

Come to the Country Living Spring Fair and... meet the makers

Join us at our brand-new, iconic venue to browse beautiful handmade products and chat to the dedicated craftspeople who create them. Here, we talk to four inspiring exhibitors about their work and why they're looking forward to this year's event

WORDS BY SARAH BARRATT AND LAURAN ELSDEN



*Meet Jo, Sam, Min and Moute as well as hundreds of other exhibitors at the
Country Living Spring Fair at Alexandra Palace 27-30 April 2017*



JO BUTCHER Embroidery artist

'Love what you do, then you'll produce your best work' is the belief that Jo Butcher founded her business on. And, looking at her intricately stitched pieces, it's clear it's been a successful approach.

With the level of detail and precision in her creations, inspired by the elegant simplicity of wild flowers and other natural forms, it's hard to believe that Jo has had no formal training and simply started embroidering as a hobby to keep her hands busy.

From an early age she loved working with a needle, creating many of her own clothes as a teenager. This passion led her to study fashion at college before becoming a womenswear designer and pattern cutter. It was only years later, when struggling to deal with a bereavement, that she turned to embroidery magazines as a form of distraction. Although she soon went on to create her own designs, she lacked the confidence to show them to a broader audience.

The turning point came in 2011 when she applied for *Country Living's* Kitchen Table Talent Awards and was amazed to win Best Craftsperson. "I still look at my framed certificate and pinch myself," she laughs. Having received the boost she needed, Jo booked a space at the Country Living Spring Fair, where she was thrilled by the popularity of her work: "My husband and I decided I had the beginnings of a business. So I booked another stand for the Country Living Christmas Fair, quit my part-time job and stitched and stitched." Her hard work paid off and in 2012 Jo was awarded Best New Business there: "It was wonderful to have a double seal of approval from CL."

Since then, the business has continued its upwards trajectory. In 2014, one of the embroidery magazines that first inspired Jo to take up the craft asked her to contribute projects, and last year she was invited to teach at a convention in Australia: "I never dreamt that my needle and thread would take me to the other side of the world!"

With her continued success, Jo is keen to offer advice and support to other women looking to start a business, advocating that they work in "small manageable steps that fit in with family life". She also recommends pacing yourself if you're a one-woman band. As she says: "There is only one of you, so you mustn't be too hard on yourself." ☺

Find Jo at stand E30 (jobutcher.co.uk).

