



For all those currently enjoying and embracing the handmade revolution, the Jenni Smith studio in Ilkley is well worth a visit.

Fans of BBC's *Sewing Bee* will be in their element in this creative hub, where Jenni runs classes in dress-making, quilting and textile art.

The space, in a former mill, is light, airy and jam-packed with a variety of sewing machines, overlockers, gorgeous fabrics and inspirational projects to feed the imagination. Along with the scheduled classes, plans to organise sewcialist events with modern makers are also in the pipeline.

No stranger to a bias cut and a godet, founder and director Jenni Smith has been sewing for over 25 years and explains how she is on a personal mission to teach this craft to a generation who she believes, missed out at school.

"Nothing beats the feeling of producing a stitched item with your own fair hand, and then sharing it with other people. I have taught over 200 people in the past 3 years, many of whom started from scratch and gained so much confidence and enjoyment from sewing."

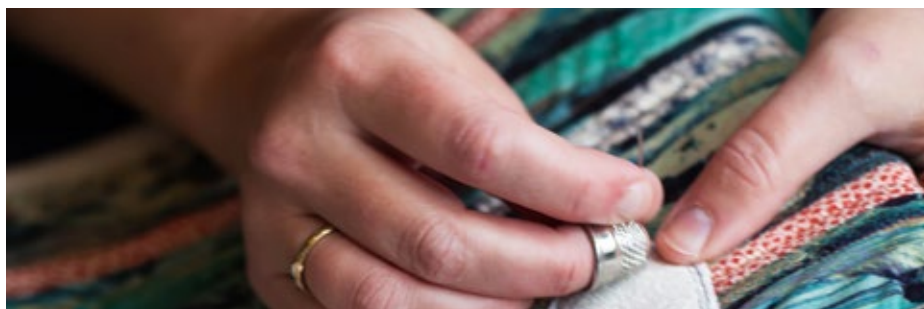
Jenni's enthusiasm for the needle and thread began at an early age, as she grew up in a creative household where her mum and nan helped to sew the upholstery for the trailer tents designed by her grandpa. As a teenager she then went on work experience at Jeff Bank's London design house and developed a gift for upcycling second-hand clothes.

Jenni spent a year in Toronto, Canada in 2006 where she immersed herself in the art of quilt making which has since developed into one of her great passions.

"I made at least one quilt for every member of my family and wanted to carry on, so I began to teach in order to feed my habit and not become overrun with fabric!"

Jenni's exquisite textile art has also developed in recent years and she has created pieces for *Sex and the City* actress Kristen Davis and US artist and illustrator Lisa Congdon.

"My textile pictures allow me to experiment



with freemotion embroidery, which is like drawing with your machine needle. I use Yorkshire wool and Liberty prints, and try to tell stories in a unique way."

Jenni is now working towards a completely handmade wardrobe and has been lucky enough to learn the essentials of tailoring from sewing veteran Ann Ladbury, who enjoyed a prolific career as a television presenter, teaching sewing skills to an eager generation, and is the author of numerous dressmaking books.

Part of the studio has become a TV set and

Jenni and her team will be releasing free video tutorials and skill-building kits in the autumn.

"We are working with pattern-designers, cloth merchants and thread manufacturers to create quality kits, from a simple bag to a dress or quilt. All the techniques will be demonstrated in booklets as well as online to make the experience as stress-free as possible. There are lots of exciting times ahead, and having such a supportive community of creative people close-by is brilliant."



jenni-smith.co.uk