

# Making and Using an Appliqué Overlay

By Barbara Douglas

A light box or window is ideal for tracing an appliqué layout to a light-colored background fabric as a guide for placement of appliqué pieces. For fusible appliqué, being able to layer the pieces on a semi-transparent Teflon™ sheet that is placed over the appliqué-layout, then fusing all of the pieces together before pressing them as a whole to the background, is another great idea.

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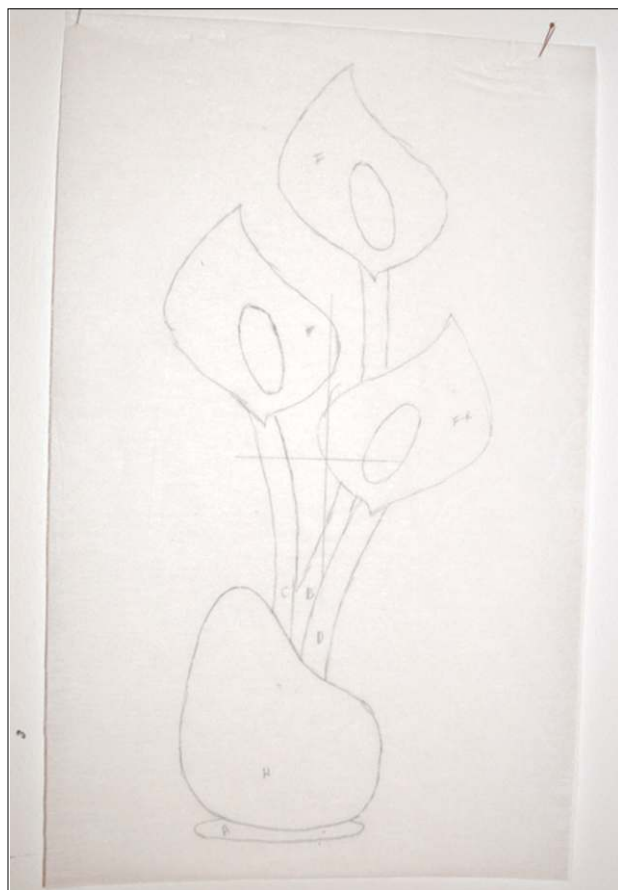
However, what do you do if your background fabric is dark? Or, what if you don't have a light box, or you begin your project at night when the window is dark? What if some (or many) of your appliqué pieces are separate and do not overlap the other pieces? The Teflon™ sheet is of no help in this case. Well, then, you make and use an overlay sheet to assist in placing each appliqué piece in its proper place. An overlay is used on top of the block and may be used for both light and dark fabrics. It may be used for hand or machine appliqué placement, including fusible web appliqué. It may be used for single blocks in a quilt, and is ideal for multi-repeated blocks, as only one tracing of the block's layout is needed.

To create an overlay, you will need a pencil that can create a dark line without smearing and a sheer-weight to light-weight sew-in interfacing. (Do not use fusible interfacing.) You will be placing the appliqué layout diagram directly under the interfacing for tracing, so you may want to take the appliqué layout diagram with you to the store in order to audition different interfacings. You will want to find the one that is the best fit for you.

When choosing an interfacing, you will want to be able to clearly see each line and marking on the layout diagram for easy tracing. Having a full-size copy of the appliqué layout diagram will be very helpful. If your pattern requires you to have the diagram enlarged, do this before auditioning the interfacings, as line sizes will vary. If your paper diagram requires you to tape pieces together to get the full layout diagram, then you may want to do this prior to auditioning the interfacing in order to purchase the proper amount of interfacing for each unique block.

If your blocks are larger than the width of the interfacing, the interfacing may be taped together to achieve the correct width to accommodate larger blocks. Use a sturdy clear tape, such as clear packing tape, and use it on the back of the overlay. Do not to apply a hot iron at any time if you use the tape. You may also butt the edges of the interfacing together, then cut and press a narrow strip of fusible interfacing along the seam line to adhere the pieces together. Be sure to test the iron setting first, so that you do not melt the interfacing when pressing. It is best to use a pressing sheet to adhere the fusible interfacing along back of the seam.

Purchase enough interfacing for each unique block. This means if a block is repeated in the quilt you will need only enough interfacing to trace that particular block once, as you will reuse the overlay for each repeat.

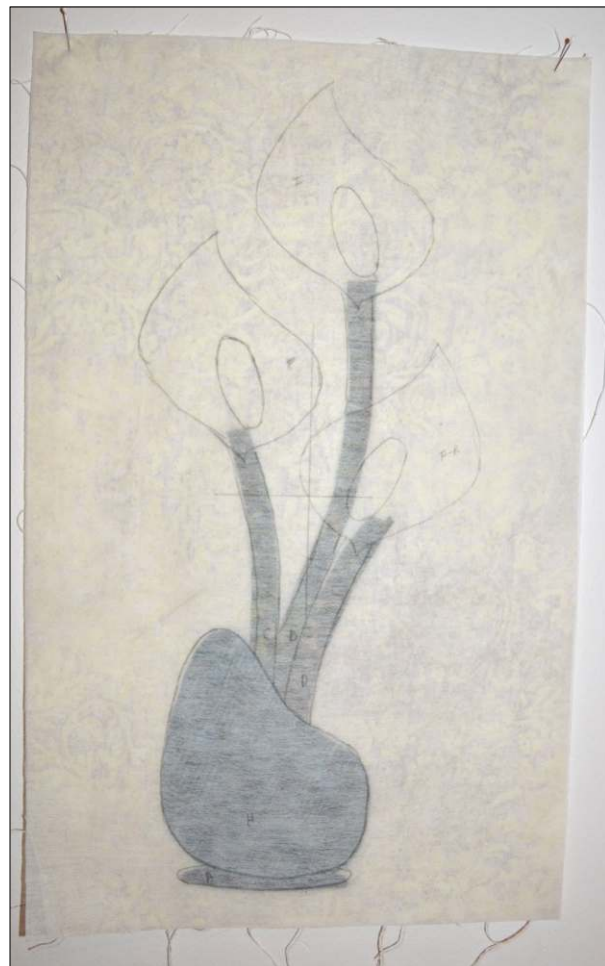


When you have found the right interfacing for you, cut each overlay sheet to the exact size of the block. Place the appliqué layout diagram under the interfacing, then trace the placement lines for each of the pieces. Your tracing lines should be darker than you would normally use if you were tracing directly to the background fabric. You need to be able to see the lines clearly once the overlay is on top of the fabric. If your background fabric is dark make sure your traced lines are darker yet. Add all of the needed markings, such as the numbering or lettering of each piece. Mark the center of the block with long-ish cross lines. You may use a light box or a window for tracing, but it probably will not be necessary.

Prepare the background fabric as directed in the pattern. Find the center of the block by folding the fabric in half and pressing, then folding the block in half perpendicularly to the first fold and press. Prepare all of the appliqué pieces that will be needed for the block. Place the overlay on top of the background fabric, matching the center cross lines of the overlay with the pressed lines of the background block, and temporarily pin in place at the center.



Place three or four pins across the top edge of the block to hold the overlay in place. Remove the center pin, then lift the overlay to make sure that the top edge stays in position. Now you are ready to begin placing your appliqué pieces on the background fabric under the overlay.



You will be able to see the fabric pieces through the overlay. The interfacing is easy to lift in order to adjust and reposition the pieces as needed. Then, lay it down again to examine the placement. Once the placement of each piece seems correct, use a small appliqué pin to hold the piece in place. You may use a small craft iron to temporarily hold fusible web appliqué pieces in place by touching the center of the appliqué piece just enough to make a slight bond. They need to be removable in case you need to make future adjustments, so don't press too much. Add each piece as directed in the pattern's instructions. Lift the overlay, remove pins and readjust, then replace the pins, until all the pieces fit perfectly under their diagram drawing. Once all the pieces are placed correctly, unpin the overlay from the background block. If you are doing needle turn or other hand appliqué, you may now begin sewing your pieces.

If you are using fusible web appliqué or freezer paper appliqué, make sure you DO NOT use the overlay as a pressing sheet to fuse the pieces to the background. To do so may cause the interfacing to melt and make a huge mess on the iron and on the fabric, as the iron has to be hot enough to melt the fusible web on the back of the appliqué. Instead, remove the overlay, then use a Teflon™ appliqué sheet or a piece of parchment paper on top of the appliqué pieces to fuse the pieces in place. This will keep your iron clean. Now you are ready to begin your machine stitching.

Finish your blocks as indicated in your chosen pattern.

Repeat and reuse your overlay for repeated blocks or for future blocks in future quilts.

We gratefully thank Mary Warner-Stone Designs, [www.marywarner-stone.com](http://www.marywarner-stone.com), for the overlay photos.