Abstract Pillow Top

Embrace the positive and negative in this unique pillow design
Notan is a Japanese composition style that features the interplay between light and dark or positive and negative space. Here, it’s applied to a sophisticated two-tone pillow-top design, which is then covered with topstitching. To learn more about notan, google it; you’ll find many examples and a variety of designs. To make your own notan, cut paper shapes first, and experiment with their layout. When you find a design you particularly like, use the paper version as a pattern for cutting your fabric.

How to make a simple notan design

To start a notan design, cut shapes at the edges of a square of paper, and turn them over so they mirror the voids created. For the pillow topper, make the pattern first in paper, and then trace it to fabric.

Supplies

- Disappearing-ink pen or mechanical chalk pencil
- Iron
- Metallic thread
- Scissors
- Sewing machine
- Silk fabric
- Spray-on fusible web, such as 606 Spray and Fix

Transfer the design to a pillow top

Cut the pillow front and get ready to apply the notan design. Fusible web sheets such as Wonder Under and Heat ‘n Bond, don’t work for this appliqué technique because part of the appliqué is on the wrong side of the fabric. A spray-on fusible web lets you easily make your notan fusible. When choosing your fabric, remember the wrong side shows.

Tip

CHOOSE A NONRAVEL FABRIC

When selecting fabric for this pillow top, choose something that has very little ravel. It will make your pillow easier to cut and stitch.
**SPRAY WITH ADHESIVE.** To make the fabric fusible, spray the wrong side of your design with a fusible web spray, such as 606 Spray and Fix, and allow it to dry.

**FUSE THE DESIGN TO THE PILLOW TOP.** Position the pieces right-side up on the pillow top. Follow the fusible-spray manufacturer’s directions to fuse the design to the pillow top.

**DRAW A BOX.** Draw a box around the notan design with a disappearing-ink pen or low-tack painter’s tape. Make the box just large enough to surround all of the notan edges.

**TOPSTITCH OVER THE DESIGN.** Thread your sewing machine with variegated metallic thread. Topstitch diagonally within the boundary of the box, or drop the feed dogs and free-motion stitch within the box shape over the appliqué. When you’ve finished, if you used tape to make the box, remove it.

**ASSEMBLE THE PILLOW COVER.** The easiest way to cover a pillow is to cut the back 1 inch longer than the front. Then cut it in half, and insert a horizontal zipper in the center. Lay the back right-side up on your work surface, and lay the front wrong-side up on top of it. Align the edges, and stitch them with a ¼-inch seam allowance. Turn the pillow cover right-side out through the zipper opening.