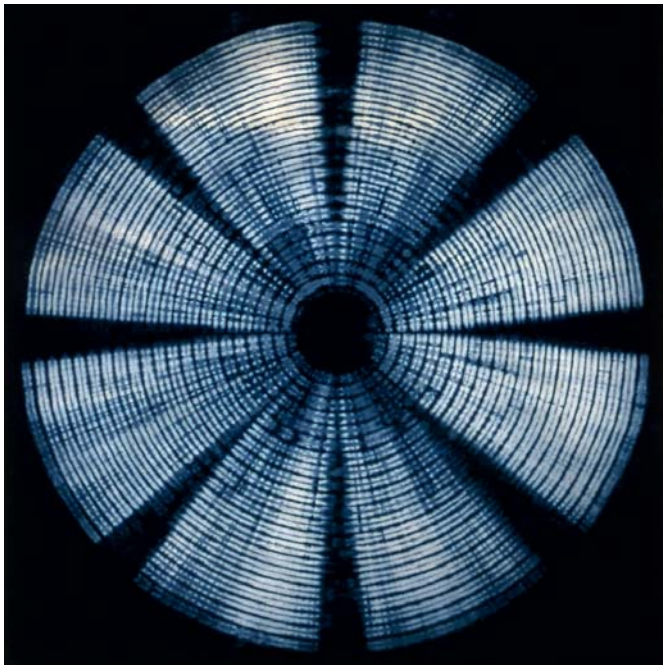


# The Indigo Resist Dyed Textiles of Jane Callender

*Pattern can be as expressive as music, as transient as breeze, or as stern as granite; it can lift the spirit or take it to a more somber place. Jane Callender.*



**JANET DE BOER:** In discussions with world traveler, author, textile collector and TAFTA friend, John Gillow, I was told of Jane Callender ('Cally') who was strongly recommended by him as a potential tutor for Australia. Cally is an artist working in Pattern, Shibori and Indigo; my research commenced. The more I saw, the more I felt we should have Cally teach in Australia if possible – and I definitely knew I wanted to experience more of her work in person and hear her talk about it.

Happily she accepted the opportunity of a lengthy stay in Australia, starting her Antipodean adventure by working for Marion Matthews at Grampians Texture during the last week of



February 2013. With Barbara Schey's help the Australian chapter of WSN, the World Shibori Network was alerted about Cally's availability; and workshops are being put in place in Western Australia, South Australia, Canberra and Brisbane plus Barbara Rogers has offered her an exhibition at Gallery Barometer in Sydney from 2-12 April 2013.

Cally finishes her Australian stay in the Blue Mountains, offering both a 2-day and 4-day workshop for the 2<sup>nd</sup> CONTEXTART-FORUM, 13-19 April 2013. At time of writing she has spaces in both workshops: [www.tafta.org.au](http://www.tafta.org.au)

A review of Jane Callender's website reveals she is: the author of "2000 Patterns"; a source of Callishibori products; an active teacher and lecturer and a prolific artist with a gifted design sense as these pages confirm. She agreed to an e-interview and here are the results.

**Q: Who would you say were the greatest influences on you - in either shibori or indigo or both? (Pattern could come into this too if you like).**

The greatest influences? - undoubtedly my tutors at college, Susan Bosence and Deryn O'Connor. I remember the day they introduced us students to indigo and resist dyed techniques at Farnham College, (now UCA, Farnham) with a wonderful display of indigo textiles from their collections and their own work. Set out on a large table the fabrics looked spectacular together, patterned and plain, from all over the world.

There followed an informal chat and we were introduced to the way of indigo. During my course I went to do a week's indigo dyeing and tritik (small running lines of stitched resist) with Susan Bosence near her Devon home and that was a wonderful opportunity to really focus without distraction – a time of development.

Susan was an unofficial student and friend of Dorothy Larcher and Phyllis Barren, painters who had found textiles, from whom she learnt how to make an indigo vat – a variation of which we used at college. She had great discernment and purpose in her application and commitment to textiles, and a quiet way which I so greatly admired.





Deryn O'Connor, formerly a historian, had incredible knowledge about dyes. A skilled stitcher, she guided me through my first stitch resist tests. Every time I did something which I sort of felt pleased about she would say 'Yes, lovely, but how about...?' – so she really urged me on and taught me not to be satisfied with the first results, but to push things further; she had great energy.

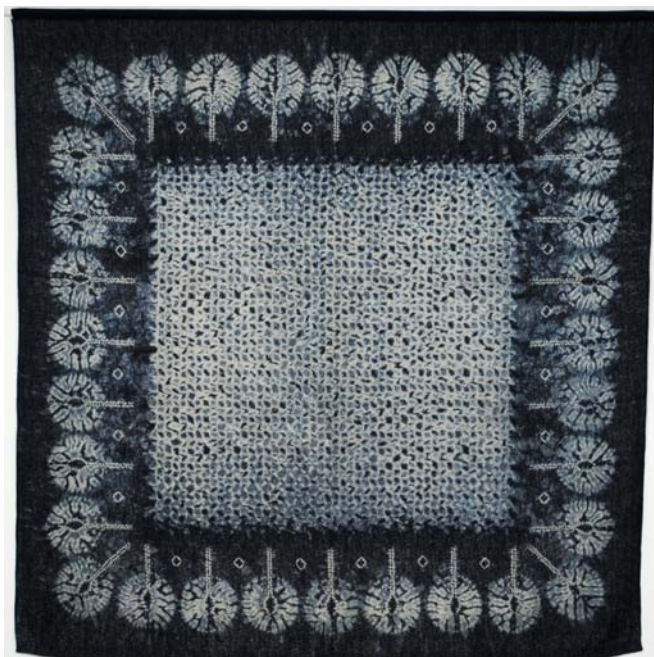
After college, as can so often happen, I lost direction although I still felt committed to textiles and continued to think, construct, design and draw while employed in the print trade. Then followed divorce, various caring obligations and then my own health challenges. Prior to my spinal surgery I went to see an exhibition of Professor Itchiku Kubota's *Tsujigahana* Dyed Kimonos at the Royal College of Art in 1989.

I don't believe I have been so moved before or since by a body of work – not just because of the visual beauty, but by the skill, the application, the resolve, the dedication and vision of this extraordinary artist. Things came together for me then and there. When I learnt that Professor Kubota had died I felt an overwhelming sadness. I had lost my inspirer, a silent mentor, someone who had opened the door.

Later I found Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada's book *Shibori The Inventive Art of Japanese Shaped Resist Dyeing* which guided me through the next stage of development. For example I was introduced to alternative techniques including bo maki shibori (using a cylinder to wrap the cloth as part of the 'resist' process).

More recently Fukumoto Shihoko's work is having a strong influence – both stitched and dipped dyed, also her control of indigo and the installations which I saw at the Daiwa Foundation Japan House Gallery in London. Her smaller studies I found to be beautiful, and they focused the mind.

John Gillow's incredible textile collection has also been a great source of inspiration over the years, African pieces in particular. Pattern, quality of fabric, skill of the artisan – all brought to us Brits with great knowledge of technique and interlocking histories, with touches of humour, wonderful anecdotes and cheer. So refreshing.



And who isn't inspired by shibori master Hiroyuki Shindo's work? – also he is an inspiration when it comes to indigo itself.

The individual Indian artisans that are Aranya Natural in the Srishti Welfare Centre, Munnar, Kerala were also most inspiring, producing beautiful fabrics. Each person plays a part in their production, be it creating the shibori, dyeing up the fabric, ironing or finishing of the edges etc. Despite their physical challenges they work with focus, with great commitment and enjoyment, loving what they do.

**Q: At what point did you feel shibori – and then callishibori – should be your life's work?**

My career has certainly had a few hiatuses – I left college to take a gap year and with my earnings bought my first lot of indigo and fabric. My parents cleared out the coal shed so that I could get organized! I did then return and complete my education at Farnham.

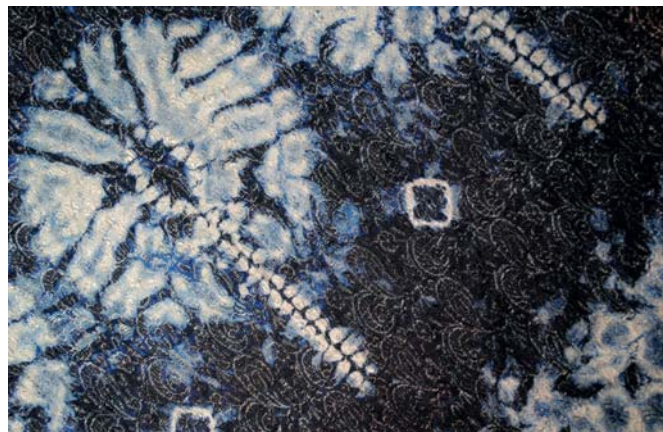
After leaving college, and having got married, there eventually followed a very unsettled time: divorce, house hunting for my mother after my father's death; and then sourcing a suitable flat for my aunt who had MS. I had been employed at a small printing firm but left with the resolve to get back to 'my work' – indigo resist dyed textiles (this is what I had always referred to as my work – never shibori). Other setbacks followed.... As I began to get better after my spinal surgery I set about working at resist dyed textiles again. I applied for and won the London Arts Board individual craftsperson award to purchase a new sewing machine.

Then while window shopping I spied a roll of some gold silk brocade which definitely had my name on it. I wondered what shibori would be like on a very grand fabric – I had always seen it on more humble fabrics and had worked on cottons mostly. I had seen it on Japanese silk – but silk and gold brocade?

I asked how much it was and felt sick at the price – but Deryn O'Connor's words echoed in my head – 'But how about??...' – so I took the risk and bought it. Dandelion was the result. ▶ ▶ ▶

Opposite page top left, SPIN made 1995-2000; hand stitched resist, indigo on cotton, 96cm sq; top right, OUTBURST made 1974, circular; hand stitch resist, indigo and iron rust on cotton, 100cm diameter. Bottom left, SEE THROUGH #3 made 2011, Miru shibori with pink and gold, approx. 25cm sq.

This page, DANDELION and detail, work made 1996; indigo on gold silk brocade, stitch resist with ne-make shibori detail; 88cm sq. All images by Hattie Leith and Jane Callender.







*Callishibori* started up when I was invited to have a stand at one of our big textile shows, the Knitting and Stitching Show in London. My focus had been to promote workshops and talks so I took samples and large pieces to generate interest - I was amazed by the response of the wider audience to the work - but hadn't anything to sell....

Students had often enquired where they could get indigo and what the best fabric was, and where best to source the varying items required. So the following year I took my first packs (indigo vat packs and patterns for small cushion covers) and they sold well. The idea developed from there with other dye packs and stencils, etc. The packs seemed an ideal way of promoting shibori and earning an income at the same time. It is something which I am proud of and I hope to keep it going, but it is such a specialist market.

I am currently developing Pattern Planners which can be personalised depending on which stitch technique is used; they

are ideal for quilters wanting to work a whole cloth shibori. The shapes are also ideal for appliqué and, depending on the scale, can be used for many different textile techniques.

***Q. So can you sum up how you support yourself and your art?***

Teaching and lectures help - summer schools, workshops and one-to-one teaching. I take part in an Open Studios scheme in the summer when local artists open their doors to visitors. I was asked to write the book *2000 Pattern Combinations* - a general pattern making book which has applications for any surface designer, in which I include a chapter on shibori. I hope it takes shibori to those who may not have come across it before. And I have just finished the spreads for a second book.

I took on a part time caring job for a couple of years but found it sapped my energies considerably and I couldn't leave my concerns after my job was done so I left after much soul searching. Funding is a problem and a continuous dilemma. I am currently re-thinking how to present my work; what new approach to try - it's brewing and I'm pondering and observing - my garden, the landscape, and the feel of the fabrics themselves - but things are not quite resolved. Oh for a lovely little part time job....

***Q. The World Shibori Network (WSN) has had value for many Australians; can you comment on its impact on you?***

It is great to have a page on the world stage in the WSN website gallery, and Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada was most generous when she introduced me to a wider audience in Hyderabad India. Here I met The Aussie Troop, with plenty of zip and energy, which I found just amazing - full of fun, disguising, I suspect, a seriousness of mind in the approach to dyes and their application and commitment to shibori.

I met Yoshiko first at the Knitting and Stitching show, London. I had left my card at her table and later discovered that the pattern design on the card, developed while at college, doesn't exist in Japan. I then attended her workshop in the UK and after her seeing a couple of my pieces, including the one on the card, she invited me to exhibit at the International Shibori Symposium in Harrogate. She later introduced me to Victoria Vijayakumar and Ratna Krishnakumar of Aranya and the following year I was invited to teach. I gave them a one week workshop which included drawing and design. I had a wonderful time. So yes - my links with WSN have had very positive outcomes. Bringing together people who share a love of textiles and in particular shibori's distinctive and unique appeal ensures its continued development and freshness.

***Q. Am I right that you prefer the hand stitch approach over machining?***

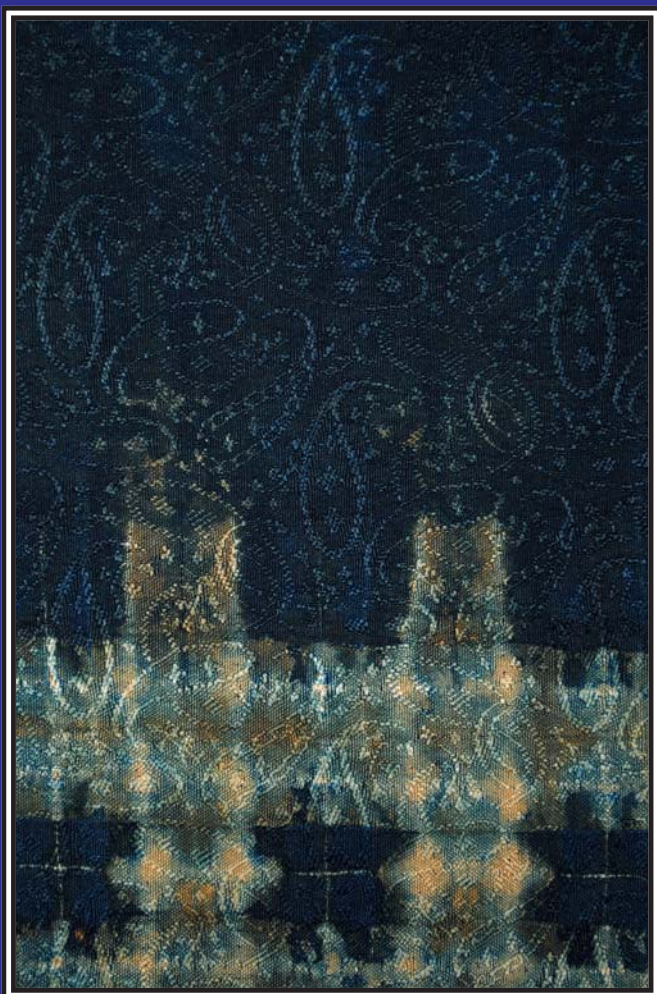
I don't actually! It's just that there is so much that can be done with hand stitching - from organic florals to geometric grids and stripes. I never use machine stitching if the result depends on pulling up the threads. Machine stitching thread simply isn't strong enough. Not only that, when the fabric is wet it becomes much heavier, and this puts a strain on the threads and can cause breakages during the dyeing process.

My first sample using the machine took me fifteen years to undo - I hadn't adjusted the stitch size and simply couldn't get it unpicked. Every time I tried I thought it impossible. Finally it was finished!





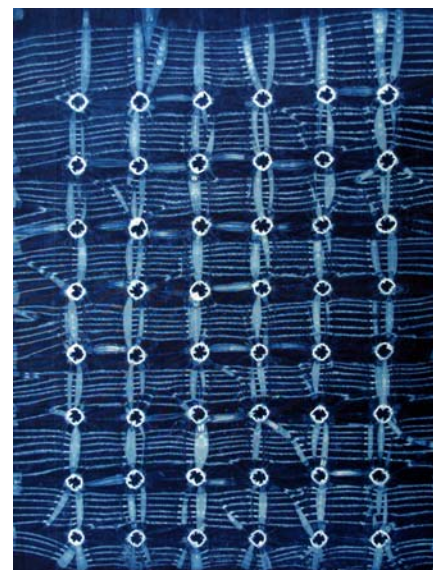
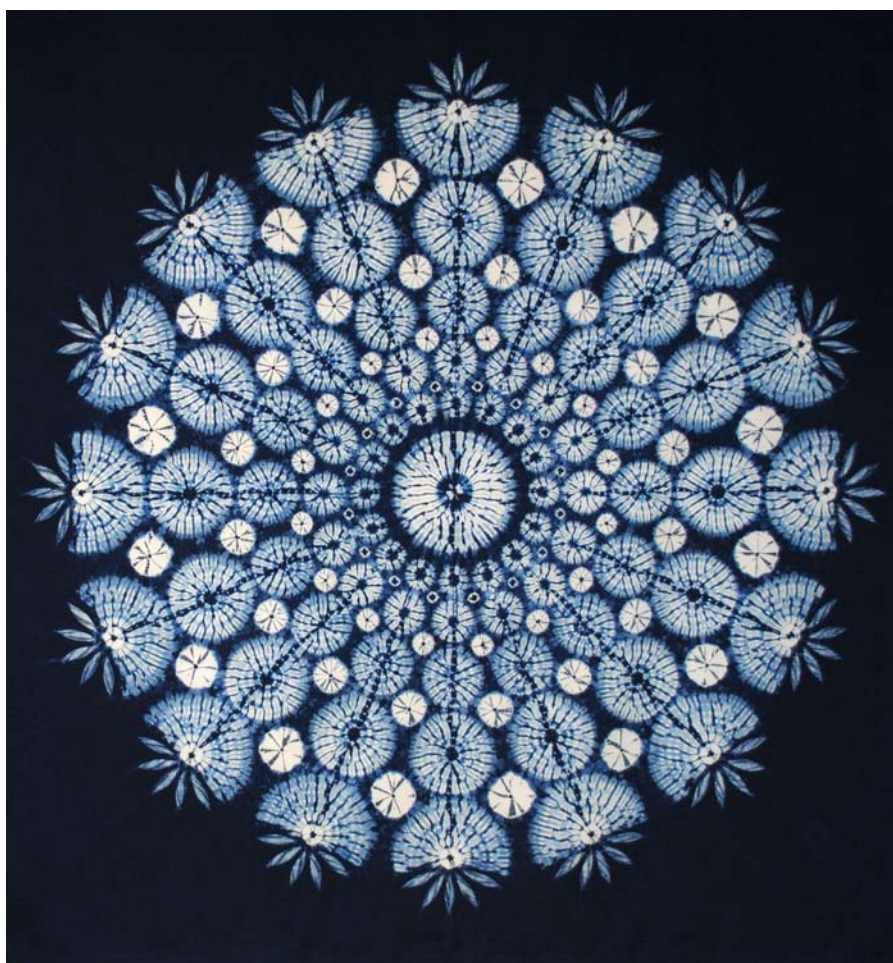
## The Indigo Resist Dyed Textiles of **Jane Callender**



See Story on  
Pages 62, 63, 64 and  
Inside Back Cover







***Q. How do you reconcile the love of precision with the almost inevitable surprise of resist dyeing with indigo?***

There is so much that is unpredictable with shibori – you hand over the fabric to the way of indigo and it is lost from view. But when so much time is spent in the preparation I want to know that I have done all I can to ensure the outcome is what I want.

Stitching can be controlled - and because stitch can be controlled, one can design and control shapes and construct pattern by adopting basic pattern making principals - but always with close attention to samples, tests and notes on how these have been done. And more than one motif for the sample needs to be worked—it's the space between each of them that is so critical.

By dyeing up really deep shades of indigo, up to twenty dips – the overall shapes, with accent and directional emphasis are in clear contrast, but the infill textured areas, the areas that I cannot predict, sit in their controlled space.

As a friend commented, 'It's half and half, and part of the charm that you cannot

predict the total outcome' – I would like to add that it's the unpredictable bit that is the draw, that keeps one trying and exploring – at the end of the day you have to keep faith in all the hard work, sampling and observations - and notations, even on the seemingly insignificant - that have been made.

***Q. And in conclusion?***

Shibori is such a special discipline, not just because of its varied and marvelous outcomes, but because of the diverse processes which offer opportunities for invention. It connects me completely with cloth and, inspired by the natural world, engages my passion for pattern and order.

When I relinquish scrunched up cloth to the depths of the indigo vat my faith and vision are tested, I have a pretty clear idea of what the result will be but I cannot predict how the dye will travel into the fabric. Only when I cut the threads and open out the cloth, wash and iron and finally say, 'It is done', can I actually see what I have been doing. □

Opposite page top left, detail of MIRU SHIBORI Colour Study made 2010; fibre reactive dyes and indigo on cotton; below it is INDIGO SQUARED

made 1995-2000; 'with variation to mokume shibori' for large corner areas; indigo on cotton; 97cm sq.

This page above left, INDIGO SPRING made 1995-2000; stitch resist techniques including miru-shibori with ne-maki and koboshi detail; 152cm sq. 'After hand stitching the fabric completely, the threads were pulled up very tightly and secured. The bunched up piece of fabric was then dipped into the indigo vat 20 times, with hand washing and drying in between. Threads were cut and removed to reveal the resist pattern. This piece marks a personal return to indigo and shibori.'

Top right, detail of ANGLED STITCH STUDY made 1999; bo maki and stitch resist, study of traditional Japanese silk shibori piece, 36" x 45". Below it is DOTS & DASHES STUDY made 1999; bound and bo maki shibori on cotton, indigo; 39" x 54".

Back Cover, WATERWAYS and detail, work made 1995-2000; hand stitch resist; indigo and permanganate on seer-suicker silk jacquard weave; 118" x 112". All images by Hattie Leith and Jane Callender.

[www.callishibori.co.uk](http://www.callishibori.co.uk)  
[www.shibori.org](http://www.shibori.org) [worldshiborinetwork.blogspot.com](http://worldshiborinetwork.blogspot.com)