

MEET THE MAKERS



The London and UK-based independent creators who are carving, stitching and painting a name for themselves

Words GRACE CAIN

HARLIE BROWN STUDIO

Witty, hand-built tableware

harliebrowstudio.co.uk

“Clay was never just a hobby, it was a form of medicine,” says ceramicist Harlie Brown of her eponymous design studio on the Kent coast. “I find it therapeutic to work with my hands in such an organic way.” Brown’s desire to create functional art translates into playful, experimental pieces, such as her signature Wiggle mugs and jugs with their comfortably tactile finish and distinctive coiled handles. Each is completely unique thanks to Brown’s preferred technique of hand-building. “It allows you to create more organically; you’re not forcing the clay to do what you want by throwing it on a pottery wheel,” she explains. “It also means you can create batches where each piece is totally different to the next, but they can all sit together without looking out of place.”

If the Wiggle established Brown’s quirky style, her French plates elevated it to a new level. Hand-painted by her husband Dan, these designs are rooted in the couple’s love of France. They made their first, *Le Crabe*, during lockdown when they could see (but not visit) their favourite destination across the Channel from their home in Deal. Now, the plates are among Harlie Brown Studio’s most popular products; keep an eye on their social media and website for one-off designs, which you can purchase directly from the studio. “When you buy from an independent maker, you know how much stress, tears and joy has gone into each item,” says Brown. “Supporting them means they can continue to create freely and complete the work they love.” The brand will soon launch new products in Heal’s, as well as a collection in LA’s Pierce & Ward, plus, there’s an upcoming collaboration with a major retailer due to drop early next year.



ROBSON STANNARD

Expressive, multi-tonal paintings

robsonstannard.format.com

When Robson Stannard came across the fashion illustration course at the London College of Fashion (UAL), it was one of those ‘meant to be’ moments. “I’ve always had a love for fashion and art, so I thought this was exactly what I needed to do,” he recalls. While the London-based artist acknowledges Matisse and Hockney as sources of inspiration, he credits the documentary *Francis Bacon: A Brush with Violence* for encouraging him to take the gestural, abstract approach that has become his signature. “It completely transformed the way I paint.” Since graduating in 2017, Stannard’s distinctly expressive, multi-tonal fashion portraits proved an instant hit, and he was invited to join Liberty London’s Artist in Residence programme. He also shares an ongoing creative relationship with Nick Knight’s SHOWstudio, which began over seven years ago when he was first invited to join its roster of illustrators at New York Fashion Week.

More recently, Stannard’s work has expanded beyond portraiture to include non-figurative explorations of colour and form - specifically, flowers. It’s some of these pieces that adorn the walls of the Velvet Bar at The Corinthia hotel, which was redesigned last year by David Collins Studio. “Creating artwork and being a part of the design process for The Corinthia was magical,” says Stannard. “The team at David Collins Studio was beyond helpful and really informed the work I created for the space.” Stannard sells a selection of original pieces on his website, including homewares such as platters and coasters hand-painted in his signature floral style, and he’s also available for illustrative commissions in London.





GATHER

Exuberant, hand-blown glassware

gather.glass

“In my experience of glassmaking, it is all-encompassing,” says Phoebe Stubbs, founder of London-based glassware brand Gather. “There’s a sense of getting to grips with the whole: you get to experience the immense satisfaction of the small completion of a thing.” Stubbs has been glassblowing for over 17 years, but Gather was born in 2020 when she found herself missing production glassmaking and the feeling of gathering with friends around a table. The pandemic is also at the root of her kaleidoscopic style, as she explains, “After all the gloom, I wanted the glassware to be abundantly joyful.” That philosophy is certainly evident in Gather’s work - vibrant, candy-bright glasses, jugs and vases in hot pinks, neon yellows and bright greens which blend the decorative with the functional; not least the latest collection, which takes inspiration from the candied sunset tones of Miami (made to order pieces are also available).

Glassblowing boasts a rich tradition spanning 2,000 years and many of the processes and tools have hardly changed in that time - something that is very much at the heart of Stubbs’ connection with the craft. “Working with glass feels deeply historical, but also excitingly elemental and primordial because of the extreme heat.” For her, supporting independent glassmakers is key to helping them evolve their craft and in turn train the next generation. “It’s a small but rewarding ecosystem to be part of,” she says. “I want to keep the skills alive because I love the way it feels, and I want other people to experience it.” And you can - Stubbs’ hot glass studio in Woolwich offers a variety of classes for all abilities.



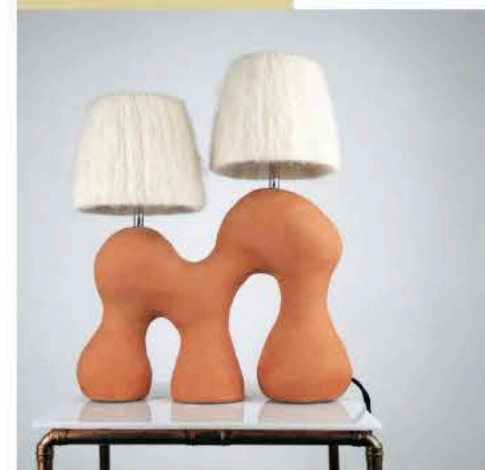
HANNAH SIMPSON STUDIO

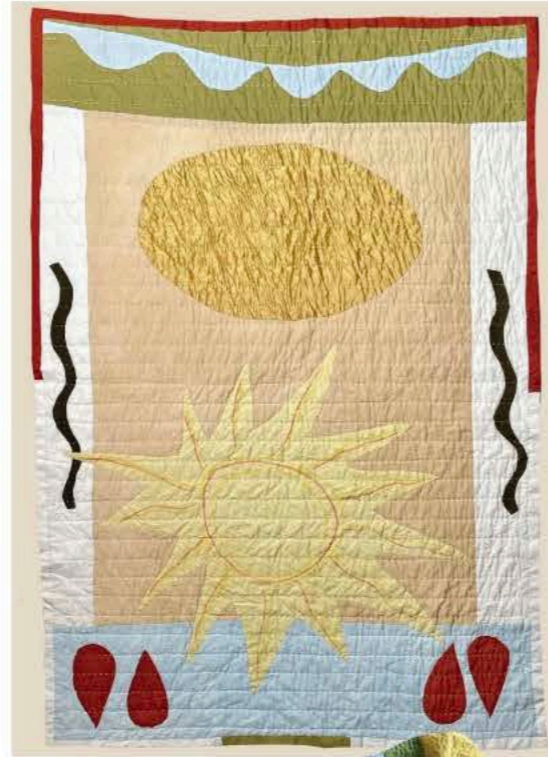
Playful statement ceramics

hannahsimpsonstudio.com

Who wouldn’t want to adopt a friendly little monster from Hannah Simpson Studio? From sculptures filled with personality to lamps and vases that look as though they could step across your table at any second, Simpson’s ceramic creations take inspiration from the sculptures of Franz West and the art of the surrealists (Desmond Morris is one of her favourites). Simpson’s business started as a hobby and therapeutic outlet during a stressful time: it was 2020, and her mother had bought home an old kiln. She started creating monsters as a tangible representation of her negative thoughts, transforming them into something humorous and approachable. “Clay comes from the earth, so it’s a grounding material by nature,” Simpson explains. “I can lose myself in the joy of making the forms. Then it will all change in the kiln, which can either be extremely humbling or rewarding! You have to learn how to control your emotions when working with ceramics.”

Since then, Simpson’s work has been picked up by the curated online boutique SSENSE and exhibited in galleries around the world - one of her sculptures was recently selected for the Royal Academy’s Summer Exhibition. Today, Simpson has a team of four people working in her west London studio. “One of the things I enjoy most is being able to give more people the opportunity to be creative every day,” she says. “Independent makers are so important as they produce work that has a meaning and a story. We need to celebrate individuality and stop chasing trends - buying items you love from small businesses is a more sustainable way of living.”





TESSA LAYZELLE

Abstract applique quilts

tessalayzelle.co.uk

“Practical paintings” is the name that artist Tessa Layzelle has given to the abstract large-scale quilts she hand-stitches in her Yorkshire studio. “I source deadstock, upcycled and remnant natural fibres where possible, often dyeing and painting in small batches,” she explains of the process. Having formally trained as a fine artist, Layzelle taught herself the art of quilting by studying traditional embroidery practices from around the world - think Japanese Sashiko and Indian Kantha - as well as 17th-century wholecloth quilts from the UK and USA. “For me, these techniques are about connection and curiosity - when you see the maker’s hand in a work, you start thinking of the person and the materials,” she continues. “Supporting independent makers means these objects of connection can continue to circulate.”

She describes her vibrant aesthetic as “windows of imagery” borrowed from popular culture, nature and painting - particularly 20th century Modernist art. “I was very inspired by other artist mothers, like Sonia Delaunay and Barbara Hepworth, who made their best work while looking after their babies,” she says, explaining that it was the birth of her own son that drove her to start quilt making in 2012. “I was eight months’ pregnant and wanted to continue painting - not so practical with a new baby on the way. Quilts enabled me to work large scale, to play with colour and composition and, crucially, to fold it away.” Although Layzelle creates collections (her winter range will drop on her website in late October, and you can also buy her work at Couverture & The Garbstore in Notting Hill), she mostly focuses on bespoke pieces for clients and interior designers, including Christopher Farr Cloth, Studio Peake and Buchanan Studio.



Daisy Wingate Saul

GRAIN & KNOT

Organic wooden homewares

grainandknot.com

Sophie Sellu was not always a woodcarver - once upon a time, she was a busy trend forecaster for a major fashion retailer. “I needed a creative outlet away from my computer screen,” she recalls. “I started wood carving as a way to keep my hands busy and express my creativity.” After facing redundancy in 2014, she made the decision to turn her hobby of crafting spoons into a full-time job: thus Grain & Knot was born. Working out of her studio in New Cross, south east London, Sellu uses traditional hand tools and techniques to create functional homewares from reclaimed and storm fallen timber, all of which she sources locally and sustainably. Organic and tactile in look and feel, her sculptural vases, brushes and kitchen utensils may have that aesthetically pleasing minimal appeal, but they are all designed to be held and used on a daily basis. It’s her choice of material that makes each one truly unique. “Wood is so varied: in look, tone, pattern and smell,” she says. “It’s also incredibly versatile, sustainable and grounding.”

Over the years, Sellu has garnered an impressive following in the world of wood-making - her carving workshops always sell out fast. But Sellu’s business model remains inherently slow and thoughtful. She releases collections seasonally and will also accept commissions, but she only makes around ten pieces every day. “I think any independent maker is doing something special,” she says. “They put their soul into each piece to create something that tells a story.”

