

INTERVIEW

Cara Murphy

Have generations of makers influenced your work in unique or unexpected ways?

Yes, my dad's research into deep drawing on the hydraulic press has influenced a lot of my design work. More recently learning to enamel with my mum has had a huge influence on my current work.

How does this influence manifest in your work?

I grew up in a family where making was not only contained to the workshop, making was everywhere, from fixing to building to sewing etc. Chris and I have always lived next door to my parents (for over 25 years) so that has continued with our children too. I can remember many times Ross and Caitlin asked me to fix things when they were younger and if I couldn't they would say 'well papa can fix it then'.

What is the most important thing you have learned from previous generations of makers within your family?

That there's a solution to every problem.

Describe the relationship between generations of makers in your family.

It's very important, especially as we are individual makers. It affords us a continual sounding board to allow us to question our practice. We are each very focused and strong minded in our individual approach to our work. When creating new work it's on an individual basis and it's good to be able to articulate why you've made something as this often adds clarification in your own mind to know if you're on the right track. What's interesting is it's not a seal of approval, if you feel it's right it's irrelevant what other family members think about it!

Can you trace the evolution of your inherited skills?

A couple of different events in 2016 made me question how important inherited skills are, up until then I'd probably taking our living and working environment for granted. I work very closely with my dad; our workbenches are less than a foot apart and so inherited skills with him would be quite readily traceable. Skills with him work both ways – he can ask me as much as I ask him. I'd worked on and off with my mum since creating the desk set for the Silver Trust at 10 Downing Street in 2011, where she did the enamelling. Over the last number of years she has enamelled different pieces for me but in 2016 I learnt to enamel. As an established silversmith I already had a set of skills but I felt it was important to add enamelling to my skillset and to ensure this knowledge was transferred from one generation to another.

How do you balance respect for tradition with innovation against current design trends or the

need to respond to the demands of the marketplace?

Silversmithing by its nature is a traditional art practice with many of the techniques being the same for hundreds, if not thousands of years. In my work I'm interested in challenging people's perception of contemporary silverware as being sculptural objects, which can be used on a daily basis and not something that is stored in the cupboard and only enjoyed on special occasions.

Have you found your own voice or do you feel that being part of a family tradition can restrict your creativity or originality?

We work as a family of makers as opposed to a family business; our businesses are separate as is our creativity and individuality. My dad and I share a workshop in the same way other craftspeople would share a working space. This affords us the benefits of a shared workshop including you don't work in isolation, share tools, knowledge etc but our design language would be quite different.

How important is it to pass on your skills and culture of making to the next generation or ensure a sense of continuity?

I am more than happy to pass on my skills to the next generation. It's less about the lineage and continuity but more if they feel it is something they want to do, though both Ross and Caitlin are interested in making. Ross is a musician and photographer but he is also keen on making and is very patient and controlled in what he makes. He has been making beautiful wooden spoons over the last six months and recently joined me on a day of blacksmithing. Caitlin has always been a maker. It was no surprise to us when she said she wanted to go to art college. She is in second year at Glasgow School of Art studying Silversmithing and Jewellery. (Which is where I started 30 years ago exactly and where I met Chris).