Reverse Applique

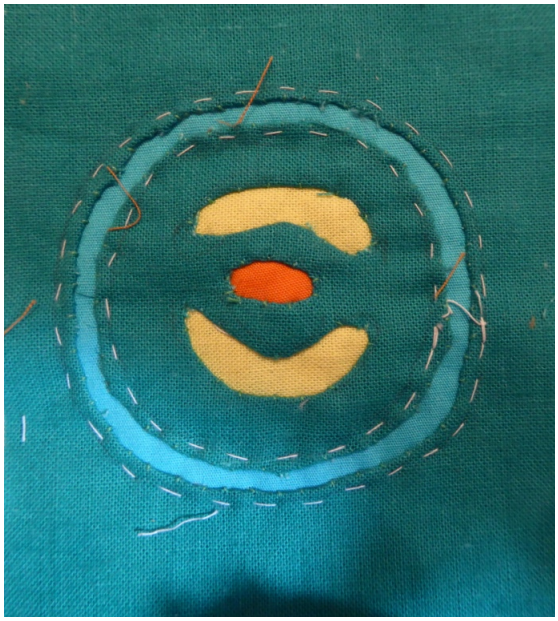
Reverse applique is a technique where a shape is cut in an upper layer of fabric and the seam allowance turned under and stitched down to reveal the fabric layer underneath. Reverse applique often features many layers of fabric and being the opposite of normal applique creates a recessed look, adding shape, colour and texture.

Ref: The Quilters Bible Linda Clements

Design

Draw a design that enables you to experiment with more than one layer of fabric such as the examples below.

Colour in the different parts of the design – this is used as a guide when sewing the different layers.



Materials

- Cream fabric for the backing – cut to the size required for your sample plus at least 2”
- One, two or three pieces (or more) of fabric for the layers (depending on your design) the same size as the backing fabric.
  When choosing fabric colours, placing dark colours on top of light ones will avoid seam allowances showing through.
- Fabric scissors and small sharp scissors
- Pins
- Needles
- Cotton thread to match the colour of the fabrics
- Tacking thread
- Iron and ironing board and protective sheet or parchment paper

Instructions

Step 1. Trace the design on to a piece of thin cream cotton fabric to be used for the backing. This will be used as a guide for sewing so unless the design is symmetrical it needs to be reversed to make sure the design is the correct way round on the front of the sample.

Step 2. Decide the order to sew the different parts of your design and place the fabric layers accordingly with the right sides facing up and the cream piece on the bottom with the design on the back. For reverse applique, the largest pattern is cut from the top layer of fabric with progressively smaller areas cut from the subsequent layers accordingly.

Step 3. Pin the fabrics together and baste (tack) along the lines of the design on the backing fabric so that the design is replicated on the front. These lines are used as a guide for cutting the layers of fabrics to expose the ones underneath.

Then tack through all layers of fabric approximately ½" outside the first tacked line to make sure the fabric did not move when cutting and sewing.

Step 4. Decide where you want to start and using small sharp scissors, cut away the design from the top layer of fabric approximately ¼" in from the line made by the first row of tacking thread, making sure you don't cut through the underlying layer. This will expose the second layer of fabric.

If the design has curves and angles snip the seam allowance regularly up to but not into the tacked line.

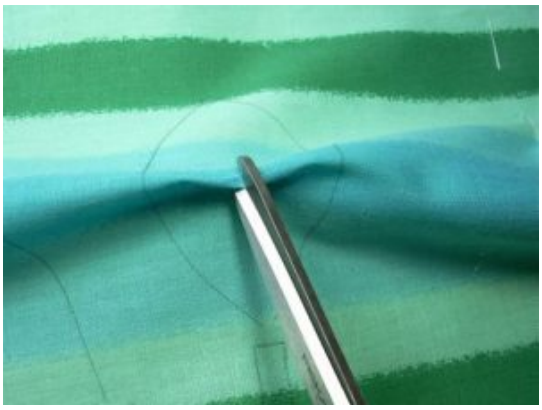
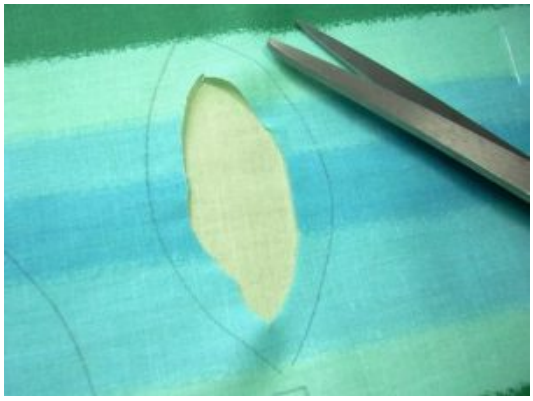
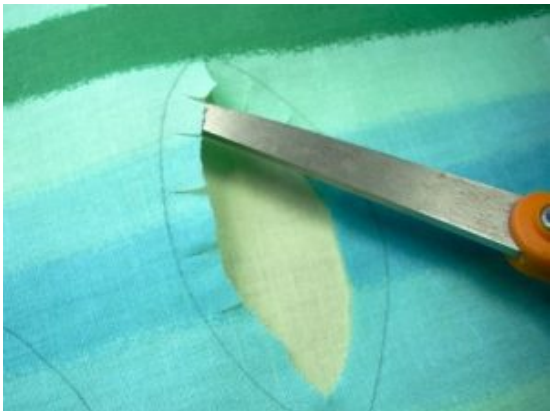
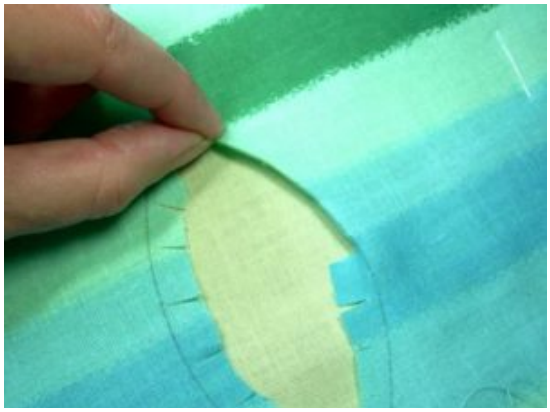
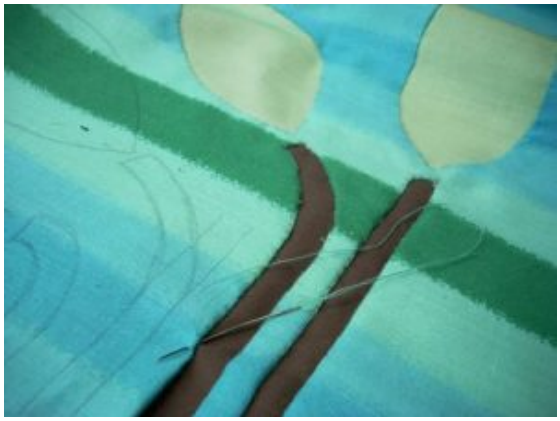
Step 5. Using thread to match the fabric, sew small slip stitches through to the bottom (exposed) layer of fabric, turning the fabric under and working all around the design until all raw edges are hidden.

Step 6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 to expose the other layers of fabric.

If a layer of fabric is cut by mistake it can be repaired by inserting a piece of matching fabric.

Step 7. When all the stitching is finished remove the tacking thread.

An alternative method is to lightly mark the design with pencil on the top layer of fabric and use this as a guide for sewing.

After the first layer of reverse applique is finished, put the design (or master pattern) back in place and draw the second part of the design on the second layer of fabric. Cut and then sew as before and repeat as necessary.

Below are some photos to show the different steps. These are taken from a project found on https://www.lazygirldesigns.com/embellish-a-tote-with-reverse-applique/