

Artful Living



Elsie Home Founder Lauren Meichtry on the Joy of Creating

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There's something warm and inviting about pitch-perfect home accessories, like pillows that are made for beautiful, lived-in spaces. Elsie Home founder Lauren Meichtry has been sewing pillows for the past six years, and as time has evolved, so have her exquisite taste and preference for hues, textures and textiles. We chatted with her about staying creative in quarantine, the joy of making something from nothing, and more.



Photography by Public 311 Design

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What prompted you to start Elsie Home?

Elsie is my husband's grandma. She's been in my life for the past 15 years. Before I joined her family, my own grandma was my creative inspiration. She always made my school costumes, shared her love of crafting and really sparked my interest in making. As a result of this early experience with creating, it was woven into the fabric of my being. When I met my husband in 2005 and was introduced to his grandma Elsie, I immediately felt a special connection to her. She is a true artist. She spent many years painting beautiful landscapes and portraits. She loved to sew and was constantly making things for every member of the family. When her arthritis got really bad, she had to put down her paintbrush and pack up her sewing machine, only to pick up a knitting needle and find a new way to express herself.

I think what really connects us is our love for creating something from nothing. Makers know that creativity is limitless and if you don't know how to make something, you practice over and over until you've mastered it. When I was gifted Grandma Elsie's sewing machine, I knew I had an opportunity to acquire a new skill and a chance to carry on her creative legacy.

Where do you seek the most inspiration in your daily life?

I am a big lover of the outdoors and have always felt inspired by the natural hues and textures you can find outside. There's nothing artificial about the outdoors and all things exist in a natural form, imperfections and all. I try to bring that same energy into my collections and into my own home.

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How often are you switching out the pillows in your own spaces?

When I first started this business, the answer would have been all the time. There was never a moment when I didn't have thread hanging off of my clothes or tangled between my kids' toes as they walked through the house. Being self-taught, sewing just one pillow took a lot longer than it should have. I watched a million sewing tutorials, pestered the women working at sewing shops, and phoned everyone I knew who could sew to pick their brain for tips. I sewed in the dining room, laundry room and garage. I now have a seamstress who makes the pillows, and I manage the business side of things. I still make samples here and there, as well as pillows for my own home.

What seasonal trends are you loving right now?

This is a summer like no other. Coming off of months in isolation, I think we're all feeling the need to be more intentional in our product selection and really only buying what we need. With that, I'm seeing an even bigger pull toward natural and sustainable products primarily made in the United States. It's almost like we've been given this clean slate where we can re-emerge in a more impactful way, purchasing high-quality products made of natural materials that will stand the test of time and have a smaller environmental footprint. We're seeing more linen, more muted and natural tones, and more wood — trends that will never go out of style.

How have the past few months in isolation affected your ability to create?

In the very beginning, isolation was a real adjustment. Having my kids at home all day made it difficult to feel creative, especially when I had to shift my time to homeschooling them every day. However, I leaned on my creativity to keep me sane. Taking the time to sew up a new pillow was often my outlet after a stressful

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day of frightening news and crying kids who just wanted to play with their friends. I decided to collaborate with an interior designer for the first time during the quarantine, and the two of us are launching my next collection of pillows together.



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Do you have an inventory of select pillows or is everything from Elsie Home made-to-order?

We keep all of our pillows stocked so they are ready to ship out as soon as someone orders them. This was actually a conscious decision to help people get their items quicker.

Any recommendations for those looking to up their pillow game?

You don't need a lot of pillows to create a beautiful space. Sometimes your bed only needs one long lumbar to look well put together. For me, prioritizing the material of the pillow cover and insert is really important because I want a pillow that not only looks good but that also feels good.

Besides pillows, what else do you enjoy sewing?

I actually started making baby clothes when my daughter was born almost six years ago. I still make some here and there for friends who are having babies. I've made many Halloween costumes, hundreds of fabric face masks throughout the coronavirus outbreak, and my all-time favorite: teeny tiny Barbie Dreamhouse-sized Elsie Home pillows.