

Muswell Hill Creatives

Designer Maker Collective

One of the first invites I received when I put the word out about the magazine was from Muswell Hill Creatives, a collective of female designers and makers who have joined together to promote their work and support each others' development. The group is collectively promoted by Rachael Booth-Clibborn who was instrumental in its formation. I travelled up to Muswell Hill to meet Rachael and a few of the group in one of their houses and then popped to Crouch End to meet others in their work spaces.



From L to R:
Helen Snell : 20th Century Cloth (5)
Isabella Lepri : Isabella Lepri Ceramics
Jess Albert : Artist / Illustrator (1)
Lito Apostolakou : Inklinks
Rachael Booth-Clibborn : Founder
Tania McLaren : The Kitchen Table Florist (2)

Liz Harrap Horton : Liz Harrap Horton Cards (3)
Samantha Sweet : Samantha Sweet Glass (4)

So, Rachael, how and when did Muswell Creatives come into being?

Rachael: It all started in October 2014, I've known Jess for a while and I knew she was working on some artworks at home, then Isabella popped up doing her ceramics in her house and I just started to think... mmm, there seemed to be something happening here. My background is PR and marketing and I did a bit more digging and soon discovered other women who were doing creative things locally, but everyone was working on their own and trying to build their business. So I got a few of the people together and we sat and chatted about whether there was value in us creating a kind of co-operative.

By the end of that meeting, we decided to have a sale very soon after, which we did in a friend's house...a big house! And it was great - we had between 250-300 people come along and it was a really successful sale. Some of the designers were more experienced in terms of doing shows and sales and were able to help those who were just setting out. It was a really positive experience.

On the back of the sale we set up a facebook page and a twitter account and since then we've got ourselves set up on instagram. Then we started to think about formalising things a bit, so that if we were to attract new members, they would know what they were buying into. We now have a set of criteria that people need to satisfy before they can join the group. But we've decided to keep the group to a maximum of twelve to keep things manageable and

whilst we haven't set out to be a women only group, that seems to be where we've ended up. But we'd happily welcome male designer makers in the future.

Tania: It's good for us to keep it as a relatively small group because a lot of it is about supporting each other, if the group got too big that might not be as easy to do. There are some people in the group, like Michele, who have been working independently for a while and she knows about tax issues and some legal stuff and she's able to help the rest of us on those things. It's a very supportive environment.

Rachael: We had one meeting when all we talked about was insurance! It's good for everyone to have that practical support, but we're also about encouraging and pushing each other creatively and I think everyone benefits from that.

Helen: We're also kept informed of what shows are coming up, Rachael has been great at sourcing and collating all that information and also in taking on all the PR and marketing for the group, which is really useful.

So, what are the objectives looking forward ?

Rachael: When we first met up our ambition was not just to be known within Muswell Hill. We want to celebrate the creativity that is within the area but also take it to a wider audience. It's been quite organic, but we are starting to build a bit of a profile. There's no concrete



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Isabella: We have talked about setting some kind of turnover within the group, so when a member feels that they're sufficiently established they can strike out on their own - fledge the nest of the group as it were. And we do have one member who has done that and she now has her own shop. And that makes way for new members to join.

Jess: I don't want to bang on about the mum thing, but we are all mums and we've all spent the last ten years of our lives raising children and we've all reached the stage where we can work more now and we desperately want to key into our creativity again.

Lito: Most of us met in the school playground and we were all nursing this ambition to get back amongst things creatively. Many of us had careers before having children but gave them up to raise our families and that can be quite isolating. Then of course, setting up your own business can also be quite isolating, so to have eleven other people in the same boat to call upon for support and encouragement is fantastic. Hopefully, what we're doing might inspire other people in different parts of the country to do something similar.

Do you feed off each other creatively?

Jess: Yes, we do. We post things on our internal facebook page and we invite the other members to comment or help us choose

from a few options. In fact, I took a picture a while ago of some mushrooms when I was out walking and I posted them in our forum and they provided some inspiration to Liz to make some linocut designs for her cards. And Michele, the jeweller and Rachel who is the bag maker have collaborated on some key-rings. So, those collaborations are just starting to happen.

Isabella: I feel that my design level has gone up several notches since I joined the group and much of that is down to the support and advice I get from the others in the group.

Rachael: I think everyone within the group is just starting to find a level in lots of different areas, in terms of defining and understanding their market, how their business works and what their price points are. There's a collective uplift in confidence and knowledge that is great to see. Ultimately, the objective is for everyone to make money and to create a sustainable business. We're learning and growing all of the time...it's quite exciting!

And so, with coffee and cakes devoured, Rachael and I move on to Crouch End and the Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre where other members of the group have their workshops.

Check out the group at www.muswellhillcreatives.com



Michele Wyckoff Smith

Wyckoff Smith Jewellery

Michele is a contemporary jeweller, she works out of her studio at The Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre in Crouch End. Her jewellery pieces are influenced and inspired by the effect time takes on natural materials. She collects smooth stones, weathered metal and organic materials that have developed subtle textures and simplified shapes as the ravages of time alter their appearance. These time treated treasures become the inspiration for her gold and silver jewellery.

www.wyckoffsmith.com

www.hthartscentre.co.uk



Shelley Zetuni

Goldust Millinery

Shelley trained with Mrs. Rose Cory, the former milliner to the late Queen Mother, for two years, before gaining a distinction in millinery at Kensington and Chelsea College. All her pieces are handmade in her studio in Crouch End. Using traditional millinery techniques, Shelley fuses contemporary styling and materials with an individual and vibrant signature to create pieces that are wearable, striking, elegant and modern. She's also a big fan of David Bowie!

www.goldustmillinery.com





Lito Apostolakou

Inklinks

Lito Apostolakou, the maker behind Inklinks, creates unique mixed media objects for lovers of the written word. Trained as a historian at King's College London, her work is inspired by the materiality of writing and the many meanings of texts. Her paperweights combine found British pebbles with antique stationery, ink and graphite. Lito's creations combine her love for words and their multiple meanings with her lifelong propensity for collecting pebbles. Paper, ink, graphite, words and images come together on the surface of the stone to create yet another hi(story).

www.inklinx.weebly.com



Isabella Lepri

Ceramicist

An anthropologist by training, Isabella has always enjoyed making things and when she encountered ceramics in 2007 it was love at first touch. She learned about pottery at London's City Lit, and with North London potter Ricky Grimes. She set up her home studio in 2013. Her work is inspired by the tradition of British Studio Pottery.

In her choice of forms and textures she values simplicity and spontaneity and allows the work to develop organically. Each piece is hand thrown and glazed with traditional, lead-free glazes; each is unique and functional.

www.isabellalepri.com





Lucy Chapman

Printmaker

Lucy Chapman is a printmaker who lives and works in London and prints at East London Printmakers. Lucy's approach incorporates photography, painting and drawing, which she transposes into screenprints. She produces small runs of prints. Much of Lucy's work is of London. She is interested in documenting the passing of time in the city and exploring the relationship between a place and its inhabitants. Being on foot and walking the city is a big part of what Lucy does. She sometimes returns to the same scenes after they have changed, or features old pieces of industry that have become redundant.



www.lucychapman.co.uk