

COCKPIT ARTS 3 YEARS

Sarah Marafie / Boodi Jewellery

- Jeweller



The Boodi jewellery brand is the result of owner Sarah Marafie's long-held belief that high-end fashion jewellery can still have a heart and soul. Working exclusively with fair trade and recycled materials, her designs are drawn from the natural world. Five per cent of profits from her latest collections are also donated to animal welfare charities. A newcomer to the jewellery scene, Sarah has spent the last two years working with Cockpit Arts' Business Development Team to hone her brand.

Sarah graduated in Mixed Media Fine Art from the University of Westminster in 2008. At the time she was interning part time in art galleries while looking after her son. She made jewellery in her spare time, as a hobby, from found pieces of blue pottery and sold them on market stalls. By 2011 Boodi Blu jewellery, as it was then called, was selling well and when Sarah spotted the Prince's Trust's enterprise programme for start-up businesses, she decided to apply. She was accepted on the course, assigned a mentor, and for the next two years attended workshops and networking events to learn as much as she could about running a small business. She did so well that in 2013 the Prince's Trust referred her on to Cockpit Arts' Creative Careers programme.

This two-year programme offers previously unemployed young people free studio space and the opportunity to work with a mentor from the Cockpit community. Successful candidates can also take advantage of all the free business support on offer. When Sarah arrived in 2013, she had been paying rent on a studio in Hackney Downs, so she says that the free studio space was a huge boost for her fledgling business.

At the time she arrived at Cockpit, Sarah was also considering a new direction for her jewellery. As she explains: "I used to find a lot of my pottery along the banks of the river Thames, but the mudlarking groups I went with were finding Roman coins and gold rings. I started to become interested in the history of ancient civilisations, their traditions and spiritual practises." Sarah visited the Cheapside Hoard, a spectacular collection of jewellery from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, on display in the Museum of London. "I spent hours there, looking at the beautiful gold and gemstones," she says. "It really got me inspired, and made me want to use gemstones in my work and create jewellery with a history and a story behind it."

Through one-to-one coaching with Cockpit's Business Information Manager, Imogen Gray, Sarah was able to identify the areas of her business where she needed most support. She was paired with renowned contemporary jeweller, and Cockpit alumna, Elizabeth Bone and embarked on an intensive training course to learn traditional jewellery making skills in Elizabeth's workshop. During her second year on the programme, she opted to continue with her jewellery making skills. She was given one-to-one training with Cockpit resident, fine jeweller Kelvin Birk, who taught her stone setting.



As Sarah's bench skills improved and she started to make a new kind of jewellery, she realised that her whole business model needed a complete rethink. She spent time with Imogen focussing on repositioning her brand for a new, higher-end market. This included renaming the brand and redesigning the logo and website. Fellow studio holder, graphic designer Craig Yamey, created a new logo and designed her marketing materials, illustrating the wonderful cross-pollination of creativity that goes on within the Cockpit community. Just before Christmas 2015, Sarah launched her new brand and her new website.

With the start of 2016, Sarah feels she finally has a collection of jewellery and a strong brand identity she can be really proud of. She has now graduated from the Creative Careers programme and is able to pay for her own workshop at Cockpit's Holborn incubator. 2016 will be all about marketing and selling the new Boodi brand - the world awaits!

www.boodijewellery.com

Photographs: Alun Callender