



4

JESSICA GRADY

After graduating from Norwich University in 2014 with a First in Textile Design, Jessica Grady set up her studio at home. She is an exhibiting member of Prism and a guest artist in Art Textiles Made in Britain's exhibition Wild, showing next at Maidstone Museum in 2020. Jessica runs her own workshop programme, and teaches her local Young Embroiderers' Group in York

I like to think of my designs as a textural and visual feast, combining bold colour and clusters of embellished treasure created from a combination of waste and recycled materials – household waste, found objects and commercial waste from scrap stores. My favourite materials include plastic packaging, coffee pods and recycled electric cables, all of which become ornate and intricate beads and sequins.

I cut and create my own sequins which I hand stitch onto fabric and I use a variety of techniques, including pleating and folding various shapes, to create them. I also use mixed media processes including printing, foiling, dyeing and melting to transform what others perceive to be rubbish into tactile embellishments. This idea echoes throughout my work: I want to challenge people's perceptions about waste and create curiosity, encouraging viewers to step closer and look again.

All of my designs are stitched by hand. I use traditional stitches in contemporary colours and patterns, flecking fabrics with bold neon lines and metallic loops. It's time-intensive, with a lot of pre-making of elements necessary before the final stages when everything is stitched into place. I don't plan my work: instead it evolves naturally on the fabric as materials are stitched and layered together. I see it as a form of collage with fabric, thread and mixed media.



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I enjoy taking a skill like embroidery, which has such deep-rooted origins, and manipulating stitches to pull them into a contemporary light. Colour is another important aspect of my work. I am fearless when it comes to strong colour, and love creating a vivid and saturated colour palette.

Working in three dimensions is also important to me and I enjoy the challenge of allowing embroidery to grow upwards by embellishing each element within the design further; carefully layering, stitching and molding each one around a variety of shapes to create sculptural forms and layers of detail.

I draw my inspiration from surface texture details such as peeling paint, barnacles and rusting metal.

I enjoy processing ideas in my sketchbook, documenting mark-making techniques and layering ideas, which are then transformed into stitched possibilities. I want my work to be suggestive of organic and floral forms with a highly abstract feel, and I build my pieces around the concept of shape, texture and colour. This allows the viewer to interpret the work as they wish.

The Embroiderers' Guild Scholarship helped showcase my work at the London and Harrogate Knitting and Stitching Shows, as well as assist with purchasing new equipment and developing my creative practice. 🍷

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