



Newsletter

Special Edition 01—2009

2008 Report

Dear Teddy Bear and Doll Friends

Two thousand and eight was a good year at Tin Soldiers. In Sewing Circle we did numerous class projects and also did lots of weekend workshops. We learned a lot, and I'm proud to report that I see several of the regular class attendees getting very good at bear making.

With a healthy mix of 'old timers' and 'newbies' in the sewing circle classes, I can see it paying off for everyone.

The newbies make fast progress, because they have the inspiration and good example of experienced bear makers all around them. The old timers are reaping the benefit too. They are reminded of the basic principles of bear making techniques often, and don't fall into bad habits so easily.

For me 2008 was a mix of reaching dizzy new heights as an artist, and dealing with the stress of overwork and personal issues that weighed heavily on me towards the end of the year. Thank you to each and every one who stayed patient when I started fading out in classes, and those who shored me up when I needed it most. You are truly friends.

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Amongst my greatest achievements in 2008 I count the setting up of the Tin Soldiers website, something I have wanted to do for a number of years. If you are connected to the internet, I think you will find the website a useful tool.

I also leaped the years wide gap between *wanting* to do a doll, and *doing* a doll. Straight away I was inundated with commercial work that ate up all my time and took me away from my first love, which is teaching crafts. On the other hand it gave me a creative boost that I very much needed. You will see more dolls happening from now on. And the bear makers need not be worried that I'm defecting to a new camp. Dolls are simply an extension of the skills we learn as bear makers.

We introduced polymer clay and Artist Trading Cards at Tin Soldiers, with great success.

On the minus side, I was hospitalized more often than in the previous three years together, and there were way too many days when I simply didn't feel great. Which makes me realize that I need to have a plan for 2009, and stick to it. Let's do fun things together!

Two thousand and nine's guidelines are contained in the pages of this booklet. As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome. Tin Soldiers is dedicated to everyone who participates in bear making here.

Megan

SPECIAL OFFER

20% DISCOUNT ON ALL CHRISTMAS KITS
20% DISCOUNT ON ALL MOHAIR

VALID UNTIL 31 JANUARY 09

Workshop Program 2009

I am still gathering my wits around weekend workshops for 2009. One thing we all seem to have in common is a busy schedule. I'm giving the preliminary dates for full day weekend workshops for the entire year here so that you can plan ahead. Workshops run from 9 till 4, and include lunch and tea, as well as your workshop kit. I'm going to try not to let the cost for any workshop run over R 380. What specific project we do will be announced in the quarterly Newsletter and on the Tin Soldiers Website (See page 4).

We will also be doing a number of class projects in Sewing Circle. These are decided by voting for projects that you suggest. Use the space on page 4 of this newsletter to jot down your ideas and suggestions.

Weekend Workshop Dates 2009

Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 February

Valentine Bear—Cost R 300

Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 March

Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 April

Saturday 9 & Sunday 10 May

Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 June

Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 July

Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 August

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 September

Saturday 10 & Sunday 11 October

Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 November

Have you seen the NEW CLASSROOM? Hidden between tall trees and a stand of bamboo, with sloping ceilings, chandeliers, a wooden floor and fireplace this is going to be a place to get really creative. We won't be having Sewing Circle classes there but it's the ideal venue for teachers needing a cozy venue to host their workshop for up to 8 students.

Newsletter

Over the last eighteen months I have become very slack about sending out the Newsletter. A disgrace, I know. As mitigating circumstances I can only claim total overwork, and the fact that I hoped to have a web based Newsletter online much sooner. For my sins, in June 2008 I took on some additional work which includes the editorship of a society newsletter which is published on a strict bi-monthly basis. The discipline of doing this has helped me get the Tin Soldiers Newsletter back on track too.

Here are the publication dates for the Tin Soldiers Newsletter in 2009:

30 January

30 April

31 July

30 October

If you have any interesting snippets for the newsletter, or have a relevant event that you would like to announce, please try to send it to me at least two weeks before the publication date. Your contribution is welcome, and much appreciated!

Notes:

Valentine Bear

Our Valentine bear for 2009 is a very relaxed fellow. In fact, he's fast asleep on his tummy with his hind legs stretched out behind him. To make his dreams sweeter we are going to make

him a pillow to sleep on. Cost of the workshop will be R 300, and includes the kit and lunch. The workshop will be held on Saturday 14 February, or if you prefer a Sunday workshop, the 15th February. There will be some homework to do.

Homework kits will be ready to collect on the 6th of February.

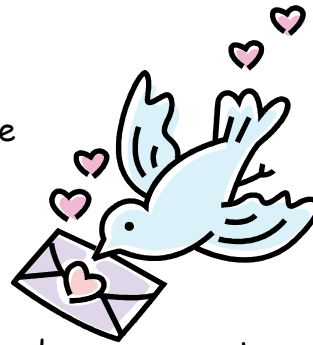


Pin Cushion Animals

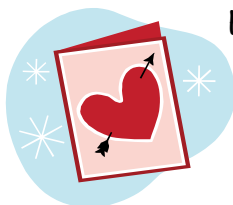
At the end of 2008 we made some simple pin cushion animals in Sewing Circle. The project was a great hit. We got carried away and made a whole lot of animals and dolls. I'm compiling the patterns into a little booklet and would very much like to enclose photographs of your completed pin cushions. If you are willing to let me photograph your pin cushion, please bring it along to the studio. You could have your name in print and become famous!

Valentine ATC

At the beginning of last year, when we introduced Artist Trading Cards for the first time at Tin Soldiers, hardly any of you knew what it was all about. Once we got warmed up there was no stopping some people, and we had a great swap in December. Others were skeptical about the viability of the project, only to be sorry later when they saw what everyone else was creating. Lately there's been a number of articles about ATCs published in craft magazines, and the studio has acquired some great books, and numerous examples and source material. If you are one of the ones who didn't jump in at the beginning— don't worry, ATC has been around for centuries, it's here to stay! These simple cards make the greatest gifts and keepsakes, and they are a splendid opportunity to stretch your creative wings.



During the week of 4 to 8 February we are going to have a festival of Valentine ATCs in the studio. The rules are that the basic structure of the card must be fabric, and that the theme be Love & Valentine. And obviously you need to follow the rules of ATC. Copies are available from Megan.



Everyone in Sewing Circle is welcome to participate, you can make only one card, or many.

I wonder who will be my Valentine...

Sewing Circle

Sewing Circle - The Place to Become a Skilled Fabric Crafter

Five sewing circle workshops are held at Tin Soldiers every week:

Tuesday and Wednesday morning from 9 to 12

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7 to 10.

Work sessions include a short lecture on a specific aspect of fabric crafting (you'd be surprised how much you can learn when you add up all those 5 minutes!). Thereafter everyone works on their own bears and dolls while chatting and drinking tea. There's always a class project on the go involving an unusual pattern or technique. (Class projects are not compulsory).

These work sessions are ideal for persons who like to set their own pace - work in class only, or work at home and finish the complicated bits in class. All levels of skill are catered for.

Benefits of regularly attending sewing circle:

- * Get help with the tricky bits whenever you need it. You will feel your confidence and your ability growing with an artist present to guide you to professional teddy bear and doll making.
- * Get to hear about and try out new products and techniques.
- * Our library and sample artwork are available to inspire you.
- * Get to make challenging creations from unpublished artist patterns.
- * A great opportunity for socializing and being inspired by like-minded creative people.

Six sewing circle sessions cost R 240. Once you have paid for sessions they never expire, simply tick one off every time you attend. We also cater for one-time visitors. Enquire about rates for single lessons.

Sewing Circle

Rules and Practical Arrangements

The rule is that we don't have too many rules here at Tin Soldiers, and mostly we can't be bothered to enforce them. Still, be nice, and try to abide. Thanks!

- Class fees remain unchanged from 2008. R 240 for six lessons when you pay for your first set. R 180 for six lessons thereafter.
- Please help me update everyone's contact details by filling in an address card.
- We would love to celebrate your birthday with you. Can we put your name on the birthday calendar?
- When you ring the bell, please wait until the gate has opened before you drive down.
- Parking next to the studio is reserved for people who have valid ama-kroko certificates. The rest, PLEASE park in the parking area at the bottom. There are no more snakes, and we've just put up extra lights too.
- Megan's nap time is between 4pm and 5pm. During this time she will be very grumpy if you phone or turn up unexpectedly. Similarly, the hours between 5am and 8am are a no-no to phone. This is valuable creative time for Megan. We might also mention that she's most creative when wearing her PJ's and with uncombed hair, so don't even think of rocking up at such a rude hour.
- The old arrangement that you should check with the teacher before working in class with patterns/materials that didn't originate at Tin Soldiers applies. There's no nastiness intended, we would like to ensure that no one gets frustrated by patterns that don't work properly or wasting time with inferior materials.
- Please remember to sign the attendance register.
- And to put your name down if you intend attending next week's class. It might one day happen that Megan isn't able to cancel a class herself when something happens. Someone would need your name in the diary to let you know.
- If you need to cancel your Sewing Circle session we won't mind, as long as you let us know in advance. Your friends will worry when you just don't rock up.
- A good time to arrive for class is 15 minutes before the hour. If you occasionally need to arrive a little earlier Megan won't mind, but please let her know that you are on your way.