

Georgina Brett Chinnery

- *Sculptural leatherwork*



Birds hover and perch around the studio of Georgina Brett Chinnery, a leather worker who creates startlingly lifelike sculptures. With a background in upholstery, she exploits traditional leather working techniques to create unique objets d'arts. She arrived at Deptford in 2014 as an awardee of the Cockpit Arts/Leathersellers' Company and has spent the last two years refining her work and repositioning it for the art market.

Georgina studied 3D Design at St Albans School of Art and subsequently went on to learn the craft of upholstery. Using her training and skills she started to create her own, very unique bespoke furniture. "It's never just been straight upholstery," she smiles. "I always have to introduce other elements like pleating or a hand crafted rose to the piece." These pieces went on to sell at Liberty and to private and commercial clients around the world.

Georgina was upholstering a pouffe in velvet, complete with a large pleated rose, when she decided the piece might work well in leather. It turned out to be a eureka moment. She embarked on a leather-decorating course, learnt the skills of gilding and tooling and created a collection of sculptural pieces entitled Flora and Fauna. In 2011, the collection was exhibited at the Project Space at Collect. "I knew what I was doing was very unique," she explains. "Right from art school, my interest had always been in sculpture, so it was a natural progression for me to work more sculpturally with the leather."

When she moved to Deptford in 2014 her sculptural work was still in the early stages of development. The Cockpit Arts/Leathersellers' Award provided subsidised studio space and access to the on-site, fully-equipped Leather Hub studio. Her time at Cockpit has been about developing a coherent body of work that she can confidently market to the art world.

As part of this development, Georgina enrolled on Cockpit Arts' New Creative Markets programme, where she was introduced to art expert and mentor Susan Mumford. "She was amazing," Georgina enthuses. "Our one-to-ones were more than useful because of Susan's insights into the art side of the market."

Georgina has also benefitted from coaching sessions with Cockpit's Business Development Manager, Madeleine Furness, who has been helping her to research her market and understand how to build her profile. "It's been a big learning curve," Georgina admits. "Pricing, for instance, is really tricky. It's a completely different market to the interiors world I was used to selling into."



Georgina knows her work is very niche, and is also extremely time-consuming to produce. "Everything I do is hand made. It takes forever to create and sculpt my pieces," she explains. With access to the Leather Hub at the Deptford incubator, she has been able to speed up some of her processes, using the specialist equipment to thin her leathers. By the end of 2015, Georgina had a collection of new work ready in time for Cockpit's Christmas Open Studios. "I finally felt I had a body of work that sat well together," she says, "not just a hotch potch of designs." She sold a pair of exquisitely lifelike kingfishers at the event. "It's interesting that these were the pieces that sold at Open Studios," she says. "With the kingfisher sculptures I'd introduced colour into my work for the first time. Some people love the crows, but not everyone likes that gothic look. As soon as I introduced colour into my work, it immediately appealed to a wider audience."

Georgina has since been in discussion with Charlotte Bowater of art consultants Guided. Charlotte agreed with the customer feedback Georgina had from Open Studios, and felt that her coloured leather work would indeed open her work up to a broader market. "Although I make speculatively, so people can see what I do, ideally I would love to start making more to commission," Georgina says. She hopes that if Guided take her on, this dream will be realised.

But for now, there is still a lot of work to be done on refining the collections. "I need to have the work in order and properly photographed before I embark on the business development side of things," she says.

Georgina still runs an upholstery service from her workshop at home in Hastings, commuting to her studio in Deptford several times a week. She shares this light, airy space with sculptural ceramicist David Marques. "I prefer a shared space. It's quite a solitary environment otherwise, making on your own. It's great to be around others to talk about ideas and pinch each other's sweets - David's always got good biscuits!" she laughs.

Despite the commute, Georgina feels that her studio at Deptford has been enormously beneficial to her work as an artist, not to mention the prestige of being part of Cockpit Arts. "Having a studio here has certainly made me focus a lot more, and hone in on the sculptural art side of my practice," she says. "I've put a lot of hard work in over the last two years. Now it's about getting it out there."



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