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The embroidery artist



2011 Best Craftsperson Jo Butcher tells us how her life has changed since winning a Kitchen Table Talent Award

When I saw the KTTA competition I knew I had to have a go and enter. I've been selling my work locally in the village coffee shop and during [Somerset Arts Weeks](#) for a few years now. But have often joked that I need to get my work out of the village! Winning Best Craftsperson is certainly helping to do that but I'm now on a steep learning curve.

Fortunately I already had a website built by my good friend Leila@lurexlounge.com. She has been extremely supportive and accepts payment in pictures and cakes from me! Alongside my husband they are both good sounding boards for marketing ideas.

Amazingly I had 800 hits on my website in that first month from 26 different countries. And I have been delighted with the e-mails resulting from the feature in Country Living. People congratulating me, [including [Caroline Zoob](#)] others wanting tips and asking if I sold kits (not yet but who knows what may happen in the future!). Even more amazing is the people wanting to buy my pictures! So we have added [Pay Pal](#) to the site, worked out P&P and sourced packaging.

Two galleries have approached me through the article and my work is currently hanging in both of them. One is even out of the county! I am starting to approach other potential outlets too. Only the other day I was browsing in a local gallery/shop which was very Country Living in style (it even had old copies of the magazine on display) so I approached them as an embroidery artist but they became truly interested when I mentioned my new found fame!

I had fun spending my on-line prize at [homecrafts.co.uk](#) mainly on hand and machine embroidery threads, silk and silk paints. I have plans of how I want to develop my work and to dye my own threads. My other prize – a course at [West Dean](#) is booked for the New Year. I am always a bit flat and lacking in inspiration after Christmas so I thought it was an ideal time to go.

My biggest issue at the moment is time. I feel like I'm one of those acts spinning plates and I'm not keeping them all going! Like many mums, I work part-time and often my sewing is last on the to-do list. I work as a learning support assistant and I was fortunate that as soon as I heard I was a finalist back in June I approached my head teacher about dropping a morning, to which she agreed. So I now have a whole sewing day. Bliss!

I like my work most of the time but I do have several crises of confidence. Sometimes when you browse the web there are so many clever creative crafting people out there that the competition is overwhelming. There are many times when I cannot believe that the judges choose my work to win. So when I'm having a bad day I make myself a cup of tea in my [Emma Bridgewater](#) mug (a gift when I renewed my Country Living subscription last spring) and chant to myself Emma's quote from the article 'My work has vision' until I feel better and am inspired to carry on.

We now have two cute and naughty kittens, Monty and Margo, who are not interested in nestling amongst my fabrics, like our last cat Chester. But they are interested in stealing tea out of my Emma mug.

Ironically, the day I heard from CL that I was a finalist, I had been bemoaning to a friend that I wasn't developing and expanding my sewing sales, and everyone seemed to be blogging and tweeting in order to promote their talents. Life is full of surprises! I wonder what I'll be learning to do next...

See what Jo is up to by following her tweets [@sewjobutcher](#) and visiting her website [here](#)

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