



Marisa Arna of the Arna Farrington Gallery and studio in Thorpe-le-Soken is already well known for her ceramic pieces, and last year set up a jewellery studio. She tells us about her work...

I set up the ceramic studio and shop with my husband, selling my work, ten years ago. In 2004 we started showing work by other artists and craftspeople, mixing local talent with that from other British regions.

Since I was a teenager I've always had a yen to make precious metal jewellery. I ended up working with

ceramics, though, which I very much enjoyed. A couple of years ago I went on a short course of LEA evening classes taught by local silversmith and jeweller, Richard Whitehouse, but I was still very busy working with porcelain and running the gallery. The opportunity came when I had to slow down with my ceramics because of recurring back problems as a result of years of throwing pots.

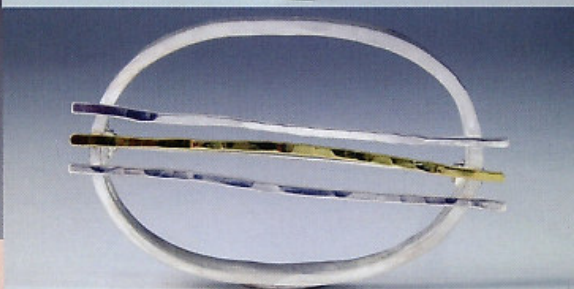
I started making silver jewellery, and enjoyed it so much I set up a studio in no time. I am largely self-taught in ceramics, so it didn't feel odd for me to go through the same process in

another discipline. I was offered a stand at British Craft Trade Fair in Harrogate in April to show my jewellery. Then a solo exhibition by firstsite @ the Minorities followed; I was "Maker of the Month" in June. I've just come back from a short course in Anti-clastic Raising in London. Both in my porcelain ceramics and my jewellery I concentrate a lot on shapes and on various textures. Their combinations can create a subtle yet stylish effect.

I work with sterling silver, some of it with 18ct gold details. My work ranges from neckpieces, bangles, earrings, to cufflinks and other men's jewellery. Most of the silver jewellery has a characteristic pearlescent, white "fine silver" look with polished edges and details. Quite a lot of my work is commissions. Just as with my porcelain, with my jewellery I aspire to a high standard of work. I make each piece of jewellery to be worn so, unless it is an exhibition piece, this is a very important consideration when designing it.

After having worked for years with something as pliable as clay, though temperamental and unpredictable





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when it comes to porcelain, it certainly feels different working with metal. The working process needn't extend over a long period of time. You can see the results while you are working on a piece rather than having a few worrying days waiting to see what comes out of the kiln! I like the immediacy of metal; it has opened new horizons for me. I enjoy seeing people's reaction when they try on the jewellery; it is a much more personal experience.

I use combinations of geometrical patterns for some of my designs. I have always lived near a coast; we also love having lots of plants in our

living and working spaces, so some of the shapes and textures associated with the natural world seem to have surfaced in my work.

The three pieces I am most proud of were quite challenging to start with. The first one is an elaborate necklace. I had the idea for the whole piece in my mind, but making it proved to be quite difficult and expensive because of the amount of silver involved. The second one is a pendant. The design had to be changed several times until I finally came to a design that was appealing to me and feasible to produce. When I made it and looked at it I knew straightaway it was going to be

the final version. The third one, a bangle I made without even first putting a design on paper, took days before the trade show in Harrogate. All three are amongst the best-sellers (pictured below).

At the moment I'm working on a commission for a large one-off ring in the shape of a flower, and a set of jewellery for a bride, both quite demanding in different ways. New work to add to my collection for a trade show in Surrey in September, other commissions. And, of course, work to be sold at our gallery and other outlets. With autumn coming and Christmas the busiest time I hope I will be busy in the studio.

Marisa Arna's work can also be seen at: in Essex, firstsite @ The Minorities, Colchester, and Felsted Studio, Felsted. Bonner's, Stow-on-the-Wold. FG2, Quorn, Leicestershire. Aberdeen Art Gallery shop. Nearer to Christmas up-to-date information website.

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