

CREATING HEIRLOOMS

Jewels made from found objects, Jayne Fowler's designs are both sustainable and beautiful. Contemporary works of art that will become treasured family possessions passed down through generations

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When I look down at my hands, I see stones set with stories inside, spanning decades. The way that I hold my pen, the movements my fingers make in the air have a sense of déjà vu – my rings have a past life that existed before me. Jewellery which has been passed down, like any tale, has a sense of history. It differs from clothes in that it's harder to box it into a trend and is, rarely, throwaway.

Thinking of jewellery, the usual assumption is of something shiny, maybe a commercial silver ring packaged in either generic Argos packaging or a Tiffany & Co. blue box. However, when I walked into Jayne Fowler's studio I was hit with the industrial side with creating a memory. A jewellery designer who views herself as an artist. "It's what I am before anything, before being a businesswoman and all the marketing, sharing and branding."

There is a thick smell of paint courtesy of the other resident artist, Tom, who shares what appears to be a converted annexe in Tooting with Jayne. There are screwdrivers and equipment splayed across workspaces,

thick boots in the corner and knick-knacks from years ago.

Jayne offers me a coffee, while walking around wearing a dark beret, an aubergine jacket with gold swirls, faded from hanging from a vendor's peg in India. Our first topic of conversation is one we naturally fall into: how sentimental jewellery can be.

If I was to describe Jayne's designs (and what she's wearing on her body), I would say her creations are rather chunky, with a hint of Victorian era, as well as using stones that resemble friends and fossils of the earth. Her distinct style at such an early stage of her career is one which many emerging creatives heavily desire.

She did a BA in jewellery and silversmithing at the Kensington and Chelsea College in 2011 and continued when her tutor pushed her to further her jewellery skills at The Cass, part of London Metropolitan University. Though she wasn't fussed about university, still believing it can sometimes be wasted if the student is doing it "for the sake of it", this is where her metalwork began to have characteristics of

their own, which she just "ran with".

Jayne's graduate collection *Materials of Accord* comprised nine statement necklaces, the steel taken from a piano heading destined for the scrap heap. Each necklace used a different technique through cuttlefish casting – an ancient, process-led way to ensure no detail can be the same.

While Jayne explained the technique for cuttlefish casting – "You can only use the mould once and, instead of setting the stone, you have to select one that can take the heat and fuse the gem into it" – I could envisage her in her south London studio until 3am (which happens when she's in a "good flow") and smell in the air the graft she puts into producing something imbued with so much meaning.

Her debut collection has a soft spot in Jayne's heart, especially as *Materials of Accord* is the foundation of her present makings and a time when she could just create without thinking of the business side of running an independent company.

Foremost, Jayne sees herself as an artist. She recently fulfilled her dream to visit India,



"An artist is what I am before anything, before being a businesswoman"

specifically the renowned jewellery hotspot Jaipur, to learn more about polishing stones. Jayne's work is a labour of love and her tunnel focus for her craftsmanship is refreshing.

A self-defined "car boot and charity shop hoarder", Jayne explains, "one collection has led to another", and as her commissions come mainly from friends and friends of friends, each individual piece seems so, too.

However when I ask which piece of jewellery means the world to her, Jayne

instinctively brings up her family heirlooms, such as her parents' gold wedding bands, and what was passed down to her after losing her father at a young age. "If they go missing, I'll freak out over it."

She also recalls a ring with a large amethyst passed down by her late aunt, which she lost at a party: "Ah, if I had that now!" When I ask if she has ever thought about recreating it, she says although she's never worked with amethysts before, maybe she has subconsciously been trying

to recreate that ring all along. "I don't sit down and think 'I'll make that now'. But now you've mentioned it, I probably will."

Jayne's designs emit powerful female energy. Her work – commissioned or not – has a trace of melding, preserving and passing down generations of lives lived. Her anecdotes are filled with women and circumstances, which she looks at as a jewellery box half full rather than empty. "One of the pieces from my graduate collection, 'Tessellation of Myrtle', was →



“It will become an heirloom that she will pass down to her daughter”

created after my nan. She lives in Spain and has arthritic hands with all these amazing lines and shapes I drew around. I then shrunk down the shapes to create the piece.

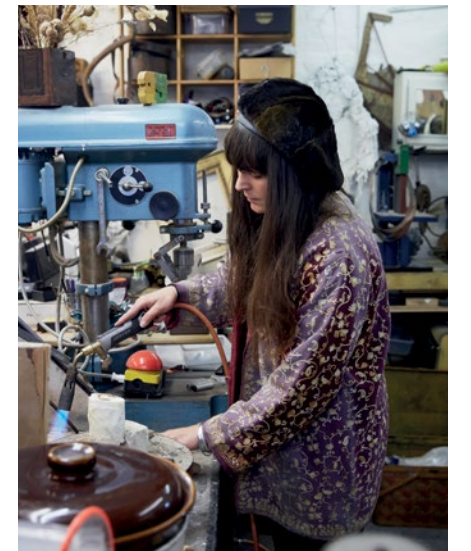
“A girl approached me because she had two bangles: one for special days from her sister and another from her best friend. One was hollow and bent in a car crash and the other had a broken clasp. I’m combining them to make something special. And since that’s personal, it will become an heirloom she will pass down to her daughter.

“I’m creating another bangle at the moment, with three stones, representing a mother, daughter and grandmother.”

And the stories continue. Yet a central – unexpected – thread was how important sustainability is to Jayne, from creating necklaces using the steel of a piano to working out what to do with the remains of her cuttlefish casting. When I ask what the future looks like, Jayne’s response is to remember that this lifestyle choice was for fun. To dedicate one day a week to “creating for creating’s sake”, and to work in a space built completely sustainably. “That would be the real favourite.” ♦

You can buy Jayne’s jewellery at jaynefowler.com and find her on Instagram @jaynefowler

Below: Jayne is melting down the silver to pour into a cuttlefish mould – an ancient jewellery making process



The ‘Tessellation of Myrtle’ piece inspired by the wrinkles on Jayne’s grandmother’s hands

