

## Picture perfect

Sorrell Kerrison's expressive style of embroidery made her the perfect choice for a unique album cover commission

### What attracted you to working with embroidery?

I've been creating using a wide variety of mediums as long as I can remember. Sewing and embroidery came through a make do and mend attitude in my childhood. In my teenage years I loved to embellish my denim jeans and backpacks with band slogans and lyrics. I pursued film making and music at university, yet I still made my own clothes and embellished them, as a hobby more than anything else. As my skills grew, I was able to weave in various art forms to create better and better embroidery pieces, and these influences still inform my work to this day. The tactility and wearability of thread and textile always brings me back to working in embroidery.

### How would you best describe your style of illustration?

I've always loved using simple tools and methods that can be made into something complex and intricate. Biro is one of my go-to drawing tools – nothing expensive – just straightforward biro on paper. I scribble, never lifting my pen from the paper, or use lines and cross hatching. I thought I could apply my style of drawing to my embroidery pieces, using a range of stitching styles to mimic the pen.

### What tools do you use?

I usually do a few sketches from reference photos first. When I'm happy with that I'll transfer it onto the material I'm working on, using transferable ink. I stretch my material in a hoop, gather my DMC threads and an embroidery needle and go from there.

### How do you select your subject matter?

My embroidered portraits are always of individuals whom I find inspiring. Some have inspired my work directly and others are just people I find fascinating in some way or another. My work is steeped in music, film and literary culture. The individuals I choose to portray all have faces that seem multi-layered, as if their complex personalities come through in their physical features. It's my job to try and capture as much of this depth as I possibly can.

### Can you tell us how the album cover commission came about?

I met Andrew Hung whilst he was producing an album for the band Zun Zun Egui back in 2015, whom I was tour managing at the time. I'd stayed in touch with his manager, Zoe Davis, through Instagram. She told me that Andrew was yet to find artwork to suit his new record. When she showed him a piece I'd recently finished (a portrait of grime MC Wiley) he thought I would be a great fit, and so they asked if I would be interested in running some test pieces. I then received an advanced, roughly mixed and unmastered copy of the album to listen to and they asked me to create a portrait of Andrew using my embroidery style. I listened to it (*Realisationship* by Andrew Hung on Lex Records) to garner the feel of the piece and just went with my intuition. Luckily, Andrew was trusting enough to hand me a lot of creative control, which is practically unheard of when creating a commission of this nature.

### What memorable responses have you had to your work?

Most of the responses to the album cover art have been great. I love it when people ask which computer program was used to create it and they're told that it was hand stitched and scanned only once it was finished. It's nice to show that the analogue arts of old are still represented in a contemporary forum.

### What are you working on currently?

A portrait of the author Margaret Atwood. I find her literary works incredibly insightful and scarily prophetic, especially in the current climate, and I admire her greatly. I'm also working on a major commission for Bolton Museum's Egyptology Collection. I'm making four embroidered portraits of the museum's major archeological collectors and benefactors. The pieces will be available to see in the museum in February 2018.

[www.sorrellkerrison.com](http://www.sorrellkerrison.com)

The final artwork for the album cover  
Realisationship by  
the recording artist  
Andrew Hung

