

## RIBBON CIRCLES

First Published in Art Business Today

Artist- Victoria Shepherd.  
[www.victoriasherpherd.co.uk](http://www.victoriasherpherd.co.uk)

I met Vicki at the 2008 Festival of Quilts and was immediately impressed by the creativity and originality of her portfolio. She had recently graduated with a first class BA Hons in Multi-Media Textile Design from Loughborough University where she specialised in creating three dimensional textile designs. Her designs have many applications and, since graduating, Victoria's work has attracted interest from the worlds of fashion and interior design giving her the opportunity to collaborate with companies like Liberty of London, Pringle of Scotland and Calvin Klein New York. In addition to their design applications, Victoria's pieces can be considered artwork in their own right and she has sold to private clients and has produced commissions to order.



Fig 1. Finished Frame and Mount.

Ribbon Circles was constructed by manipulating ribbon using a unique folding and pleating technique developed by Vicki over the last two years of her degree. The work was then secured by hand stitching.



Fig 2. Final Mount Design.

The framing presented some interesting possibilities and when considering such questions as; what Guild level should I aim for - conservation; how should I support the artwork - light tack/stitch. However, it was mounting the fabric art that was of particular interest and whilst I had a number of ideas it was at this year's Spring Fair that the mount design was formulated when demonstrating the new MatStylus head and chatting with Nico Valiani and Luca Bartalini of Valiani.

My idea was that the mount would reflect and follow the contours of the circles; it was to be a triple mount using a thick bottom mount, then normal thickness mountboard for the second and top mount, the overlap on each to be around 5mm and the colours reflecting but not overpowering the work. Museum cream, a Timecare Heritage Museum board was used for the support and bottom mount, Blue Night suedette board was used for the second, this was chosen to highlight the blue ribbon circle and finally, the top mount was Cloud White.

The actual mount design was challenging. I wanted the mounts to follow the outline of the circles and then use Valiani's new MatStylus head to draw a number of lines

reflecting the gold in the work. In addition, I decided to include a small cut out of the top mount with a washline to break up the large area of mount board in the top right hand corner; its function was to enhance the mount by highlighting the blue ribbon circle, it also demonstrated the ability of the Valiani CMC to cut small, intricate shapes. This design could be achieved reasonably easily using one of several different methods available to the Valiani CMC; however, it soon became evident that there were two small problems that needed to be addressed. First, with a triple mount there was insufficient space between the top circle and the circle with the blue inner ring to its right in which to get all three mounts spaced at 5mm apart.

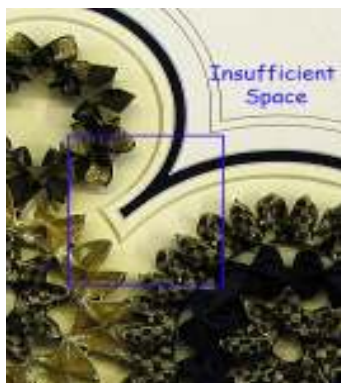


Fig 3. Insufficient Space.

Consequently, once the bottom mount had been designed and whilst I could create a concentric shape for the middle mount; the top mount had to be designed separately. Second, in order to use the MatStylus I had to use the newly designed top mount and create concentric shapes on this design. There were three possible methods of design for the bottom two mounts. First, by using the normal mat working screen, five overlapping circles could be positioned to mirror the desired shape for the bottom mount, then by using the concentric shape

function the second mount created. Cutting both mounts would be a nuisance, whilst the final outcome would be satisfactory, all five circles would be cut in one pass resulting in the possibility small arcs of the cut circles causing problems. However, this did not solve the spacing problem of the top mount and the use of the MatStylus. Second, the use of the 'New Shape' function to design the bottom two mounts and the final top mount; this was by far the most difficult option and very quickly discarded. Finally, using 'Coral Draw' to design all three mounts and washlines and then import them, as a 'plt file' into the Valiani software; this proved to be the easiest option. A template of all three mounts was cut, from standard board, to check the dimensions and shape; the use of this template would also be of importance when attaching the work to its support board thereby ensuring the correct final shape was achieved.

All fabric art needs to be supported and Ribbon Circles was no exception. The most obvious method of support was to use small stitches(light tack) sewn through the support board and the bottom stitches holding two creases of ribbon together. Anchor stranded cotton thread was used, the thread colour being matched to the colour of the ribbon in the area of the stitch; stranded thread comprises six individual threads from this two were stripped out and used for the stitch.

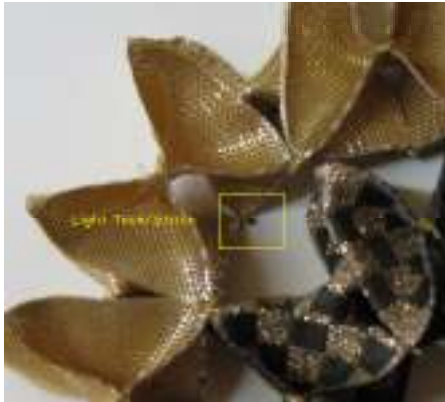


Fig 4. Light Tack/Stitch.

Ribbon Circles was placed on the support board and the template mount used to ensure the correct shape. Starting at the top two small holes were drilled through the support board, this is considerably easier than pushing a needle through the board, the first stitch was then inserted and tied off. Further stitches were then inserted, gradually working down the circles from top to bottom left, around the bottom and back up the right hand side. In all 16 stitches supported the work these were all tied off and taped using conservation gummed tape for extra security.

The software that is used by the Valiani CMC to cut mounts is simple to use. First, one has to open the mat design screen and set the overall mat dimensions. There is an extensive library of both shapes and corners that one can use but in my case the mount design had been completed using 'Coral Draw' saved as a plt file then the files imported into the design screen. The bottom two mounts were first imported, centred top and sides and then cut using Valiani green (50°) head. Some work was required to create the top mount; first, the aperture was copied into the design screen and positioned ensuring the top and sides were equal. I decided on two French lines, each designed

separately, the first line imported and aligned with the aperture; then to create the small shape for the top right corner both shapes were selected, copied, then pasted to create a second shape, which was then reduced in size by scaling down the group; it was then moved to the desired position. The second French line was then imported and aligned. It was necessary to select the MatStylus tool on the top button bar for all the lines and I also used the cut sequence function to ensure the lines were drawn before the apertures were cut.

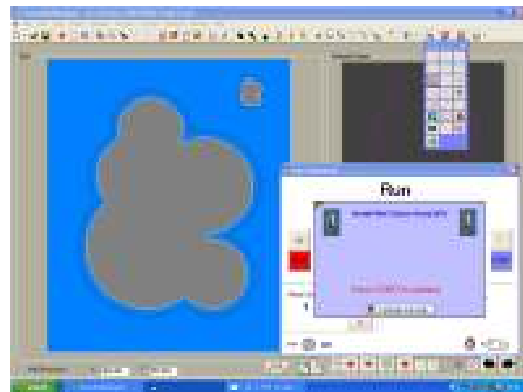


Fig 5. Valiani Cut Screen.

Finally, when drawing the lines, I set the speed control to five to ensure an even flow of ink from the pen. Once all the mounts were cut they were taped together and then taped to the supported Ribbon Circles.



Fig 6. Mat Stylus in Operation.

The moulding was chosen and the frame made; I selected a new Larson Juhl moulding - Lucerne LJ350793. The colour reflected and enhanced fabric art and this deep rebated moulding was ideal ensuring the work was kept away from the glass. The glass TruVue conservation clear(98% UV filtering) ensured protection from the effects of ultra-violet radiation. Spacers were required to support the fabric art package. I make my own spacers and in this case I used cloud white mount board glued with 'Eva-Con R' to Plastazote and then cut into the width of spacer required. When fixing the spacers to the frame I always tape the top and bottom spacers first and then the sides, for added security should the tape fail. Once the spacers were fixed the whole package was assembled, pinned, taped and the hangers and buffers fitted.

This was an interesting project from start to finish and one that made full use of the Valiani CMC and the new MatStylus head. The final outcome is stunning and has added an outstanding piece of fabric art to my collection. Many thanks to Nico and Luca for their assistance in completing this project.