

Pillow designer lets you in on fun



RON TARVER / Inquirer Staff Photographer
Monica Walker-Miraglio, owner of Fill-a-Pillow, designs one in her Haverford shop. Her customers can choose from hundreds of materials to have accent pillows made to order.

Build your own, have a party, at Haverford store.

By Eils Lotozo
 INQUIRER STAFF WRITER
Painting a room a new color can be a major chore. Picking out furniture can be a project, and waiting for it to arrive can be a marathon. But changing your accent pillows? A snap. "They're instant gratification," says Monica Walker-Miraglio, who has turned that idea into a business. Fill-a-Pillow, her Haverford Station shop, lets DIY designers choose from hundreds of fabrics and trims to create their own accent pillows, which the shop's seamstresses sew up and deliver within three days. At the catered "pillow parties" See **PILLOWS** on E9

Friday, September 29, 2006

THE PHILADELPHIA

Pillow shop lets you be designer

PILLOWS from Eil Walker-Miraglio (pronounced *Mur-ag-leo*) offers at the store for both adults and kids, guests get to walk away with their creations the same day.

If this sounds a little bit like a Build-A-Bear Workshop with pillows, that's no accident.

Walker-Miraglio and husband Michael, her business partner, originally wanted to open one of the toy bear-making franchises in Ocean City.

"Then we found out there already was one," she says. "So my husband said, 'Why don't you do the same thing with pillows?' I said, 'You're a genius.'"

For years, she had designed pillows, made from vintage scarves, to give to clients of her interior decorating business. That venture was a sideline to her career as a fashion model. (Walker-Miraglio, who has worked the runways for top designers and was once pictured on a Budweiser billboard, appears regularly on QVC.)

Model-slim just three weeks after giving birth to her second child, Walker-Miraglio, 38, got into decorating through an unusual route.

"I bought a house and I didn't have any money," she says. "So I started going to Home Depot and asking guys how to do things."

Then single, she embarked on a home renovation. "I knocked down walls, dry-walled, painted. I did a terracotta tile floor and a whole slate bathroom."

Friends began asking her to redo their homes after they saw hers, and those projects led to others. "My business was all word-of-mouth," says Walker-Miraglio, who created a sleek, sophisticated look for her shop with chocolate walls, a button-tufted white vinyl and faux cowhide banquette, and an antique Asian table that becomes a workspace during pillow parties.

Though she quit the decorating field, she's still creating those vintage-scarf pillows. Only now she sells them at Fill-a-Pillow for prices that start at \$150 for vivid 1960s pop-art-looking patterns from fashion houses such as Pucci, Givenchy and Burberry.

"This one really looks like something from Versace," Walker-Miraglio says, laughing as she picks up a pillow with a green Moroccan-tile pattern and black feather trim. "I was thinking about sending it to Oprah."

She also designs more traditional looks, both for sale in the shop and as examples for clients wanting to create their own custom pillows.

Among the designer fabric lines she carries at Fill-a-Pillow are Robert Allen, Beacon Hill, Scalandre and Clarence House. Prices start at \$20 per yard, particularly for many of the bright, modern and retro prints Walker-Miraglio has grouped together in the section of the store she uses for children's pillow-making parties. (Prices for those events, favored by tween girls, start at \$35 per person; the adult parties, where many guests opt to create "memory" pillows using personal photos the shop transfers onto fabric, start at \$55 per person.)

Custom-sewn pillow prices begin at \$25 for a 10-by-10-inch size, without trim, in the lowest-price fabric. Added trims (braid, tassels and fringes) can up the price considerably.

"I don't stock a lot of one fabric, because I don't want people to go to someone's house and say, 'Oh, I've got that pillow.' But if you want something, I can get it for you in two days."

Maybe not instant gratification, but quick enough.

Contact staff writer Eils Lotozo at 215-854-5610 or elotozo@phillynews.com.

If You Go

Fill-a-Pillow
 403 Berkley Rd.
 Haverford
 610-649-5040
 www.fillapillow.com



RON TARVER / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Designer with her creations: Monica Walker-Miraglio displays some of the accent pillows she has created, including ones made of vintage scarves, at right.



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