**Kantha (Kahn-ta) Quilts**

**WHAT IS IT?**

Consists of layering a quilt top and back together with no batting between the layers. Then add the running stitches to cover the entire area of the quilt with beautiful texture & color. The running stitch uses a colorful thread, and is sometimes known as big stitch quilting. The stitching should be STRESS FREE, and have an organic look to it, creating a charming imperfect texture. The stitching tends to be on the larger size, and it’s about filling the canvas and creating TEXTURE. The stitching on the cloth gives it a slightly wrinkled, wavy effect.

As in traditional quilting, the quilt back needs to be a bit larger than the quilt top, to account for any shifting as you stitch. A few extra inches (2-3”) on all sides is sufficient.

You will trim down the backing AFTER stitching and BEFORE finishing the edge to even up all the sides.

**LAYERING**

Use a larger stitch (easy to remove later) stitch around the perimeter of the quilt top ¼” in from all four sides. This stitch line will become a guide for finishing the quilt edge. Do not add kantha stitching outside of this stitched guide line.

Fold the quilt top in half vertically & horizontally to find the center, mark the spot with a safety pin positioned on the right side of the fabric. Repeat for the quilt back. Align the pins with layering the top and back.

**PROCESS**

On a large, flat surface (like a table) layer the quilt top and back, wrong sides together. To avoid slipping you may secure the quilt back with a small amount of painters/masking/washi tape.

Match up center spots to start, pinning the top and back together at this point. Smooth out layers, and pin approximately every 18” out from the center both vertically and horizontally. Pins may need to be adjusted as you work and can be removed after a few rows of stitching have been added.

**STITCHING DIRECTIONS**

Cut a length of perle cotton thread approximately 12” longer than the length of the quilt top. Thread your needle then run the perle through your finger and thumb a few times to reduce tension, which causes knots.

Stitch from the CENTER of the piece OUT to the EDGES. Begin by making one stitch in the middle of your first stitch line. Pull the thread through the stitch so that half of it is allotted for stitching in one direction and half in the other.

Loosely gather the fabric to get to the middle of the piece either from the side or the top or bottom edges. Use the edge of the seam allowance as a guide for stitching. With a single strand of perle cotton thread, begin in the middle of the piece, and stitch using a running stitch from that point out to one edge leaving a single strand tail that is long enough to stitch back to the other edge in the opposite direction. For now, leave the thread UNKNOTTED and LOOSE at each edge.

Repeat following other seam allowance edges approximately every 6” working from the middle out to the edges. Smooth the layers as you work as needed. At this point the piece is stable (fully basted), pins can be removed, and you will begin filling in stitches between the existing stitch lines.

Next, add additional stitch lines halfway between the 6” stitches. Then add stitches halfway between the 3” stitches, and finally fill in on either side of the 3” stitches, with the final two rows approximately evenly between them, eyeballing is good enough.

**ON THE EDGE + THE WHIPSTITCH**

The edges are typically finished with a simple whipstitch.

STOPPING STITCHING

When you reach the top and bottom edges of your kantha quilt position the last stitch so that the tail is in BETWEEN the two layers of fabric. Be sure the edge of the quilt top can be folded in approximately ¼” without touching a stitch. So, basically stop approximately ½” from the edge of the quilt top, and approximately ¼” from the right and left sides of the quilt top.

KNOTTING THE THREAD TAILS

Before knotting spread out the entire quilt from the middle to the top and bottom edges along the stitching columns. Doing this will smooth out any bunching along the stitch lines.

Begin knotting thread tails on the inside of the two layers. Do so by double knotting (square knot) two tails together. Repeat along both top and bottom edges. Clip thread tails close to each knot.

FINISHING THE EDGE

Trim the edge of the quilt back to match the quilt top. Be CAREFUL to not cut any threads/knots.

Use the basting stitch around the perimeter of your quilt top as a guide for folding in the edge of both the top and back approximately ¼”, pin and/or press to secure the edge for stitching. The basting stitch can be removed at this point.

Knot a single strand of thread. Begin by positioning the knot BETWEEN the quilt top and back. Whipstitch (diagonally) around the perimeter of the quilt in one direction. Knot between the layers. Repeat, reversing the stitch around the perimeter in the other direction forming ‘V’ shaped stitches. Like handwriting, the look of the whipstitch will vary depending on spacing, depth, and technique. Stitches are fairly shallow, approximately ¼” deep and ½” wide.

**The BIG message: don’t stress, just enjoy!**