand out. I thought it was just because of the dark color, but I think it's also a really powerful arrangement with the round applique. The chair almost looks like a circle, which I did not realize when I was making it. I also put a lot of thoughtfulness into these floral blocks, because these three are so different from the other blocks in the quilt. I thought a little bit about having them be very close together, and that felt a little bit too separate or different from the rest of the composition. I also thought a lot about visual movement, so anchoring this bottom left corner with the arrow continues to feel really good to me visually. I like the way that it shoots your eye into the middle of the quilt, and then hopefully loops you around. There's an effect that I think happens with visual movement where almost like a pinball machine, I wanna keep bouncing your eye, and holding your attention in my work of art for as long as possible. That arrow is such a strong visual that it's been a little bit challenging to figure out which piece goes here. For example, with the lips, it feels almost like a tic-tac-toe game. Certainly this would be a really strange arrangement with this line of objects in a row. I could do that, I could even do a row of objects along the bottom of the quilt, throw the hand in there, but that feels like a move towards separateness, towards separating the items, and defining like with like, and I'm finding myself more visually drawn towards having things more evenly dispersed throughout the quilt. It's left me now with these two empty spaces, and I'll want to consider what I put in them, and how they react with each other. I also am starting to notice that I might want a little more yellow in the quilt. It's already made an appearance with my yellow skirt, and this yellow shining through on my scrap block, along with the yellow thread in the moon. And I think something louder for the yellow would appeal to me a lot. I have a little bit more of this yellow grid fabric, and I also have this very slinky yellow, and I am having some fun playing with what that would look like, and how that would feel in the quilt or activate things. I am also interested in potentially repeating one of these prints again. All of these florals show up only once, so if I were to have something smaller, maybe using a part of a floral, instead of such a, instead of having the base fabric be a floral, that could be really beautiful and interesting in this location, and something fun to see. If I like the look of this blue floral, this more geometric scalloped print, or potentially even the drapes, if those should show up another time in the quilt. This type of checking in is something that I find to be really important, but it's not a step, like making a block, so it can easily get overlooked. And devoting our day to organizing, rearranging the blocks, seeing what works and what doesn't work is a way that I think is really important of unpacking the quilt, and sharing with you my artistic process in figuring out the aesthetic of the quilt as a whole, rather than each block one by one by one.

Day 26 / Block 19 - Say 'I love you' with food

- Food is one of the greatest pathways to the heart. I love the movie "Julie & Julia," and always think of Julia Child loving the fish in the beginning and thinking about how good she is at eating. And my mother and aunt are incredible cooks, and that's one of the greatest ways that they show their love and care. Block 19 is a prompt to make food. Think about the kind of food that your loved one

would really enjoy eating. Is there something that you cook for them? Something they always order when they go out to eat, something that they are great at cooking or simply something that celebrates the act of eating itself. That's what I'm gonna do. I'd like to make a bowl and then embroider a knife, a fork and a spoon. I'm gonna use a reverse applique technique to make my bowl, because it's a little bit fancy. I know folks are often curious about how to do reverse applique, and it'll be a special way for me to incorporate a beautiful print, because I know I want another punch of that blue fabric print in my composition from having just looked at the layout. I'm aiming for another slightly quirky layout like the chair, so that things aren't 100% accurate. I can begin, just to make sure I don't go too big and nip into the seam allowance, I'm gonna use my air erase marker to define the area that I'm definitely cutting out where the bowl will be. (marker scribbling) I want it to be big enough though that I am showing off my print, because that is the reason why I'm making a bowl, apart from the sort of infinite amount of foods that could be inside of a bowl. Now I'm going to cut out about a quarter of an inch rather than a half an inch inside of this shape. I'm folding the fabric so that I can snip it. And then cutting around here. (scissor snipping) A bowl is a really good shape for demonstrating reverse applique because I have this nice curve as well as some right angles. I'm going to cut right up to the edge in my corners. This is exactly what I did when I was doing the applique for my hand. And now the same way that I did for the web in the hand, I'm going to snip along that curved edge of the bowl so that it can stretch and open up into a nice curve. You could use an iron for this, but I think that finger pressing is going to be more than adequate. And you can see here that I'm folding right on the line that I drew. Reverse applique is something that you can always make your hole larger and you can never go back and make it smaller. Now with this little window, I can audition these three fabrics to see which one I like the best for my bowl. Oh, that one's actually even cuter than I thought it would be. I like that. And now this one looks a little bit softer than I thought it would be. This the one I thought that I would go with. Let's see if it can keep up with the polka dot. Yeah, that's the one I like. And I think part of what I like about it more than these other two prints is that it's a more complex print. You don't see the repeat within it, and it has a little bit of a feeling of painted china. So here I can move it around again. That fussy cutting technique of choosing exactly the right place to have my print shine through. And this contrast of leaves and flower seems really pretty to me. I'm going to match the warp and the weft of the fabric. I don't have to, but it always looks a little more uniform to me. It also, from a practical point of view, it's gonna be less stretchy and it will stay a little flatter. So I'm using long pins where it's long, but I think I'll use my smaller applique pins to hold it down when I get to the base of my curve. A very important thing is just checking that it lays flat. And I frequently prefer to sew it first and then trim away the excess of the fabric in my applique rather than trying to cut it perfectly first and then pin it. This feels more relaxed. I'm gonna use up some of these blue threads that I had going earlier in other blocks. And you can start anywhere. I wouldn't start exactly in a corner 'cause that's the place where I'll want to make a whip stitch. I'll start just in front of that. Any stitch will work. I think I'll do a combination of running stitch and whip stitch. It's a different choice from when I made that precise hand applique. There I used the ladder stitch, so it's nice to not be too matchy. Here's my whip stitch going around the corner. Suddenly making that whip stitch gave me a little flash of Chip from "Beauty and the Beast." That little wink of a teacup. If I were to choose a food for some of the other people in my life, I think I would choose, certainly if my mother was making a quilt for me, she would choose a scone. In the '80s, her scone recipe was in the newspaper, and it's one of the most delicious scones I've ever had. I've learned how to make it from her. And whenever I visit her in Florida, she likes to make scones for me 'cause it's one of my favorites. My brother is awesome at

making steak, so I might choose a big tomahawk steak for him. My nephew and I both love crab legs, so if I were doing a quilt for him, he's six years old now, I would put a crab on the quilt. Bo likes everything that I cook. One of my favorite things about him is when I ask him what he'd like for dinner, if he's gonna be coming over, he just says anything, anything you cook would be wonderful. And then he always eats it and always likes it. One time for his birthday though, he requested my meatloaf. I don't know how attractive meatloaf would look as applique though. I have a deep connection, I think, also with pottery and bowls, and maybe that's part of why this feels like the right choice for me. My very first creative love was ceramics. And I still, all of the bowls in my home that I eat out of are things that I turned on the pottery wheel myself. My grandmother, Mimi, who made my baby quilt for me, who organized that, she lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico for about a decade. And I would visit her when I was in elementary school. And we would make pottery in the garage and paint ceramic tiles. And it was a very formative experience for me. I'm sure that's why I decided to take ceramics classes when I was in high school. And I wanna see if this block looks complete as is or if I want to continue adding to it. I think that in the quilt that's over my shoulder, I have a series of bowls, applique bowls, and then I added a knife and a fork, and a spoon to them. And that little teeny-tiny embroidery on that quilt is one of the most complimented moments. And I love that power in a quilt where something little can capture the imagination and draw someone in and say, that little itsy bitsy part is my favorite. And I think that this might be a nice opportunity to repeat that. Sometimes I just don't know until I'm done with the first step to choose the next step. That's a really helpful mentality that I have in general, is when I'm making a quilt, I don't try to play the whole chess game in my head. I like to just choose the next right thing. And then after that, I can look and see what feels right. So I'm kind of hoping that it will feel right to embroider a knife, a fork and a spoon. Oh, I really like that. Something about the reverse applique, it feels so anchored into the fabric rather than sitting on top of it. It's very satisfying technique. Truly makes a difference if it's reverse applique or applique on top. I'm going to cut away the extra fabric now. It's very important not to cut through the base fabric when you're doing this. I find that if everything's laying flat and not crumpled, it's pretty easy to avoid. If you did accidentally cut through the base fabric, would be a good opportunity to do some mending. Oh, that looks so cute. And then I think adding to the awkwardness, you know, normally the knife and fork would be at the sides here, but putting them above off to the corner, I think, will be a little more charming and will fit in with the way that my chair looks. I've threaded a needle with this gold thread, and I love that if I'm planning to use this bright yellow fabric, it'll create a good visual bounce between the two since it's a little bit of a new color that I'm adding into the quilt, since I paused yesterday and looked at everything. Tiny embroidery like this can be amazing how fast it goes. I'm gonna use the back stitch, and I'm making the handle of my fork. This kind of thing is also really nice to do freehand without needing to make a drawing on the quilt. I'm making the middle tine of the fork. And then I'll swoop around with a letter U-shape to create the other tines. Now with that U-shape complete, I'm gonna make a knife. Again, I'll do the back stitch first to create the length of the knife. And now just send my needle up to create the nice spreading your butter, cutting your meat part of the knife. Still with the back stitch. Maybe I'll do a little seed stitch in there. I definitely don't want it to look like a spoon. And to have my spoon look really spoon-like, I think I'll start with the oval. And this could be a good occasion to use some satin stitch to fill that in. The satin stitch is what I used on the leg of my chair. Okay, and then the bottom, the handle of my spoon, especially in the context of this being a love letter to myself. It's maybe connecting to the block around skills. I feel very proud of my skills in the kitchen by not showing one particular kind of food. It's maybe hinting more at the ability to cook and make

food in general. Looking at this, both of these feel a little too short. I'm gonna go over here and add another stitch to lengthen my knife, and another stitch to lengthen my fork. That looks great. Yeah, that has the really charming quality that I wanted. And also, creates some wonderful visual rhythm and adds a lot to my composition with the floral and the gold. And also, one of those nice little moments that will delight the eye of my viewer if they take the time to look closely.

Day 27 / Block 20 - A wish

- A truly important thing about loving someone is sharing their dreams, wishing the best for them and encouraging them with their goals. Our last block on this quilt is to make a wish, a wish for their best interest. It's something that we do every year around birthdays, at least in my family, where we sing happy birthday and then say, make a wish, and we all hope that it will come true and that kind of magic is a really special part of loving. I have done some other work with making wishes in my quilts and my pattern, the scavenger hunt quilt, is one that has a manifestation block. It's an opportunity for me to identify my goals to think about what I wish for and I'd like to show two examples of that and then I will start on making my wish for my block. When I made the second version of this scavenger hunt quilt that you see here, it was March, 2020 and I had a lot of concerns about health. I wanted to remind myself how physically healthy I was. Apart from concerns about the pandemic, I was struggling a lot with my hormonal health and trying to find the right medications and patterns of life to feel well, at certain times I was almost so frustrated with my health that I made too many habits for myself and I was trying so hard to be healthy that that was also contributing to a lack of health. When I thought about this quilt, I wanted to think about what I did want, what I did want to manifest so I didn't want to mention poor health or being sick. I wanted to stay very focused on healthfulness. Thinking about this prompt reminded me of how generally healthy I truly was, how many things I was able to do with my body and how frequently I felt good, that inspired me to embroider that I am in a state of vibrant good health. The version of the quilt that I made before this was at the end of October in 2019, and I had just come back from India. I was traveling to teach in Colorado, and I was thinking very much about how I wanted a partner to share life with and I had already depicted this large piece of applique as tracing the side of my body onto the quilt and I thought, what if I could give myself an arm and then someone to hold hands with and that would hopefully manifest for me a partnership someone to hold hands with. I embroidered this and then a week later I went on my very first date with Bo. I would like to recreate this image of holding hands with the yellow fabric for my wish on this particular quilt and it for me would be a wish to continue to have a lot of love and connection in my life. I'm going to just look at these side by side to picture if I want it to be the same scale or if I want to maybe shrink it down so I can see more of the arms, I think that would look really strongly like a letter V. And to me, seeing this moment where potentially a thumb is overlapping and some fingers are intertwined is the part of this embroidery that I like the most. So I'm gonna focus on that and I want it to be a little louder. I think a lot of people don't see this part of the quilt until I point it out or zoom in, and I'm gonna be bold and use a darker thread color to depict this wish. Maybe make it a little stronger, bigger wish. I'm going to use running stitch embroidery here without a hoop because I want to work from the corners and the hoop won't be the right shape for that. I also find that doing the running stitch in this way is much faster than with an embroidery hoop and going in and forming the diagonal of the wrist, making its way into the center. I think this also gets into my love language that the idea of holding hands is such a great way of for me, feeling loved. Similar to the blocks that I've made already with a bow and arrow and my dog bone, knowing what to shoot for is so important and

having a wish come true in manifesting something when I don't know what I want. It could be really frustrating moment in life in general of not having something to shoot for and I am not walking around with my senses perked up, observing, looking for the thing that I want. When I have named what I want and I'm really aware of it like a bullseye, I am able to see it more frequently. It's such a great way of feeling like my senses are more attuned, like I'm able to notice opportunities far more, that can be in any part of life, not just the romantic relationship part, now that I'm in here I think I will use a hoop. This will be helpful to keep things taut. I'm noticing it bunching more than I wanted it to, probably because it's a slinky, shiny polyester fabric. A favorite story that I have about manifestation is from Jeff Koons. He's a very famous contemporary artist, and he talks a lot about saying that he wanted to be the most famous artist in the world and to make lots of money as an artist and I think for a lot of us, it can be too big of a dream to say something like that or sound too scary and that's what he shared in some of his lectures and the YouTube videos or online video that I watched about him and he said that he felt really bold saying that but that that was the only way that it would come true for him was if he could articulate having that big of a wish. When I changed careers to become a quilter nine months after having made my first quilt, I thought a lot about Jeff Koons and that quote and that moment of saying, yes, this is what I want. I'm going to be a quilter and it allowed me to manifest that and make it happen. If you're thinking about the wish for someone else this is maybe easy for me because I'm making a self-love quilt and I know what it is that I want but there are a lot of moments where I have conversations with loved ones, thinking about what it is that they want or what their goals are, what they're working towards. If you don't already know what the person that you love wants, could be a great dinnertime conversation or a wonderful phone call with your friend to find out what are their goals, what are they working towards? It's a nice thing to be able to stay in tune with when communicating with loved ones. Here I'm gonna make one last loop around and then I'll make my way back off, so I'll keep on sewing. Another important element with diaries and making wishes and the secrecy around making a wish at your birthday is that sometimes privacy can be really important in making the wish come true. In my quilt, my scavenger hunt quilt, where I initially put this handholding image, I used that light color so that it could be subtle enough that I knew I was naming it for myself but not advertising it real loudly. And I'm very happy again with how this image looks a little bit abstract. So to someone else, it might not be obvious that it's about holding hands but there is, I think energetically just looking at it as an abstract line drawing, an element of converging, swirling around and then going back that hopefully will have an idea of connection to it. It might also look like a wish for a necklace, and that's okay too. I really like wearing necklaces. I made another sample block for this prompt and it centered around the number 108, in the world of yoga, 108 is a very auspicious number. Maybe not unlike the idea of making 1000 paper cranes in Japan. This mathematically works out to being 108 little colonial knots. I love, again, the texture that those make and this is just a very different way of representing a wish that also allows the wisher to keep their privacy, or maybe is saying the same way. If you have a wishbone, here you get to make a wish. Here's 108, you get to use this to make a wish of your choice for the maker, and then you don't have to guess at all about what the wish is. You've just put the energy into having a wish come true. If I were making this quilt from my mother, I would do a four-leaf clover. My great-grandpa, her grandpa was an expert at looking down at a bunch of grass and pulling up a four-leaf clover and my mom can do the same thing and it's such a beautiful ability and really special when she gives four leaf clovers to other people just to say, I hope your wishes come true.

Day 28 - Hand yoga

- Sometimes hand yoga requires a lot of movement, but other times you can do a yoga pose with your hands. This is called a mudra, and it creates a seal or an energetic circuit in your body. It works a lot like acupuncture or acupressure in working on the energy body, rather than just the hands and a physical movement. I'm going to practice a wish-fulfilling mudra called Surabhi mudra. It can be a little bit tangled-feeling at first. Take your time. If for any reason it feels too complicated, too hard at first to form with your hands, you can always take Anjali mudra that we held previously, and you can hold your hands together, fingertips facing forward. If you'd like to go for it with me, Surabhi mudra begins by connecting the right index finger with the left middle finger and then connecting the left middle finger with the right. I go down and do the same twist, connecting the other two fingers. And you can see if it feels a lot better one direction with your fingers or the other direction. This might be another one of those genetic things, just like clasping your hands. The point is to mix those first two fingers, middle and index, together, and then mix the other two fingers, pinky and ring. Now that they're connected, I want my thumbs facing up. And at some point I might start to feel my pulse between my fingers. That's a nice sign that that energy circuit is taking place. From here, it becomes a meditation. I want to visualize deeply the thing that I want, the wish that I'm hoping to fulfill. It could be a wish for wellness. It could also be something much more specific. In my yoga training as a yoga therapist, I learned a lot about making a sankalpa. A sankalpa is a sincere, true goal that you don't take lightly, that you make sure you want to return to again and again and again, and that is a wonderful thing to solidify with this wish-fulfilling mudra. It might be something like a wish to be more compassionate. When I began to teach as a quilter, I remember in the morning and the evening, I would find that liminal space between dreaming and waking. And while laying in bed, I would hold this mudra with my fingers, and I would vividly picture and think to myself, "I know someone would love to learn quilting from me. That person exists and I can find them and teach them about quilting." And so it's beautiful to be able to hold this mudra in my hands again and to know that I am teaching quilting. Take your time with this mudra. Be gentle with yourself. If it starts to feel stiff or unpleasant or like you want to release it from your fingers, honor that impulse in your body. You can always return to Anjali mudra and then baby-step your way towards our wish-fulfilling mudra so long as that feels good in your hands. (sighs deeply) You can hold this as long as you want. It can be like a medicine. You can use a timer or just tune into your intuition for a couple of minutes.

Day 29 - Final check-in of the composition

- Today is our final composition check-in and I'm really feeling excited looking at all of my blocks together. This is a 20 block quilt and we've got our five columns and four rows going across. A special part of why we're using rectangular shaped blocks in this pattern is to harken to a piece of paper that you might write a letter on and it's something I dreamed up in my head and now seeing it with a rectangular block instead of square blocks feels super exciting to me. It's a shape that I don't see very often. Normally, a block quilt is with square blocks, so that's a really satisfying thing that I feel like I'm especially noticing now that all of the blocks are filled in. And I am excited to share a little bit with you about the opportunity of making a switch or swapping something out. Sometimes when you see this final composition laid out, you can think, "Oh, that one block "is just not singing the same song as the others." And for me, that happened a while ago in the planning process with my skill. The first skill that I thought about was my skill was sewing. And I thought, oh, I'll make a sampler and show different ways of doing applique and embroidery stitches, and that

was a block I didn't love. It would've looked like this, instead of having my lips and teeth speaking and talking. I love sewing in an improvisational way. So, I organized this sampler improvisationally and maybe I would've liked it more if I'd had an equally spaced row of circles or these different colonial knots and Tailor's knots and French knots if they had been more organized. So, I spent a lot of time on it and I really didn't love it. I wouldn't lay it out next to an identical fabric, but even if it were here, when I take in the full composition, for me, it doesn't resonate as much. Someone else might really love this composition. They might even prefer this block over the lips. And it's one of those very personal things when you decide that you want to swap out a block or remake it and it's up to you as the maker, as the artist, if there's something in this composition, you've got some time today and you could revisit a block if that feels right to you and worth your time to do in a different way. Another swap out that I'd like to share with you is my first impulse around the food block. I love the pastry, a sfogliatella. It's an Italian pastry and I spent a lot of time on this block and this is one that I think I will eventually put in a different quilt. I could use it as applique on a different project, but for me, the way that this bowl and knife and fork and spoon sing with the rest of the composition is more satisfying than seeing this pastry. I think part of why I like the pastry is because a lot of people don't know what it is, and then when they see it on a quilt, it's not very identifiable as food. (laughing) Something else that you might enjoy, if you perhaps struggled with a block or you just wanna delete it, you can come in and use a piece of fabric as a solution for something else. It could be related to a prompt, the way that I used this floral for the plant prompt, but it could also just be that you really want an additional print. So, for example, if I was feeling really eager to add more polka dot fabric, I could add that and swap something out for a solid fabric block just because it was more satisfying to me as the maker and I could throw out whatever prompt I was covering up. Another option is to create a five column, five row quilt. And for that, I can go in with some of the other blocks that I've made and just find something satisfying. There's a lot of playfulness and fun things that you can do if you're adding blocks to a quilt, and you can add a row or a column as you work. And it's fun to know that if a slight variation in size feels best to you, you are welcome to go that way. Maybe you had several moments as you were making the quilt where it felt fun to try different variations and you've got some extra blocks floating around. That kind of swapping things out is well within the scope of the pattern. I want you to feel excited and satisfied with the quilt that you're making, and this composition check-in is an opportunity for you to put a lot of ownership and excitement into the pattern.

Day 30 - Piece together the blocks

- This is a very exciting moment. Today we are going to piece all of these blocks together. I will piece four of them together by hand and then I'll move to the sewing machine and do the rest of the piecing that way. Both ways of piecing are excellent. Do whatever feels right for you. If you don't have a machine, then hand piecing is right. If you are on the go, one time I pieced a block quilt together while I was on the airplane and I did not bring a sewing machine for that. You are also very welcome to just speed through the way that I am and focus on the sewing machine. To begin, I like to piece things together in sections rather than in rows and columns. I will begin with these four, piecing them together. Then I'll move on to the top four. Then another section of four, another section of four and I'll connect these pairs to these to create blocks of six. Then I'll sew the shorter seams together and then have one long seam down the middle of the quilt to sew together. I'm going to try to get the corners close but I'm not gonna be really intense about having the corners match up so long as I do that consistently throughout the whole quilt. It will look right if I am super

careful for part of them and then the other part are a half an inch off. That can look a little bit funny, but if I consistently decide that I'm not gonna be too worried about the intersections, it will be that way throughout and it will become normal to the eye of the viewer. They'll be expecting that. To start, I'm gonna do these bottom two seams. Send them pretty to pretty, and sew these two edges together I have a lot of halfway chosen threads built up at this point and I'm gonna be using these up while I piece things. I've got a nice short length of blue, but I can see that it will be plenty to get all the way across the seam. I'm remembering that I've got my perfect half inch pinky on my side as my seam allowance that I planned and sew along there. If it helps you, especially if you've never pieced a quilt together before you are welcome to use your hera marker and a clear plastic ruler or another marking tool to pin things or create a line for yourself so that you have a straighter seam. I feel really comfortable with eyeballing it so that's why I'm just sewing it without marking and without pinning. I love how fast it is to do this type of running stitch. You'll notice that I'm moving my left hand side to side bringing the fabric perpendicular to the needle to get a nice, big, long running stitch. I'll make sure I'm un gathering that seam and I'll tie my tailors knot. You can see that my line isn't perfectly straight and that does not worry me at all. I'll send this open and when I decide about my seam allowance, if one of the fabrics is a lot stiffer or thicker, for example the linens, then I'll make sure that that fabric is flat. Also, if one of the fabrics is a lot more transparent I will make sure that the seam allowance isn't shining through. If the fabric's really stiff, I don't bother folding it. I do like to press as I go. I've got my iron ready here and I'm gonna fold it over and because this is upholstery fabric this one with the floral is not going to be folded. I'll set that down and you don't have to iron as you go. Certainly I didn't iron as I went as I was piecing blocks on the airplane, but it can be nice. So I'll grab another thread from my stack. Check that it's long enough... Before I sew them together I like to always double check that I'm sewing the correct side of the seam, matching them up really well and again, I'll sew across this way. If there are additional seams within, you just sew right across them. For example, when I get to this hand, I'll just sew right across that intersection. This is a really nice easy one because it doesn't have any seams that I'm going through. If you find that something is real thick and hard to sew through then don't stack as many stitches with your needle. You can even stab stitch through it. Again, I'll tie my tailors knot and it's always so satisfying to end up with a nice clean pack of needles. Now I'll iron this one and I do always tend to iron with the pretty side of my work down and the seam side up. Once in a while an iron will leak or something will go a little bit funny and to me it's a nice sense of security to have the pretty side down. It also allows me to make sure I'm fully getting the seam over to the side and that nothing's flipped or moved around funny. With these two laying down I'm going to place them pretty to pretty and open them up. Coincidentally, I ended up with something that I like to have here. The seams are going opposite directions so here I'm not ending up with a really thick side and a really thin side. It's not a big deal if you do have that situation but this is nice that they're folding to the left on top and to the right on the bottom. It's an easy way to anchor things in. If you wanted to be really precise with your corners that is an ideal way to get them to lock. I'm also just trying to find the middle here because I aimed for six by eight intersections but didn't necessarily get that perfectly on every single piece. So here I wanna find a nice middle ground. Maybe later I'll even trim a little bit of this excess off but also that's something that won't bother anybody if it's in the quilt guts so I can leave it too. Hand piecing blocks is a really relaxing meditative step. It's a nice moment where there aren't a lot of decisions to make. That's one of the things that I love about hand quilting. When I'm hand quilting with straight lines that go across the quilt, I know exactly what I'm supposed to do and I can tune into trusting my hands to do their thing without needing to overthink

or have any decision fatigue. Once more, I'm gonna open up and iron. I do have a habit of generally going with gravity when I'm ironing down a seam that is parallel to the floor, a horizontal seam. So here if it's the same either way for the fabric if I don't have a fabric that's extra transparent or extra thick, I'm going to iron it down with gravity. My friend Kat's mom, Diane, who was always my coach on sewing things, when I first got started quilting she said that the shadows look a little bit nicer on a quilt if the seam is ironed down that way and I haven't had any reason to change my ways in the last 10 years since then. So this is piece, you can see I got a really perfect beautiful intersection here. We'll find out how that continues. As I do things, it gets harder and harder the more blocks you're sewing to each other so I'm not counting on being able to do that. I do think though that the half inch seam allowance gives me more flexibility to be able to nudge things to have the seam matchup. This next intersection I'm going to sew with my machine. I'll bring it a little bit closer to the sewing machine so that I can do that here at the sewing machine I'm gonna be working with a straight stitch and the same as for hand piecing. The most important thing is that I get the right seams together so I'm looking at it matching pretty to pretty and remembering which side it is that I'm gonna sew together. I like to lock my stitches. I know that's another sewing machine controversy so I don't like to just start sewing. I like to do a little back stitch. When I set the sewing down at the machine, I like to match it up with the edge of the presser foot. I'll lock it down and I prefer to lock in the stitch so I'm going to go backwards first and then sew my seam. I find that that's a really helpful way to make sure things don't unravel or get confused. It's a habit that I have, especially because I do a lot of improvisational piecing and I don't want things to get unraveled as I go. I'm gonna begin now going backwards and then forwards. I don't use a lot of pins when I do things like that. I just look once in a while, make sure things are still matched up well, and then keep going. (sewing machine whirring) I will lift up my pressor foot, cut, and now I can open it up. I'll do my next seam. This velvet can be a little bit slippery, but I'm gonna go slow and that should solve any problems that might come up. (sewing machine whirring) When I'm being extra careful with slippery things like this. Sometimes I'll pull one side up so that I can look at it a little bit better as it's going through. That slippery velvet did cause me to lose a little bit of space at the bottom but because I've got my half inch seam allowance I can get a little bit of extra space in here and it's not gonna be something that I need to re sew. Here as I sew the top and bottom together, I'm gonna focus on shooting for a quarter of an inch seam at the top and that will help make up for the lack of fabric at the bottom of the block and balance things out. To help me with that quarter of an inch seam I'm gonna move the needle as far to the right as I can So this is pretty far over and it's great that it's happened at the beginning of the process 'cause it'll set the tone for how I piece other seams and everything will look equally not quite matched up. I'm gonna iron this now and sew more blocks together. I'm on my second to last seam and lots of tricky things have gone really well. The gold fabric didn't cause a problem, even though it's a slinky polyester. And this silk layered on top of my scraps is also going really smoothly but this velvet is fighting me once more. Right here, it's scrunched up and so the fabric is gathered and puckered and also not long enough so what I'm going to do is seam rip it and then sew it by hand, which is much more predictable. To tame this velvet I'm going to use some straight pins as well. When I pin things like this it's helpful to start at the opposite edge and then continue to meet in the middle. So I'm doing the middle pin and then cutting that in half for fourths and because it's been so wild, I might even do eighths. This is so much easier already I have learned the lesson that when I'm piecing velvet, it will always be by hand. My final seam has two big challenges and that's caused me to decide to piece it by hand instead of by machine. Number one is our friend. This velvet. Number two is that my chair is really close to the

seam allowance and I don't want to cut off the top of the chair, so these two blocks next to each other are going to be much more successful. If I sew by hand nice and slow I'll flip this pretty to pretty, pin, and sew by hand. I have a loose thread that came to the front so I'll snip this off. When I quilt things, that's another great opportunity to clean up any loose ends. And wow, it was very easy to do sewing by hand. The velvet was no trouble. This chair is its full self. You'll notice that with these safety pin applique sections, the safety pins are still in place. Those will come off later when I'm hand quilting the quilt.

Day 31 - Thoughts on finishing

- Today is our last day, and I'm excited to talk about finishing quilts. My previous Daily Practice quilt, the Story quilt top, is an excellent example of running stitch quilting. That's what I use most of the time when I'm finishing a quilt. And I use my thumb, which is exactly an inch, to guide myself as I'm doing the quilting here on the quilt top. It'll be important to have somewhat dense quilting if you went for the safety pin applique technique. The dog bone will need to be held down with quilting. If you decide that you don't want to do one-inch stitching, then you would just need to go in and applique with the ladder stitch or the running stitch or the whip stitch. But when quilting, I would want to be mindful that this doesn't flap in the wind. I wanna make sure that my quilting line goes over the edge and holds this down the way that the safety pin is holding it down now. The piece that's fully covered with silk chiffon, I'll want to make sure that on each of these loose blocks of fabric at least one running stitch goes through them. That will help them stay secure and stable as the quilt gets used and moved around. When I decide what direction and how to quilt, I love to use a little bit of thread as a preview. I can see what this red looks like as a quilting thread option just by laying it out and seeing how the color interacts with the surface of the quilt. It also gives me a sense of how horizontal line quilting will interact. That is the easiest way to quilt, and it's a nice go-to, especially if there's a lot of wonderful, complex stuff going on on the quilt surface. When I arrive, as well, at things that have red in them, it's important to see how that will interact and to find out if they can coexist. It's also fun to see if something like a curve would look good with the thread, and if so, what direction of curve. I find that we're used to seeing graphs, and the upward diagonal means happiness, and the downward diagonal means despair. So that kind of subliminal message that people can get is also important. And it would be rare that I would quilt with a downward angle like this. Even something like a spiral can be a fun way to do your quilting. So work with your skill, see what feels fun and exciting and works visually with the composition. The next steps after quilting are binding, labels and quilts sleeves. I have a wonderful class here on Creativebug for my needle case. And this is made in the exact same way that I bind the edge of my quilts. If you look here at the edge, you can see my running stitch going around, and I've used the backing fabric as the binding. This is a wonderful class, both to make a tool, practice your skills mitering your corners, and then to feel ready for binding the quilt. I also find that it's important to not stop at binding. There are too many quilts out there with unknown makers. I have a class on a handwritten embroidered label. And here you can see that I've used applique to add my name to the back of this quilt. You're welcome to use the quilt functionally on your bed, on a chair, but another option is to hang the quilt on the wall. If you're interested in doing that, a quilt sleeve is a great way to go. Another option for finishing a quilt is a tied quilt. That's what my grandmother did in my baby quilt. When piecing this quilt together, my grandma used a technique called sashing by adding these strips in between each block. Then she used yarn and tied on both sides from the front to the back. This is done with a knot that's very similar to a shoelace knot. If I were to tie my Love Letter quilt, I

might do ties just at the intersections, like my grandmother did, but I also have experience with tied quilts where I cover them with lots and lots of ties. You can use pearl cotton or yarn or any other joining device, like a button can be really adorable. If you're looking for more suggestions about the supplies that I love to use, like binding clips and batting, you can find those linked in the class materials page. Thank you for spending the month with me making your own Love Letter quilt. I appreciate you committing your time and talents to the quilt and sharing about it here on Creativebug and on Instagram with our #LoveLetterQAL. There are so many fun jumping-off points with this pattern. It makes me want to make a dozen more quilts. Some of the ideas that I've gotten excited about are making a really big quilt and adding lots and lots of blocks with more aspects of love and revisiting different parts of the prompt. I can see myself also making a quilt just about houses and furniture. And thinking about chairs, but also what about their bed? What about their kitchen? Another idea that sparks my creativity is the location prompt. I enjoyed making the silhouette of Lake Michigan, and I wonder if I could do landmarks that are special in my neighborhood, or revisit different places that I'd love to travel to. Especially if you or your loved one have lived in a lot of different places, there might be a lot more landmarks that spark your creativity. Quilts have an incredible history of expressing love. The love and care that I have felt over the years from my grandmother's quilt is immeasurable. Feeling the support of family and friends beyond my nuclear family was so pivotal for me in my childhood. The traditions around making quilts for babies and weddings and other markers of growth, like the moment when I made a quilt when I moved out of my mom's house, and how that was an important rite of passage for me. I think there's a longing for that in our culture right now, and being able to seal an intention and mark a new chapter in life and ground it in love is a very special thing to be able to do with a quilt.