

next

generation

action

talent



London's leading designers and entrepreneurs are mentoring a brilliant new generation of creative talent

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The jeweller

Mentor: Alex Monroe

Protégé: Rosie Kent



Alex Monroe's delicate, nature-inspired jewellery has achieved iconic status, making him a favourite with fashion stores such as Liberty and Harrods. His handcrafted pieces, particularly his bumblebee and hummingbird necklaces, are snapped up by stylish Londoners and have previously won him the coveted Designer of the Year title at the UK Jewellery Awards.

Alex frequently employs design graduates in his workshop and was introduced to Central Saint Martin's graduate Rosie Kent by a mutual friend. For the past three years, Rosie has been working part-time for Alex while starting her own jewellery design business. She

creates bespoke engagement rings, inspired by Art Deco motifs, and has just launched her first collection – Palladio.

'Rosie has her own style that's very different to mine,' says Alex. 'In fact, my children all want her stuff instead of mine! She also has bags of energy and is really ambitious. And that's important. Making jewellery is lovely, but for it to work as a business you need a lot of drive.'

As for Rosie, having Alex as an informal mentor has been invaluable. 'He is very generous with his time and knowledge,' she says. 'He'll answer any question and even lets me use the workshop out of hours which, when you're starting out, is wonderful.'

alexmonroe.com ◦ rosiekent.com



“ MAKING JEWELLERY IS LOVELY, BUT FOR IT TO WORK AS A BUSINESS YOU NEED A LOT OF DRIVE ”

ALEX MONROE
JEWELLER

The ceramicist

Mentor: Robin Levien

Protégé: Billy Lloyd



Robin Levien is Britain's most successful and sought-after ceramics designer. His award-winning creative work for leading companies, such as Villeroy & Boch and John Lewis, means that most of us will have some of his designs in our homes. He is closely involved with the Royal College of Art's mentoring scheme.

'Someone said you have to give in order to get and I wouldn't mentor if I didn't get something back – even if it's just a warm glow!' says Robin. 'But it also keeps me in touch with what's going on and that's very valuable.'

One of his current protégés is Billy Lloyd, who is making the transition from hands-on ceramicist to designer. After studying for a degree in ceramics at Camberwell College of Arts, Billy worked as a potter, creating simple, elegant, white tableware, hand-thrown on a wheel. But he was beginning to feel restricted.

'I knew that if I wanted to throw everything myself, I could only produce one slowly evolving collection, rather than several collections,' he explains.

The next step was to develop his skills as a designer, which is where Robin could help. 'Billy has a very good eye and I can see how that could translate to designing for industry,' he says. 'He's got a really good sense of proportion, line and form.'

As well as offering practical support, Robin has played a crucial role in confirming Billy's career choices. 'I don't think he'd be making as much of an effort with me if he couldn't see my potential as a designer,' says Billy. 'That's given me confidence that I'm choosing the right path.'

studiolevien.com ◦ billylloyd.co.uk



The entrepreneur

Mentor: Sophie Cornish

Protégé: Sophie Kirkpatrick



Sophie Cornish knows exactly what it takes to set up a successful, design-driven business. She's the co-founder of the hugely popular website Not On The High Street, which showcases original and inspiring products, and has an annual turnover of £83 million.

'Being able to support creative people is at the core of what we do,' says Sophie. 'It's fantastic to be in a position to spot the talent of a designer like Sophie Kirkpatrick and play a part in helping her realise her potential.'

Working under the name Atlas & I, Sophie designs leather accessories, stationery and prints based on reproductions of maps. She made some as Christmas gifts and discovered there was a market for her designs.

'Although I believed in what I was creating, it was difficult to establish myself as a designer,' explains Sophie. 'Especially as I was also working full-time.'

But then she had a stroke of luck – she was spotted by Not On The High Street when she took a small stand at a local fair. 'It was a wonderful opportunity for me,' she says. 'Although I have a creative mind, I know that you have to sell your products to survive. The support Sophie and the company gave me was crucial – I've learnt so much about photography and marketing. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to become a full-time designer and run my own business.'

Atlas & I now sells around 600 products a year through the site, something that delights Sophie Cornish. 'It's wonderful to see her doing so well,' she says. 'But that's a result of her hard work, commitment to creativity and genuinely unique products.' ● notonthehighstreet.com ◦ atlas-and-i.com



The designer

Mentor: Sir Terence Conran

Protégé: Felix Conran



In the world of design, Sir Terence Conran is, quite literally, a household name. As the founder of Habitat, he brought modern design into our homes, offering his own pieces alongside carefully curated items from around the world. He believes that good design should not just be for those who can afford it.

While Sir Terence admits he might be biased in tipping his grandson as a design talent to watch, he is adamant that Felix, who is in his second year at Central Saint Martin's studying product design, has what it takes.

'From a very early age he had that essential ingredient – the curious mind of a designer and an ability to solve problems,' says Sir Terence. 'He has a sharp and discerning eye. He is already creating great products that really stand out, which isn't easy in this day and age.'

In his first year at university, Felix teamed up with fellow students to form CLAM, a design collective that is on the verge of launching its first product, Lightly, an adjustable LED desk lamp made from a single piece of stainless steel.

'I've grown up in an environment where if you said you liked something, someone would always ask "why?" and "could you make it better?"' explains Felix. 'But it was never a foregone conclusion that I'd go into design.'

He believes a series of conversations he had with his grandfather in summer 2013, when Sir Terence was working on his latest book *Plain Simple Useful: The Essence of Conran Style*, were a turning point.

'The book shines a light on things that you wouldn't normally look twice at – like string and paperclips – and I was fascinated by the idea that everything around us is a designed object but we don't even notice it,' says Felix. 'It really taught me not to overlook anything.'

conran.com ◦ clamcollective.com

