



JENNI SMITH

A love of textiles and Liberty fabric is the foundation of Jenni Smith's designs

Growing up in a house where my mum and nan both sewed upholstery for the caravans my grandpa designed meant I have always been interested in textiles and sewing. I studied art history and Italian at university but have always loved drawing and painting. After my degree, I spent time printmaking, before taking up quilting 10 years ago.

Having taught sewing for five years, I truly believe that crafting is good for the soul. Making something original with your own hands gives people the space to switch off from everyday life and just enjoy the process. You can't beat the feeling of happiness when you finish a project and share it with others. I have managed to convert a few reluctant sewists and I am yet to come across anyone who isn't hooked once they get started. Teaching sewing has made me feel part of a warm and supportive community. The best thing is the friends I have made through an interest in making.

A career highlight so far is knowing that my work is hanging in the home of Kristin Davis from *Sex and the City*. The story of my commission for her will be featured in a book celebrating Liberty's 140th birthday!

Selecting fabrics to design the interiors a fox might like (bird cushions and feathered wallpaper), for my crafty foxes range was a lot of fun. I loved stitching details such as tiny pins, spools of thread and bunny slippers. One fox is quilting and the other is making a smart jacket from

"TEACHING SEWING HAS MADE ME FEEL PART OF A WARM AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY"



genuine Harris Tweed. They were ideas in my head for quite some time. It's very satisfying to create final images that make people smile!

Liberty fabric has a special place in my heart. Many friends have suggested I go on *Mastermind*, as I know the names of most prints! As a child, I frequently visited the factory shop with my nan and fell for the softness of Tana Lawn. I began collecting fabric from around the age of eight.

Sewing expert, Ann Ladbury has been a fantastic teacher to me, with a wealth of knowledge. After looking at my garment sewing for the first time, she said I had plenty to learn! She teaches me tailoring techniques like how you can use a pattern as a starting point then add personal style by including features such as pockets, collars and other decorations.

I recently managed to gain a place on a fantastic programme called Entrepreneurial Spark. The team are enabling me to develop my business further into the production of beautiful tools for creative people. They will suit the modern maker, be well made and not like anything currently on the market. Stay tuned!

My sewing bucket list this year includes a boned bodice to attach to a crazy vintage lace skirt I rescued, as well as wanting to make something from neoprene. I also want to stitch a small quilt using my grandpa's sailor collar from the war as a starting point, combined with some beautiful shweshwe fabrics from where he served in South Africa.

Discover more at www.jenni-smith.co.uk