

# COCKPIT ARTS

**Nadia-Anne Ricketts, BeatWoven®**  
Digital textile designer



Imagine your favourite piece of music transposed into fabric – this is the work of visionary weaver Nadia-Anne Ricketts who combines innovative digital technology with traditional weaving skills to create luxury bespoke woven pieces. Nadia's gorgeously rich fabrics offer a wide range of applications from large-scale art installations and upholstery to fashion and home accessories. Two years after joining Cockpit, her registered business, BeatWoven®, is now producing fabric by the metre and one-off commissions for the V&A, Southbank Centre and Harrods.

Following a successful career as a professional dancer, Nadia studied BA Hons Textiles Design, specialising in Weave, at Central Saint Martins. She arrived at Cockpit Arts in 2012 with a passion for dance and music and a fledgling business idea. She had been awarded a studio thanks to the Cockpit Arts/Clothworkers' Foundation Award which provided a large dedicated studio space for 6 weavers at Cockpit's Deptford incubator. This subsidised studio space has played a vital role during the formative years of Nadia's business.

'BeatWoven® has been extremely expensive to set up as there has been a lot of research and development in the early stages of the business,' explains Nadia. 'Initially I was not in a position to sell product or make any money back, so being able to keep my costs down with a subsidised studio space has helped me incredibly.'

During one-to-one coaching sessions with Cockpit's Business Development Team, Nadia was helped to successfully apply for a School for Start-ups' Launcher Loan and the UAL Seed Fund. Along with a further year's funding from the Cockpit Arts/Clothworkers' Foundation Award 2013, this has enabled her to continue to develop and research her brand.

But the real breakthrough came when Cockpit Arts' CEO Vanessa Swann introduced Nadia to Creativeworks London's Voucher scheme, enabling her to team up with two researchers from Queen Mary University of London to explore the legal and technological challenges of the business. 'I'm really grateful to Vanessa for helping me to successfully apply for this voucher,' says Nadia. 'The result of this collaboration will allow absolute assurance that I, and future businesses exploring these areas, will have a commercial concept to take forward and grow into a viable business.'



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During her time at Cockpit, Nadia has also benefitted from a raft of business support which has included group sessions with the other weavers looking into the business planning process, developing a brand story, pricing and costing and launching a new website. Nadia now has a new website and brand identity in keeping with the high-end luxury market her product is aimed at.

Nadia says the Cockpit community provides support in so many other ways too. 'I've become good friends with the other cloth workers,' she smiles. 'We share knowledge and contacts and experiences. It's a really nice environment to work in.' She has now moved into a new studio at Cockpit's Holborn incubator in central London, a location that she feels will really benefit her business. 'Being at Cockpit has given me structure, guidance and a level of professionalism. It's a fabulous platform for me in terms of PR and marketing, plus it has allowed me to have a reputable hub from which to deal with suppliers, manufacturers and clients,' she says.

BeatWoven® goes from strength to strength. Having launched her fabric by the metre at Designer's Block in Milan in early 2014 she was then invited to showcase her work at Harrods during the London Design Festival in September. This was the first time Harrods had taken part in the London Design Festival and the Beatwoven® brand was positioned as a new talent alongside big names such as Tom Dixon, Zaha Hadid and Bethan Gray. Nadia's range of cushions and exclusive fabrics for Harrods then continued to be stocked in the Fabric Library on the Third Floor.

The Southbank Centre commissioned work as part of its Summer 2014 Festival of Love. Based on Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, which was used as the theme music for the iconic romantic film *Brief Encounter* and played by the London Philharmonic during the festival, Nadia created a large-scale art installation which will hang permanently in the Royal Festival Hall's member's bar. This was accompanied by a capsule collection of exclusively designed silk scarves, cushions and textile art pieces for the Southbank Centre shop.

Nadia was selected as a key future name in British craft by Corinne Julius to feature in her curated Future Heritage stand at Decorex 2014, a show renowned for the very best in luxury design. Julius said 'All the people I have selected make beautiful, interesting, intelligent pieces and push the boundaries of techniques and making.' Meanwhile, Nadia's work was also on show at the Digital Encounters exhibition, part of the Crysalis Moving Textiles series, at the UCA's Herbert Read Gallery in Canterbury.

Beatwoven® has gained some impressive press since launching, including coverage in Financial Times How to Spend It and FT Magazine, The New York Times, Crafts Magazine, Coolhunting, and House & Garden.

The support and access to funding that Nadia has received has taken her on a journey from her initial idea on arrival at Cockpit Arts in 2012, to a viable business that officially launched at the 2014 London Design Festival. She said looking back on 2014 'It has been a busy second year for me involving huge amounts of research, development and submission of funding applications. September 2014 was the turning point when I can start shouting about what I am doing with a product and production line I am confident with,' says Nadia proudly.