

# Juggling Act

Juggling a small business with a full time job or family life can be tough. We chat with Kat Cameron, Fiona Watson and Kirbee Lawler about life, business and juggling it all.



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With a passion for nostalgia, history and the beauty of time worn objects, Gold Coast artist Fiona Watson creates laser cut brooches, lino printed art works and handmade gifts under her label, *The Sentimentalist*.

# the *Sentimentalist*



## Sentimental Art

FIONA WATSON, OWNER OF **THE SENTIMENTALIST** BEGAN HER LABEL AFTER SETTING HERSELF A PERSONAL CHALLENGE BACK IN EARLY 2011 TO LAUNCH HER OWN BUSINESS AFTER MAKING ARTWORKS FOR HER HOME AND GIFTS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR MANY YEARS. SHE TOOK THAT LEAP INTO THE WORLD OF SMALL BUSINESS 12 MONTHS AGO AND HASN'T LOOKED BACK.

A full time secondary art teacher, Fiona lives at the beautiful Currumbin Valley on the Gold Coast with husband Viv. "Always encouraging, Viv comes to markets with me, helps assemble brooches when I need an extra pair of hands and makes a great cup of tea for those late night stitching sessions." Fiona says.

STORY Kim Archer | PHOTOGRAPHY Kiel Wode, Vert Photographics, Gold Coast QLD

“A lot of my work brings back happy memories for my customers. *“That’s just like Nans”* is a favourite comment!”



#### Tell us about your business name?

*“The Sentimentalist”* was the name I kept coming back to as I feel it best represents who I am and what I’m passionate about.

I love nostalgia, the beauty and history of old and time worn objects and thinking about the people and stories connected to them.

A lot of my work brings back happy memories for my customers. *“That’s just like Nans”* ..... is a favourite comment! or perhaps *“we had one just like those!”*

I also think the name covers my broad range of work, as though it may vary in media the subject matter is always informed by my love of everything old and sentimental.

#### How long have you been in business and where can we find your products?

My market business is about to have it’s first birthday actually - yay! You can find me at many local markets here on the Gold Coast, but my regular market is The Village Markets at Burleigh Heads State School on the first and third Sunday of the month.

I also have some of my brooches at the gorgeous ‘Hey Maker’ pop up shop in Murwillumbah and lots of items at the ‘Sheoak Shack Gallery’ at Fingal. I also sell via my Facebook page for people interstate, overseas or those who can’t make it to a market. I plan to have my work in more shops and galleries next year.

#### Three words that sum up your business brand?

Sweet. Handmade. Memories.

#### What is the best thing about what you do?

One of the best things about what I do is the lovely feedback from my customers! It’s really encouraging and I love making people happy.

People really value handmade items - I know I certainly do when I’m shopping for gifts, and I love receiving thoughtful hand crafted items.

I also get a kick out of hearing about where my work has found a new home. I think Germany is the record at the moment!





I'VE MET SO MANY OTHER WONDERFUL CREATIVE PEOPLE AND SUPPLIERS IN THE PAST YEAR, and the support from that community is fantastic. Like Mark from 'Focal Point Laser Engraving' my amazing lasercut man - thanks Mark!!

**What is the most challenging thing about what you do?**

Without doubt the most challenging thing at the moment for me is squeezing in everything I want to do in a day!

I work full time as a secondary art teacher and am nurturing a new business with my hubby called 'Woody's Surf Car Hire' based on our shared love of classic vehicles. I make sure I make the most of the time I get on holidays to catch up.

**Have you always been creative?**

My mum still has some of my earliest drawings and creations, and my rellies always knew art materials, books or trips to the gallery would be treasured birthday and Christmas gifts. I also enjoyed photography from a young age and continue to do so. I just love love LOVE creating - anything! So my 'day' job is just perfect.

**What is your favourite thing to make/create?**

This is a hard one to answer, but I do enjoy the repetitive, meditative carving of a lino block! I enjoy the directness of the mark making and then the satisfaction of a successful printing session.

Otherwise my stitched pieces are also very relaxing to make. My hoop wall art pieces featuring recycled vintage fabric which I stitch with imagery from past eras have been really popular, and my mini cross stitch brooches are all done free hand like drawing with thread. I enjoy the challenge of working on a 3cm hoop.



"Every spare moment you'll find me in my art room, music on, cup of tea close by, busy creating. Bliss!"





"I've used images of vintage swimcaps as inspiration for my new range of brooches for summer, and painted them in lots of fun colours."



"All my hoops feature vintage fabrics that I stitch with suitable retro imagery."

"My new collection of brooches for Summer, inspired by a 1960s sewing pattern illustration."



ABOVE: I love meeting new people at my markets, and the immediate feedback is useful and encouraging

#### And what is your biggest seller?

My art cards featuring my photography sells well I think as it is an affordable way for people to have an original artwork, however people are always amazed by the mini cross stitch brooches!

I thank customers for their purchase saying it will help pay for my optometrist bill!

#### Tell us a little about your background?

My background is in secondary teaching which I have enjoyed immensely over the last 20 years.

It is a challenging career at times but so rewarding. I majored in photography and printmaking at college and this has helped me in good stead for my little business.

#### What's next for Fiona?

It's still early days for me with my label as I juggle it with full time work and other business commitments, so I'm looking forward to finding a better balance.

At the moment I communicate via Facebook with updates about my work, markets and goings on, but I'd like to think one day I'd have an online store or website.



Find Fiona on the Gold Coast at various markets including The Village Markets at Burleigh Heads State School the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month or stay in touch via her [FACEBOOK PAGE HERE](#)