

Saloukee scoops BJA Award at BCTF

Designer Sarah Kelly's paper jewellery has won plenty of plaudits recently and her young business - 'Saloukee' - is rapidly making its mark in the designer jewellery and fashion markets.

"Sarah's jewellery has real innovation behind it and the execution is excellent," says the award-winning jeweller, Andrew Geogehan, who judged the British Jewellers' Association Award at this year's British Craft Trade Fair. "Coming from a precious jewellery background it was very interesting to see the designers at BCTF working in other materials. Sarah's pieces really stood out for me not only in terms of their aesthetic structure and balance but also in how well they are made."

Andrew is not alone in his high opinion of Sarah's workmanship and the commercial viability of her product. In April 2009, five independent judges from 'Shell Live Wire' unanimously voted for Sarah awarding £1000 to her business for her 'Grand Idea'. "It was tremendously useful to win this money and it will go a long way towards paying for the two consumer-facing exhibitions I am attending later this year," Sarah told JIB.

A graduate of Loughborough University, with a degree in 3D Design, Silversmithing and Jewellery, Sarah says that she has been making objects in paper ever since her GCSEs, but it wasn't until her finals that she discovered the material's full potential. "I was using paper to make 3D models for belts that I was then going to produce in leather when I became aware that the paper was an end in itself. It was more easily manipulated, lighter and more feminine. For me paper has a simplicity and tactility that other materials simply don't have," she says.

But what about durability: is that a problem? "People do seem to find the concept quite difficult, but if you are working in a quick-moving fashion market then nothing is expected to last forever. My ambition is to do more work for the catwalk and for photo shoots and the lightness and disposability of paper make it perfect for this market. On the more commercial jewellery front, in my latest designs I am mixing paper most successfully with silver and this seems to work well in terms of giving it greater durability," she says.

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The fashion market certainly seems to have taken Sarah's designs to heart, with interest being expressed by stylists for Vera Wang and by the fashion Director of the Los Angeles Times. "I have produced a number of statement pieces recently, including a large Elizabethan-type ruff and these have also been picked up by two, international trend agencies for inclusion in their 2010 predictions," she explains.

Saloukee's commercial lines are also causing a stir. These include a variety of bracelets, necklaces, brooches and earrings which were well received, both at BCTF and at Treasure staged as part of Coutts London Jewellery Week in June, with interest from The UK Fashion and Textiles Museum, Harvey Nichols and the Tate Gallery.

Sarah is currently working in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter where she has a year's workshop funded by Birmingham City Council as part of its Design Space scheme. She is planning to move to London later this year to further her career.

Saloukee's designs are available in a range of colours. Prices range from around £50 - £400.

See Saloukee at Origin, London (13-18 October) and Sieraad in Amsterdam (5-8 November).

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