



Campbell at her heritage loom, made by Leicester artisan George Wood, originally a Ships Engineer. She owns two looms created by Wood, numbered 151 and 297 out of a total of about 300 created in his lifetime.

# ARAMINTA CAMPBELL

Photos Courtesy Araminta Campbell

Araminta Campbell founded her self-named company in 2014 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her role is as key designer and Creative Director, but she continues to train new handweavers herself because of her devotion to hands-on involvement from design to finish.



Campbell says she has always loved sewing and took classes after school from an early age. "My mum still has the pin cushion I made for her when I was 6!" she says. When she was just 14, a new textiles teacher at Campbell's school opened her eyes to the potential of embroidery as an art form and not just a practical skill. "I then got a sewing machine for my 15th birthday," she says, "and I have never looked back! It was the

best birthday present I ever received, and it is still very much in use here in the studio."

Campbell went on to get a degree in embroidery from Fine Art Embroidery at Manchester Metropolitan University.

"Scotland has a long history of embroidery, from royal robes to household linens. There is actually currently a showcase of Scottish embroidered samplers at the National

Museum of Scotland produced by children in the 18th and 19th Centuries. It is fascinating to see how these examples combine international influences as well as motifs and techniques endemic to Scotland," Campbell says.

"In the final project for my degree, I decided to look at Scotland; its landscape and heritage as my primary inspiration. I found that the direction my work went in was leading me



**Left:** Araminta Campbell began to learn embroidery at age 14, eventually earning her degree in Fine Art Embroidery. Later, she changed trajectory to become a weaver but still incorporates what she learned as an embroiderer. Today she owns and operates her own brand, selling luxury garments and products for home interiors across the globe.

**Below:** During the final weeks of earning her Embroidery degree, weaving “captured Araminta’s imagination.” While preparing for her degree show, she “spent every free moment in the weave room, teaching herself to weave.”

**Opposite:** Undyed cushions and throws spun by partner mills for the Minta British Alpaca Interiors collection. Inspired by the Scottish landscape and the natural forms of ferns, alliums and willows.

towards weaving, and I just wasn’t able to produce the kind of work I wanted to focusing exclusively on embroidery. So, in the final few weeks of my degree — with help from a few friends — I taught myself to weave!”

Campbell believes her embroidery background lends an organic approach to the more structured discipline of weaving.

“The work I displayed at my degree show combined weaving and embroidery using silk and wool that I had naturally dyed myself with roots, berries and bark. Scotland has a really distinctive weaving heritage, and in the process of learning this new skill, I became completely hooked! I love the mathematical nature of creating a weave structure. It is a fascinating combination of the technical and creative that seems to just click with the way I work.

“I am driven by my wish to create something so beautiful that someone else would like to own and treasure it. I am an artist and I express myself through the creation of luxurious handmade textile artworks,” Campbell says.

She feels that despite the availability of sophisticated textile machines,

the public is increasingly embracing the ethos of high-quality, handmade items of great beauty.

Campbell maintains a small and dedicated team at her hand weaving studio, showroom and offices in Edinburgh and welcomes international visitors. Her exclusive designs are purchased by customers around the world.

## How did you first discover alpaca?

I was aware of alpaca’s hypoallergenic qualities as my mother is allergic to wool, and alpaca is one of the few warm fibres she can wear next to her skin. Not long after I started weaving, I decided to make her an alpaca shawl for Christmas. Somehow, word got out and I ended up selling all of





the shawls I made before Christmas even arrived! My mother is still the biggest fan of my products and gets the first viewing of each new collection.

**You say the Scottish landscape is inspiring to you. Can you describe some plants, textures and colors from it for those of us not familiar with it?**

Scotland has such a varied landscape and it is constantly changing with the weather and the seasons, which gives me endless opportunities to be inspired. In my work, I try to capture a moment in time or those quiet natural details that can be easy to overlook. The dappled light in the spring woodland with bright flashes of daffodils and bluebells peeking through or the rough texture of the ancient Scots pine tree twisting in the wind on a rugged hillside.

**Do you include traditions of your Scottish heritage into your designs?**

My Scottish heritage informs all of my work — textiles have been created here for thousands of years so there is such a wealth of history and expertise for me to draw from. My Heritage service offers clients the opportunity to create their own custom tweed and tartans, and these fabrics are often what people associate with Scottish textiles. However, my alpaca accessories and interiors are also deeply connected to my Scottish heritage. They are woven with techniques that have been used here for generations, and the focus on quality and craftsmanship is something that Scotland has always cultivated.

**You have a small team of weavers and canine helpers. How does being a close-knit group inform your work?**

Being a small team means that we do everything together. There are no departments or hierarchies here — we all work alongside each other and see each achievement as a team effort. It also means we freely share ideas, and it is amazing how bringing in other people's perspectives and skills can help take you places you would never have been able to go on your own. And yes, the dogs are a vital part of the team — our constant cheerer-uppers, playmates and hot water bottles!

**Please can you tell us the story of your heritage loom?**

Both my looms were made by a gentleman named George Wood. He was originally a Ships Engineer, and then became a loom maker in Leicester around the middle of the last century. Each of his looms is a work of art in itself, made bespoke for each weaver. They are all individually numbered, and



it is estimated he managed to make around 300 in his lifetime. My first loom is number 151 — so created around halfway through his career. I bought it off another Scottish weaver, who had waited for years to sell it until she could find the right person to give it to — she thankfully picked me! My second loom, number 297, was made for an English weaver who commissioned George Wood to create a loom for her in 1985 — when he was in his 80s! She sold the loom to me after her arthritis meant that she could no longer use it. I feel very privileged to have been trusted with these remarkable pieces of history, and it is wonderful to be able to continue to weave with them all these years later.

**Your MINTA Collection is a contemporary selection of interiors range of home cushions and throws. How does alpaca enhance a home setting?**

Alpaca is such a beautiful natural fibre to have in the home. It is

exceptionally soft and incredibly warm so perfect for a blanket you can wrap round your shoulders on a chilly night, or you can create a pile of cosy cushions to snuggle into on the sofa. I use undyed alpaca in my products, which gives me a beautiful natural palette to work with. Soft natural white, grey and soft fawns create a lovely restful aesthetic for the home.

**Your Signature collection features scarves, shawls and blanket wraps. Do you find they are popular with a certain group?**

My Signature customers are mostly female — however, we do have the occasional gentleman buying a special gift! They actually come from all over the world, but I think the thing they all have in common is their appreciation for items that are unique, authentic, original and handcrafted works of art. The blanket wraps are currently our best seller — a real statement piece and one-of-a-kind, so customers know they

are wearing something really special and luxurious.

**Heritage is a “bespoke tweed and tartan service.” Can you explain that?**

With Heritage, we offer clients the opportunity to have their own custom tweeds and tartans designed and then woven in Scotland. I work closely with each client to create a cloth that speaks of them, often incorporating family history or special places or events into the design.

**You trained as an embroidery artist. What does that entail?**

I studied fine art embroidery at university, as I had always loved textiles and wanted to continue approaching my work as an artist rather than a designer. During my studies I learned practical techniques as well as rigorous research and development practices. For my final degree show work, I produced artworks based on the Scottish landscape, mixing embroidery, hand weaving and

**Right:** Campbell's early embroidery training, rigorous attention to detail and dexterous skill inform much of her work today. “I studied fine art embroidery at university, as I had always loved textiles and wanted to continue approaching my work as an artist rather than a designer,” Campbell says.

**Opposite:** The handwoven Araminta Campbell pebble shawl modeled by the artist in light grey. It belongs to a collection of one-off luxurious statement garments. Each is individually handmade at the Araminta Campbell Edinburgh studio.





the use of naturally dyed silks and wools.

### How does your training as an embroidery artist inform your work now?

I continue to still consider myself an artist first and foremost, and I think that helps me to push the boundaries and create work that is unusual in my industry. The attention to detail and precision I learned can be seen in the quality and finish of my products, and the influence of those early landscape artworks continues to flow through my work now.

### Why is sustainability important to you?

The natural world is my greatest

inspiration, and I believe we need to look after it! I want the future generations to be able to enjoy the places I love and as a result, think we need to pay attention to the way we use resources and reduce waste.

### How does alpaca fit into that?

Alpaca is the only luxury fibre you can grow in Britain — cashmere and silk all have to be imported, which results in a higher carbon footprint as well as less transparency in the supply chain. We work with small British alpaca breeders and know that everyone involved in producing our alpaca yarns has been well looked after and respected. Alpacas themselves are also good to the land — their

soft feet don't compact the soil in the same way as hooved livestock, and they are gentle grazers too. In addition, there is much less processing involved in using their fleece — we use the natural colours so don't require harmful bleaches or dyes, and as they produce a dry fleece, it requires much less scouring and washing than a greasy fibre like wool. ●



- Personal interview Araminta Campbell.
- "Araminta Campbell, Alpaca Apostle: Fashion, Scotland on Sunday." *News, Scotsman.com*, 23 Oct. 2018, [www.scotsman.com/news/araminta-campbell-alpaca-apostle-fashion-scotland-on-sunday-1-4818859](http://www.scotsman.com/news/araminta-campbell-alpaca-apostle-fashion-scotland-on-sunday-1-4818859).
- "Araminta Campbell." *Araminta Campbell*, [www.aramintacampbell.co.uk/](http://www.aramintacampbell.co.uk/).