

Let's Explore - Kawandi May 2024

What is Kawandi?

In India, 'Kawandi' means quilt. It is a technique developed by the Siddis (an African community brought to India more than 800 years ago). It is made with recycled materials, entirely by hand. The process is engaging, creative, relaxed and sustainable. It is an interesting visual example of repetitive stitching, a technique that is used to great effect in modern stitching.

Exploring Kawandi

We will start a small sample quilt (around 50cms wide) in order to get the hang of the technique. It could be a short table runner, table mat, or cushion cover size. By making a sample size on the day, you will be able to consider a few things before attempting a larger quilt.

The most important thing is that both backing fabric and wadding are thin for ease of stitching. This allows for having to sew through 4 thicknesses of fabric. Soft, drapey, aged or even slightly worn backing fabric are best. The backing needs to be 3-5cms larger all around than the wadding.

We will start off stitching scraps onto the folded border and upon completion of the first row all the way around, will insert the wadding close to the first row of stitches.

Please bring plenty of light weight cotton fabric scraps from your stash or suitable lightweight recycled fabrics!

What to bring

- **Thin batting (wadding)** around 3-5cms (slightly) smaller than your backing piece. It may be cotton, wool, synthetic, whatever you have to hand.
- **Backing fabric** 3-5cms larger than your batting (wadding) piece. You can select a fat quarter of quilting cotton, that's soft, or drapey, aged or worn fabric.
- **Fabric scraps** mostly light weight cotton. Aim for soft or even silky non-cotton, but not sheer, stiff or heavy weight.
- **Needles** Chenille size 20 and 22 from Clover, or Sashiko needles such as Bohin or Olympus brands. A sharp long needle is good as you can load more stitches onto your needle.
- **Threads** are determined by the size of your needle Perle size #8 is perfect for Kawandi. Plain or variegated in the colour of your choice. Off white/cream is very effective with multi-coloured fabrics. I have plenty of cream thread suitable, if you are unsure on the day. If you have thicker thread in mind, ensure it will go through your needle. Cotton a broder (embroidery thread) is also a possible choice.
- **Also** small quilting mat, small rotary cutter, quilting ruler (longer than 50cms is good, if not, I will have one), sharp scissors, pins, needle threader.