

Featuring a new Edinburgh business – We Make

We Make is a new business situated at 18 Montrose Terrace. It is a lovely bright space with a working area to the rear and a space at the front which can be used for retail or running craft workshops.

Anna Bowes is one of the trio of owners of the business. She made me a lovely cup of coffee one day recently to tell me more about the business and her own ceramics business in particular. (And yes the coffee was served in a beautiful hand-made cup!)

There are three strands to the business, Anna's is A.M. Ceramics which are hand made items like cups and plates that you will really want in your home. Lucy's is Polymorphics and she makes lovely simple geometric things like earrings and plant holders which you will also love. The third is Amy's business BertyB and The Edinburgh Craft Club. She makes cards, wrapping paper and stationery using local suppliers.

A.M Ceramics

Most of Anna's pottery is wheel thrown, but some of it is 'slab built' which she explained to me means just rolling it out with a rolling pin. The wheel thrown pieces take a 'heck of a long time'. One piece, from filling a kiln to firing it, could take a couple of weeks. Anna explained : "Each piece is thrown then first has to dry, followed by trimming. Then there is an initial firing which can take twelve hours, then the pieces need to be glazed to finish them off with another final firing too."

Anna admits she is really impatient and sometimes opens the kiln far too early.... She admits : "It is too tempting not to just check! When the pieces go in to the kiln, the glazes are matt. My blue glaze is actually purple before it goes in so you don't really know how its going to look until it comes out – and no there's no window in the kiln!"



We Make owners Lucyna Batura, Anna Bowes and Amy Buchanan. Their shop, studio and workspace is on Montrose Terrace, Edinburgh. *PHOTO Greg Macvean 07971 826 457*

She continued the explanation of her pottery, saying : "I use white earthenware because it is really white and the aesthetic is very important to me. It is a very smooth clay and because I throw a lot I need it to be quite elastic – and also I like my pieces to be quite thin. That is a good clay to use as it doesn't need to be fired at very high temperatures."

Anna's hanging planters are popular with visitors to the shop, but all her pieces are decorated with blues and greens on a white background and so are fresh and clean-looking. All of these mugs and plates are meant to be used. She explained : "I use the white earthenware so that the colours really pop onto the background ,but I am about to start using red clay as well. I use a lot of cobalt in my blue glaze."

Her inspiration comes from the way that cobalt blue (and the green she uses) have been used to decorate ceramics for hundreds of years. She told me : "It was one of the first colours used on ceramics. Willow pattern uses cobalt blue and it is a really pure colour. I am trying to do a contemporary take on those old colours."

Anna studied ceramics with her Danish granny who lives in the Highlands. In a previous life she was a chef, but has turned these new skills into her own business. The pieces she makes are functional earthenware, and there are lovely mugs and plates which would grace any kitchen table.

She explained that she became an apprentice ceramicist for a time : “I learned most from my granny She has been showing me things for a long time, and I picked things up during my childhood. I used to help her go to shows – packing up and setting up, and I used to help her prepare her clay too which is a big part of the process. It was good to see the things that she made, especially what worked and what didn’t. So I learned a lot like that and then she took me on as a student for four months. It was full on learning – yes, she was a hard taskmaster. There was no false praise which is quite hard to take when you are learning.”



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Her granny does very different kind of work to Anna however. Anna continued : “My granny makes huge sculptural pieces – really imaginative pieces that are inspired by the landscape, so it is very different to my work. But she also does really beautiful functional ware, made of porcelain which are absolutely beautiful. I aspire to be that good but it takes a long time!”

We Make will also run a mix of workshops led by the owners Lucy, Amy and Anna and a range of external tutors.

Polymorphics

Lucy makes wooden resin cast objects – geometric wooden planters and candle holders and is moving into Jesmonite which is a kind of resin. She can use it to mix her own colours and it has the feel of concrete or stone. She makes lovely earrings as well as planters and candle holders and all of her items are really lovely to the touch – so you have to go and visit to see what her products are like!

BertyB and The Edinburgh Craft Club

Berty B designs is a lot of colourful prints and stationery including wrapping paper. Amy’s business runs alongside the Edinburgh Craft Club which has been in existence for about a year now, running workshops in all kinds of spaces across the city.

We met Amy Buchanan who told us a little about her business too: “I studied print and textiles. I used to do a lot of screen printing on fabric and make household items like cushions and lampshades, but recently I’ve moved away from that.

“Now I’m doing a lot of paper stuff – so cards and prints and wrapping paper. It’s just a bit of a change for me but still

using surface pattern as a basis for that. It's always had a retro feel and I think it was more kind of 50s previously – I'm kind of trying to go forward slightly I'm taking a bit inspiration kind of maybe more 1980s in some of the patterns.

“But it's always about colour – I've actually recently just started using black which I've never used before.”

You can see some of Amy's lovely items in the shop and in our video below.

All three creatives came together after two of them shared a studio, and all three met at markets, got talking and decided to pool their resources so that they could all co-exist under one roof.

We Make aims to be open every weekend from 10.00 -2.00pm – and they will open by appointment and for workshops.

Upcoming workshops include sessions on weaving and an arm knitting workshop as well as others teaching you how to make necklaces or lampshades. The workshops are run for about 7 or 8 people so it is quite a bespoke session and you will undoubtedly learn lots from the experts!

You can book any of these sessions on the [website](#).

As well as this the owners of We Make are offering you a weekend of free space so that your creative business can pop up in the shop. There are four weekends to choose from and you will get your own display and get full use of their window – the more creative the better! For a small sales based commission you could have your own shop during We Make August Take Over. [Entries close on 30 June 2019.](#)

Website – www.wemakeedinburgh.co.uk

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