

Wren ★ Feathers

Little Darling in Japan: Sashiko

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I assume you have basic sewing knowledge and the explanation should suffice, but if you need help please email me! Quarter inch seams allowed unless otherwise specified.



There's a lot to love about sashiko (刺し子). This traditional quilting method in Japan uses both interlocking patterns and motifs you will see repeated on all sorts of other things from fabric to pottery. It's usually done in white thread on navy (indigo-dyed) cotton or linen, or occasionally red/navy on white. While I've digitized several motifs for you to do on an embroidery machine, this is one case where it would actually look much prettier done by hand in perfectly-spaced running stitches.

We'll be making some soft furnishings this week, which include two floor pillows called zabuton (座布団) to use as chairs with a low table, and for bedtime, a neck pillow and a quilt. In lieu of a bed, get a piece of foam, or a few layers of cotton quilt batting, and encase in white fabric. In Japanese, 布団 (futon) refers to bedding, and not to the mattress on a wooden frame you had in your first apartment.

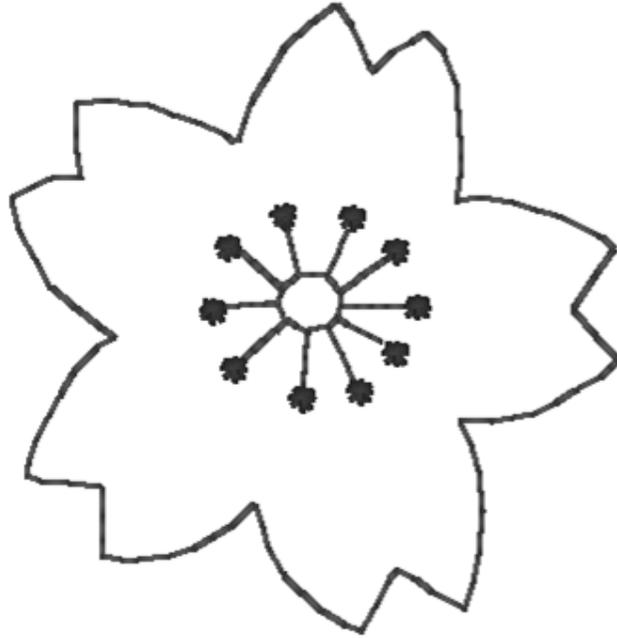


These low tables often have two tops. One is made of slats with a heating source underneath, and the very top is solid and removable. In winter time, the heated table こたつ (kotatsu) gets covered with a very thick blanket, and the solid part gets put on top of the blanket. The blanket traps the heat and people then sit around the table, tucked under the blanket to stay warm. On the side is a 火鉢 (hibachi) (charcoal-filled brazier) to keep a teapot warm. Mine was a tiny flowerpot, filled with dirt because I couldn't find any sand. The teapot is made from wood. Yep, wood. The main part was a wooden apple, which I turned upside down and glued other small bits of wood to make a lid and spout. The handle is a piece of waxed cotton jewelry cord. The teapot often sits on a trivet atop the ashes/sand to keep it clean. My trivet was a lid I cut bits out of to make legs. The table is set with **iwako erasers**, many of which are a perfect scale for 13"-14" dolls. Check craft/stationery stores or possibly your local Japanese grocery store. If you live near Denver, the Japanese grocery store in Sakura square has them; if not, they're also widely available online.

The sakura 桜 (cherry blossom) is a non-repeating, non-interlocking design, used as a motif. It is sometimes combined with other blossoms on top of another repeating pattern like the ones that follow

Use this for zabuton (floor pillows)

The fan design on the asa no ha quilt could work for a floor pillow design too!



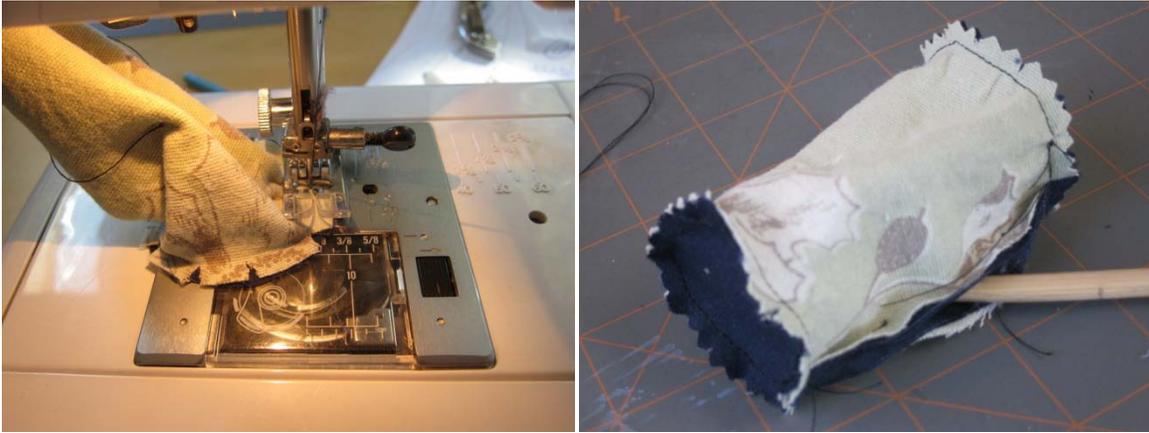
Machine embroidery designs in .pes format for this and the quilts can be found below. They took me a really long time to digitize, and I'm giving them free for your **personal use only, not to make items to sell**. You MAY share them by linking to this blog, you may NOT sell or upload them to any other site without my permission.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ti657rtzlbjzedn/sakura%20cushion.pes?dl=0>

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ko6m5y4rymvsydi/sashiko%20asa%20no%20ha.pes?dl=0>

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/98ldgpihbpbvzr3/sashiko%20circles.pes?dl=0>

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/uik5qdye7krzhsk/sashiko%20kikko.pes?dl=0>



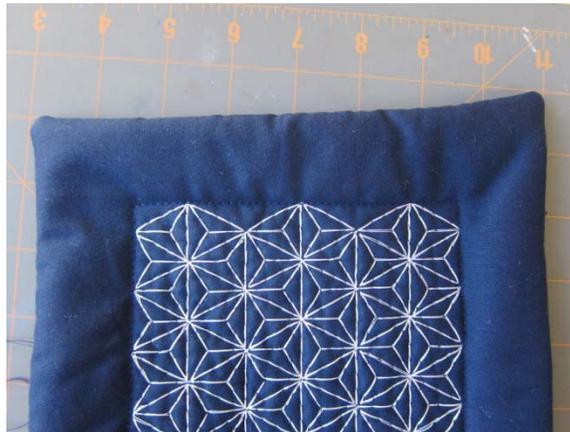
I found it easiest to sew with the rectangular part on top of the circle. Clip it at intervals before sewing, then trim with pinking shears afterward. My pillow was lined with flannel because my fabric was thin.



Stuff the floor pillow, sew closed, then rub and squish until it flattens and becomes more firm.



My quilt experienced much more shrinkage than I anticipated! Measure your doll and plan accordingly. You might also want to make a square quilt to go on top of your table. It should cover the table and go down to touch the floor.





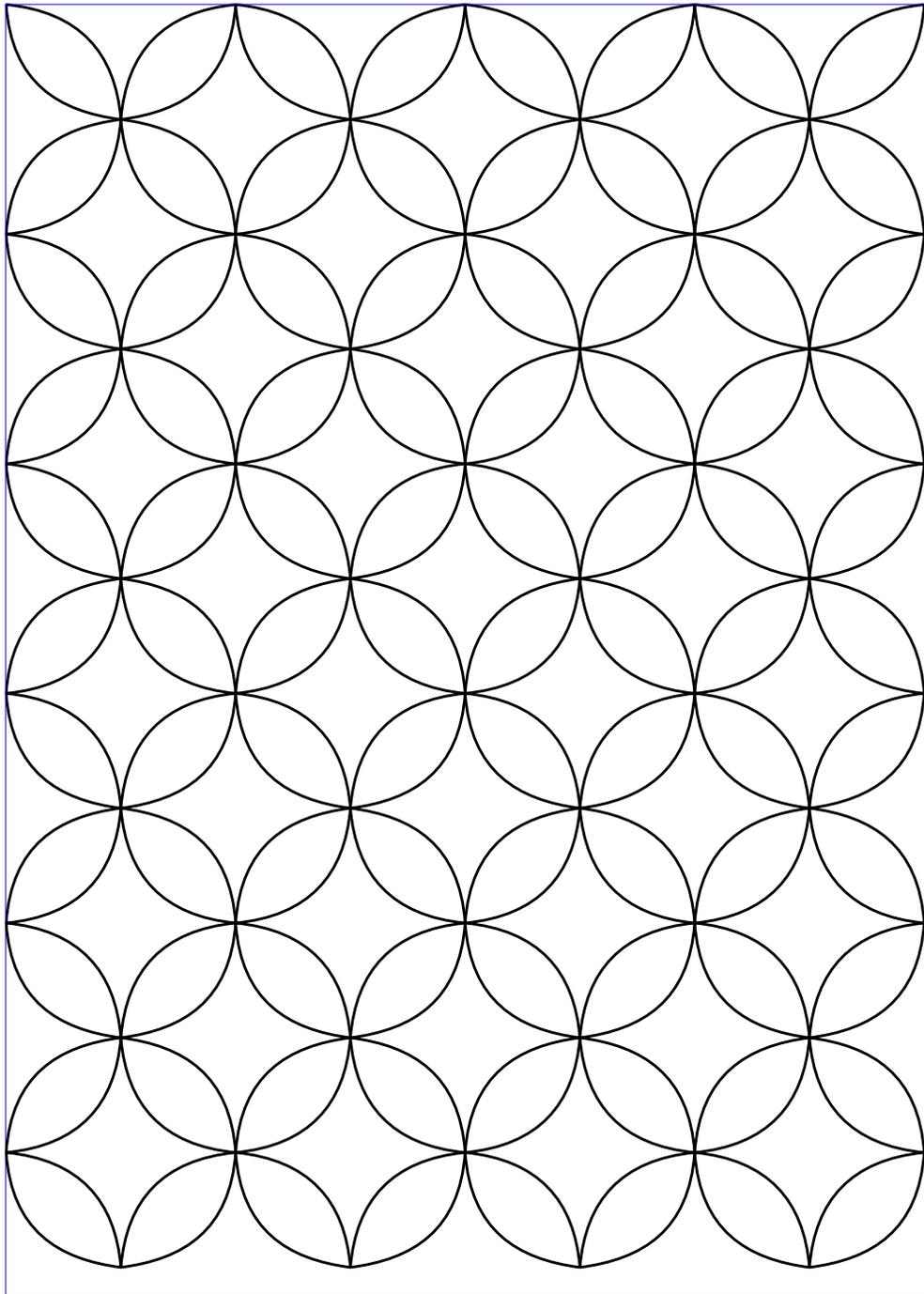
The Zen-like simplicity of this bedroom practically guarantees sweet dreams.



But a more realistic bedroom might look like this. Random magazines scattered around, folded laundry waiting to be put away, unfinished homework, a bedtime snack, etc.

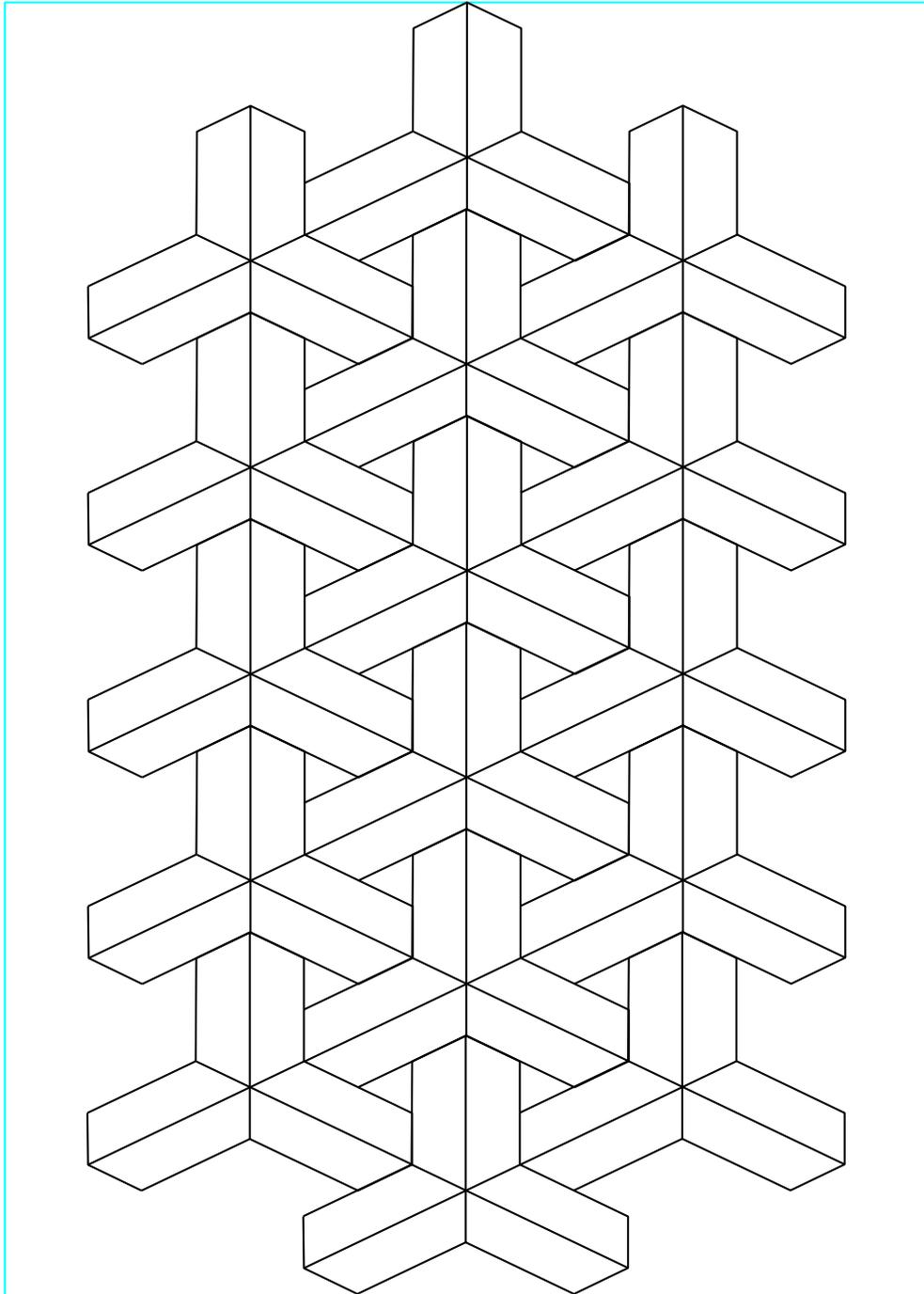


Little Darling reads before bedtime. Her PJs are the karate outfit from week 2, her cake is another Iwako eraser. That cat is made of Fimo and based on a cat named "Chi" from a manga. After spending a really long time making and painting it, I found out you can get them as figurines/keychains for about \$1-2.



This pattern of overlapping circles (Shippo-Tsunagi) also looks like 4-pointed flowers. When this pattern is painted, for example on pottery, different parts might be emphasized to give a different look. It's quite easy to stitch, just follow the curves down in lines, turn and go back up.

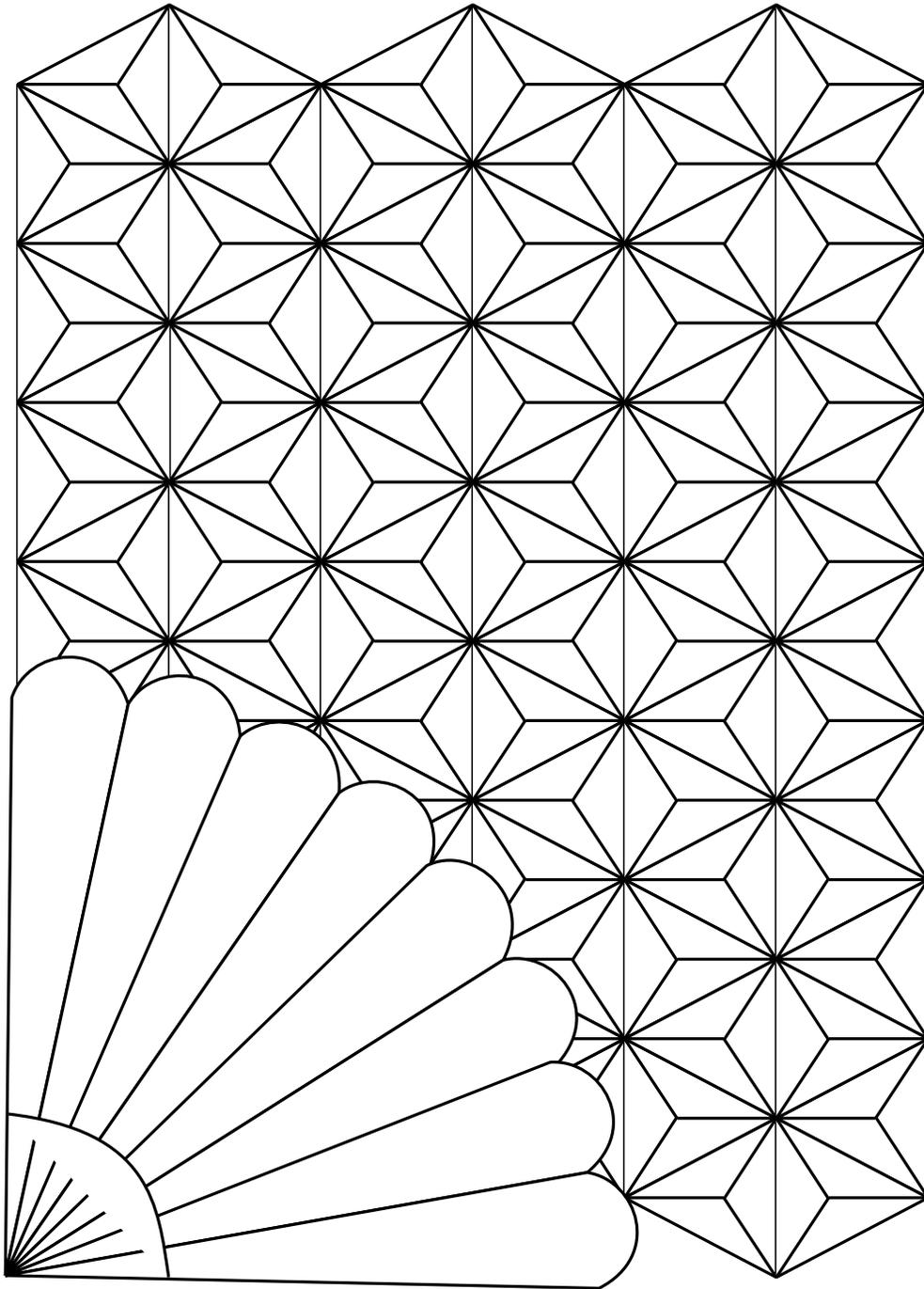
If you're pressed for time, or this is for a child who might not appreciate your quilting efforts, you could use a fabric marker to draw the designs on instead of sewing them.



This pattern has a lot of straight lines, which at first glance seems like it would be easy to sew, but the outlines and little inner triangles make it more challenging than the previous one. This is a type of kikkō 亀甲 pattern, all of which are based on hexagons. Some others are:

Bishamon- kikkō 毘沙門亀甲 (tortise shell)

Kumi-kikkō 組亀甲 (braided/interlaced hexagons)



This 麻の葉 (asa no ha or hemp leaf) is one of my favorite designs as well as one of the most difficult to draw and sew accurately. Study it for a while...does it tessellate with diamonds? Triangles? Hexagons? Arrows? A person who's mesmerized by pattern possibilities in lines (I can't be the only one!) can spend quite a long time seeing different shape possibilities in asa no ha.

The drawing and digitizing process for machine embroidery took me close to 4 hours to get the result I had hoped for. Covering it partially with a fan saves time, as well as looking pretty. 😊

You're probably not interested, but ultimately, I created graph paper like this to draw the asa no ha and kikko patterns.
If you'd like, print this out and use it to design your own motifs!

