

# A passion for silver

By Miriam Hanid

I began my journey into silversmithing at the age of four, when I often loved to paint and draw. One day I used the spiked end of a large umbrella to 'engrave' bold letters and curved shapes on to the hallway wall of our family home. I was pleased with my outpouring of self-expression but it was to be some years before I was to experiment with engraving again!

At school I pursued my love of painting, and gradually moved towards a 3D approach by working in mixed media, adding collaged elements to oil paints, watercolours and oil pastels to produce textured pieces. On reflection, the bold colours and designs at this time in my life shaped the style of my current work and allowed me to more fully explore my creative approach.

My introduction to 3D work was through an A-level art project in which I created a triangular Art Nouveau-inspired lamp in leaded glass. I instinctively felt that 3D work was what I wanted to pursue and after my A-Levels I began studying for a degree in Three Dimensional Design (Metalwork and Jewellery) from the University College for the Creative Arts at Farnham, graduating in 2007.

While at Farnham I was introduced to chasing and repoussé and began working with large sheets of metal, approaching the pieces freely, as I would with a painting. From 2007 to 2008 I attended the Post-Graduate Training Course for Jewellers and Silversmiths at Bishopsland. This was a milestone on my creative path, and is where I developed the chasing and forming techniques that have since become my signatures.



Working on the Radiance Centerpiece



Detail Radiance centerpiece



Undulations, fine silver, 68x39x12 cm

In 2009 I spent a week studying engraving with Malcolm Appleby, which I found to be transformative – full of new experiences and approaches to working with silver. He introduced me to the hand-engraving technique that has enabled me to add unique highlights and at times intricate detail to my pieces. As a member of the Hand Engravers Association, and through the Goldsmiths Company Master Craftsman Internship Scheme, I have been fortunate to travel to Malcolm's workshop most summers and be inspired by his original use of silversmithing and his engraving skills.



Whirlpool Rosewater Bowl, fine silver, 40x40x9 cm

I have been working as a professional silversmith since 2008, creating pieces for private clients and public institutions including the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, New College Oxford, The Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Museum of Wales.

My work has been exhibited in numerous exhibitions across the UK and internationally, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, Kunsthalle Wurth, Germany and Liang Yi Museum, Hong Kong ; 'Collect' at the New Saatchi Gallery; The Worshipful

Company of Goldsmiths, London, The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; Inorghenta, Germany; Petronas Towers, Malaysia; and Häme Castle, Finland.

In 2009 my signature Whirlpool Rosewater Bowl was awarded a Gold Award in Chasing and 'Best Junior' Award in The Goldsmiths Craftsmanship and Design Awards .

In 2010 my large centrepiece 'Undulations' was awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the public's favourite prize in the Schoonhoven Silver Award, The Netherlands.

In 2012 I was asked to produce an engraved silver band as part of a dressed walking stick that was presented to the Queen for her Diamond Jubilee. In Kenya exactly sixty years earlier in 1952, my great-grandfather made two gifts for the



Engraved band on a walking stick for Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Commission , Drapers Company

Queen when she visited the country. I feel honoured to be part of a lineage of craftsmanship and engineering within my family.

In March 2018 my *Radiance Centrepiece* won gold in 3 categories – the Chasers Senior, the Senior Award and The Goldsmiths Company Award, as well as a bronze in Silversmithing Design.

The essence of movement in water is the main inspiration for my work. I feel that it is synonymous with love in all its physical and metaphorical representations. In water there is an endless, never repeating range of forms and patterns, each with its own unique and intricate beauty, giving me an infinite visual language with which to express my ideas.

Water makes up life – it flows throughout nature and is part of all living things. For me this also represents divine love, all-permeating and free-flowing among beings and the other boundless possibilities of life.

Among the questions that I ask myself in my work are: “What can I learn from nature?”, “What is the significance of nature’s perfection?” and “What resonance do I feel from it?”

These ideas manifest themselves in visual themes that relate to nature such as the waves, ripples and reflections found in water, layers of sedimentary rock, and the subtleties of texture and pattern found in wood grain, snowflakes and frost.

I find silver the ideal medium through which to express my ideas as it is sensitive to heat, moisture, movement and emotion and is multi-dimensional just like water. Silver can be fluid to work with, reflects 98 per cent of light and can even look transparent – as such I see it as the perfect material for translating into various flowing shapes and forms. It allows me to imbue my work with a sensuous quality which can also communicate my



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Radiance Centrepiece, Britannia silver, 50x50x5cm



Accepting the rewards for the Radiance Centrepiece, March 2018





Cascade jug, Britannia silver, 28x18x18 cm

message through touch. Both the tactile surface of worked silver and its light-reflecting properties enable me to express the subtlest nuances in the natural forms that inspire me.

I enjoy creating organic shapes in silver using embossing techniques such as chasing, repoussé and forming to coax the material into contours with a series of punches. I use wide nylon punches to bring about deep curves and fine steel tools to define specific areas.

I often enhance my silver forms with engraving, which allows me to introduce intricate detailing, drawing the viewer further into the piece. The polished steel engraving tool highlights the silver's spectacular properties by projecting glints and shimmers across the finished area, often in contrast to the rest of the piece.



Pixie box, Sterling silver with black and lemon gilding,

Through these specialist techniques I represent water – and its subtle yet powerful ability to shape the landscape – and other aspects of nature, interpreting these transformations and impressions by carving and peeling away fine layers of material.

Finished pieces of silver function in multiple ways, often as practical vessels or objects, but always I hope as works which are alluring to the viewer both visually and from a tactile point of view. Most of all I hope to encourage an emotional response and a connection, to evoke a sense of movement, of life force, of energy and to share the joy which I derive from the visual world around me



Whirlpool Bowl, Fine silver, 22x22x5cm

Many inspirational people have contributed to my journey so far, providing exciting opportunities, challenging projects and encouraging me with my work. I am firmly of the opinion that good relationships and heartfelt connections with people add richness to my life's work and an underlying significance to my creative voice. I look forward to a visually vibrant and dynamic future, making works in silver that I hope will enrich and inspire their owners for many years to come.