

## Giving with meaning, by Cockpit Arts Buy one-of-a-kind gifts and help ignite a creative recovery with new Makers' Market



Aimee Furnival's fun Mini Models enliven any shelf, desk, terrarium or window sill for just £10.

Some 47% of jobs in the craft sector are at risk due to the economic ravages of Covid-19. Committing to a creative career is a risky endeavour at the best of times; sustaining one in the midst of a global pandemic as youth unemployment reaches a four-decade high is nigh on impossible.

Creativity, they say, thrives in the face of adversity and, for Cockpit Arts' community of 146 London makers, a new digital winter festival offers a vision of renewal and a more inclusive, creative economy.

Central London's only dedicated craft studios, Cockpit has proved itself to be a resourceful, resilient and socially-minded incubator of new talent for three decades. In any other year, the makers based at its two sites in Holborn and Deptford would now be looking forward to welcoming as many as 6,500 visitors through their doors for an Open Studios Christmas event. But 2020 had other ideas.

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Faced with the impossibility of operating the event as usual, Cockpit Arts CEO Annie Warburton and her team have adapted the Open Studios concept to create a winter Makers' Market, a new online marketplace and digital event to showcase and sell 500+ products crafted by Cockpit's gifted makers.

## Cockpit Makers' Market



Lucy McGrath working in her studio. Photo by James Winspear.

**Over 100 makers and 500+ contemporary craft products, from £3.65 – £5,800**

Going live on Thursday 26 November, the Cockpit Makers' Market provides a vital retail platform for makers – as well as giving the public the chance to get their hands on exceptional craft gifts for Christmas.

Cockpit has always been the destination to discover fresh talent on the cusp of career success – and the new online emporium features virtuoso makers across the spectrum of craft disciplines: from contemporary ceramics to fine jewellery, from hand-printed cards to handwoven textiles, and from bespoke leather goods to

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bespoke kitchen knives. There are a host of more unusual disciplines, too, including millinery, mosaic and Moroccan Zouac painting.

*“Cockpit is one of a kind – and our makers are too. Our new platform brings together in one place Cockpit’s gifted community of makers and the stunning works they create. With an immense variety of items available – in price range, product type and craft discipline – its appeal lies in the ability to seek out one-offs found nowhere else. It’s the place to come for gifts with meaning and soul.”*

– Annie Warburton, CEO, Cockpit Arts

The items on offer have been selected to suit all budgets, from splash-out collectible artworks (think: exquisite pieces shown in the likes of the V&A) to readily affordable stocking fillers, smashing any preconception that high-end craft is just for those with deep pockets. For this event only, pieces on offer will include a number of ‘studio exclusives’ – items created especially for the event and unavailable anywhere else.

Spoilt for choice? Cockpit has enrolled style insiders to share their picks. The Cockpit Edit is a glimpse into the gift wish lists of taste-makers including TV’s Jay Blades, design editor David Nicholls, bespoke womenswear entrepreneur Maggie Semple, London’s Deputy Mayor of Culture Justine Simons, author and ex-Vogue editor Alexandra Shulman, and photographer Robert Taylor.

Every purchase has the potential to make a difference to the maker’s livelihood at a time of intense pressure. In an era when the ‘Amazonification’ of gift giving seems unstoppable, for those starting out, it could make the difference between them staying the course or giving up on their talent.

As author Anna Lappé puts it, “Every time you spend money, you’re casting a vote for the kind of world you want.” The Makers Market offers the opportunity to do something good: buy a truly special one-off gift whilst ensuring a gifted maker has the best chance of sustaining their career.

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## Featured makers



Majeda Clarke is one of 144 makers based in Cockpit Arts.

Cockpit makers represent the full breadth of contemporary craft talent, including:

- Rough diamonds with unique character by **Tamara Gomez**
- Conceptually playful jewellery by **Joy BC**
- Blankets woven in Wales and inspired by Bangladesh by **Majeda Clarke**
- Ancient textile techniques are given a fresh face by artist **Jacob Monk**
- Handwoven fabrics using silk and merino by **Charlotte Grierson**
- A rebellious journey told in handcrafted leather backpacks by **Candice Lau**
- Intricate stories and stitching by **Ekta Kaul**
- Sculptural wooden vessels with organic surfaces by **Eleanor Lakelin**
- Material exploration in porcelain by **Helen Johannessen**
- Sculptures inspired by the physicality of Northern Ireland from **Simon Kidd**
- Gestural glass and illuminating vessels by **Michele Oberdieck**
- Spectacular wearable art made from recycled acrylic by **Juliette Stuart**
- The ultimate guide for green-fingered friends by **Aimee Furnival**
- Personal stories and meditations on material malleability from **Darren Appiagyei**

The full list of participants will be available on the website.

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Left to right: Two pieces by Joy BC, then Tamara Gomez.



Majeda Clarke, Jacob Monk and Charlotte Grierson.



Candice Lau, Ekta Kaul and Eleanor Lakelin.

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Helen Johannessen, Simon Kidd and Michele Oberdieck.



Juliette Stuart, Aimee Furnival and Darren Appiagyei.

## Impact of Covid-19 on craft businesses

As the pandemic hit, it was CEO Annie Warburton's intent to keep the community of makers based at Cockpit together while stabilising the 35-year-old charity to stem a critical loss of jobs. As in any year, there have been comings and goings, but Cockpit is still 144 makers strong (a loss of just two in total) and supports a total field of 300 jobs. That's a remarkable achievement in light of how many Cockpit makers have, like many independent sole traders, fallen through the gaps of most Government support.

Although no sector has been left untouched, the impact of the pandemic on the creative industries has been harsher than most. One of the UK's success stories – previously growing five times faster than the UK economy as a whole – the sector has been hit twice as hard as the wider economy. An Oxford Economics Report forecasts £1.5 billion a week in lost revenues for the creative industries, with London projected to experience the largest drop.

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More than 400,000 jobs are at risk in the creative industries as a whole. While media attention has been on the devastating impact on the performing arts, makers aren't immune from this cultural catastrophe. Dominated by microenterprises and small businesses, the craft sector faces critical job losses forecast to be as high as 47%.

Lockdown has left craftspeople and makers with difficulty obtaining materials due to slowed or broken supply chains compounding the effects of closed exhibitions and limited opportunities to sell their work. For those in the early stages of their career, many of whom are subsidised with funding awards, this has been potentially career-threatening.



Studio space is essential for makers like Francis Pinnock. Photos by Alun Callender.

Cockpit moved fast as the pandemic hit, taking action to bolster its community of makers by slashing already-subsidised studio fees whilst keeping the studios open and safe. With most of its staff furloughed, a remaining team of two went all out on fundraising so the charity could maintain significant discounts until the end of the year. Since then, it has adapted to new communication platforms to maintain its

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business support programme with one-to-one coaching and expert workshops supporting its makers to adapt and survive.

*“At a time when my year’s worth of exhibitions, selling events and teaching commitments disappeared overnight, having the support of the Cockpit Arts team meant that I didn’t feel isolated or overwhelmed. Thanks to the support of the business incubation team and rent discounts I was able to steady the business in the initial rocky phase of lockdown and put new strategies in place to strengthen it. All this has resulted in positive outcomes and I am facing the challenges of our current times with confidence and optimism.”*

– Ekta Kaul, maker at Cockpit Arts Holborn

Measures such as these have given Cockpit makers space to pivot and adapt their practices, exploring alternative income avenues such as running online workshops and craft tuition, and channelling their skills into the production of PPE for local hospitals and healthcare trusts during the first wave.

There is no question that the creative sector is still very much under threat, and that many independent makers are struggling with uncertainty, but the forward-thinking approach taken by Cockpit Arts has enabled the organisation and the makers it supports to remain upbeat and optimistic for the future of craft.

*“These last six months have brought about a universal reappraisal of what we value: the importance of community, how we spend our time and where we spend our money. Slowing down as we locked down, we rediscovered the pleasures of making – with a renewed appreciation of the exceptional skill of people who’ve dedicated themselves to their craft.*

*No matter how modest the gift, buying direct from an independent maker is a bold choice for a better future, one no longer dominated by global corporations. It’s a statement of belief in skill, care, and the enduring power of creativity as a force for good in the world.”*

– Annie Warburton, CEO, Cockpit Arts

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Kintsugi jewelry tray by Ya Wen Chou.

## Notes to editors

For more information about Cockpit Arts' winter event, the participating makers, the products available, or the other ways in which Cockpit is supporting the craft sector in the age of Covid, please contact Emily Ward at [emily@zetteler.com](mailto:emily@zetteler.com).

### About Cockpit Arts

Home to 150 independent businesses, Cockpit is London's leading studios for contemporary craft and the UK's only business incubator for makers. With a focus on new talent, Cockpit equips makers with the tools, know-how, space and encouragement to pursue their dreams. It offers dedicated studio space combined with in-house business support to enable them to start and grow successful practices.

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As a charity, Cockpit supports 30 new makers every year with free studio space for 12 months, along with equipment, such as looms and kilns, and in-house business coaching to give them the best chance of success. These bursaries are highly sought-after, with upwards of 25 applicants competing for one place for some awards.

This support is vital for a more equal creative sector. The risk, in the face of the impending recession, is of a massive talent drain, especially of those without the support of wealthy families, as early-stage creatives face stark choices to struggle through on scant income or give up on their talent.

Cockpit is one of the 100 top-performing social enterprises in the UK, recognised in 2020 for the second year running on the NatWest SE100 Index (the social business equivalent of the FTSE100) and a finalist for the 2020 SE100 Impact Champion Award.

On 16 November 2020, CEO Annie Warburton will be recognised by WISE (Women in Social Enterprise) as one of their selected 'extraordinary women in extraordinary times' for her leadership through Covid.

Cockpit is a charity: a donation [here](#) is a direct gift to supporting new young talent to thrive.

[cockpitarts.com](http://cockpitarts.com)