
Folk Flower Block with Anna Maria Horner

Chapter 1 - Folk Flower Block

Overview

(light upbeat music) - I'm Anna Maria Horner. I am a textile designer, a quilter and a sewing book author. The folk flower block is all about machine reverse applique and if you've never tried reverse applique this is a great project for you because the subtle curves of this design are a really good way to begin. And doing it on the machine is gonna save some time. We'll be tracing simple shapes onto a background fabric. Cutting them out and then slipping some gorgeous florals behind them to create some pretty flower blocks. (upbeat music)

Materials

- The materials for the floral block begin with the fabrics. I chose a sort of soft, pale print for the foundation of the fabric. And the block itself is gonna be about 12 1/2 inches, so you'll want about a third of a yard to cut one of those out. I also chose two stem-colored and leaf-colored fabrics. I'm gonna use a mix of those to create the stem and leaves. And then I've pulled some of my very favorite florals 'cause I thought it would be pretty to cut out that simple circle from a really intense floral. I have those paper templates ready to go, a pencil. I've got my cutting tools, which include scissors, as well as a rotary cutter and mat, and two measuring grids. I've got the 12 1/2 inch one that makes it really simple to cut out the whole block shape. I've got some straight pins. And I've also pulled aside some pretty colors of thread in case you want to do something interesting with the applique stitch. You'll also need an iron and ironing surface and a sewing machine.

Quilt Block and Reverse Machine Applique

Cutting fabric and constructing block

- Let's begin the cutting with the foundation fabric, or the background. I'm gonna begin with a 12 and a half inch square. And this grid, which is the exact same size and shape, makes that really simple, so I'm just gonna cut all the way around against the salvage. And obviously, if you're making more than one block at a time, you could cut a few layers at a time. Last edge. While we have that here, let's go ahead and cut on the diagonal of this. And I'm gonna use my longer grid to do that. So we're just gonna lay this long straight edge from corner to corner. And it's in between there that we're gonna set our stem, and I'm gonna cut out the stem fabric now. I've got these two colors that I'm using for leaf and stem, and I think I'll use this darker one for the stem. I'm not gonna worry too much about how long it is right now, 'cause I can trim it off, but I do want it to be at least 18 inches long. And this is only gonna be, that looks like a nice, straight edge, there, so I can use that. But this is only gonna be an inch wide, or just barely over an inch if you prefer. While I have this stem fabric here, I'm gonna go ahead and layer it up with the other stem leaf fabric, because I have sort of a two part leaf. I put a seam down the middle of it to sort of represent a shadow on a leaf. And I'm only gonna need for this size leaf template, I'm only gonna need two inch strips out of these, and then I'll seam them together. I'm gonna start by getting a clean, common edge on both of them. And cut about two inches off, okay. So now I have two inch strips of each of those. That's gonna look really pretty pieced together. I actually need to stop now and do a little bit of sewing before I can move

on to other cutting and assembling. So I am gonna be doing just really straight lines on the machine, inserting that one inch stem strip in between that angled cut. So we're gonna be sewing right sides together, the stem to one of those angled cuts, with just a quarter-inch seam allowance. (sewing machine buzzes) Since this angled piece is cut on the bias, you want to be careful not to stretch it out as you sew. (sewing machine buzzes) Now, I'm gonna sew the other angled piece on this side of the stem. At this point, you do want to sort of make sure that where the pieces come together is directly across, here, so you don't offset your final square by too much. So you can see how those points match up. (sewing machine buzzes) It's important, too, that they're ending at the same point as well. So if pins help you with that, go ahead and do it. So now, we can press this, and I'm just gonna press the stem seam allowances out against the background. Give it a press from the right side as well. I love the way that color looks on that pale background, that's so pretty. Okay, I'm just gonna kind of roughly snip off this edge right here to get it out of my way, but we'll do a final trimming, later. While I'm at it, I'm gonna go ahead and prepare the leaf fabrics by just sewing those two colors together with a quarter-inch seam allowance. It's okay that these are different lengths. This is just cut from scrap fabric. I'm gonna press this open, now, too, and this looks long enough probably to do about three or four different leaves. I prefer to press these open, so it'll lay nice and flat under the reverse applique. Once you have the foundation, stem, and leaves prepped, you can move on to tracing and cutting out those template shapes.

Machine reverse applique

- Now that our foundation includes this stem in the center of it, we can begin positioning the circular template, which is basically our flower head, and the leaf template. And we're gonna trace those right onto the fabric using a pencil. As far as where the flower head goes, I really just try and center it on the stem. If it helps you to fold the fabric in half and mark the halfway mark so that you can line that up in the center of the stem, go ahead and do that. But I'm just gonna sort of eyeball it, and use a light pencil line to trace around. If you'd rather use a fabric marker or water-soluble marker or something like that, go ahead, but really this pencil line is gonna get sort of hidden when we fold the fabric under. Now keep in mind as well that you don't want this way far up here because we're gonna lose a seam allowance edge as well. So I've kept it kind of safely about an inch or more away. And then for the leaf it's pretty much the same thing. You just position it as desired, and then I'm gonna flip it over, just making sure that looks pretty symmetrical. You wouldn't have to do it symmetrically if you don't want. With your templates pencil-sketched in, you can now cut out the center of those shapes. But you only wanna cut to about a quarter inch on the inside of the line. So I'm gonna begin with a little snip here so that I can get on the inside. And carefully cut, stopping about a quarter inch of the way. And then I'm just gonna trim out the inside, following along with the shape of the pencil. Definitely don't wanna use a rotary cutter for this task. Once you have the main portion of the shape cut out, you're gonna make little snips all the way around. You can go just about right up to the pencil line, but you definitely don't wanna go through it. On the straight passes you don't need lots of snips, but these little cuts in the curved areas are gonna be what helps you fold out and under smoothly when we go to applique. And in the corner here, you wanna cut in the point as well as right next to it. You can continue the two-part cutting process with each shape. Don't be scared to cut through that seam. In fact, if you cut neatly and carefully, these shapes that you're cutting out are big enough that you could actually use for an applique project. Now that you have the shapes cut out, you can sort of audition your fabrics to see how it's gonna look underneath. With the leaf, for the most part, we know how it's gonna look, but maybe this is a good

chance to figure out whether you want the blue to be on the underside of the leaf here, or have a look at it this way. Trim out the length of pieced leaf that you're gonna need underneath here. You're gonna wanna leave about a quarter inch all the way around, or maybe even a little more. And then once we have one cut, we can cut a second to get those ready. And there's no reason to specifically cut these leaves out yet. We'll save that after they've been appliqued in place. And then comes my favorite part of auditioning a flower fabric. That's really cute, but it kinda makes this whole flower shrink a little bit because of that shape of that one. So maybe something that feels like it's sort of exploding behind would be pretty. That's pretty cool. I love how cropped and simple that makes it. And keep in mind it is gonna be a little bigger, 'cause we're gonna turn on that pencil line. But I'm thinking something a little more folksy would look pretty with the fabrics that I have chosen already. Yes, I like how it's sort of a bouquet but also a flower at the same time. I'm just gonna roughly cut this out, making it more simple when I put it all together. And I could do some specific positioning once I've got my edges turned under. And that's what we need to do next is to go to the iron and press all these edges under. Turn it under almost just about on that pencil line or just enough to hide the pencil line, and press it in place. I choose not to use steam because you can burn your fingers with steam, even if your hand is not too close to the iron. I think you'll be really surprised if you've never done this before, how easy it is to manipulate the fabric into these pretty, subtle curves. Look at that. There are also reverse applique processes of using wax paper on the back of the fabric to help hold the crease, but I really find with pretty subtle curves and shapes that it's simple to do it by just folding and pressing. And on the corner here, you are gonna have a raw edge right up in the very sort of crook of that corner, but the type of stitch that we're gonna use on the machine is gonna keep all the edges so secure that it's gonna be safe and tidy. So you can continue folding and pressing all the way around each of the shapes, and then we'll move on to layering those pretty fabrics underneath, pinning them together, and sewing. Set the final position of where you want your floral fabric. You want to make sure that when you're pinning you don't distort the shape at all, but try and sort of let the fabric relax and sit the way it wants to. For the pinning, I point towards the shape. And you do want to, on that second push through, try and catch the fold-under fabric. In fact I'm gonna go ahead and go over to the opposite side here and pin, and kind of keep working from opposites so that again you don't distort as you go around. While this is a pretty tedious process, doing the stitching on the machine is gonna save a ton of time compared to doing it by hand. I like to pin pretty heavily. Having that whole big piece underneath instead of a cut circle that's just barely bigger underneath keeps everything a little bit more stable when you go to the machine to sew it together. I also like to just pin one shape at a time and then go to sew it, and then come back and do the next one instead of going to the machine with lots of different pins sticking out in all directions. So I think this is ready to go. You could use a zigzag stitch for this step to trap down this folded edge. This Janome has a nice little blanket-style stitch that's perfect for applique that I'm gonna use. And just take your time. Slow and steady wins the race on these curves. Where you position the fold underneath the presser foot all depends on the width of your particular stitch. I like for the needle to be falling down on the right just on the inside of my folded shape. Sometimes I also lift the presser foot just a little bit to get a better turn. Once you've finished your stitching, a nice pressing will get this really smooth and flat, and then you can carefully go back behind and cut away all that excess fabric. And basically you're gonna be cutting it to be in line with that folded-under seam allowance. And then you can continue the same process for the leaves underneath these openings here by pinning and carefully stitching around. I'm gonna carefully trim out all this excess. I think it's safest to leave your foundation flat against a table when you do this,

and just raise up the excess. Okay, now you can do just the same thing with the leaves. We can give this pretty block a final pressing. Now the only thing left is to use that 12 1/2 inch grid again and trim off those corners. Reverse applique is a very traditional technique, but I like this very simple, modern shape, and doing it on the machine certainly saves time. Now that you know how to do it, you could play with your own shapes, add extra leaves, add petals. With the block design itself, once you've made multiples, you can combine them in lots of interesting ways. In this sampler, I've sort of tilted them out in this little diagonal shape. And the way the stems connect is really cool. In fact, I think it'd be very pretty to set them on point and grow a whole vertical stem of folk flowers as well.