

HOW ABOUT?

with Louise Howland



A whole generation of crafters are finding pleasure and fulfilment above and beyond simple necessity.

Recently, we spent a beach holiday with my honorary daughter and her husband and children. A young wife and mother of three kids under five, she has spent an exciting decade in the corporate world, complete with inner-city lifestyle.

With a creative instinct inherited from her rock-star dad, along with intelligence and sturdy values, I suspect no-one is more surprised than she that her life now takes place in the outer suburbs of the city, on a block that fits a vegie patch, sandpit and craft room.

Just 12 months ago we were browsing interior-design shops; this year we went enthusiastically into sewing, craft and quilting shops – and aren't some of the best of them on the south coast of NSW?. Fabrics, decorative ribbons, cute buttons, embellishing threads, laces, not to mention the whole new world of interfacings, absorbed our attention for many hours. Mother, daughters, Grammy and Poppop were involved in the trial piecing-together of handmade garments to be. (Spare counter space, friendly advice and aisles wide enough for prams made one particular store a standout place to spend our time and money.)

Less than one week after the birth of her son, our daughter phoned us from the Craft & Quilt Fair, baby by her side. This new

little male had just opened up an entire range of craft and sewing opportunities and this mother was keen to explore.

The fact she has little or no prior experience or knowledge of sewing has in no way deterred her – she creates designs, cuts without a pattern, and ties and wraps the children into their garments accordingly, discovering techniques old and new along the way.

My mum sewed and knitted for necessity. While she was more than competent and the dresses my sister and I wore were most beautiful in our eyes – Shirred gingham smocks with puffed sleeves anyone? – I don't recall any particular pleasure attached to either the sewing process or the result. As an early working mother, Mum was likely just too busy and too tired. Likewise, sewing for me was an effort and a chore, and it was only through decorative embroidery that my passion grew.

The influx of inexpensive clothes, largely from China, has greatly decreased the need to sew children's clothing. Yet this same factor has increased the reason to create as many of today's mothers want to dress their kids in unique, and individualised garments and these mass-produced pieces make a wonderful starting point. Just a little lace or appliqué on a white cotton singlet, a shisha design on



a drawstring purse or cross-stitched initials on the puppy's coat transforms the everyday to the distinctive.

I'm not sure why we have a generation of women that are finding great fulfilment in crafting and are creating their way through motherhood. All I know is, we are witnessing an evolution and I love that it's happening. And it's inspiring me all over again.

Until next month,

Louise