

# Refinements ~ Kirsten E. Silven



versions are simply computer generated patterns and have been used before by others with the same initials. As an alternative to this option, those with truly discriminating taste are now opting to visit talented, highly creative individuals who specialize in creating customized monograms that are truly unique.

Claudia Engle of Lexington did not begin her career by designing monograms. Instead, she started out by mastering the fine art of calligraphy, which she still practices today. However, it is easy to imagine the natural progression from calligraphy to custom monogramming – who could have a better understanding of letter forms than a professional calligrapher? In fact, her knowledge of letter forms is exactly what gives her the edge she needs to design gorgeous custom monograms that can be used on just about anything you could dream up - from a wedding cake to new cloth shoes!

What makes Engle's work truly exceptional, however, is that she spends a great deal of the design process in collaboration with her clients to create a completely unique custom monogram every time. Based on the impressions and feedback she receives during these design meetings, Engle crafts monograms which incorporate personal characteristics of the individuals they represent. This process of creation is very rewarding for Engle on a personal level, and she often develops lasting relationships with her clients.

It is important to note that, although many people have chosen to branch out and use monograms in new and exciting ways, individuals from all age groups are still just as entranced with more traditional uses, including linens and clothing. Donna Osif of Bedded Bliss in Louisville is quite familiar with these needs, and works with a local seamstress who has over 40 years

of experience to bring custom monogramming to her clientele. Roberta Turner, who can also be contacted through The Smocking Shop in St. Matthews, began her career as a professional seamstress at Bryan's Embroidery Company, which has since closed.

Upon purchasing high-end textile products, Osif's clients often wish to have them monogrammed. At this point, there are two routes to choose from – one involves sending your new purchase to a factory to be machine stitched, and the other involves a quick telephone call to Turner, who hand stitches the designs. With Turner's experience and hands-on approach, your monogram will have not only the certain *je ne sais quois* that only comes about through sewing an item by hand, but also your finished design will benefit from her keen eye for good design.

The art of monogramming transcends age and gender due to its versatility. Today, designs can be either utilitarian or sophisticated, and where they wind up is limited only by your imagination! This, combined with the wonderful option of owning a custom-designed monogram that is hand-stitched, makes it easy to see why this trend is inspiring so many people to create heirloom quality monograms that are not only fun, but also pay homage to the family name. **K**

*Claudia Engle Lettering and Design can be reached at 859.806.2114. Donna Osif and Bedded Bliss can be reached at 502-899-5153*

**Left:** The fleur de lis in the center of this monogram, which also incorporates the first initials of the bride and groom, as well as their common last name initial, is significant because it was the symbol for Melinda Mobley's sorority. Here, the monogram is shown on their wedding cake. Monogram by Claudia Engle Lettering and Design. Photo by Jay May. **Below:** This hand towel (above) and linen guest towel (below) are from Bedded Bliss in Louisville and give two very different examples of the hand stitched monograms that Roberta Turner specializes in.



# Monograms - The Art of Identity

Monogramming saw its first wave of popularity in the United States during the Victorian era, when it routinely appeared on the fine silver of prominent families. Today, it has once again risen to great popularity among all age groups, and has branched out into some surprising new territory. Yes, the concept

of monogramming has expanded today to include so many new and imaginative forms of expression that it has transcended what we traditionally have thought of as a 'monogram'. Inspired individuals are taking these designs and are using them on painted pillows, as wax letter seals, on cookies for baby showers, or even on flags, which deco-

rate the walkway to a church for a late spring or early summer wedding! It has even become quite commonplace for a newly engaged couple to receive, as a holiday or birthday gift, the services of a design professional who creates for the couple a custom monogram.

Although many retail stores can 'create' a monogram for you, most of these

**Above Left:** This monogram was created by Claudia Engle Lettering and Design for Rebecca Gibbs Smallpage, who wanted her married initials to be the only ones included in the design. The monogram was used in various ways for the wedding, and reception, and also appears on her Haviland china in the Serengeti pattern, shown here. **Above Right:** Claudia Engle Lettering and Design crafted this more masculine monogram for a baby boy, giving special attention to creating a design that will be able to grow with him as he matures. Here, it is used on cookies that were served at his christening. Photo by Claudia Engle.