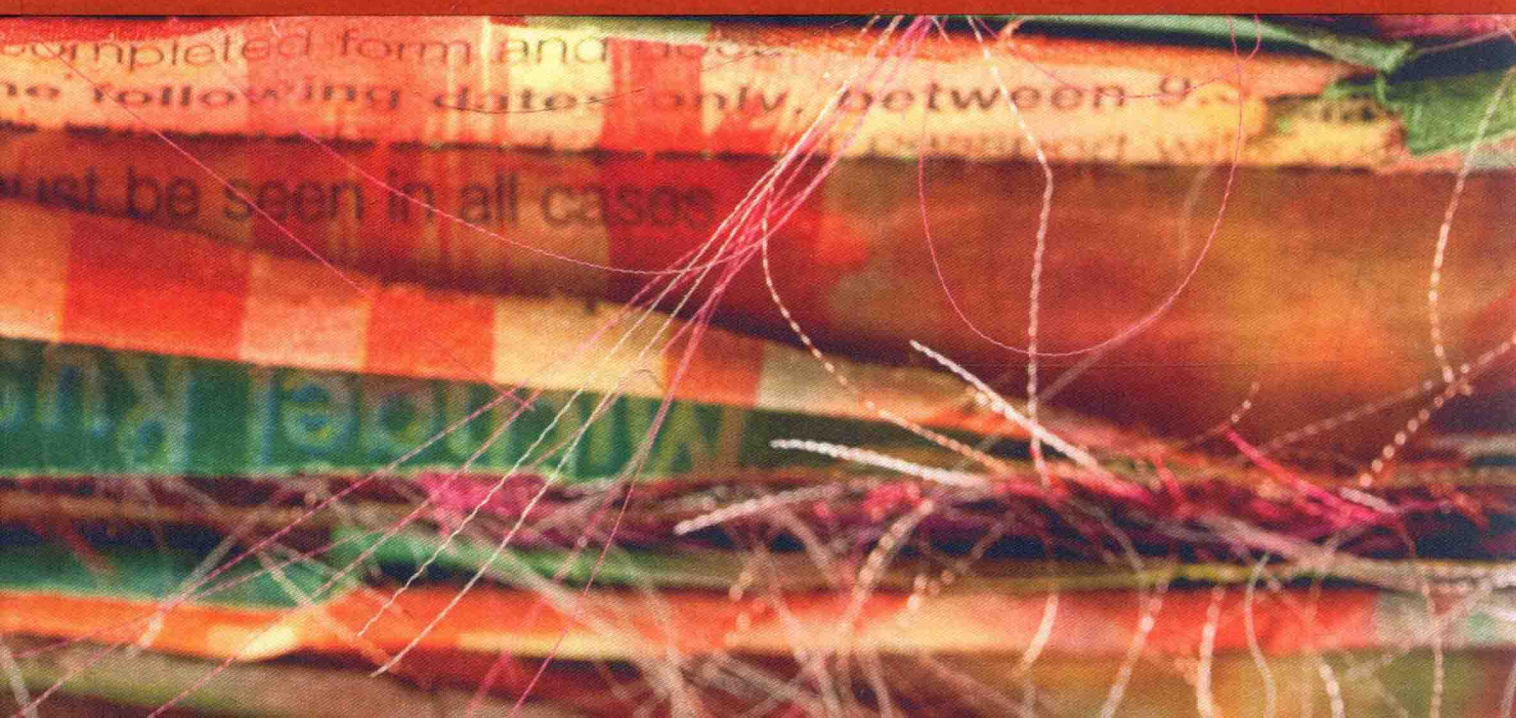


layered textiles

New surfaces with heat tools, machine and hand stitch

Kim Thittichai



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BATSFORD

This book is dedicated to Eleanor Fielder, a colourful, vibrant student and friend. Without students like Eleanor teaching would be very dull!

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the artists who allowed me to use their work in this book. Particular thanks to Kristy Richardson of Anova Books for her patience and care, and Michael Wicks for his wonderful photographs.

Very special thanks to my parents and my amazing sister – thank you.

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Page 1: Amber bead bowl by Kim Thittichai.

Page 2: *Buds in Bloom II* by Angie Hughes.

Right: Layers of gold satin and cotton velvet bonded together with painted Bondaweb and embellished with Xpandaprint, net, hand stitch, heat-transfer foils and beads.



If you wish to produce simple but unusual surfaces or extremely textured and even three-dimensional objects, layering is a major feature of textile art, essential for creating beautiful and unique surfaces for stitch or further textile work.

This inspirational and practical guide from bestselling author Kim Thittichai explores a range of exciting materials for creating layers in your textile art. From working with dyes and transfer printing to produce bright and colourful layers, the author moves on to experimenting with texture, using simple papers and more unusual products such as Tyvek and Bondaweb to produce striking surfaces that can be developed further. The unique possibilities of translucent and transparent layers such as Vilene Spunbond, Lamifix and polyester organza are also explored here, as well as working with recycled materials, newspaper and fabrics. Layers can also be used to create strength and support for heavily textured or three-dimensional pieces and vessels, in a range of materials from Tyvek to felt, silk paper, and even found objects such as beads.

A wide variety of techniques are combined with these materials, from hand and machine stitch to using heat guns, soldering irons and laser-cutting machines. All the techniques are demonstrated by some of the best textile artists working today, in a range of disciplines from quilting, embroidery and needle felting to collage, dyeing, transfer printing and heat techniques.

This stunning collection of work, alongside exercises and step-by-step projects, will provide the reader with endless inspiration for their own creative work. This beautiful and practical book is the ultimate guide to layered textiles for anyone wishing to create unique surfaces for their own exciting textile art.



Contents

Introduction	6
Basic Techniques	10
Layering Colour	24
Layering Texture	38
Translucent and Transparent Layers	56
Recycled Layers	68
Layers for Strength	84
Layering Processes	102
Conclusion	118
Featured Artists	120
Useful Addresses and Suppliers	122
Further Reading	124
Index	126
Glossary	128

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Introduction

I love texture – looking at it, analysing it, creating it and, most importantly, appreciating it. While it is usually the case that ‘less is more’ there are times when more is much better. Layers of texture can be very exciting and just the thing to lift a flat piece of work – or the layers become the work itself. Whether your layers measure a few centimetres or several metres – be adventurous and experiment.

I first started thinking about layers at art college, where I studied wood, metal, ceramics and plastics. Some years later, when studying creative embroidery, I started to make three-dimensional sample vessels – this was before I was aware of the excellent heavy iron-on and sew-in interfacings that were available. Trying to make quilted forms stand up with just the aid of wire never did quite work out but I persevered.

At this time, the sculptor Hamish Black had an exhibition at the college entitled *Talking Books*. The sculptures were created from huge stacks of discarded books and telephone directories. Shapes were carved from the stacks of books to create the most amazing and exciting work. The scale and the content of this work have stayed with me, and no doubt informs my work now, as do many of the artists I have been lucky to work with and whose work continues to inspire.

No artist works in a vacuum and of course there are now many more exciting materials to work with. In my travels as a textile tutor I find there are still people who are overwhelmed with the choice of materials available to them, whether they are quilters, embroiderers or somewhere in between. I hope this book will make some of the available options a little clearer.

Any suggestions and theories mentioned in this book are purely my own and made in good faith; other tutors you work with may not agree with them but we all have our own ways. You need to decide for yourself what suits you. The only crucial piece of advice for using this book is to read it – and, on a practical front, when you start to work make sure you are in a well-ventilated room. Even if you are just sitting and stitching, have a good air flow; it keeps you more alert.

If you read this book through first you will get much more benefit than by just flicking through the pages. There is a good mixture of ‘How to’ projects and exercises, as well as finished pieces of work by students and professional artists that should spur you on to finish that masterpiece or even start a new one.

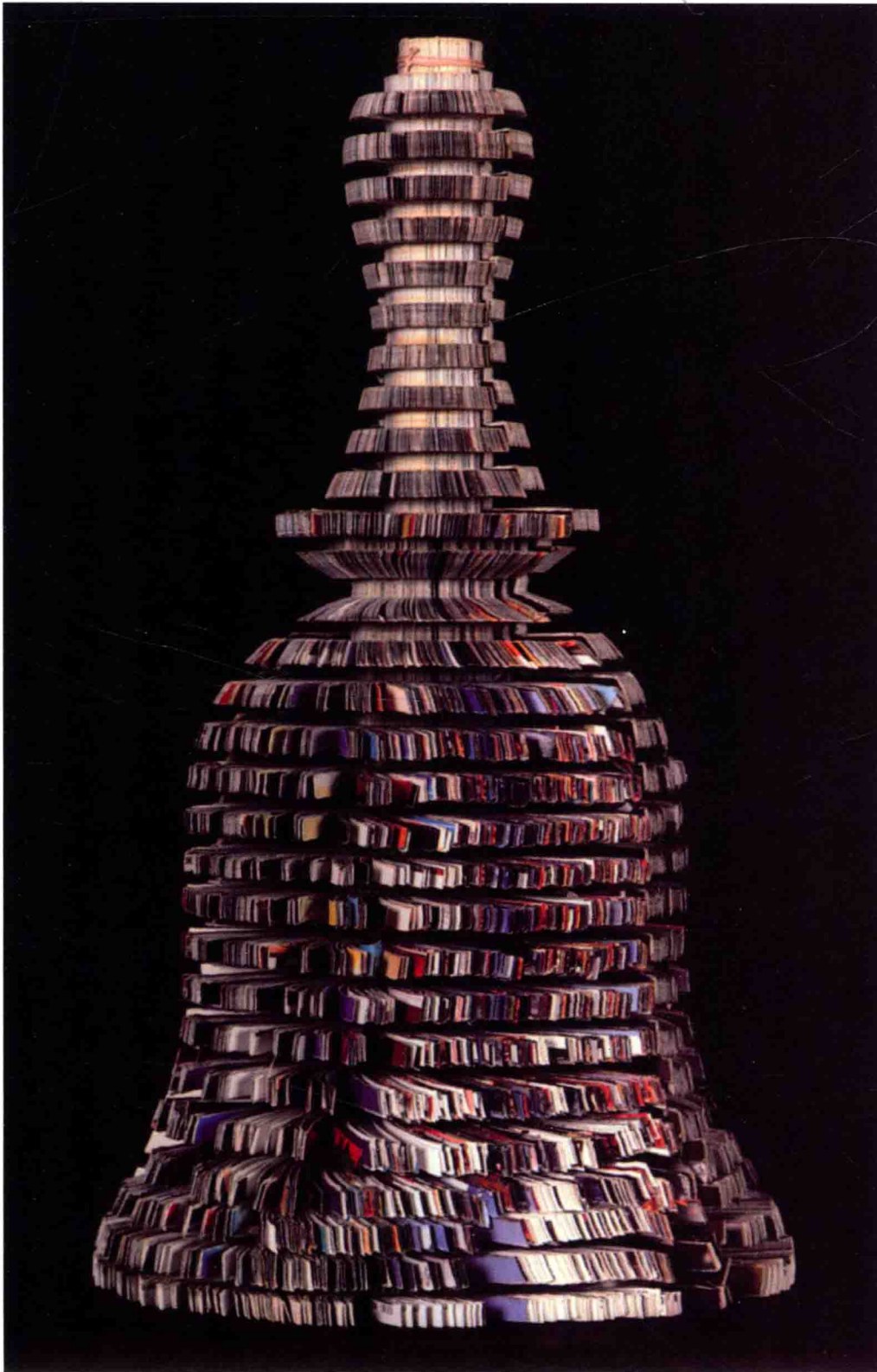
Techniques, products and processes

My first book covered the basics for many of the techniques requiring heat tools. These will be explored further within these pages along with the introduction of many new products that have become available since writing *Hot Textiles*. So if you are interested in Vilene Spunbond, Hot Spots! and Lamifix then read on.

For those who are new to this kind of work and need help with the basic processes it can be very difficult to know just where to start; hopefully this book will help you on your way. For example, there is a section on how to apply heat transfer foils and how to decorate painted Bondaweb/Vliesofix. While using heat tools and synthetic fabrics are important parts of my work it is not all I do, so there are many ideas using paper and fabric covered in this book as well. All processes can be a surface on which you can stitch – you will just need to decide on the size of the needle and thread to use.

Layering processes, techniques and products can be very exciting but consider whether you need that extra layer of Tyvek or 3D medium/Xpandaprint. Ask yourself, Is it right for the piece? Will it distract or add to your work?

Words are very important to me – I find them an inspiration – so each section of this book is headed with a selection of words relating to the work in the section; use them to inspire, add to or even combine with your work. I hope this book will inspire you to develop new techniques, revisit some old favourites and maybe even look at the newspaper in the recycling bin with new eyes.



Left: Detail of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1997) by Hamish Black, made from paper and cut books.

Inspiration

coating, blanket, coat, cover, covering, film, flap, floor, fold, laminate, layer, mantle, overlap, overlay, panel, pile, ply, row, seam, sheet, slab, stack, stratum, strip, stripe

You never know when inspiration will strike; it could be immediate or delayed. We store everything we see in our minds. It may be many years later that you see something that will start a chain of ideas and bring back something you first saw ten years ago. The brain is a remarkable tool.

Using layers was just the start of a very long inspirational journey for me. Being taught to 'see' rather than just 'look' was probably one of the most important things I learned. When you learn properly to examine how a leaf is joined to a stem, or work out how to recreate a particular colour you have seen, it will make a huge difference to the work you create for the rest of your life. Take the time when you are out and about to examine the simple things you find attractive. Whether it is the manhole cover in the pavement, a tiny shell on the beach or how the lay-lines

of a landscape create beautiful shapes, all this information will inform everything you do and add new dimensions to your work.

As students at art college we were taught to understand the materials we were working with before we could design and complete a finished object. This was real 'designing through process'. We were taught to start with the basic techniques in wood, metal, ceramics and plastics and were then encouraged to work through all the different processes to create finished pieces. The way I was taught on that course is also the way I teach my own students. Working through the traditional techniques and then experimenting with each media meant I had total confidence in how I worked and the finishes I could use – I just had to learn to be inspired and how to use that inspiration.



This is not a tap you can turn on and off. Once you start down this route it will be a continuing process for the rest of your life. Many things will get in the way of your creativity but do persevere. Life's ups and downs and twists and turns will always tend to guide or obscure the joy we find in our work. But have faith; if you feed your inspiration whenever you can through looking, keeping notebooks and, above all, just relishing the sheer pleasure of something you delight in, the ideas will come. Whatever your age when you start your journey of creativity – you may be 18 and just starting college or 64 and trying a new workshop for the first time – hang on in there and just have fun.

There is a difference between creating work from an original idea and working from a kit or for a commission – creating work that changes as you add to it and designing something to be made as you have designed it is an organic process. While there is just as much validity in these ways of working, there is not much room to develop new ideas and discover new ways of working.

I teach processes in my workshops, not finished items. This can be a little uncomfortable for students who are

used to completing a project, such as a box or a bag, in a workshop. I believe that if you teach basic techniques then the student can go away and make anything. It is all about making connections between your ideas and your materials and experimenting.

Whether layers are three-dimensional, a cross-section, flat, crusty or smooth there are so many amazing images to inspire us. Inspiration can be found all around. There are layers everywhere – running through the earth and in layers of clouds and colour in the sky. Look at the layers of a trifle, stacks of logs or chairs, peeling paint – the choice is endless. Many ideas can be interpreted into techniques and layered processes using the incredible array of materials now at hand. Think of what you find attractive and interesting about your stack or layer; can you describe the essence of what you see? If it helps, make a list of words that describe what you want to portray. Then think of the textures you can achieve with products and techniques available to you. Interpretation is always more successful than copying directly. How do you depict the things you like about your chosen layers?

Below: Inspiration can be found all around you.







Basic Techniques

Basic Techniques

It seems sensible to start with a look at the basic techniques that you will need to use when creating layered textiles. You can build on these with the range of materials and techniques that you will find described in detail throughout the rest of the book, as they are used for various practical projects.

I will start with Hot Spots! and printing on to foils, and using Bondaweb/Vliesofix. This introductory section will finish with a practical project – a layered flower sample – which will enable you to practise the basic techniques before going on to tackle more complicated projects.

Heat-transfer foils and Hot Spots!

Transfer foils give a wonderful flash of shiny colour, but be warned – like many good things in life – a little goes a long way. Foils can be applied to fabric or paper and are useful for almost any craft project. When used with unpainted Bondaweb and Hot Spots! transfer foils are washable.

There are several types of heat-transfer foils, including Jones Tones and Tonertex, available in the UK, which are the best-quality foils to use in textiles. They are hot or cold release, are washable and don't fade – they never lose their flash. Omnicrom foils have escaped into the textile field from the printing industry. They are useful for many craft projects but are a different quality of foil and are not as reliable as Jones Tones or Tonertex.

Always use the foils colour side up. This is always confusing when you first use foils; the foil is released from the underside of a plastic carrier sheet.

Hot Spots! are spots of heat-activated glue that are similar to Bondaweb/Vliesofix. They can be used to bond fabrics and threads together and are particularly good for bonding the seams of stretch fabrics. More or less anything can be bonded to Hot Spots! but the larger the shape you apply to spots the more you lose its 'spottiness'.

Hot Spots! come in two sizes, small and medium. The clear spots of glue are on a firm brown paper background. This paper can be cut with scissors or a hole punch.

Hot Spots! can be used with an iron or a heat press. Whichever you use, always make sure you put baking parchment on the top of the Hot Spots! Never rely on just the brown paper or your iron will get into a terrible mess.

Hot Spots! are great for using up all those old sheets of heat-transfer foil and glitter that you may have, and are completely machine washable. They are really useful for decorating T-shirts, jeans and many other craft projects. They can be ironed on to anything flat that will take the heat of the iron, so they can also be used on wood, paper and card. When cutting out your design, make sure you cut the Hot Spots! paper away from your project on a different work surface. You might not notice if odd glue dots fall off the paper on to your project, which could contaminate your work later.

As with all heat-activated glue, when using Hot Spots! you need to wait for the glue to cool down before you remove the backing paper or baking parchment. Don't be tempted to apply all your decoration at once, but iron each one in place one product at a time. For example, apply the sequins first, then glitter and then heat-transfer foil.



Left: A selection of Jones Tones foils.