

COCKPIT ARTS

Katrin Spranger

- *Conceptual jewellery designer/artist*

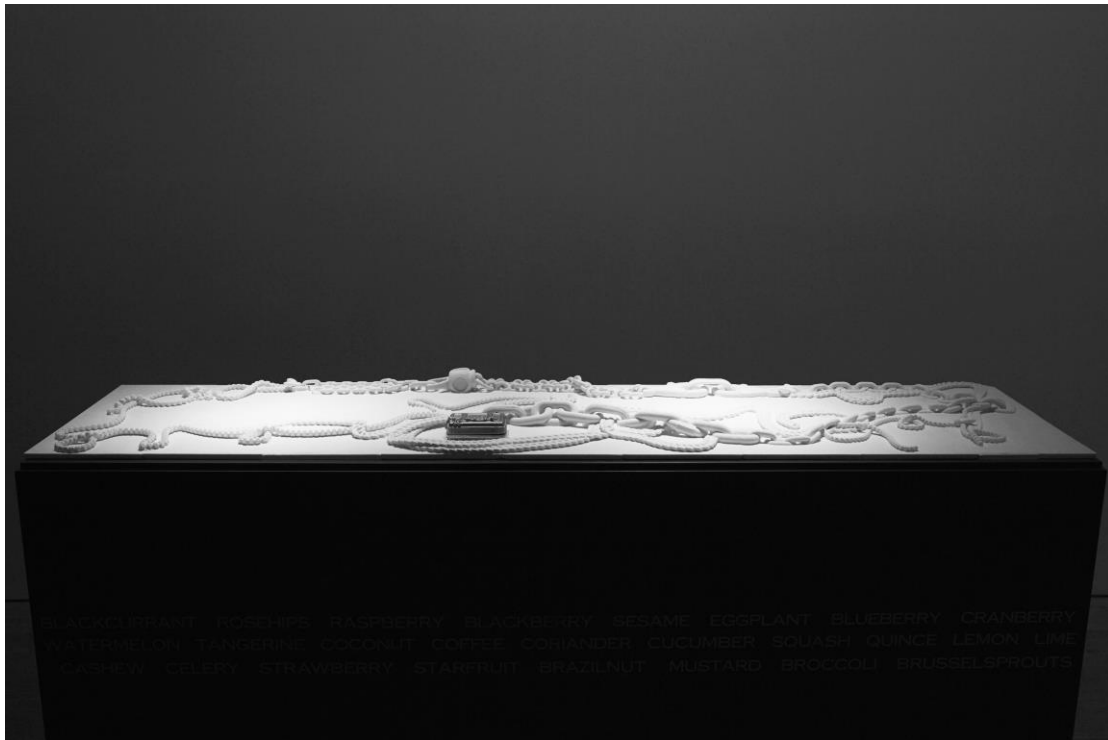


Katrin Spranger is a conceptual artist who creates sculptural pieces in response to her worldview with an emphasis on consumer culture and the environment. Hers is a hybrid practice that touches several disciplines including jewellery, fashion, food, photography, performance and installation art. She has exhibited extensively in galleries and venues throughout the world and recently received an Arts Council grant to create an installation for COLLECT 2015.

Katrin originally trained as a traditional goldsmith in Lübeck and Hamburg before doing jewellery design studies at HAWK, University of Applied Science and Arts in Hildesheim, Germany. She went on to do her Masters in Fine Art at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm and it was here that she started to take a much more conceptual approach to her work. When she graduated, she initially wanted to set up her practice in a fine art studio in London, but was turned down as it was felt her work was more design rather than art-lead. However, she was encouraged to apply to Cockpit Arts instead. "At first I wasn't sure," Katrin admits. "I really wanted to be in an art studio, rather than a craft community. Craft can have a negative connotation. But I applied because I very much liked the fact that Cockpit offered the business support and I felt I needed some support in regards to sales and marketing. Cockpit liked my work and offered me a space, and I moved in in 2013."

Working as a conceptual artist within a community of crafts people was initially quite lonely and Katrin admits to feeling isolated from her fellow studio holders in the early years. However, she has benefitted enormously from the broad spectrum of business support at Cockpit, thanks to the diverse and complementary skills of the Cockpit Arts team. This has included Cockpit's Business Incubation Programme Manager, Madeleine Furness, who previously worked at the Crafts Council and is herself a trained jeweller, and Holborn's Studio Manager, Adrian Lee, an artist working predominantly in Performance, Sculpture and Video and an associate lecturer at Central St Martin's. Both Adrian and Madeleine were on hand to offer Katrin a series of mentoring sessions, which she says she found invaluable. "Madeleine in particular really understands my practice," Katrin says. "She knows people from the art world that could be important to me."

It was also Madeleine who encouraged Katrin to apply for an Arts Council Grant in 2015. "It was a big challenge," she says. "It's not easy to get funding in London as you are competing with so many artists. The funding application form is 24 pages long. It took me four weeks to write! But both Madeleine and Dana [Segal, Cockpit's Head of Development], who knows a lot about funding, read through my application and gave me valuable feedback."



Katrin's application was successful and she was awarded a substantial amount of money to design and create an exhibit for COLLECT 2015. "I was really excited," she recalls. "It was hugely prestigious to receive this funding. It was by far the biggest grant I had ever been given and that was quite a responsibility." With the money, Katrin was able to develop *The Future of Apis Melifera* (or honey bee), an extraordinary jewellery sculpture made entirely from dehydrated edible honey. The work was created with a 3D printer together with Julian Sing, a food scientist in the Netherlands, and addressed the issue of the declining bee population and its effect on our entire food chain. At the end of the show, visitors were encouraged to interact with and taste the exhibit.

Since the COLLECT show, Katrin has developed a new body of performance art, which she showed at Cockpit's Christmas Open Studios. Entitled *'Aquatopia'*, the work comprises a number of glass water vessels that explore a science fiction narrative about the lack of fresh water supply for a third of the planet's population. She is hoping to find a similarly prestigious venue in which to exhibit this new work.



Alongside her art practice, Katrin runs art and design workshops from the Education Space at Holborn with fellow Cockpitter, jeweller Kelvin Birk. Over the years, these courses have grown in popularity and now attract students from all around the world. "It's very flattering!" she smiles. "My passion is art performance jewellery, but I generate most of my income from teaching." With this in mind, she is in the process of establishing a school for jewellery in collaboration with Kelvin. She feels that having the school based at Cockpit Arts Holborn, in the heart of the capital, will be very attractive to potential students, and they are hoping to start enrolment from the spring of 2017.

Three years since she first came to Cockpit Arts, Katrin feels she has finally found her place. "At university I used to have a lot of chats with my classmates and when I first arrived here I felt I was lacking that kind of feedback. I had no one to exchange ideas with," she explains. "It's why I really appreciated the mentoring I had with Madeleine and Adrian. But since I've started planning the school I now have Kelvin. He's my future business partner and a good friend and I feel I've found someone more like-minded. The majority of studio holders here may be very different to me, but that's all right."

www.katrinspranger.com

Photos: Theo Cohen and Jamie Trounce