

Gwen's Liberated String MEDALLION

by Gwen Marston



GWEN'S LIBERATED STRING MEDALLION, 38½" x 38½", by Gwen Marston

In my book, *Liberated Medallion Quilts* (AQS Publishing, 2012), I say that when I make a medallion quilt, I wonder why I bother making any other style of quilt. I feel the same way when I make a string quilt, so combining the two is irresistible.

By their very nature, string quilts are liberated quilts. There is no set block pattern so every string quilt is an original.

Most string quilts are pieced on foundations of fabric or paper but the instructions that follow are for free-

pieced string blocks using liberated techniques without foundations. All the blocks are made individually so there is no repetition and they all look different. Since this is a medallion quilt, it starts in the middle and grows with a series of borders. For more detailed information on making quilts see the AQS Quiltmaking Essentials at www.AmericanQuilter.com.

Choosing fabrics

For my quilt, I chose of 7 different lights. The variety of lights adds subtle depth to the quilt. I added dark solids for a dramatic and contemporary look.

For the light strings, cut 2" and 3" wide strips from several neutrals. The dark strings in my quilt tend to be narrower, which contributes to its overall minimalist look. For these narrow strings, cut several dark strips 1½" to 2" wide. Don't cut all the strips for the whole quilt, just some to get started. As you work you may find you need to add colors or cut some different widths.

Making the block guides

You need a guide to act as a template for sizing up the pieced blocks. The guide must be the size of the finished block plus the ¼" seam allowance all around. It works similar to a foundation except you do not sew the strings onto it. For the 4½" x 4½" finished block, cut a guide 5" x 5" from paper or muslin. For the 5½" x 5½" finished block, cut a guide 6" x 6". The advantage of a muslin guide is that it doesn't slip around. Label the guides so you don't confuse one for the other as you work.

FABRIC & CUTTING REQUIREMENTS

Skill level: Easy

Quilt size: 38½" x 38½"

- Requirements are based on 40" fabric width.

Finished block sizes: 4½" x 4½",

- Strips are cut selvage to selvage.

5½" x 5½"

Assorted light neutrals –
approximately 2¾ yards

- see "Choosing fabrics"

Assorted dark solids –
approximately 1½ yards

- see "Choosing fabrics"

Medium tan print –
½ yard

- border #3 top/bottom, 2 strips 3¼" x 28"

- border #3 sides, 2 strips 3¼" x 22½"

- border #1 top/bottom, 2 strips 1½" x 11½"

- border #1 sides, 2 strips 1½" x 9½"

Binding – ½ yard

- 5 strips 2¼" x 40" for 164" of continuous binding

Backing – 2⅝ yards

- 2 panels, 22" x 43"

- sleeve, 1 piece 9" x 38"

Batting

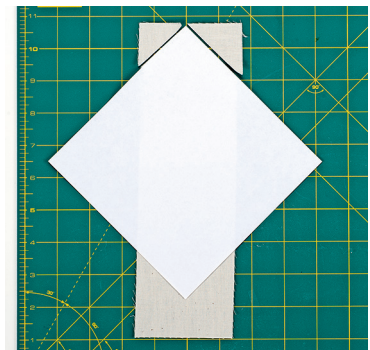
- 43" x 43"

Piecing the blocks

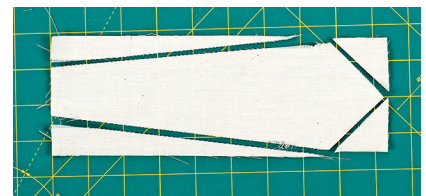
Note: Instructions and figures are for the 4½" x 4½" finished block, but construction is the same for both size blocks. For the center strip, lay the guide diagonally on a light 3" strip, cut to length as shown in figure 1. Make two 45° cuts on the top, forming a point on the strip. Eyeball cut slight angles on both sides of the strip (fig. 2). Tip: As you construct additional blocks, make these cuts slightly different.

Sew dark strings (1½" to 2" wide) to each side of the center. Press seam allowances away from the center. Using a rotary cutter and ruler, trim to fit the edges of the guide (fig 3). Set the guide aside. Reshape the strips just added by cutting angles. This will make the blocks more interesting.

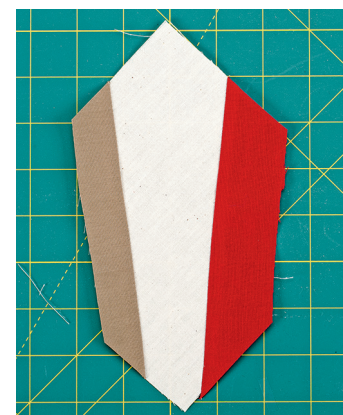
Continue building the block by adding light strips and then dark strips in the same manner, trimming



1



2



3

as you go until it is the shape of the guide (fig. 4). As you sew the blocks, you will find yourself naturally making slight variations by adding more strings to some blocks and less to others, or by changing the shape and width of the center strip. String quilts invite improvisation. Make 4 blocks using the 5" x 5" guide and 36 blocks using the 6" x 6" guide.

4



Assembling the quilt

Following the quilt assembly diagram, lay out the smaller blocks in 2 rows of 2 blocks. Join the blocks into rows. Press seam allowances in opposite directions. Join the rows. Press seam allowances in one direction. The quilt center should measure 9½" x 9½" from raw edge to raw edge. If yours is different, adjust the seam allowances or trim to size.

Sew the 1½" wide border #1 strips to the sides, then top and bottom of the quilt. Press seam allowances toward the border. The quilt should measure 11½" x 11½".

Join 2 of the larger blocks. Sew them to a side of the quilt. Press seam allowances toward the tan border. Repeat for the other side.

For the top and bottom borders, join 4 blocks. Sew them to the quilt. The quilt should measure 22½" x 22½" from raw edge to raw edge.

Sew the 3¼" wide border #3 strips to the sides, then top and bottom of the quilt. Press seam allowances toward the tan border. The quilt should measure 28" x 28".

Join 5 blocks. Sew to a side of the quilt. Press seam allowances toward the tan border. Repeat for the other side. Join 7 blocks. Sew to the top of the quilt. Repeat for the quilt bottom.

Quilting and finishing

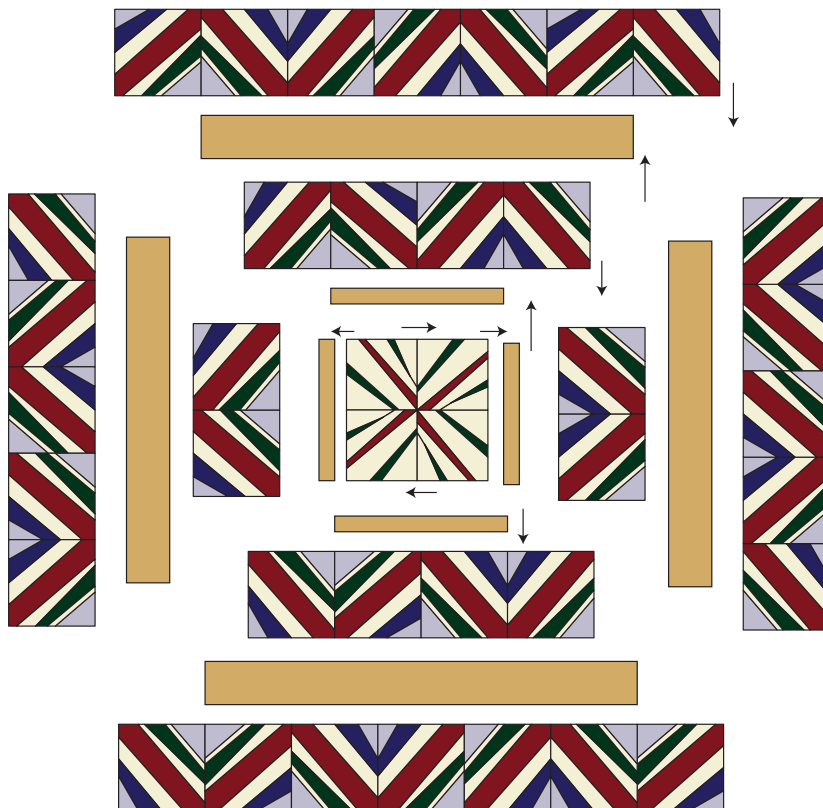
Layer the backing, batting, and quilt top. Baste the layers together.

My quilt was hand quilted without marking, which adds to the informal look. I quilted lines parallel to some of the seams of the blocks, and angled lines in the tan borders.

Sew the binding strips together to make 164" of continuous binding. Finish the edges of your quilt with double-fold binding. *Editor's note: Gwen prefers single-fold binding, cut 1¼" wide on the straight grain of fabric.* To display your quilt, make a sleeve and sew it to the back of the quilt.

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Quilt assembly