
Three-Part Harmony Quilt with Anna Maria Horner

Chapter 1 - Three-Part Harmony Quilt

Introduction

Overview

(cheerful upbeat music) - Hi, I'm Anna Maria Horner. I am an artist, an author, and I design quilting patterns, fabric collections, and needleworks projects. I love patchwork so much, and I also love color, and very frequently I am designing quilts and patchwork projects to really emphasize my love of color, and playing one color category against another. Three-Part Harmony is a wonderful opportunity to play with your fabrics in a completely different way than maybe you ever have. You can ignore color here ^and just categorize them by light, dark, and medium tones ^and create a gorgeous, harmonious design. ^I'm gonna show you how to go through your fabric stash and recognize fabrics for what tone they are, whether light, medium, or dark. I'm gonna show you this simple patchwork process that just combines squares and also half-square triangles. Each of the blocks for this quilt is almost a quilt unto itself, and the real composition comes through putting together all the pieces in a beautiful design. (cheerful upbeat music) (birds chirping)

Materials

Materials

- You'll want to pull some of your favorite fabrics from your stash, and we're going to be working in a light, medium, and dark category here for this quilt. But I'm also going to show you how to divide those. For the the 48 by 48 inch quilt that we're making today, that's either a baby or lap-size quilt, we'll need a total of three and a half yards, but you can refer to your PDF for the specific amount that you'll need in each of the light, medium, and dark categories, depending on which positions you use for those shades. Also, be sure and have that PDF with your color maps on hand. Basic patchwork supplies like your rotary cutter and mat, a clear quilting ruler, a pencil, some thread snips, your machine, and also an iron and ironing board. And straight pins.

Creating Blocks

Selecting fabrics

- Let's look at the fabrics that I've pulled for my Three-Part Harmony and talk a little bit about why I've chosen to put lights and mediums and darks where they are. It's pretty obvious I think for the light category. It's easy to see when you look at most prints whether or not it's gonna be a light fabric. You can see here though, that there are a variety of colors. There's pinks, there's even some pale browns, there's grays, and you can certainly decide to include some solids in this quilt or some almost solids or tonals. I do have a lot of prints and even though these prints have some dark pops on them I think for the most part, when they're cut up into the small shapes that those dark pops are not gonna exist in whole forms so the general feeling is that they're gonna be light. And that's a

good thing to keep in mind and kind of why this quilt works in terms of letting those three categories show up well is because it is cut into small shapes. Our shapes are only three and a half inch squares to be finished whether they're a full square or a half square triangle. So that's pretty small. And it creates that beautiful, sort of soft, water color-y effect. For the most part, the darks are also easy to recognize as a dark fabric, kind of like the lights. Obviously, there are a lot of them where it's only the background that's dark. Here the background is dark, but the little brighter bits are smaller. And so sometimes it is gonna depend on where they're cut. For instance, if the square is cut mostly in this dark area, it's gonna look really different compared to it being cut from here. All of this could actually be considered a medium tone. So keep that in mind when you're cutting and it's also gonna be a scenario where you might end up cutting a little bit more than you end up using, so go ahead and cut maybe some extra squares. Because the way that they look relative to one another is gonna be pretty important. The medium tone category is one that I think is a little bit trickier to determine and call a medium fabric a medium fabric. I think it also has more of a variety of colors in the medium tone category. A lot of dark fabrics tend to be black, or navy, or blues, or purples. And a lot of the light fabrics tend to be more yellows and pinks because those are more traditionally soft type fabric palettes to choose from. In the medium tone, you can see, we've got a big variety from deep yellow to purple, to green. And I like to look at a fabric and try and decide, well, this has light, this has dark, while the whole thing might not be medium, if you were to blend this together, it would become medium, because it has both light and dark. This one for me is a pretty obvious medium tone. But it's all a matter of relatively. For instance, I've decided that this is a dark fabric. However, it's really just about the same tone as this. So when you combine lights and darks and mediums and darks for half square triangles, or when you lay one square next to the other, you'll want to look at whether or not there's a nice contrast between the two. So even though we are saying that this is the light, medium, and dark category, pay careful attention once you've cut your squares and created your half square triangles to make sure that they're providing that graphic interest one next to the other. Before you begin any cutting, you'll also need to decide which variation of this quilt you're gonna do. I provided a map of two different scenarios. One where all of the lights are mostly in the background and these little shapes are created by darks, and another where it's a dark background. That decision is an important one because it will change how much you cut from each of those three categories. The background actually takes way more fabric than the other two categories, so be sure and look at your PDF, look at the requirements for each of them and pull your fabrics.

Cutting fabric into squares

- I've decided to do a dark background version, and the dark background one means that I'm gonna be using more dark fabrics than either the light or the medium fabrics. But again, just pay attention to your PDF and the cutting directions that it gives you. Each of the blocks that you make is gonna require 64 finished little squares, whether it's a half-square triangle or just a full cut square. And that's a lot of squares, so it's almost like composing a whole quilt in one block. Each of those blocks will have a total requirement of squares and cutting to do, and then you'll multiply that by however many blocks you're gonna make. We're gonna make one block together and I'm gonna show you how I layer up my fabrics to cut them all together and save a little bit of time by first cutting strips and then squares. So, to begin with, I'm gonna cut six solid dark squares, but I wanna do it from a variety of fabrics. I'm just gonna choose four. If you have a nice big, sharp blade on your rotary cutter, you could probably cut more than four layers at once, but I like to just really never do more

than four to make sure that I'm cutting nice and clean all the way through. Now, keep in mind that this is, by nature, a scrap-busting quilt, so maybe your pieces are all different sizes. In fact, your PDF is gonna show you how many squares you can expect to get out of different sizes and scraps of fabric, which I think is really helpful. If they're all different sizes of fabric that you're layering up together, I tend to put the biggest one on the bottom and then the smaller ones up towards the top so that I can keep my eyes on what I'm cutting to make sure that I'm cutting whole squares all the way down. So I'm laying my fabric out now, one on top of the other, and I am keeping two edges pretty close together over here on all of them because I'm gonna start on this left, bottom side here and clean up the edges before I cut a strip. To cut whole dark squares, we need to cut them 3 1/2 inches square. So what I'm gonna do first is cut a 3 1/2 inch wide strip and the length of that strip is gonna be as long as you wanna go with these four fabrics that you've chosen or as long as your fabric will allow, because I think it's nice in this kind of project to have a little extra. I'm gonna cut 3 1/2 inch wide strips, and while I could use this more narrow ruler and the markings on my mat to do that, I'm, instead, gonna switch to this larger ruler 'cause I like the way it feels to have the strips secured underneath the ruler. The first cut I'm going to make is just gonna clean up this edge. And while I'm at it, I think I'll go ahead and clean up the lower edge. You can see why I've made sure all the fabric layers have come close to these two edges here. Okay, I'm just gonna lay that over. So now I'm gonna find a 3 1/2 inch mark from this edge, which is right here, and lay that in line with my left fabric edge and just cut. I'm not gonna go all the way through because one of my pieces extends way beyond the mat here. I'm just gonna leave it, and I'm gonna turn this back to only expose my 3 1/2 inch strip. So now, what I'm gonna do is measure off this bottom edge 3 1/2 inches and keep cutting until I can't any more, and that is gonna build some squares for me. I'm gonna keep cutting now. I only need 12 for this one block, but I'm actually gonna do four blocks for this quilt so I'm gonna need 48 solid dark squares and for variety's sake and because I need more, I can keep cutting those. But I also wanna show you how I cut the 4 1/2 inch squares. We need a bigger-sized square to create the half-square triangles. We start with 4 1/2 that get sewn together and then trimmed down to 3 1/2 to match the solid squares. We need, for this one block, 32 light and dark square half-square triangles, and to create 32 half-square triangles, you actually only need 16 pairs because each pair is gonna create 2, but for variety's sake, again, and for the total amount that you're gonna need for your quilt, go ahead and feel free to cut as much as you want. But I'm gonna start pulling light and dark together and cut those now. Again, keeping the bigger pieces on the bottom, let's choose two darks and then I'll choose two lights. I just have this little strip here, but that's totally fine. I'll be able to get, I think, a 4 1/2 inch strip out of there. Don't forget these are 4 1/2 inches to create the half-square triangles. These are perfect. I've been wondering what I could do with these skinny strips. I wanna be pretty tight up against these and I'm gonna put my ruler right up against that edge, just barely, to get a nice, clean edge but make sure I use as much of this strip as I can. Just gonna set that aside for now. Gonna clean up this bottom edge as well. Now I'm gonna cut a nice, long 4 1/2 inch strip as far as I can go with these fabrics. Okay, and just like the 3 1/2 inch ones, we're now gonna measure off this bottom edge 4 1/2 inches. If it makes more sense to you to always only be layering up light and always only be layering dark, that's fine. I'm just anxious to get going on this block so I went ahead and started cutting light and dark together since I'll be making pairs out of those. As I go along in my quilting, and you might want to do this, too, particularly with this project that has so many small pieces in three categories of color, I make sure to keep stacks going in order so that I have all of my light whole squares together, my dark whole squares together, and then the bigger squares that are gonna become half-square triangles, I go

ahead and break those down into categories of light, medium, and dark, as well, and you might even wanna pin a post-it note or something on each one of your categories so in case you have to stop your project and come back to it later, you'll know where to pick up and begin again. So keep cutting until you have enough squares for the particular size quilt you're gonna make and maybe a little bit extra for as much variety as you wanna pull from.

Assemble half square triangles

- I wanna show you how to put together the really simple thing called, a half square triangle. I've got a light and dark square here and these are the four and a half inch squares, they're bigger because they're gonna get smaller once we sew and trim them out. Just place the two squares right sides together, make sure all the edges and corners are lined and then you're just gonna use a ruler to draw a nice, straight line from one corner to another with the pencil. Doesn't have to be dark, just light enough or dark enough for you to be able to see it. I'm choosing to draw on the lighter fabric because it makes my pencil line easier to see. What we're gonna do next is sew on either side of this line, if you would need to use a pin here, that's fine but this is a pretty small piece and I feel comfortable sewing it like this. Just use your simple straight stitch, lining up the line with your quarter inch mark on your foot, or your special quarter inch foot if you've got one. You don't really have to back stitch at the beginning or the end of the seam, whatever color thread you have in the machine for this multi-color patchwork is totally fine. Come back down the other side now, starting where you did the first seam, just to the other side of the line, over here on the left. Now lay the ruler right against that pencil line and carefully cut. So now we have two, somewhat identical, only different because of where the print falls, but identical, half square triangles and again, even though 16 pairs of light and dark fabrics or medium and dark, however the pairs of half squares come together, 16 of those pairs is gonna create 32 total half square triangles. It's only gonna create 16 varieties, so if you wanna have a greater variety of half square triangles, go ahead and make a couple of extra or switch from one block to the next, your total variety of fabrics. We're just gonna press them now, before we trim. Lots of people press towards darker fabrics, I actually really don't pay too much attention to it on half square triangles, because the way the final patchwork comes together, I don't find that the seam allowances get in the way. These half square triangles need to be trimmed down to three and a half inches square, so that they'll match with our solid squares and patchwork together. I'm going to use this grid ruler because it has this 45 degree line on here that can match the angle on my half square triangle and when I trim out the corners of these, it's important to get it to the right size, but it's also important to keep that angle seam right into the corners of our new, three and a half inch square. Now that I've got that nice and clean, I'm gonna pay attention to the measurement as well as that angle, so I'm placing the angle here and then I wanna be sure that I've got these outer markings at three and a half inches, so I'm sliding down, you can see that we've trimmed off quite a bit to get it down to three and a half inches. The reason that extra is built in, is because everyone's seam allowances tend to vary in terms of how far away they are from that drawn line, so some extra is built in, you probably could cut those beginning squares that end up as half square triangles, like closer to four and a quarter inches if you prefer that. So go ahead and get your cutting finished, your half square triangles prepared and trimmed and then we'll build a beautiful block.

Assembling Quilt Top Block

Arrange into block design

- Now comes time to experience a little bit of joy from the fruits of our labor, all that trimming and cutting and half-square triangling is coming together into a pretty block, and I'm gonna continually refer to my block map because even though I wrote this pattern and I have sewn this a few times myself, I need it to make sure that I've got everything turned the right way and to make sure I've got my color, or rather my shade order, in line. So starting in the center is gonna be four half-square triangles that are the medium and light combo. This is the part that I love. Let's see, and right above that little foursome is half-square triangles combined with light and dark, so I'm gonna come over here to my big stack of those. I'm gonna just start by pulling out two and just laying it out the first time is only the beginning of the process. This is just marking the positions of where everything goes. And two more light dark combos right below the center. Once we have our positions held and we're sure that we've got everything arranged just right you can start switching back and forth and balancing color. You might find that by no intention you have a lot of purple hanging out on one side of your block, so you can just keep an eye on balance of color and shade and disperse those. And then over off to the left and the right of that center square we also have more pairs of these lights and darks. This one actually when I look at it it doesn't seem like a huge contrast between the two but I'm gonna leave it in place for now but I might end up deciding that I want a different one. If it helps you out on this map over here to put a little highlighted dot onto the positions you've already placed with your block, then do that because that will maybe make it a little bit easier when you go back to the map to see where you're supposed to pick up and start again. But it's really fun as the sort of dynamic design starts making itself apparent as you go. Let's see, all these little corner fill-ins are also gonna have. That's the exact same fabric there actually, so I don't want to place that there. I'm gonna move that over here, I believe. Yeah, that looks right. You could also be doing this on your design wall. That way, you could leave everything in place if you're lucky enough to have a house that doesn't turn your design wall on its head while you're out of the room. Just continue placing the appropriate half-square triangles and full squares by following your map. Get everything into the correct position before you decide just specifically how you want everything to lay out. Alright, now that is just half the fun. I have replicated the map using all of my blocks and half square triangles, and a great way to get perspective, obviously, is to have this up on a wall and be able to stand back and see if that light dark game is happening, if that three part harmony is sounding beautiful to your eyes, but also, if you don't have that wall available to you, you can take a quick snap of the picture with your phone and see it on a smaller scale. That'll really help you see whether or not the light dark thing is happening for you. I'm finding as I look at this that these darks over here aren't feeling quite dark enough for me, and in fact it's feeling really green over here, so I think I might replace this with something a little different. Or maybe it's more a matter of switching positions because these are similar prints and different color ways. And I just want a little bit more punctuation over here with my darks, which is why it's great to have a reserve of extra squares on hand for you to audition different pieces in different places. Also I've got a doubling up here of the same print, which is really okay because it will serve an overall, but variety is really fun for me in this kind of scrappy quilt, so I'm gonna trade it out. So continue to have a good look at each individual block because all of them are gonna create such an impact once they're put together and change around whatever you're not feeling great about and then we can move on to sewing.

Chain piecing to assemble block

- To assemble your Three-Part Harmony block, you can use whatever your favorite assembly

technique is. I think that I'm gonna chain piece this whole far left and then second column left, column together, two at a time, all the way down, replace them, and then keep doing that across, before I go on to assemble my rows. We're gonna sew these edges together, right sides together, and using 1/4 inch seam allowance. I'm not gonna cut here, I'm just gonna continue piecing pairs together all in one long chain. So you can just carry this chain right back into place, and of course I always wanna be sure that I have sewn correct sides together, so it doesn't hurt, either to pull your mat back out, and also refer to maybe just the other side of the block to make sure it's a mirror image. So I've got this one column complete here. I'm just gonna leave that in place. I think I've got that all right, hurrah! I wanna point out something to you if you've never done half square triangles. This is gonna create a continuous angle like this, and it might seem like it's been jagged by that seam, but actually, this angle dying right into this one, about 1/4 inch away from this top edge, is exactly what you want, it's not wrong. In fact, another seam is gonna come across here and fall right onto that line 1/4 inch away from those raw edges. So now I'm going to continue matching up my pairs and sewing them in one long chain on the next column. If you're chain piecing, you can continue to create your pairs and columns, and then sew those columns to each other until you have rows. Once you have your rows complete, you'll wanna be sure and press their seam allowances to one direction or another, and I actually alternate the direction from one row down to the next, that I press the seam allowances. The top row we'll press all to the left, the next row we'll press all to the right, and so on, all the way down, to disperse that seam allowance bulk as you sew them together. If it helps you to align your seam intersections by using pins, go ahead and do that. Once you've sewn all your rows together and you have a complete block, you can give it a nice final pressing, and depending on how big your quilt is, continue making however many blocks you need to. I only need four total quilt blocks because I'm gonna be making the smaller lap size or baby size quilt.

Final Block and Variations

Light and dark tone block variations

- There is my new three part harmony. In fact I had already made this quilt in a larger scale and also with a pale background, light tones in the background with darker shapes. Still the same graphic quality but reversed in this new smaller scale quilt where the background is dark tones with lighter shapes. I love both of them. I think that this is a really nice opportunity to play with machine quilting or by sending it out to your favorite machine quilter. I think that the regularity of this small patchwork piecing is a really good opportunity to do something also very regular with your quilting. Because of all of the diversity and colors and shapes, quilting is going to really show up too heavily. You already have a lot of seam work so a basic pattern is really nice. Three part harmony isn't just a great opportunity to use those smaller bits of fabric that you've had in your stash for awhile but it's also a really fun way to change up your process. Not just look at fabrics for what color they contribute to your composition, but also their tones and that beautiful interplay that can happen when you have a really lovely arrangement of light and dark.