

## In Conversation with Kerrie Hutchinson

In March 2021, I had the pleasure of interviewing the lovely Kerrie Hutchinson to talk about her self-titled design business. After corresponding over a few emails, it was very clear to see how passionate, creatively driven, and talented Kerrie is, and it was a dream to discover a bit more about her as a person as well as her artistic craft.

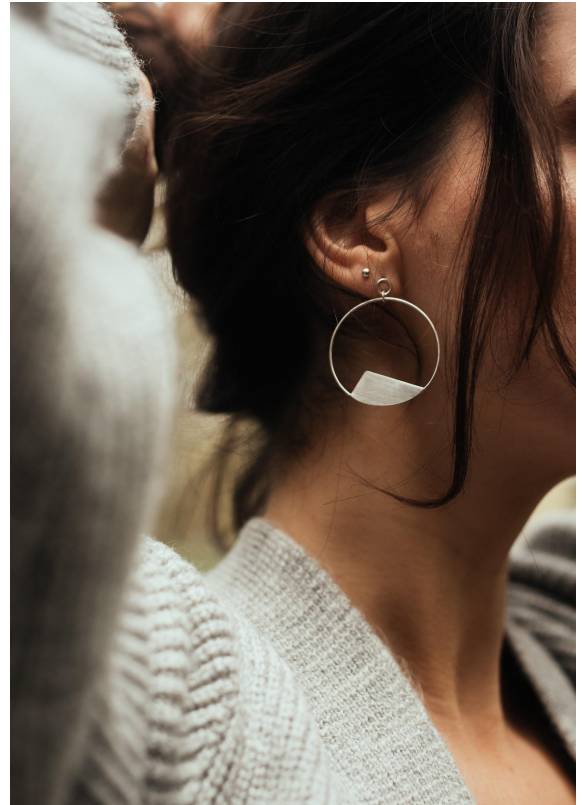


Kerrie grew up in the Cotswolds and moved down to Cornwall to study Fine Art at Falmouth University and has stayed there ever since. At nearly 25, Kerrie had always wanted to study and work creatively and brought this enthusiasm to both her art foundation year prior to university and her undergraduate degree. Across her studies, Kerrie has explored Fashion and Textiles and Sculpture, but particularly enjoyed the freeness of fine art; not having to be constrained within a certain creative box or genre.

Outside of her art, Kerrie enjoys lots of active sports including rock climbing, yoga, swimming, surfing, cycling, and running, a sport which Kerrie describes as her 'constant.' She has even ran half marathons and one full marathon and says that this past year is probably the first year she hasn't raced because of COVID-19 since she was about 15 years old. As well as participating in sports, Kerrie loves volunteering and has done for much of her life. She has volunteered countless times at kids craft clubs, exhibitions, and most recently restoring furniture and working in the clothing department for Cornish Hospice Care. Most of all, Kerrie likes learning new things and keeping busy, which provides the backbone of her motivation and creative flare.

In terms of starting her business and the inspiration behind her craft, Kerrie says she had been itching to create and make things again since her degree show in 2018. For both her art foundation final exhibition and her final university degree show, Kerrie welded large scale minimalist steel sculptures with a type of hanging, broken, transparent circle/sphere involved. After realising the stark similarities between both of her exhibitions, Kerrie figured that metalwork was her passion.

Like all of us do at some point or another in our lives, Kerrie felt a little lost as a creative amongst a sea of graduate chaos after completing her degree, and in 2019 started thinking of ways to pursue her talent for metalwork. With this in mind, Kerrie found out that a few coursemates had also stayed in Cornwall and had a small workshop where they were doing small scale silver and copper soldering. She got in contact and they agreed to teach Kerrie their craft in exchange for beers. And so, once or twice a week for about a year, Kerrie would show up with a crate in order to learn as much as she could from her fellow creatives to whom she says she owes an awful lot. At one point during this innovative year for Kerrie, the seed was planted and she knew that her truest passion was jewellery making, and perfected her silversmithing skills. Again, like a lot of creatives, we tend to veer on the side of caution when it comes to having confidence in our own work, and this was no different for Kerrie to begin with. However, upon showing her jewellery to friends and family who urged her to sell her work, she began to think that this might be a tentative possibility.





During the first lockdown of 2020 amidst the pandemic, Kerrie was furloughed from her café day job which turned out to be a blessing as she finally had the time and the money to really think about starting her own business. Not knowing how long this creative freedom would last for, Kerrie worked incredibly hard to get a website up and going, alongside coming up with her first designs, doing online marketing courses, making commissions to fund new experiments, set up an online shop, designing packaging, branding - the list is endless! Without having too much of a business plan, Kerrie decided to just start and work through the finer details later. She recalls a quote that she was told at university; “if you wait until you are completely ready to put work out there, you have probably

waited too long.”

Having discussed the motivation and strategy for starting the business, I wanted to ask Kerrie about her creative ethos and aims. She points out that:

***“In my business, I aim to create original, high quality pieces of jewellery, with strong consideration for the environment. The business values being small and personal as well supporting other starting out creatives.”***

In this light, Kerrie reinforced the fact that she puts her all into every single piece and that her original designs take time to perfect and develop, and are made to last a lifetime. Kerrie aims for her jewellery to be minimalist with a few quirks to make them as timeless as possible while also suiting to her own artistic style. Kerrie says that she loves working with commissions for their personal attachment to the customer, and the reassurance that what Kerrie makes for them is the exact piece that they wanted originally. To quote Kerrie again, “Its uniqueness to the individual speaks to me that it will be kept and treasured forever.”

In terms of the environment, Kerrie is a massive advocate for promoting slow fashion in jewellery as well as clothing and alongside her interpersonal creative process comes her eco-aware packaging. Her end goal is to make the packaging as environmentally friendly as possible, and currently, every part of Kerrie's packaging can be reused/recycled. This is an aspect of her business that she continues to look to develop piece by piece given her enthusiasm for creating as little environmental impact on the planet as possible.



Kerrie's next point is one that resonated with me and I'm sure will resonate with many other creatives. As a small independent business, Kerrie is very keen on supporting other creative professionals in the industry; she says that she has many friends from art school who have also started their own ventures and she loves to support them. Kerrie has collaborated with some of these friends who are make-up artists, photographers, models, writers, graphic designers, and she is also part of multiple online communities where she is able to exchange, offer, and collaborate on ideas with - a platform for which Kerrie feels very thankful. As we know, the influence of social media in the 21st century is massive. And Kerrie tries to support other people through such digital outlets, calling herself 'a loyal cheerleader' who will shout about those she has gotten to know.

***"I like to think of myself as a bit more of a loyal cheerleader, and I'll shout about those people I've got to know."***

I also wanted to ask Kerrie about her creative process and the actual production of her designs. She told me that a lot of the designs she comes up with are quite intuitive and subconscious, and generally speaking, she will see a scrap of metal, or half-finished design on her jewellery bench that will peak her interest. Growing more curious as the weeks of mulling the design over in her head continue, Kerrie will try it out to see how it would look as an object. It is usually Kerrie's curiosity of making something new that initially inspires and motivates her, and she says that 'the combinations of these ideas results in something new, but still 'me.'

In terms of her stylistic quality, Kerrie says that her jewellery can be split into sections and subsections, each one with slightly different characteristics. She works in two main sections, commissions and designs. Commissions, Kerrie told me, are generally a combination of a customer's idea and her own design and can end up looking quite different. Her own designs can be categorised into subsections again into sea glass jewellery, wild flower jewellery, and her original designs. Kerrie says that if she were to try and describe an all-encompassing

style for her art, she would say that it's both minimalist and geometric. Rather beautifully and more specifically to her own original designs, Kerrie says she explores ideas of negative space and light, of geometric forms and asymmetry, of weight and movement, making her style quite sculpturally considered.



With all this in mind, I wanted to ask Kerrie if her business had been affected by the pandemic over the last year. Kerrie says that yes, her business has been affected but in a positive and a negative light. She told me that she probably wouldn't have started the business in the first place had it not been for lockdown which gave her the opportunity, time, and creative freedom to start-up. On the other hand, she had Christmas and art fairs cancelled, delays and closures from suppliers, closure of shops and therefore a lack of stockists, and on a more personal level, Kerrie had to self-isolate on two separate occasions causing obvious delays to orders. Rather admirably, Kerrie discusses the impact of the pandemic on her mental health saying that it's probably not something generally considered to affect a business, but, 'a small one woman show relies on that one woman being well and high functioning 24/7 and so not being able 'to show up for work' some days can be such a problem.' Grappling and contending with this in her day-to-day life, Kerrie explains that the impact of the pandemic has affected her business and how she runs it more than anything else over the past year.

On this note, I wanted to know how Kerrie feels about the future of her business and about the next few years. Being so eco-aware, she hopes to improve the sustainability of her packaging, to improve her knowledge of business and marketing, and finally, she strives to meet many more creatives and be part of an even bigger community. In doing this, Kerrie wants to continue her love and passion for creative freedom in terms of her own original designs and is excited about the future, with new and innovative projects coming up on the horizon.

The last thing I wanted to discuss with Kerrie, and more importantly, have her opinion on was any advice, words of wisdom, or knowledge she had acquired over the last year or so to pass on to women/creatives wanting to start their own business. It feels more appropriate to quote Kerrie here and leave you with her inspiring words:

***“I think my general advice would be to try and keep your business as true to you and your vision as you can and avoid being influenced by other people too much. Finding your gap in the market is all fine and good but once you’re there, stick to your guns and do what you do, the best you can do it. It has been a process for me, figuring out my style and my brand as I grow my business, so you don’t need to necessarily have mapped out your complete game plan before you start, but just keep reminding yourself what you’re doing and why you’re doing it.”***



\*I'd finally like to thank Kerrie for her wonderful answers to my interview questions and for allowing me to gain an insight into her life as a business-woman and her life outside of that. I want to also thank her for her personal honesty, industry knowledge and passion for her work, it was a pleasure to write a piece about such a talented creative.