



# Alabama Stitch Book: Projects and Stories Celebrating Hand-Sewing, Quilting and Embroidery for Contemporary Sustainable Style

*Natalie Chanin , Stacie Stukin , Robert Rausch (Photographs)*

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“Haute homespun out of the Deep South.” That’s how *Vogue* magazine has described the fashion of Natalie Chanin. *Alabama Stitch Book* brings us a collection of projects and stories from her clothing and lifestyle company, Alabama Chanin, known for the cutting-edge twist it puts on tried-and-true sewing, quilting, and embroidery techniques, applied mostly by hand to recycled cotton jersey.

This long-awaited book from Chanin begins with her story. After living in New York and Vienna for over 20 years, she began to transform cotton T-shirts into high fashion using the needlework skills she learned as a child in Florence, Alabama. When she moved home, Chanin hired local women (many of whom had worked in the state’s now defunct textile factories) to stitch her couture collections with her.

What follows is a step-by-step guide to the stitching, stenciling, and beading techniques used in the 20 projects showcased in the book: T-shirts, skirts, and corsets that are sold at chic shops around the world, plus a journal cover, sampler quilt, and tablecloth, among others. Also included are a pullout stencil, perforated postcard for bead-embroidery, and reusable patterns. Throughout are Robert Rausch’s beautiful photographs set against the back roads, farms, and homesteads of the rural South.

## Alabama Stitch Book: Projects and Stories Celebrating Hand-Sewing, Quilting and Embroidery for Contemporary Sustainable Style Details

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## **From Reader Review Alabama Stitch Book: Projects and Stories Celebrating Hand-Sewing, Quilting and Embroidery for Contemporary Sustainable Style for online ebook**

### **Maggie says**

I checked this book out of the library but it is definitely on my to-buy list. Unlike most of the other books I have read that discuss refashioning or reusing materials, this book actually has patterns and ideas that I would use and wear. Although Chanin really only uses cotton jersey there are a lot of good ideas in the book. Her clothes look pretty and comfortable. Great book with great idea's.

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### **Jennifer says**

I love everything about this book, from the photography, to the unusual and beautiful stitching style, to the author's insistence on careful, thoughtful work. Natalie Chanin is an inspiration in her outlook and her accomplishments.

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### **Kathleen says**

As a lapsed hand stitcher, I loved reading this book. It is encouraging to find that someone else has a love for hand stitching and has developed it into an art form. I recommend this book from start to finish as a primer for anyone who wants to hand stitch clothing.

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### **Snorki says**

A Christmas present, and a good read. Beautifully produced book, with great layout, pictures and full of ideas on sewing, specifically re-purposing old t-shirts and using a variety of hand-sewn techniques like appliqué, sequins, beading and so on. Enough detail to warrant reading from cover-to-cover, with some good projects, patterns and templates.

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### **Michelle says**

I think I am in the category of "I like to look at pretty craft books but don't have time to do anything" category. I like the idea of repurposing clothing and this has some great ideas using quilting, stenciling and plain old "cut it up and re sew it back together as something new" ideas! My favorite is the fabric mums (because I might have time to think of making something like this).

Alabama Stitch Book

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## Vanessa says

For several months, I had been thinking about making new clothes from old. I enjoy the process of sewing, creating something with my own two hands and knowing that the garment I am wearing was not made in some sweatshop overseas. I also like the idea of reusing something that is in good shape and avoiding the expense of purchasing brand new fabric. Then I heard about The Alabama Stitch Book and immediately got it out from my local library.

Natalie Chanin has created several projects for this book, all using recycled t-shirts. They include stenciled items, a quilt, a scarf, corsets, a skirt and a book cover, among others. She is an advocate for "let your stitching show!" and also introduces the reader (or this reader, at least) to the process of reverse applique, which involves creating a two layered garment, cutting out a design on the top layer and stitching around it to reveal the layer beneath. Beautiful results!

I am currently halfway through the printed t-shirt corset, which I am making from a printed t-shirt that I have had for 15 years and which was on its last legs, but which I could not bear to part with, as well as an old yellow jersey pillow case that never fit any of my pillows. I am excited about the results so far.

Not every project in The Alabama Stitch book is one that I want to try - either not to my taste (e.g. stenciled items) or the end product is not something I am interested in having (e.g. book cover). However, both corset patterns and the swing skirt (beaded, and not) are ideas I will use many times, for myself and as gifts.

A great book for the sewer and/or environmentalist.

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## Gwen says

This is a great guide to hand-sewing, applique, and beading techniques. It includes detailed guides to several techniques and lots of projects complete with instructions, most of them pretty simple and well-suited to beginners. The illustrations are clear, detailed, and really helpful.

I actually want to pick up her other two books because I'm planning a wedding dress along these lines, but this book does not have a whole lot of details about garment construction- most of the projects in it don't need a lot of constructing. But it was the perfect book for me when I first read it because so many of the projects are simple enough for a beginner- not to mention really beautiful!

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## Tracey says

Adult nonfiction; sewing fashions. Natalie Chanin explains in detail the steps she goes through to make her unique clothing line--from picking out the fabric to deconstructing a t-shirt, and thorough instructions for doing embroidery, stenciling, beading, applique and reverse applique. She includes plenty of lovely projects and while I would probably never want to put that much time into a t-shirt or a table cloth or even a head scarf, I found the discussion of the techniques to be valuable, and there are a few projects (the rag boa scarf and the cut-up t-shirt chrysanthemums) that might be done in an hour or less with a very minimal amount of skills required (read: appropriate for a library program for teens or adults).

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## **Meghan Pinson says**

last year's review: read this one sitting on the floor at borders, taking tiny notes into my little book. promptly went out and got buttonhole/carpet thread in five colors. am presently hording old t-shirts to dismantle and repurpose for AWESOMENESS.

right now: just finally bought it ... after coveting a book for over a year, it's time to just own it.

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## **Wendy says**

T-shirts and stencils and sequins, oh my!

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## **Judith Bowman says**

I'm working my way through trying out these projects. I'm enjoying the hand sewing process as a portable way to keep my hands busy when I want to be busy and recapture lost time. It is sort of addicting though and I want to make more time for it in my schedule!

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## **Bridgett says**

I have had the Alabama Stitch Book for almost two years now. I pull it out now and again, read, look at pictures and put it back on the shelf. Lately I have begun to make good on my threat of sewing my own wardrobe though.

I have been sewing by hand since I was a little girl, so the sewing part was super easy. The cutting on the other hand not so much. It said to cut the T-shirt fabric so the grain line is going from the tip of the bandanna to the long end, the one you wrap around your head. Does that make sense? Well, my husband wears double X T-shirts and they were still not big enough to get a Square with 20 inch sides out of it, if you wanted the grain line going that way. I just cut the triangle out of the back of the shirt and did not care too much about the grain line.

Actually, this is the only gripe I have with the book. She said she uses recycled T-shirts for almost everything. Well, I think not even triple X shirts are big enough for some of the projects. (unless you are a tiny person)

Also: I have tried to find some T-shirts with the same colours to make some of the bigger things like the skirts and stuff . It's just not possible to find T-shirts with the same colour in a thrift store. They come close, they may have been the same colour at one point, but different detergents and wearing habits changed the hue, etc. If you want to make a bigger project from the book, buy Yardage. SPECIALLY if you are "real woman size", not model thin. ;D

Well.. maybe one more thing: I think some of the projects are a bit too \*too\* if that makes sense. They are easily enough altered to fit what I think would be more appropriate for grown ups. For example: I LOVE the rooster stencil, but on the chest of a T-shirt I find it a wee bit immature, I think with the right placement (off

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to the side on the bottom front maybe?) it could be totally wearable.

All right then.. so there is oooone more little thing that really irritated me... she doesn't give you any yardage... only the amount of T-shirts you need. But she doesn't state if the amount given will make the super small size or an extra large....

Let's take that super cute corset for example: It just says "Two cotton-jersey T-shirts (close but slightly different in colour) That's it. No two XXXL T-shirts, not the yards the two T-shirts need to yield (or in case you can't find any big enough and have to buy yards of cotton-jersey) nothing. THAT, my friend, is a tad annoying if you want to make a fitting garment and not run out of fabric somewhere halfway to the finish line...

Other than that the book is really really amazing! I love the photography. I love the patterns and projects, I love the writing! I would recommend it, since it is really a fun book to look at and read! :) The projects are so wonderfully explained, there is little chance of your project not turning out.(if you can just figure out your yardage) Very nice explanations, with LOTS of pictures! I will definitely make more of the projects from it.

I give it two out of five stars, for the plain fact that I think a pattern book for garments should give you the fabric requirements. That is a gross oversight in my eyes.

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## Trena says

I give this book four stars for its content, which is excellent and comprehensive. However, its Hipster Cowboy aesthetic is definitely not for me. I deliberately put the words in order with Hipster first and Cowboy second; although Chanin has returned home to Alabama the look is pure Brooklyn (where she lived while developing her style).

The idea is to use old t-shirts as the raw material for all the projects in the book, which is kind of cool (but, again, not my thing). The first section contains useful and well-written information on hand-sewing basics (nothing on machine sewing) and embellishment techniques.

After the preliminaries come the projects. There are a good number of projects and the book includes patterns for a skirt (loose fitting, A line) and corset-style t-shirt refashion. I found it a little frustrating on behalf of beginners that she doesn't make clear the corset thingy is corset style, not an actual corset; it has no structure and being made of a t-shirt won't do anything corset-y or foundation-y. But that's a small quibble.

The book also includes extensive information on applique, reverse applique, beading, and stenciling.

I like the tactile nature of the book, if that's the proper way to describe it. In addition to your normal book attributes such as a cover and pages, it also includes a cardboard stencil, two paper patterns at the end, and a postcard to bead. There are other stencil motifs printed on the pages that are to be enlarged on a copy machine and transferred to a stencil medium.

## Laurel Flynn says

This book took me awhile to get through but only because I wanted to try some things out as I went. I truly appreciate this approach to sewing for two reasons: First, I am committed to the idea of reusing, remaking, repurposing as much as possible so that I continue away from consumerist excess, save money, and commit wearable art! Second, I like the trend toward "homemade" as not just an acceptable style but as something to be actively pursued.

I don't give this book a full five stars because I don't feel that everything can or should be made out of deconstructed jersey clothing fabric. Some of the items would work better with a woven. I am also not thrilled with the "inside-out" aesthetic: leave the knots and rough edges on the inside, please. Otherwise, have fun and make new from old!

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## Phoebe says

Pretty but, turns out, this book isn't really my cup of tea.

Despite this, one aspect that I connected with was the concept of loving the thread:  
<http://alabamachanin.com/journal/2013...>  
For which I thank Ms. Chanin and her creative team.

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