Slow Stitching: The Textile Art of Jessie Cutts

Description

British-based, self-proclaimed â??slow-stitcherâ?? Jessie Cutts is founder of the eccentric textile company Cutts & Sons, for which she produces hand-made, intricate quilts, wall-hangings and fabric-based artworks with a rich and deeply tactile quality. â??Thereâ??s no mass-production here!â?• she says. Instead, each fabric piece is carefully crafted from a blend of natural, sustainable fabrics, many of which are upcycled or gathered from clothing construction waste. She brings together these fabrics into striking, bold and colourful abstract designs, recalling the lively patterns of the Geeâ??s Bend quilters.

Cutts was raised on a farm just outside Brisbane, Australia, where she was surrounded by creativity. Her father restored vintage cars, and even built entire houses from scratch. Cuttsâ?? crafty parents were always on the hunt for salvageable objects to fix up, as she explains, â??When I was a kid, we were always picking up odd things from the side of the road and fixing them upâ?¦ My dad was always making furniture and picking stuff up off the dump. It was very much about doing it yourself. That was the household I grew up in; you make stuff, you fix stuff, you use what youâ??ve got.â?• This thrifty approach inevitably fired up her own creative flair, as she remembers, â??Ever since I was young, Iâ??ve always loved making things with yarn and fabric. I canâ??t remember a time when I wasnâ??t creating something or other.â?•

Cutts trained in Fine Art at Griffith University in South East Queensland before eventually making her way to London, where she took up work in illustration, graphic and communication design. The seeds of her future as a textile designer had been growing for several years before she took the plunge; it was while on maternity leave with her second son that Cutts began to reconsider the hectic work/life balance she was sharing with her husband in London. â??I had wanted to start a business making quilts and toys, but it never seemed the right time,â?• she explains.

Moving from London to the flourishing â??Isle of Thanetâ??, in the south east of Kent in 2018 was the catalyst Cutts needed to quit her job and focus on growing her career as a textile artist. The change of pace was, in part, influenced by Cuttsâ?? desire to work in a way that allowed her to be around for her young children. â??The move has meant I can be around for the kids more while theyâ??re little, and I make my own hours to work around them,â?• she says.

Working with textiles seemed like a natural development for Cutts given her long history in graphic design â?? she applies the same eye for impactful layout and colour to each carefully crafted quilt she makes. Cutts says, â??a design sensibility is in my background.â?• She merges this eye for design with the mend-and-make-do approach of her childhood in her textile art, working with a wide range of thrift store, upcycled and deadstock fabrics. â??I have a real mix of places I get my fabrics from,â?• she explains. â??The haberdashery local to us has an amazing array of deadstock â?¦ but I also upcycle lots of stuff.â?• These artworks are completed several at a time, and take Cutts anything from 1 to 7 months to complete, depending on scale and complexity.

Meanwhile, Cuttsâ?? home has become an extension of her textile art, a growing enterprise which she and her husband have been gradually transforming from a dilapidated Georgian ruin into a family home. Much like her art, the home is the product of time, care, dedication and patience, an apt reflection of her entire approach to living a creative life. â??Weâ??re going very gently with it,â?• she says, â??â?¦not too quickly. Someone couldâ??ve just gutted the place, renovated it in six months, and had it move-in ready â?? but then something about the house would have been lost.â?•

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