

It's an honour working in textiles



If luck had not played a part leading bridal and special occasionwear designer Joyce

Young OBE might have expressed her love of fabrics, colour and texture in interiors. Having graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 1975 with an honours degree in Interior Design and Embroidery and Weaving (there were no fashion courses there at the time), she responded to an advertisement for a creative designer with a Marks and Spencer supplier and has remained on the fashion side ever since.

She founded By Storm with her husband Maurice and now employs 20 staff, in a purpose-built manufacturing unit next door to a new showroom in Glasgow and a shop in Belsize Park, North London. She has been a regular visitor to Textile Forum since the show was launched 15 years ago this year.



Who has inspired you the most? And why?

The never-ending positivity of my husband Maurice, who gives me the confidence to keep stretching and achieving my goals. This industry is not for the faint-hearted and between us we have racked up 96 years in the textiles sector. We still enjoy the day to day running of the business and all that it entails probably because we have kept it to a manageable size so we can deal directly with our customers and have all our designs individually made to measure in Glasgow.

Do you have a ritual for "getting creative"?

I definitely do have a ritual for designing the collections. It involves getting very messy with the fabrics spread around and hundreds of thumbnail sketches. I like to do this in the evening with music playing and a glass of wine. I prefer to be completely alone and indulge myself in my creative thoughts. These over time get narrowed down and the final sketches prepared with all the information for the pattern cutters. As each decision is made the fabric gets removed from the "mess" and put in a tidy queue along with the finished sketch.

The difficulty, or beauty, of designing is that there is no right or wrong. It's not like adding up a row of figures where there is a correct answer. There are infinitesimal ways of combining shape, fabric, colour and detail and the way we do it defines the handwriting of the designer.

What do you think the biggest fabric trends of 2017 will be?

I think there will be a move towards plainer fabrics and styles. There has been so much lace over the past few years and while it will still be around, I think it will become less popular for complete dresses. I don't tend to follow fashion as I like to offer my customers a good choice of colours that I like and are flattering to the British complexion. Some seasons the trends from Europe are for strong citrus shades which are beautiful on tanned skins but not so great on pale ones. It's all about knowing your customer and giving them a considered good choice. Faded vintage colours for mother of the bride have been popular for a few years and tend to be flattering so we will continue to offer these but also clear brights which suit women with stronger colouring.

Are there any differences between the designs you create for Scottish brides and the bridal party compared with those 'south of the Border'?

We don't see a lot of difference. The best sellers are the same in both shops because they are the most flattering shapes and suit most figure types. In Scotland there is a niche market for tartan themed weddings so introduced our Tartan Spirit collection so the women in the bridal party can co-ordinate with the groom's tartan.

We also have lots of customers in London going to Scottish weddings who choose to wear a touch of tartan.

What are the main differences in the fabrics you use today than say 15 years ago when Textile Forum started?

We mainly use silks, which are pretty much the same excellent quality that we have always had over the past 15 years. However, there are far more mixes now with a little elastic or polyester that help with drape and don't crease as much. Innovation mainly comes from the blends and I have a preference for soft draping fabrics rather than the more structured ones.

How important to you is Textile Forum?

I always make a point to be in London and visit Textile Forum each season. It's great to see lots of our suppliers under one roof and apart from keeping up to date with new developments it's a good social occasion to meet up with others in our industry. I always come away having bought more fabrics than intended and feeling a fresh flush of enthusiasm.

What is the one thing you wish you had known before entering a career in textiles?

It's not an industry to go into if you want to make your fortune!! Seriously though, I consider myself incredibly lucky to have spent my lifetime working with fabrics in a career that I enjoy so much. It is never a problem to go to work and along with my husband we work virtually 24/7 together. I love all aspects of it from the designing to meeting all the wonderful brides and mothers who come on their journey with us. It's a real privilege to play such an important part in such a special day in their lives.

What is your favourite book?

Facebook.

What is your favourite film?

It's got to be a romantic oldie: Breakfast at Tiffany's.

And your favourite TV show?

I love seeing people winning so enjoy The Apprentice, Strictly and X factor if we are in on a Saturday night and all the amazing costume dramas.

What would be your "last supper"?

Well I guess I wouldn't have to be worrying about calories, so like my clothes I prefer simple and good quality food: watercress soup, sea bass, spinach, roast potatoes, cheesecake and lots of good wine.

What is the one item you can't live without?

Smartphone (sad).

How or where do you relax?

I do a bit of Ashtanga Yoga but I wouldn't call that relaxing.

When Maurice and I are in London we love to go to the Everyman Cinema in Hampstead with comfy couches and cocktails we are right down there at the front - next best thing to being IN the film. Eating out is our main pastime after work when it's too late to think about cooking we like to have a glass of wine and a nice meal in one of our favourite restaurants and catch up on the day's activities.

What has been the most surreal event in your life?

Without doubt, receiving an OBE for services to textiles. The whole process was surreal, from receiving the unexpected letter (I thought it was a mistake or a wind up) through to going to Buckingham Palace with my family to the investiture where Prince Charles presented me with the award. I was, and still am, in shock to receive such prestigious recognition for something that I enjoy doing so much. I am also absolutely delighted and very honoured to have received it.

