

## A Practice in Stitches: Make Your Memory Quilt Table Runner

Stitching is like having a mantra. It's a form of concentration. The tactile nature of the cloth, the meditative presence it takes to pull a threaded needle through it over and over again, bring mind and body together. And when you are dealing with the raw materials of your life, the fabric that a loved one touched and lived and loved in for so many years, the effect can be transforming.

This project is a table runner that will be 12" wide and 60" long. It is worked using the "crazy quilt" technique where random size and shape pieces of fabric are attached to a muslin foundation and decorated with hand embroidery stitches. Needlework skills are not a prerequisite for trying this form of patchwork quilting and feeling its cultural life connections first hand. Use the many hours it will take to make your runner to remember, mourn, cry, laugh, and finally bring some resolution to your own grieving.

I find that the hardest step is making the first cut into each meaningful textile. Deconstructing the garment symbolizes the severing of the relationship. The cutting exposes our vulnerability and an emotional nakedness. This becomes both literally and figuratively the raw material of our transformation.

Gather the following, visiting a fabric store to purchase those items you don't have on hand:

1 yd. muslin

1 yd. backing

An assortment of meaningful cloth

Quilting thread and #7 quilting needles

An assortment of cotton embroidery floss and #5 embroidery needles

Fabric scissors, see-thru ruler, pencil, straight pins

1. Cut five 13" squares of muslin. This allows for 1/2" seam allowance around the edge.
2. Select your favorite fabric from your collection and cut out a 2 to 3 inch square from it. Don't worry about precision. In this case, the finished product will actually be

more interesting if the patches are oddly sized. Lay this piece at the approximate center of one of the muslin blocks.

3. Select a second fabric that contrasts in texture or color with the first. Cut a random rectangular size piece, making sure that one edge is as long as one of the edges of the first patch. Lay these two fabrics with right sides facing each other, matching up that one similar length edge. This second fabric will be covering both the first fabric and the muslin block underneath it. Use quilting thread, make a running stitch (a simple in-and-out motion in a straight line)  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from that matching edge.
4. Turn the second piece to show its right side. The sewn edge is now hidden. You now have two fabric pieces sewn to each other and the muslin base.
5. Continue in this fashion until the muslin is completely covered. Trim any excess to end with a 13" square of patchwork.
6. To complete the crazy quilt top, piece the blocks into one long row.
7. Embellish the top with buttons, jewelry, and decorative embroidery. Start with a simple running stitch. Use an embroidery dictionary (found at your local fabric store) for inspiration.
8. When all of the embellishment is completed, cut a backing fabric that is 1" bigger along all four edges of the crazy quilt top. Center the patchwork top on to the backing, wrong sides facing each other.
9. Fold the outside edges of the backing in to meet the outside edge of the top and then fold it again, covering all of the raw edges. Hand-stitch this binding in place and add additional embroidery to the bound edge.
10. Using a permanent ink marker, sign, date, and write any desired inscription on the finished piece.

--Louise Silk

For more help with stitching, or just for inspiration, try [www.silkquilt.com](http://www.silkquilt.com) or [www.quiltmag.com](http://www.quiltmag.com).