Desert Flower

Inspired by *Untamed Abstraction* by Sheila Frampton Cooper

Sample by: Sheila Frampton Cooper
After channeling her artistic muse to painting, jewelry making and architectural photography for many years, Sheila plunged into abstract quilt-making in 2010. Guided by no plan, no sketch and no agenda, but fed by intuition and inspired by nature’s palette, she speeds into journeys of revelation and surprise in her quilt studio. Her live intensity is apparent in the colors, lines and shapes of her improvisational textile works.

Since embarking on her fiber art adventure, Sheila has won awards at major quilt shows, including: IQA World of Beauty in Houston, AQS Show in Paducah and Road to California. Her work has been exhibited in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, England, China and Japan.

Sheila is also a passionate teacher and has shared her process in workshops around the world. She says, "Another wonderful change quilting brought into my life was the opportunity to teach. It is a privilege for me to witness what my students accomplish in 2-5 days! I am honored to hold the space and guide them as they discover the freedom, joy, and for some, the slight discomfort that comes from not knowing the outcome of their creations".

Website: www.zoombaby.com

Online Workshops: www.FiberArtWorkshops.art

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sheilaframptoncooper

Instagram: www.instagram.com/sheilaframptoncooper
Inspiration

Sheila Frampton Cooper’s exhibit “Untamed Abstraction” in the Corner Gallery includes 11 of her vibrant quilts. This exhibit runs until May 10.

“Whether I'm painting, drawing or piecing a studio quilt, moving head first into the unknown fuels my creativity,” Sheila said. “I relish all the surprising discoveries along the way as the journey starts to reveal itself to me.”
I’ve chosen to keep it simple using only two color families. The important thing is to have multiple values for each color you use. Fat quarters will definitely work for this block, and that’s a great way to get multiple values without buying whole yards of fabric. I definitely recommend that you use solid fabric for this block to achieve a similar result.
Instructions

When I was first asked to design a Block of the Month for the National Quilt Museum, I was slightly apprehensive. This is because I do not create patterns when I work. However, I have designed “Desert Flower” in a way that will provide you with a little flexibility.

You will be doing a bit of curved piecing as well. I do not use pins when I sew curves but you may choose to if that’s more comfortable and familiar. And feel free to make small changes as far as how deep you cut your curves etc.

I hope you enjoy making this block as much as I did, and that you will continue exploring improv!

1. Begin by cutting strips of fabric selvage to selvage about 8” wide. If you are using fat quarters, I like to do the stretch test if the selvage is not obvious (Photo 1).

2. Cut two pieces of background fabric approximately 10” long and place them right sides together (if you are using a printed fabric) with the grain of the fabric going in the same direction (Photo 2).

3. Make three cuts through both pieces of fabric. Feel free to adjust the angle of the cuts (Photo 3).
Instructions

4. Separate the two and work on one side at a time (Photo 4).

   **Note:** These are for the two top parts.

5. Make an additional cut for the insert (Photo 5).

6. I’ve chosen to use three slightly different values of orange. You may choose whatever you prefer (Photo 6).
Instructions

7. Cut a 2.5” strip (selvage to selvage) of the fabric you want to insert. Place it on the strip and use your finger nail or marking tool to continue the cut line. This is for visual purposes. You always want extra, at least an inch or so past the edge (Photo 7).

8. Place a 1/8” mark where you will start sewing. You can start from either direction because this is a gentle curve (Photo 8).

9. Flip the fabric that will be on top and use the pencil mark to line it up. Sew the seam using a ¼” seam allowance. I do not use pins when I sew curves, however you may do so if you choose (Photo 9).
10. Iron the fabric toward the inserted piece (Photo 10).

11. Repeat for each insert. Make sure not to trim! It won’t go back together perfectly aligned, and you might have to re-cut when you sew these four parts together. Please resist the urge to clean it up because you want the extra flexibility when it comes to placement of the parts (Photo 11).

12. When you are ironing the parts together, make sure you are not ironing the point towards itself. You want to keep that laying flat (Photo 12).
Instructions

13. In my case, I’m ironing the dark towards the light and there will be a shadow. Whenever I need to do this, I trim off 1/8” of the dark fabric from the seam allowance only. This will prevent a shadow of the darker fabric showing through (Photo 13).

14. When you connect the parts, start sewing from the side indicated in the photo (Photo 14).

15. Line up the pencil lines and start sewing from this point (Photo 15).
16. You can see that it is a lot smaller than when I began. This is why it’s better to cut your strips longer than you will need. Your results may vary depending on the angle of your cuts (Photo 16).

17. Optional: Now I’m starting on the other side and I’ve decided to add a bit of line to one of my inserts (Photo 17).

18. Repeat steps 7-16 for the opposite top part from Step 4 (Photo 18).
Instructions

19. This is how it should look. DO NOT TRIM (Photo 19).

20. Repeat Steps 1-3 to create the two bottom parts. Make sure to leave more fabric at the top of the background pieces when making your cuts (Photo 20).

21. Repeat Steps 4-19 to add the insert fabric (Photo 21).
22. All of the top and bottom parts are done now. Put the four parts aside and keep them in order so you don’t become confused when it’s time to connect them to the center part (Photo 22).

Now we’ll start making the center part design.

23. Cut two strips, selvage to selvage, for the center parts. These should be approximately 4.5” wide and 14” long (Photo 23).

24. Place the two strips, right sides together, and cut your shape. You have flexibility here — you may choose a deep or shallow curve (Photo 24).
25. Open the two parts right side up (Photo 25).

26. Place each side over the fabric you want to insert. I’ve chosen a lighter value of this color, but not too light. I do not want a huge contrast between the two. Notice I used a white pencil to draw my cut line and I’m following the angle of my original cut. You can also use your finger nail for this (Photo 26).

27. When sewing curves like this, I put a 1/8” mark on each fabric before I move anything. Notice the placement of the mark. I always put this just before the deepest part of the curve. This is if you choose not to use pins like I do. If using pins, I’d still put at least one mark on each side before moving to pin the pieces together (Photo 27).
Instructions

28. Start sewing from the mark and make sure the concave (the “C”) is on the bottom and the convex (the “D”) is on the top (Photo 28).

29. At this point, check to see if it looks good and that you don’t have any puckers in the seam. If it looks like this, then you are in good shape (Photo 29).

30. Now, it’s time to finish the seam. Flip it over then place your needle down just to right of your previous seam and approximately 1” from where you stopped. Start sewing so you overlap the stitches in the seam allowance (Photo 30).
31. Trim the excess fabric from what you just inserted to each side (Photo 31).

32. I decided to add in a thin orange line using some of my scraps (Photo 32).

33. When inserting, always position the fabric so you have extra. It tends to shrink when you don’t use pins. Of course, if you prefer you can use pins, but it’s always better to leave extra and cut off after (Photo 33).
34. Now you may trim off the excess (Photo 34a & 34b).
Instructions

35. If you choose to insert a thin line, and if you iron that towards itself, you will need to trim off 1/8” of the seam. This is so you don’t sew through 4 layers of fabric when you add on the next part (Photo 35a & 35b).

36. After you insert the final part, make sure to be mindful to trim 1/8” of the darker fabric from the seam allowance, then iron towards the lighter color (Photo 36).
37. Trim everything and place the two parts side by side. Then cut an angle as I’ve done here on the inner, bottom corner of each half (Photo 37).

38. Now add on a thin line to each side. It’s always better to sew on more and trim down to your preferred width. A little 1” strip should be just fine (Photo 38). (Reference step 35 if needed)
39. Add line to each side of the center and trim to desired width (Photo 39a & 39b).

40. Now, add in the final center strip to the left half, along the vertical seam first. Then add a wide strip along the bottom angle, make sure to add on a large enough piece so you can trim to a straight edge and not have any gaps near the bottom (Photo 40).
Instructions

41. Add a large enough strip to the angled seam on the right half, and then trim to a straight edge as shown. Now you can adjust the center strip to the desired width (before sewing the two halves together (Photo 41a & 41b).

42. Now it’s time to add on the top and bottom side parts completed in Step 22 (Photo 42).
43. Fold the center piece right sides together and make the first cut (Photo 43).

44. Open and place the two top parts in position for an assessment. The most important thing is the position of the spikes, and you may need to add a bit more fabric on the top (Photo 44).
45. This provides another opportunity to add even more depth to the block. I’ve chosen a very pale blue because I don’t want a strong contrast. After attaching the light blue to both sides, I sew on to the center piece (Photo 45a & 45b).
46. Next, fold the center part right sides together and cut. Make sure to check that you are folding as close to the center as possible (Photo 46a & 46b).

47. It’s time to do a check before sewing on the two bottom parts. Place the ruler in the center at the 6” mark. This is just to make sure you are in good shape for your final trim when everything is all together (Photo 47).
Instructions

48. Position your parts and attach (Photo 48).

49. Once attached, trim the bottom and the top edges straight (Photo 49a & 49b).
50. Next, fold at the center again to make your side cuts. Depending on your spikes, you may decide to cut each side separately (Photo 50).

51. I’ve chosen to add in a darker blue line before adding the lighter blue to the sides (Photo 51a & 51b).
52. Now it’s time to trim your block to 12 ½” x 12 ½” square (Photo 52 & 53)!

Finished? Fantastic!