Ruth Blackwell

*Memorial Teddy Bears and More by Ruth*

by Pam North

A snippet of a wedding dress; a scrap of a child's romper; a smidgen of a man's tie - all bits and pieces of people's lives and loves. These are the treasured collages of Ruth Blackwell's clever creations. They are more than just fabric remnants; they are charming montages representing cherished moments and experiences, preserved in time as cuddly bears.

Blackwell lives in London, Ohio. Her nickname, Luvy Bear, prompted one of her friends to suggest that she should make a bear for her crafting line, so she started making little ones, called *Dream Bears,* back in 2001. The simply designed little bears, filled with lavender sachets, were about 6 inches high, made from fabric yoyos, and stitched totally by hand. From there she went into making a variety of bears, including a tribute to the *Phantom of the Opera,* a favorite story of hers.

She then evolved into creating special "memories" for loved ones in 2004. Blackwell explained, “These are my *Memorial Teddy Bears*, which are especially crafted from clothing of the customer or loved ones. They can depict a theme or time of achievement, such as a graduation, wedding, baptism, etc. They also can be huggable reminders of loved ones lost, including pets. I have made hundreds of memory bears from every fabric imaginable - pillow cases, sleeping bags, fur jackets, leather, blankets, sheets, jeans, nightgowns, wedding gowns, robes, flannel shirts, sweaters, and everything in between. There is no fabric that I will not use to make a bear. I just let the fabric talk to me, and tell me how and where it should be used.”

To make the bears even more special, she hand-paints the eyes to match the eyes of the person the bear represents, and often incorporates buttons or beads. She also embroiders the bears' paws. or adds pictures to the bears, hearts on the chest, and even has made them look like they are wearing clothing. My *Memorial Teddy Bears* are available in sizes ranging from 12” up to 28". Some are seated, and others are fully jointed, including the head.

Blackwell's designs continue to evolve. “This year I am concentrating on adding other memory critters, as not everyone wants bears. I currently offer hippos, dogs, and kittens, and in the future I will have patterns for a rabbit, turtle, and an owl (the owl will be more of a pillow). I also make memory quilts and pillows which can be made from any fabric as well. Aside from my *Memorial Teddy Bears,* I occasionally offer collectible bears that I make from reclaimed fur. I love to take something old and turn it into something new, as I hate seeing anything go to waste. I am the ultimate clothing recycler! Who knows where this adventure will take me, as I am constantly thinking of new ways to do things or to make my bears more special and more personalized.”

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