





# 30 Years, 12 Blocks, 4 Days

Christalena Hughmanick

What has happened in 1989? The Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union collapsed, the Cold War ended and the satellite states of the Soviet Union collapsed. As a result, many countries in the east European block experienced a lifted ban on social gatherings and in Hungary the Hungarian Patchwork Guild (henceforth referred to as HPG) was formed. Thirty years later, in 2019, I revived this moment of awakening and designed the Freedom Quilt Project to publicly investigate the idea of democracy and provide Hungarian residents of various ages, backgrounds and skills with a platform to cultivate and define individual notions of freedom in a developing Capitalist economic structure.

In Hungary today, quilt practioners share and circulate their open source patterns and technical skills freely throughout their communities. They often use the traditional kékfestő fabric as a base fabric for their highly developed hand stitching techniques, which keeps the heritage of quilting and kékfestő alive. This is how the knowledge doesn't get lost and continues to be freely taught. With my background as an American textile artist I introduced the HPG to the culturally rich history of American quilting and its use of group work and social gathering to frame the creation of a public art, for which my role is facilitator. The overall objective of my project is to foster an environment for cross-cultural exchange between Hungary and the United States through our shared craft histories.

Through studio visits with remaining kékfestő producers in Győr, Tiszakécske and Nagynyárad, I learned of the materials' evolution in relation to political events of the past one hundred and eighty years, which I contextualized through examples of its use in protest and labor histories. But let us look back hundred and eighty years. What is the evolution about? In 1841 Hungarian noble women wore the block, printed and resist dyed cloth with a printed HONI pattern (HONI translates to "just one" in Hungarian). A

sample of it can currently be found in the Goldberger Museum in Budapest and was worn as an act of protest against Hungary's reliance on Austrian textile producers. As kékfestő fabric production grew within the broader textile industry, hundreds of family run dye houses formed and the material became a lucrative export until the Soviet occupation, which began in 1949. It was then that most dye houses were shut down and the remaining became property of the state, on occasion being forced to dye uniforms for factory and manual labor workers of the state. In the present day, the decorative, blue and white patterned material is easy to spot but if you look closely, you may also notice Budapest city Parking Inspector and MAV (public transport system) employee uniforms remain in this iconic blue color; a contemporary symbol of governmental power intersecting with craft.

My work in Hungary began with 9 months of field research on kékfestő cloth in Hungary, followed by a presentation and call for participation at the Hungarian Patchwork Guild (HPG) 2019 Annual Conference in May 2019. Through the assistance of the guild president Ildiko Polyak, members were invited to create forty by forty centimeters quilt blocks using a majority of kékfestő cloth to later be combined into the final Freedom Quilt. My call for participation circulated through their well connected community, resulting in approximately ninety blocks arriving in my mailbox by mid summer of this year. I found it important to begin with this existing group in order to locate what is unique about quilt work in this region of the world. In addition, their foundational efforts of community building and broader representation of female artists are inline with my teaching philosophy and became objectives for this project.

To achieve one of the projects goals - free and accessible education - a series of 8, 3 hour workshops were held free of charge at the US Embassy American Corners locations in

Veszprém, Budapest, Szeged, Ördögkatlan Festival in Pécs, Moholy-Nagy Művészeti Egyetem and Brody Workshop. They were advertised to people of all ages interested in the subject and with any level of experience in sewing, so as to create the most diverse selection of blocks. The practice of combining contributions from many different people can be found in the mid nineteenth century Baltimore Album Quilt tradition but it is generally uncommon for such freedom in design principles for participants, which left a level of unknown about the final outcome. For context and inspiration, I provided a presentation on US quilting practices and their connections to the many cultures that make up The United States. Examples included Native American tribe patterns, imagery used in Lancaster County Amish work and the function of African American Freedom Quilts in guiding slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad. The participants were also introduced to the pattern developed for the winning American Revolutionary war battle, Civil War cot quilts and social movements such as the Temperance Movement figure Carrie Nation pattern. I then gave basic sewing and applique instructions so that participants could create imagery representative of their own cultural heritage and identity, while providing the prompt of "What does freedom mean to you?"

Following the series of workshops, the collected blocks were stitched together during a quilting bee event over the course of 4 days in the Jánossomorjai ház at the open-air ethnographic museum Skanzen Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum. This event was modelled on American Western Expansionism era quilting bees in which geographically distant Pioneer women gathered to complete the hand stitching process together in order to complete one quilt faster; a type of event that have consistently taken place in the African American quilting communities and continues to have a strong presence by the women of Gees Bend, Alabama. This meeting space for slow hand work inherently lends to the sharing of skills, news and practical information in a social manner which was not experienced by Hungarian quilters until 1989 when the newly sovereign government allowed non-profit organizations to form and people to gather in large groups.

Over the course of the 4 day event I was joined by various combinations of HPG members on each of the four days to help with the quilt construction and the many decisions that came with the beginning of a new step in the process. The program schedule was the following: the participants were to first decide which blocks were to be included, sew

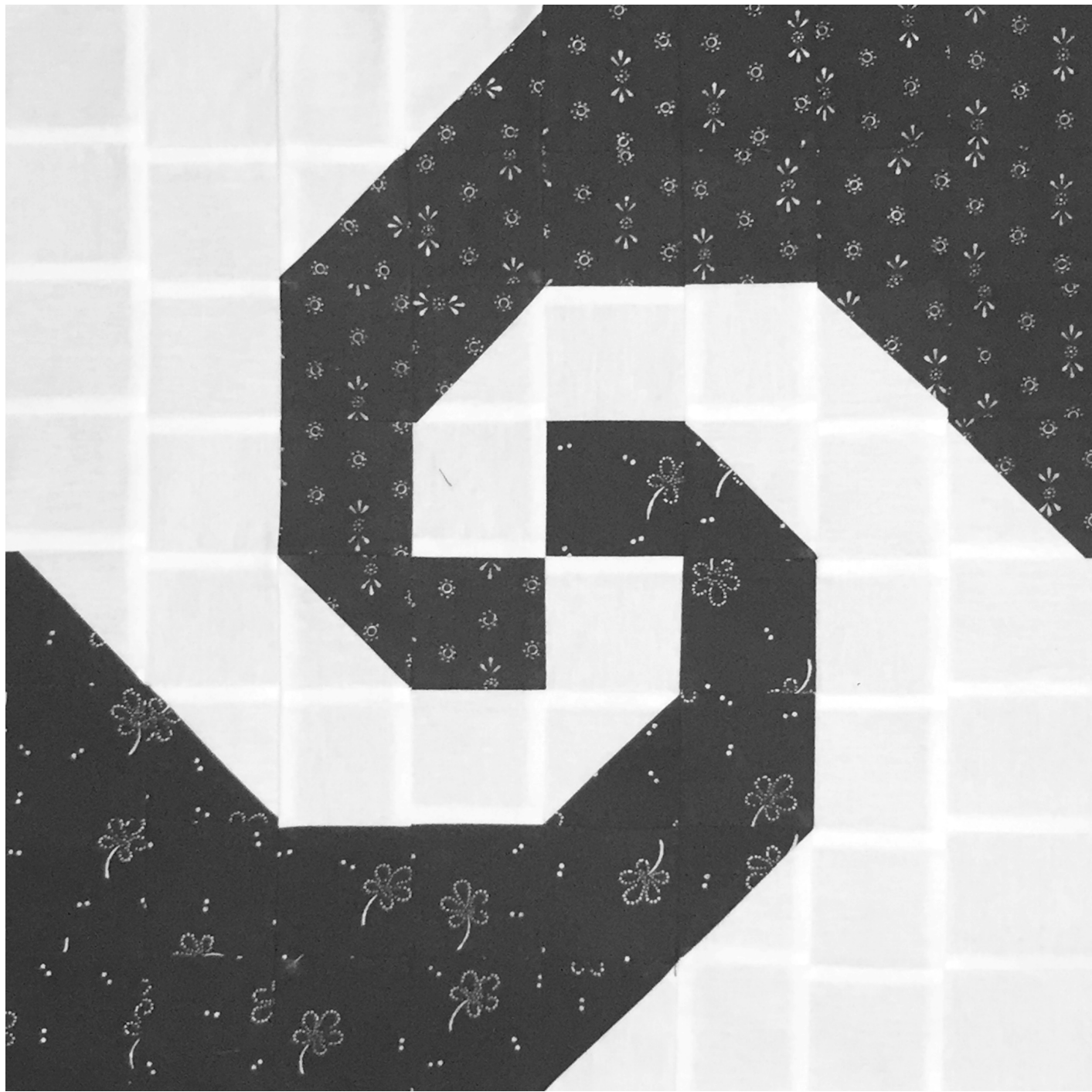
them together into four quilt top sections, each 2 by 4 meters in size; cut backing fabric, middle batting, hand baste the layers into quilt "sandwiches" and complete as much top stitching as was possible within the given amount of time. In keeping with the concept of democracy, a majority vote process was implemented to make decisions like what blocks to include (as we had too many for one quilt) and whether to top stitch by hand or machine. The objective was to give each person donating their time and skill an equal amount of ownership over the final outcome by distributing the power of choice as evenly as possible, therefore with each step, we paused for an exchange of ideas.

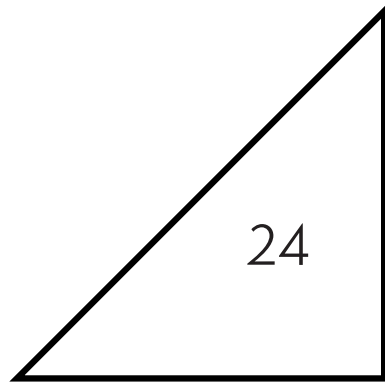
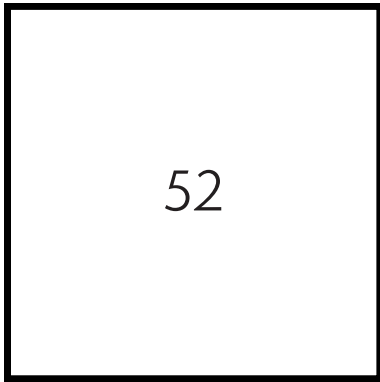
As we began a new step, an expert among the group naturally emerged to guide and share their knowledge with the rest of us. It made us all engaged, present and the experience educational not only for the participants but also the museum visitors that looked on and sometimes became involved in our lively conversations. The resulting work is an 8 by 4 meters quilt, made by over two hundred people that will continue to be exhibited as a symbol of temporal union, international exchange and resilience in quilting communities. In the following pages you will find a selection of blocks from the quilt, the name of their makers and pattern instructions to recreate them on your own. I hope that you find freedom in the many choices you will make within this structured and layered instruction provided for you here.

Happy stitching.

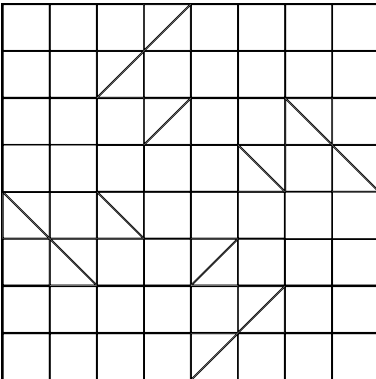
# Quilt Block Patterns

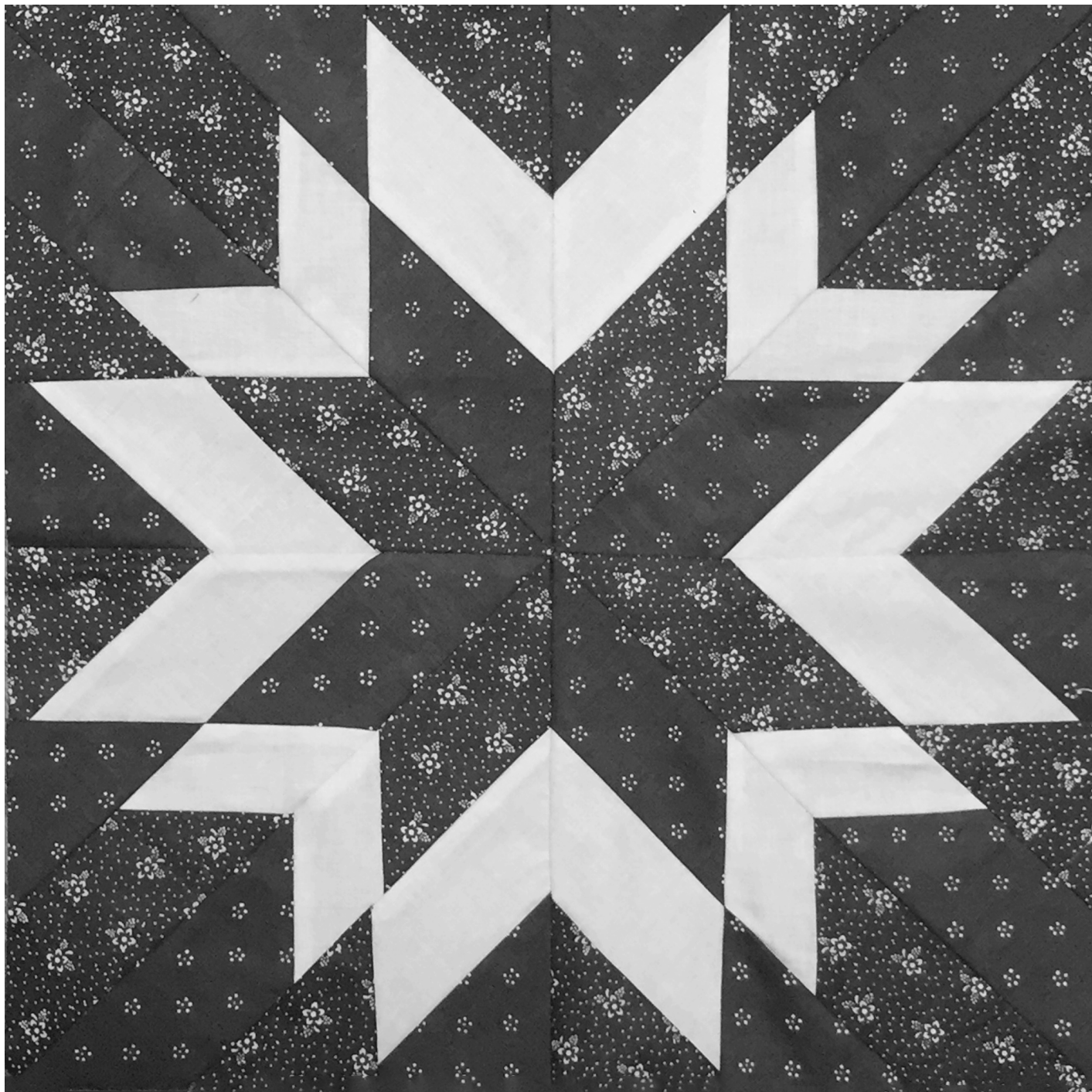
A square block measuring approximately 40 cm or 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in will be generated when pattern shapes are pieced together. Please add your desired seam allowance to each shape when cutting out your pieces.



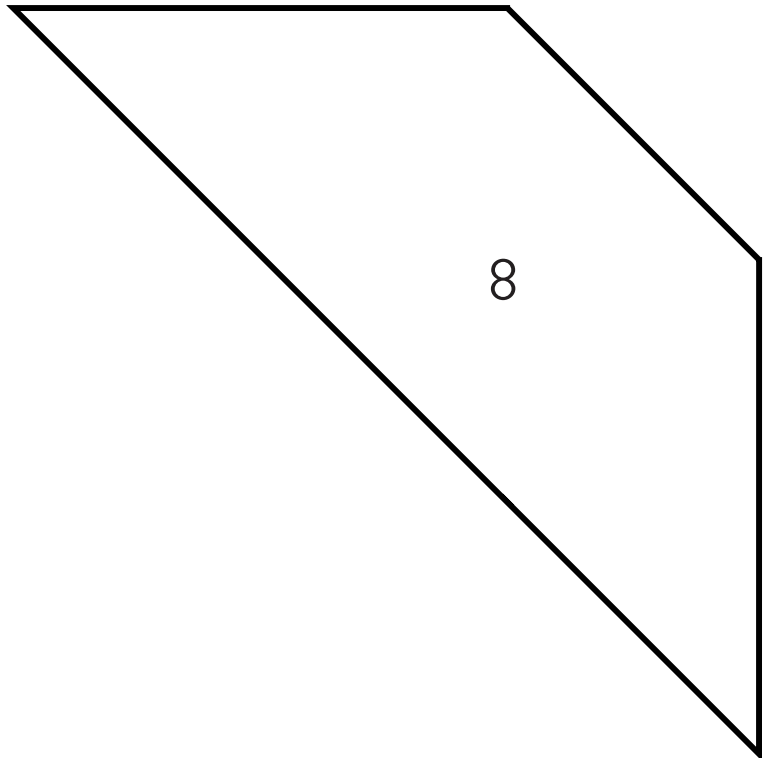
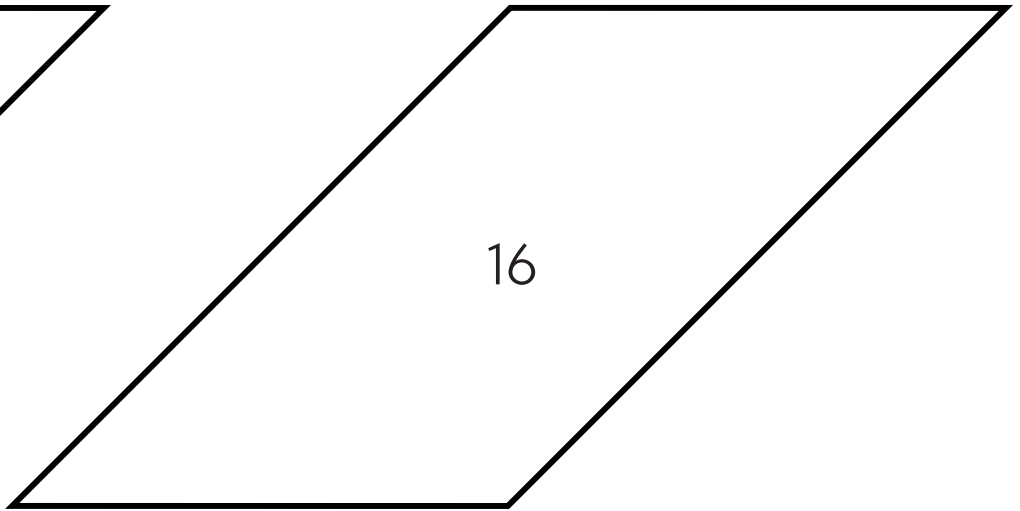
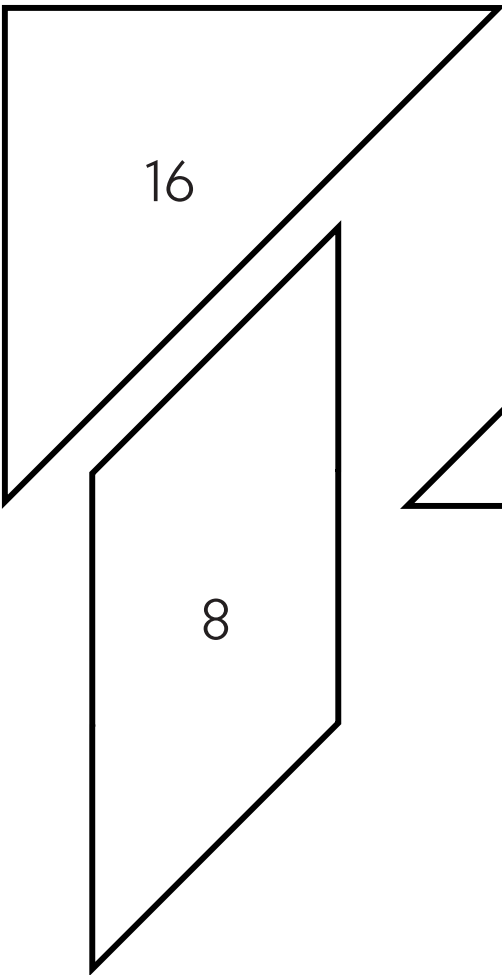


Enesei Foltvarró Klubja

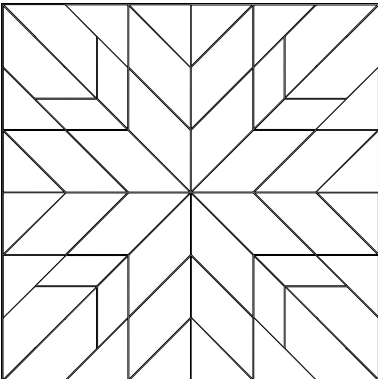


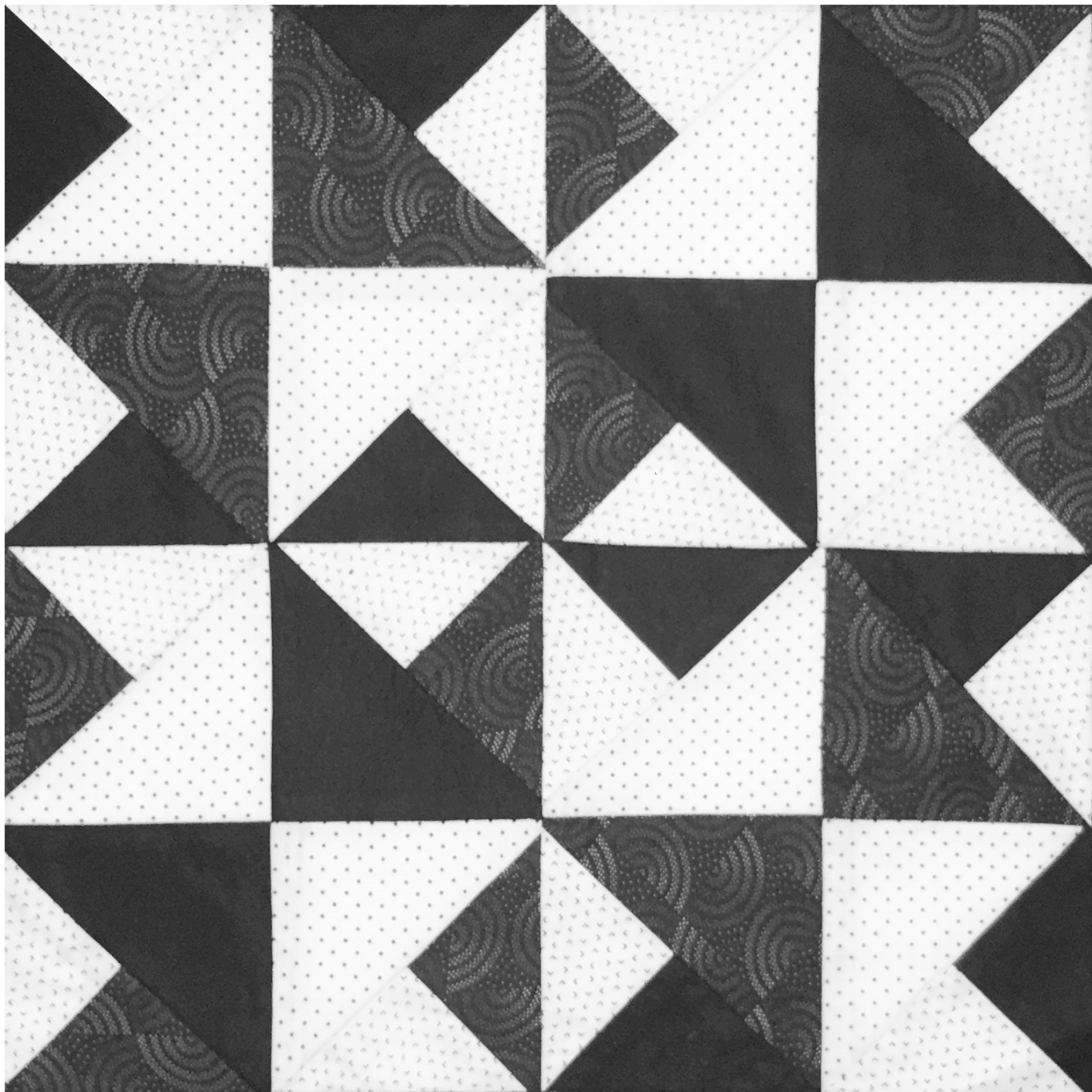


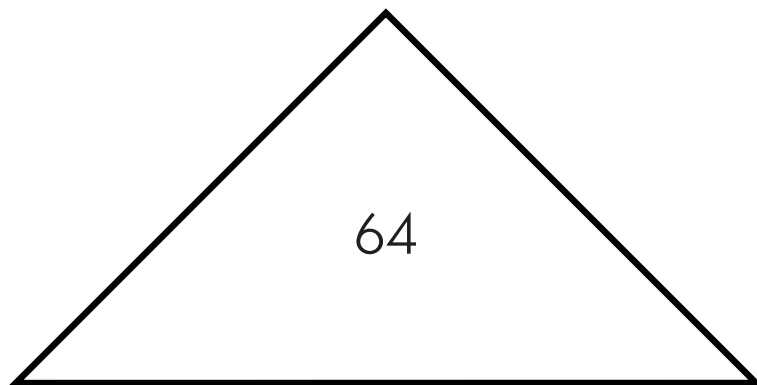




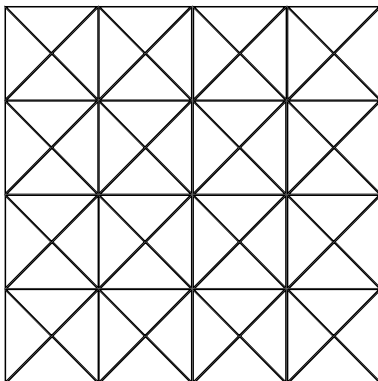
Varga Ágnes M

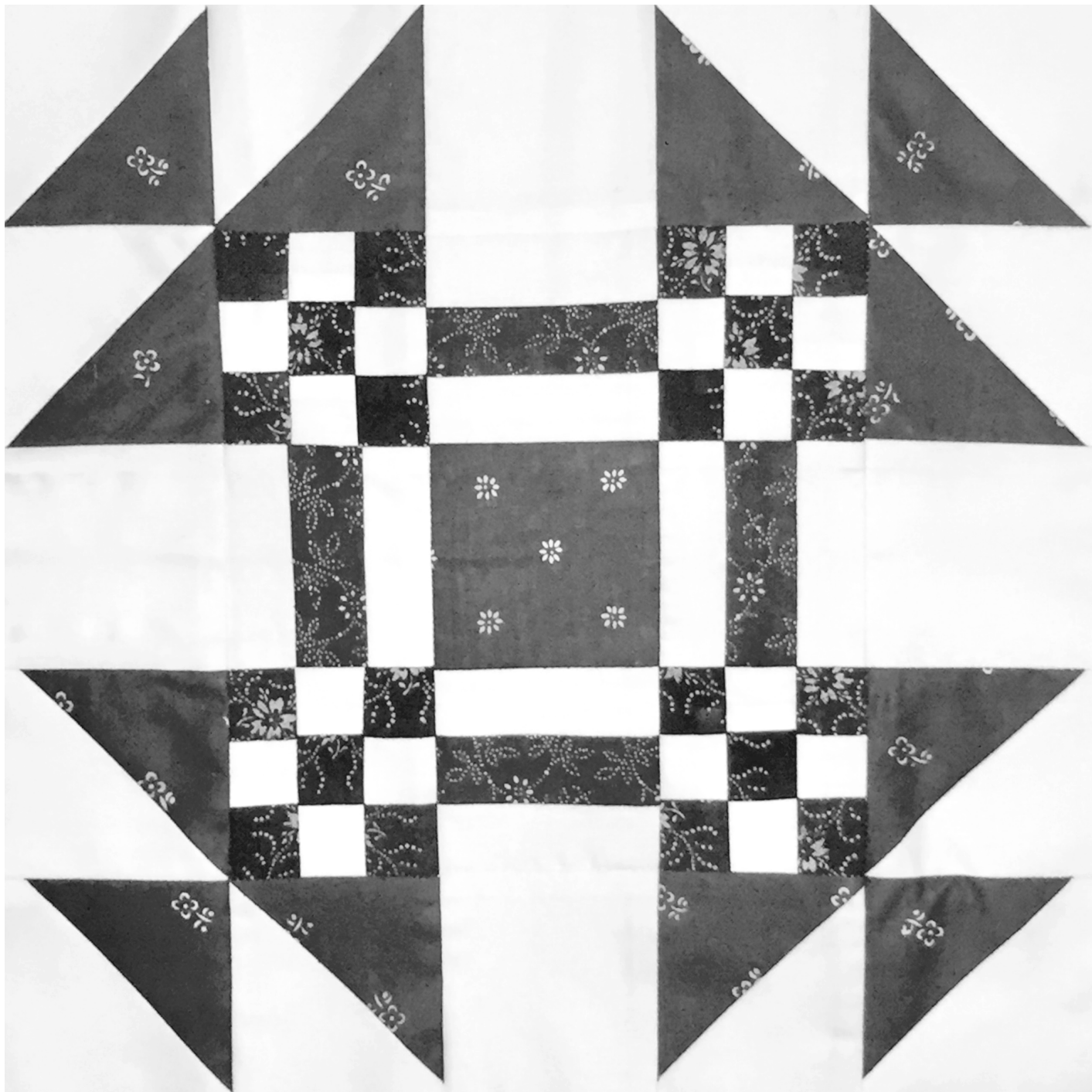


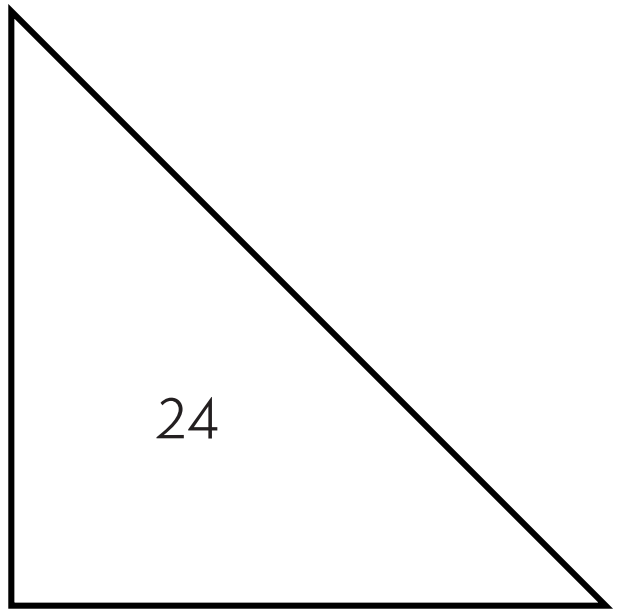
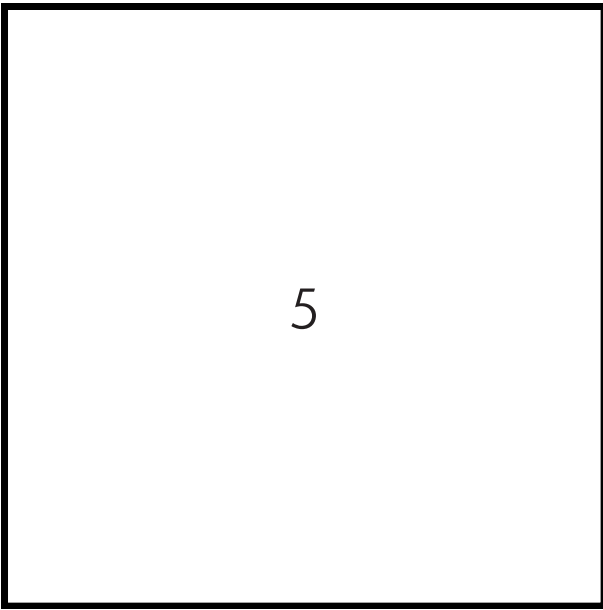




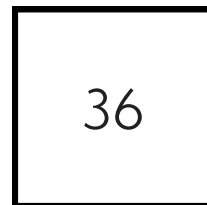
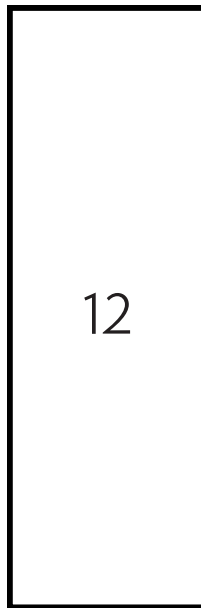
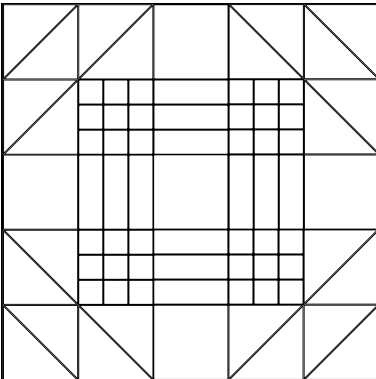
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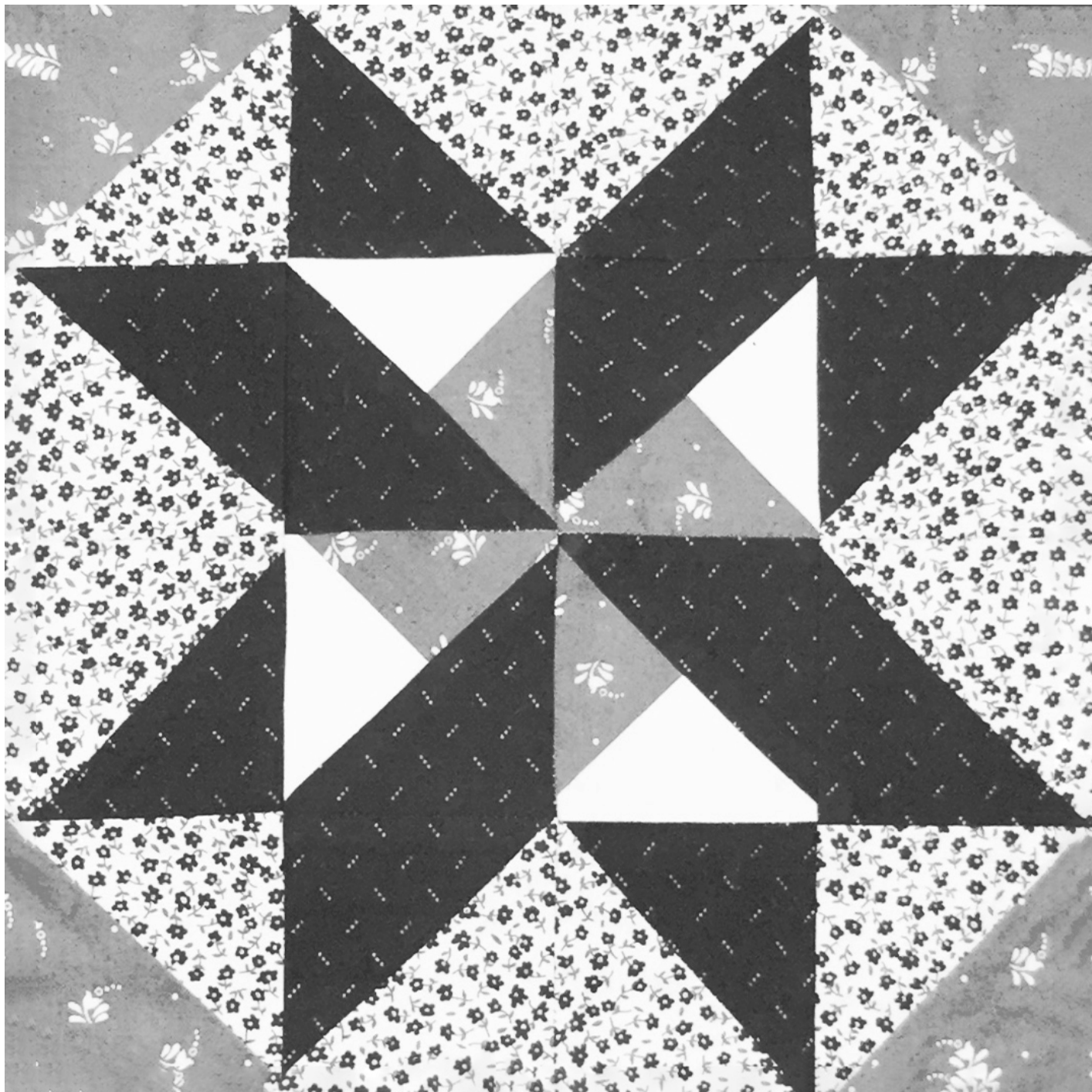


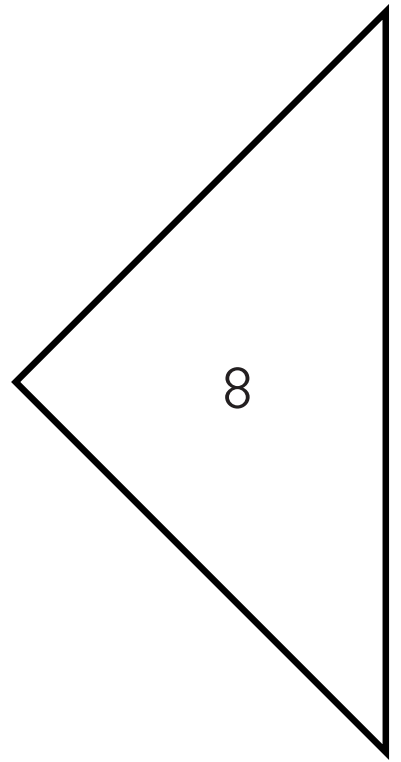
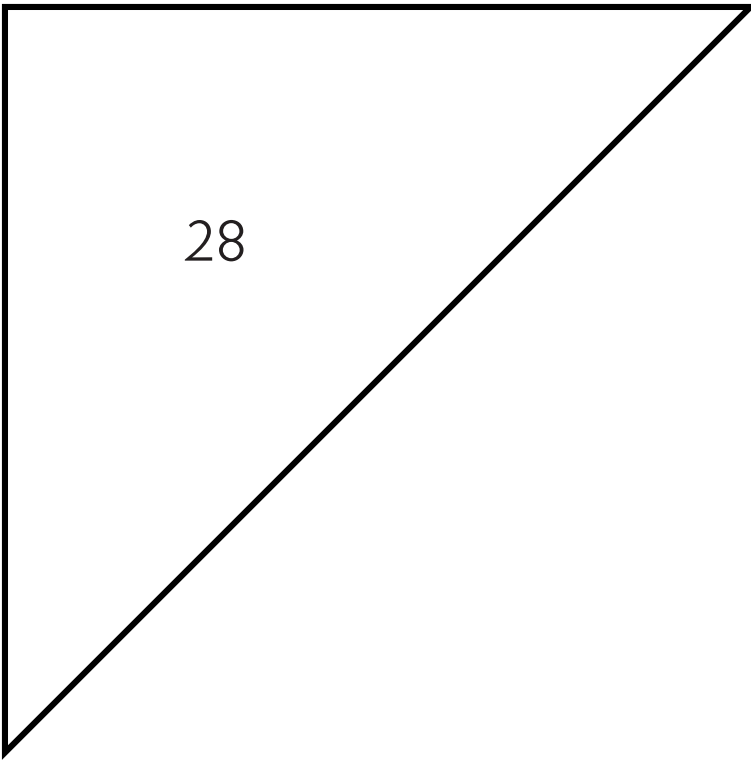




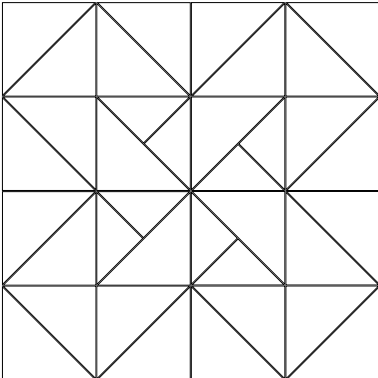
Petik Réka & Zsíros Katalin

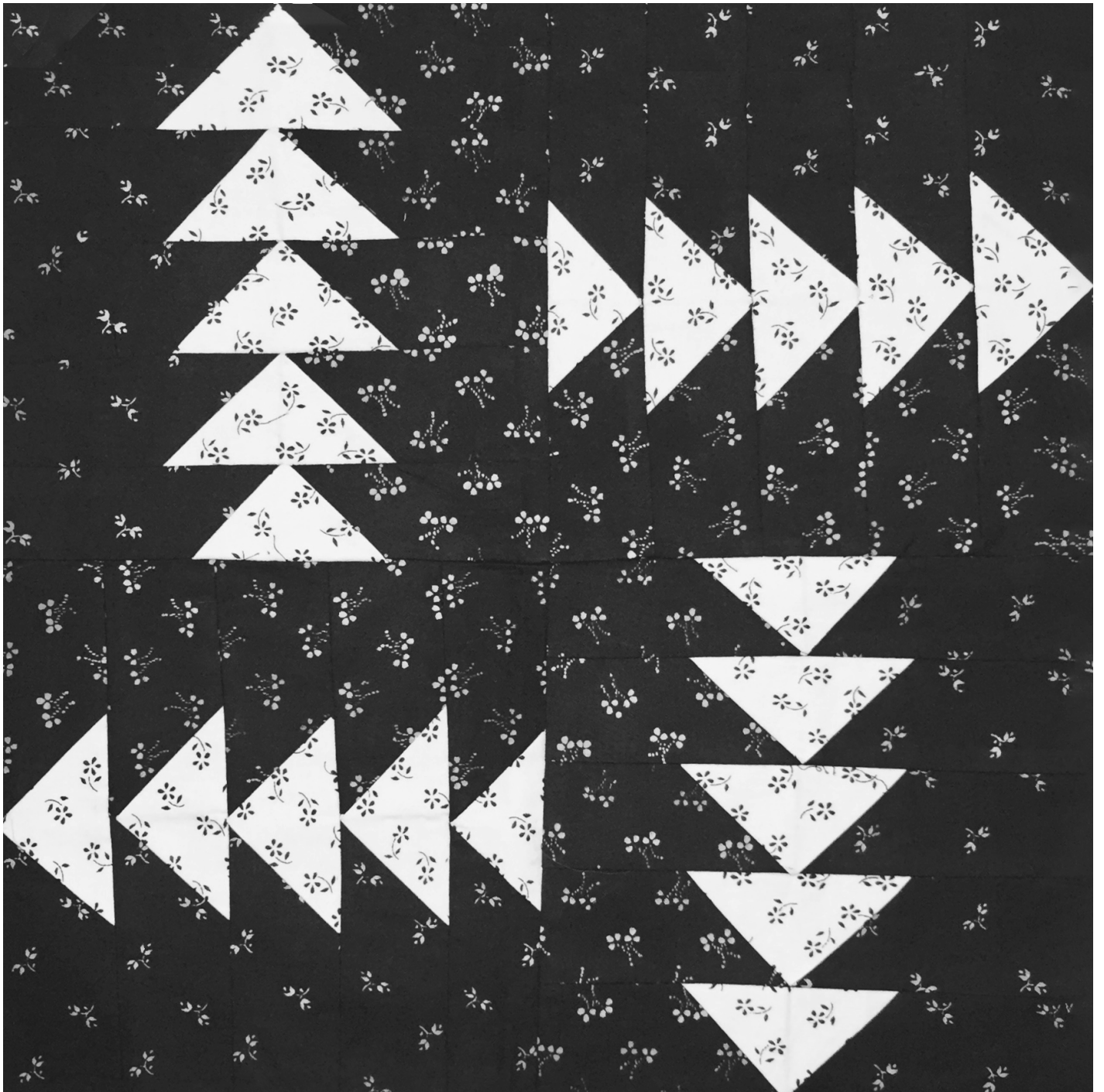




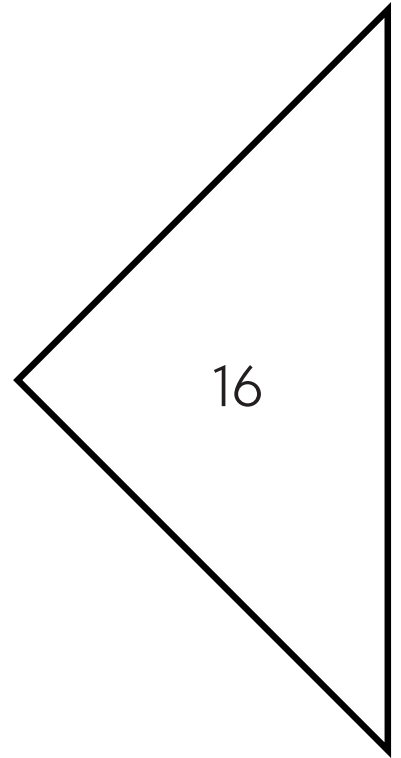
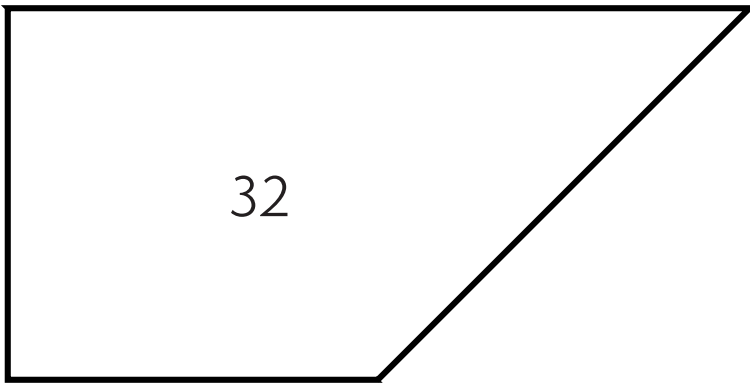


**Kasab Apa Katalin**

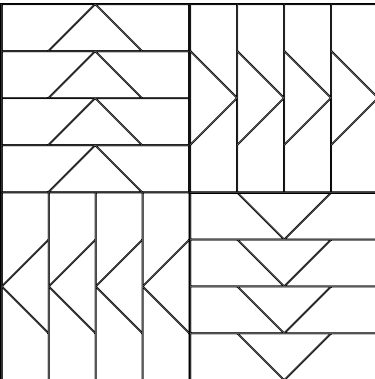


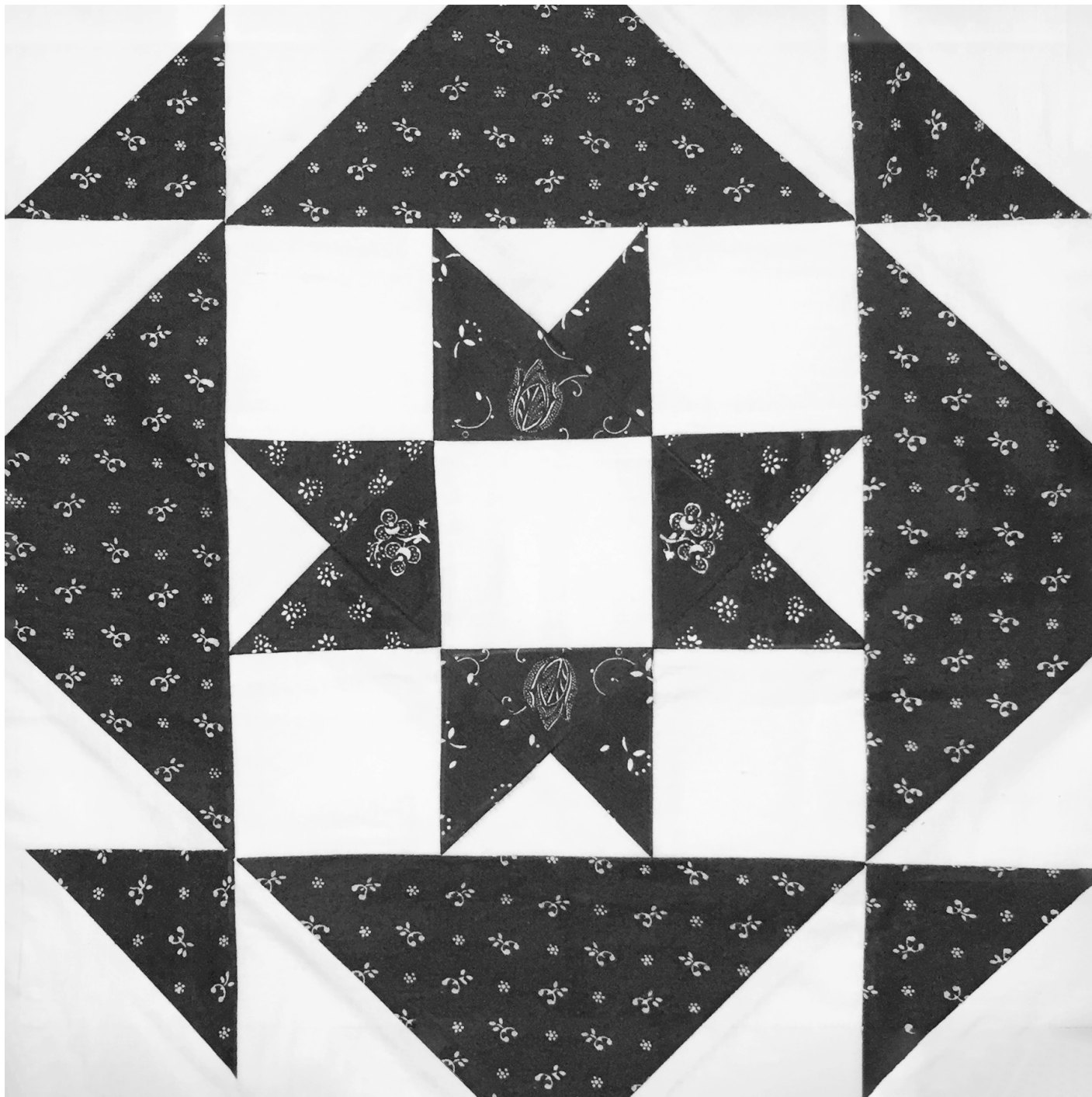


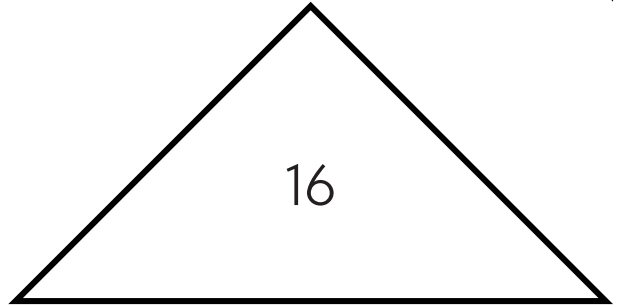
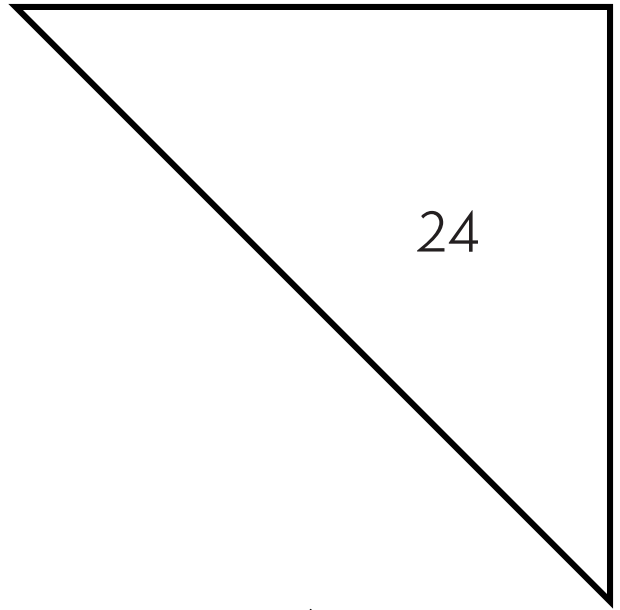
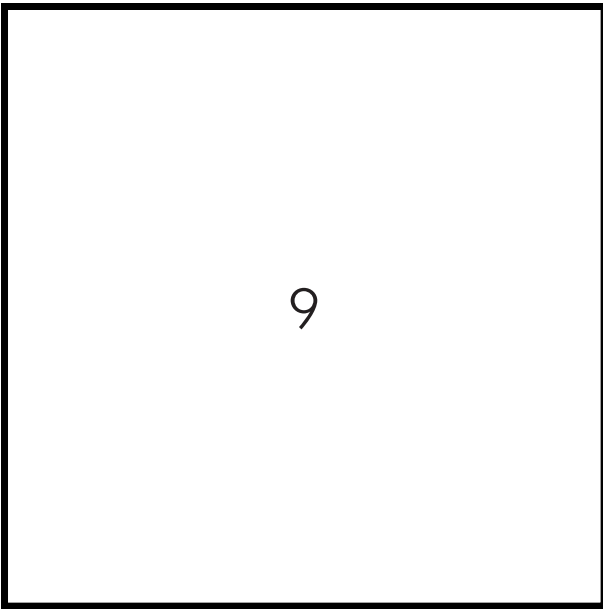




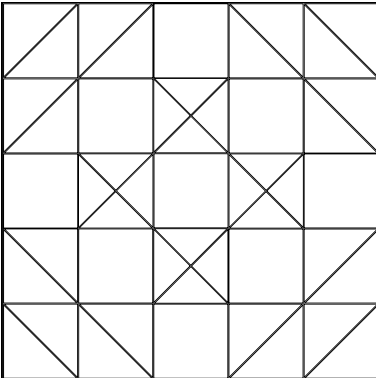
**Boris Kata**

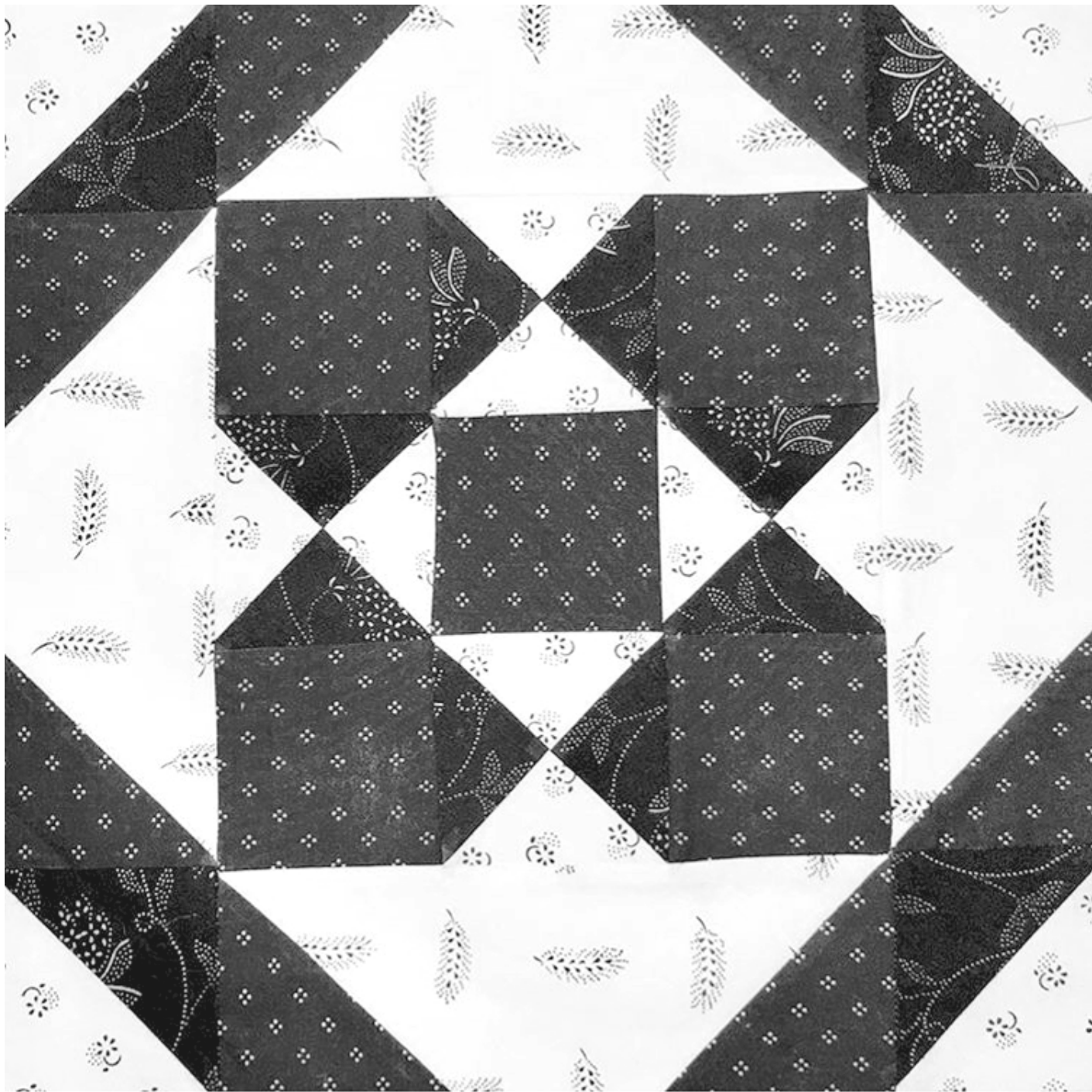


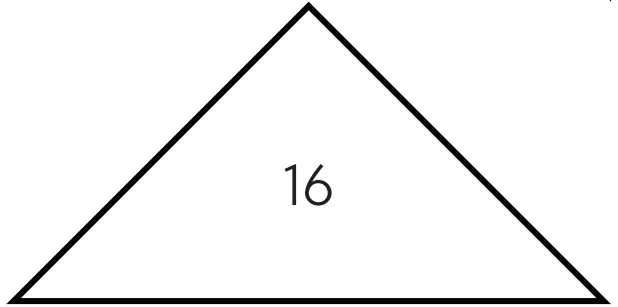
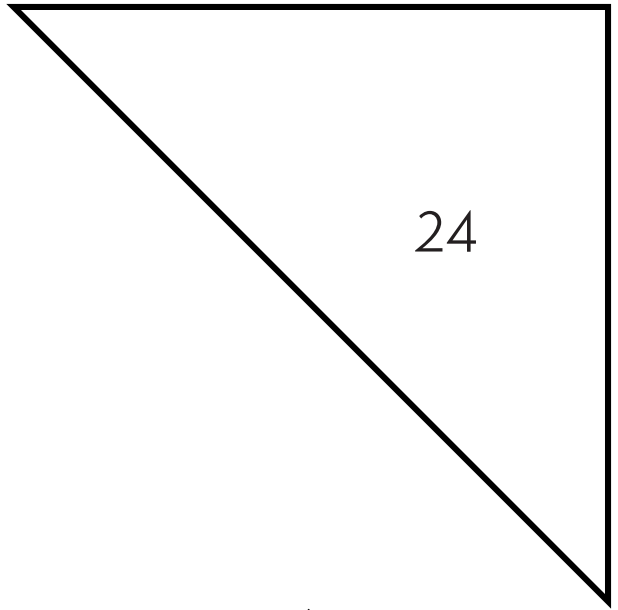
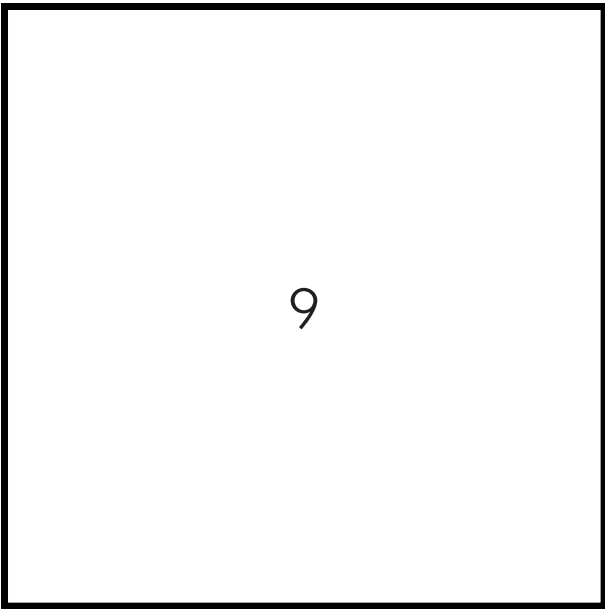




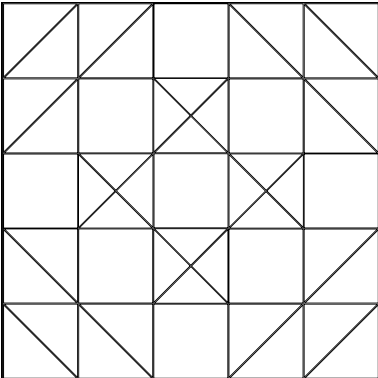
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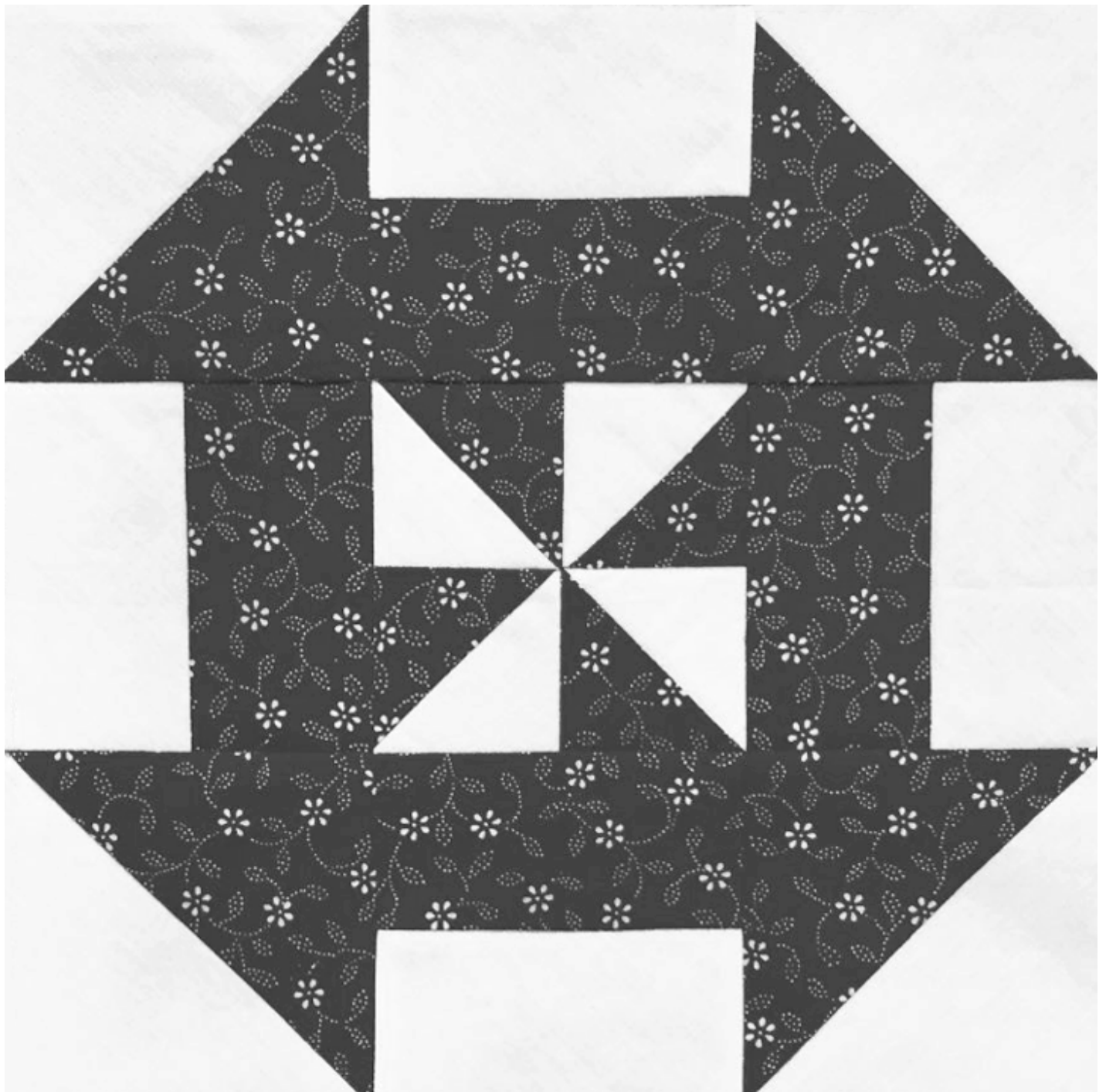


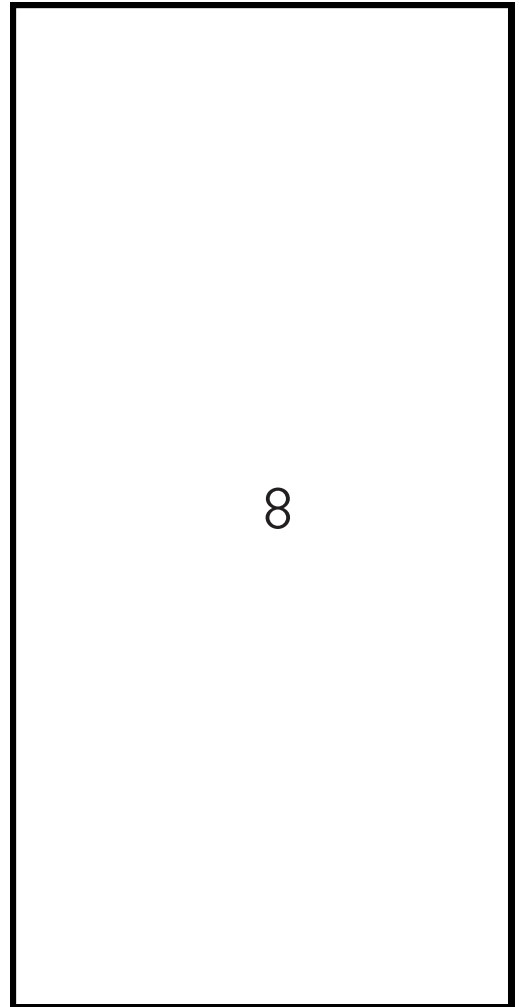
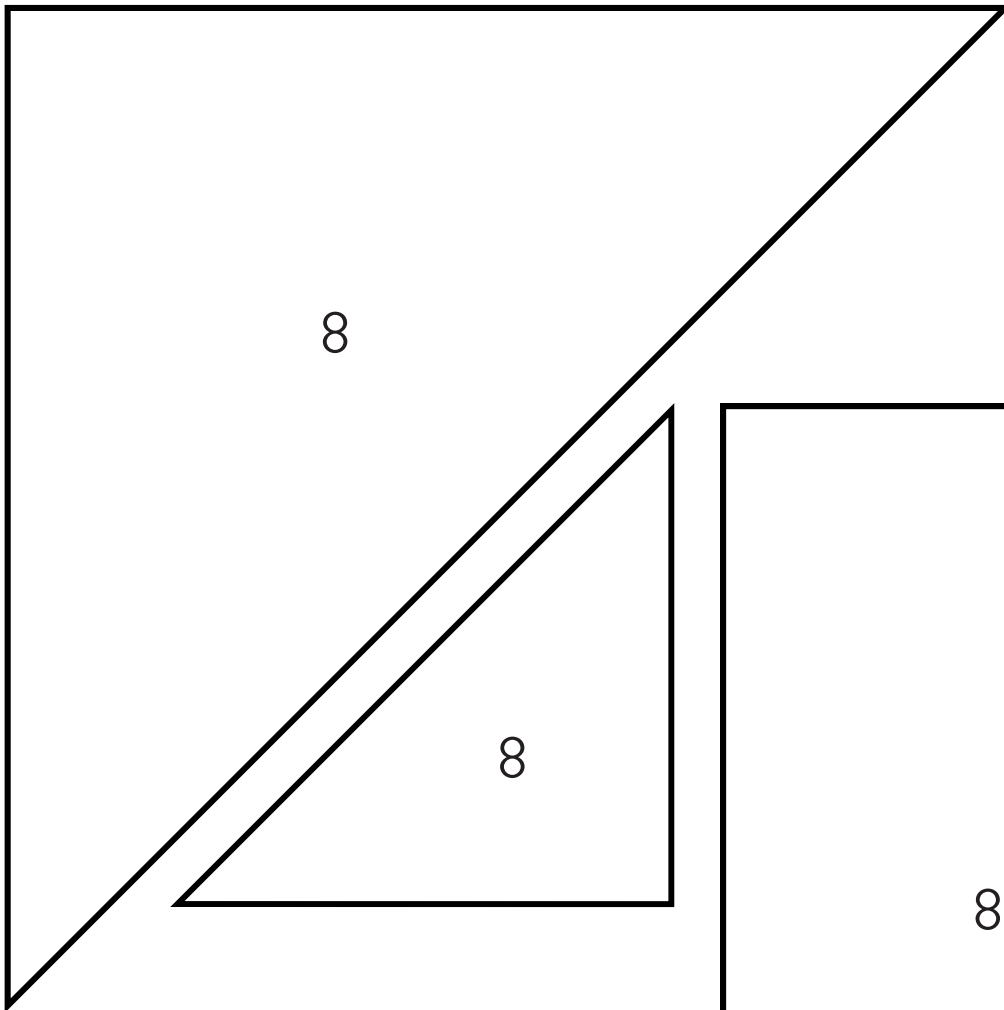




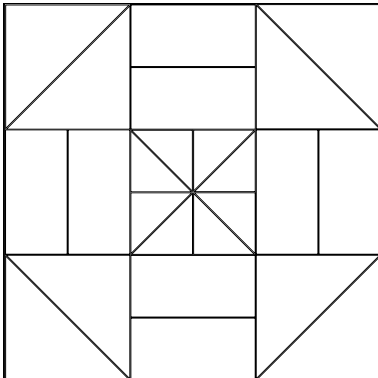
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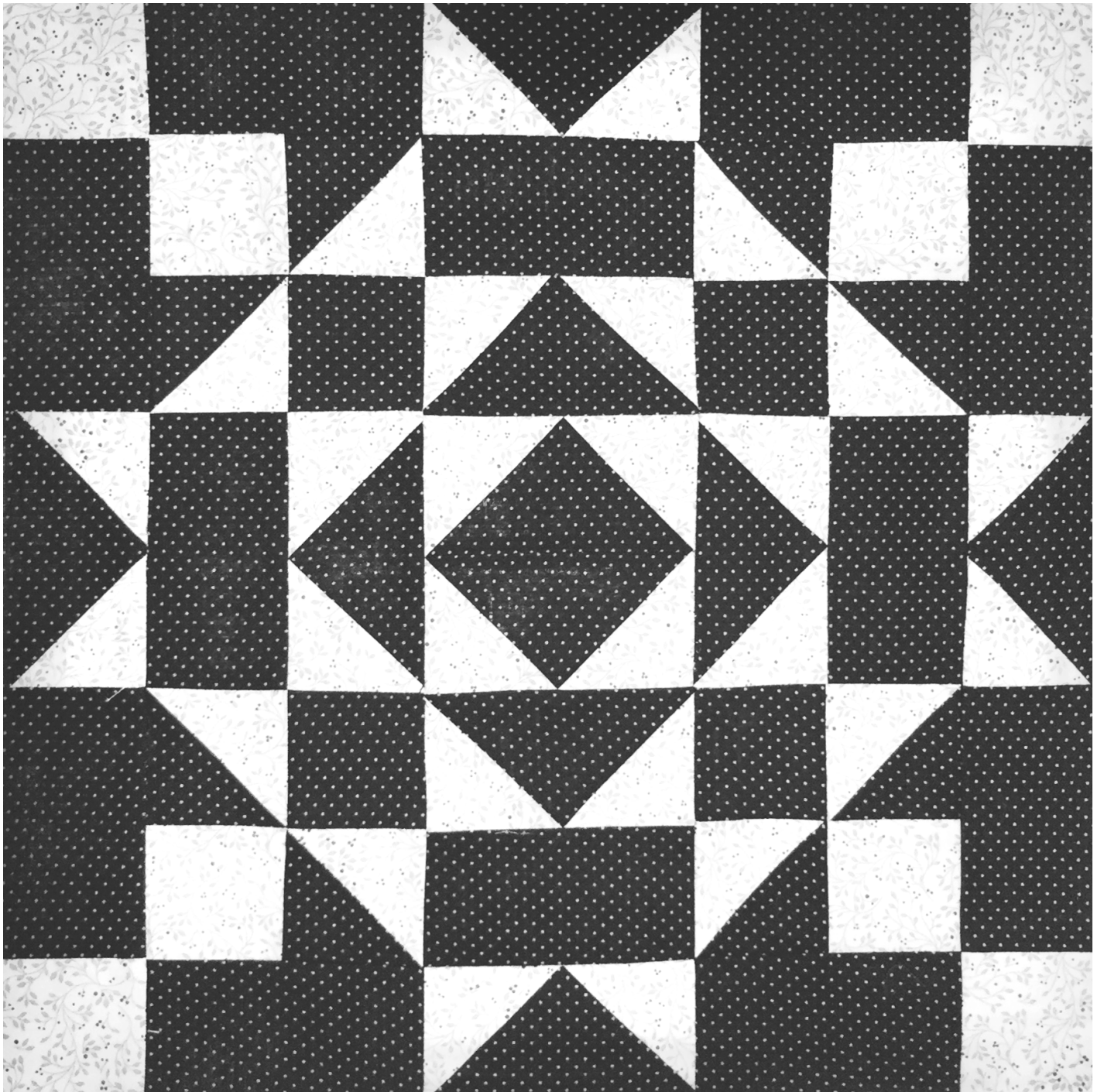






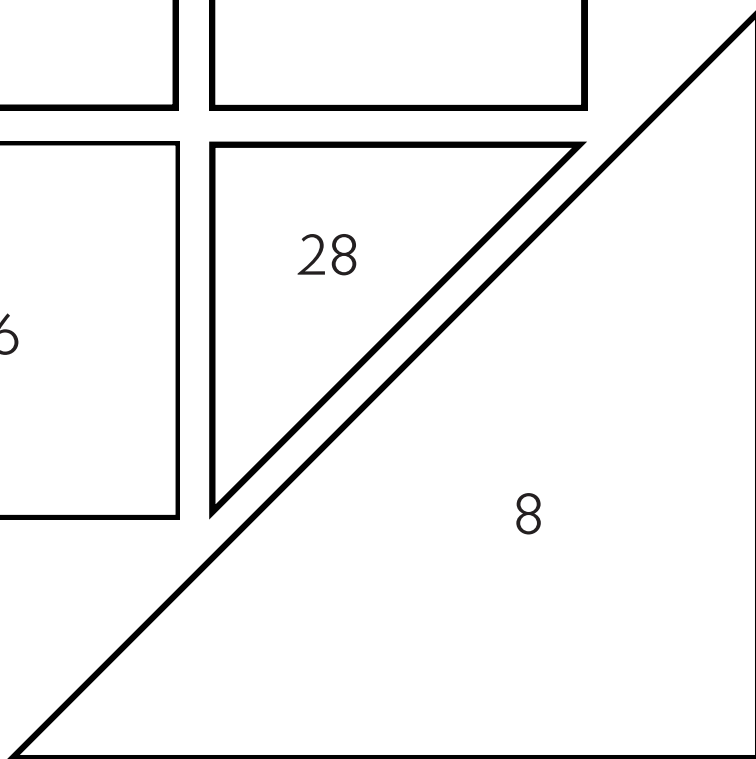
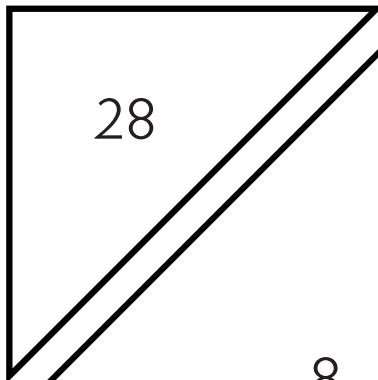
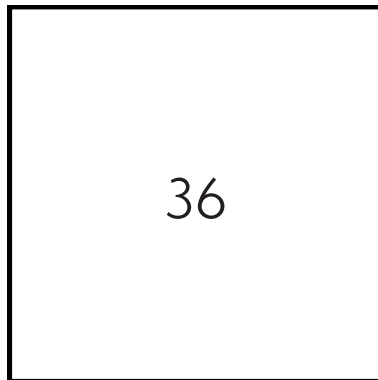
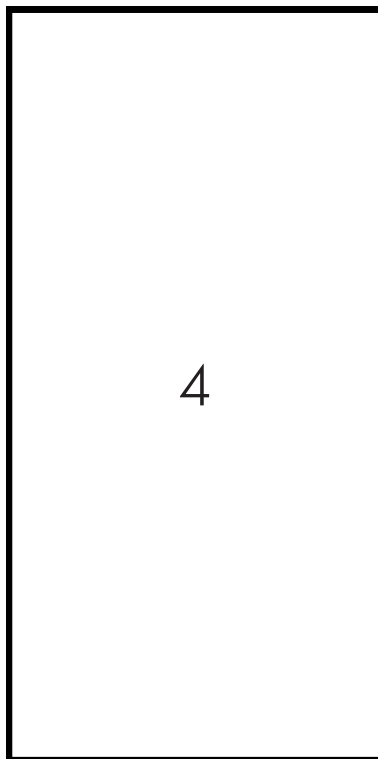
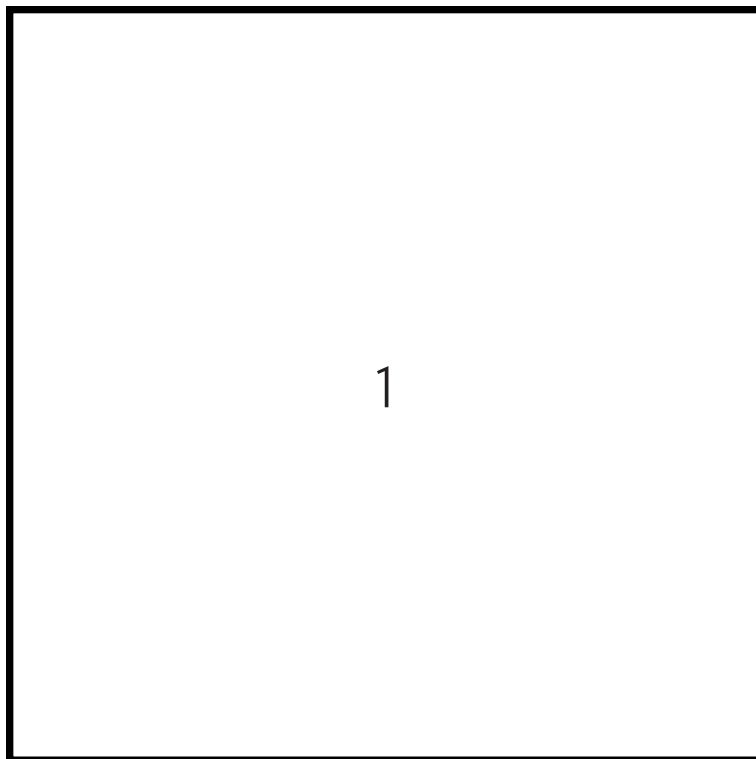
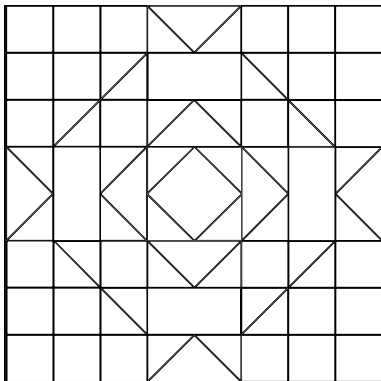
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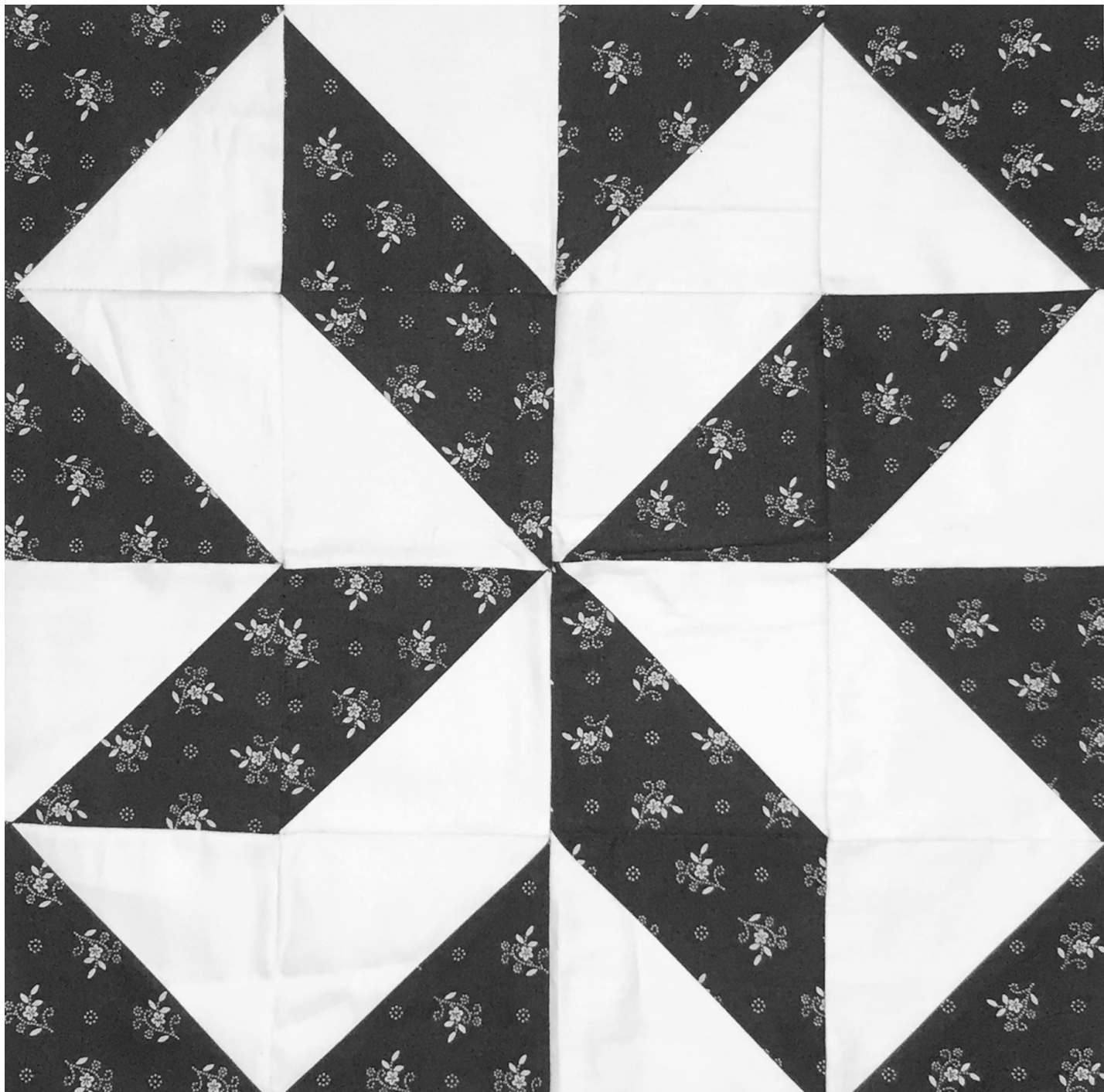


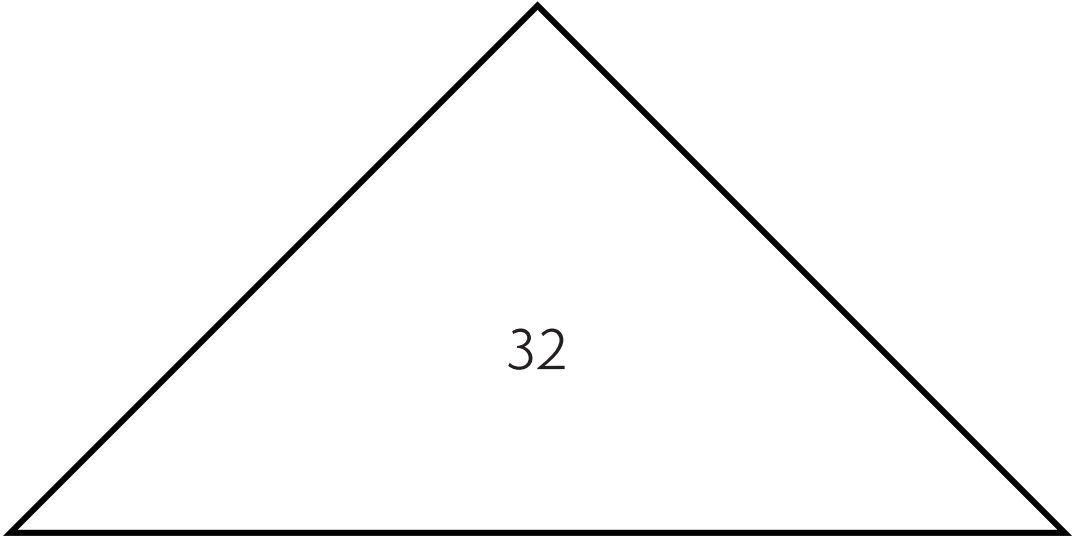




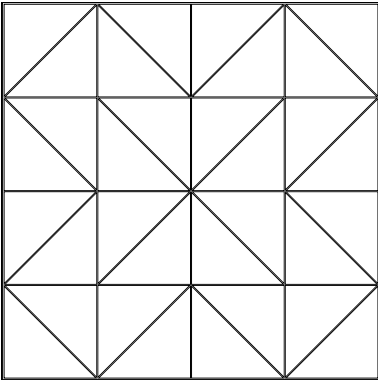
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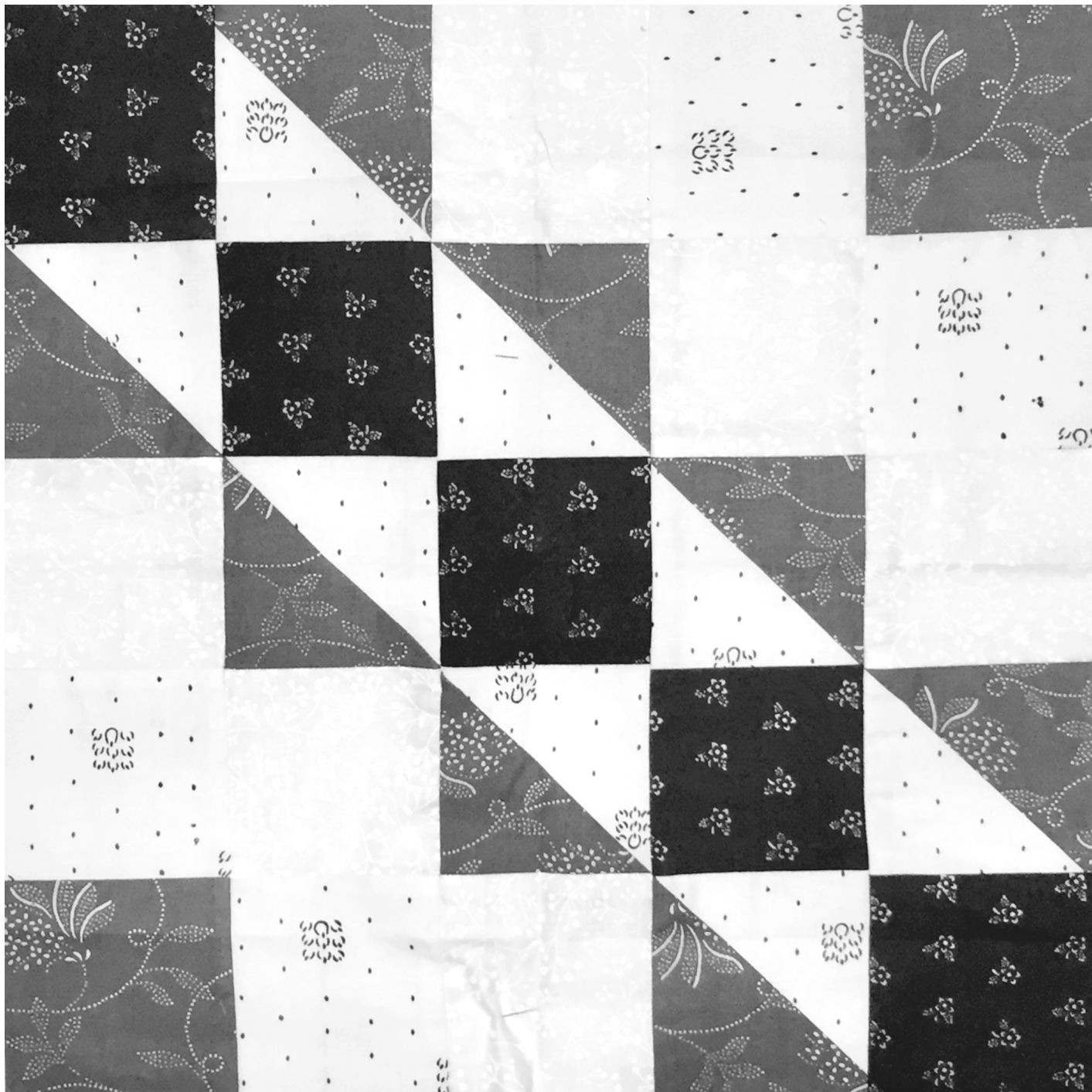


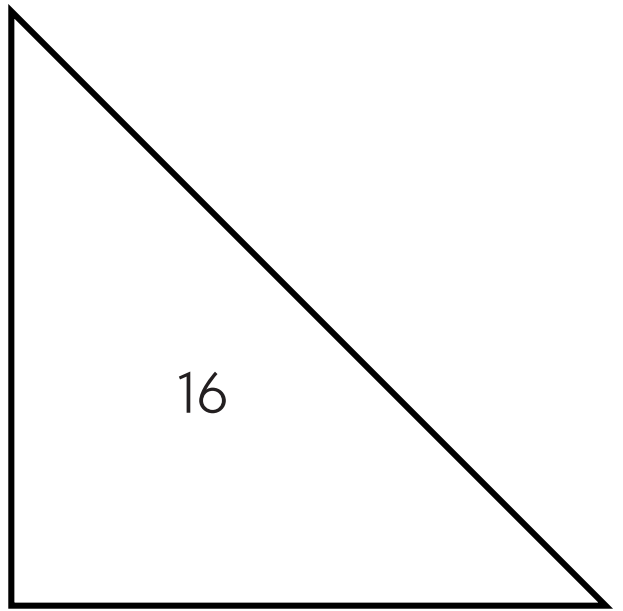
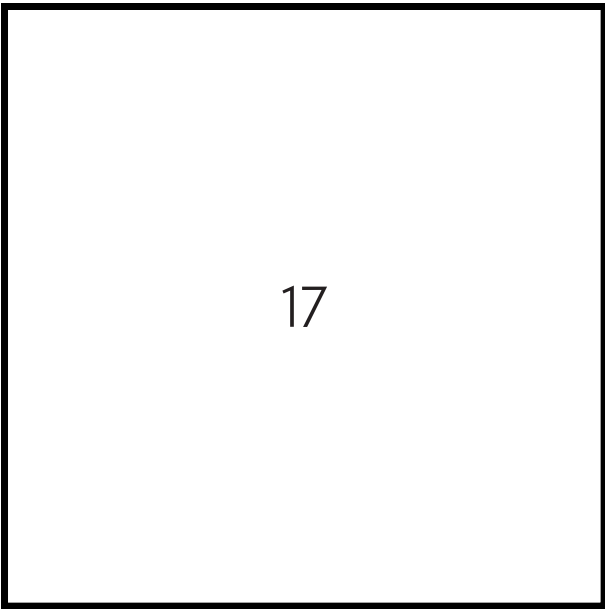




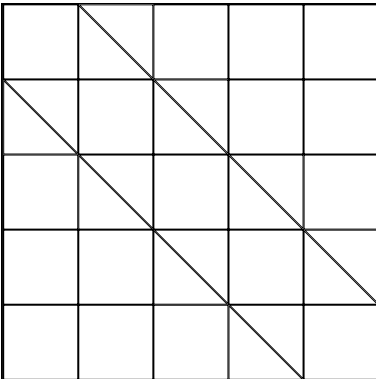
Horváth Istvánné







Zalay Alice





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