



make them a bit different and designed a muzzle which made them look like they had jowls. I also wasn't very good at stitching noses, so some of my very first bears had plastic noses covered in leather. There was only a few of those, then I started needle felting my noses, just so I wouldn't have to stitch them!"

It is a good point to note in two ways, firstly in that if you are a collector and you are looking at a vintage Russell Bear you might be able to date it by the appearance of the nose!

Secondly, surely that must give great hope to all of you out there who struggle with noses. If an artist of Kim's calibre can struggle with this essential element, then surely it is no shame to admit that you do too! I know I couldn't sew a nose right if I had a gun to my head (a fact that resident making expert Julie Shepherd can attest to!).

Working ways

Kim uses only her own patterns and likes to constantly change them to suit what she is creating. She usually just designs with good old pen and paper and of course, having a background as a dressmaker certainly helps! "If I am attempting something really different I like to sketch the basic shape first and then make the pattern from that" she says.

Time is a funny thing and in some ways it doesn't matter much to Kim. It is a great thing to hear because there is nothing

worse than an artist constantly watching the clock rather than the bear they are creating. "I don't like to work that way," she explains, "it takes all the fun out of it. I might start one bear and decide that I've had enough of it, and then start another one. I may not go back to the first one for months and then all of a sudden I get an urge to pick it up again... I know I am a bit weird," she laughs.

Weird no, artistic temperament, well perhaps! "My inspiration is drawn mainly from animals," she says, and anyone looking at her work can see that it is obviously a fascination of hers. "I love their expressions, body shapes, mannerisms and especially their eyes," she says. She is also inspired by colour and sometimes makes something because she just has to see the colours together.

Changing to suit

Of course the path of any artist can be a long and winding one. It can be very fast and then all of a sudden it can meander a bit and allow the artist to change direction. Letting them evolve and bring greater depth to their designs.

"My designs have constantly changed over the years," Kim says, "but been a bit stagnant of late as I have not had spare time to experiment. My hope is that with cutting back on commission work, will free up more time for me to create new designs. I am so looking forward to starting something with a completely new



Top left: The Frog Prince - TOBY 2007
Far left inset: Beau
Left: Harley