

---

## Sew a Dresden Plate Pillow with Michele Muska

---

### Chapter 1 - Sew a Dresden Plate Pillow

#### Overview

(upbeat music) - Hi, I'm Michele Muska. I'm a quilter and a fiber artist. I'm also a quilt book author. The first quilt I made with intention as an adult was with the Dresden Plate. It happens to be my favorite quilt block because it's so versatile. In this class, we're going to learn how to construct a Dresden Plate, do hand stitching, machine stitching, we'll also be learning how to make bias piping and freezer paper circle, which is one of the most difficult things to do in quilting. I chose the Dresden Plate for this pillow project because it makes a great impact. And finally, I've chosen to offset the Dresden Plate to give it a more modern and contemporary feel. (upbeat music)

#### Materials

- The supplies you will need to make the modern Dresden pillow are one and a quarter yards 54 inch wide of linen or cotton of your choice for the backing and, the front, and the piping. Eight colors of linen or cotton for your Dresden plate, about a fat quarter each. You'll also need some low-loft batting, the Dresden tool, 18 degrees, as well as a pillow form and two yards of filler cord. You will also need wash-out or erasable marking pens or pencils, always great to have a seam ripper, contrasting and matching thread, as well as some embroidery floss for your hand stitching. Common pins, small scissors, your fabric shears, a rotary cutter and a mat, freezer paper, fusible medium or heavyweight interfacing, an iron, an ironing surface, a six inch plate or disc, and of course, a sewing machine.

#### Sew and cut the Dresden plate

- We're now ready to cut the Dresden plate. I'll be using an acrylic tool that is an 18-degree wedge. I will need 21 wedges to create a Dresden circle or plate. I'm going to use the strip method and I'm going to do three layers. You can probably do about three or four layers at a time. Saves energy. This is a six-and-a-half-inch strip. Always make sure to have your rotary cutter, when not in use, locked for safety reasons. That's your first cut, and then you're gonna turn it. And you're gonna be flipping your tool just back and forth. (tool whirring) And you can just continue all the way down. Then you continue with the rest of your colors 'til you have 21 pieces. I'm going to begin joining my Dresden wedges together. I'm gonna take my first two, right sides together, it won't matter with linen. There's no right or wrong side, and you can put a couple of pins in and I'll be using a quarter-inch seam. (machine whirring) and you might wanna go a little bit slower if you're using the linen because it does have a little bit of stretch. And then when you open up, this is what it'll look like. Take the next one, right sides together. And match it up. Few pins to guide it. (machine whirring) Okay, and as you can see, it's starting to form the curve of the plate. Now I'll join the first and the last wedge together to complete your circle. (machine whirring) And here we have our completed Dresden plate or circle. Next, we'll be taking it to the ironing board and ironing to the left, all around. And the reason you're going to be ironing your seams to the left, it'll be a lot easier to run underneath your presser foot when you're doing your top stitching. So the hope is to have your wedges meet up and create a nice flat surface on this side. You know, if you have any variation in your seam, you might have a little bit of bulkiness and that's what a nice, hot iron will help you with.

### Assemble the front

- I've cut out a 16-inch circle out of my fusible webbing. This is going to give the lighter-weight linen a little bit of stability as well as help with fraying around the edges. I also need to cut this circle out so I'm going to trace a circle. And cut the middle out. Gonna use my ironing pad. I'm going to place the fusible webbing down on the backside with paper side up. And you wanna hold your iron for a few seconds in each spot. And follow your manufacturer's instructions. The paper backing will still be hot to the touch but you wanna make sure that it's adhering so you can see that shiny, fusible iron-on web is now on the back of your Dresden plate and it's ready to pull away. Let it cool completely and then you can peel the paper back. While you're waiting for this to cool completely, you can actually trim. The paper backing will give it a little bit more stability as you trim it. And since the fusible webbing is right up to the edge, your linen is not going to fray. And you'll eventually be doing a blanket stitch over it to keep it in place. The paper is cool enough and now we can peel it back and you wanna start very gently. Work your way around. It should come off in one piece but if it doesn't, don't worry. There. And now you're ready to put it onto your pillow face. I've already cut my 17-inch square of linen for the pillow face as well as the low-loft batting. And we're going to place our Dresden plate onto the pillow and it's going to be off center. I mean, you could actually place it in the middle and cover the whole space. It's really up to you since it's your project but I chose to off center it. Makes it a little more contemporary, okay? And what I'm going to do is just iron on. Wanna make sure you're not ironing onto your mat. Just to keep it in place. Might also wanna add a few pins. And this is where you're going to trim off the rest of the Dresden plate. You might wanna save these scraps so you can iron 'em onto a piece of scrap linen and you can test out your blanket stitch or your top stitching before you do it on your actual pillow face. And now you wanna make sure that, wait a few seconds in each spot to the fusible webbing is adhered to the pillow face. And now you're ready to take it to the machine. I'm going to use my presser foot as a guide so it'll be a little less than a quarter of an inch. I'm going to change my stitch length to 3.5 just to give it a little bit more of a hand-stitched look. Back tack only once. And you probably wanna set it maybe on a medium speed, just to make sure you get a nice, straight stitch. (machine whirring) Back tack, cut. And then move on to the next. This is yellow so it matches but for most of the wedges, it'll be a contrasting color. (machine whirring) Okay. I'll be using the blanket stitch for the outside of the Dresden plate. If you don't have a blanket stitch on your machine, you can also use your zigzag. You might wanna set to medium speed just so you can have control. (machine whirring) And make sure that the needle at the blanket stitch edge is right over the edge of the Dresden. Try not to push your fabric, just let it go at its own speed. It's making multiple stitches back and forth so it's just going to take a little bit longer. And now you're ready to snip any extra threads around the plate. It's okay to have a little bit of fray because it's a more modern piece. Now I'm ready to work on the center. I took a piece of freezer paper and cut a four-inch circle and then you put the shiny side down and you iron it on. It's not a permanent adhesion. It's just gonna hold it in place for you to work on it. Circles are notoriously difficult to do in quilting so this is a really helpful little trick. Single thread, knotted on one end, and I'm gonna start around the edge in the middle and make a running stitch. It might be a little awkward at first but just kinda hang in there, you'll do it. I sewed a running stitch all the way around the outside and then pulled it tight. I'm gonna clip it off. And iron it down. You wanna flip it over. It's a pretty nice looking circle there. Press it, get a crisp edge. And it'll be a little warm so you wanna let it cool off. And you're gonna peel your paper out. Just press it again. Just to maintain that shape. And then there's your circle. Just make sure it's really pressed so you have a nice crisp edge. Next you're gonna come over and place it

onto the center. Once you have it placed, so you don't see any of the raw edges, you're going to pin in place so you can applique it down by hand. I'm hand appliqueing the center with a blind stitch. You wanna get the color of your thread as close as possible to your center and just pick up right at the edge. You'll need to pull it a little bit taut but not too taut that it like really shows like you're pulling the fabric. And just go all the way around the circle. I'm going to run it through the back and whip stitch it a few times. And now I'm gonna give it a little press just to make sure it sets the stitches and it lays flat. And we're done with the center. I've decided to do some hand stitching to sandwich the top and the batting together. I'm using my trusty little plate. It's about six inches. I like to use my retractable pencil and you're just gonna do a few circles here and there. Kind of randomly but you wanna make sure that they're all in a area that will make the pillow top stay onto the batting. And maybe one more in the corner. At this point, I'm going to take a few pins, pin it in place. The batting does a really great job holding down your pillow-top fabric but just in case. This pin's giving me a little bit of trouble. Okay. I'm going to be using cotton embroidery floss. This is three strands. And doing a running stitch. Big stitch, however you wanna call it and maybe three stitches to an inch. And if you go nice and slow, you really don't need, I don't think you need a hoop. If you feel more comfortable, you could certainly do that. Basically, it's decorative and just, you know, holding the top in place. Just rock the needle back and forth. And gently pull through. I love how the circles mimic the motif of the Dresden plate too. And then I just whip stitch it on the end. That is going to be inside your seam and sewed down really well so you're not gonna have to worry about it coming out. And now you'll hand stitch the rest of the circles.

#### Create and attach piping

- Since our finished pillow has curved corners with the piping, we need to make bias piping. First, I'm gonna show you how to make bias tape. You'll want to use your selvage edge, and every mat has a 45 degree angle. Take your ruler, put it on your 45 degree angle. So I'm gonna do on the two inch line. And I want to cut enough strips to equal two yards. Pull this away a little bit so you can really see the edge. And then you'll want to square off your ends. To join the strips together, there's not a right or a wrong side to this linen, if there was you would want to join right sides together. Pin the lower corner, and with your marking pencil draw a diagonal. You'll see when you turn it over like this, this is how it will continue. And then you're going to put another pin on this side. And that will hold it in place when you take it to the sewing machine and stitch the diagonal line. I'll show you that once again, right sides together if there is one. Pin in the lower corner. Draw the diagonal. Since the linen is rather stretchy, I'll do from the center out, so it won't pull. And again the pin on the top. That will hold it nicely in place to stitch your line. And as I said earlier you want to do two yards that will go around the perimeter of your pillow. And now you're ready to take it to the sewing machine. Now we need to cut the corners off and press open the seams. 'Kay. You want to leave a nice five-eighths inch seam allowance. That will help you open up the seam, and I would, could finger press it. And then with your iron press it open. And that will also give you a nice crisp edge on this side. And there you're finished. You will want to change your presser foot to a zipper foot because you want to get as close as possible to the cording. So we're gonna change that out. And with a zipper foot you can go on either side, so we're gonna go to the left side. So I'm gonna leave a tail of the cording out. And it's going to be folded right in half. And you're gonna nudge the edge of the zipper foot right on the side next to your cording. And you really can't use any pins here, you just really need to use your fingers or a stylus. So you're coming up to your first seam that you made when you did your bias tape, you want to make sure that it's still laying flat. Then fold it over, hold it

in place. And then you'll want to leave a little tail at the end as well. Now that we have our freshly made bias piping we'll attach it to the front of the pillow. You want to leave a couple inches off to the side because we're going to be making a different type of joint at the end. And you're going to start pinning all the way around. I want to make a curved corner. And it looks a little bunched now, but once we turn it the right way all that will go away because we made it on the bias. You'll probably have to manipulate your pins a little bit because it might stretch as you go along. So here you are at your third corner. Then you're going to leave a tail at the end. We'll do the joining after we finish sewing the piping onto the pillow to make sure that there wasn't any stretch in the bias piping. Still using the zipper foot, sew the cording on. I'm actually going to put this up to a 3.5 just in case we need to make an adjustment it'll be easier to take it out. And like before, the side of the zipper foot will guide your stitching. Now we're coming to the corner, so you just want to go slow. And try to stay as close to the cording and the previous stitch that's holding your bias piping together. You don't want to go too close 'cause that way you'll catch the filler cord inside, and it won't look quite as clean. So you can see it's already bunching a little bit because it stretches. So you just want to take note of that. The pins are really just a guide. And almost the end of the tail here so you want to leave a little bit of room, probably about three inches just to be able to manipulate your joint. Now I'm going to show you how to join your piping together. There are several different methods but we're gonna do the blunt end method. Take out a few of the stitches here. And don't cut off too much too quickly because you can't put it back on. So you're going to overlap, so you can cut right about here. Open your seam, pull the filler cord back, and you're going to fold this over. That will be our outside edge. Then this goes right over, I'm gonna open this up a little bit more so you can see it a little better. 'Kay. Finger press that in place. And then make sure it's nice and taut underneath, you're gonna lay the top piping over that, and you see that's going to be coming around and that's going to be creating your seam. So give yourself a good inch or so over the piping, like this, and lay that down. And then take the other end, the other tail of the cording and you're gonna snip it directly next to it. And you lay that there. And then you're gonna fold that over. And you might have to do this a few times, it's a little bit fussy, but you want to pin it, take it on this side and look, that looks pretty good like that, so I think you're ready to sew. Now that I know that this is in the right position I'm going to put my pins in sideways. And we're gonna finish off the seam. You'll have a little bit of bulk here so go a little bit slower. And the moment of truth. There, it looks pretty good. If you don't want to go through the trouble of making your own bias piping, you can purchase pre-made piping. I particularly love to make my own because it gives you so many more options. You can make it with the same fabric, or with something contrasting and fun.

### Finishing and variations

- For your backing, you will need to cut two pieces of fabric, 17 inches by 12 inches. Then we're going to go to the sewing machine and finish off the edges. To finish off the raw edges, this happens to be the selvage, but you're going to fold over twice about 1/2 inch. And you can finger press it, or if you feel more comfortable, you can actually pin it. I'll be using the regular presser foot. And sew a straight stitch down the entire length. (sewing machine beeps) (sewing machine beeps) Back tack and finish it off. And then you'll wanna do the second piece the same way. Pin the back fabrics to your pillow front. Wanna remember that there is a right and wrong side to this, only because of the seam finishing. So you want the finished side to the right side of your pillow top. You're gonna adjust that so you can see. This one will eventually go over the top like this as well.

And this is the envelope. So let's pin this one first. I'm going to start pinning from the bottom because the fabric is a little bit stretchy. And this is probably the most difficult part (laughs) of the project because you're going to be doing this almost blind, and you're gonna have to use your zipper foot to curve around the piping. And don't worry if you pin through the piping. You just wanna make sure you're holding it in place. Now we're ready to attach the second piece wrong side up 'cause that will be on the interior of your pillow. And we're gonna start at the corner again. You'll get quite a bit of bulk on the side here, so when you're sewing, you wanna make sure to go a little bit slower. Make sure that's laying down nice and flat. Take it to sewing machine and sew around the edges. Swap out to your zipper foot to the left side because you're going to be sewing around the outside of your pillow. Start right at one of the envelop seams here and nudge the zipper foot right up against the piping. You're sewing blind, so you really can't see where the piping is. You really have to go by feel. That's what the edge of the zipper foot is going to help you do. I'm also going to switch (sewing machine beeps) to a little bit bigger stitch. This is just something that I do personally because I like to be able to take my pillow, see what it looks like on the outside, make sure I don't need any adjustments. And sometimes you do need adjustments, and it's much easier to take out a 3.5 inch stitch than a smaller stitch with your seam ripper. And then once you get all your adjustments done, you can sew it around again with your regular 2.5 stitch. Okay, so we're gonna back tack. And I usually take my finger and press the filler cord up against the zipper foot like this and my other finger down here to make sure it's getting as close as possible. And since this is linen, it does have a little bit of a stretch to it, so you're going to have to adjust your fabric as you go along. We're approaching our first corner, so I'm gonna slow my speed down a little bit, using your finger as a guide like before and the zipper foot side to get around the corner. It's a good idea to check when you get to the corner with your piping lip to make sure it's laying nice and flat and getting around that corner. We're approaching the last corner, so you wanna make sure you can give your fabric a little bit of a tug to make it taut. (sewing machine beeps) Okay. To reduce bulk, I'm going to cut and clip each corner, just a few around the corner. Make sure you don't get the seam. So this is it. This is the first time you're gonna get to see your pillow finished with the piping. And it's also the time you'll be able to make some adjustments. So let's give it a try. Gonna pop out your corners. So far, so good. So you wanna pull out your piping, your filler cord, and just see how it looks. Actually looks pretty good. But sometimes because you're not really able to see exactly how close you are getting to the piping cord, you might see a little bit of space there that you'd like to make an adjustment. So I don't need to make any here, but if you did, I'd put a little pin there, turn it back inside out, fix that, and then you'll want to completely go around again with your 2.5 stitch length to make sure it's nice and secure. So just follow the line, the stitch line that you had before if you're happy with it, on your smaller setting, stitch setting. (sewing machine beeps) And now we're ready to insert the pillow form. I like to use a pillow form that has a zipper so I can actually remove some of the stuffing. I prefer a little bit softer pillow as opposed to something being really firm. It also when it's really firm will affect how your corners pop. I would just stuff it and give it a try and see what you think about it. Wanna make sure you get the stuffing right into the corners. And this should lay nice and flat. I usually like to have at least a four-inch overhang here. And if you feel like it, you can even do a little bit of basting stitch across to hold it in place, but not necessary. Okay, perfect. We've learned a lot of techniques during this pillow class, none of them that difficult, but you just need a little patience to get to the end results. We can actually make lots of different variations with the Dresden and the piping. On this one, we did large piping, so it makes a little bit bigger of a statement. And then this one's a little bit more contemporary. I chose a modern print

with a black backing and used just one thread for the stitching. And I didn't put a center in it, and you can see my end threads here. Now that you know how to do all these techniques, just enjoy the process and make it your own.