

COCKPIT ARTS 3 YEARS

Jo Hayes Ward
- Jeweller



Jo Hayes Ward is a fine jeweller whose business has grown since its conception in 2006 into an internationally renowned luxury brand. Jo employs rapid prototyping technology alongside traditional jewellery skills to create her distinctive designs of intricate, honeycomb structures and swirling filigree globes. She has exhibited with the British Fashion Council's Rock Vault and has her work in the permanent collections of The Crafts Council, The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and the Alice and Louis Koch collection in Switzerland.

Jo graduated with a 1st class BA Hons in metalwork from the Camberwell College of Art in 2001 and worked for several years for big-name jewellers including Jane Adam, Scott Wilson and Disa Allsop - all Cockpit Arts alumni. "It was great getting an insight into very different businesses working in the same sector," says Jo. "I learnt more from working for jewellers at Cockpit Arts than I ever had at college."

When, several years later, Jo needed a proper studio space to work in, Cockpit Arts therefore seemed a natural choice. "I'd already met a few of the studio holders from exhibiting with them at Goldsmiths' Fair," she explains. "I was moving into a community that I had already worked in."



"Workshops are generally not like [the ones at Cockpit Arts]," she continues. "They're often cold, wet and open. I needed somewhere warm and secure, especially as I work with such precious materials. I'm a south Londoner, so Cockpit's Deptford incubator was the obvious choice."

When she arrived at Cockpit, Jo had already started to establish a reputation for her work within the fine jewellery market. She'd graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2006 with a collection of fine jewellery that rapidly started to garner awards and attention. She exhibited at COLLECT with the Lesley Craze Gallery the summer after she graduated, and counted Electrum as a stockist. "I was already working in gold, which is quite unusual for new starters," says Jo. "Every time I sold something, I designed something new. The money went back into the collection. It was a very considered approach."

By 2009, Jo's business was growing steadily but it wasn't at a stage where she felt she could give up her job. "I was still teaching when I came to Cockpit," she says. "The first studio space I had was the size of a postage stamp. I rented the cheapest one I could afford. I've always worked within my means."

It meant that in the early years it was hard for Jo to find the time to fully take advantage of all the extra business workshops and seminars regularly on offer to studio holders. It wasn't until she was pregnant with her first child that she realised she really needed more support. Through one-to-one coaching with the Business Development Manager, she identified the need for an assistant. "We worked on a 'how to be Jo' folder together for when I physically couldn't do the job," she smiles. "It was very useful."

Jo says it has been the mid-career business coaching that she has found particularly beneficial in recent years. "As the business grew, I found I was getting less and less time to design and that's where my value is," she says. "I've been a one-man band for such a long time and it's just not sustainable, especially now I have a family. My time has probably halved since I've had kids. In order to continue growing the business, I've had to make the shift from my business being me, to something that employs me and other people. I'm Jo Becket now, and the business is Jo Hayes Ward. I've specifically taken my husband's name in order to remind me of that. I find it useful to separate the different aspects of my life."

She says the individual coaching sessions she's had with Cockpit's new Head of Business Development, David Crump, have been totally instrumental in setting up this new framework for her business. "Together, David and I looked at everything inside out, to identify the elements that were lacking in my business. He helped me to work out the kind of person I needed to support me. We wrote the job description together. I now employ a fantastic studio manager who is quite senior and very organised!"

This restructuring has enabled Jo to start focussing on growing her business abroad. In January, she took her collections to New York NOW, a massive trade show that attracts many of the major jewellery, design and museum stores in the States. "This is a big show for me," Jo enthuses. "90% of my work is currently sold in London, so I'm hoping this could really help me reach new markets."

Jo is using programmes like Cockpit's New Creative Markets and UKTI's Passport to Export to explore even further afield. In 2015, she was invited to design a capsule collection for China's major jewellery retailer, Chow Tai Fook, as part of her work with Rock Vault. She travelled to China for the project and, while there, met the buyer for Lane Crawford, Hong Kong's equivalent to Selfridges. With her jewellery soon to be stocked in Hong Kong, Jo hopes this will act as a gateway to the East and is also exploring the possibility of selling her work in Japan.



"The support at Cockpit Arts has been unbelievably useful, particularly over the last two years as my business has undergone these major changes," she says. "The focus for me now is to have a career that I love that can both feed the family and maybe allow us to go on holiday now and again! And it is doing that. It doesn't take over my home life, and my family/work balance is much more manageable."

www.johayesward.com

Photographs: Alun Callender.