



ALL IN THE MATERIALS

Bennita shares the secrets of her luxury homewares' successes

Having graduated in 2017 with a Masters in Design (Mdes) from the University of Brighton, Bennita has since been working on her own product company, making luxury homeware pieces from her small home-studio based in Hassocks, just on the outskirts of Brighton.

While at university, Bennita learnt about a range of material disciplines that included ceramics, metalwork, woodwork and polymers. These experiences enabled the expansion of her knowledge in materials and different process methods while having the time to develop ideas and test out prototypes that she has continued to develop in her own practice.

Now a self-employed practitioner, Bennita continues to grow as a maker producing handmade, original products that reflect individuality by combining function and aesthetics. She does this by using both traditional and modern craft techniques to design new, unique products.

Currently specialising in Jesmonite, Bennita also produces her own handmade silicone moulds from original masters that are then cast from. Jesmonite is a concrete-like material that, once mixed, coloured and cast, is then left to dry for a minimum of 24 hours. This is then sanded to a soft, smooth finish and painted with a clear sealant, resulting in a water and stain-resistant surface that allows each product to be hard wearing and versatile to accommodate a

range of uses. Being a material that is relatively undiscovered in the product industry, the use of Jesmonite adds to the originality and uniqueness of each piece, designed and made exclusively by hand.

Bennita also offers a limited collection of ceramic and cork storage pots originally designed as an accessory to The Kitchen Collection. Each piece is handmade by Bennita on the pottery wheel, glazed and then completed with an air-tight cork.

Living in the Sussex countryside, Bennita takes inspiration for colour and patterns in her work from the natural surroundings and seasonal changes in nature. This develops throughout the year with ever-changing colour palettes.

With less than a year in production, one of Bennita's biggest achievements to date has to be selected from over 9,500 applicants as a finalist in Liberty's Open Call 2018 competition to find "the best untapped interior design talent in the UK". Her product that was entered, Stackable Storage Dishes, will proudly be on display alongside the other 12 finalists in the London Regent Street store during Craft Week in May.

Bennita said: "With over 9,500 entries, I honestly cannot believe that I made it through to the final and feel so privileged to even have been in the shortlist, let alone a finalist." Discussing her entered product, Stackable

Storage Dishes, Bennita said: "Combining function and aesthetics, this unique product can be used to store a variety of items in a brilliantly tidy, decorative way, either working as an individual dish or stacked together in multiples.

"Handmade using a material called Jesmonite, the dishes are available in a wide range of colours, marbles and patterns, designed with the influence of nature and seasonal colour trends. Jesmonite is a concrete-like material that, once cast, is sanded to a soft, smooth finish and sealed, resulting in a water and stain-resistant surface, allowing the dishes not only to store objects, but plants also."

She has since accepted an invitation to exhibit her product Stackable Storage Dishes in their Liberty Open Call 2018 Exhibition which will take place in their Store on Regent Street during craft week in May. The exhibition will reveal to the public the winner/winners among the other finalists.

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