

Willow Stacey

(KENT BASED ARTIST)

Willow tell me what is the story behind your swears embroidery?

SOMETIMES SOMEONE SAYS SOMETHING TO YOU THAT SETS YOU OFF ON A WHOLE NEW JOURNEY. THINGS MEN SAY STARTED AFTER WORKING A SHIFT AS A WAITRESS, IN THE PUB I HAVE WORKED AT ON AND OFF SINCE I WAS 14. A CUSTOMER SAID, "IF A WOMAN IS EARNING A LOT OF MONEY SHE IS DOING A MAN'S JOB," AND I WAS LEFT WITH THAT CONFLICT OF BEING AT WORK AND TRYING TO STAY PROFESSIONAL AND SEETHING INSIDE. WHAT STARTED AS A PERSONAL PROJECT; IMMORTALISING THE COMMENTS I RECEIVED, RAGING INSIDE, BITING MY TONGUE HAS EVOLVED INTO AN ACT OF SOLIDARITY. IT HAS GIVEN OTHER WOMAN A VOICE, WOMEN IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE WHO GO THROUGH THE SAME PAIN ON A DAILY BASIS.



Your current work explores sexism in everyday life. Things men say to women that were meant to hurt. What was the most horrible phrase you embroidered?

I THINK THE ONES THAT HURT HARDEST ARE ACTUALLY THE LESS GRAPHIC PHRASES LIKE; "YOU CAN'T COPE ON YOUR OWN" AND "I'M NOT SEXIST, BUT IF YOU MADE MORE EFFORT THE CUSTOMERS WOULD LIKE YOU MORE" THEY ARE LESS ABRUPT, BUT THEY STICK IN YOUR MIND, YOU CAN HEAR THEM ON REPEAT MAKING YOU QUESTION YOURSELF.

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Your art is very much female orientated and it has given other woman a voice; does it mean you have mostly female buyers? And how are the men reacting towards your project 'things men say?'

IF ANYTHING I WOULD SAY THAT MORE MEN HAVE BOUGHT MY WORK THAN WOMEN. I OFTEN GET ASKED, "WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?" AND HONESTLY THERE IS NO SINGLE TYPE OR SPECIFIC BUYER, I THINK THAT EACH COLLECTOR HAS CONNECTED ON A PERSONAL LEVEL TO THE PHRASE, WHETHER IN THE CONTEXT OF 'THINGS MEN SAY' OR THEIR OWN LIFE EXPERIENCES - REGARDLESS OF THEIR GENDER.

MEN HAVE REACTED IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE WAY TO MY WORK; SOME ARE SHOCKED, SOME LAUGH AT THINGS THEY HAVE SAID WHEREAS OTHERS ARE IN COMPLETE DENIAL. I'VE SEEN MEN USHERING THEIR FAMILIES AWAY SAYING "ALL LIES", WHILST OTHERS HAVE BEEN THAT MOVED THEY HAVE BROUGHT THEIR DAUGHTERS BACK.

Tell me a bit more about your atmosphere in your studio.. are you listening to some specific music ? Any particular rituals ?

I CURRENTLY MAKE A LOT OF MY WORK AT HOME, RATHER THAN IN MY STUDIO. I'VE RECENTLY HUNG A BRIGHT YELLOW BIRD FEEDER IN MY BACK GARDEN, SO I OFTEN WORK IN SILENCE SO I CAN WATCH AND HEAR ALL THE BIRDS THAT VISIT. ONCE I START CUTTING OUT FELT LETTERS OR SEWING I LOSE TRACK OF ALL CONCEPTS OF TIME.

