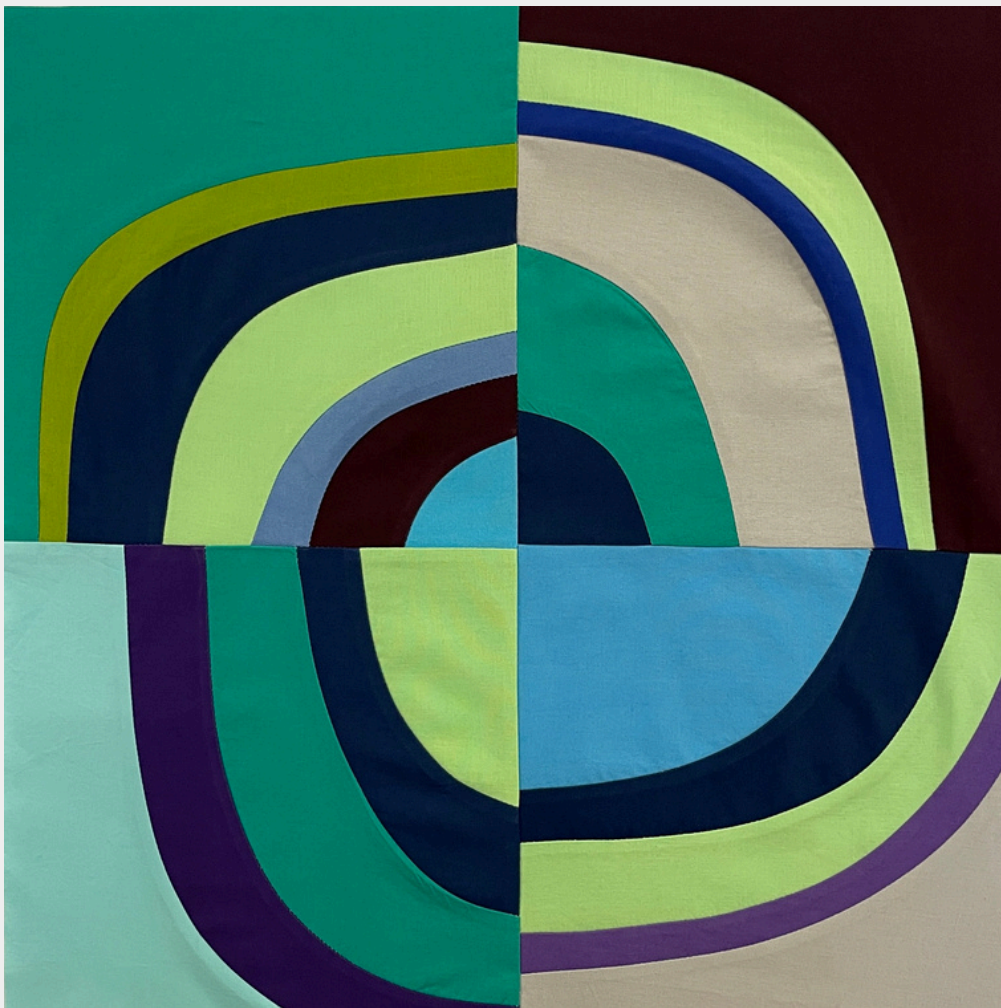


JULY 2024

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**Block of the
Month Club**



Ripple by Maria Shell

Guest Designer



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Instagram: [@mariashellquilts](#)

Website: [Maria Shell](#)

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Maria Shell's work is grounded in the tradition and craft of American quilt making. She strives to take the classical components of a traditional bed quilt and manipulate them with the hope of creating surprising combinations of pattern, repetition, and color for the viewer.

Maria is the recipient of a Sustainable Arts Foundation 2011 Winter Award, a Rasmuson Foundation Project Award and two Rasmuson Fellowships (2009, 2013, 2017). She has had several solo and small group shows including fiber at the Fitton Center for Creative Arts in Hamilton, Ohio; *Right Lines & Circles* at the Ormond Beach Memorial Art Museum and Gardens in Ormond Beach, Florida; *Line + Shape* at the Hello Stitch Studio in Berkeley, California; and *The Pieced Canvas* at the Visions Art Museum in San Diego, California.

Her most recent solo exhibitions were *Off the Grid* which was on view at the Shelburne Art Museum in Shelburne, Vermont from May–October 2022 and *On the Grid—Structure as Visual Aesthetic* at the Pacific Northwest Quilt and Textiles Museum in LaConner, Washington March 1–May 28, 2023. Her first book *Improv Patchwork—Dynamic Quilts Made with Line & Shape* was published in 2017.

Ripple by Maria Shell



Echoes

When I think of an echo, I am reminded of the visual version of that word—especially the “echo” or ripple that rain or stone can make on the surface of a smooth water surface. This thought led me to examine many examples of what water rippling/echoing out might look like, and how I might piece that idea. Simple improv quarter circles felt like the best approach to creating this visual. My quilt block is composed of four quarter circles sewn together to form a very improvisational circle. I hope you enjoy exploring this block with me.

Many improv quilters approach the quarter circle unit by doing a version of cut, swap, and stitch. This results in a quarter circle that varies in colors but not in the actual cut seams. My method involves cutting and piecing each curve individually. I like this approach because each and every curve and quarter circle is unique.

Materials

- Select an assortment of quilters cotton fabrics—approximately ten colors. I selected a variety of cool colors which remind me of Alaskan rivers and lakes—purple, blue, teal, and green along with a few greys to keep it interesting. I prefer solid colored fabrics because of the enhanced graphic quality they create, but small geometrics such as stripes, polka dots, and plaids can also work really well. Wash, dry, and iron all fabric—doing this removes the sizing and makes curved improvisational piecing easier.
- Basic quilting materials including a 1/4” presser foot without a flange, a 60MM Rotary cutter, cutting mat, snips, neutral stitching thread, sewing machine, and straight pins.
- Everything I do is “ISH.” I am a big fan of just working with what you have and seeing what happens. So, while I am recommending the above supplies, I also totally support a more improvisational approach to making this block. Let’s just do it!

NOTES - A few helpful tips if you have never cut improvisational quarter circles before.

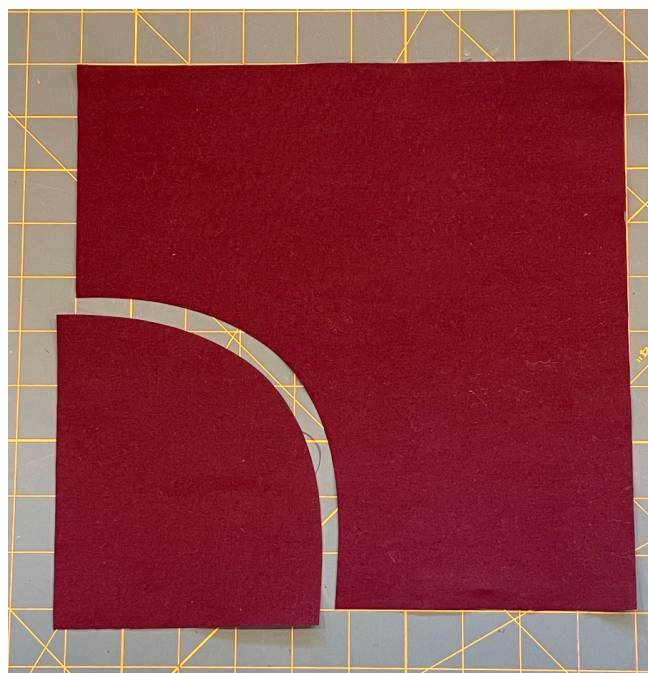
- All steps are done with the fabric RIGHT SIDES UP
- Use a 60mm Rotary cutter—Bigger is Better!
- Practice cutting on your fabric with your cutter closed.
- It is okay to use the lines on your mat to help guide your cuts.
- Make sure that your fabric is properly ironed and that you do not have creases or excess threads.
- If you don’t like the cut you made, cut it again!

Directions

1. Cut your fabric into 10" squares. You should have at least one ten inch square of each other color for a total of 10 squares. You might not use all ten colors.

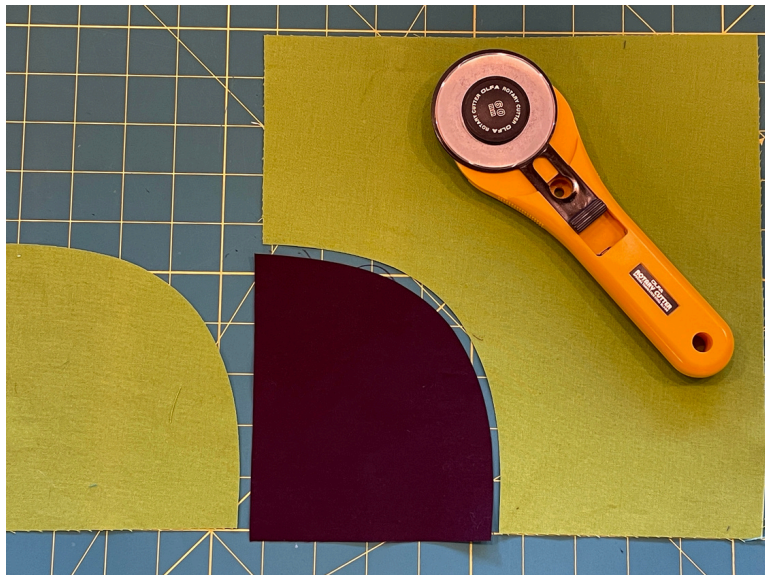


2. Select your first fabric for your first improv quarter circle. Cut a quarter circle directly into the square of fabric 1. My quarter circle is about 4 1/2" x 5." The size does not matter.



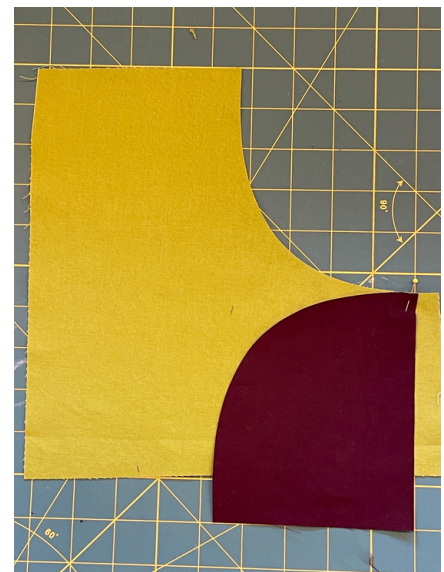
Directions

3. Take the quarter circle created from fabric #1 and place it on top of a second 10" square of fabric in the lower left hand corner. Line the straight edges of the quarter circle up with the straight edges of the 10" square of fabric. Using the cut quarter circle as your ruler, cut the shape of the quarter circle into the background square. I like to cut just a tiny, tiny bit into the quarter circle when I make this cut. Remove the quarter circle you just made from the background fabric and save it for later.



4. Flip the background fabric on top of the quarter circle Right Sides Together. Scooch the background fabric over approximately a 1/4". You will now have a quarter inch tail (or overhang) of background fabric. Use a straight pin to pin the edge of the quarter circle to the background fabric as shown in the image.

The image shows this step from the reverse side, so you can see the pinned quarter circle, and the tail overhang of the background fabric.



Directions

5. At the sewing machine, sew with the quarter circle next to your feed dogs. You will start sewing on just the tail/overhang. After a few stitches you will be sewing the background fabric to the quarter circle. It is helpful to hold the background fabric in your left hand and use a stiletto in your right hand to guide the fabric. GO SLOW.

You will end with a tail of background fabric. The tails are helping to distribute the differences between the two curves while also minimizing distortion.



Directions

6. Press your seam out towards the background fabric. Your unit will look the image below, from the front. Trim the tails of your unit. I use the lines on my cutting mat to guide my cuts. You are now ready to insert another quarter circle.



7. Cut a new curve into your unit. Set aside the extra fabric 2 piece for later. This cut edge will be your new ruler/template for cutting into your next background square from fabric 3.



Directions

8. Select a third 10" fabric square and place your pieced quarter circle curve on top of the fabric lining up the lower left corner vertically and horizontally. RIGHT SIDES UP. Cut into your background fabric using your quarter circle unit as your ruler.



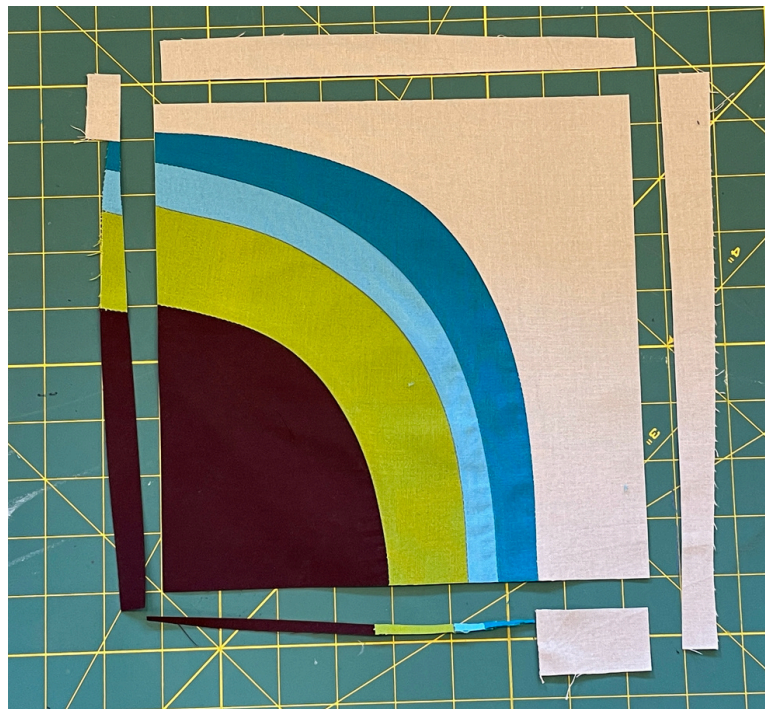
9. Repeat the sewing process, always remembering to start with a tail and sew with the quarter circle curve next to your feed dogs. Trim the tails using the lines on your mat.



Directions

10. Repeat this process two more times or as many times as desired. I found that I liked my quarter circles to have five - seven colors each.

Do not worry that the square is not exactly square. These units are designed to be built larger than needed and then cut down to the appropriate size. Once you have as many colored curves as you like, use the lines on your mat or a ruler to square the unit up to measure $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$.



Directions

11. Now the real fun begins! You will have an assortment of left over 10" squares and cut curves—both quarter circles and background curves. These are the fabrics that you will use to create your next quarter circle unit. You can use them as is, or use your ruler to reshape the curves as you wish.

Each time you do this, you will generate leftovers to be used in future quarter circle curved units. I like this method because each and every curve is unique and different. This creates more visual interest for the viewer.

12. Create a total of four quarter circle units.



Directions

13. Once your four quarter circle units are sewn, pressed and trimmed, sew them together to create a rippling/echoing circle block. Block should measure 16 1/2" x 16 1/2" when completed.

