



Meet a designer who makes quirky, colourful KNITS FOR KIDS

Amanda Hawkins uses her textile design skills to create irresistible knitted accessories to make children smile.

Nothing brightens up this time of year like a pair of dazzling knitted mittens or bold vibrant bunting.

Designer Amanda Hawkins knits both by hand and machine, creating vivid accessories for children. It all stems from her own childhood of joyful and imaginative crafting.

"From a very young age, I had endless patience and was always immersed in a project – knitting, sewing, constructing, designing and drawing," she recalls. "By my early teens, I was making my own clothes, adapting old patterns."

This path prompted Amanda to take an art foundation course at an art college, and then enrol on a textile degree, specialising in weaving. After graduation and with a head full of ideas, Amanda started her design business, Amanda Hawkins Knitwear, in 1990. "I chose knitting for the love of it and also for practical reasons – I didn't have the space for a loom!"

"Knitting," she says, "is my passion and my addiction. Every knitter knows that 'just one more row' feeling. At times, I would be

happily machine knitting for work all day, and hand knitting for relaxation, late into the evening."

THE NEXT STEP

Amanda's first commissioned pieces were intricate sculptural jackets for women, which took days to make. "My children's range developed in 2002, alongside me starting my own family," she says.

Having tiny offspring at that point was essential to the range's development. "I had perfect little models and was surrounded by colour and design inspiration."

After knitting personalised bunting for her own children's rooms, Amanda experimented with a range of colourways and simple motifs for customers to choose between. "These were soon followed by smaller 'door plaques', and due to demand, I now sell individual letters for customers to make up their own names."

Next came a selection of dinky bags for kids. "The inspiration for my bags came from my youngest daughter carrying around her baby hat," Amanda says. "It had become

her comfort blanket and when it was too small to wear, she carried it around by the toggles on the ends of the ear flaps. An upside down hat had become a bag!"

Amanda's makes also include a cheery breed of characters called Nelly Noodles, which she devised by playing around with a pile of hats. "You can see the stripy colourways, motifs and crazy ears, taken from various hat styles jumbled together, with mittens scaled down to become arms."

In 2014 Amanda opened her business up to a wider audience by setting up her website and joining Etsy. The latter, she says, is a very affordable way of sharing creativity on a professional platform.

Recent additions to the range include a brand new fox character who has joined her Nelly Noodles menagerie. "In 2016 I may develop more animals," Amanda says, "or I might just see what morphs out of my sample drawer!"

Written by Judy Darley

Find Amanda's knits at www.amandahawkinsknitwear.co.uk or www.etsy.com/uk/shop/ahawkinsknitwear.



From left to right: Amanda just can't stop knitting, and who can blame her?; this bright hat and mittens set really makes it feel like springtime; we can't resist her cute Nelly Noodles characters; no true little pirate should be without their very own plundering bag!