

In the centre of London you'll find bustling businessmen going about their day, savvy shoppers grabbing a bargain and now you'll find crafty creators sewing away in a café. Lisa Comfort started sewing at the age of 11. She taught herself, then took textile GCSE, studied tailoring in Italy then went on to the London College of Fashion where she studied embroidery and fashion.

"I have always loved sewing — I can't remember not sewing!" At *Sew Hip*, we know it's not just being able to sew that's important, it's having a design philosophy. Lisa says, "Keep it classic and feminine. I have never been a particularly edgy person — I have always favoured classic designs that will stand the test of time. Silhouette is also important — creating a feminine shape that flatters," and we couldn't agree more. There has been a distinct trend of feminine, figure flattering designs making their way into mainstream fashion. Gone are the days of oversized tops (though they still have their place) and cementing themselves in our wardrobes are fabulously floral and feminine designs.

EVERYDAY INSPIRATION

One of the most important aspects of sewing is inspiration — if you can't find inspiration, where do you find the desire to sew? Here at *Sew Hip* we have lists and lists and images upon images of wonderful things we eventually want to get around to making. Lisa finds her inspiration and draws her influence particularly from the designers she has worked for, people on the tube in London, magazines and even just the print on a fabric. What started as a hobby, slowly turned into a career choice for Lisa, "I realised I wanted my own business so I started teaching on the side. I created a website and I got more and more bookings until I was working seven days a week and evenings so I decided to take a leap and leave my job in fashion and open a studio." It has taken Lisa over two years to build the business to this stage. "I was finding my customers wanted more — not just one to one lessons but the chance to meet others and get inspired — it was very difficult to do that without a studio." Her pride and joy has now been open since May 4th and is doing really well. The studio is decked out with state of the art Janome sewing machines, overlockers, a quilting machine, bags of space for cutting fabric, irons, and all other equipment, as well as Lisa and her expert knowledge! There is always a technical expert on hand to give handy hints, tips and advice. For £5 an hour, including unlimited pots of tea, you can't go wrong! The shop also stocks haberdashery, patterns, sewing kits and an array of other goodies.

CRAFT REVIVAL

Most people visit Sew Over It with a view to altering and customising their own clothes, and who wouldn't with so many people buying almost identical garments from high street shops? "Items for the home are always popular, too as they are easy to make," explains Lisa. Well, who can resist a cute doorstep or fun and funky cushion? The studio has space for up to ten people at once, though the Sunday sewing club has space for 15. Lisa comments on the boom in younger people getting involved in sewing — one of the many reasons she opened the studio, "I think the craft revival has come from the recession and a more mindful approach to what we spend money on. People have had a taste of how rewarding making things can be and realised they can have the satisfaction of a great hobby and of making something unique." There has also been a renewed interest in all things vintage, "It was getting crazy how much we bought and then we saw everyone in the same things. Vintage offers a unique element to your wardrobe — every item is different which is the same as making something for yourself. You choose the fabric and so no one else will have the same!" Speaking of being unique, Lisa's favourite creation was her first wedding dress for her cousin's wife. Corseted in Duchess satin with hand appliquéd lace — like Kate Middleton's — although the back was more fishtail in shape. "I also made a matching lace appliquéd veil. It was over 100 hours work, but well worth it when I saw her in it on the big day!"

CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS

Sew Over It run parties and sewing clubs as well as a wide variety of classes and workshops, from dressmaking to accessory creating, home furnishings and children's clothes. In each class you will find yourself learning new skills, receiving tips and advice and taking away your item at the end of it! Each teacher is a specialist in their field, so you can be confident you'll receive expert advice each visit. Lisa is keen on pushing boundaries, and Sew Over It definitely offers something new, "We are not just another craft cafe — we like to see ourselves as a bridge between the fashion world and the craft world — something in between." To see when the next classes are scheduled, visit the website (www.sewoverit.co.uk) or drop Lisa an email (info@sewoverit.co.uk) to be added to the mailing list.

Top tips for beginners...

- 1 If your machine isn't working, check the threading — nine times out of ten it will be because something was missed or incorrect.
- 2 Always reverse stitch at the start and end of every seam
- 3 2.5 is the optimum stitch length for straight stitch
- 4 Always allow twice the time you think your project will take — sewing takes time!
- 5 Don't forget to pin and press — these make all the difference!