



WAINWRIGHT BOOKBINDING

Charlotte Wainwright is a 21st century bookbinder. She invited Penny Rutterford to her studio in Walthamstow to see how she crafts bespoke books, boxes and portfolios to treasure.

Photography by Simon Goodwin.

We live in a Digital Age. We read books on Kindle, send invitations via Facebook and store our photographs in "The Cloud". Yet recent reports suggest that sales of physical books are rising as is the interest in artisanal and bespoke items as an antidote to mass production and all things digital. Wainwright Bookbinding is a fine example of this tradition - its owner, Charlotte Wainwright, creates bespoke pieces for her clients who range from individuals to corporate businesses.

Tucked down Greenleaf Road, Charlotte's studio space is shared with a photographer and a ceramicist. The ground floor beneath her studio houses her rather hefty guillotine weighing in at half a tonne and which, quite helpfully, she shares its use with Matt McKenzie who runs the neighbouring letterpress - Paekakinki Press. Opening her own bookbinding studio and business was a long held dream, but finding one with a resident letterpress enthusiast was, she says, just a happy coincidence.

I asked Charlotte how she came to the craft of bookbinding. "I studied architecture for a year at the Glasgow School of Art which was amazing, but I figured out I didn't really want to be an architect so I changed course and came down to London to study graphic design and illustration at Central St Martin's. It was on my Erasmus year in Germany where I discovered bookbinding and fell in love with it. I graduated with a degree in graphic design and illustration but ended up working at a fine bookbinders in central London called Barnard & Westwood".

Before finding her own studio, Charlotte was already successfully selling her work at craft markets and is a member of E17 Designers. By the time she moved into her studio she was receiving orders through word of mouth and had made some commercial contacts. One commercial project she is currently working on is the production of leather presentation folders for Dr Martens. These will be visual merchandising manuals for each of their stores and so matching the branding, feel and quality of their footwear is important. Charlotte is using a thick hide, foil blocking the logo on the cover in a matt yellow and using their trademark yellow stitching around the outside.

The bespoke nature of Charlotte's work means that she receives some precious commissions. She is currently working to



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repair and bind a personal diary which is over 80 years old, written by a client's grandfather while in India. Another involves a handwritten recipe book kept by a grandmother throughout her life. Wedding season can be especially busy, Charlotte crafts bespoke wedding albums and invitations but enjoys the challenge of creating something different. "I particularly enjoy using unusual materials to cover a book. I made a wedding album using the French lace of someone's wedding dress. I had done it before for my own wedding album and they'd seen it on my Instagram. With another I used the silk of a wedding dress and the spine was covered in the tartan of the groom's kilt".

Initially drawn by Walthamstow's reputation as a place with a thriving creative community Charlotte is now putting down roots here and embarking on an ambitious project to build Beulah Road Studios (www.beulahroadstudios.com), renovating dilapidated garages

into shared creative studios. She is project managing this renovation working with local architects Bat Studio. Mindful that she is working within the conservation area of the Village, and drawing on her love of the character of the Warner houses around Walthamstow she has recently been busy sourcing hand glazed curved bricks for the facade. Talking of the plans Charlotte says, "It's going to be single storey with space for six large desk areas to rent, space for my bindery and room at the front dedicated to multipurpose use so we'll be able to put on a programme of workshops, use it as a gallery space, or host small events. My hope is that it will become an asset to the creative community".

wainwrightbookbinding.com

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