

Watches & Jewellery



Clockwise from left: Cockpit's Open Studios; Yen Duong; Jonathan Burton; Ute Decker. Below: a gold brooch by Huimin Zhang. Sophie Hubert/Alan Calder



The craft hub providing 'therapy' for jewellers

UK-based charity Cockpit claims to offer a unique environment for nurturing artisans, writes **Kate Youde**

"If I have any question, whether it's about shipping to China, working with a gallery in India [or] how does that metal react with this, I just need to walk down the hall and I have [many] experts," says artist jeweller Ute Decker. "And I can solve my problems in five minutes." She is speaking about how she benefits from the "cultural infrastructure" of Cockpit, a social enterprise that supports London-based jewellers. The charity is marking its 40th anniversary this year with a fundraising auction, including a pair of earrings by Decker, next month. It is one of several activities Jonathan Burton, Cockpit chief executive, hopes will raise awareness of, and engagement with, the organisation

that he claims is "unique" internationally in being a business incubator dedicated to craft. Its aim, he says, is to support makers to have "sustainable, professional" practice.

Cockpit provides studio space in two London locations (Bloomsbury, near the Hatton Garden jewellery district, and Deptford), professional development programmes and one-on-one business coaching to 173 craftspeople, who have combined annual sales of £7.5mn. Jewellers account for more than a quarter (26 per cent) of these makers, the largest proportion of the 25 disciplines represented.

Its main public-facing activity is Cockpit Open Studios, held every summer and winter. It is at this selling event from June 4 that the organisation will run a silent auction of 40 pieces donated by makers. The winter Open Studios will feature a display of pieces featured in an upcoming book telling Cockpit's history through 40 objects by current makers and alumni.

Ben Massey, chief executive of the National Association of Jewellers, says Cockpit plays a "distinctive but an

important role" in the sector. "What it does do is bridge this gap between education, professional practice and marketplace," he says. He adds that Cockpit celebrates craftspeople "in a way that there's a lot for the rest of the country to learn from" in terms of having a "unique community that allows businesses to start and develop", keeping skills in the UK.

"When makers are together that's when they can often feel the most creative and the most reassured and the most empowered, the most confident," says Massey. He adds that it is essential in less certain times that small businesses can "share challenges", describing the community at Cockpit as "a real superpower".

Alongside peer support, Decker benefits from the business advice, calling the business coaches her "therapist". "They're really good at asking ques-

tions," she says. "They don't tell you, 'Oh you should be doing this, or you should be doing that.' They ask, 'How does that fit with this? What are the priorities?' ... It's invaluable."

Goldsmith Huimin Zhang, who joined Cockpit Bloomsbury last year, says Cockpit Open Studios enables her to share a "more detailed" look at her work by showing tests that came before a final piece, and the equipment and gold wire she uses.

"Most of the people see my work just when I do a fair outside [Cockpit] or when I put something on my Instagram, but they don't know about how I make it," says Zhang, who has a filigree brooch inspired by a friend's journey through breast cancer in the collection of London's V&A Museum.

One in seven applicants for a Cockpit studio is successful. Burton says the organisation seeks makers who not only have the skills and quality, but a "singular voice". Other resident jewellers include the award-winning hand engraver Castro Smith and Jacqueline Cullen, who specialises in Whitby jet.

Cockpit, which had an income of £1.31mn in the year ending March 31 2023, supports 40 makers each year who receive an award or bursary entitling them to subsidised studio space and business support. This support tapers over the course of the award. Its annual impact report, launched this week alongside a short film and exhibition staged as part of London Craft Week, said £1 invested in Cockpit generated £5.90 in gross value added.

"Lord knows, it's tough enough to make a living in craft, and being an independent jeweller is no different," says Burton. "So, for us, a measure of our success is being able to see how our makers' practice evolves, that their businesses are successful, that they achieve recognition in their field... whether that's being able to identify those that are collecting their work, where it's being retailed, institutions that are purchas-

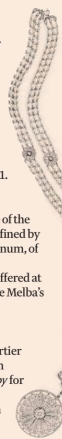
ing work for permanent collections and indeed press [coverage]."

Looking ahead, he says the organisation, which partners with other charities on education and community workshops, will continue to develop its services for makers in response to market shifts. Given the "gloomy" economic atmosphere over the past 12 months, he says Cockpit is exploring new opportunities for makers to sell work or raise their profile. He says there are "plans to take work out of the building" to retail in a gallery context.

There will also be a new mentorship scheme. After nearly 30 years at Cockpit, jewellery designer Yen Duong is giving back by supporting two younger makers who would not currently be accepted by Cockpit in their own right. She will pay them to work for her and will offer them expertise; they can use a shared studio and equipment for their own designs. "It's a two-way system where they can also enable [to] support themselves, but it also enables them to develop their business," says Duong. This approach, she adds, is "almost creating a microsystem" of Cockpit.

Sale strikes high note with Cartier necklace

Bonhams is offering a Cartier sautoir that belonged to the celebrated Australian opera singer Dame Nellie Melba. The seed pearl and diamond piece (right), dated around 1910, is estimated to fetch £60,000-£80,000 in the auction house's Exceptional Jewels, London sale on June 11. Jean Ghika, Bonhams' global head of jewellery, says the sautoir "reflects the elegance of the Belle Époque era, a period defined by the revolutionary use of platinum, of which Cartier [was] an early pioneer". The piece is being offered at auction for the first time since Melba's ownership. She died in 1931.



Great Scott
Christie's sold an art deco Cartier sautoir that featured in a film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* for SFr444,500 (\$568,200) in Geneva this week, against an estimate of SFr240,000. SFr400,000. The emerald, pearl and diamond long necklace was a special commission for a client created in 1925, the same year F Scott Fitzgerald's novel was published. Actor Lois Chiles wore the piece as Jordan Baker in the 1974 film of the book. In the same Magnificent Jewels auction, Christie's set a new auction record for a blue-green diamond. The largest fancy vivid blue-green diamond graded by the GIA, the 5.5-carat Ocean Dream (right), fetched SFr13.6mn, against an estimate of SFr7mn-SFr10mn.

Fish tales
Portuguese jeweller Rosior will present a selection of one-of-a-kind pieces at the Treasure House Fair on June 24-30. The brand's presence will mark its first participation in a London fair. Founded in 1978 by José Manuel Rosas, the family-run house is now led by his daughter Graça and son José. Designs are made from platinum and 19.2-carat gold. Unique pieces being displayed at the annual fair, held at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, include a pair of whimsical fish earrings set with diamonds, emeralds and sapphires, and Candy earrings featuring pave diamonds and rubies.

Portable reserve

Marie Lichtenberg's new pendant collection is designed as an irrevocable response to the recent soaring cost of gold. Gold Weights, launched online earlier this week, comprises pendants in yellow or white gold that are available in three sizes: micro, baby and jumbo. The pieces replicate the hexagonal form of the Paris-based fine jewellery brand's locket pendants but do not open. The weight of the metal in grammes is engraved on the base. Imagined for "use in case of emergency", the jeweller describes the pendants as "a portable reserve—an elegant insurance policy suspended from a chain".

Dance moves

Kiki McDonough is launching the first part of a new ballet-themed collection on May 28. Thorns and Roses is the first of three "acts" in Night at the Ballet, which is inspired by Tchaikovsky scores. It comprises 32 designs made in 18-carat gold and set with portrait-cut gemstones. Reflecting the romance of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the palette of stones includes pink tourmaline, Morganite and rubellite, soft lilac amethyst and green tourmaline. The UK brand, which was previously inspired by *The Sleeping Beauty* for the Classic Double Ovals core collection, will release the next two parts later this year.

Fine Brush

An exhibition dedicated to the late American artist and jeweller Daniel Brush will open in Paris on June 8. L'École, School of Jewelry Arts will show more than 75 jewels, paintings, objects and sculptures in the retrospective *Daniel Brush, the Art of Line and Light* at Hôtel de Mercy-Argenteau until October 4. Some of the works are leaving the self-taught artist's New York studio for the first time. Brush's wife and collaborator Olivia Brush and the jewellery historian Vivienne Becker are curating the monograph, which will explore the connection between jewellery and art.

Making waves

Graff has introduced a new design code for the UK house with the launch of three high jewellery suites for its London boutique last week. Pieces in the Radiant Waves launch feature a

geometric V-shaped wave motif formed from round white diamonds set in white gold. Each suite, showcasing either Mozambique unheated rubies, fancy intense yellow diamonds or white diamonds, includes a necklace and a pair of matching earrings. While the motif takes its cue from waves, the jeweller drew broader inspiration for the designs from the concept of repetition and flow in nature.

Links of love

Elisabetta Cipriani Gallery is to show the final jewellery design the sculptor Sophia Vari created before her death three years ago. The London gallery is presenting *Liens d'Amour* (Links of Love) as part of an exhibition of about 20 of the Greek artist's works, being staged between May 20 and July 3. The necklace, made from ebony, 18-carat yellow gold and orange-red coral, was completed in 2023 and produced in an edition of three plus two artist's proofs. The display will include Vari's Plastiline prototype for the necklace as well as her drawings and maquettes.

Eye opener

Jessica McCormack's new summer capsule collection introduces pendants that display some of the diamond jeweller's signature motifs. Medallions, launched last week, includes designs for five pendants in 18-carat gold—an eye, a spiral, a flower, a burning heart or a swallow. These pieces, crafted in the brand's London workshop, feature white diamonds set in blackened white gold. The capsule also includes two one-of-a-kind pendants, plus four styles of necklace made from hand-carved elongated beads of lapis lazuli, yellow gold beads, diamonds and blackened white gold.

Echoes of deco

A new fine jewellery collection from Rachel Boston explores line, movement and repetition through gold and white diamonds. Echoes, which the London-based jewellery designer unveiled yesterday, comprises necklace, pendant, earring and ring designs that are available in 18-carat yellow, rose or white gold. Many of these feature a double rub-over setting, meaning the diamond is framed twice by a layered gold border. Some of the pieces set with diamonds feature a combination of different cuts. The collection features a subtle art deco influence, for which the brand is known.

Kate Youde

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