



# Our Pets Block

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Animal lovers are a unique species of human being. Most normal people told by their doctor that they were allergic to something would most likely try to avoid it. Animal lovers suffer through the allergies, sneezing and coughing while they cuddle and kiss their dogs and cats. We walk around in fur-covered clothing and don't care. We go to dinner at normal people's homes and they have to brush and vacuum their furniture when we leave. Meanwhile we drive home clueless, smiling at what a great evening we'd had.

When our pets act badly and tear up shoes and cushions, we fluctuate between anger and giggles as we grumble and take videos of the mess. We watch their amazingly funny behavior that, to us, is better than television. When Gracie the cat scratches my husband, showing him her meanest scowl, he continues to play with her with his bloodied finger wrapped in a napkin. She never scratches me. Just saying.

When Ernie and I first got married, we watched a movie



called *To Dance with the White Dog* featuring Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronin. It somehow captured our imaginations, and for the last 30 years, we have had the joy, the privilege, and sometimes even the heartache of dancing with white dogs, all rescued, all a pain in the neck, all well-loved and many well-missed.

Everyone thinks they have the smartest, most adorable pets. We never thought that. Our dogs are big, sloppy messes, drooling as they run through the house, and quite forgetful of the hours of pet training classes they attended. The cats are mostly stuck up. They are, that is, until dinner time arrives.



Our Pets Block shows Bear, on the left, and Murphy on the right. Bear was a huge, snow-white, Great Pyrenees with a silky coat and big brown eyes. He was gentle and sweet, and brave; our constant companion. We said good-bye to Bear just weeks ago, and it is with such sadness that I write this. Murphy was his best buddy. She was a Pyrenees mix, and my heart's delight. I am happiest when I think that wherever they are, they are together, healthy and happy, playing and cavorting somewhere across Rainbow Bridge.

I rescued Gracie as a little kitten from the jaws of an opossum in our backyard. She's not stuck up with me and seeks me out. She goes outside with the dogs at the appropriate times and hasn't used a litter box in two years. Okay, as I think about it just now, she really is adorable. As cats go.



## DESIGN METHOD: *Our Pets Block*

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There are many ways to represent an animal with fabric, but I think it's pretty difficult to do unless you are an accomplished artist. Then you

are able to transfer your talent with ink or paints to fabric. Animals are living, breathing things with facial expressions and tiny facial hairs that enhance those expressions. They have complicated eyes and mouths, and another dilemma is how best to depict their fur whether short or long.



I didn't think it mattered that I wasn't a formal artist, that I only knew rudimentary aspects of drawing. I truly believe art is a personal expression, and if your heart needs to express something, then you should do it.

Animals have been a part of my life for as long as I can

remember. It was a no-brainer that I would have a block in my quilt celebrating our pets. I just had to decide how to do it.

A word about balance. I already knew that my pets block would be placed directionally opposite, or catty-corner to the flag block. I also knew that the flag block would show flag poles in a crossed X pattern. In this instance, for symmetry and balance in the quilt, I made the tree to resemble that same crossed pattern in our pets block.

In deciding how to make the pets themselves, I wanted them posed in a way where photo transfer didn't work for me. I can't draw that well so I didn't want to draw and thread paint them. Applique became my choice. I found a picture of Bear and Murphy in the poses I wanted.



I traced the picture of Murphy and made a line drawing. I wasn't happy with that method for Bear and Gracie, so I found clip art that worked. From those I made line drawings.

In the process of making the tree, I realized it would be perfect to place Grace on one of the limbs instead of with the dogs, which was my original plan. I made a patch of grass for the white dogs to sit on, and it wasn't until I placed the dog pieces on the block that I realized that they blended into the background so much that you couldn't see them against the background fabric. To fix this, I placed a small black outline around them above the grass so they would stand out. The tree was an imaginary design made to help balance the quilt and fill out the edges of the quilt block.