

The fabric of life

Staffordshire Life feature writer **KAREN COX** talks to local artist Hollie Caley about her work with textiles

BEAUTIFUL, delicate, charming and extremely feminine, the current works created by textile artist Hollie Caley have been inspired by her love of all things vintage. She admits to haunting local charity shops as she searches for inspiration amongst the trinkets, fabrics and bric-a-brac to be found there.

Scraps of lace, odd bits of fabric, old bits of paper and pages of archive books are all taken home and hoarded by Hollie, destined to be recycled and immortalised by the Stafford artist as they are put to use forming part of her artwork, hopeful that they will one day adorn someone's wall or display area.

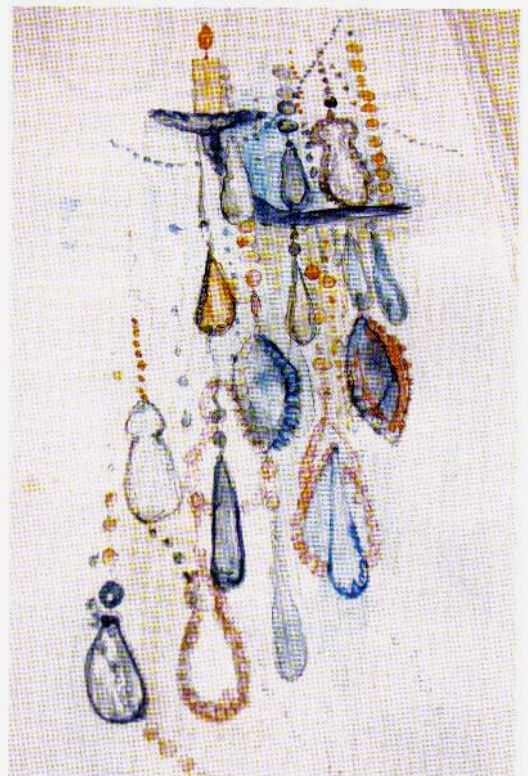
All her work has a slightly aged appearance and strikes a sentimental tone, whether they are decorative objects or framed canvasses, all of which could be created from a combination of handstitch, watercolour paints, charcoal, graphite, oil pastels and wire, mainly focusing upon feminine floral patterns and decorative objects, such as garments, shoes, hairpins, teacups and jewellery.

She also gives the pictures and decorative objects she creates a deliberate vintage feel by using shades of pastels such as dusky rose which on occasion is enhanced by the use of gold leaf.

It's a style which definitely seems to suit Hollie at the moment. She chooses to create art from these objects and to be inspired by them because she feels aged and distressed objects encapsulate a sense of romance and charm which can spark the imagination into wondering who they once belonged to.

Her work leaves a lasting, charming impression, easily conveying the nostalgia she strives to create, but it could have been very different if Hollie hadn't been inspired by the enthusiasm of one of her teachers at Walton High





School, where she used a sewing machine for the first time. She broke a few needles along the way, but she was hooked.

Although she still wasn't sure in which direction she wanted to go when she was at Stafford College, another teacher once again inspired her with her enthusiasm for textiles. Now a recent graduate of Manchester Metropolitan University with a BA (Hons) in textile design, Hollie, aged 23, is flushed with the success of her recent degree show which even saw one of the university lecturers buying a piece of her work as well as selling a number of her decorative cupcakes, shoes and cards.

"It was nerve-wracking," she says, eyes wide, still looking terrified at the memory. "You just don't know how people will take your work and my work is a bit different from the others. More embroidered, more for art galleries."

But Hollie is clearly committed to her work and is determined to carve out a career as an artist, selling and exhibiting her work. She is already preparing for an exhibition at the Shire Hall Gallery in Market Square, Stafford, which is taking place from September 13 to November 2.

The exhibition will be themed around children and Hollie will be showcasing

six little dresses made of old parchment paper and old book paper, organza and collected pieces of fabric all stitched together, as well as some of her decorative shoes, tea cups and cupcakes which take shape over a wire mould, using some of the same ingredients used to create the dresses.

Hollie will also be holding a workshop at the Shire Hall Gallery on November 7 and 8, making and displaying work which people will also have the chance to buy.

"I'm very thrilled to be exhibiting there and really looking forward to that and holding the workshop and hopefully it will lead onto other things," she said.

"The olde worlde eccentricities of English pastimes have inspired me. I started looking at tea sets and table settings and thinking about English teas — kind of a heritage idea — and making dainty things like cupcakes and teacups just for decoration, but they have proved very popular.

"I use lots of things given to me or collected from charity shops — they all know me in Stafford," she giggles. "It's weird what people will throw out, like old black and white Victorian photographs. My favourite find is an old blue and white china teacup I got for 50p. It's nicely decorated and you just don't know where it's come from, where it's been. I find that

inspirational."

Although Hollie has been invited to apply for a spot at the Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair taking place in October, she is also hoping to find other galleries willing to exhibit her work and is also hoping to sell some of her existing pieces as well as take on commissions from people.

When it comes to her work she is obviously passionate about her calling, saying: "I am really enjoying it, I love it, I just want to carry on making things and try to make something every day, even if it is just for a few hours.

"I like to push myself, to see what I can do. After the exhibition I will change direction a little and look at landscapes and nature with a floral theme and gardening rather than tea cups or tea sets, but it will still be based around the home.

"I enjoy landscape painting, not just the countryside but also nightscapes and cityscapes which are harsher, a bit more masculine. I'm looking forward to doing that, having a change, a bit of a challenge.

"I'm looking forward to exploring my creativity, to seeing what else I can do."

Hollie currently has a website under construction, but if anyone would like more information about her work they can contact her on 07738227912.