

Businesswoman Hannah creates wonderful stitch kits to suit every season



From a small business to an empire, MakeBox & Co. now features in major retailers



A fresh set of skeins, a brightly coloured stack of crisp cotton, an empty hoop or two... There's nothing we love more than getting a parcel in the post – especially when it's filled to the brim with shiny new embroidery supplies.

Cue, MakeBox & Co. Embroidery designer Hannah Read-Baldrey founded the art box subscription service six years ago to help those with a creative itch discover and try out new crafts. Every box contains all the materials and instructions needed to whip up one of Hannah's many beautifully designed projects. Subscribers might arrange a bouquet of frothy paper poppies one month and stitch a felt floral wreath the next. Hannah and her small-but-mighty MakeBox team also sell a hand-picked selection of specialist crafting supplies; think pretty paper, watercolour paints, macramé yarns. Oh, and an ever-growing selection of wonderful embroidery kits.

"Creativity has always been in my DNA," says Hannah. "Having a primary school teacher as a mother meant that a cardboard box and set of poster paints were never far away... I honestly can't remember a time when I wasn't encouraged to be creative. I used to see her making some of my clothes and thought it was the norm to work with your hands!" Hannah followed in her mum's footsteps, pursuing a career as a props and fashion stylist before turning her hand to embroidery, and MakeBox, in 2019.

Despite having made a name for herself in, and beyond, the stitching community (MakeBox kits are now stocked in luxury department stores Harrods, Liberty and John

Lewis) the road to success hasn't been an easy one for Hannah. Not only was she six months pregnant with her daughter when the business launched, but she and her husband Brendan were also grieving the death of their son: "The year before we set up MakeBox we tragically lost our second son Bertie at birth, which flipped our world on its head." The business then had to weather the Covid-19 storm and the challenging years that followed. "It has been an insane ride," Hannah tells us. "Beginning in the way that we did, after a loss... Then the pandemic hit, which was a huge growth spike for us but also super stressful as I had a newborn baby, and we grew exponentially overnight. We needed to expand into a warehouse to safely have space for people packing. After this, a cost-of-living crisis and recession..."

But Hannah and Brendan ultimately found their crafting journey to be a healing one. "My husband and I were looking for a way to change how we worked, knowing first-hand how fundamental creativity is to wellbeing," Hannah says. The couple wanted "to share positivity through creativity in an accessible way". And the MakeBox →

Hannah Read-Baldrey

ELEGANT, SIMPLE, SUSTAINABLE: WHEN EMBROIDERY DESIGNER HANNAH SET UP HER CRAFT BOX SUBSCRIPTION BUSINESS MAKEBOX & CO., SHE HAD A CLEAR VISION OF WHAT IT SHOULD BE...

Words by Daisy Game



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MakeBox strives to be as sustainable as possible when it comes to creating products

embroidery kits do just that. Bursting with bright colours and oodles of stitched texture, each pattern is a true joy to sew. Hannah uses her designs to celebrate the beauty of the natural world, with lots of MakeBox hoops containing florals or cute stitched critters worked in an array of seasonal palettes. Strawberry, citrus and sunshine motifs feature in her summer hoops, while Hannah's autumn patterns are scattered with ruby red toadstools, acorn clusters, cheeky hedgehogs and bushy-tailed foxes. And for Christmas? Hannah stitches classic fir trees, love birds and festive flowers. This year, MakeBox also brought back the bestselling Christmas Tree Sampler and Advent Apron kit, complete with a brand-new set of motifs.

A love of nature has been at the heart of Hannah's design process from the very start. "The first box we ever released was the Bee Kind box. This is dedicated to our son Bertie Bee, and is a double hoop kit containing a simple embroidered bee and floral posy, which uses the satin DMC threads – so it glimmers when hung..." The designer's patterns go hand-in-hand with her passion for sustainability: unlike others on the market, the MakeBox kits are good for both people and planet. "When we were first looking at the craft box space, there seemed to be a lot of excess, basically unneeded packaging, plastic bits bulking out the packaging. We wanted to keep it elegant, simple and sustainable," Hannah explains. It took a little bit of practice – "our first boxes are a world away from what we produce now and were enormous!" – but Hannah has turned her vision into an incredible reality: "Since selling to retailers such as John Lewis, we've refined the designs to fit on the shelves better".

The crafter's passion for the planet has led her to approach brands with similar values. MakeBox & Co. has

recently collaborated with clothing brand Nobody's Child to create a set of five embroidery kits, which can be used to adorn old and new clothes alike. From the Wild Rose kit, containing the pattern and threads to stitch a blush pink bloom onto collared shirts, to the delicate Daisy Patch and hot pink Anemones kits, both are perfect for decorating denim, and the idea behind the collab, says Hannah, is to "help you love your clothes for longer". Why replace items in our wardrobe, when just a few stitches can make them feel new and exciting again? "I fully support the movement in fashion for sustainable, traceable ethically made garments," Hannah emphasises.

Just as her mother did, Hannah believes in the power of using our hands to mend – and to make from scratch. So much so, that she has written a book on the subject. *Couture Craft Gifts* (David & Charles) is a practical craft book containing a selection of giftable projects which can be created by crafters of all abilities. "The book had been bubbling away for a while in the back of my head..." Hannah says, explaining that she "wanted to show how you can make something beautiful and premium by looking through the price tag". Each project is broken down into simple steps, making them super easy to follow along with. From clay candle holders to monogrammed cushion covers and plush hair scrunchies, *Couture* is fit to burst with gifting ideas. Our top pick (though we hate to play favourites) has to be Hannah's embroidered letter project. She uses Woven Wheel, French Knots and Fishbone Stitch to sew a dainty selection of floral motifs, which are shaped to look like letters of the alphabet. Time for us to get stitching an 'L' and an 'E' to hang right here at *Love Embroidery* HQ.

Subscribe to MakeBox & Co. and get creative kits and other goodies delivered directly to your door by visiting [makebox.co](https://www.makebox.co)



From speedy projects to luxury handmade items, there's a gift to suit every occasion in Hannah Read-Baldrey's *Couture Craft Gifts* (David & Charles). It's filled with simple step-by-step instructions complemented by beautifully styled photography, and better still, Hannah's gifts are all budget-friendly to make too, so you can get crafty without breaking the bank. Order your copy today from www.davidandcharles.com