



Terry

# Terry FOX

*This month, Love Sewing delved into the world of couture and bridal fashion with the award-winning designer Terry Fox*

**Hi Terry! Can you tell us what's on your sewing table right now?**

Oh no, I feel like I'm in confession! So, I have one wedding dress already started for a client. Four cut-out dresses for myself, all in black, and one other black linen/orange silk dress in the process of being beaded with the most gorgeous orange beads I bought in Madrid. I have to work on several things at the same time. I go crazy if I don't. But then I go crazy because I do!

**What first sparked your interest in couture and bridal?**

One of my first jobs after moving to London was making dresses for the top royal designers, the Emmanuels. It was mind blowing. I considered myself an experienced dressmaker until then. I had made thousands of garments before but this was a whole new world; a completely different approach. You

create an infrastructure; the fabric was just wallpaper. I had only just begun. The fascinating thing is once the formula of the garment had changed, the construction techniques also had to, so all the ingredients could work together in harmony. Discovering this whole new magic formula sparked my love of elaborate design which encouraged me to create my own collection. Before I knew it, I had my first couture wedding dress in Harrods window. That was way back in the 80s. That felt good.

**How have you developed your skills in 40 years?**

Oh my skills develop every week. I remember when I set up the first sewing school teaching couture techniques at the very beginning of the 90s. Couture has changed oh so much over the years to meet the demands of fashion and its clientele. Most of what I teach now is completely different to what I taught back then. There are of course some techniques that remain traditional and are fascinating to know, without this understanding you would find it very difficult to evolve. I quite often refer back to these. I will introduce a little bit of traditional, combined



Terry set up the first sewing school teaching couture techniques and now offers workshops in bridal and couture sewing and creative mixed-media design

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with modern day, relaxed couture and mix with high-level manufacturing to get the best results. I am always looking for new combinations to create certain fashion looks of the moment.

**How have couture techniques and influences developed during your time in the industry?**

It has taken me a lifetime to find out this stuff and by the time next week comes there will be another new fabric, an updated design and all sorts of wizardry applied to our everyday notions. So, the experimental steps start all over again. Couture today is definitely led more by fashion. The garment is not built with the sole purpose of lasting. History shows us that the internal structure of couture constructed a solid frame for the beautiful, often handmade cloth, to adorn. Today these fashion-forward designs seen on the catwalk may only be worn once or twice and that's it. The feel of the design is often more relaxed.

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But don't be fooled, the work involved is huge, embellishing is a massive thing. I always say anything you can imagine can be achieved by couture. You just find a way to make it work. And during that time, you have light bulb moments and that technique is used over and over again.

**Where do you find inspiration for the pieces you make?**

Anywhere and literally everywhere. I find inspiration all day long. I am forever jotting down an idea, scribbling a sketch or snapping a photograph. I went on a textile course about three years ago and my whole life moved on a stage. I was introduced to a new world of creative textiles and mixed media. What you can learn in a day is monumental. It is not only inspiring but empowering. It propelled me into a whole new creative place!

**Which couture garment are you most proud of and why?**

The dress I am most proud of is a wedding dress I made at the beginning of last year. It tested me in so many ways. I met my client around Christmas time to discuss the occasion, the design and her requirements. Then the dress grew! I am happy on so many levels to evolve with a dress challenge, but this went from being one of my usual, fully handmade dresses to what I know now as the biggest, most elaborate and time-consuming dress I have ever made. By the time I had finished the gown consisted of over 100 metres of fabric. The top fabric was a plain, pure silk, satin organza in ivory.

The lessons I learnt from doing this were exhilarating and have now excelled my signature workshop to another level.

**You're launching a range of couture sewing workshops, have you noticed an increased interest in couture sewing?**

I think it is hugely popular once again in a more diverse way! We have craft making, upcycling, dressmaking everyday clothes, creative textiles, couture sewing and wedding dresses, as well as accessories, and the list goes on. Everyone sews for fun, creativity and knowledge and many are turning their hand to making a living out of what they enjoy making. But overall the level and expectations are much higher than ever. Especially as the internet now reaches the far corners of the world. I aim to show sewists everything and anything is possible. If you have seen it on the catwalk or on a celebrity, add your own twist and make it yourself. You are the designer. No one, absolutely no one, can tell me they are not creative. That's my job to bring out what they already have and show them what they can do with it.



Terry once made a couture gown which consisted of over 100 metres of fabric!





### What can people expect to learn?

You can expect to learn all the answers to those 'whys' that we all have at home. Why doesn't that zip fit around a curve? Why does that bodice keep slipping down? Why do my darts keep sticking out? Then right through to how to take one single length of fabric and drape it around a couture gown - freestyle! Or take a 6ft wedding train and get it to glide across the floor. To me, couture sewing is a way of thinking, a logic. All of these techniques help me in my everyday sewing. My workshops have been carefully planned out so sewists with a basic knowledge can learn professional ways to construct from the very beginning and professional makers can discover new ways to take their sewing to another level. We all know as makers we never stand still. We just keep learning, experimenting, evolving.

### What advice would you give to those who might be intimidated by couture?

It all starts by truly understanding what couture actually is. It really is just another way of thinking so don't be overwhelmed. Just think of it as a whole load more techniques that you can add to your bag of tricks. For me, couture means whatever you can imagine, you will find a way to make this work. That is all I am here for, to guide you into that way of thinking and show you what took me over 45 years to find out in problem solving. Then you use as much or as little of the knowledge as you wish, build on it as you feel is right for you.

### What is your favourite couture technique and what do you love about it?

There are so many and I love them all for different reasons. I love the simplicity of the couture dart and the huge amount of understanding it brings regarding the varying thickness of fabric, stitch length, pressing and the way your machine works. But I think my all-time favourite is my set-in sleeve. I used to teach speed tailoring

many years ago and this has developed from there. So now it is ideal for everyday sleeves right through to high-couture wedding dresses.

### Finally, do you have any exciting plans for 2019 that you'd like to share?

I launched the new business a few days before Christmas. So my top priority is to nurture this and spread the word. I also have some great plans for later in the year. I am so excited but I really don't want to tempt fate yet. For now I would love everyone to join up on Facebook (@terryfoxcouture) and Instagram (terryfoxspiritofcouture) and follow me. This will really help with the next plan. Then as soon as the time is right you will be the first to know and I promise you will all be part of it. Sharing the knowledge is a wonderful thing. Happy sewing to everyone.



Terry completed apprenticeships with Zandra Rhodes and the Emmanuels. She appears regularly in magazines and on TV shows and was a presenter on the TV series *Wear it Well*

## FIND OUT MORE

Terry Fox is an award-winning couture fashion and wedding dress designer based in the UK. She has an impressive career spanning over 45 years and shares her knowledge and techniques in a range of bridal, couture sewing and mixed-media workshops. To find out more visit [www.terryfox.co.uk](http://www.terryfox.co.uk)