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Alabama Studio Sewing + Design: A Guide To Hand-Sewing An Alabama Chanin Wardrobe



Synopsis

Alabama Studio Sewing + Design is an invaluable reference for any woman who has dreamed of creating her own gorgeous handmade wardrobe. In this follow-up to Alabama Stitch Book and Alabama Studio Style, author Natalie Chanin presents all of the stenciling, hand-stitching, and beading techniques her company uses to create the award-winning Alabama Chanin line of organic cotton clothing, plus more than 50 variations that lead to infinite design possibilities. Included in this encyclopedic compilation of Alabama Chanin skill and style are patterns and instructions for dresses, skirts, tops, a wrap, a poncho, a bolero, fingerless gloves, and a hat. Each piece is featured in both its basic form and with varying embellishment combinations. By mixing, matching, and layering, a stunning, unique, and versatile wardrobe can be built. Praise for Alabama Studio Sewing + Design: "Transform organic or recycled materials into clothing or home decor items with haute homespun flair." Better Homes and Gardens Quilts and More magazine "Natalie is beautifully simple, yet elegant, just like her clothing. Her signature look is intricate stitching, beading and applique on basic organic cotton jersey which together make a show stopping casual look." SF Unzipped "I'm a longtime fan of Natalie's clothing designs . . . Her sewing patterns do not disappoint. These are the same dresses, tops, skirts, and accessories that carry four-figure price tags and are coveted by ec-groovy lady rock stars. The same ones. But in her books, Natalie teaches you how to make them yourself . . . Natalie's pieces are so simple to sew together . . . They go together in a single evening, and when you pull them on they don't just make you look better than you did in whatever you were wearing before, they make you feel better." Heather Ross, HeatherRoss.Squarespace.com "The photographs in this volume are exceptional . . . I think if quilters get this book for both technique and inspiration, it will be more than worth the money." Meg Cox, quilter and author of The Book of New Family Traditions "I just love that Natalie has the guts to share the tricks of her trade. The reason I say guts is that you would think that sharing how your garments are made might hurt your business; but in Natalie's case it's proved to be actually quite the opposite . . . The interest in her couture line grew once she started to write books." Cathy Callahan, Cathy of California blogger and author of Vintage Craft Workshop

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Customer Reviews

I wavered on buying this book. I wasn't a big fan of the bucket hat on the cover, had never heard of Alabama Chanin, and when I looked at a few images of the fashion line I didn't see myself in those clothes. I made my decision to purchase based on the emphasis on hand sewing, embroidery, fashion applique, and beading. This may be the best sewing-centric book purchase I've made in the last 12 months (and I've made quite a few). This is a truly outstanding book from cover to cover for a few reasons: 1.) The stitch charts are very easy to follow. 2.) The samples are presented in LARGE, close up photographs. 3.) The garments included are very basic and can be made by hand with one of the easiest, green friendly, most forgiving fabrics out there- cotton jersey. 4.) The instructions are very good. Even a beginner could make the tank, tee, skirt, bolero, wrap, or fingerless gloves by hand with a minimum of notions except for quality fabric and thread. Those particular items would probably not give a beginner a fit over fitting either. You'll need more tools for stenciling or beading, but even they are pretty simple to acquire. 5.) The book's index includes photos for fast referencing. 6.) The embellishments shown are beautiful and accessible! You can go as elaborate (full beading and applique on a long dress) or simple (adding a basic ruffle to a tank) as you want. This is truly "luxe casual" at its best. All the things above tied together with the author's encouraging narrative (friendly without being too exhausting) make this a wonderful book. Very few things I consider a "must have". However, if you are in to hand sewing garments or just curious about how to add embellishment to clothes you make or own, this book does an excellent job and has enough ideas to keep you busy for a very long time.

I received my pre-order of Alabama Studio Sewing + Design this afternoon, and have to say I am

blown away both by Natalie Chanin's creativity and by her generosity - because she has included so much in this book! I own both of her two previous books, and love them but I think that this new one will be my favorite. The first two books are more technical primers - how to hand sew with jersey, how to bead, how to stencil - with a few patterns and stencils included. Alabama Studio Sewing does not go in depth into the techniques; the emphasis is on the design of the finished fabric and garment sewing. There are patterns for a hat, fingerless gloves, skirts, a t-shirt, a dress and a wrap with instructions on how to use ruffles or surface elements to vary the designs. Then there are the stencils. 6 or 7 of them, to be photocopied or downloaded to use. And with these are a design 'library' of images showing fabrics created using each stencil and different combinations of beading, applique, reverse applique and printing (all techniques that were covered in the first and second books). There are also photos and instructions for decorative and beaded stitches, ruffles, eyelets and even "fur". At the end of the book is an index showing all of the garment photos in the main body and listing exactly what they are composed of: the color fabric and thread, the pattern and stencils used, the fabric treatment, the style of beads, etc...so that one could theoretically recreate any of the garments. It is an incredible, inspiring book and I really look forward to trying my hand at creating my own Alabama Chanin wardrobe. Thank you to Natalie and the Alabama Chanin team for making such an amazing work available to the rest of us!!!!

I have all three Alabama Chanin books and love them all, but I must say this is my favorite! I can't believe how generous Natalie Chanin is with sharing her techniques, and the sample photos are really wonderful. So far I have made 2 t-shirts, a fitted tank top and two boleros. While the neckline of the tank was too low for me and I had to raise it, I love the cut of her patterns. The t-shirts are so graceful with the slightly curved hems. Very flattering. In addition to the above items I have made from scratch from an old cotton jersey t-shirt sheet, I have also started to revamp some of my existing clothes. For example, I took an oversized frumpy old maternity t-shirt I set aside about 5 years ago, laid one of my A.C. t-shirts on top of it, traced it, re-sewed along those lines, and then added some appliques cut from another t-shirt I had unsuccessfully tried to alter back in my ill-advised days of following the instructions in the Generation T book. (Not saying Generation T is a bad book, but being almost 40, the styles are not appropriate for me, and I needed something a bit more refined.) From these two depressing old rag bag t-shirts, I made what is now one of my very favorite shirts. Similarly, I had a Coldwater Creek shirt I bought online, and the very first time I wore it, one of the seams developed a hole, right in the front of the shirt! They had no more in stock, and I didn't want to hassle with a return, so into the "to be altered" pile it went. Luckily, the shirt had two

layers of fabric on the front, so I was able to do some reverse-applique using a stencil from the book. I just finished it a couple of days ago, and I can't wait to wear it. Another garment rescued from the rag bag. It feels like magic to make beautiful and functional from something that had been too ugly and ill-fitting to even wear as pajamas. It's like making something from nothing. I have read some reviews that complain that the sizes run too small in these books. I will say I border on regular sizes and plus sizes, and the XL in the book is just barely too small for me. I have to alter the patterns a little, but I just do it when I trace the patterns off, and so far have had luck. But even for a person who is much larger than this, you can either apply the embellishment techniques to existing garments that fit you, as I have, or just find a simple sewing pattern for knits from one of the big pattern companies, which often go on sale for 99 cents each at places like JoAnn Fabrics. Use a plus-size pattern with clean lines and simple construction, similar to the patterns in the book, and I'm sure the results would be great. Don't feel like you can't profit from this book just because you are a plus size lady, because there are lots of ways to customize the techniques to suit you. A great source for material is cotton jersey sheet sets. Also, at thrift stores, I can very often find large plus-size cotton jersey dresses, often made of very high-quality fabric, which I can cut apart and use to sew smaller garments from the patterns in the book. Someday I'd love to splurge on the gorgeous organic cotton yardage they sell at Alabama Chanin, but that's not in the cards for me right now. It's a very accessible book, and great to use as a jumping-off point for your own designs and ideas. I think that's the whole point of it. Take Natalie Chanin's advice, and then run with it to make your own creations.

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