



**THIS PAGE** Aimee in her south London studio, where cones of thread are arranged by colour. The circular knitting machine is used to make bespoke cord. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT** Strips of leather, string, cord and thread displayed in front of a large sampler of

digital and hand embroidery on vintage linen; Ricasso handles in ash, oak and walnut, inspired by sword hilts in The Wallace Collection, are embellished with leather, hemp, waxed cotton cord and gilt thread; Aimee finishing off pleats decorated with exquisite French knots.

MIXED MEDIA DESIGNER  
**AIMEE BETTS**

*Bringing the tradition of embroidery to the forefront of contemporary design, this mixed media specialist creates a unique range of embellishments and textiles*

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**ABOVE** Colourful key fob tassels. **BELOW** Behind Aimee are ceremonial tassels inspired by British military dress uniform, available at The New Craftsmen, [thenewcraftsmen.com](http://thenewcraftsmen.com). Above her is the Clara Lux pendant light, made by Aimee in collaboration with Sarah Colson, [sarahcolson.com](http://sarahcolson.com).



After completing a Masters in Mixed Media Textiles at the Royal College of Art, maker Aimee Betts set up her own studio in 2012. Her embellishments, inspired by historic and contemporary techniques, add a modern twist to textiles, clothing, jewellery and even lighting. Recent projects include a velvet cushion with knitted cord decoration for Burberry and The New Craftsmen.

**“ Embroidery and decoration should add value to a piece of work; if they don’t, then the design isn’t working. I’m certainly not afraid of trying something new and experimenting with different techniques. In the past, I’ve said yes to jobs knowing full well that I’d have to go away and learn an entirely new way of working. For me, it’s an enriching experience that broadens my knowledge and keeps things fresh.**

**The diversity of my work lies in it not being restricted by any traditional definitions of embroidery, or the different contexts in which it can be applied.** At first, I thought that I would focus solely on fashion embroidery, but after collaborating with different designers across several mediums, I discovered new applications for my work. Now I’m always trying to push the boundaries.

**I work across a variety of genres, from fashion and interiors to lighting.** I’ve gained a lot from seeing how my work can be applied to different materials. Recently, I designed a collection of Ricasso handles, inspired by European sword hilts on display at The Wallace Collection in London, working with braiding and embroidery methods to add leather ribbon, metallic threads and hemp cord to beautifully turned wooden handles.

**A lot can be achieved by simply asking yourself ‘what will happen if I do this?’** As well as the traditional processes, technology and machinery play a big role in my work. There’s nothing I love more than discovering a new way of using a machine or technique and pushing what it can make for me. I work with a sewing machine, a circular knitting machine and a digital embroidery machine to achieve different effects. For traditional embroidery, I will refer to my collection of books and samples, and look at drawings and notes taken on my travels and museum visits. The blending of techniques happens serendipitously as the design evolves. The objective is to make sure that the design is successful, regardless of the methods used to create it.

**I like to be surrounded by colour, texture, materials, machinery, yarns, books, samples and paintings.** They make my work environment really playful. I keep an archive of all of my samples, whether they have proved successful or not. I feel that it’s important to maintain a visual record as sometimes dormant ideas gain momentum years later. The aesthetic may change but fundamental themes and ideas develop with time.

**The physical demands of the job can take their toll and can be really tough on the body, but I’ve learnt not to punish myself if I can’t do everything.** The most challenging part is managing the different roles of being a maker. You have to be involved in every aspect of running a business, from marketing and admin to sales. If you’re not careful it can leave very little time for making. At the end of each day I take time to reflect on what has been successful or unsuccessful. It helps to generate plans and ideas for the future.”  
*Aimee Betts, [aimeebetts.com](http://aimeebetts.com).*