

# COCKPIT ARTS 3 YEARS

Katharine Morling

- Ceramic Artist



Katharine Morling is one of the UK's most pre-eminent ceramicists, an award-winning artist working in the medium of ceramics. Using a technique that she describes as sketching in 3D, Katharine's distinctive black and white ceramic pieces combine to make tableaux staging the still lives of everyday objects. Since joining Cockpit Arts in 2003, her work has grown in reputation and scale. She has created a number of large installations for high-profile clients including the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and the Balman Gallery, and her work has inspired a dance performance at the Royal Opera House.

Katharine came to Cockpit Arts straight from graduating with first class honours in Ceramics from Falmouth College of Art in 2003. As a mature student, she was already selling her work, so she felt ready to set up a studio in London. "I looked at all the studios in the Lewisham/Greenwich area and found that Cockpit ran the best programme," Katharine explains. "I felt Cockpit had everything that would be helpful to setting up a business."

Initially, however, Katharine only felt comfortable attending the group workshops, and for four years she avoided one-to-one coaching. "When I first arrived at Cockpit, I didn't think artists had anything to do with business. I just thought it was luck," she says. She admits now that this was because she was ashamed of how little she was earning at the time. "I was afraid someone would say to me: 'Go and get a proper job'," she says. "So I never told anyone, I just struggled on."

It was when a member of the Business Development Team queried the price of one of her pieces that Katharine finally realised she needed to reappraise her business. "They suggested that I double the price," she recalls. "I sent the piece off to a show and it sold straight away. That gave me loads of confidence."

As her orders steadily began to increase, Katharine came up against another hurdle: her severe dyslexia. "I was getting really busy and finding it very stressful to read and respond to client emails and meet orders," she explains. "It's hard for other people to make the work for me," she says, "so I was encouraged to look at the parts of my business I could get help with."



Katharine joined Cockpit's Creative Employment Programme, which provides wage subsidies and management training to enable studio holders to employ staff. "Doing that course really made me understand how to work with a team and get the best out of them, by letting them work autonomously, solve their own problems and achieve things for themselves," she says.

Katharine now employs a team of three, including a studio manager who has put colour-coded systems into place for her. She also employs two technicians who are able to make some of the smaller elements of her work and can clean tools, prep the clay and tidy up the studio for her. "I've learnt now what has to be done and the division of labour is much clearer," says Katharine.

Streamlining the production process in this way has become even more critical since she recently had a baby. "I'm discovering how to run my business now I'm a mother," she says. "I've learnt to lean on my team. My time is now really precious. I need to keep making new work, and these guys enable me to focus on the creative side of the business."

Part of this creative focus includes expanding into the US market, where Katharine is currently enjoying a lot of direct sales to individuals thanks to a flurry of recent press. In order to research this more fully, she joined Cockpit's New Creative Markets programme and with her mentor, art world specialist Susan Mumford, she has started to understand how to deal with the American art market. "Communicating with the US galleries is very different to the UK," she explains. "They are much more direct and straightforward, in many ways. It's something I've had to learn to do, as we're not naturally like that in the UK."

Katharine's creative vision reaches beyond the US. She has long cherished a desire to open a large ceramics studio running art therapy-based workshops, alongside studio space for recent graduates. "I've gained so much from working quietly with the clay that I'd really like other people to experience that," she explains. It's a plan that, over the years, she has worked on with the business team at Cockpit Arts, and hopes to bring to fruition in the next year or two. "I have a financial plan in place and know exactly what we're looking for, it's just a question of when I feel back to full strength (after the birth of my daughter Florence Rose) and happy to give it some real energy," she says. "Like any large ceramics project, it's a big vision but one that I am very excited about."



[www.katharinemorling.co.uk](http://www.katharinemorling.co.uk)

Photographs: Alun Callender