

HugosHouse – BEARS MADE BY Gregory Gyllenship



“My wish is to share the pleasure and charm I find in the Teddy bear, a creature of cloth and felt, stitches and stuffing.”

LEFT:

George - Character Bear
10 Inches 2016

ABOVE RIGHT:

Jumbo - Grizzly Teddy
9 Inches long 2016

RIGHT:

Gregory with Newfoundlands
Angus & BooBar

My bear making years seem to have slipped by very quickly, now after 24 years I have been a bear artist for longer than all my previous occupations put together. Looking back, the venture began almost by accident, I always had a fondness for cuddlies which was fostered by my mum who made most of them herself. A prodigious knitter, mum made a small army of teds, dragons, rabbits, mice and other characters for my brother and for me. This included my teddy bear, made from a very complicated pattern for an unjointed bear, I called him Paddington and he was made from a wool plush. Paddington soon acquired quite a lot of clothes, his own bed, and pyjamas which he wore at night, he fulfilled all the duties of a Teddy Bear and ended up very care worn and faded. He is still with me and sits with my own first effort at bear making. Over the years I bought the occasional stuffed dinosaur, cow or pig, some dogs but no more bears until I was in my mid thirties. Then a row of Canterbury bears, newly

stocked by a local village shop, caught my eye and I bought one, somehow that led to a companion for him and soon the collection of bears overtook the other creatures. In those days, remember, there was no internet, so I collected what appeared in my local shop. I bought some Steiff reproduction edition bears which led me to look into the history and I became intrigued by the older bears, I liked the idea of the creature which had been a companion and wore the marks of its time, just as did my own bear from my childhood.

I couldn't afford pristine vintage



bears but, since I was rather fond of the worn out looking ones, that



GREGORY GYLLENSHIP



began collecting bears in
the late 1980's

Made my first bear 1992

Became full time Bear
Maker 1993

Winner in British Bear Artist
Awards 1995 & 1996

You can contact Gregory at:
Website: www.Hugoshouse.com
e.mail Gregory@hugoshouse.com
gyllenship.blogspot.co.uk
Hugoshouse on Facebook
Twitter: Gregory Gyllenship
Telephone 44 (0)1932 243263

was quite convenient and I began haunting Christie's auctions hoping for a lucky find. One or two bears came home and I taught myself to clean them and make minor repairs. The turning point came when I bought a bear which for some reason, had had its foot cut off at the ankle. I repaired his nose and paws and decided that he should have a new foot. Now, once again back in the days before google and the internet, finding out where to buy mohair

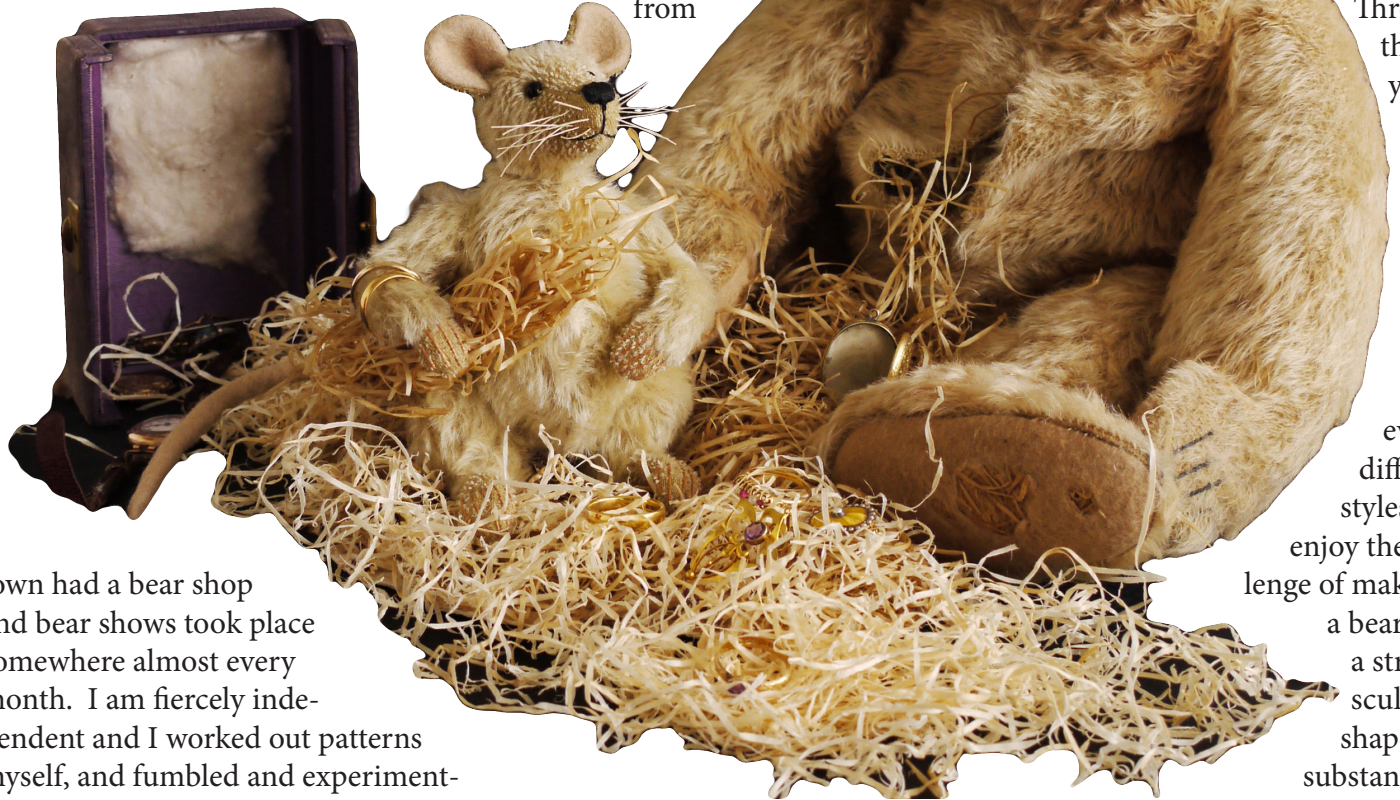
LEFT:

Cornelius - Classic Bear 14 Inches
2013

plush in the UK. So, it was by chance, I didn't set out to be a bear artist and in those pre-internet days I wasn't especially aware of people who were bear artists, my eyes were not fully opened to the possibilities until I went to a big show organised in the early 1990's by store owner Gerry Grey, where lots of established USA artists exhibited. It was a new phenomenon here and I was very lucky to begin at the time when there was a huge growth in the pursuit in the UK until it seemed almost every

type bear. Watching my mum make things meant it seemed relatively straight forward to sew bits of cloth together and I discovered that I had absorbed quite a lot from her which was useful in the needlework aspects of bear making. My ideas for the bears are always based in the simplest idea of a creature made

fragile possibly to sell on, but an ambition for a bear which I might keep. I was brave enough once and although I didn't keep him, he is still one of the bears I always see as a landmark in my efforts. Through the years I



town had a bear shop and bear shows took place somewhere almost every month. I am fiercely independent and I worked out patterns myself, and fumbled and experimented with methods to make the bears, I had no training other than common sense and firm idea what I wanted to make, which was a very traditional long armed long snouted German

from cloth, sewing and stuffing which somehow acquires its own personality, and looks as if it might have a life of its own when you aren't watching. I like the charm and fragility of an old bear, I like the evidence of play and cuddles. I still enjoy the challenge of trying to combine the elements of the shapes, the feel and the expressions of old bears and make one which is identifiable as my own. Some people will say that the face is all important, I understand that but to me every part is important, the shape of the arms, the shoulders etc all add to express the character of a bear. My ideal classic bear is one which looks almost too fragile to touch without great care, light, crunchy and very saggy, preferably with open seams and holes. Too

evolved different styles and enjoy the challenge of making a bear with a strong sculptural shape and substance,

sometimes with bold colours and contrasts. Whatever the style of bear I make it is important to me to recall the origin of the Teddy Bear as a gentle creature of cloth and felt and needlework, so even a large grizzly bear will always be mostly Teddy bear. I still very much enjoy the challenge of capturing the spirit and style of those early bears too and constantly revise patterns and details as an ongoing creative process. More recently I was finding difficulty constructing the larger bears, it might be my own fault for not taking care not to over stress my own hands and joints, a common enough issue with many jobs involv-



ABOVE: Attic Bear - Classic Bear
16 Inches 2014
LEFT: Louis - Teddy Clown
9 Inches 2016

involving close work, so I looked at ways of changing techniques and from that arose a whole new era of smaller sized bears. I have never really had flashes of creative inspiration or experimented with innovation, new designs are more a well paced process of evolution.

Bear making has provided my income for many years and I am ever grateful for the enthusiasm and support of the collectors. It has taken me to USA, Japan, Singapore, Europe and Korea for shows and I was always surprised and moved by the excitement and interest in my bears. At a store in USA, which became a regular venue a little gang of loyal friends actually camped outside in the snow during the night to be first in line when the new bears were revealed. Nowadays that translates to the customers who are waiting, poised by their computers for the moment when new bears are listed on my website, and I am very much aware of their expectations and the responsibility to try to maintain work to the very best of my abilities.

Much like any self employment, creating bears can become all consuming, it is easy to find yourself working late into the evening to solve a problem or just finish something which you are looking forward to seeing completed. Sometimes I look around and the house is disappearing under layers of fluff where the bear trimmings and wood wool have migrated



down the stairs and are meeting the tide of dog hair and leaves from the yard coming up from the hallway, that's one reminder to take a break and come back fresh another day. Which brings me to the most important part of my own little world, my two Newfoundlands, Angus and BooBar, they are by my side most of the



time, careful monitoring my activities and making sure I spend plenty of time away from the sewing machine. Their temperament is almost ideal to my situation, they are happy to practice snoring and



experimenting with different sleeping positions while I work, and take me enthusiastically around the local green spaces when they can see I

when they can see I need refreshing. Music also provides a place to unwind, I like the tuneful operas and violin music, although sometimes it has to compete

with Angus snoring loudly at my feet ! When I set up my first website I named it after my first "giant" breed dog, Hugo, who was a Leonberger; my own name is frequently mis-pronounced and I get fed up with having to spell it out so I wanted something simpler for my website. Hugo passed away some years ago but my website (www.hugoshouse.com) still has his name and I decided to brand myself as "HugosHouse" in his honour. August 2016 brought my 60th birthday and did cause me to reflect on the journey to date and the way

ABOVE:
Hercules - 6 Joint Character Bear
8 Inches 2015
FAR LEFT:
Henry - 6 Joint Character Bear
9 Inches 2016
LEFT:
Rose - Character Girl Bear
9 Inches 2016



ahead, I am not very good at planning but I can't see myself "retiring" so, as long as there are people to adopt them, I

will carry on making bears, I have new ideas for how the bears will

evolve and

and after 24

dressed

so much

I expect

gently evolve

forward to

bear shows.

always, to share

charm I find in

a creature of

felt, stitch-

stuffing.

have just revived

years, made

the grizzly teds,

my first ever

girl bears,

as before

they will

and I look

many more

My wish is, as

the pleasure and

the Teddy bear,

cloth and

es and

You can



Woburn Abbey Teddy Bear Festival on Sunday 11th June 2017.

ABOVE TOP:

Clement - 6 Joint Character Bear 14 Inches - 2013

ABOVE MIDDLE:

Attic Bear - Classic Bear 16 Inches - 2014

ABOVE:

Tomasz - Classic Bear 15 Inches - 2015

BOTTOM LEFT:

My beautiful Newfoundlands, Angus (right) and BooBar (left)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Bottom indeed! Monty 2016

ABOVE TOP:

Benjy - Character Bear 8 Inches - 2015

ABOVE MIDDLE:

Bromley - Classic Bear 12 Inches - 2014