

COCKPIT ARTS 3 YEARS

David Marques

- Ceramic artist



David Marques is a ceramic artist who creates beautifully intricate work for both large-scale art installations as well as collectable objets d'arts. Born in Switzerland of Portuguese origin, David worked for many years in Geneva's watch and jewellery industry. He draws on this background in his art, working with painstaking precision at every stage of the making process, from conception through to design and production. He has worked on major installations for Portugal's leading porcelain and crystal manufacturer Vista Alegre and the Outpatient Oncology Clinic at Charing Cross Hospital for Cancer Research UK.

David was first introduced to Cockpit Arts while he was studying at Central Saint Martins. "We were told Cockpit had one of the best open studio events," he says, "so I came to one with a group of my fellow students. I was really impressed by the quality of the makers' work. It all looked very professional and well organised - you could see that through the website too."

After graduating in 2013 with a 1st Class BA Hons in Ceramic Design, David did a summer residency at Vista Alegre in Portugal before returning to London to set up his practice. Initially he was in a studio space in Camberwell, but he felt it didn't suit his needs. "I was feeling very lonely there," he admits. "There was no business support and hardly any interaction with the other makers. There was no sense of community and I found it very isolating."

A visit to the Deptford Open Studios was the impetus he needed. "I immediately loved Deptford," he says. "I loved the atmosphere and the building and the set up. I felt very inspired from a creative perspective."

David was accepted for a studio at Cockpit's Deptford incubator and arrived in July 2014. It was a serendipitous move as he had just been commissioned by Cancer Research UK to create a large installation for Charing Cross Hospital's Outpatient Oncology Clinic. His new studio provided the space and light he needed to realise this large-scale installation. He now had room to lay out the individual porcelain elements, then stand back and see how the artwork was developing as a whole.

The project was a hugely ambitious undertaking and David says he didn't have time to tap in to any specific one-to-one support during his first year at Cockpit. However, he was able to attend some of the workshops, which he found really beneficial. "When you attend workshops with fellow studio holders you realise people are having the same issues as you and you feel less alone; you're not the only one that's struggling!" he smiles.

It's clear that David feels a keen bond with the other makers he works alongside. "At Cockpit Arts there is a huge sense of community from day one," he says. "People are super friendly. It's great to see businesses at very different stages. There is a positive energy going on all the time. You see people being successful, exhibiting, selling their stuff and that gives you momentum," he says. "And when you have a technical issue you can ask. People are really willing to help and give you time and that's an amazing resource."



In 2015, David began to meet Madeleine Furness, Cockpit's Business Incubation Programme Manager, for individual business support. "Madeleine challenged me to write a business plan and create a financial structure," he says. She also encouraged David to break down his practice and look at different ways of working. He's now in the process of developing new products on a smaller, more commercial scale. "In response to Madeleine's feedback, I created Mini Tiny, a series of four small porcelain pots that scale down in size," he explains. "It's my first retail project and means I can sell something and have a different interaction with customers."

David launched the pots for Cockpit Arts' 30th anniversary Open Studios in the summer in a limited edition colourway. "They sold well and got a very good response from customers, which was really rewarding," he says. This he feels is the beauty of Open Studios. "I will have an idea in my head for a project, but Open Studios gives me a deadline, something to work towards."

In fact, David's latest work has also been designed and made specifically for Cockpit's upcoming Christmas Open Studios. The installation, entitled 'Jewellery For The Home', is a ceiling-hung sculpture made up of a series of brass and porcelain elements that look like spinning tops. It can be custom-made for the client, with the elements easily adaptable to multiple sizes, lengths and colour schemes.



David is very excited about its imminent launch. "Cockpit Arts Holborn is in WC1, a premium space for displaying your work to the right audience. This is a cross-site installation, so I have to adapt the piece for two different sites [Holborn and Deptford] over the two weekends. Where else would you get an opportunity to get feedback from two different audiences within two weeks? No gallery would be able to provide that!"

Over the last year, David says his practice has completely changed thanks to the support he's received at Cockpit. "It gives you a backbone to your business and a structure which helps you feel safer," he explains. "It actually enables me to be *more* creative, because I now have these steps in place which I have built with Madeleine's help." He has also been lucky enough to secure a larger, sole-occupancy space at Deptford. "I didn't think I would ever get such a studio," he enthuses. "It's a dream!"

Feeling more stable and focussed in his work, David is now more confident in being able to grow in a sustainable way – and to do so at his own pace. Not that this means he's standing still – he feels ready to seek out the right clients and collaborations and is rightly thrilled about the future prospects for his unique work.

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Photos: Jamie Trounce