

Selwedge

DESIGNER EDGE



DANIELLE CLOUGH

South African-based artist Danielle Clough loves squash and embroidery ... and embroidering on squash racquets, or any racquet that she thinks is beautiful. “I don’t discriminate! The first few I got at a car-boot market in Cape Town, but since then I have been sourcing wherever I go,” she says.

Danielle started stitching on racquets last year, translating plants, including proteas, aloes, tulips, poppies and roses, into embroidered artworks. “A friend showed me simple hearts woven onto a racquet, and I took it as a challenge. I wanted to figure out how to interpret my style onto them,”



she says. Danielle begins by creating a reference image, using photographs and sometimes paint, then with a tapestry needle and wool, stitches across the network of strings, adding finer details with embroidery threads.

“Initially, when I first started embroidering, it was just drawing with thread but, as I did it more and more, I realised it had a name and that people had been doing it for centuries!” she says. Along with designs on racquets, she also embroiders animal pendants, birds on local fabrics and large portraits. “I don’t have a set idea of what I do. I’m completely governed by feelings,” says Danielle. And her creative pursuits don’t end there; she’s also a digital designer and “visual jockey”. (“It’s like a DJ, but with pictures!”)

Her sewing takes place in a small, crowded studio in the city centre. The floors are covered with threads, the shelves contain “really twee” porcelain animals, the walls are lined with a (slowly) growing collection of tapestries, and by the window is a comfy couch – the perfect spot for stitching.

All this sitting and stitching has led Danielle back to playing squash. “I stopped playing for the simple, universal reason of sheer laziness. But it does help to take a break to stay fit and healthy when you’re sitting and sewing for hours, because you can really lose track of time,” she says. Unlike with squash, what Danielle loves most about embroidery is that there is no competition, as such. “There’s an incredible community of fellow stitchers, who are kind, open and supportive,” she says.

For more of Danielle’s craft-meets-sport designs, check out her website (www.danielleclough.com), Instagram page (@fiance_knowles) and Tumblr (www.fianceknowles.tumblr.com). Or you can email her at hello@danielleclough.com.

– Janai Velez

And while we’re on the subject of racquets ... turn to page 106 for our special tennis-racquet covers project.