

SUSANNAH WEILAND

Susannah Weiland Collections, United Kingdom



Photography: Linda Gould @GlobalWIIN 2019

Susanna Weiland produces exquisite hand drawn, embroidered and beaded textile products and prints for luxury interiors.

Interview by Esther Veerappan

At the Global Women Inventors & Innovators Showcase, London, United Kingdom 2019

Please tell me about your products?

"It's all inspired by collections from Kew Gardens, working from photographs that I have taken. I have drawn everything and then created repeat patterns which I then get printed on to fabrics. I then bead embroider the colour into them so I have my one-off piece of artwork which is then reprinted for the fabrics, wallpaper and the plates and the individual cushions which I have hand embroidered as well. The idea is that, I am developing a style where everything is black-and-white-drawn and all the colour that is in anything, is always the beading and the embroidery - more like highlights."



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Have you always had these skills?

"I have worked in fashion design and graphics for about 19 years so I find designing interesting and in my spare time I have done a lot of evening

courses in all sorts of things such as painting and drawing, photography and embroidery and so on. I am always learning different creatives although it took me a while to find a way of combining my favourites in one package. It took a lot of experimentation to get to this stage; a lot of things I did and thought '*that's terrible*' or '*that doesn't work*'."

What motivated you to take it further, turn it into a business?

"I had always wanted my own business but I was not quite sure what it was going to be or how it was going to work. In my day job, I am always moving quite quickly and it's quite 'graphicy' and computer based and, I do really enjoy it, but I do miss the hand element of everything and that is why I did it in my own way; it's slow unlike fashion and I've been freelancing which is fast moving. It's like going to the other extreme where everything is drawn by hand and embroidered by hand. I wanted something opposite to what I do, something completely different to what I do in my day job. I also enjoy it; I find it relaxing and I find it quite nice and calming environment to work in. It has always been my dream, to run my own business."

What has been your greatest challenge so far?

“It has been getting myself out there, getting people to hear about what I do and making contact with interior designers which is my target market. I did a show in New York recently and I am doing one in October which I am going to be planning for. I’ve learnt a lot from doing one and how to do things differently for the next one. It’s really getting people to know about what I do. I am on social media but I don’t really post all the time. I probably should be posting more although I don’t want it to be just anything, I want it to be nice images, looking just so. More professional.”

What about the highlights?

“The response has been really good. I did a top-drawer section a few years ago but that was before the website was up and running – just to get initial feedback. I just had fabric and wallpaper and it was kind of an experiment to see what people thought. From that, I went on to do cushions and got the plates, making sure I had more products. That went really well and people really did like my products. I didn’t have my price points quite right. The way I was selling the wallpaper initially changed because I was selling by rolls rather than by metre – which I learnt from doing [at this GWIIN event].”

“In New York, it went really well. I sat there doing embroidery on the stand and people could see how I created designs and that created a lot of interest. I had a few people come back and say, ‘this is my favourite stand’ and that was really nice.”

“I have also had an Italian company get in touch with me – just last week actually so I am hoping that will lead to orders. In terms of interior designers, I have had a few chats back and forth so I am hoping that somewhere down the road it will lead to something.”

What next?

“Going forward the next collection I have in mind will be more elaborate. With the plates, I have had just two produced at the moment but there are a series of ten all together. Depending on how people like these, I am planning on having more done in other colours.

I am also starting a new collection which will be based on the Royal Parks. I’ve got all my photography which is what I work from. I hope to be launching this new collection next year and looking at getting into the swing of doing a couple every year. I have learnt a lot from doing this one and how I will be adapting in the future.”

What advice would you give to others perhaps looking to get into business but do not know where to start?

“There is a lot of help out there for people who want to start their own business. Depending on what they have in mind, for me, this is a creative business so I know more about this industry but I’m sure for others there is help available too. I’ve had mentoring help and I am part of a number of networks and creative networks which is really nice to meet other people that are in a similar situation whom

you can bounce ideas off and you can talk about different events. It is helpful to have a network of people around you also that are trying to do the right things to get their businesses going.”



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SUSANNAH WEILAND from United Kingdom was awarded the **BRITISH WOMEN INVENTORS & INNOVATORS INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL RECOGNITION 2019 AWARD** for her exceptional creative and crafted luxury home décor of range of surface designs which are sophisticated, unusual and detailed.



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