



Questions and Answers

Linda Miller

Who influenced your work?

Lots of Contemporary and historical artists/craftspeople that I admire, but I like to think that I am more influenced by the world around me; light, colours, people, animals

Why? How?

Ideas just seem to pop into my head, so I jot them down and add them to the others on my studio wall. It maybe from a conversation I've had.

What do you like about the artists work who have inspired you?

Too many things to list. The placing of imagery, use of colour and light composition of the piece, the ideas behind the piece; how it makes me feel.

What scale do you usually do your pieces? Why?

5x5cm to 30x45cm. I try to use a scale that I consider is easy to look at.

What materials do you use/ have used? Why?

Heavyweight cotton, Rayon threads, silk, cotton. They work best with my Bernina 950 industrial sewing machine.

Is there any reason why you use those particular colours?

There's a palette which I always find myself using; blues greens reds. I struggle with browns. I like colours that I think will compliment the subject matter.

Any particular fabrics you use? Why?

Almost always 100 cotton, calico. I like the texture and the fact its off-white.

What stitch do you use?

Free Machine embroidery

What techniques do you use?

I'm not sure I have techniques that I use but I'm sure anyone watching me would beg to differ. I just have an idea and start making!

Any meanings behind your work?

Sometimes, but usually they're snapshots of scenes and situations. I never like to say what meanings I might be working to as I prefer the work to speak for itself, and other people may feel constrained in what they feel about the piece if I say what I think it means.

Any reason why most of your pieces are set outdoors?

I like the outdoors, the space, weather conditions...

How long does it usually take to complete a piece of work?

It depends on the size and theme. Small pieces; 1-2 days, but larger pieces can take 4-6 days

Do you sketch your pieces of work before making them into textile pieces?

I always start with an idea, then a drawing mapping out my design. I always embroider the figures first, then the background.

How long have you been a stitcher?

Ever since I can remember I have always sewn; professionally since 1989.

Who or what made you start?

My Grandfather was a taylor, my mother an upholsterer, sewing has always been in my life. I love to sew.

Why did you choose to specialise in machine embroidery during / following your degree in printed textiles?

I was introduced to machine embroidery while studying textiles at Winchester School of Art (BA Hons 1985 -1988) and was consumed by the technique and the result.

Have you found your degree to have been useful in the development of your career?

Yes, learning techniques, Art history, and design.



How do you arrive at your final design?

Working my way towards the end result from the initial idea. Themes, layout, colours, embellishment stitching, completion. Pricing and framing

Do you have a piece of work that you would never part with? if so what is it and why?

I often feel like that about a piece, but I let all my pieces go, as I always feel I have more ideas to turn into pieces.

When you are working to commission how much influence does your client have over the final design?
I work to my client's wishes and ideas, but within my style of making.

How do you find your clients?

I am in the fortunate position where they find me through magazine articles, through exhibitions I attend, and through galleries, craft shows and my website.

Do you prefer working on commissioned work or your own designs? Why?

Both. I like a happy medium between the two. I like the freedom to let my mind wander but its also good to have someone else's ideas testing my abilities.

What is your favourite aspect of machine embroidery?

Stitching with sumptuous threads, to create a piece which can be enjoyed by others.

What do you particularly enjoy about working with fabrics and threads?

Everything. The colours, the weight, the possibility of creating something new, learning from failures and experimenting.

Do you find anything frustrating about restricting yourself to threads and fabrics?

Sometimes I wish I could create and sew in tinier detail

Do you have to be in the mood to be creative?

No I don't think about it, I just cannot wait to sew.

Do you have any tips for getting round a creative block?

I go shopping or to the library. I watch films, dig the garden, and come back to the difficulty with a fresh approach

How long do you work for daily and how do you discipline yourself to work?

Five to six days a week and up to eight hours a day. I don't have to discipline my self to work - it comes naturally.

Do you have a piece of work which you are particularly proud of? If so what is it and why?

I have a piece in the permanent textile and dress collection at the Victoria and Albert museum that I am really pleased about. To be amongst such fine exhibits in such a prestigious museum is a lovely feeling.

Which piece of learning would you pass on to beginner?

Try not to take criticism to heart.

Is there a piece of learning you wish you had had years ago and why?

Don't take yourself too seriously. Life is easier if you don't.

Which is your most thumbed reference book?

Oxford Dictionary.

Which books and magazines have your work been featured in?

Country Living Magazines. Embroidery and Stitch magazines and books (embroidery magazine Sept 2004)

How do you keep your ideas and techniques up to date?

I visit galleries, museums, exhibitions and read magazines.

How do you see your work developing in the future?

Do you see computers playing a creative part?

I hope to continue in doing what I love to do. The computer is a valid tool for many things, but it is not a sewing machine, and computerised sewing machines hinder my creativity.

What are your aspirations for the future, and what ambitions do you still hold?

Continue to make

How do you start one of your piece of work?

With a drawing.

What would you like to be remembered for?

Making and creating machine embroideries for people to enjoy, or to be annoyed by.

Is there a large Market for your work?

Yes, I'm very lucky, virtually everything I make sells, and I also have a long list of clients waiting for commission pieces.

What age group do you find you appeal to the most?

There does not appear to be one age group that I can pin-point but women, rather than men are my main customers. If a man buys my work he is usually buying it for a wife or partner.



Are there any negatives that come with your work?

Being self-employed means I work too many hours and don't spend enough time pursuing other things. However, I love what I do and would be dreadfully unhappy if I were unable to do it.

In your article (Embroidery Magazine Sept 2004) it talks about your love of knitting. Do you prefer to knit?

No I prefer sewing best, but I love to Knit as a hobby in the evenings, on trains etc, although at present I am doing some crocheting.

Do you ever get frustrated with your work and how time consuming it is?

Yes a lot of the time, but when it goes right it is so fulfilling, and therefore its time well spent.

What's it like to work for yourself was it hard to set up on your own?

I have always enjoyed working for myself, setting up my business was easy but keeping a steady cash flow when my business was new was quite difficult. I had a grant from the crafts council and a couple of part time jobs as well as the income from my embroidery.

Do you have fixed hours that you work say like 9 am till 5pm?

I work 5-6 days a week usually an 8 hour day.

How do you get customer/ clients?

I exhibit at established and sometimes un established craft fairs. My work is seen in galleries, fairs, books, magazines, web sites, press etc. all these ways of publicising have created easy access to my work - hence meeting new clients and keeping established clients.

How do you know what the customer wants? Do you have a brief/ or a meeting?

I have a brief which the client and myself have created.

Do you do samples of what your of work before you create the final one?

No, I always do a drawing first.

Which embroidery artists do you particularly like?

I don't have a favourite, I like a lot of contemporary embroiderers work, especially Rachel Howard and Louise Baldwin.

What happens if the customer/ client does not like what you have done?

I sometimes make changes (at the client's request) to the drawing to ensure the finished embroidery is to their liking. I cannot unpick parts of a finished piece

How much would a project cost?

Depends on size, theme, commission or if it is to be for sale

What advice would you give a student hoping for a career in machine embroidery?

Be yourself. Be original! Its hard work and it takes between three to five years to be recognised, but its an exciting and rewarding profession, and to make a living at something one loves to do is a real joy worth striving for.

How much does every thing cost for example studio hire, staff... etc?

The rent on my studio space is equal to the going rate in any town.

Why do you use those Media's?

I love them
In much of your work the weather appears to play a big part in the scene.

My weather pieces are about the joy of being outside in unpredictable weather. Living in a climate where the weather is changeable plays a great part in our conversation and thoughts; "Should I take an umbrella? Is it going to rain? Will I be too hot in this jumper? Do you think the clouds will clear?"

People in big coats, warm coats, gloves, hats, scarves, dogs in coats, being blown about, hurrying home to a warm house. Running along a beach, up a hill enjoying the thrill of being outside in such a climate but also looking forward to going home to where all is still, loving and warm.

My birds are studies of the shoreline, gentle birds going about their business. Coastlines sunny and warm, wanting to watch the birds without disturbing them, feet and toes on warm sand, paddling in the water.

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