

Diary of a Craftworker



It's a big thank you from *craft&design* to Poppy Porter, for being our 2008 Diary writer. Poppy has shared her creative life with us through her regular pages and in turn has inspired others to follow their own creative paths. So thank you Poppy for being so open and friendly in your writing - and for meeting our copy dates for each issue so promptly! Our very best wishes for a bright and successful future with your business.

www.poppyporther.co.uk
E: poppy.porter@btinternet.com
M: 07941 117782

Who's next then?
Our 2009 Diary Writer?
Wait and see!
Our next issue is on sale 19th February

I am really surprised at how quickly the last entry in my Diary of a Craftsman has come round, it hardly seems like a year since I was introducing myself to you all. Here I am successfully in business for one year, I couldn't say I could retire to a tropical island of my choice on the proceeds, but the business is funding itself, which is a real achievement. I hope there are others of you out there who have also had successful journeys this year and achieved your aims, be they big or small.

The choice to become a self-employed craftsman is one that involves my life as a whole, not just my working life. The hours are often odd, either by choice or necessity, and the planning decisions I have to make are often hard and always influenced by financial constraints. However, the choice of what I make and how is mine, as is the choice of where and how I sell it. My work is rarely put out of my thoughts, as a passion it has taken hold and that can only be a good thing. I have plans and lots of them - some may happen, some may not, but they are there and as long as they are, I know I am engaged and my creative projects will continue, new work will be made and hopefully sold.

It is worth mentioning, before I get on to what I have been doing in the last two months, how I have felt about writing this column and what a habit it has become. Before writing this column I had not written a reflective kind of diary since I was about nine years old and then I suspect I complained at length about wanting a pony. In my adult life a diary has been a planning tool concerning what I wanted to do in the future, appointments to keep and tasks to complete. Having written this diary for the past year I have seen the benefits of a reflective diary, one where I can look back at what I have done and assess what I did right, wrong or average. It is a record of how I approached things, an aide memoir, a confidence booster and a record of my achievements over time. It will help me reflect on the previous draft of my business plan too, to see whether the goals I set myself have been achieved or whether I have made decisions that took me on a different path. I have been learning so much this year and a diary has been a valuable tool in recording and evaluating what I have learnt. I hope this will be an ongoing process throughout my life and career.

These past months I have taken part in a magazine cover shoot and have reached the milestone of making my stand costs back at a show.

I have also been having a long hard think about what I can do to make sales in the current financial crisis that may well make my second year in business harder than the first.

As you may remember from my previous diary entries I was lucky enough to be awarded a SPEED bursary (Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education) by Thames Valley University. This bursary also included some business training and opportunities to network with other people on the course. Through this networking I met a photographer called Angela Chan who had been asked to do a cover shoot for a new ethical lifestyle magazine *Lifescape*, whose editor was also part of SPEED. Angela asked me whether I would bring some of my jewellery along to the shoot as *Lifescape* were looking for something bold for the cover.

Of course I agreed and went along on the appointed day and spent the day at the shoot and met everyone involved, which was great fun. I even ended up helping wrap a very patient model in a brown paper cocktail dress! The sheer volume of photographs needed to get the right one was astounding and many different looks were tried, some with my jewellery some without. Angela was a real help and took a few quick photos for me at the end of the shoot and let me have them for free, which was incredibly generous. It was a tiring day, but I am still in contact with Angela and the *Lifescape* people. As I am starting to use recycled materials in my work I am hoping to persuade them to do a feature on it in the future. As a result of watching Angela work, I am arranging to spend some of my bursary getting some really good photos of my pieces done, both worn on a model and shot on their own. It will update the look of my website and give my work professional presentation which I have felt is becoming a necessity as I get it seen by more and more people.

Despite the doom and gloom that every financial journalist in the land is currently revelling in, I have had my most successful show to date. I recently participated in The Society of Designer Craftsmen's Designer Crafts at Chelsea and was pleased to finally reach the milestone of making my costs back on my stand. I have to say that having a communal credit card facility was a real help and made life much easier.

I have recently been wondering about how to get



Chequered Flag Bracelet

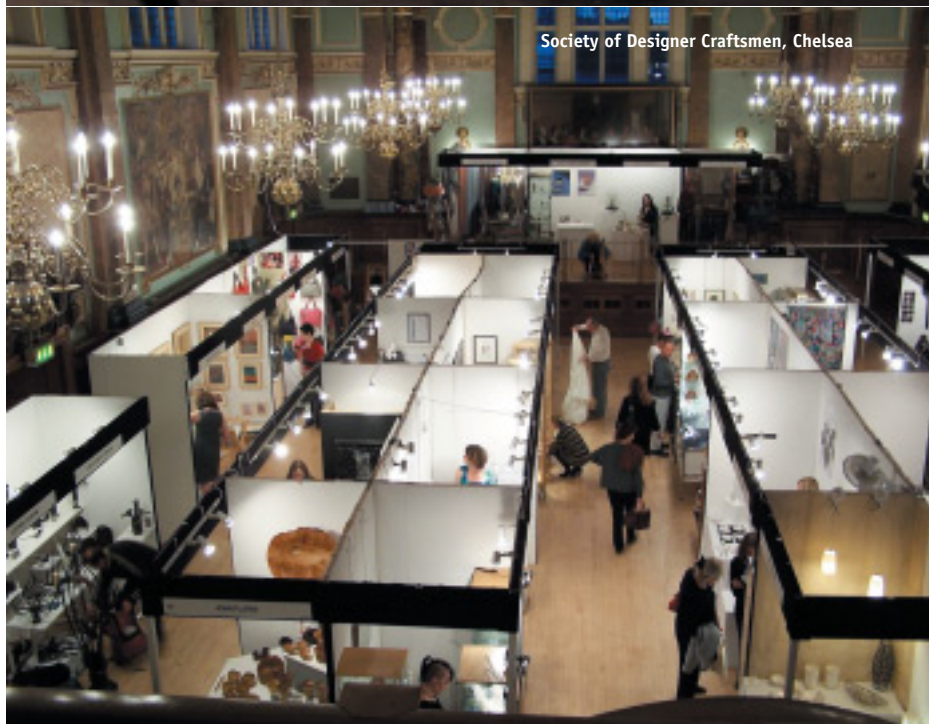
more people to buy my work and also how to keep my creativity fresh. I have come to the conclusion that I have to have several different kinds of work. My titanium work is time consuming and expensive to make so as a result is aimed at a certain market and is placed in a certain price bracket. When it sells I don't have to sell many to make good money. I decided as more local Christmas shows were looming at time of writing that I would come up with some jewellery that is just as out of the ordinary as my titanium work but that is cheaper and quicker for me to make. I would hope it would be more likely to be an impulse buy at a local Christmas show where people may not be looking to spend a huge amount, particularly as we are now in recession. This way I hope to keep the small volume of higher value sales going while also having a higher volume of lower value sales to supplement it. There is also my two dimensional work which is progressing and I hope to test the market a little with a few small art shows next year.

Oddly enough, far from being fearful about the next year, I am hoping it will present opportunities for the enterprising craftsperson. Will some people be seeking alternatives to the mundane goods for sale on the high street? Will they start looking for quality, individuality and workmanship over throw-away high volume imports? You only have to look at how our perceptions of where food comes from to see how attitudes can slowly change. Clearly not everyone will change, but it seems there is change in the air at the moment I am hoping it will be to the craftsman/artist/designer's advantage.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to all those who have supported me throughout my first year in business, family, friends and colleagues, show organisers and editors who have not only given me the opportunity to progress, but offered help and advice along the way. Before this turns into an Oscars speech I will just say I hope you have enjoyed my diary this year and I look forward to reading my successor's thoughts next year. My next exhibition is from 10 to 18 January, Designer Crafts at the Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1
www.societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk
info@poppyporter.co.uk
www.poppyporter.co.uk



Lifescape photoshoot



Society of Designer Craftsmen, Chelsea