

Learning to Design~Wholecloth & Pieced Quilts

by~

Cindy Needham

Website: www.cindyneedham.com

Email: linenqltr@comcast.net

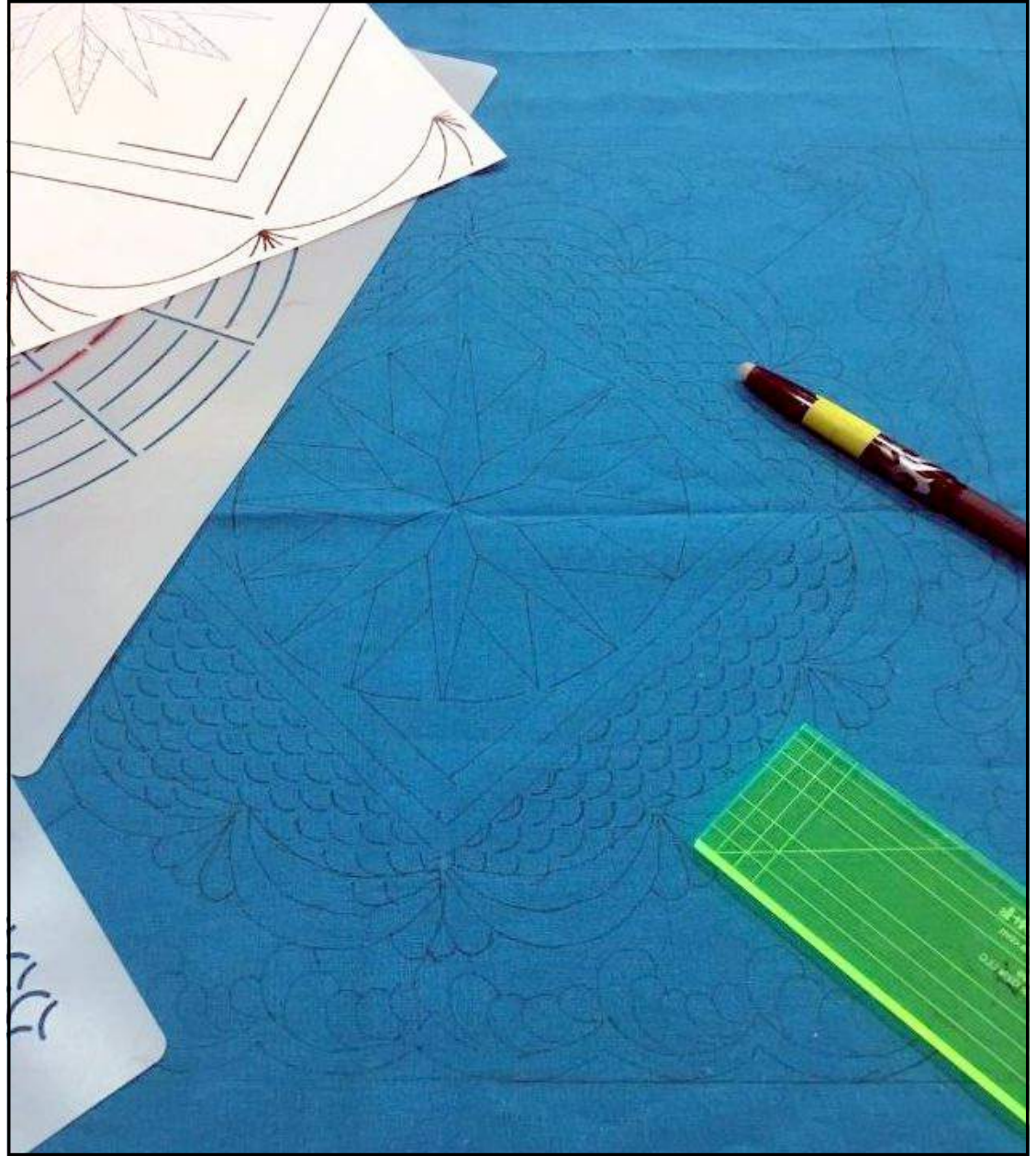


Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Permission to Copy..... | 3 |
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Getting Started..... | 5 |
| Peanut Butter Cup..... | 6 |
| Sunshine and Shadow..... | 7 |
| Busy Prints..... | 8 |
| Basic Elements of Design..... | 9-14 |
| Wholecloth Guidelines..... | 15-25 |
| Repetitive Design Wholecloth..... | 26-32 |
| Designing Pieced Tops..... | 33-45 |

2020: This book is a complete re-write. Please throw the old one away and replace with this one! Cindy

Cindy Needham
Email: linenqltr@comcast.net
Website: www.cindyneedham.com

© 2009-2020

Cindy L. Needham

All Rights Reserved

This handbook is protected by a copyright and is intended for the personal use of the original retail purchaser only. Photocopying and all other types of reproduction including mechanical, electronic, computerized, or digital are prohibited without the written consent of Cindy Needham.

Please respect the time and energy it took to compile this information and do not copy it. Thank you.

Permission to Copy

I hereby grant permission for this handbook to be copied. This book is provided to my students and contains all of their class information. They have purchased this information.

If you have further questions, you may contact me via email:

linenqltr@comcast.net

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Needham".

Cindy Needham
January 1, 2020

Introduction

When I started my journey in free motion quilting it was on traditionally pieced tops. I was fairly content picking out simple stencil designs, marking them on blocks and then quilting them but I knew there had to be something more...

One day while at my local quilt store I discovered a book called *Quilts of Provence* (written by Kathryn Berenson, Archetype Press, Inc.) This fabulous book was beautifully illustrated with over 200 pages of antique French wholecloth quilts. I melted...I was inspired...my quilting style was changed forever. I fell head over heels in love with wholecloth quilting. I loved the designing process and discovered that many of the same designs I was putting into my wholecloth quilts looked fabulous on pieced tops too.

Many quilters have a huge stash of pieced tops in their closets because they simply don't know how to quilt them. We all know that "quilting makes the quilt" and it's a huge decision. We're afraid we might ruin the top by choosing the wrong design.

Quilting stencils are not easy to come by these days...stores simply don't sell them and you may need to go on-line to find them. I've changed my designing techniques to rely on my six sets of Ultimates, a ruler and the Basic Three fillers.

This book will focus on learning to design by dividing and conquering space, using the Ultimates to create your own designs, using the Basic Three to fill space and using a good old fashioned ruler!

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to email me at any time!

Cindy

Email: linenqltr@comcast.net
Website: www.cindyneedham.com



Getting Started Tips

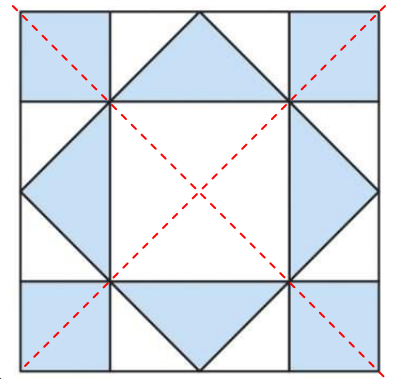
When I started free motion quilting for other people the very first thing I did was to put the quilt up on the design wall and asked it to talk to me. Trust me, in the beginning I never heard a word from any of them! They just hung there waiting for me to come up with the perfect pattern.

It is a huge responsibility to come up with a quilting design because we all know it can make or break your quilt. No pressure here! Not all quilt tops are created equal. Some are beautifully pieced and some are “creatively” pieced but they all want to look good. I’ll pass on a few tips that have really helped me.

One of the best ways to design is to put your quilt up on a design wall. You get a much better perspective of the top when you can stand back and look at it. Sometimes it helps to take a photo of it with your cell phone...take one in color and one in black/white.

One of my most important designing tools is my ruler. When I’m designing a pieced quilt, the first thing I want to find out is if it is well pieced or creatively pieced. If it is well pieced, i.e., seams and points line up and seams are straight then the sky is the limit on what design I choose. If it is creatively pieced with botched points and wavy seams, then I am more likely to choose designs that may be more curvy in nature to take the viewer’s eye away from the creativity. I also lay the ruler across the blocks to see if I can add lines thru sections. In other words, do things line up? This is where the “well pieced quilt” comes into play!

Clear vinyl is a great secret weapon. I buy large rolls of heavy clear vinyl from Joan’s and cut it into large sections. I run either brightly colored masking tape on all of the edges or mark the edge with a bright red Sharpie marker. This is my stop sign telling me that the edge is coming up! I place the vinyl over the top of my quilt and then use a dry erase marker to start playing with designs. I treat it like a sketch pad...throwing ideas out there to see how they would look. Lines can be easily erased with a finger tip or a tissue. This is a great way to audition designs without having to erase marks off of your quilt or ripping out quilted lines with your seam ripper.



Quilting designs don’t have to stay within the seam lines. In other words, lines and designs can run ACROSS seams to create a beautiful secondary design! That’s an eye opener for many of my students.

The Peanut Butter Cup Theory

The Basic Three



In my world there isn't anything much better than a peanut butter cup. Chocolate and peanut butter go VERY well together!

In the quilting design world strong geometrics and "soft stuff" also go together very well. I call this the "Peanut Butter Cup" theory.

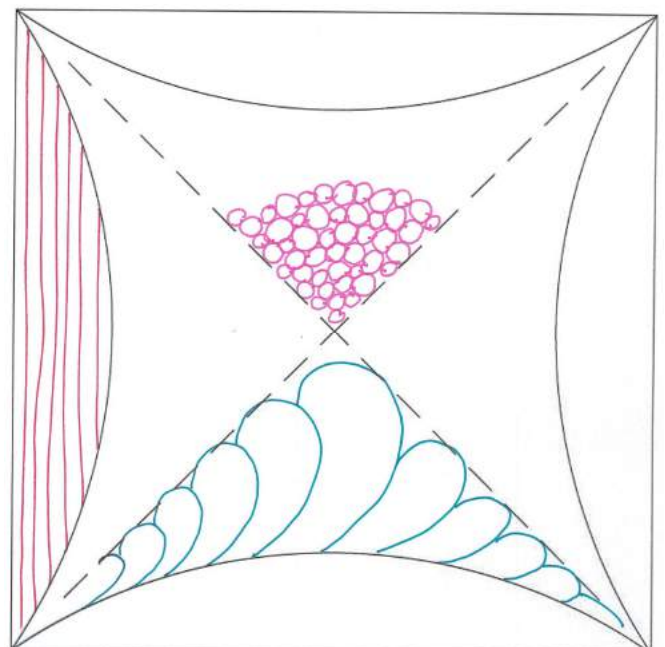
If you have a quilt top that has very strong geometric piecing, adding soft feathers, clam shells, pebbles/bubbles or serpentine lines will complement the geometric lines.

If you have a creatively pieced quilt top, using these softer curvey designs will take the viewer's eye away from the poor piecing. They will also nail down and flatten poofy areas.

If you have a quilt top that is full of soft curves, adding strong geometric repetitive lines will be a nice complement to the curved piecework.

I have three basic fillers that I use on nearly every single quilt I do...Free Form Feathers, Repetitive Lines and Pebbles/Bubbles.

These provide the "soft stuff" as well as the strong geometrics in any space. I will only be using these three fillers for the lessons in this book.



Sunshine and Shadow

Our world is beautiful because of all the different textures, colors and contrast. Our quilts are the same way. We choose light, medium and dark fabrics for the contrast to help define a design. When we choose a quilting design we want it to pop or stand out and be noticed. We need to create shadow behind a design in order for it to pop.

This photo is a great example of how a detailed, textured background creates a shadow making the feathers pop or become the “sunshine”. Be sure to include both sunshine and shadow in your quilts to make them fabulous.



Busy Prints

Do you have a quilt top that has busy prints? Don't bother putting a lot of fancy designs on a busy print because you just won't see it. Keep it simple! This class sample shows a feather wreath on a solid vs. print. The same thread was used throughout this block. I went to a lot of work to do the design and it just doesn't show up on the print. A better choice would have been to choose a design that completed itself in the solid and possibly quilt repetitive lines or something simple in the print.



Basic Elements of Design

The Basic Elements of Design applies to both pieced quilt tops as well as wholecloth quilts.

There are four elements of design that I use all the time...

1. Focal Point
2. Movement
3. Dimension
4. Repetition

These elements are evident everywhere whether it is a beautiful photograph, a painting or a beautifully done quilt!

Each person sees art in their own way. It's important to remember that these four elements of design are not always present in art or your quilts. These are just guidelines to think of during your designing process.

Let's start with three prints that I use in my classroom lecture to help identify these elements in the "art world".



If you close your eyes, and then open them, what is the first thing your eyes go to?

For me it was the beautiful red flowers. This is my focal point.

I felt movement was created by the blue flowers branching off to the left and the greenery cascading down on the right.

Dimension was created by the flowers going over the top of the vase and the table going behind the vase.

Repetition was created by the repetitive flower designs.



When I look at this piece the first thing I see is the bright building right in the middle. This would be my focal point.

Movement is created by the various shapes of the buildings all nestled in together. My eyes kept moving around looking for them all. I also see the boats providing movement as I expect to see them swaying around.

Dimension is created by the various depths of the buildings as well as the boats lined up in front of the buildings.

Repetition is created by the repetitive buildings as well as the boats.

The focal point on this piece appears to be the bright yellow leaf towards the top of the photo.

Movement appears to be created by the rain droplets.

Dimension is created by all the various layers of the leaves

Repetition is obvious with the repetitive leaves.

Now let's see how these basic elements apply to wholecloth quilts.



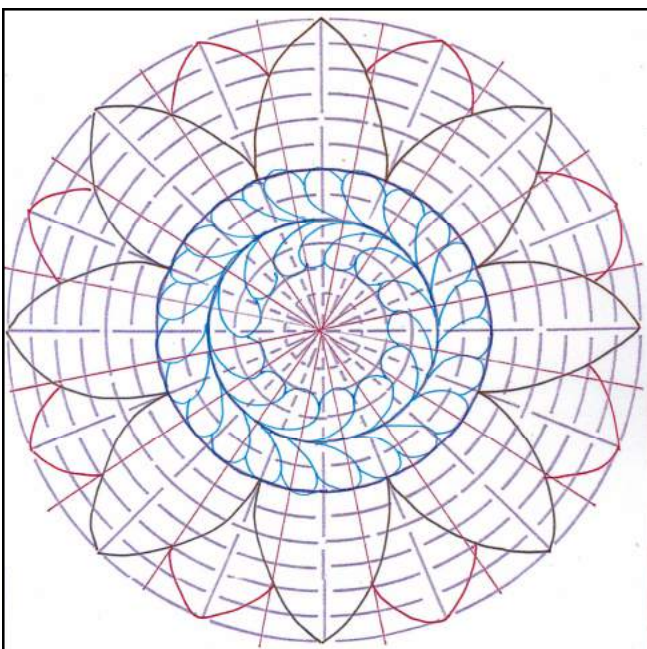
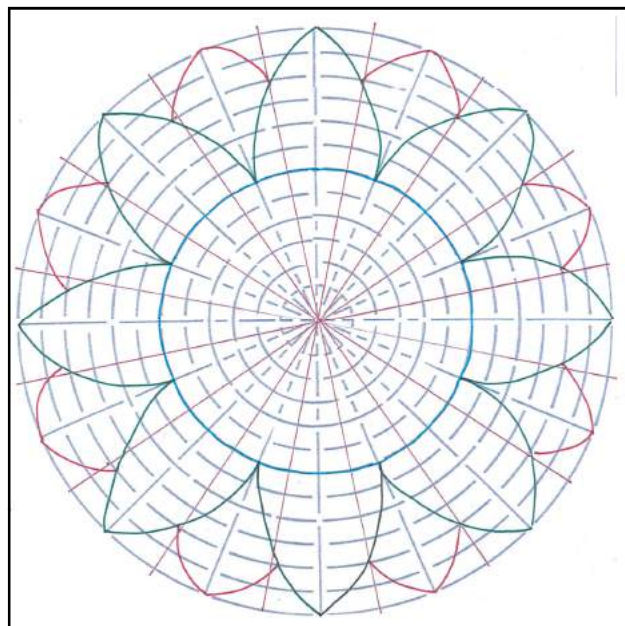
Identifying elements of design in the “art world” is fairly easy...but how do you do it in the “quilting world” ? Sometimes it’s easier said than done.

One point I’d like to make, and it’s important for you to remember, is not every quilt is going to have all four of these elements. These are simply a guide when you start to plan your quilting designs.

(This design was drafted using the circle Ultimate Stencil)

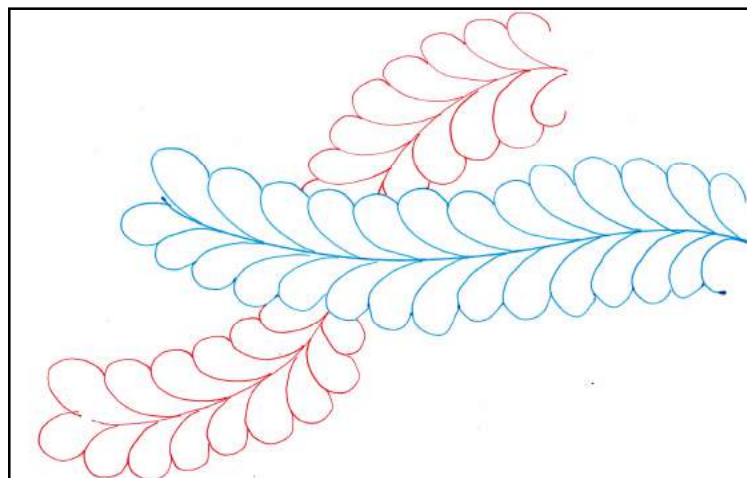
If you want your quilt to have a **FOCAL POINT**, you may want to choose a large medallion type of design that will instantly grab the viewer’s eye.

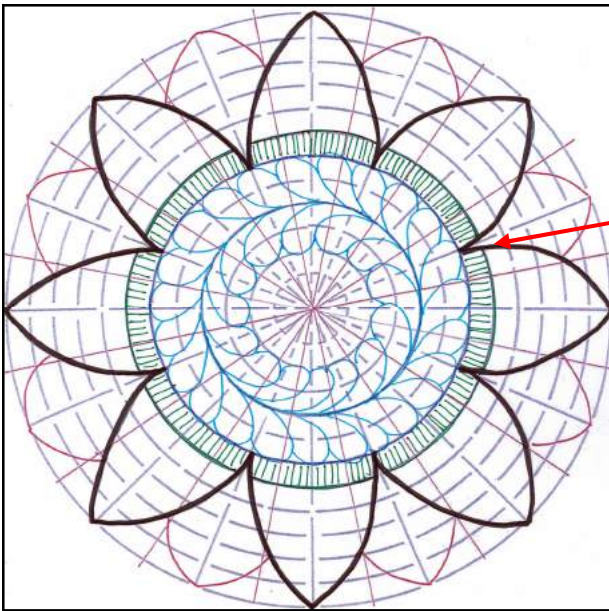
This particular design would work well as you can add lots of goodies in the open areas to make this come alive.



The one thing this particular medallion design is lacking is **MOVEMENT**. There’s nothing encouraging your eye to move around. Let’s add a beautiful feathered wreath in the middle. This provides a focal point but it gives this design a spin and instantly gets your eye moving around.

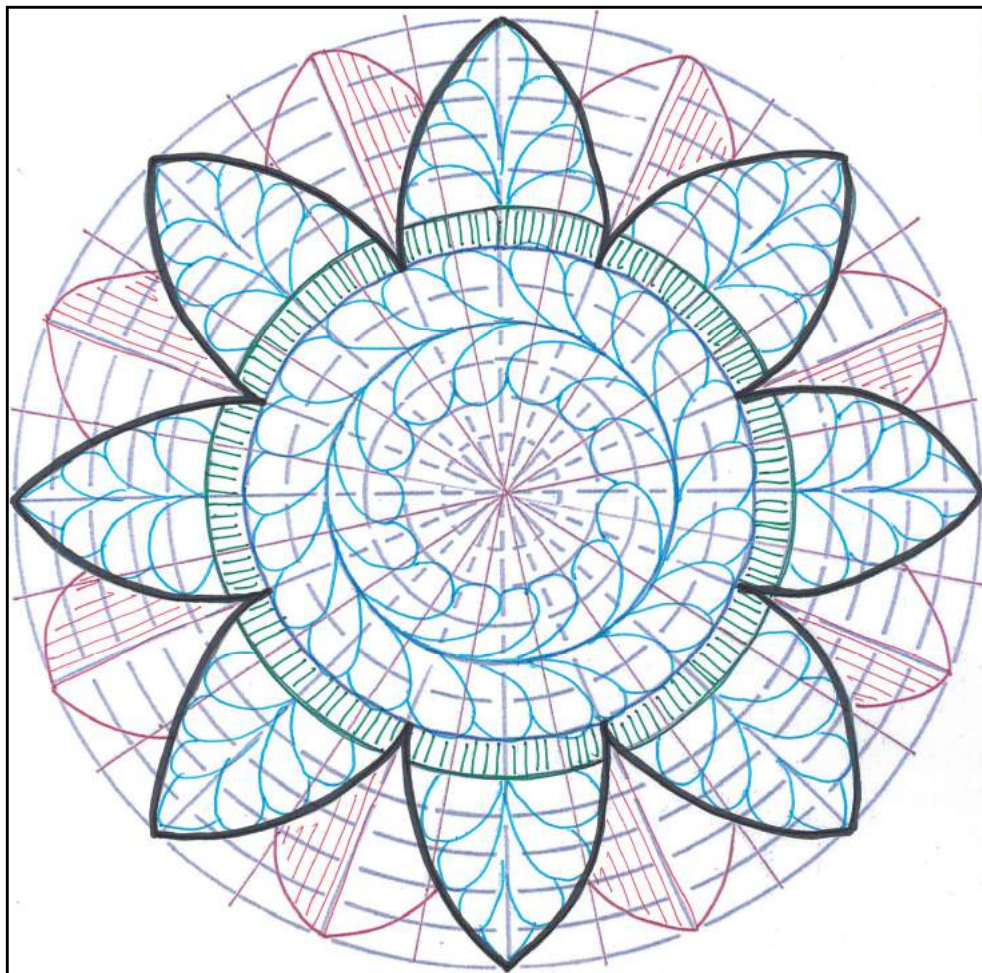
DIMENSION, in my quilting world, is making one design go underneath another. In other words have one design that is primary (the blue feather on top) and another that is secondary (red feather running behind it). Great dimension!

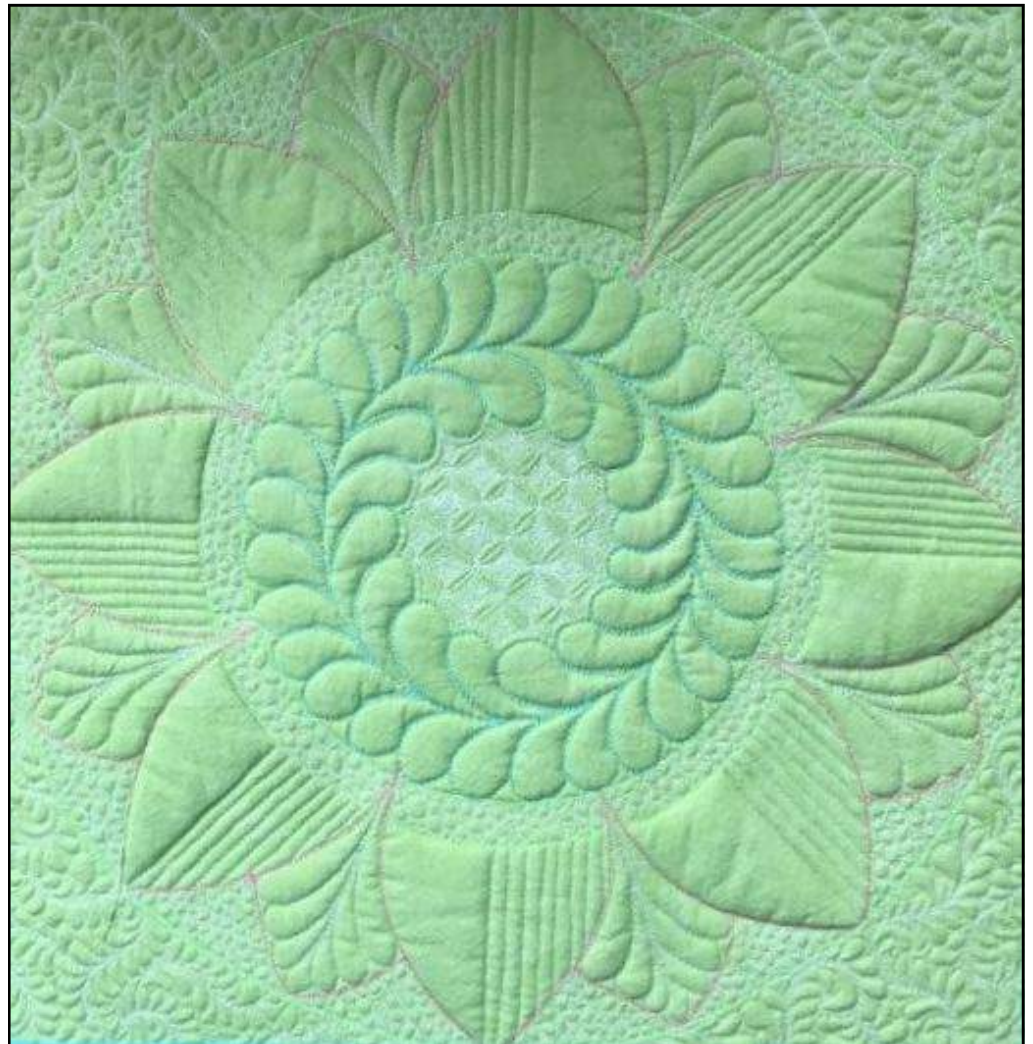




In the case of this medallion I ran a ring of repetitive lines going around the feather wreath but it ends at the base of the blades. The circle stops at each “V”. I darkened the blades to make this easier to see. This circle of repetitive lines also provides a resting spot for your eyes...I call this a “speed bump”.

REPETITION in the case of this medallion is very easy. The repetitive blades going around the outside easily provides this element. Repeating the feathers from the feather wreath into the blades and repeating the lines from the narrow circle into the small blades provides repetition.



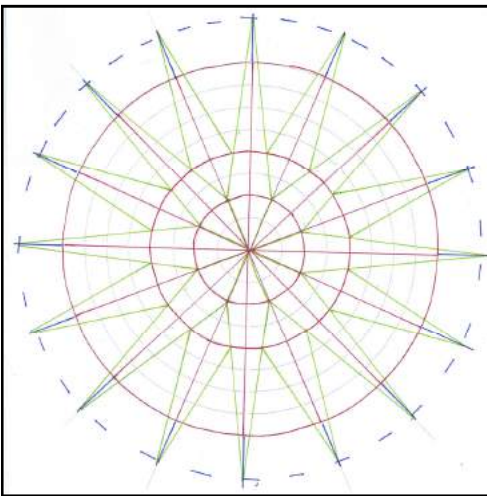


Traditionally Pieced vs. Wholecloth Designs

When I took the plunge from quilting traditionally pieced quilts to designing and quilting wholecloth pieces I was amazed at the similarity between the two types of quilts. With a pieced quilt you are planning your designs around the piecework. A wholecloth quilt is a blank canvas that you can do anything on. I found I kept going back to the designs that I was putting on the pieced quilts and putting them on my wholecloth pieces.

Pieced quilts can be quilted with large medallion designs as well as overall repetitive designs. The same can be said for wholecloth quilts. It is for this reason that I am combining the designing techniques for both quilts together.

Let's talk a bit about the difference between medallion designs vs. overall repetitive designs.



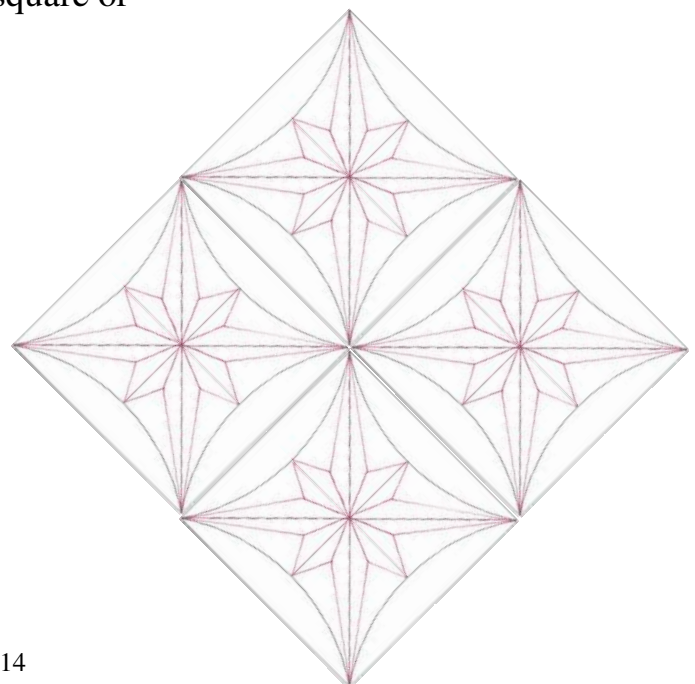
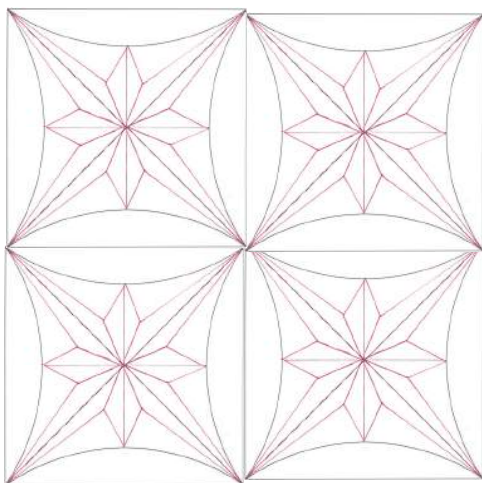
MEDALLION DESIGNS

A basic medallion is one large design surrounded by one or more borders. The design doesn't have to be in the center ...it can be off to one side, there can be multiple large designs or it can run off of the edge. This is totally up to you!

Regardless of how you set your design you generally have a main focal point.

REPETITIVE OVERALL DESIGNS

A repetitive overall design means you are taking one design and repeating it over and over again until you have filled your space. My favorite repetitive shape is a square. This shape can be repeated square or on-point.



Wholecloth Guidelines

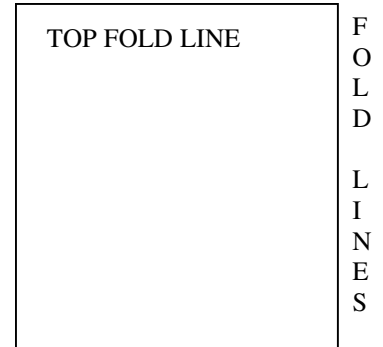
Before we start the designing process on pieced tops, I want to provide you with the guidelines on how to lay out a wholecloth quilt. We can adapt the same guidelines to a pieced quilt.



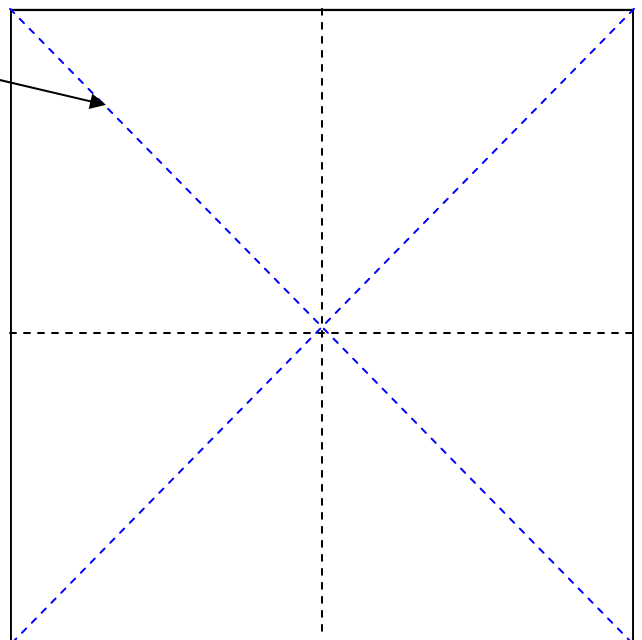
Laying Out a Wholecloth Quilt

Before you even start designing or marking your wholecloth quilt, there is one important step to take and that is establishing your center point and horizontal and vertical lines. These are VERY important and will make your designing process SO much easier. These guidelines apply to both standard wholecloth quilts as well as linen wholecloth quilts.

1. Press your fabric flat. I often use Niagra sizing or Best Press to give the fabric a little more body.
2. Hold your pressed fabric up and fold it in half width wise and then in half again lengthwise. You are quartering it by folding it in half in each direction. Your fabric is rarely perfectly square or straight so don't stress about having your edges and corners perfectly matched.
3. Take your folded/quartered piece and place it back on the ironing board and press your folds into firm creases. You have now established the center of your wholecloth quilt and also created horizontal and vertical guidelines that all of your designing will be based off of.
4. Open up your fabric and lay your long ruler down on these pressed lines. With your quilt marking pen, trace these lines so they are visible. All of your designing will be based off of these lines...they are critical!
5. I highly recommend that you mark additional lines at a 45 degree going from corner to corner.

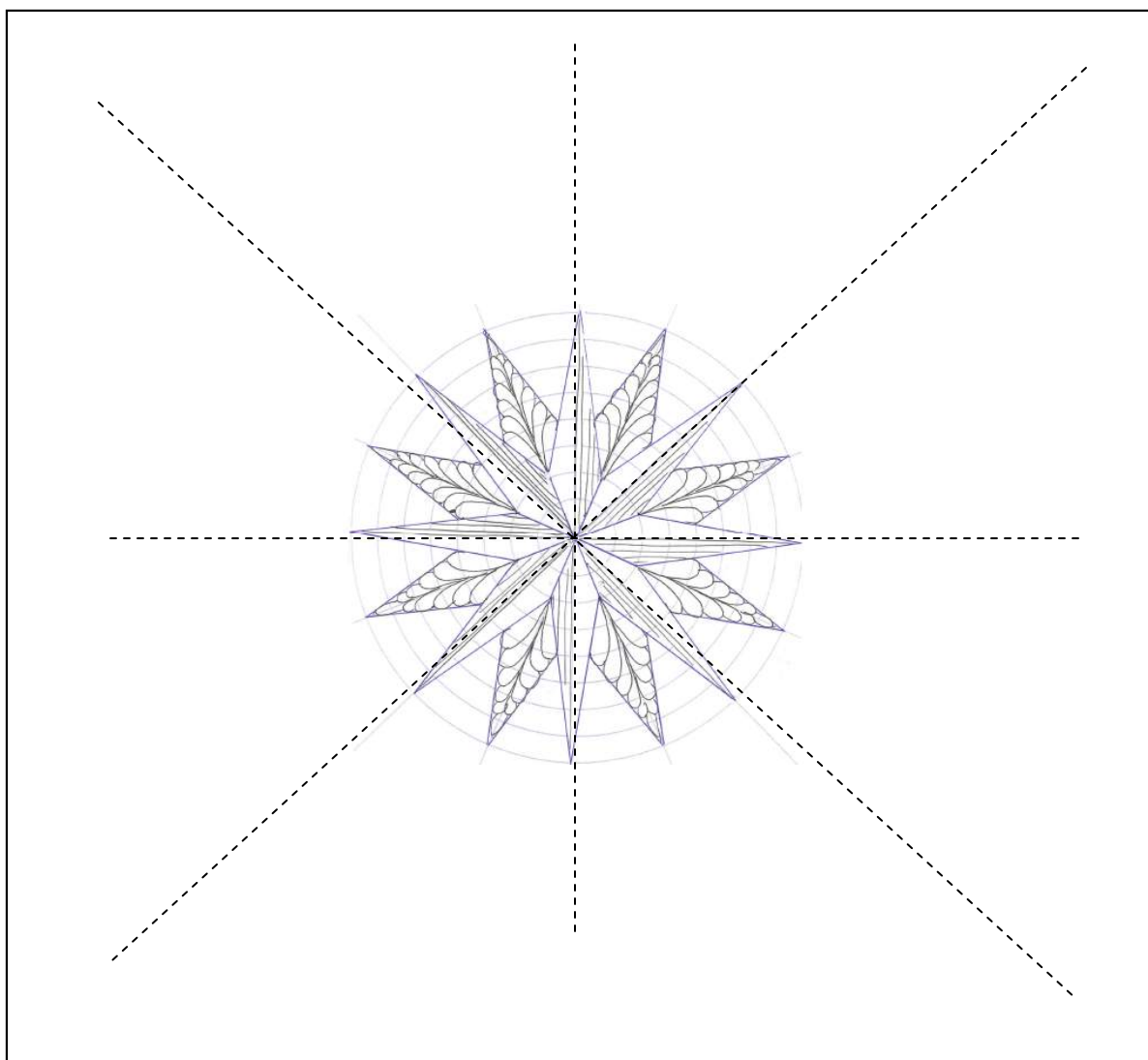


All four lines will be used to keep your medallion design in the middle (if that's where you want it) and establish guidelines to keep your designs straight and lined up.

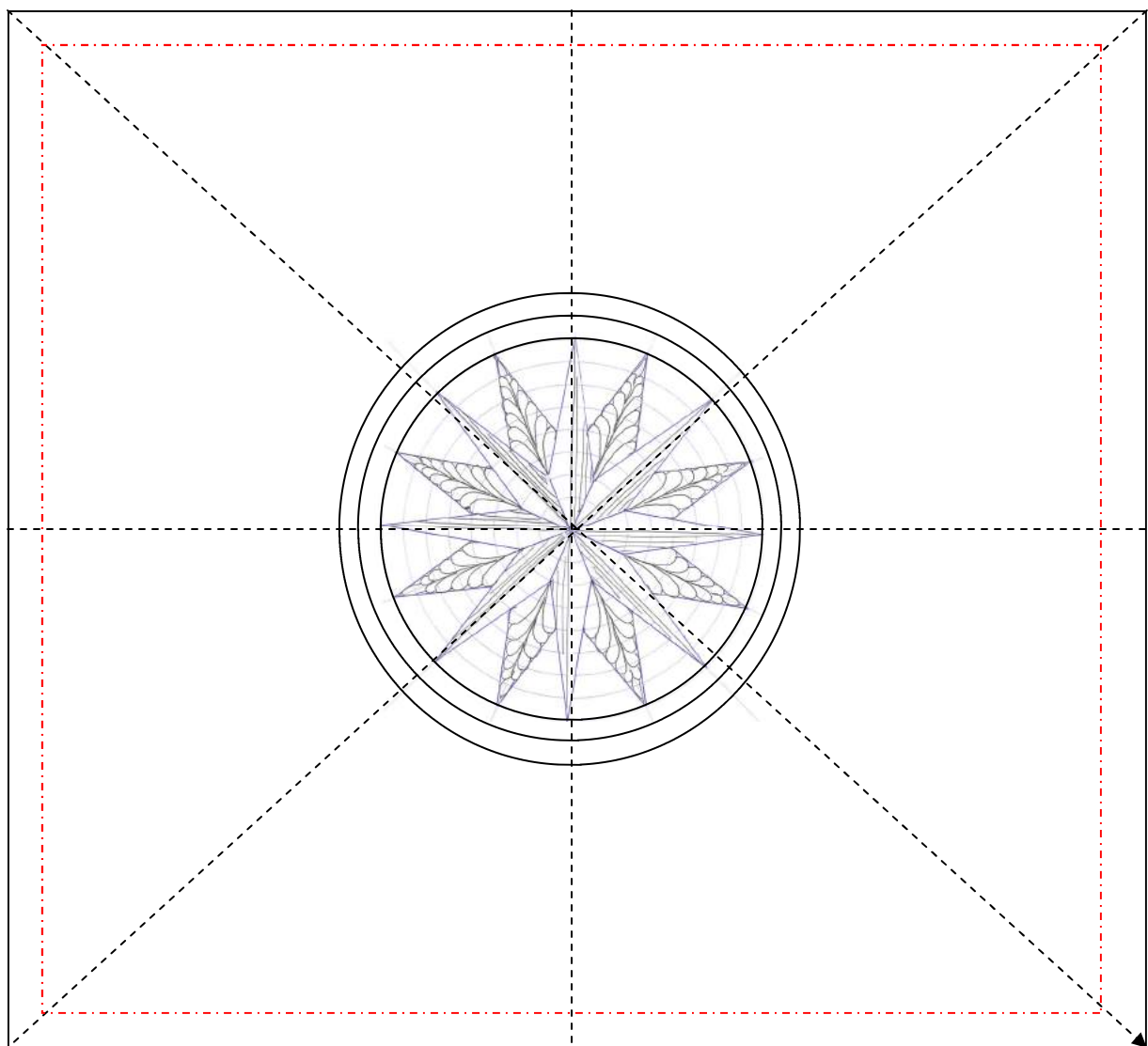


The most common style of wholecloth quilts is a medallion. Rather than creating a repetitive or overall design, you are focusing on one main design surrounded by one or more borders or corners. This is where your four main points of design can really come in to play!

I've chosen a Mariners Compass design for the medallion of my wholecloth quilt and decided to have it in the center of my piece. I used my marked guidelines for placement.

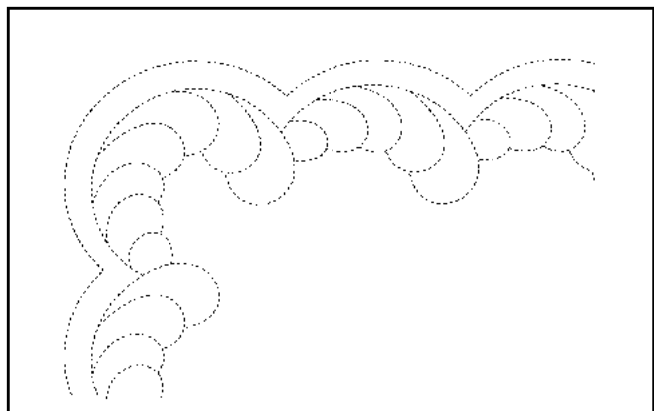


Sometimes it's fun to add additional lines around your medallion just to strengthen it a bit and add more detail. I love a three-line repeat and love how this looks around the compass. You can add any kind of detail or border around your medallion...the sky is the limit! These additional lines also make it easy when you are quilting backgrounds...you can take the background right up to the last line. Makes it easy for traveling.



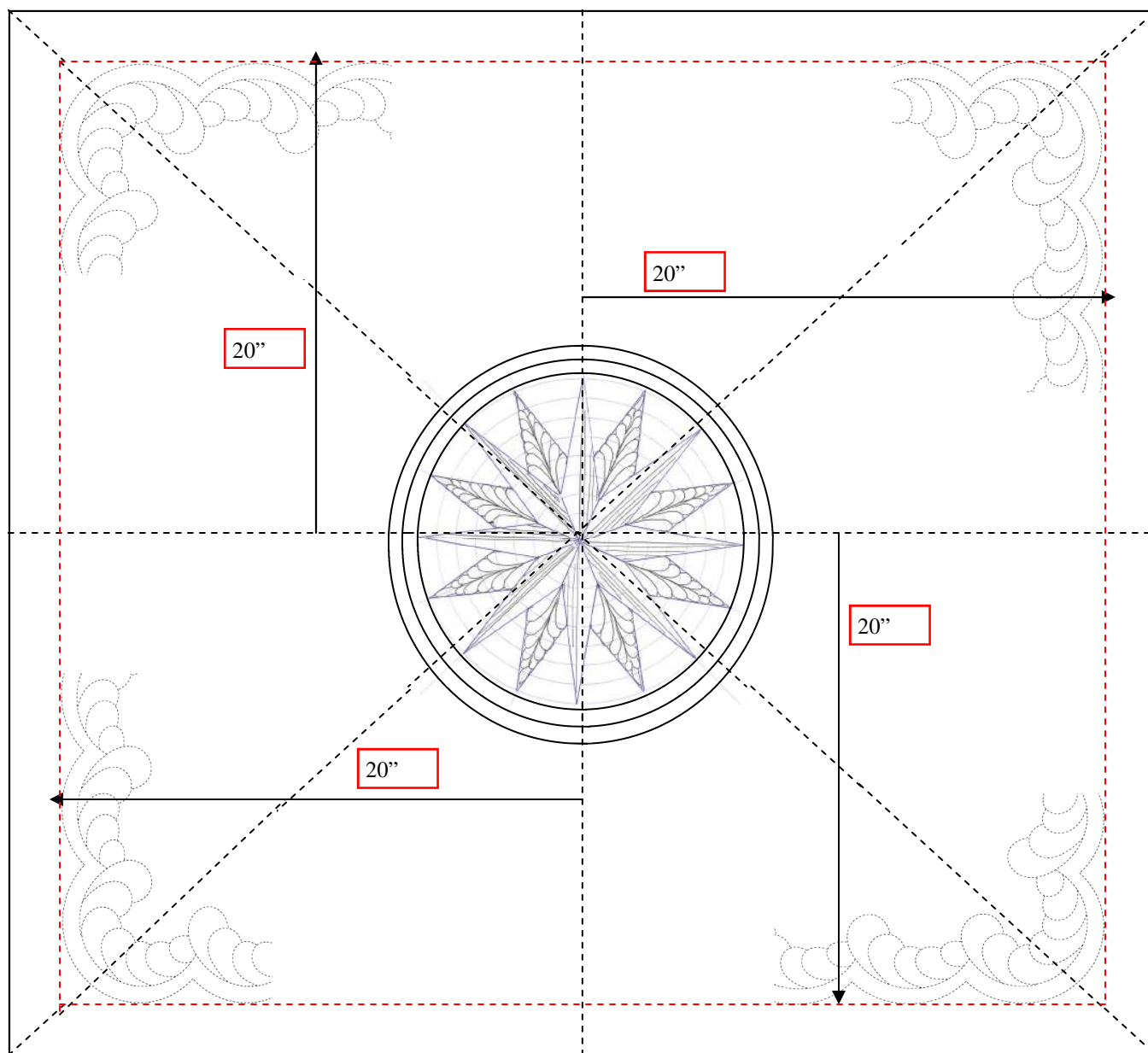
Now it's time to choose and lay out a border should you want one. This is simple to do in a pieced top because you have a pieced border. It's just as easy for a wholecloth quilt.

The first step is to choose your border design.

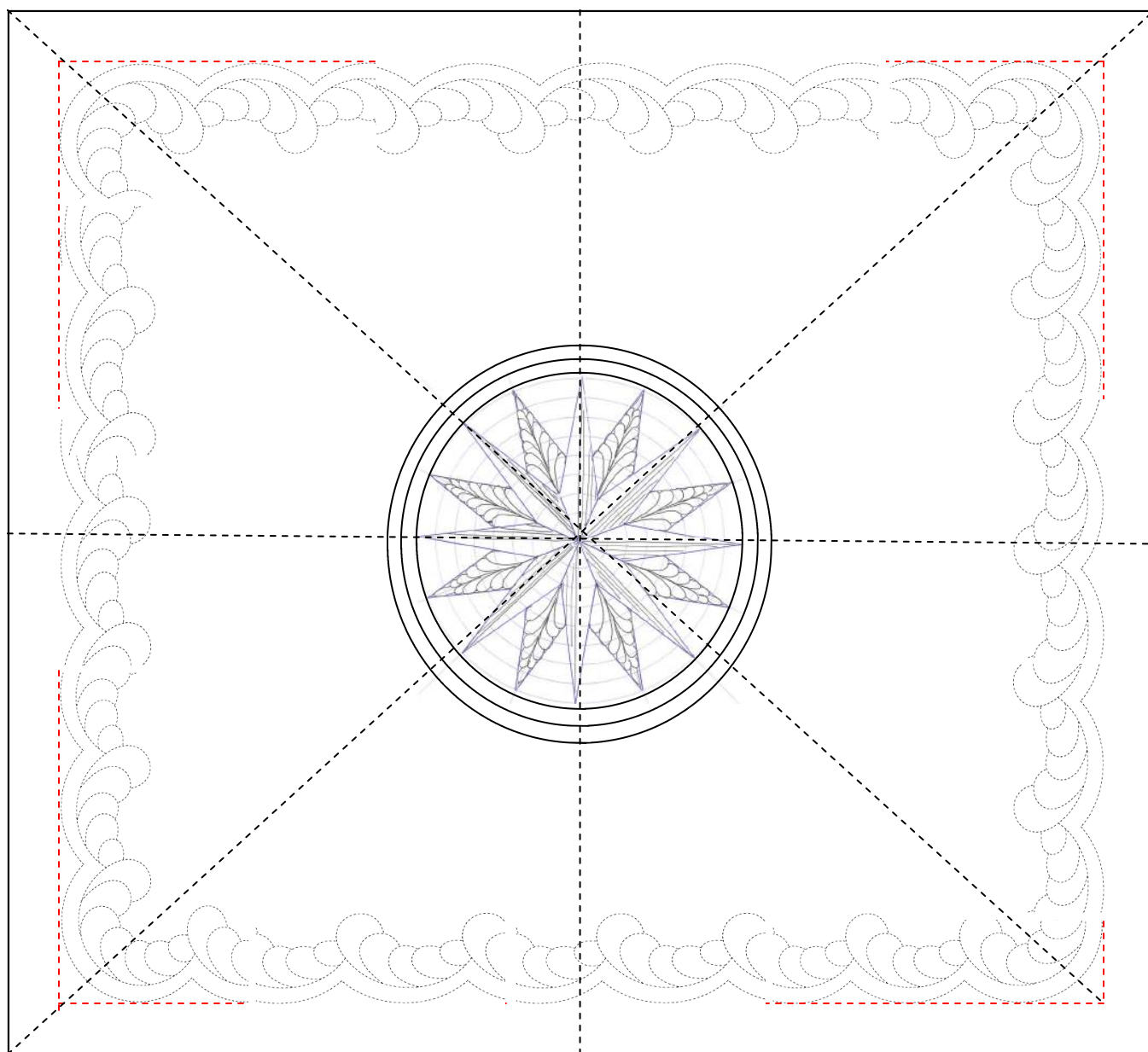


Determine how far out you want the outside edge of your border to be. Be sure to leave at least 2" from the outside edge of your border to the outside raw edge of your fabric for squaring up later on. In this case I want the outside edge of my border to be 20" from center. Using a ruler, I measure out from both the horizontal and vertical lines and mark a dashed line all the way around at 20". This is my guide for lining up and marking my border.

Mark all four corners first and "fudge to fit" in the middle. Please refer to the "Making Borders Fit" handout that accompanies this.

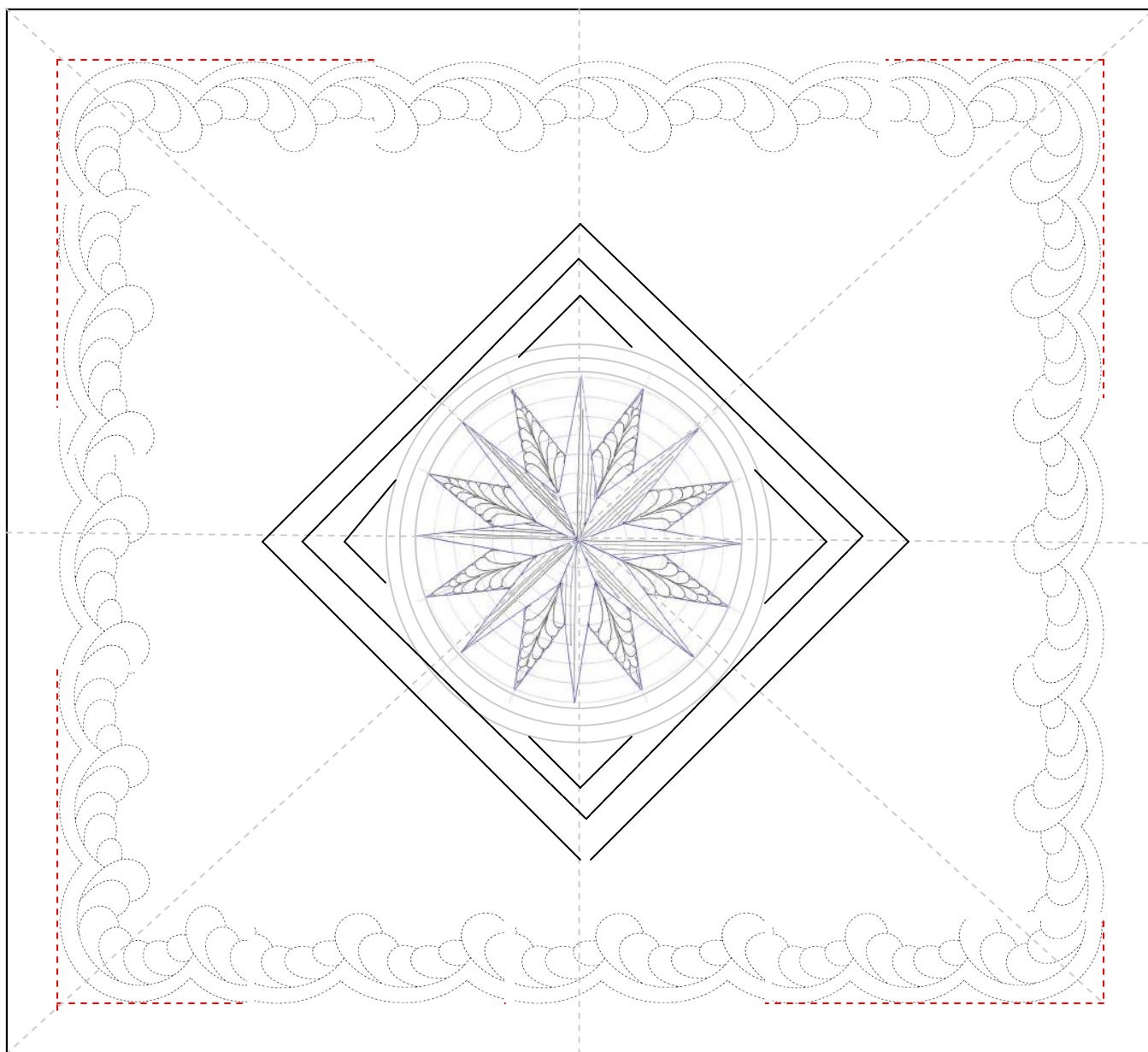


This is what a very basic medallion wholecloth quilt may look like. Although it's pretty, it doesn't excite me too much. The medallion in the middle seems to be a "floater" Nothing is grounding it and there's no dimension. Let me show you how we can easily fix this!



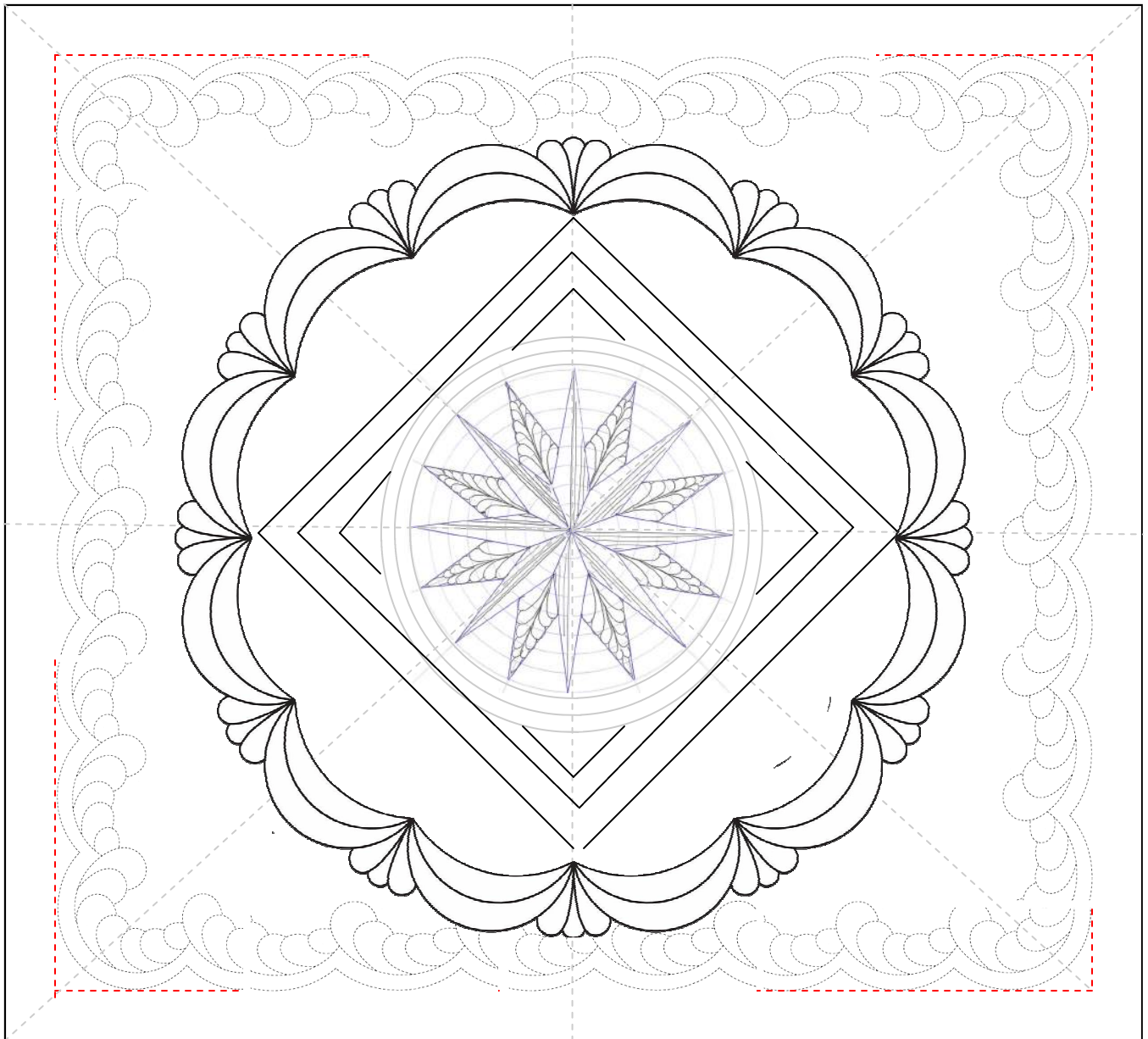
Using my horizontal and vertical lines as a guide, I marked another set of triple lines on point with one line going “underneath” the circles that surround the medallion.

I’ve added dimension to this piece and used up a little bit more space in the wide open area. Let’s play with the open area by adding MORE!

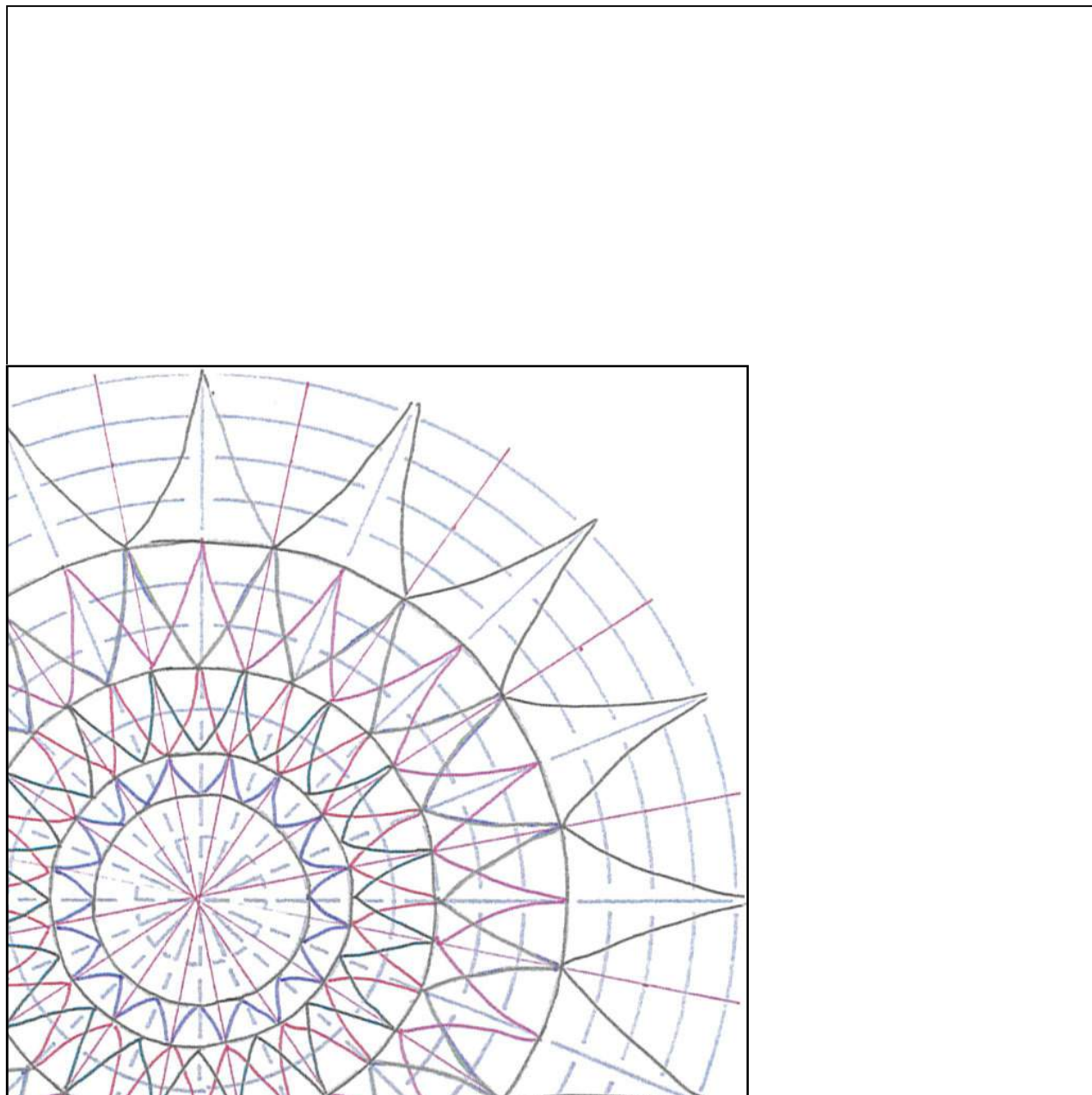


I added a large circular swag to go around the medallion. This divides up more space, provides movement and dimension and also repeats the circular design in the middle.

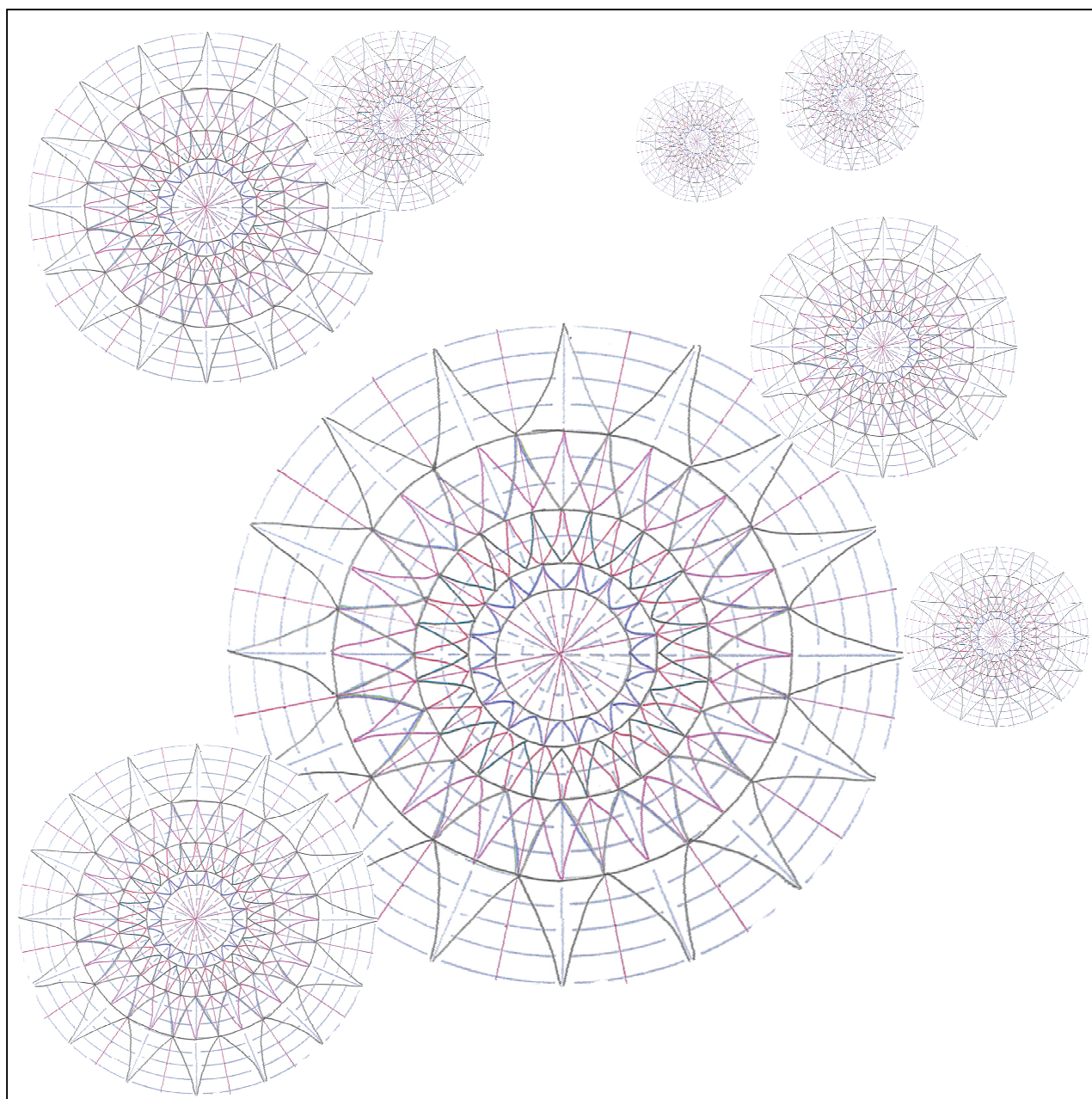
Because this huge area was divided into separate areas I am inclined to use several different background designs to add even more interest!

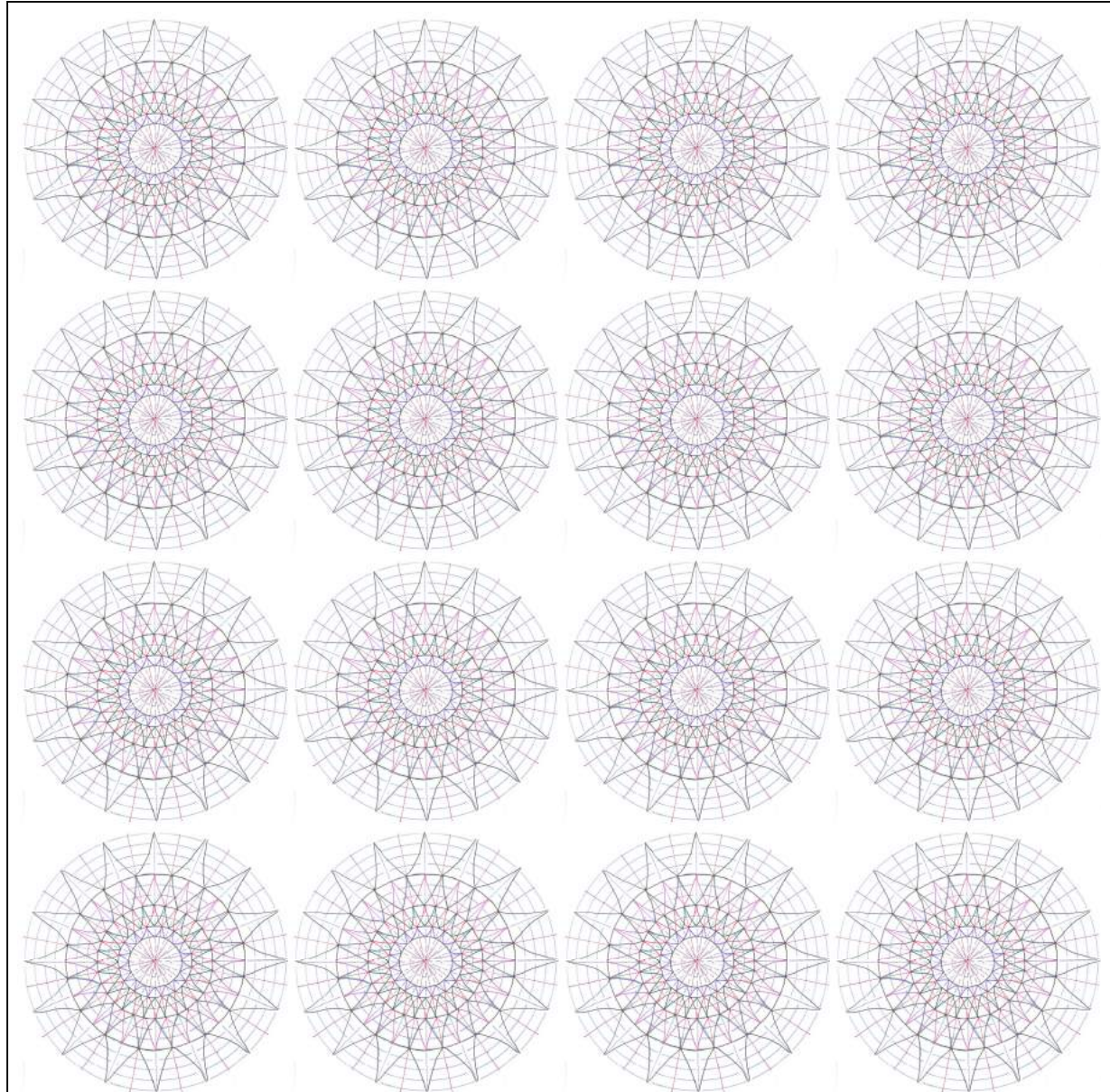


I mentioned earlier that you don't always have to have your medallion centered! It's fun to place it in a corner and run it off the edge if you wish. You can bring your borders up to it and then fill the middle with more designs!



Another fun thing to do is to take your medallion and repeat it many times in different sizes overlapping, running designs off the edge, etc.



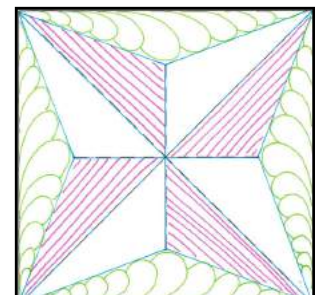
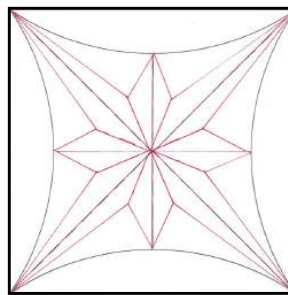
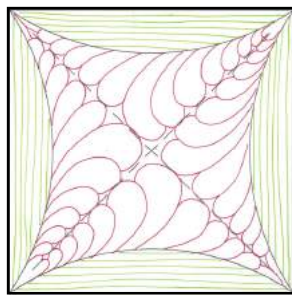
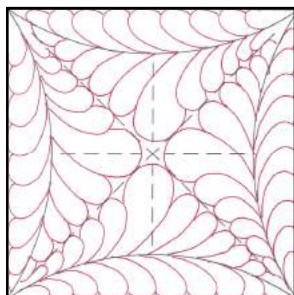
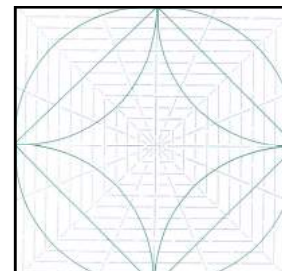
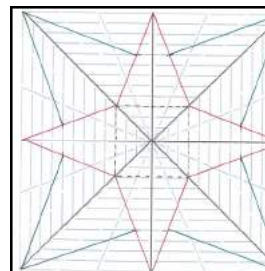
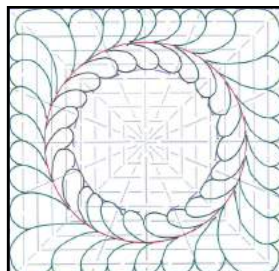
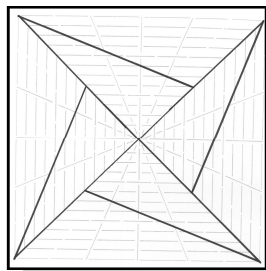
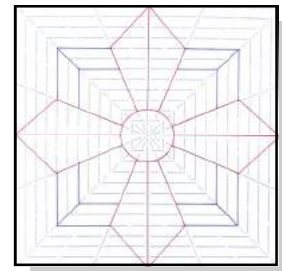
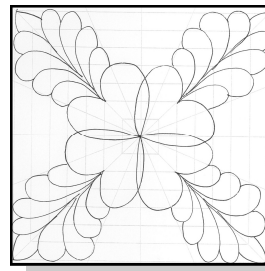
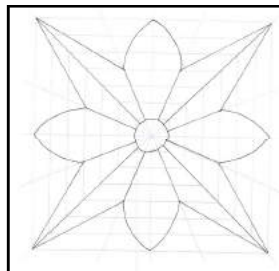
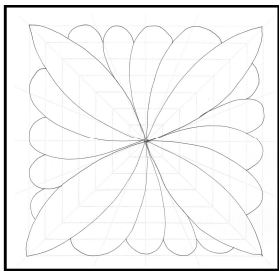


You can also repeat it “on square” for a repetitive overall design. This is a great introduction to the next chapter!

Repetitive Design Wholecloth Quilt

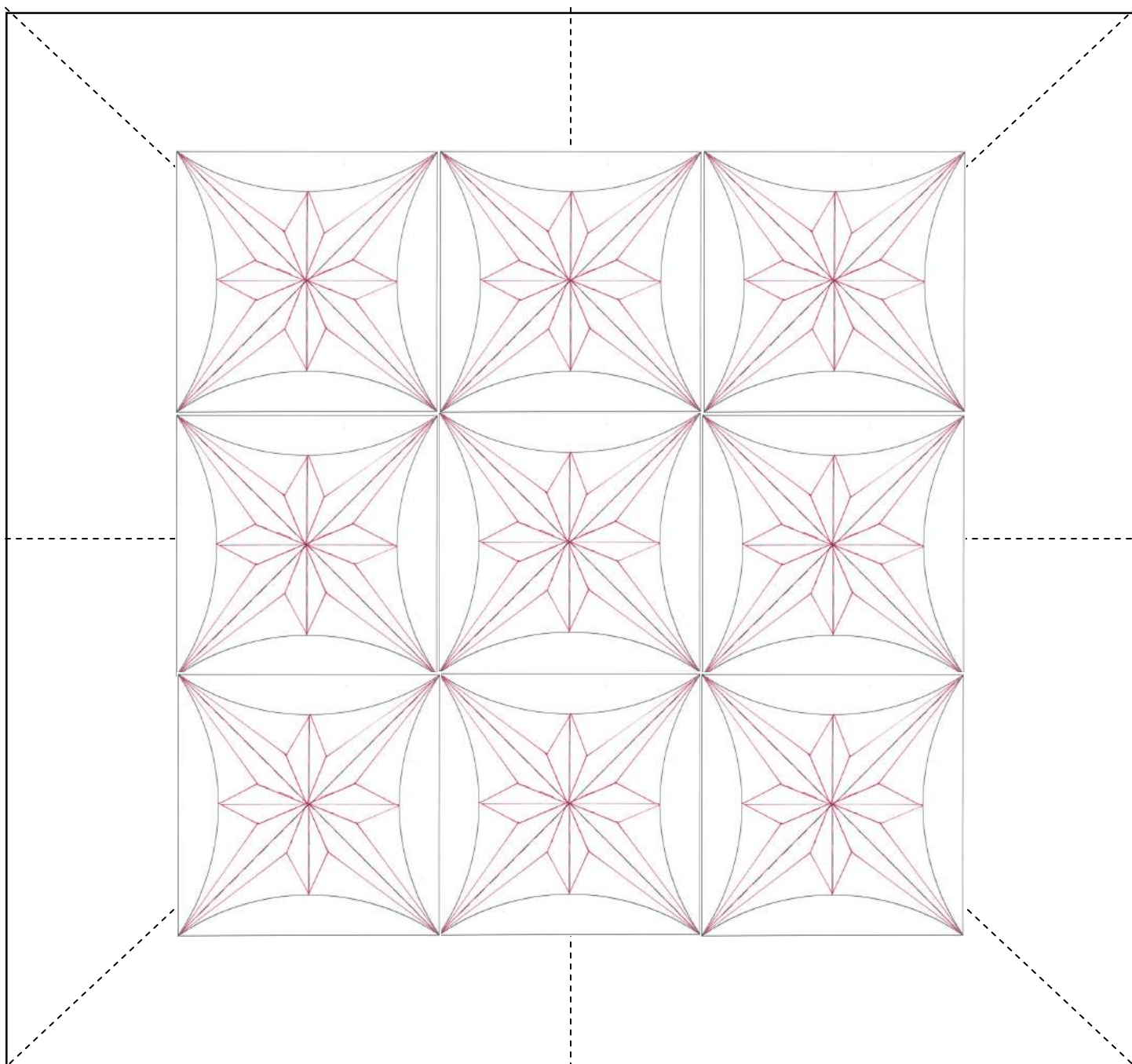
The guidelines for folding, quartering and pressing your fabric are exactly the same for both medallion designs and repetitive overall designs. Mark the exact same guidelines as you did before, i.e., horizontal center, vertical center and corner to corner.

The difference with a repetitive style design is you are repeating one design over and over to fill your space. 99% of the time I am using a square design with four corners.

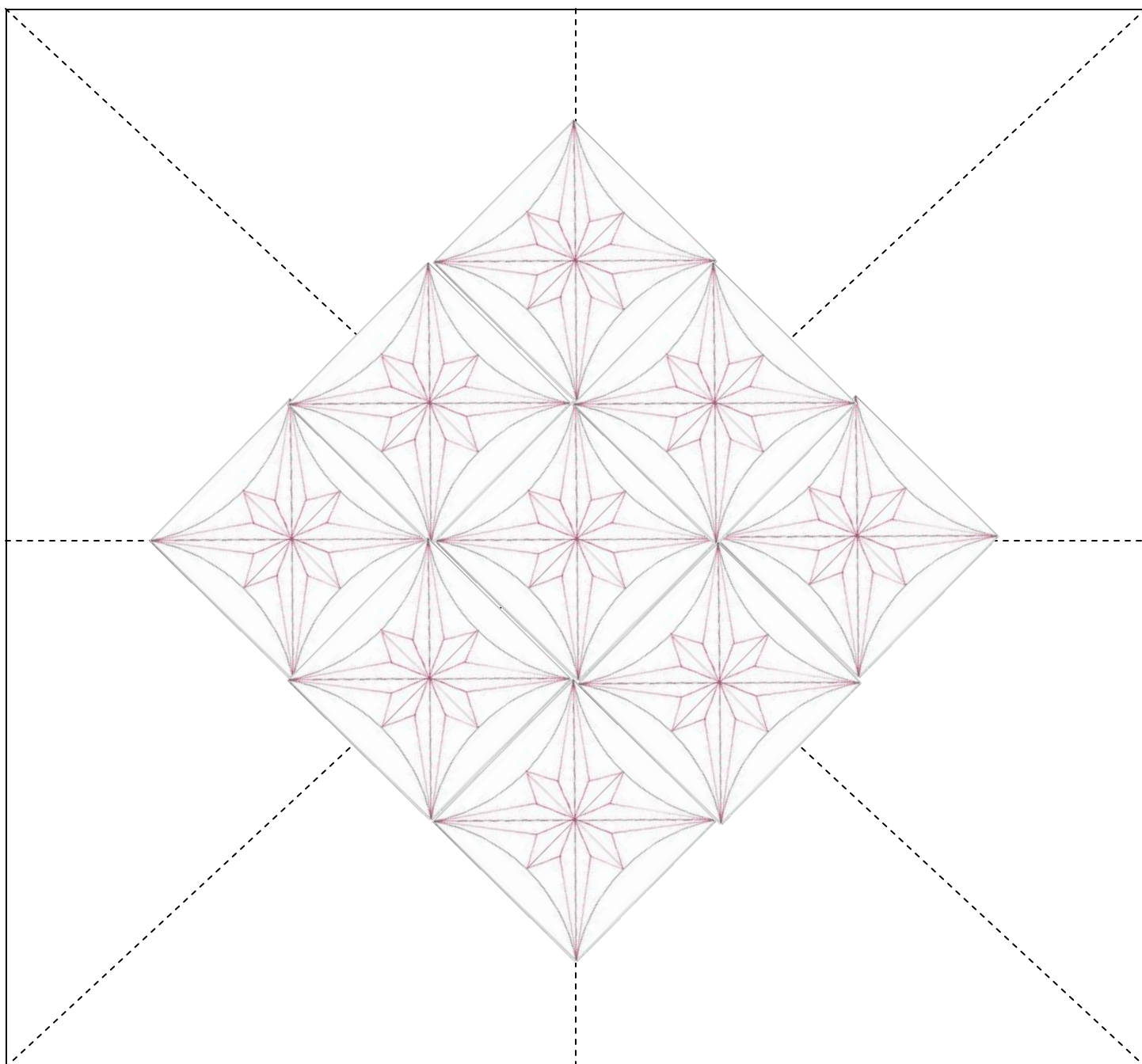


Use the basic layout for a repetitive design wholecloth quilt...the same one we used for the medallion style.

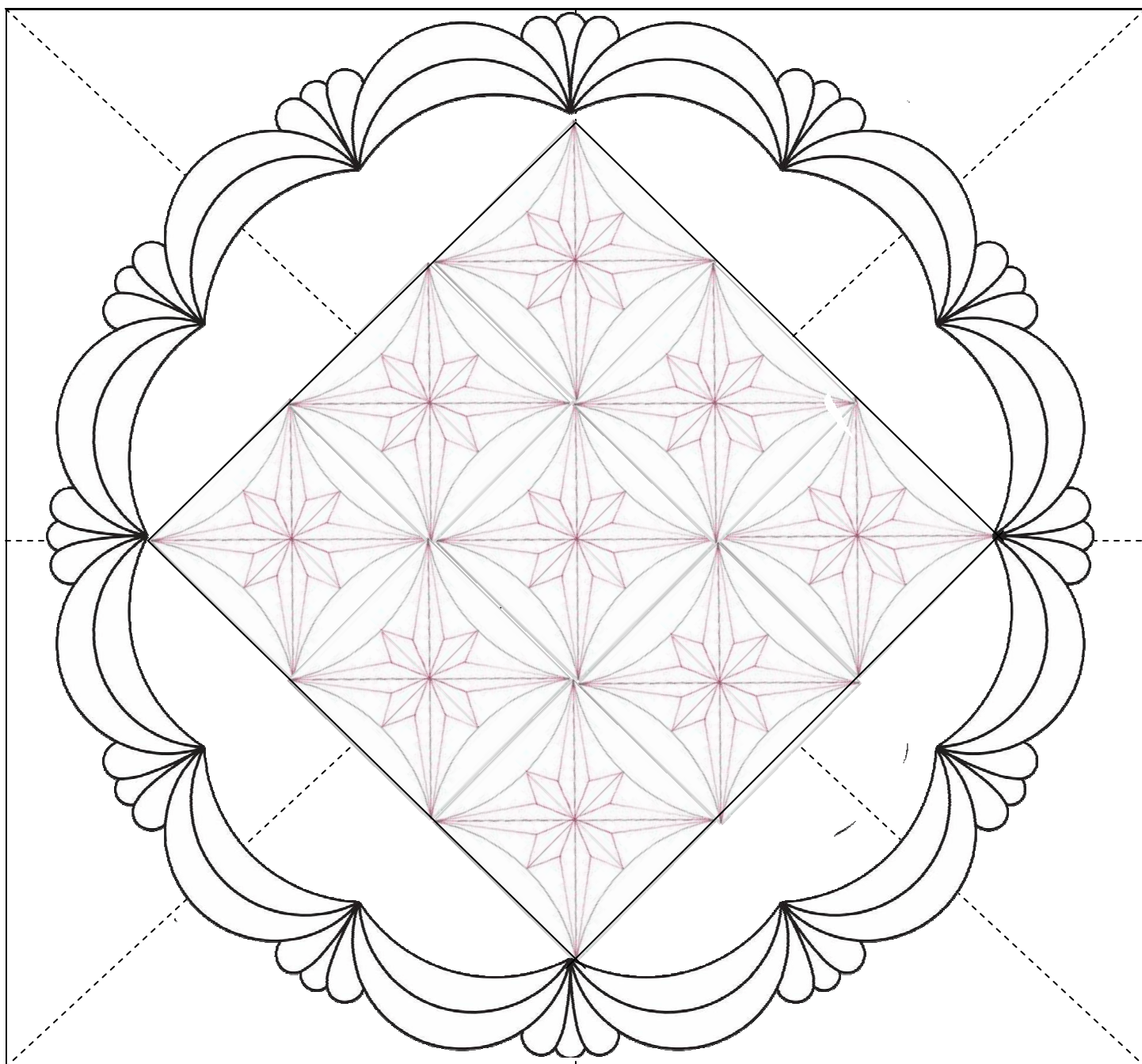
1. Choose your square design and place it in the middle of your quilt being sure to line up the center and corners with your marked guidelines.
2. Now repeat that design horizontally and vertically always lining up your design with the marked guidelines. Keep repeating the design until you have filled your space. See the beautiful secondary design that is created by the repetition???? Very cool!
3. If you have a pieced block quilt you can place your design on your blocks and repeat it in every single block and you will end up with the same overall design.



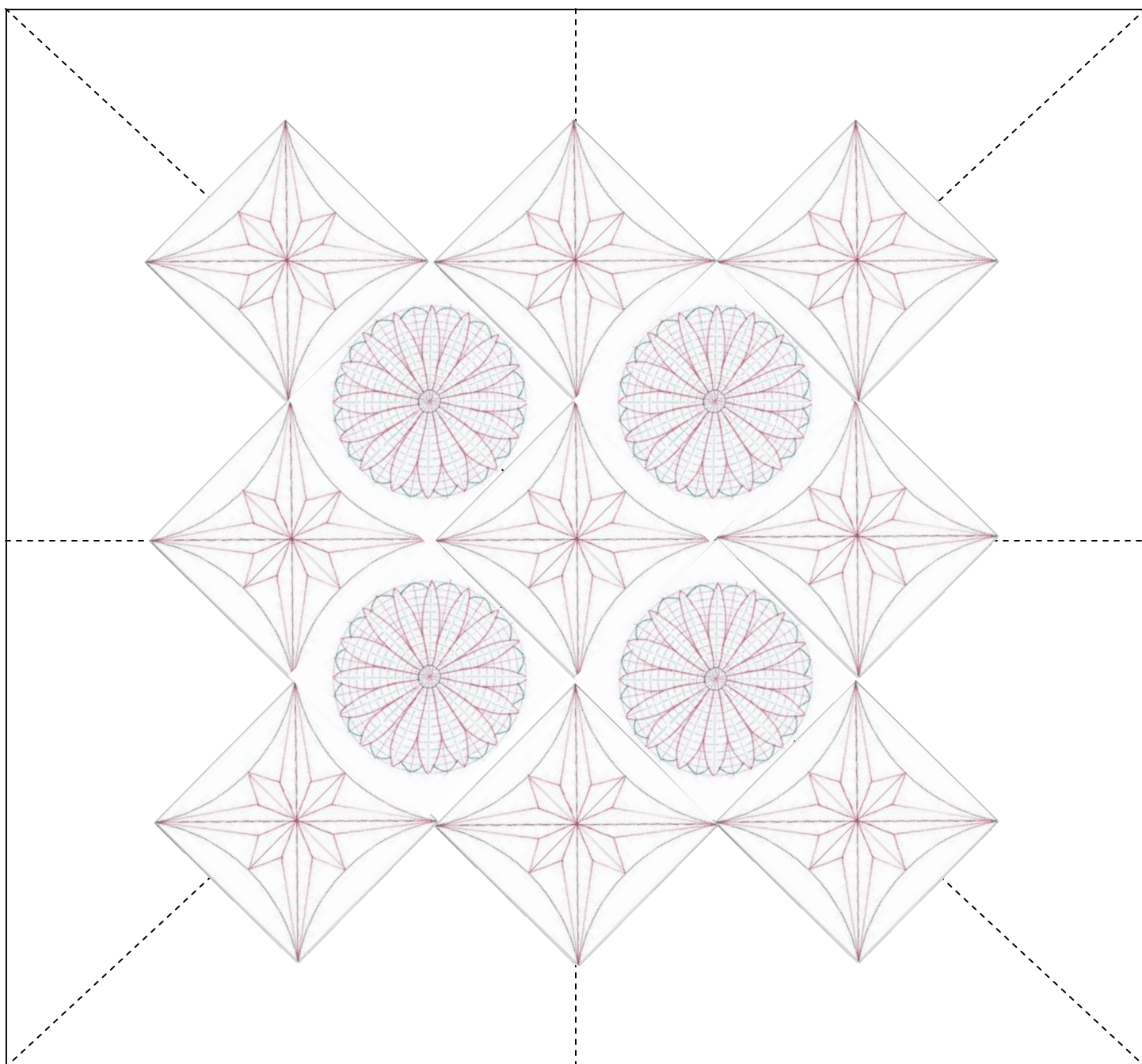
The previous page showed one square design repeated horizontally and vertically. When I audition designs I always try them “on point” too. You get a totally different effect. You still line your design up on your marked guidelines to keep everything lined up. Keep repeating your design until your space is filled.



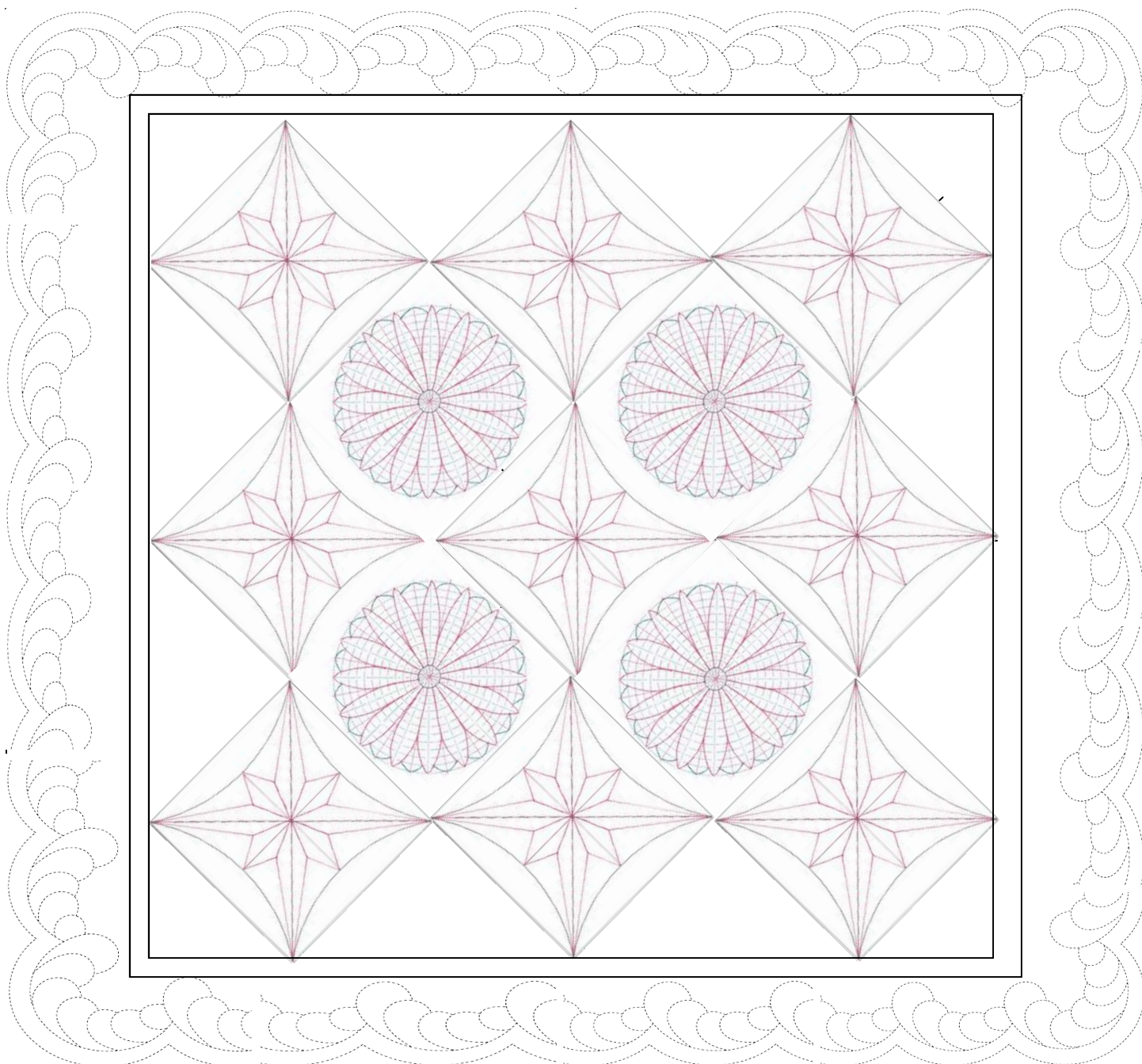
Remember the circle swag we used on the previous medallion quilt? You can do the same thing here!



One fun thing about repeating a design on-point is you can end up with open areas where you can add a completely different design such as this flower . Use your imagination here... the sky is the limit!!!

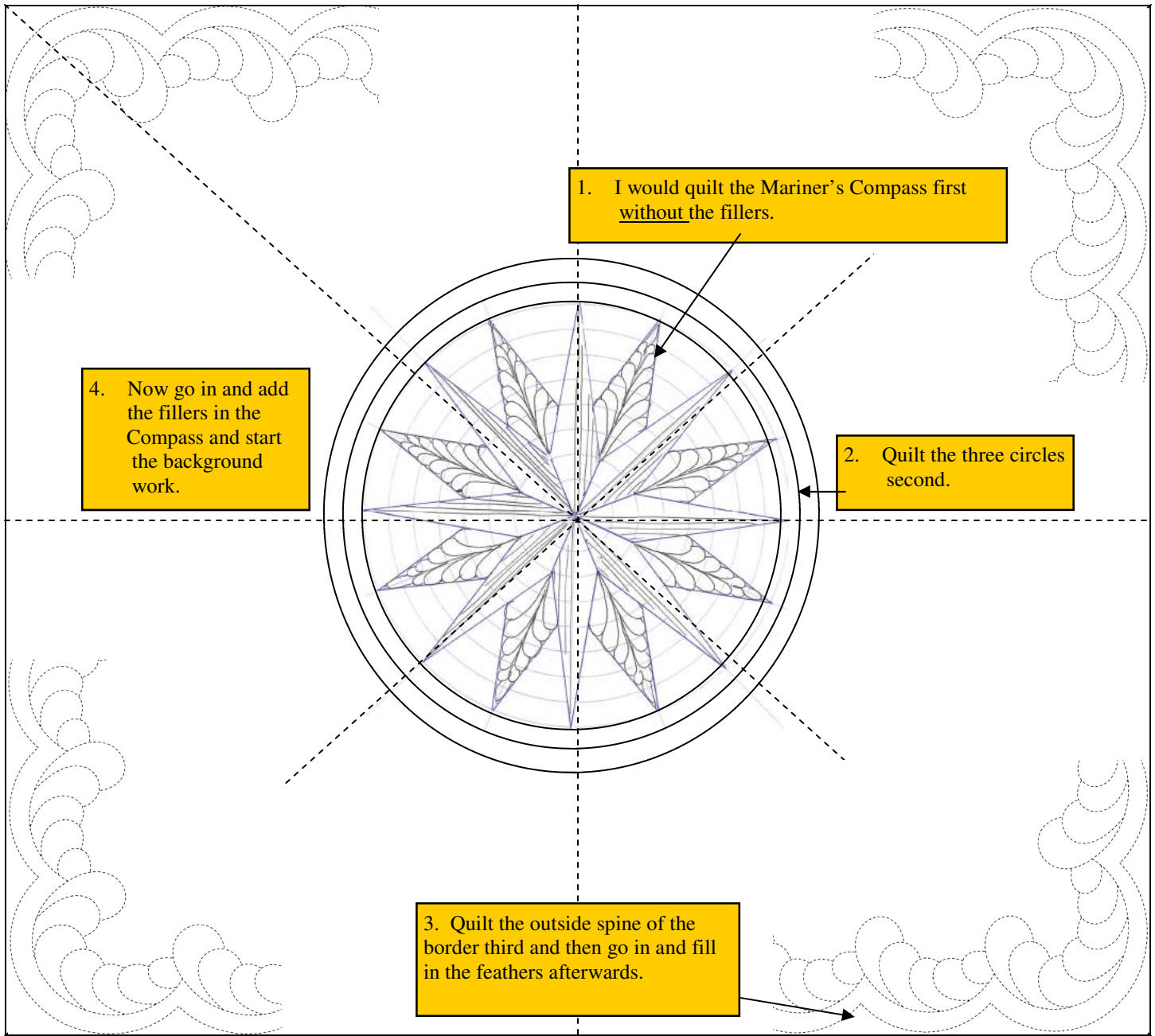


You don't have to repeat a design all the way to the edge...you can add a border around the center design too!



Order of Quilting

Stabilizing and quilting a wholecloth quilt is different than a pieced quilt. I recommend that you quilt your piece from the “big bones” to the “little bones”. Do your major designs first throughout the entire piece and start working your way down to the smaller designs. By quilting the designs evenly throughout the entire quilt, big bones to little bones, it should be relatively flat when you are done. Your background designs are always last. I have numbered the designs in the order I would quilt this piece.

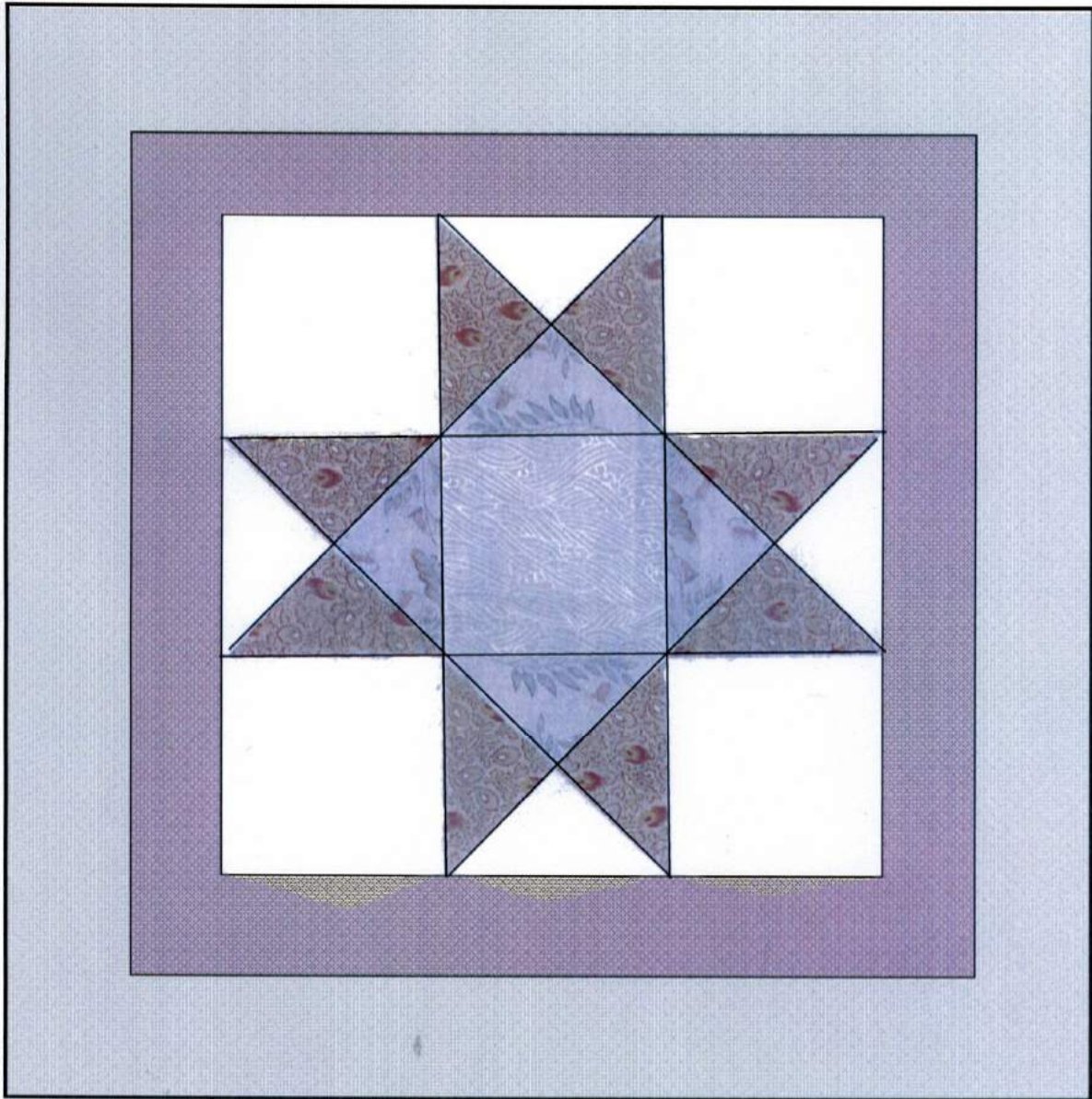


Designing Pieced Tops

In this next chapter I am going to give you some tips on how to create medallion and overall designs in pieced quilt settings. The tips I'm providing apply to both pieced quilts as well as wholecloth quilts. I will show designs being drafted on a pieced quilt. Remember...nearly any design you do on a pieced top could translate into a wholecloth quilt design!

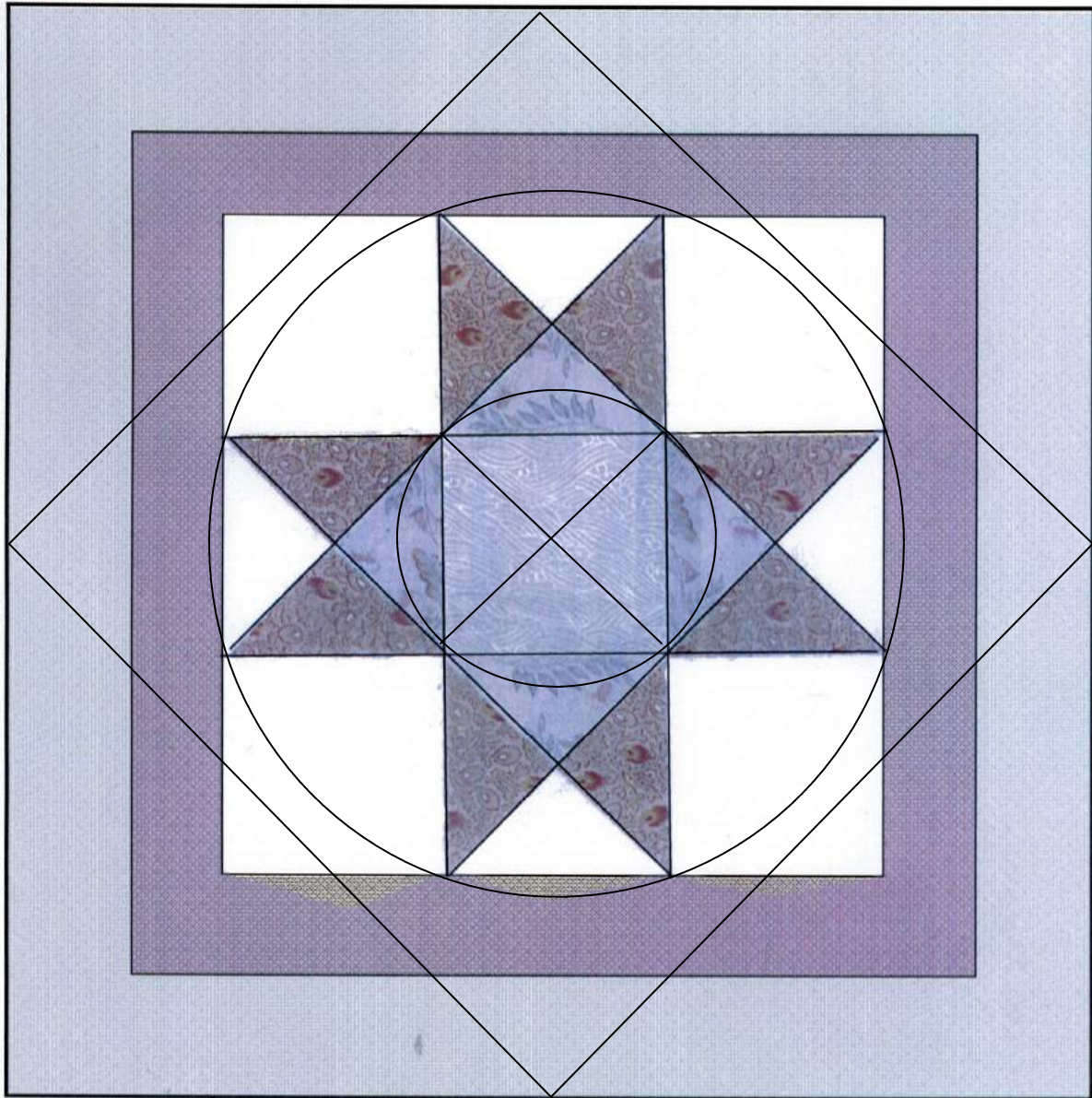


Medallion Style



This is a basic medallion style pieced quilt. It has one large design in the middle surrounded by white space and two borders.

1. **Focal Point:** Obviously the large star in the middle.
2. **Movement:** I see a little bit of movement being created by the half-square triangle points bringing your eye to the outside edge.
3. **Dimension:** I don't see any dimension in this quilt...but we can definitely create that with the quilting designs!
4. **Repetition:** No repetition

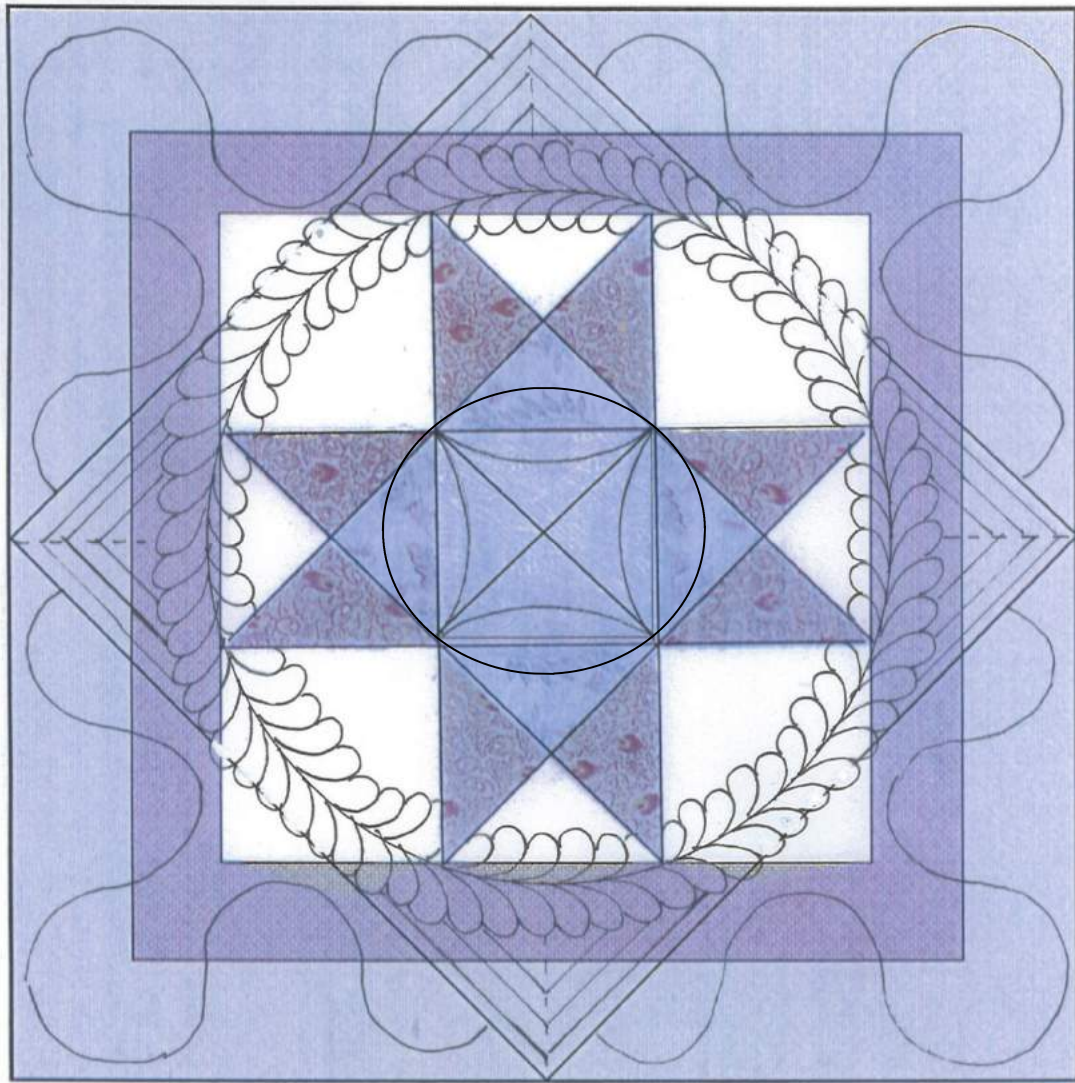


It's a little overwhelming to look at an entire quilt, i.e. large space, and try and decide on a design. I live by "divide and conquer". Start breaking down your space into smaller areas. Remember it's okay to cross lines!

I started by adding circles on the inside and outside of the star. This provides movement and reinforces the focal point.

I divided up the square in the middle on the diagonal to divide that space.

Then I added a large square on point going thru the middle and across the borders.



I used my Basic Three to fill my divided spaces.

The large circle became a feather wreath that goes UNDER the pieced star points.

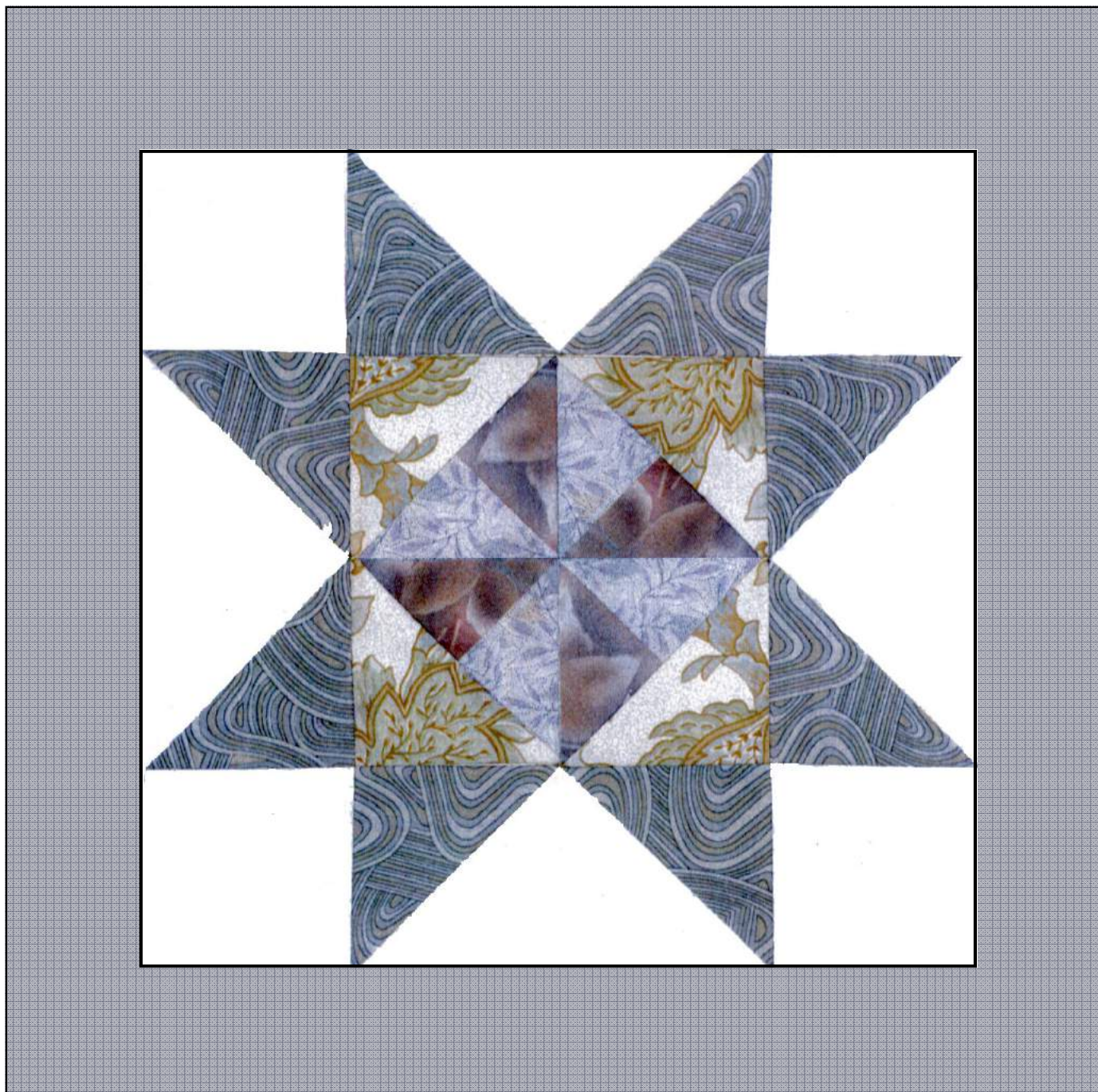
I added repetitive lines in the square on point that go UNDER the quilted feathers.

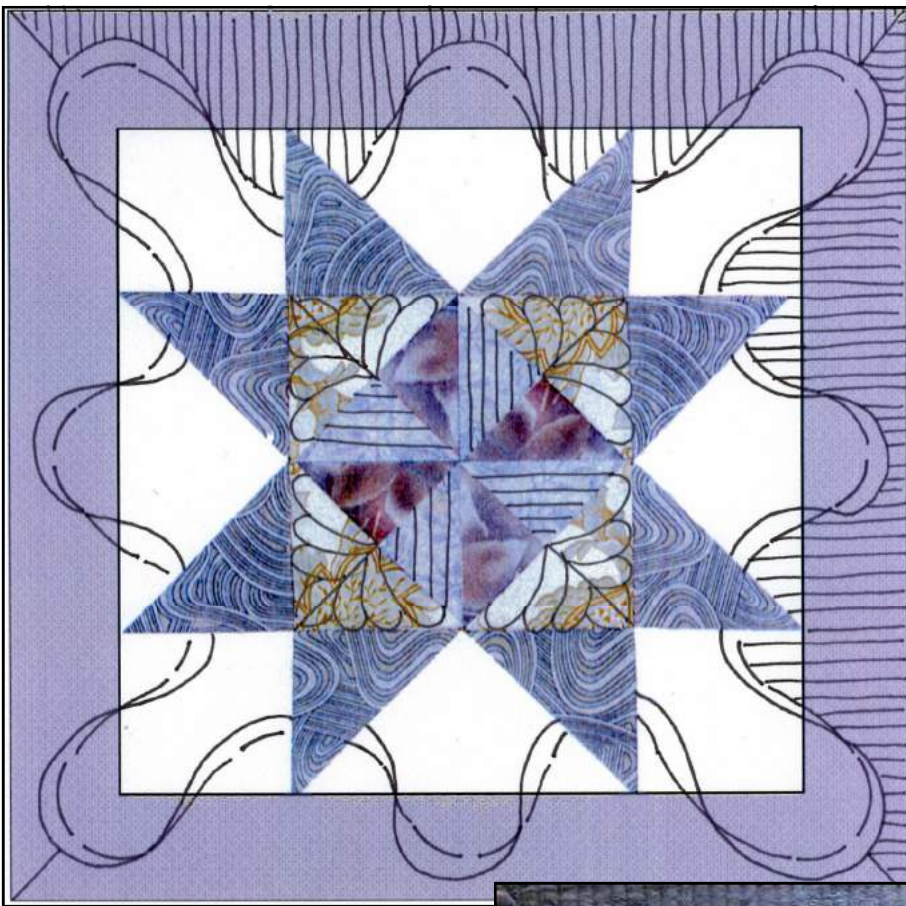
I added a vine border that I can fill with anything I wish. This goes UNDER the repetitive line square.

See...it doesn't have to be complicated. Divide and Conquer. Fill with the Basic Three.

Here's another Medallion style pieced quilt. Focal point and movement is captured in the pinwheel block in the middle of the quilt.

The previous quilt showed the border in the corners and sashing areas. Let me show you how you can add dimension and movement by bringing the border INTO the quilt itself.

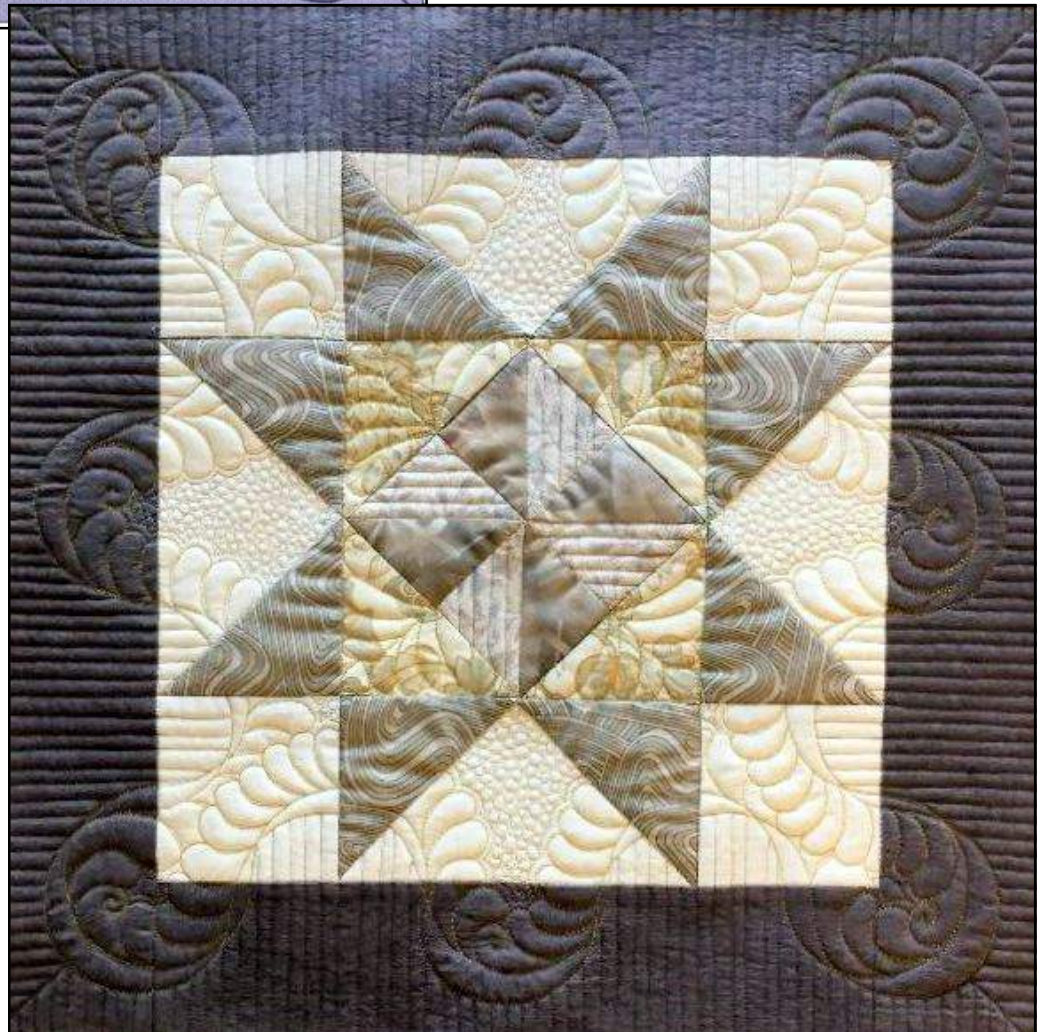




I drew a simple double ribbon border that not only provides great movement but it also provides dimension by diving underneath the star medallion.

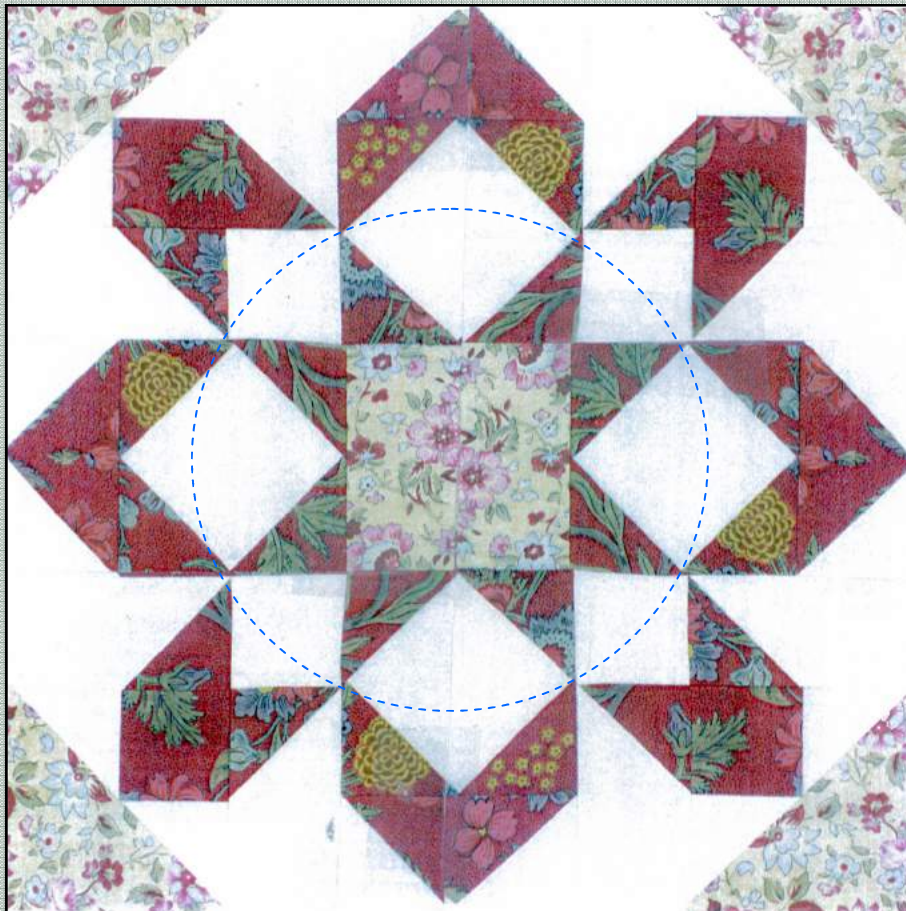
Because this is a wimpy narrow border I added repetitive lines to the outside to make it stronger. Notice these lines also go past the border seam and into the body of the quilt.

Repetitive lines were added to the pinwheel on the inside to provide movement and repetition of the outside lines. Feathers were added to fill the triangles and to the inside of the ribbon.

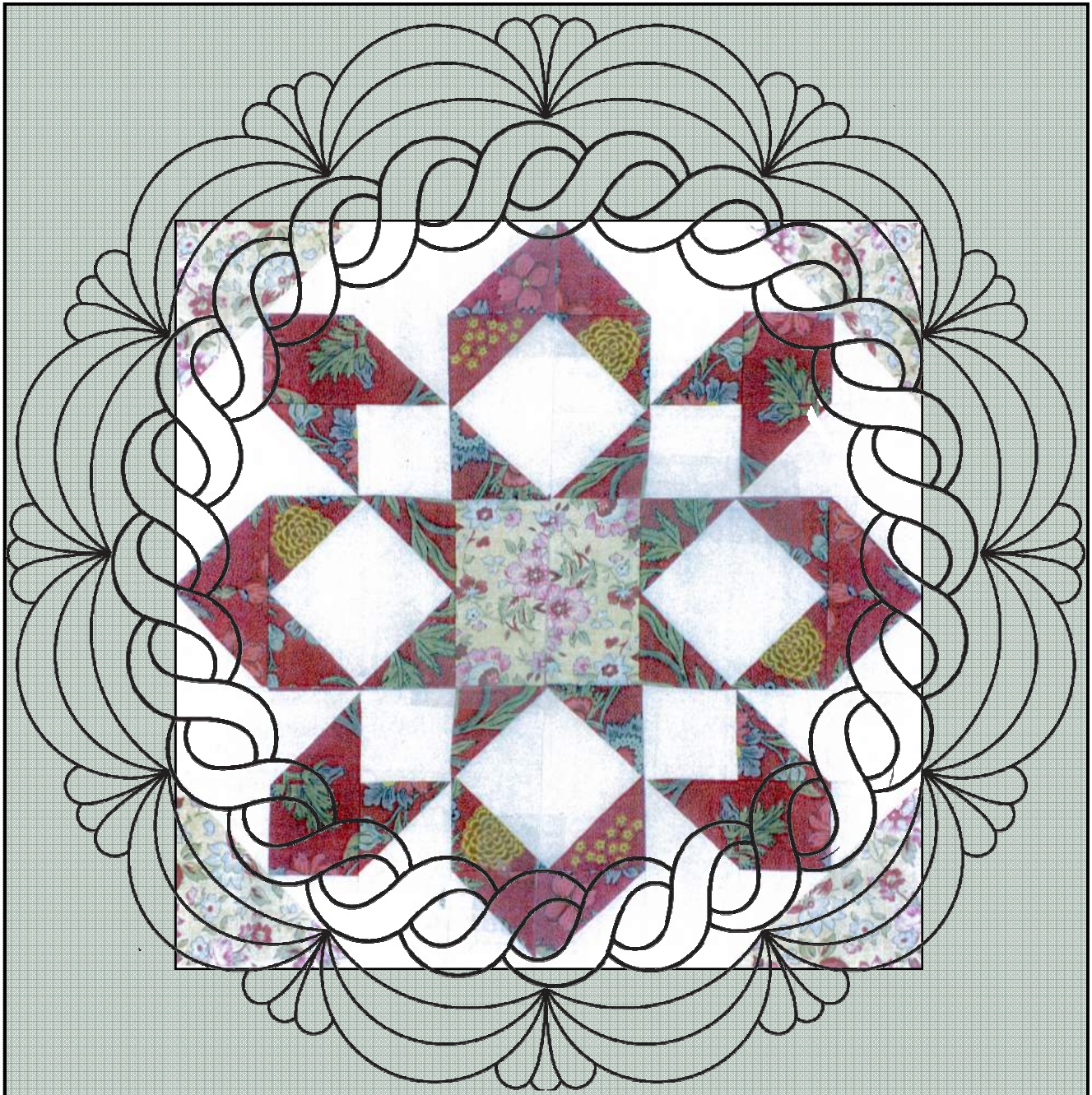


The previous example showed how you can take a border and cross the seam lines.

I like the secondary “circle” that the white blocks provide. I want to highlight that design by adding a circular quilting design.



These are two circle medallions from my Ultimate Medallions collection. See how nice these look going around the middle of the quilt and notice, too, that I crossed over the border seams!



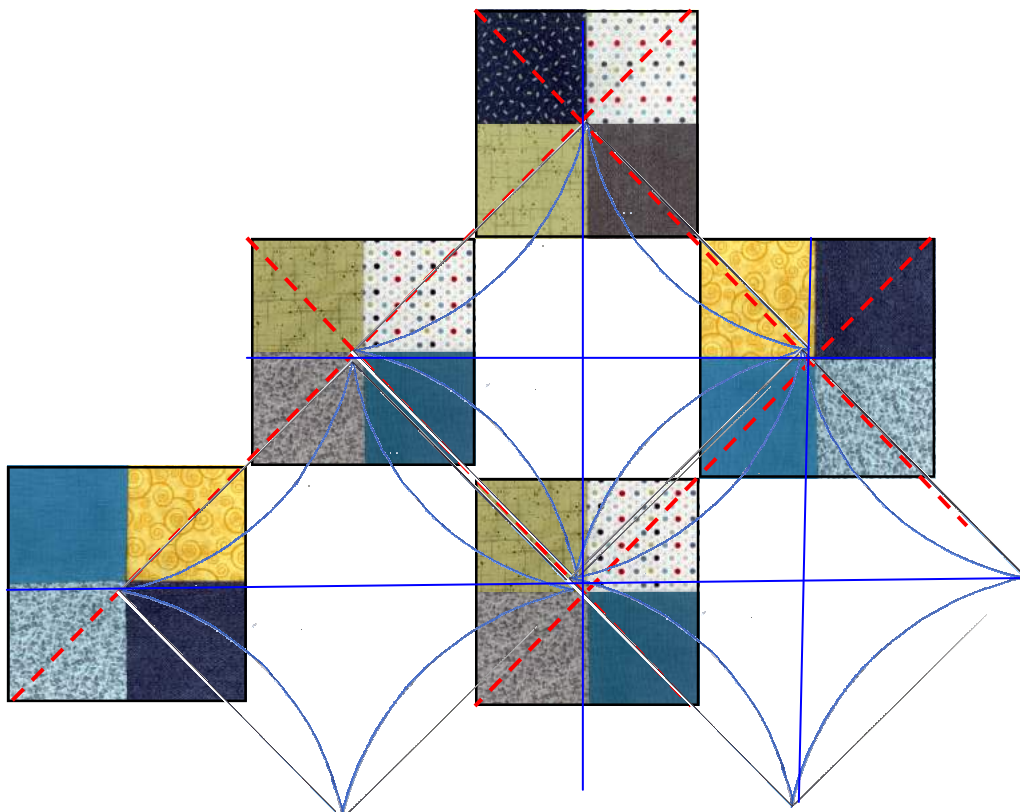
Repetitive Overall Style



This is a very basic four patch block divided by a plain block. This is a perfect setting for a repetitive overall design just like the wholecloth.



Remember how we repeated this square design in the wholecloth? Look how nice this looks in a pieced quilt setting!



I used the Ultimate Shape and repeated it on point from block to block. This immediately broke up the “blockiness” of this quilt and provided a whole different space to fill.

I chose to quilt the Shape in bright red contrasting thread. I added repetitive lines in a matching thin thread. LOVE the simplicity and the texture!





This star block pattern offers a multitude of choices for designing! You could stay within the middle of each star and be safe OR we could start adding more lines to create an overall secondary design.



I went back to my best designing tool ever...my ruler. I simply laid the ruler down on the star points and started connecting everything. It can be as simple as that. If you want to add more you can start filling some of the spaces with The Basic Three.

In conclusion, I hope that this book has offered you some good “tools” for you to consider using when you are designing your quilt tops.

If the designing process overwhelms you...remember to divide and conquer. Breaking things down into smaller sections makes it do-able.

Remember The Basic Three. You don't have to be fancy. These three fillers can make even the most simple quilt fabulous.

Use your ruler! It's the best tool you have.

If you don't have stencils for shapes go to your kitchen! Plates, saucers, cups, etc. are all great ways to get basic shapes.

Get some clear vinyl so you can play. I always have some on hand for doodling or drafting designs. Just remember to line the edges with colored masking tape or make a bright mark on the edge to stop you from drawing over the edge of the vinyl onto your quilt top.

Email me! I'm always there for questions. Just remember to reference quilting in the subject line so I am certain to open your email.

Thank you! Cindy :)

