



Ray Slater

# clothdolls

for textile artists

# **Cloth Dolls** **for Textile Artists**

Ray Slater

For  
Mum and Dad  
and  
Tim, Rosie and Thomas

With thanks to Vivienne Rudd, friend and guinea-pig, and Pat Lumsdale for helpful advice. A special thank-you to June Evans, friend and nimble-fingered word wizard. Also thanks to Alan Lambert for the occasional use of his front lobe.

First published in the United States by  
Interweave Press, LLC  
201 East Fourth Street  
Loveland, CO 80537-4632  
interweavebooks.com

Copyright © Batsford 2008  
Text © Ray Slater 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Slater, Ray.  
Cloth dolls for textile artists / Ray Slater, author.  
p. cm.  
Includes index.  
ISBN 978-1-59668-087-6 (hardcover)  
1. Dollmaking. 2. Cloth dolls. I. Title.  
TT175.S556 2008  
745.592'21—dc22

2008005373

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Reproduction by Dot Gradations Ltd, UK  
Printed by Craft Print Ltd, Singapore



*Page 1:* This doll's headdress was created using crossway waves (see page 51).

*Page 2:* Three wired dolls. These are created around a wire armature for maximum flexibility (see chapter 2).

*Below and opposite:* This doll's headdress was created using the cutwork technique (see page 115). The same fabric was used to create a dainty shoe (opposite page).

# Contents

Introduction	<b>6</b>
Stump Dolls	<b>14</b>
Wired Dolls	<b>54</b>
Stuffed Cloth Dolls	<b>92</b>
Suppliers and Further Reading	<b>127</b>
Index	<b>128</b>





# Cloth Dolls for Textile Artists





# **Cloth Dolls** **for Textile Artists**

Ray Slater



For  
Mum and Dad  
and  
Tim, Rosie and Thomas

With thanks to Vivienne Rudd, friend and guinea-pig, and Pat Lumsdale for helpful advice. A special thank-you to June Evans, friend and nimble-fingered word wizard. Also thanks to Alan Lambert for the occasional use of his front lobe.

First published in the United States by  
Interweave Press, LLC  
201 East Fourth Street  
Loveland, CO 80537-4632  
interweavebooks.com

Copyright © Batsford 2008  
Text © Ray Slater 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Slater, Ray.  
Cloth dolls for textile artists / Ray Slater, author.  
p. cm.  
Includes index.  
ISBN 978-1-59668-087-6 (hardcover)  
1. Dollmaking. 2. Cloth dolls. I. Title.  
TT175.S556 2008  
745.592'21—dc22

2008005373

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Reproduction by Dot Gradations Ltd, UK  
Printed by Craft Print Ltd, Singapore



*Page 1:* This doll's headdress was created using crossway waves (see page 51).

*Page 2:* Three wired dolls. These are created around a wire armature for maximum flexibility (see chapter 2).

*Below and opposite:* This doll's headdress was created using the cutwork technique (see page 115). The same fabric was used to create a dainty shoe (opposite page).



# Contents

Introduction	<b>6</b>
Stump Dolls	<b>14</b>
Wired Dolls	<b>54</b>
Stuffed Cloth Dolls	<b>92</b>
Suppliers and Further Reading	<b>127</b>
Index	<b>128</b>





# Introduction

**In simple terms, a cloth doll is a figurative soft sculpture, but it is the interpretation of an idea and the combination of raw materials that enables these unique and inspirational figures to come to life.**

Cloth dolls and figures appeal to artists from many different backgrounds and this has led to the cross-fertilization of different media and styles. Realism and abstraction, fantasy and fine art are often combined with hand- and machine-made textiles, printed and painted fabrics, to create wonderful figurative works of art.

The inspiration for soft dolls and figures can come from many diverse sources including paintings, sculptures, fashion, magazines, costume or fairy and folk tales, as well as from observation of our fellow creatures. If you keep an open mind, you need never be short of ideas.

You may find it helpful to create your own source information book, in which you can keep anything that may inspire you, to be explored and developed at a later stage.

This book introduces you to some basic doll techniques. It also includes textile techniques for creating fabrics, that can be used either for making the actual doll or for costume.

The *Stump Doll* produced from simple shapes provides the perfect vehicle for this type of textile fabric.

The *Wired Armature Doll* can be arranged in different poses to create a sense of fluidity. Here, hand stitching and *bias rouleau* are used to create surface detail and texture.

The *Stuffed Cloth Doll* is brought to life by the use of transfer-dyed fabric embellished with free-machine embroidery and motifs created with a soldering iron.

I hope that these three different dolls and three different starting points will equip and inspire you to develop your own creative style.

*Opposite:* This dramatic stump doll is dressed in fabric created using crossway waves (see page 51).



# Basic tools and equipment

For all the dolls in this book you will need the following basic set of tools and equipment:

- **Freezer paper** for making pattern templates.
- **Sharp H pencil or mechanical pencil** for drawing sharp, accurate lines.
- **Small paper scissors** for cutting intricate paper shapes.
- **Sharp fabric scissors.** Keep two pairs: large for speed and small for accuracy.
- **Fabric** for making heads and hands: 100% cotton fabric has an amount of stretch and will mold nicely into shape, unlike polyester-cotton blends, which do not give a smooth finish.
- **Forceps** are useful for gripping fabric and turning things inside out. These come in various shapes and sizes and can be obtained from doll suppliers, tool shops, or fly-fishing suppliers.
- **Finger-turning tools** are an essential for turning intricate fingers inside out. They consist of a tube and a rod. Two useful sizes are:  $\frac{1}{8}$ in (4mm) tube and  $\frac{1}{16}$ in (2mm) rod;  $\frac{3}{32}$ in (3mm) tube and  $\frac{3}{64}$ in (1.5mm) rod.
- **Stuffing fork or chopstick** for pushing stuffing into limbs and heads.
- **Good-quality polyester stuffing.** A soft, springy stuffing will give a smooth finish.
- **Soft coloring pencils** for coloring faces (see “Drawing flat faces” on page 36).
- **Waterproof and fade-proof pens** for drawing faces on fabric: size 0.5 and 0.3, in black, for outlining and 0.3 in red for lips.
- **Acrylic spray coating** will seal colored pencils and stop them from smudging.
- **Fabric eraser** for erasing pencil marks on fabric.
- **Good-quality polyester thread** for general sewing.
- **Quilting or strong thread** for needle-sculpting.
- **Long fine darning needles** in sizes 1 to 5.
- **Chenille stems or pipe cleaners** for inserting into fingers to make them flexible.
- **Felting needles** for attaching wool fibers for hair.
- **Liquid seam sealants, such as Fray Check** are fabric sealants that will stop fabric from fraying and enable you to clip very close to the stitch line. This ensures that intricate shapes can be turned through without fraying. Use this product very sparingly as it hardens the fabric, which then becomes more difficult to turn through. Cut the end off a toothpick and use the blunt end to apply the sealant. Do not squirt straight from the bottle.
- **Embroidery hoop or frame** for stretching fabric for machine embroidery.
- **Wonder Under (Bondaweb)** a double-sided adhesive web with a protective paper backing. It is used to secure fabric onto a background before stitching.
- **Parchment paper, or non-stick baking paper** is used to protect your fabric from a hot iron. This can be obtained from supermarkets.

*Opposite:* The hair on this wired doll was created using a felting needle (see page 125).



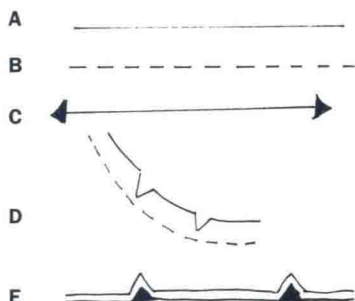


# General information

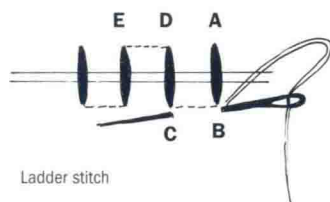
The following instructions are basic doll-making principles and apply to all the dolls in this book.

Note in **Diagram 1** that:

- A = cutting line
- B = stitching line
- C = straight grain line—the straight grain line runs parallel to the selvedge edge or finished edge of the fabric, not the cut edge
- D = clip seams—this will ease the fabric and allow it to stretch around intricate shapes, such as neck, waist, elbow, nose and fingers
- E = balance marks, which match to corresponding balance marks on another pattern piece



Pattern symbols



Ladder stitch

## Stitching

### Stitch length and type

For normal stitch length use  $\frac{1}{16}$ in (2.0mm). When stitching the body, limbs and head, use a very small stitch, about  $\frac{3}{16}$ in (1.50mm). This will provide a strong seam that will not burst open when you are stuffing the doll. Hand stitching, no matter how small, is just not strong enough.

*Ladder stitch:* This is an excellent stitch for closing a seam or opening, as it is virtually invisible.

### Seam allowance

For normal seams leave  $\frac{1}{8}$ in (0.3cm). For intricate pieces such as hands and heads, leave slightly under  $\frac{1}{8}$ in (0.3cm). Too big a seam allowance will give you a lumpy finish when stuffed. Too small and it will split when stuffed.

### Threads

Use a good quality polyester thread. Always use a thread that matches your fabric. If you don't, you will find that the stitching will show through when you stuff your doll. It is a shame to spoil all your hard work by letting the stitching show.

### Ladder-stitch method

- 1 Start at A.
- 2 Stitch over the fabric to B.
- 3 Stitch under the fabric to C.
- 4 Stitch over the fabric to D.
- 5 Stitch to E, etc.

**TIP** When you have done three or four stitches, pull the thread gently and this will close the opening with an almost invisible finish.



# Using the patterns

It is well worth taking a little time to look at the pattern and familiarizing yourself with the pieces.

- Note that some pattern pieces have a seam allowance and some do not.
- Note any information on the pattern, such as openings, grain line, number of pieces.
- Always match the straight grain line on the pattern to the straight grain of the fabric. If you don't do this, your doll's head and limbs may turn out to be a different shape from the original patterns.

## The Freezer-paper Method

I like to use the freezer-paper method to transfer my patterns onto fabric as it provides a stable and accurate foundation for stitching. Here's how it is done:

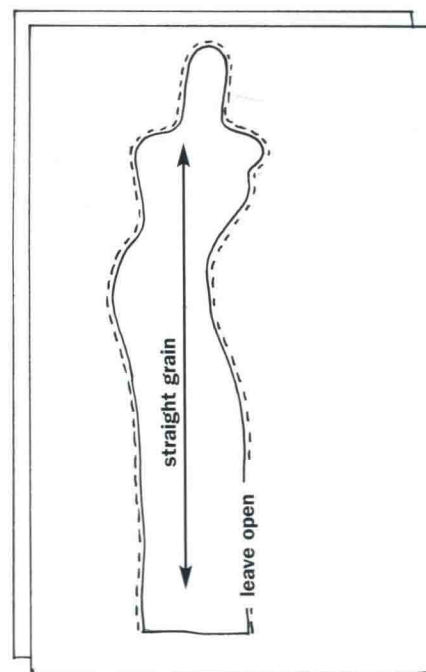
### Cutting out the pieces

- 1 Lay the freezer paper shiny side down onto the pattern.
- 2 With a mechanical pencil or hard sharp (H) pencil, trace around the pattern piece. Note any relevant information, such as grain lines, openings, and balance marks.
- 3 Cut out the freezer paper accurately.
- 4 Place shiny side down onto a double layer of fabric and iron with a medium-hot iron. This will now remain securely in place and provide you with an accurate shape to stitch around.
- 5 Using a very small stitch,  $\frac{5}{8}$ in (1.5mm), stitch right along the edge of the freezer paper.
- 6 Peel the freezer paper away (this can be used several times).
- 7 Cut out the fabric with the appropriate seam allowance.

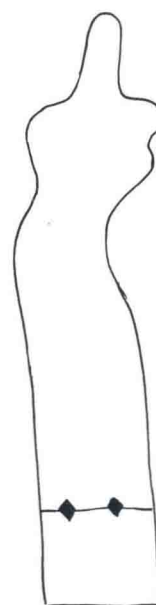
If you do not wish to use the freezer-paper method, you can trace the pattern onto paper, pin onto a double layer of fabric and trace around the shape.

### Joining the pattern pieces

In order to complete some of the pattern pieces they will need to be joined together first. Trace and cut out both pieces and match up the balance marks; use sticky tape to stick the pieces together to complete the pattern, as shown in the diagram.



Using the pattern on a double layer of fabric



Joining the pattern pieces

# Stuffing the doll

There are many makes of stuffing on the market but you need to find a light, bouncy polyester stuffing. I use Super Poly Stuffing. Some stuffing is dense when compressed, and gives a lumpy, cellulite-like finish—and we don't want cellulite! Find yourself a stuffing tool that suits you—a chopstick or a commercial toy-stuffing tool, something you are comfortable using.

- 1 Take a chopstick or other stuffing tool and gently press it against the inside seam. This will give you a nice smooth line and a better finish to your limbs.
- 2 Take as much stuffing as will go through the opening and maneuver it to the required area. Push it into the outside edges first and then fill in the inside area. This method will produce a smooth, firm finish. For intricate areas, insert a small amount of stuffing at a time.

**TIP** The body and limbs should be stuffed very firmly. This will prevent them sagging later.

# Machine embroidery


## Free-machine Stitching

Free-machine stitching means that you can stitch in any direction to create wonderful decorative effects. You are in control and not the sewing machine. The basics are simple, but the various techniques and possibilities are endless. With practice you can achieve amazing results.

For normal stitching, the fabric is held between the presser foot and the teeth (feed dog). This makes the material move forward under the material. To enable you to do free-machine stitching, you have to:

- 1 Lower the feed dog.
- 2 Remove the presser foot.
- 3 Thread the machine as normal.
- 4 Set the stitch length to 0. From now on the movement of the embroidery hoop will determine the stitch length.
- 5 Stretch the fabric drum-tight in an embroidery hoop.
- 6 Put the embroidery-hoop-framed fabric under the needle.
- 7 Bring the bobbin thread up by turning the hand wheel toward you. If you omit this process, you may get a tangle underneath.
- 8 Lower the presser foot and start machine stitching, running the machine fast and moving the frame around as required.





*Right: Transfer-painted fabric and free-machine embroidery were used to create the fabric for this doll. Motifs cut out using a soldering iron were twisted around the arms.*

### **Free-machine embroidery checklist**

Top Tension: Normal

Bobbin: Normal

Presser foot: Off

Feed dog: Lowered

Stitch length: 0

Stitch width: 0

Fabric: Framed

Needle size: 90-100