



Belle, Cindy and Mortimer, some of Debi's adorable Neon Babies, made from neon coloured punch thread with a size 14 steel crochet hook. They are stuffed with cotton, the heads are disc jointed and the arms and legs are thread jointed.



Aster, an Oddie Moddie made from a combination of punch thread and fun fur

Teds From Threads

Debi McCarthy-Beckett of Teds From Threads creates inspirational crochet bear and animals –
Kathy Martin reports

What's the definition of a true bear artist? That question will elicit different answers from different people. For me, a bear artist is someone who can come up with an original concept and develop it into an attractive and well made piece. Even if I possessed the sewing skills needed to be a good bear maker (which I don't), I couldn't be an artist because I don't have the ability to transfer my ideas into a three dimensional reality. I lack both the vision and the skills. As a genuine fan of artist bears, this understanding of my own creative deficiencies leaves me with a near-reverent sense of awe when I encounter real talent. Many artists have inspired this feeling in me, and the latest to do so is the subject of this feature, Debi McCarthy Beckett who trades as Teds From Threads.

Debi lives in the USA in Server, Pennsylvania, about 30 miles north of Pittsburgh. She has recently married Bud, her partner of 11 years, and between them they have two grown up children. Debi and Bud live on 8 acres, sharing their space with 3 dogs, 4 cats and the fish in their water garden. It sounds like an idyllic existence – they grow a variety of crops and harvest and bottle everything they produce. In the midst of all this, Debi finds the time to hold down a full time job as a PC Support Specialist and run her bear making and supplies business. Perhaps there are more than 24 hours in a day in Server, Pennsylvania!

As a child, Debi loved her teddies and stuffed animals and she attempted to make simple clothes for her dolls. In time, these childhood fancies were abandoned until she stumbled across some auctions of little bears crocheted from

thread. It was a Road to Damascus experience for Debi. "In that instant my life was forever changed, as my inner child exploded and chortled with glee as it shouted 'Mine!' And I knew that I had found my newest addiction, a reason to be a kid again and an excuse to play with bears and dolls once more." Debi has been crocheting since the age of 12 and crochet is one of her greatest pleasures, so it was a natural medium for her bear making. Even so, when she began experimenting it was a painstaking process of starting something and then ripping it apart again when it didn't turn out as planned. In time, however, things came together and she sold her first bear on Ebay in February 2001. Since then, Debi has been officially hooked on making and designing thread crochet bears and animals. "It is almost a form of meditation for me as I get lost in creating something," she says. "I find it gives me the time out I need from this hectic world."

Debi draws inspiration for her creations from life and nature, although she says that her bears actually do the designing for her! "I start out with one idea in mind and before I know it, the bear takes over and shows me what it wants to be." The hardest part, she thinks, is transferring an idea from her head to the hook and thread. "It can sometimes get frustrating trying to sculpt with thread but the end results are worth it." One of her most original designs was actually inspired by a pattern created by Angela Jareki as a challenge for the thread animals group Debi belongs to. "When I saw how cute the pattern was I couldn't resist altering it to develop it into a 'Puzzle-Bits' piece. In that case Angela's pattern became my inspiration to create my piece."



Talia, Debi's latest Puzzle-Bits® Bear...

...and Talia in pieces

INFORMATION

You can see a variety of Debi's amazing creations by visiting www.tedsfromthreads.com. She is currently working with a lady on some new, innovative items for thread crochet bears. Debi thinks they are unique for thread bears and worth watching for. You can also order supplies and patterns from the site.



Debi sells a pattern for a Picture Frame bear where the bear holds a separate picture frame in its arms. Another unusual bear has a working clock in his tummy. You pop the clock out to change batteries. All the bears in the group picture were made with perle cotton thread instead of punch thread.

Jasker, another of Debi's animal creations



www.teddybearscene.co.uk



A Thanksgiving Puzzle-Bits set, whole....

...and in pieces





Above - Sarge and Right - Taiko: more of Debi's animal creations

These 'Puzzle-Bits' © bears are now Debi's personal favourite in her repertoire. "They are such fun," she enthuses. "They are designed with interlocking pieces. This means the head, arms and legs will interlock into the body, making it work just like a puzzle. You can take these Puzzle-Bit Bears and Animals apart and put them together again as many times as you want. They are like a 3-D puzzle. They are usually 2.5 inches or less in size."

Debi started out using perle cotton thread to make her bears as it was all she could find in her area, but having discovered punch thread she was immediately converted. "I love how it brushes out to give a furry appearance to your bears," she explains. "It can also make the finished bear look like it is made from material rather than thread as the brushing helps hide the stitches." Although punch thread is her favourite, Debi has also made bears from alpaca threads, chenille thread and fun fur threads. She prefers to make miniature crochet bears, in sizes ranging from 3.5 inches to



Another unusual concept with a reindeer turned into a chair for Santa bear to sit on. The chair has four legs, two arms for arm rests and its head is disc jointed and will turn from side to side.



less than an inch. The bears are stuffed with 100% cotton as Debi feels it gives a firmer pack and the bears have a more solid and weighty feel to them. "It is hard to get a needle through it when you stuff with cotton versus polyester," she admits, "but I feel the end result is worth the effort."

The search for materials led to Debi developing an additional side to her bear business. "One of the hardest things I have found since I started making my bears and other animals from thread is finding all the supplies you need in one convenient location. Some items were pretty hard to find or you had to order eyes from here, thread from there and ribbon from another place. So, my frustration in finding supplies is what led me to open my own store and website." Debi has gathered together some basic supplies for making thread animals. "This makes it easy to one-stop shop for the supplies," she says. "You can order in small quantities and I only charge for the actual shipping costs. You could easily spend a lot more in gas just running around trying to find these supplies than it would cost in shipping charges. I also ship to international customers."

Debi has a favourite saying that sums up her attitude to life and bear making. "If your mind can perceive it, and your heart can believe it, then your hands can achieve it." Describing her creations she adds: "My bears are created with love, mixed in with some colourful threads, a dash of fun, a tiny hook, a pinch of imagination, scoops of time and



A Teds From Threads Crochet Bear Supply Kit & Pattern

If you're inspired to try creating thread bears, why not enter our competition? Debi is giving TBS one of her miniature thread crochet bear supply kits and a pattern to give away. The kit contains acrylic punch threads in three colours, a crochet hook, black onyx beads for eyes, discs and coffer pins for jointing, doll needles, darning needles, ribbon, cotton stuffing, embroidery floss and several other useful items. The pattern features instructions for three bears and shows how to make different size bears from the same pattern.

For your chance to win, answer the following question and then complete the relevant section of the Multiple Competition Entry Form on page 62. Post your entry to Competitions Department, Teddy Bear Scene, Warners Group Publications, The Millings, West Street, Bourne, Lincs PE10 9PH. The winner will be the sender of the first correct answer drawn from the postbag after the closing date, Friday, 23rd September 2005.

QUESTION: What is Debi's preferred thread for making her crochet bears and animals?



Bears made from Debi's newest bear pattern.