

Diary of a Craftworker



Poppy Porter is craft&design's Diary writer throughout 2008. Previously working in the world of law, she has recently made a major career change into craft and the creative industries.

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I am quite astounded to realise that at the time of writing (mid July) it has been a year since I exhibited at New Designers and began to embark on my career as an artist. This year I visited New Designers at the beginning of July and found it to be both reassuring and a "kick in the pants" in equal measure. Reassuring because nobody's work looked anything like mine and a "kick in the pants" because I am very aware of how my work must stay fresh and new to stay distinctive. Every year there is a new tier of graduates some of whom will become healthy competition. This diary instalment will be my thoughts on the direction my work is taking and the methods I use to produce it as well as the various events I have been a part of.

Visiting New Designers also brought to mind the inadequacy of how describe what I do through my business name. The current name of my business is "Poppy Porter Jewellery and Accessory Design". I think you will agree this is not very catchy and only half describes what I currently do. Do I even need to have anything descriptive included? I think just using my own name as a business name is the way to go as adding anything more seems extremely limiting and of course what you do changes over time. My current business name is also no longer adequate as out of my jewellery has come a form of digital "photo-painting" that really does not constitute jewellery however you look at it! With my business head on what I have are two products quite distinct from each other but with a common root of inspiration.

The human urges to create marks, things or adorn themselves

are ancient ones. Jewellery as a wearable art form is something that has always interested me. The point of art as I see it is to satisfy a creative need both in the creator and the viewer/wearer/participant and to provoke a reaction whatever that may be. The added bonus of jewellery as an art form is it adorns the body. I love making large statement pieces that make the wearer feel confident and not only encourages them to show off the piece they are wearing but at the same time the area of the body they wear it on.

Photographs of Formula 1 cars are the "jewels" in my work. These photographs are digitally transformed to become the iridescent abstracts inlaid into the titanium bodies of my jewellery. These digital transformations began to take on a life of their own as I began to visually explore the astounding sounds that a Formula 1 engine produces. Excitement, anticipation and desire are also strong elements in the work as it moved out of the three-dimensional structured frame of the jewellery and became a fluid image on screen.

So I now have two types of work, the jewellery is far further developed than the currently embryonic photo-paintings. However, the paintings have been liked enough for someone to commission me to create something for their office wall in one of the Formula 1 teams' offices, which is extremely encouraging. I am thinking of taking these pieces to sell at motor sport events such as the Festival of Speed at Goodwood. This does need some more market research so I think I must plan some combined visual/market research trips to various motor sport events particularly ones like the Festival of Speed and Goodwood Revival that might attract customers interested in artworks as well as racing.

At the moment I am working on two commissions the photo-paintings and a private commission for a large bracelet. This bracelet has been the catalyst for my reviewing my making process. The first part of my making stage is piercing out titanium sheet, which is costly in both time and saw blades. I have come to the conclusion both from a pricing point of view and a health point of view (there is only so much titanium my arm can cut!) that it is time to get my main designs laser cut.



Racing wings hairstick

Racing lace ring bubbles



Work in progress, bubbles ring

Jenson Button does a burn out in front of Goodwood House, photo-painting



This means I have to remember how to use Adobe Illustrator and do scale drawings for my laser cutters. I have had larger pieces laser cut before now and it has worked very well and been economic to do. The bracelet commission originally involved several differently shaped layers, but I now want all the layers to be the same but joined in sequence so the form has a rhythm. The whole bracelet will be joined by small titanium nuts and bolts. I have used titanium nuts and bolts in the past and when I told my nut and bolt suppliers what I wanted their products for they were quite amazed and asked for a photo of what I was making as they usually supply fastenings for performance bikes.

There was also good news on the financial front in the past two months. I applied for and was accepted on to the SPEED project (Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education) a bursary/funding programme that allows for cash flow funding as well as a lump sum for research and development within a business. I attend the classes they provide on business skills once a month at Thames Valley University and it is proving to be a good opportunity to meet some really interesting people. There are such a diverse assortment of people on the course including sound recordists, artists, chiropractors, importers, nutritionists, graphic designers and public speaking experts. It is not just those in the creative industries, although they seem to be the majority. I wonder if this is because we are more attuned to the availability funding, as it is quite a common occurrence in the creative world.

My work is finally beginning to make its way in to galleries and as a result of my attending BCTF earlier in the year my work is to be exhibited in Edinburgh as part of the world famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe at *Jewellery at the Edge* an exhibition run by The Pebbles Gallery from 27 July-30 August. Preparations for that have been making progress over the last couple of weeks and I have had to be extra organised as I am going on holiday before the submission deadline so will have to send my work off a week early! So all in all the last couple of months have been ones for decisions and developments as I try to evolve my work and get it out on view.