
Sew a Lumbar Pillow with Michele Muska

Chapter 1 - Sew a Lumbar Pillow

Overview

- Hi, I'm Michele Muska. I'm a designer, quilter, and fiber artist. I'm going to show you how to make a very elegant linen pillow. It's tailored with an invisible zipper. And then we're going to show variations. A belly band that can be removed to show different options for your home decor. And we'll be working with some interesting fabrics. Cotton woven prints, along with some suede or leather piping, four inch grosgrain ribbon, and cork and vinyl. I can sew everything, but I particularly love sewing home decor, because within my fabric choices, I can show my personal style in my home. (happy music)

Materials

- These are the materials you'll need to make your lumbar pillow. You'll need a 1/2 a yard of linen for your pillow. And then for the belly band you will need a 1/4 yard of lining and a 1/4 yard of the facing. And then for your pillow form, if you're going to be making your own, a 1/2 a yard of lightweight cotton. We're going to be using leather. For piping, you will need a strip 28 inches long and 4 1/2 inches wide. Two yards of filler cord. And for an additional option, some vinyl and cork. An invisible zipper, 14 inches long. Your fabric shears. Your small snipping scissors. Rotary cutter. Common pins. Coordinating thread. A number 16, or Jeans Needle for your sewing machine. An invisible zipper foot, or a regular zipper foot. Velcro. A seam ripper. You also might like to have handy a marking pencil. A pillow form, 12 by 16 inches. A large format acrylic ruler. Stuffing if you're going to be making your own pillow form. Four inch grosgrain ribbon. Fusible stabilizer. An iron and an ironing surface. And your sewing machine.

Sew a pillow form

- I like to make my own pillow forms to control the firmness. You will need two pieces of lightweight cotton. And for a 12 by 16-inch pillow, I cut my pieces 12 1/2 by 16 1/2. And then you're gonna take it to the sewing machine and sew it out. I'll be leaving approximately a four-inch opening on one end to get the stuffing in. And you'll wanna back tack, and do about a 3/8-inch seam all the way around. Then you wanna clip the corners to reduce bulk. Turn the pillow form case inside out or right side out. (chuckles) Then you're going to start stuffing. Wanna make sure to get it right down into the corners. Not all stuffing is created equal. Some of it's a little fluffier and some has a little bit more stiffness, so you'll have to judge how firm your pillow will be according to the stuffing that you get. So, once you get your pillow to where you want it, you're gonna push the stuffing back in a little bit, just fold that under, then you'll wanna put a few pins in there before you take it to the machine to sew. And I have to wrestle it a little bit with the stuffing in the way. So, back tack and sew up your closure. And here's your pillow form. So, you just wanna squish it around and get that batting all into the corners. It's as easy as that.

Sew a cover with invisible zipper

- I will be using a 14 inch invisible zipper for my lumbar pillow project. You will notice that you do not see the teeth from the front of the zipper, and the zipper pull glides down and the teeth are underneath. We will be prepping the zipper with an iron. Use the synthetic setting on your iron so

you won't melt the plastic teeth, and you're going to roll the zipper down flat, and you can see those stitch lines, and that's where you wanna iron it out flat. And as you can see, you can see the two rows of stitches, so it's starting to lay flat, and you wanna do that all the way down the zipper. You have to have a little bit of patience during this step, since it is on a low setting. Okay. That side's looking pretty good. And then I wanna repeat on the other side. And once you have it flattened out on both sides, we're ready to insert it into our pillow cover. We're going to center the zipper on one side of the pillow cover. This zipper will be inserted into the seam and it'll be practically invisible. So the zipper will be face down and the teeth will be towards the bottom of the pillow. And on this end the tail will be off to the side and we'll take it to the machine to sew. I wanna remove my regular presser foot. I can replace it with a regular zipper foot that you can use the zipper on either side to stitch, but I got this little foot for my machine that's called an invisible zipper foot, and I find it really helpful, and you can purchase those for most machines if your machine didn't come with one. See, it has a little hole and it has a little canal underneath. You want to lower the invisible zipper foot to the right canal, lower your needle, and you're going to start stitching. And you can see how close that allows your needle to get to the teeth. And you're going to stop right before the end of your zipper. Back tack. And look how that close that came to the teeth. Works really great, it's beautiful. And that first side is finished. We have the first side of our zipper sewn on. We're gonna flip it over like this so the zipper's laying flat and we're going to bring it and match it up to the end like this. And we're going to pin in place and we'll sew along this side as well. We're going to put the zipper foot down into the left groove and you can always make sure you're on the correct side by lowering your needle and making sure it's to the right of the zipper teeth. And we'll be sewing right till we get to the zipper pull. It's a little bit tight here because this side is already sewn down. And now both sides are sewn on. At this point, open this up, and you'll want to try your zipper to make sure that it opens and shuts nicely. Make sure there's no threads in the zipper teeth, and look how beautiful that looks. Open up your zipper a little bit, and we're going to finish off each end. The zipper tails on each end will be pulled out, and here, sew across the bottom. So it might be a little fussy. Wanna replace your zipper foot with your regular presser foot. And that's about a 5/8 inch seam to match your zipper. Go all the way to the end, tack, release, and that's what it will look like. I like to leave the zipper open a little bit, that way when I go to turn it right side out I can actually get it. If you close it all the way up it's really hard to undo the zipper from the outside, so pull the tails up, line up the pillow edges, pin, and just take your zipper ends and pull them to the side. That will be on the inside of the pillow, so you don't have to worry about that. And you'll feel the zipper, and just back tack, and you'll want to check your zipper here. Looks pretty good. And now we're going to go around the other three sides of the pillow. If you feel more comfortable, you can pin it. Next you want to clip your corners to reduce the bulk. Now we're going to turn our pillow cover right side out. Pop up the corners a little bit. And insert the pillow form that we made earlier. And it really is an invisible zipper right in the seam. It's beautiful, you can't even see it. This pillow will have a removable belly band that you'll be able to choose your own fabrics. You can, if you prefer not to do the belly band, you can use a decorative fabric and it will be a stand alone pillow.

Piped belly band

- Using a lightweight cotton fabric with leather piping is a bit of an issue. I had to figure out how to stabilize the cotton to match the weight of the leather piping. I really love this woven fabric. The colors just really speak to me. And I think it looks beautiful with the suede piping. So what I've

decided to do is take a fusible layer. And I'm going to iron that on. Follow your manufacturer's instructions on your iron setting. I'm using a dry iron on a medium-high setting. This is on the wrong side of your fabric. And I'm going to press it again, all the way down, leaving it a few seconds in each area to get a really nice adhesion. You'll need to let this cool down before you peel the paper backing off and apply your lining. So once it's cool, test the corner. And it looks like the adhesion is perfect. You want to gently pull it back. We're going to place the lining on to the back. Make sure it fits nicely. And press. Leaving your iron for a few seconds in each spot. Test your corner. I think it needs a little bit more. And it has a nice adhesion. And let it cool off before the next step. You may need to trim the edges to make them all even. Fold over the ends a half inch and sew down. I'm using a very thin, pliable leather for my piping. I'm using the sueded side of the leather. And I've already cut them to 2 1/4 inches wide and 28 inches long. I'll have my filler cord. I'm going to measure, and about an inch and a half longer. Cut each piece. And now we're ready to sew our piping. To sew with leather, I've done a few different things to my machine. Well, first of all, I changed the bobbin and the thread to a rust-medium brown to match my leather. Then I put my zipper foot on, as well as changing my needle to a jeans needle. I will also lengthen my stitch length. And make sure to slow my machine down. Remember, we're leaving about an inch and a half tail of the filler cord. It's a little bit fussy to get it in here in the beginning. Lower the needle. Make sure the filler cord is pressed in. And grab the back so you can guide it through. The edge of the zipper foot will be right against the cord. And will get your seam as close to the cord as possible. And repeat for the other piping. Now we're going to attach the piping to the band. You just wanna make sure your measurements are correct so it overlaps a little bit on each end. The leather is really too thick for you to pin it, and so you can just use the edges as your guide. Lower your needle. We're going to keep the adjustments on the machine the same, 3.5 for your stitch length and at a slow pace. You've added a few other layers in here, so you just wanna go slow. Make sure you don't break your needle. And I'm holding my piping down, pushing a little bit with this finger against the zipper foot and holding the piping down here. It's really thick, and it kind of has a mind of its own so you really kind of have to handle it a little bit. Look how nice that looks. It's really pretty. So now we're gonna do the other side the same way. Again, just make sure you have an equal amount, approximately, on each end. Slip under, gently lower your needle. One of the other things you might wanna look at, sometimes when you're working with suede, these little fibers almost feel a little bit gummy and attach to your needle, so you might wanna just clean that off a little bit. Plus you're also, needle is going through a fusible webbing, and so that gums it up a little bit as well. So now you'll take and pull the filler cord out. And cut the leather piping. This way, you can't see the white of the filler cord at the end. And you'll do that on all sides. Then we'll be taking the piping and flipping it over like this. And we're going to topstitch it down. First, because there's so much bulk here, we're going to snip the suede piping off on the corners. Kind of just to get this whole thing started. I'll change my zipper foot to the other side. You're going through quite a few layers here, so really start off slowly. And then you do the same thing to the opposite side. I think the topstitching gives it a really nice finished look. And it will hold the piping in place. Now we're ready to size the belly band on to the pillow. And, you know, there's always one end that looks better than the other, so you decide which one you want. And it's lining up pretty good. I've chosen to use a peel-and-stick Velcro just to make it a little bit easier for me. And then I'll also sew it on. I'm gonna put... Make sure that doesn't show. That looks just about right. You can also get this in one long continuous strip or completely sew on. They also have iron on Velcro now. Okay. That looks pretty good. All right, and now you'll gently wanna pull these apart so you won't peel them off of the fabric, but you'll keep them in the right

place. And we're ready to sew them down. I've switched back to the regular presser foot. And going to run a stitch down the top, along the side, and down the bottom of the squares. And now you'll do the other side. Also, I'd like to mention, at this point, since I've been using several different fusibles and adhesive products, I will now be replacing my needle before my next project. Now we're going to clean up the extra thread tails on each end. And we're finished. So now we're ready to wrap up our pillow. There. I really love the contrast of the cotton fabric with the suede piping. You can also purchase piping if you'd prefer. Or if you're using a lightweight cotton, you can use a lighter weight cotton fabric, contrasting and making your own piping as well.

Vinyl cork & belly band

- There are so many different types of materials that you can use for your belly band. I like to use vinyl. This is a textured vinyl, and it has a fleece backing. Most people think vinyl is really difficult to sew with, but if you use a jeans needle and go slow, you should be absolutely fine. Most cork fabric for sewing or crafts comes with a little fleece backing, so it's nice and soft, it's pliable. This one has some gold flecks, with I think adds really nice touch. And it's really difficult to pin, so I am going to line this up with my ruler, butt it up against the side, and I'm going to take some painter's masking tape to hold it in place. You'll be able to sew your seam down this side, and then remove the tape and do the opposite side. And you're ready to take it to the machine. I like to use a longer stitch length when I'm working with thicker materials. I'm just going to line it up with the edge of my presser foot. Back tack. This side is finished, so we're to remove the painter's tape. I use painter's tape instead of regular masking tape, I think it works a lot better with the fabric, it won't leave a mark. Vinyl and cork fabric does not fray, so you don't have to fold the end over, you can leave a raw edge. You'll want to go ahead and finish the ends with Velcro, as we did in the other pillow. This time I chose to use a full strip of Velcro. And we're gonna fit it to our pillow.

Ribbon belly band

- For the ribbon belly band, we'll need to measure the circumference of the pillow. So, wrap that around. So I have about 28 inches, and I'll need to add three inches for 31 inches in total. I've already cut my grosgrain ribbon 31 inches long. These are four inches wide, so I only need three, but you can use any size ribbon that you like, you just have to add more ribbons for your width. Next I'll be taking 'em to the machine to sew together. First check to see if your ribbon has a right and a wrong side. You wanna put wrong sides together, because we will be showing the seam allowance on the front side of our belly band. And we're going to do an 1/2 inch seam allowance. And of course as always, if you feel more comfortable, please pin as you go along. So this'll be the front side of your belly band, and you'll add one more ribbon. Now you can finger press open your seams. And it'll be easier to apply a low temp iron to it. Always check the content of your ribbon. If it's high in acetate, or even rayon you might wanna use a pressing cloth, so make sure you use a little piece of it and give it a try on your iron before you use it on your belly band. So I have my iron set to acrylic setting, and I'll lightly iron that flat. We'll be applying a decorative stitch down the middle of the seam, to add a little accent to the belly band. I will be using the decorative zigzag stitch. You can use whatever you like. And when I press the zigzag stitch, that already brings my stitch length to 3.5. And we'll put our presser foot directly in the middle of the seam, and that should get your zigzag directly in the middle. This is going to give you just a little bit of an accent stitch, and it adds some texture to your pillow. That's the first length, and we'll do the second one. What's great about grosgrain ribbon, it has a really nice woven finished edge, so you don't have to finish anything. You

can just trim up the ends. And you wanna finish off each end, just fold over about a half inch. Pin it if you feel more comfortable. Change back to a straight stitch. And finish off my end. And then you'll wanna do the same to the opposite end. Now that you have the two ends finished, we're going to trim up your threads, and we're going to measure it to our pillow. Let's measure the pillow with our belly band. And it matches up really nicely. So I'll be able to use this topstitching here as my guide to sew it. So let's take it to the sewing machine and finish it up. I think I'll put a few pins, just to make sure I meet my line here, the topstitching. 'Kay, just make sure not to catch the bottom piece onto there sewing. Back tack. Now we can fit our grosgrain belly band onto the pillow. If it cooperates. (chuckles) Mmhm. Fits really nicely. I love how the grosgrain ribbon gives it such a tailored look, and that we had put the seams on the outside with a little bit of decorative stitch down the middle, gives a nice accent to the pillow as well. The inseam invisible zipper only adds to the simplicity of this pillow that will stand alone in any home decor environment. It's also a vehicle to show your own personal style with the interchangeable belly bands.