

Recipe for Success: Introduction to 3D Textile Sculpture

by textile artist Claire Manners Wood

CTL members at the workshop in their London venue near The Gherkin



I do love the incredible textile skill set which emanates from the Contemporary Textiles London (CTL) group of quilters and textile artists! Throw them into a workshop for an introduction to 3D textiles and I knew they would attack the challenge with gusto, laughs and strong discussion around techniques. Not to mention the incredible results.

Ingredients

- 40cm length of 0.5cm Tiranti aluminium wire (filed on ends to eliminate sharp edges)
- 5-6 pieces of fabric, cut 4 x 28cm in length – hemmed on one long edge and both short ends. Hems only need to be folded 0.5cm once and stitched 2mm from edge
- Small 2 x 2cm scraps of fabric for the ends
- Hot glue gun
- Silicon 'fingers' (if needed) to protect fingers from hot glue
- Beads and decorations
- Needle and invisible thread
- 90 minutes
- Open mind and desire to experiment

Method

1. I started by asking everyone to bend the 40cm length of wire into an abstract shape. There is something very rewarding in taming wire, as it can have a mind of its own. The 0.5cm wire is easy to bend and move without pliers.



Working with glue guns

2. Then we started the process of adding our fabric. First, we glued the small fabric scraps to the ends to cover the aluminium and create a neat finish. This was also a good opportunity to practise with the glue gun.
3. Next, we began at one end and started wrapping and glueing the fabric strip to our shapes, with the hemmed edge of the first fabric as close to the covered wire end as possible. We wrapped the strips at an angle, so the fabric spirals down the wire with each wrap. We worked to ensure the neat, hemmed edge is visible and the raw edge is covered with each turn, and we added glue every 3-4 wraps to hold it in place. It is important to keep the fabric pulled tight as you wrap to ensure a clean finish. However, wrapping fabric around bends in wire means there is always some excess to ease in, tuck in and control. When fabrics changed, we ensured the end of one hemmed edge lines up with the next into a seamless transition. At the final end, we trimmed the fabric to the right length and then glued a neat hem as close to the end as possible.
4. Finally, we started decorating our sculptures. The decorations are fabulous to add extra elements to the design, as well as covering up any 'mistakes' as needed (photo above).



I was thrilled at the results! The Contemporary Textiles London members adapted their myriad skills to realise a new one in creating a fun 3D textile sculpture. Their growing understanding of how fabrics can be worked and manipulated into a new object was beautiful to watch – just take a look at their amazing sculptures, pictured on the previous pages.

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Using the 'silicon fingers'