

In June this year, Eleni Koumara of Eni Jewellery was announced as the recipient of the NAJ Award at the (online) British Craft Trade Fair. So what makes a winner? Asks Belinda Morris.

Eleni – Eni Jewellery

Where did you train as a jeweller and was it always your first choice of career? What led you into the jewellery world?

I remember myself making jewellery with simple materials since I was eight or nine. I don't have an academic education in jewellery – I got involved in silversmithing back in 2008, when I began experimenting with metals and fire under the guidance of Manolis Manimanakis – a great artist and craftsman. I would watch him work, and he showed me the basics on soldering, stone setting etc.

Six months later I bought my own equipment and I started practicing. In a way, I can call myself self-taught. I have a degree in computer engineering, and although I have worked as a web developer, I couldn't give up my passion for creation and expression.

What has been your career path to date?

Once I finished my university degree I decided to attend a short course in jewellery design at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. In 2016 I decided to go full time with the jewellery business, prior to that I was web developing. To date I have not regretted that decision, as it gave me the chance to dedicate my self full time to what I love. Also I had the chance to take part in several exhibitions all over the world, like Dutch Design Week and the Biennale in Shanghai.

When and where did you establish your own business? Were you selling directly to the consumer or to the trade?

I established Eni Jewellery Ltd in London in 2016. I am selling directly to consumers

via my website enijewellery.com and I am very happy to have some stockists in Greece, Spain, Brussels and the UK.

What inspires your work and do you have a particular woman in your mind when you design?

I get inspiration from different things. My previous collections were inspired by urban landscapes and music movements. The latest – Enyo – was inspired by the goddess of war in Classical Greek mythology. The main idea behind the Enyo collection is us, the human beings: the extension of our limits, our inner strength, the power and the self-estimation.

I usually don't have a particular woman in mind when I design my collections. I am trying to keep a balance between the forms and the shapes, and I think I couldn't design a piece that I wouldn't wear myself. I work in fine silver, which is softer and brighter than sterling silver. I can give it any form I like.

How have the last six months been for you, work-wise? Have you managed to continue designing and selling?

To be honest, those six months weren't the easiest. Many shops have closed, some of them permanently, but thankfully I managed to continue designing and selling online. I truly thank all the people that are supporting my work and they keep choosing handmade jewellery.

What does winning an award at BCTF mean for you and your business?

It is a great honour to get the NAJ Award of Excellence in Jewellery. It feels like all

my efforts have been rewarded. I am super excited and grateful, and I hope that it will open new opportunities for my business.

I see you are taking part in the next BCTF online showcase this month...

Yes! The previous one was a great experience – I couldn't imagine that a show would have been transferred online with such a big success. And all thanks must go to the amazing work that the BCTF team have put behind it. I am really looking forward to the next one.



Following the success of the BCTF online fair in June, with many orders taken, a second interactive online fair took place 20th-22nd September, with a raft of new features.

The next physical fair is due to take place 10th-13th April, 2021 at the Yorkshire Event Centre, Harrogate.

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