

Fancy being 'Famous for a Year' and promoting your business along the way? We'll be selecting our 2012 Diary Writer very soon, so if you'd like to be you, simply tell us why! Please email us for more details of what's involved: editor@craftanddesign.net

Diary of a Craftworker



Janine Partington, *craft&design's* Diary Writer this year, is a designer maker based in Bristol, who combines the traditional craft of enamelling with fresh, clean, contemporary design.

Janine's work is well known and frequently seen at major contemporary craft events. Her distinctive panels, jewellery and flat back sculptures are also shown in galleries throughout the UK. See her website for details: www.janinepartington.co.uk

As I sit writing my fourth article of six I can't believe that it's already the beginning of July. Despite having already done so many things this year, it still feels like time has flown too quickly with not a lot achieved.

The end of May saw me giving my first ever talk about my work - at Cambridge Contemporary Craft. I had said I would talk as part of their programme to coincide with Craft&Design month, but the minute I agreed I regretted it. I fear public speaking. Anyone who knows me will realise that I can talk for England, but that is only when it is not planned. I can get very nervous and very stressed and do silly things when it is planned. For example in my early 20s I was a no-show for a live radio interview - something for which I still feel guilt to this day. However, I did get on the train, arrived in Cambridge and turned up at the gallery. In the end the experience was a good one. In the basement of the gallery I talked for nearly an hour and a half about my upbringing, my work, my influences, I demonstrated my techniques and showed the equipment I used. I had had the option of doing a laptop presentation, but opted for A4 print outs of pictures instead - low tech is much more my style. It was only an audience of about ten, but they were all interested, asked questions and knew my work, which was lovely. One person had recently been given a kiln and wanted to have a go. The next day I got an email from one of the attendees saying how

much they'd enjoyed the talk. During the course of my presentation I had talked about how nice it was when someone contacts you out of the blue to say that they had bought a piece in a gallery and needed to tell you how much they liked it. Unless you are selling directly, you generally get very little feedback from galleries about the stories behind the purchases, and so a customer email is very precious.

June saw the coming of a typical English summer - lots of sunshine and some showers. Of course when the time came for me to attend the Contemporary Craft Fair at Bovey Tracey the heavens opened and we got drenched, particularly on the Sunday when we had to close early. Each year I worry about the weather when the fair approaches. When I used to help run my local arts trail I used to spend the week before the event looking several times a day at the BBC weather site as if I could make the forecast the one I wanted to see. Weather can affect visitor figures, but unless it is absolutely catastrophic, showers can often be much better than sweltering heat, particularly where stuffy pavilions are concerned.

The weather for the fair this year was mixed, but the visitors were intrepid and I had much better sales than the previous year. The trend continued for the majority of my sales to be made to existing customers or those already familiar with my work. Repeat custom is always nice. As usual I tried to have new work on my stand to garner interest and so made some garden butterflies and birds and tried a new colour for my panels. I also showed some of my new paper cuts. I was really pleased with the feedback I got on those in particular and it was nice to have something different to talk about. Normally I just go back to my room every night with a sandwich, but this year I was opposite my friend Chez Williams' stand - she makes the most amazing bright and cheery digitally printed cushions - and so I went out for a meal with her and her partner George one evening and went to the exhibitor meal and sat with them for that also. Chez was really nervous as it was her first show but she got marvellous feedback and lots of sales, so by the end of the event she was happy and didn't want it to end. She has a wonderful eye for design and is a lovely person, so I am sure she will do very well in the future.

I've visited Bovey quite a few times in recent months. I attended a Mentoring and Coaching

workshop that the Devon Guild of Craftsmen put together. It was a fascinating workshop and it helped to focus my ideas about my future and my need to balance work and experimental play. I think I'm making the right decisions about what I want to achieve and how to go about it. I was also present at the AGM of the Devon Guild earlier in the year. This began with a bunting workshop led by Bridget Arnold. Bridget has spent the past year or more facilitating these workshops as part of the Guild's celebration of their 25th anniversary year at the Riverside Mill in Bovey Tracey. When I attended the thoroughly festooned mill at the beginning of July for their 25th Anniversary Tea Party, I managed to spot my bunting amongst the multitudes and it felt good to have taken some small part in the celebrations. There were some funny and interesting stories told about the purchase and running of the mill by founding members and past directors, before we moved into the gallery for the private view of 'A Silver Thread' the themed summer member's exhibition in which I had a few paper cuts on show. I am so glad to be a member of such a wonderful organisation.

As I write this, all the summer top up orders are coming in, and it all feels more than a bit overwhelming, but I need to buckle down as school holidays are looming and I have an exhibition at the Rostra Gallery in Bath in a few weeks for which I need new designs and lots of new work. With Origin in London in September, Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair in Manchester in October, Mac Designer Maker Fair in Birmingham in November, Made by Hand in Wales in December and all the other exhibitions and galleries and shops I've already committed to, I can't envisage taking much of a breath until mid-December - and then it's Christmas - there I go again wishing the time away again....

For stockist and forthcoming exhibition details visit www.janinepartington.co.uk

Origin: The London Craft Fair
Old Spitalfields Market, London
22-28 September
www.originuk.org

Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair
Spinningfields, Manchester, 20 - 23 October 2011
www.greatnorthernevents.co.uk

The Heat is On: Contemporary Enamelling in Britain
The Garden Gallery, Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock, Oxon. 17 September - 15 October

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Devon Guild of Craftsmen celebrating 25th year at Riverside Mill



'A Silver Thread' - summer members exhibition at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen



My father and me in front of his portrait of my grandparents - shown at my talk



'Perched' - an enamel panel design



New stencil designs



My stand at Contemporary Craft Fair at Bovey Tracey including new work