

Lavish THREADS

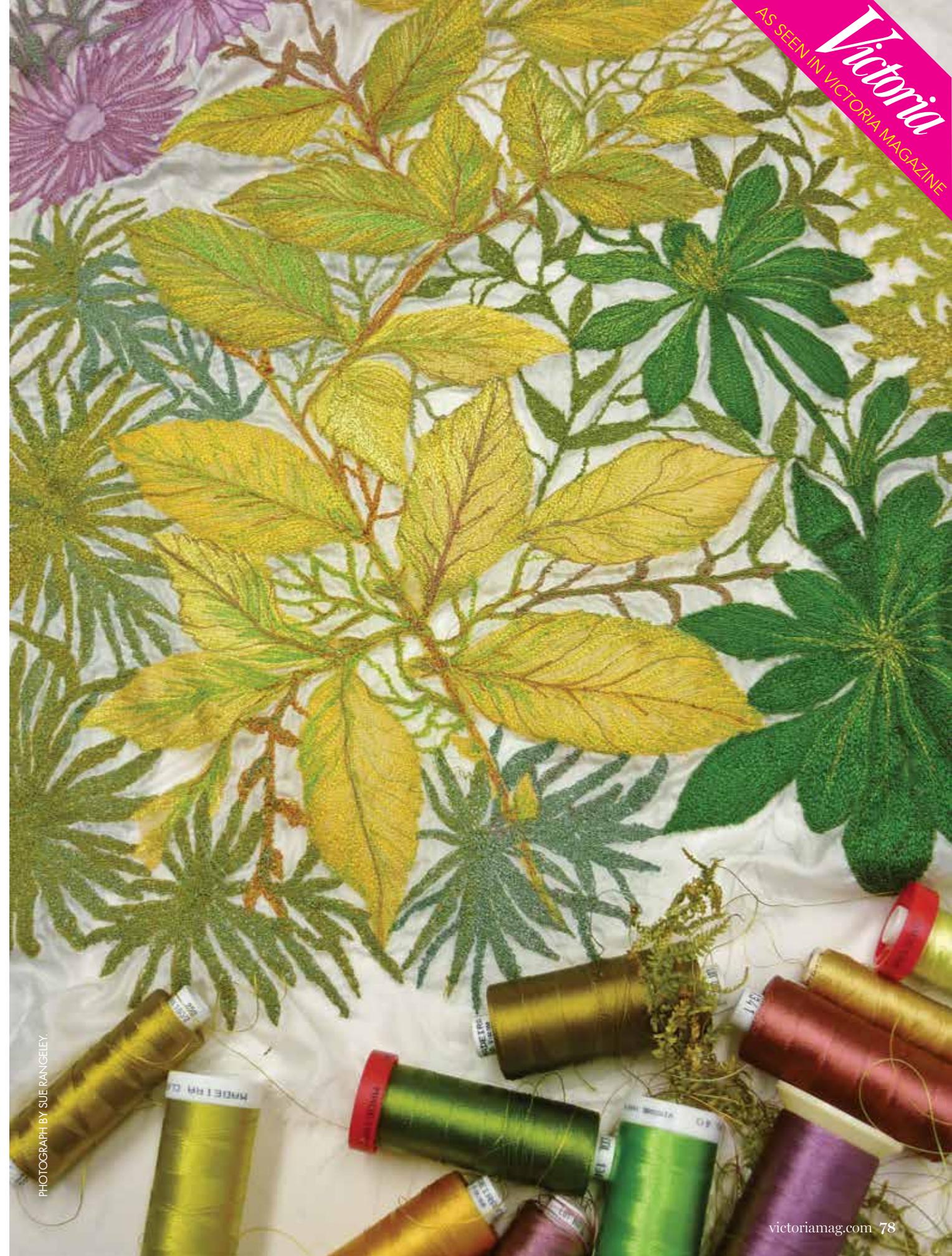
Through patterns both intricate and romantic, British artist Sue Rangeley crafts fashion-inspired pieces that showcase the infinite potential of embroidery.

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In a studio overlooking the garden of her eighteenth-century West Oxfordshire dwelling—a Georgian charmer built of mellow Cotswold stone—Sue Rangeley produces bespoke treasures for contemporary interiors. What was originally the property's stable now brims with the makings of a career wrought in wonder.

From an early age, Sue was entranced by the exquisite beauty of the natural world. “The rural idyll of English country life stirred my imagination,” she says. Wandering through meadows, playing dress-up with her mother’s trunk of vintage

Left: Sue Rangeley’s vibrant Hidcote lace panel calls to mind flapper dresses of the Roaring Twenties. Opposite: Shown before completion, Autumnal was commissioned for a client’s dining room.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SUE RANGELEY



"Fabric is my blank canvas, and fashion textiles emerge as wearable art, touched by the possibilities of threads, beads, and artful embellishments." —SUE RANGELEY

attire, and exploring an aunt's sewing chest fostered the youngster's ingenuity. "A finely worked pastoral scene stitched in hair on ivory silk has remained a poignant touchstone for my artistic journey," she adds. This heirloom, passed down from her grandfather, offers a source of daily motivation.

Past, present, and future come together within Sue's atelier. A vast portfolio chronicles her progression from constructing muslin apparel as an art student to showing her repertoire internationally. Among her noteworthy achievements, an outfit she embroidered is housed in the permanent collection of London's famed Victoria and Albert Museum. "Fashion still acts as an influence, but I no longer create one-of-a-kind wearable garments," she says. "Instead, stitches emerge as textile art suspended in frames."

Much like the sketchbooks and albums of preserved flowers Sue filled as a child, today's mood boards and

botanical depictions represent the stuff of dreams. Although historical research is key to her design process, uninhibited expression ultimately determines the direction for composition, texture, and palette. She uses thread to carry out with precision the essence of plans born in washes of watercolor paint and articulated with the flourish of a pencil.

When Sue drops the feed dog (teeth that guide the cloth) on her sewing machine and replaces the normal presser foot with a darning attachment, the needle becomes a drawing instrument. Details such as beadwork, metallic foiling, and appliqué are added by hand. Since she began experimenting with freestyle techniques decades ago, Sue says stretching the boundaries of expectation has never lost its allure: "I have not stopped playing with the possibilities of creative stitch to convey the riches of embroidery."



Clockwise from above right: Items of significance in Sue's studio include examples of her handiwork, an array of colorful spools, and a bureau that belonged to her father. Flower Power alludes to sunny motifs popular in the 1960s, while Pavonia recalls the flamboyant sleeves of a gown she made in 1975. Airbrushing lends a gentle blush to rose corsages. As explained in Sue's book Embroidered Originals (d4daisy books limited), tendrils of ivy inspire themes that suggest ancient woodlands. Opposite: On these drafts, pansies ornament a fitted bodice.



TOP RIGHT PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY GALE.