

COCKPIT ARTS

Cockpit Arts / NADFAS Award – Lucy McGrath

In 2016, applications were invited for the ninth Cockpit Arts / NADFAS Award. This prestigious award aims to support professional craftspeople working with traditional craft skills, with particular consideration given to crafts requiring skills at risk of dying out.



In September 2016, Lucy McGrath was selected as the recipient of this Award and was awarded a place at a Cockpit Arts incubator for a year. The Award includes the following benefits:

- Studio space for a year within the creative community at Cockpit Arts.
- Business and professional development services including on-site coaching, a personalised development plan, workshops and events.
- A range of selling and promotional opportunities including the popular Cockpit Arts Open Studios events.
- Opportunity to collaborate with other makers in the Cockpit community.
- Access to office facilities and resource centre.

About Lucy McGrath



Sick of poorly-made sketchbooks falling apart at the seams or her pen bleeding through multiple pages, Lucy decided to take matters into her own hands and offer beautiful quality, one-of-a-kind products that would be treasured.

Paper marbling is an ancient and beautiful technique that Lucy hopes to revive, with a contemporary twist for today.

She got her first formal training in bookbinding studying Illustration at the University of Brighton, and previously worked for Cockpit Arts maker Jen Rowland, before launching her own business.

Q. What difference has The Cockpit Arts / NADFAS Award made to you and your business?

It's made an enormous difference to me in so many ways. My business has grown hugely in turnover and scope - I'm starting to explore new routes to market and ways to educate people about and involve them with marbling. I've gained huge amounts of confidence in myself as the driver of the business, and my products. I've benefitted from very insightful workshops and being in a community of supportive makers, where I've made friends and found opportunities.

Q. How has the Award affected the growth, development and/or performance of your business?

My turnover is the most obvious benefit – it has increased fourfold in just the five months I've been at Cockpit. This has enabled me to invest in improvements such as a new website and better equipment, meaning my work is higher quality and I can work quicker. I am now being approached by shops and am working with my business adviser to develop correct pricing so I can wholesale them this year.

Q. How has the Award affected the profile of your business?

I was featured in a local Greenwich newspaper after receiving the Award, which was great. I think this also helped me to secure a premium place at Greenwich Market throughout the autumn/winter of 2016. My following on social media continues to grow rapidly and I can now say I have a celebrity fan after Daniel Hopwood, of BBC's Great Interior Design Challenge fame, came to the Deptford Open Studios and was very interested in my work. He now follows me on Instagram which is very exciting for me! I also feel like other makers and craft industry professionals are increasingly aware of my business now - I've enjoyed a really fantastic welcome from Cockpit's makers.

Q. Has your attitude towards running your business changed as a result of being at Cockpit?

I feel so much more confident in my abilities and I can say that I now consider my business my primary focus rather than a 'side project'. I love my craft and being at Cockpit has given me



faith that I can make it into my profession and make a living as well. Having Madeleine Furness as my business advisor has been great as her knowledge has helped me to make decisions that have benefitted my business, like pinning down my target market and making decisions based on that rather than short term concerns and taking a wider look at my finances to develop correct pricing.

Q. Has the time you are spending on your business changed as a result of being at Cockpit and the subsequent growth of your business? Do you spend more time at work or less?

I consider this to be my greatest gift the Award has given me: I handed in my notice at my part-time job in November and am now not in a salaried position! I spend most of my time in my studio, making products and working on my business. I have a zero-hour contract now that allows me to be flexible; if I am busy, I simply don't take any shifts. I have found it hard 'allowing' myself to spend money on equipment and improvements without a fixed monthly income, but I have been challenging this and I am confident that I will see benefits in the rate my business grows.

Q. What is next over the coming 6 months?

I've just launched my new website, with plans to include a new 'bespoke book builder' in the next few months - this is an unusual thing in the e-commerce world that differentiates my site from others offering 'off-the-shelf', mass-manufactured items. After that, I will be running a series of marbling workshops (after receiving huge amounts of interest at Open Studios and my market stalls) and hope to start getting my books stocked in shops from the spring. I am very quickly reaching a point where demand for my products outstrips my ability to make it quickly enough, and soon I will have to decide whether to take on a staff member, invest in heavier equipment or outsource the book-binding portion of my work.

