



BEST CRAFTSPERSON JO BUTCHER



Jo impressed the judges with her intricately stitched, delicate embroideries of flowers and foliage. "I like to think I garden with my needle," she says

"Jo's work demonstrates real vision," says Emma Bridgewater. However, the beauty of her craft belies its painful origins. Jo was eight months pregnant when she spotted a sewing magazine with a cover featuring a hand-embroidered garden. "It reminded me of the cloths and linens of my grandmother's generation," she says and, despite anticipating little opportunity to produce needlework once her baby was born, she bought the magazine and stored it away. Sadly, one year later she had all the time in the world. Her daughter was diagnosed

with a genetic condition and died at ten months old. Teaching herself the art of embroidery proved to be the creative outlet Jo needed during this traumatic time. She already had talent to build on, having worked as a designer and pattern cutter for high-street chains. With practice, she improved her skills to the point where her school sewing teacher, also a friend, could barely recognise her former pupil's work. Now Jo has another daughter, Sophie, who, at eight years old, is learning needlework alongside her.

The Somerset village where she lives and its surrounding countryside continues to feed her imagination. Made with a combination of hand-stitching and machine work, Jo's pieces are then turned into pictures, cushions and lavender bags and she hopes to develop a business selling these. One day, she wants to create her own real-life cottage garden but, in the meantime, she's happy to cultivate her

fabric plots with bullion knots, fly stitches and button loops. jobutcher.co.uk ▷

• Jo wins a five-day craft course at West Dean College (westdean.org.uk), £100 of Homecrafts vouchers (homecrafts.co.uk) and a BlackBerry Torch (uk.blackberry.com). She also receives a Start-up Kit and a copy of *Working 5 to 9* by Emma Jones ▷

