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Meet

VALERIE NESBITT

We sat down with quilting icon Valerie Nesbitt to discover more about her impressive five decades of quilting and her business justhands-on.tv



**Hi Valerie, how are you today?
Tell us, what's on your sewing table
at the minute?**

I always seem to have more than one project on the go. I love using up scraps, but I am also inspired by the new bundle of fabric I have just purchased. I am very fortunate in that my work is my pleasure. I try and find time most days to do either some sewing, sorting, cutting or planning; if I don't then I definitely have withdrawal symptoms.

I am currently working on a Hashtag quilt. It uses a stitch-and-flip technique using fabric with writing on as a background which I hope will appeal to the younger set. I am also working on my own version of the Dream Quilt designed for Makower UK by Lynne Goldsworthy, which uses foundation piecing throughout - it is still a work in progress.

As I teach, these can both be used as teaching samples. When I've finished, I often donate quilts to local charity Momentum in Kingston-upon-Thames which supports children with life-limiting illnesses, as well as the Children's ward at St. George's Hospital, Surrey. In both cases I know the quilts will be much loved.

**How did you first get into quilting?
Were you taught by family or friends
or were you more of a self-starter?**

I have always sewn, either by hand or machine. My mother loved to sew and I come from an era when sewing was part of most households. However, it was some





Valerie is a bit of a YouTube sensation and her 40-minute scrap quilt video has nearly 2 million views!

time before patchwork came into my life – probably in the mid-1970s – again with my mother's influence. I began incorporating hexagons and doing English paper piecing, which is a great way of using up scraps of fabric and recycling Christmas cards for the paper templates.

I've always been a self-starter and get very excited by new patterns and techniques, which is why I have managed to stay passionate about patchwork and quilting, as it is constantly evolving. Recently I fell in love with soldering fabric to create cut-work, something Kathleen Laurel-Sage (one of the contributors on justhands-on.tv) is also passionate about. A group of us spent a wonderful weekend with her recently at a justhands-on.tv weekend retreat.

How long have you been quilting?

I opened the quilt shop Creative Quilting back in 1989 when the rotary cutter was just coming to be accepted into the patchwork world, but I have been quilting longer than that – over half a century I realise! Patchwork and quilting are in fact two different things and during that time they have both changed hugely; patchwork was hand sewn and pieces were cut individually, whereas now we have the rotary cutter and the sewing machine; quilting was also done by hand whereas now we are able to machine-quilt, or even send a

quilt to someone else to do on a long arm machine, and I haven't even mentioned all the wonderful fabric, wadding, thread and gadgets that have been invented just for us!

“ I have always been a self-starter and get very excited by new patterns and techniques ”

If you could give your younger self one piece of quilting advice, what would it be?

Two things maybe; I have managed to teach myself a little patience – it is better to do it right the first time since unpicking is very time-wasteful. Also, despite being adults, we are not instant experts. We still need to practise and it is something we should enjoy. The journey and experience of making my projects is still the best part.

What's the favourite quilt you've ever made and why?

That's a difficult one to answer as I have so many favourites for all sorts of reasons, but probably the one I have on my own bed fits the bill best. Made several years ago now, it

is a Stack-n-Whack kaleidoscope quilt which means that each of the eight blocks are different, made from the same piece of fabric; it appeals to me visually as well as to my 'thrifty' self. I managed to get the blocks from just 1m of fabric – all that was left after making curtains – and then I had it long-arm quilted.

What inspired you to start justhands-on.tv?

I just wanted to share my love of patchwork and quilting. I realised that not everyone was as fortunate as I to be surrounded by the latest fabric, patterns and gadgets on a regular basis, and engage with the community of sewists who come through the shop every day. Plus, we all lead such busy lives, which means that we often don't get to do the things we want to do when they are on offer, eg come to the class or demo. So, with the help of the internet, it is much easier to share ideas, share what is happening at a show and watch the workshop we like. Bringing the patchwork inspiration into people's homes is what I wanted to do.

What is it about video that you think quilters love?

Quilters love being able to watch videos when the time is right for them, there is no need to dress up or go out into the cold,

and they rewind and re-view as often as they like. Videos with demonstrations are always popular as they are so much clearer than the written word. You only have to see the cluster of fans around the demonstrators at quilt shows to know that and video demonstrations come to life with the help of a great tutor. Quilters love it when the tutor provides a special hint or tip in a video; the sort only an experienced tutor knows.

For anyone who isn't aware of justhands-on.tv, could you describe what it is and who it is aimed at?

We are devoted to inspiring and helping create beautiful projects. We do this by providing online classes for quilting, knitting and textile art – featuring the UK's finest tutors and covering everything from beginner techniques to advanced patterns. We now have a library of over 1,600 videos which is added to weekly – new releases are out every Friday and as a subscriber you get unlimited access to all the videos from £7 per month – think Netflix for quilters. We are also supporting sewing communities by providing a marketplace for quilt shops to sell a wide range of sewing products (many of which are featured in our videos) and we regularly organise sewing retreats for the delegates to enjoy a little sewing 'me time'.

What do you think makes for a successful tutorial video?

A world-class tutor makes all the difference; that colourful character who anticipates questions and knows exactly how to help solve problems. The best tutors bring hours of classroom experience to a tutorial video. Many of the world's finest tutors are from the UK and you will find them on justhands-on.tv! Technically speaking, I think it's good camera work that makes the process clear. For example, you would be surprised to see how much time we spend working out the best way to set up an overhead shot – from lighting to hand position – so that a viewer will be able to replicate the experience easily at home.

What are the most enjoyable and challenging parts of creating your videos?

The most enjoyable is meeting all our talented contributors and the most challenging is the technology. Being an IT expert was not on my radar when I started justhands-on.tv back in 2009, but then neither was the iPad!



Do you have any exciting plans for justhands-on.tv next year that you'd like to share?

We are going to work more closely with quilting shops in 2019. The sewing community needs a thriving network of patchwork shops and, as a former quilt shop owner, it is important to me to continue to help and to sell through shops and not against them. Our www.justhands-on.tv online shop is more of a marketplace where shops and artists list products, patterns and books that are often mentioned in the workshop videos. I see this as part of our ongoing commitment to supporting sewing communities in the UK and around the world. We also have a very exciting series of weekend sewing retreats planned – all based in a wonderful hotel in North Hampshire.

Finally, do you have any quilting resolutions for 2019?

I really want to make time to take workshops with some of our amazing contributors – but as I have booked some of them to join us in the justhands-on.tv retreat line-up for 2019 maybe that's almost sorted! Oh and finish more quilts – I want to practise using the range of sewing machine rulers that I have just treated myself to.



FIND OUT MORE

To discover more about Valerie and justhands-on.tv, subscribe to quilting tutorials, find sewing resources or book a retreat spot, visit www.justhands-on.tv