

April, 2017: Celtic bias appliqué and Interfacing-backed appliqué with or without stuffing (Trapunto)

Appliqué is a French word meaning "applied". It involves cutting out shapes in fabric and then sewing them in some manner on top of the background material. Many quilts will combine appliqué and piecing techniques. Through the years, since the middle ages when appliqué developed out of hand sewing tapestries, different techniques for doing the appliqué have been developed.

This month we will be discovering two very different types using the same bird design. The first is called continuous bias appliqué or Celtic appliqué and is used to outline the shape. The second type is a variation of turn needle appliqué, in which a thin fabric is used as the backing of the main piece, turned inside out, so there is a smooth edge, and then sewn onto the background fabric by machine or hand.

Celtic appliqué

1. Cut out the hummingbird on the dark line. Do not cut the pieces apart.
2. Lay the hummingbird on your background fabric and draw as close to the edge of the paper on the fabric as you can.
3. Cut 1"-1 1/8"-wide bias strips from appliqué fabric. You will need approximately 72" of bias tape. These will finish at approximately 3/8 inch wide. With wrong sides together, fold the strips in half lengthwise, press, and machine stitch 1/8" from the raw edge onto the line that is the outline of the hummingbird.
4. Start at the top of what would be the head/neck region, and apply the bias tape to the very end of his bill. Cut this segment off and come back to it at the end. Now take the tape and start at the bottom edge of the upper wing. Go in a continuous line up around the upper wing and down and around the lower wing. Stop but do not cut the bias tape when you get back to where this segment will cross over the ones that have already been sewn on. Before you complete the application of the tape, go back to the beginning of the strip that you started at the lower part of the top wing and turn the finished edge over the raw edge. Hand or machine stitch this down so that the raw edge does not show. You will need to go slowly and have some patience with the loops and turns on the wings. When you are almost to the end where you stopped sewing the raw edge down, you may finish stitching down the raw edge all the way under the chin to his mouth. Then finish folding over and tacking down the smooth pressed end. All raw edges will be covered at this time except for the tip of the mouth. You will need to fold this under and tack it down as well.

Note: ribbon or yarn may be substituted for the continuous bias tape and used in the same manner as described above except that it will not need to be folded. It can be pinned in place and an appropriate width long zigzag stitch can be run over it to "couch" it in place.

Interfacing – backed appliqué

1. Cut out the hummingbird, ignoring the loops on the wings. Cut the three pieces apart. One will be the head, one will be the upper wing, and one will be the lower wing.
2. Trace around these pieces onto freezer paper (dull side).
3. Put your loose weave, non-adhesive, interfacing together with a single layer of your appliqué fabric, right sides together.
4. Iron each freezer paper pattern piece onto the interfacing/appliqué and then cut each piece out.
5. Stitch the two pieces of fabric together using a scant 1/4 inch seam. For the head and top wing, do not stitch across the straight edge. That would be the neck of the bird head and the bottom small segment of the upper wing. The lower wing will need to be stitched around entirely. Clip all curves.
6. Turn all three pieces inside out and iron the edges to be crisp. This can be done on the head and upper wing piece through the opening that was left. The lower wing will need to have a slit cut in the center of the interfacing only, in order to turn it inside out.
7. Place each piece in the appropriate position on your background fabric. The upper wing should be placed just over the neck opening of the head, and the bottom wing should be placed over the opening of the upper wing. Once these are in the position that you want, stitch them down either by hand or machine just catching the turned edges

Note: if you would like to try trapunto for this bird, use a puffy batting or stuffing loosely inside each piece before sewing the final edges down.

