

Wanderlust

A textile designer finds perfection in far-flung places.

SALLY Campbell goes that little bit extra for her art. The Sydney textile designer has spent 25 years travelling to remote areas of the world, particularly India, to find the right craftspeople to produce her designs.

These trips are not without their moments. For example, she was recently in a small Indian village to collect a consignment of fabrics only to find a local war lord guarding her truck.

"There were armed, uniformed soldiers acting as his bodyguards and it was quite scary for a while, but once they realised who I was they were fine," she says.

Campbell designs an array of textiles, including throws and blankets, which are handmade in India.

She has made more trips there than she could probably count, travelling to remote places and small, out of the way villages in search of the traditional skills and fine craftsmanship she is after.

"I work with different women's communities in areas famous for the special talents of the women," she says. "All the pieces are made using traditional methods, all in the finest quality. They are like works of art."

Campbell works closely with the women in the villages to bring her exquisite designs to life.

"I travel to India two or three times a year and it is always such a joy to see the women again and the country always inspires me to design."

After buying the textiles from the women, Campbell brings them to Australia

to exhibit and sell. The work she does with the communities is twofold, she says.

"Most importantly it gives these women an income. It also keeps their traditions alive. They are using methods of stitching and embroidery that have been around for centuries."

Some of the pieces are so intricate they can take up to three months to make.

An exhibition of her works that opened in Bowral this weekend includes vintage pieces such as ralli quilts and turbans.

"About three-quarters of the pieces I have designed myself," says Campbell, who worked as a costume and set designer for 25 years, winning an AFI award for production design for Vincent Ward's *The Navigator*.

While most pieces are designed to be used in the home, those who buy them often find other ways to show off the fabrics, she says.

"People will buy a throw or quilt and wear it as a shawl."

Campbell's exhibition in Bowral runs until June 8. Her work can also be viewed and purchased at www.sallycampbell.com.au.

The exhibition is at the Milk Factory Gallery, 31 Station Street, Bowral. For details, phone 4862 1077.

ANGELA CUMING



DESIGNER SALLY CAMPBELL AND THE HANDCRAFTED TEXTILES INSPIRED BY HER TRAVELS TO INDIA.

