

Enabling Innovation: from concept to reality

Anne Selby – Arashi Shibori Wrapping Machine

Overview

Winning a Bath Spa University Innovation Award, enabled Anne Selby to design and test a prototype machine that will modernise the labour-intensive traditional Japanese arashi shibori technique of wrapping fabric around a pole for pleating and patterning of fabric.

About the Project

Anne Selby was a student on the MA Design (Textiles) course at Bath Spa University when she applied for innovation funding to develop a prototype wrapping machine. A textile artist with over 15 years' experience of working with silk, creating pattern and texture through devoré techniques and print, Anne used her Masters degree to explore pleating as an alternative way of texturing silk. At the same time, she studied shibori extensively, including attending a master class with Carter Smith – a renowned shibori artist based in the USA.

Arashi Shibori is a little-known textile technique that is experiencing something of a revival, especially in America. It involves wrapping material around a cylindrical pipe, binding this with thread and compressing it to form pleats. Once compressed, the fabric can be treated with dyes to introduce colour, discharged to remove colour and steamed/heated to fix pleats. The final results can be patterned and pleated, or just patterned. When hand done, this method is extremely time-consuming – and therefore expensive – and can also cause repetitive strain injury.

Anne's innovation project aimed to design and test a prototype machine that would modernise the labour-intensive Japanese arashi shibori technique and which could be sold to individual artists, designer/makers and educational centres.

Benefits

The funding enabled technical specification drawings to be done, an engineering company to be commissioned to produce the prototype wrapping machine, legal fees in relation to the wording for a confidentiality agreement with manufacturers.



Anne Selby Scarf

Fast Facts

- £5,000 innovation funding and £3,000 follow on funding was awarded to Anne Selby to develop her concept and test its commercial feasibility.
- Anne was awarded the FSB 'Most Innovative Small Business' award in August 2008 for the unusual combination of artist and machine developer.
- The developed Compleat™ Arashi Shibori Wrapping Machine has led to Anne receiving €3,000 in the 'Students & Young Professionals' category at the IMB 2009 Innovation Awards.

The process of developing the machine led to new experiences for Anne, such as briefing and dealing with an engineering contractor and understanding technical drawings. It has also included having to suffer all the ups and downs of a supplier going into receivership, including losing Prototype 3, but Anne has learned to re-group and look for an alternative engineering firm that is already experienced in textiles and the industry.

It is not an easy process to develop a machine, consider all the design issues and safety requirements, etc. However, Anne has met so many people who have encouraged her to continue with taking the **Compleat™** wrapping machine to market, as well as a fraternity of other passionate pleaters – from India to South Africa and South America.

By creating **Compleat™**, Anne has made Arashi Shibori more accessible and well known to designers, textile artists, manufacturers and fashion schools worldwide.

Outcomes

The Business Support Office was able to interest David Dye, Marketing & Training Executive of the British Engineering Manufacturers Association – the largest engineering trade association in the South West of England – to sit on the business review panels that assessed Anne's project progress at regular intervals. David was also very willing to talk to Anne about appropriate engineers for her prototype machine. This helped to keep the project focused and achievable within the capabilities of the industry.

The Business Support Office also arranged for TLT Solicitors to give Anne a pro bono consultation on intellectual property issues that might arise with developing the prototype.

Anne was also introduced to a representative from UKTI and attended its 'Passport to Export' workshop. With the help of International Trade Advisers Norris Myers and Sue Tisdall, Anne was able to progress from the concept phase and explore the potential for her scarves and wraps, as well as how to market and sell the device. Anne also attended a UKTI inward mission by buyers from the USA, where she met the UKTI representative from the US team, who was able to offer further advice on markets there. Anne was able to access 'Passport to Export' funding to attend the International Shibori Symposium in Paris in 2008, where she was able to show the prototype specialist pleating machine and meet potential buyers.

Prototype 2 of the wrapping machine – now called the **Compleat™** Arashi Shibori Wrapping Machine by Anne Selby Ltd – was developed in early 2009 by a Bristol-based engineering firm.

Anne has received an incredible amount of PR coverage, including in the local press business pages, on the UKTI website and in *The Embroidery World* (published by Nippon News in Japan), regarding the export potential of her machine and her silk-pleated accessories as a textile product.

Anne was awarded the 'Most Innovative Small Business' award in August 2008 by the Federation of Small Businesses (Bath & North East Somerset) for the unusual combination of artist and machine developer.

Anne has subsequently received €3,000 at an international machinery fair in the 'Students & Young Professionals' category at the IMB 2009 Innovation Awards in Cologne for her **Compleat™** Arashi Shibori Wrapping Machine.



Prototype Wrapping Machine



Anne Selby Concertina Scarf

She continues to enter for other awards, for example the Crafts Council Development Award in June 2009. Anne exhibits in Bear Flat Artists, an open studio event alongside the Bath Festival, as well as selling her textiles in galleries in London and at the Devon Guild in Bovey Tracey. From July 2009, Anne will be demonstrating at Art in Action in Oxfordshire.

In June 2009 Anne's concertina stole was featured in the fashion show at the Surface Design Association textile conference in Kansas, USA. The multi-layered silk and organza concertina stole is mesmerising to look at and luxurious to wear. It has been shown both in Kansas and Cologne, where it has attracted much interest and is selling extremely well.

Anne Selby is keen to support new ventures anywhere in the world that wish to develop competency in the use of shibori and devoré techniques. She offers public workshops as well as in-house courses to assist individuals and groups to learn these techniques and develop the capability to make and sell top-quality silk accessories.

Pleating is timeless, but only with the arashi shibori technique and with the help of Compleat™ can you make pleats with contrasting dye lines along the peaks to create such a strong visual effect.



Anne Selby Scarf

Perspective

“I'm thrilled with the award! I am passionate about Arashi Shibori, which has become an established art form in the USA. I would like to contribute to its development as a textile technique in Europe. This award will enable me to develop a piece of equipment which will take the labour out of the process, making Arashi Shibori techniques easier, more economic, and therefore more accessible.”

Anne Selby, MA Design (Textiles), www.anneselby.com

“Companies need to visit the market to make effective relationships with clients that bring in successful sales. I'm glad we were able to support Anne Selby Textiles to visit a seminar in France that led to orders from the USA and look forward to hearing more of her success after she visits the USA.”

Norris Myers, UKTI's International Trade Adviser in the South West



Scarf being shown at SDA Fashion Show