Diary of a Craftworker



Janine Partington, 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

Summer is a time for children if you have them, and I have two. If I worked away from my home, as a lot of people do, then I'd take a couple of weeks off and then the children would be enrolled in some sort of summer scheme. Working from home makes this a lot more difficult and the guilt immense. Unfortunately, August is a month requiring a lot of top ups at some of my galleries and so even being away for a fortnight can mean missing out on sales. Of course, family should always come first, but maintaining an income to keep them in the manner to which they have become accustomed is also

important. The summer always seems a long time on the last day of school, a time to be filled with lots of interesting things and more attention than I lavish on my children during term time. However on the first day of the autumn term it always seems conversely as if the summer has been but a blink of the eye. We did go on our annual summer trip to my

in-laws in the Isle of Man and, for once, though I did take work with me, I did not a single bit of it (apart from replying to emails). I celebrated my 40th birthday whilst away and spent the entire day reading a trashy novel - perfect. But on my return to Bristol, I found the work had piled up once again (I'd cleared a lot before I went away including taking all my work to the Rostra Gallery for my featured show 'Fired by Nature') and within a week I was already staying up till all hours and exhausted by the



afternoon. There was also the problem of what to do with my children.

Louis is twelve and Breesha is nine and they have both outgrown the local playschemes and are reluctant to be left at organised events. Breesha is easier as she is always drawing and making and so spends a lot of the time doing just that and does not need too much entertaining – I hasten to add that she did go to friends' houses and we did have friends here and we did go on day trips. Louis is more difficult. He is at a stage where he wants to spread his wings and vet he seems much too little still. This summer we gave him a longer leash and he spent much of the summer out with friends at various parks and houses.

Bristol is great for families in the summer and hosts a Harbour Festival, an International Balloon Fiesta, a Kite Festival and the Organic Food Festival as well as St Paul's Carnival and a Festival of Puppets and other smaller events throughout July, August and September. This year there have been several added and very successful artistic ventures in the city including the transformation of a drab street in the centre of the city into a vision of colour and creativity through a massive graffiti project and, perhaps more importantly to my household, the Wow! Gorillas trail.

The Wow! Gorillas trail began at the beginning of the summer when over 60 life-size fibreglass gorillas were designed and decorated by artists and placed

around the city (and beyond). This has been a huge hit with everyone and each time I pass a gorilla I see someone having their photograph taken with it. Bristol has gone gorilla mad. My son is not interested in drawing or making or art in general take him to a gallery and he's only interested in the café and when he can leave. However, the Wow! Gorillas have captured his imagination and those of his friends and he has travelled the city and captured over fifty of the creatures with his camera. They've been such a hit with him that we even gave him a limited edition ceramic figure of one of the gorillas as a birthday present in August and he said it was one of his best presents (aside from tickets to watch Liverpool



Mantel clocks





thrash Bolton at Anfield!). Breesha and I joined Louis on the last day of the school holidays to get in a few gorillas before they are auctioned off for charity in mid-September – we managed 9 in one day and had a really lovely time. (For more information and pictures visit www.bristolzoo.org. uk/wow-gorillas.)

With summer holidays over and the children back in school I'm now back to full-time making. Origin: The London Craft Fair happens towards the end of September and I have done nothing yet for the show, so am getting quite frantic. Trying to design new products, such as mantel clocks, to bring some freshness to my stand doesn't help and time is limited. Added to this is the fact that my husband Matthew has gone on holiday with his father to America for sixteen days (coming back just a few days before I leave for Origin) so I am currently sole parent in charge. I already know that I rely heavily on Matthew, but his absence really brings home to me how, if I was on my own, I couldn't maintain the workload I do, and to be honest I don't really want

> to any more. I need to cut back and I keep promising myself that next year I will.

There are galleries and shops where my work no longer sells and I have withdrawn my work from these places over the summer and this in a way could create a natural cutting back of work. It seemed silly for my work to be sitting in some gallery gathering dust when it might sell somewhere else, but it also feels a big failure when a gallery either decides that they no longer want your work, or you have to broach the conversation that you never really want to have about withdrawing your work because your work is no longer popular. I know that without change my work will eventually have been bought by everyone who will want it and so it does have a shelf-life, I just haven't found a

suitable replacement yet, and to be fair despite these small failures things are far from gloomy with my turnover actually up on last year so far this financial year.

So with schools re-opened and work back to normal, I really do need to put my nose to the grindstone for all the shows and exhibitions I have already committed to – make it through to Christmas and take stock. Don't think there will be any time for playing, but maybe I'll be making more time for family instead.

For stockist and forthcoming exhibition details visit www.janinepartington.co.uk. You can meet Janine and see her work in the coming months at:

mac marketplace, Contemporary Craft Fair mac, Birmingham, 19-20 November www.macarts.co.uk

Made By Hand - Tredegar House, Newport, Wales, 2-4 December www.madebyhand-wales.co.uk

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