

Fortnum & Mason Showcases British Crafts

By: Karen Dabrowska

Fortnum & Mason has always prided itself on supporting small artisanal producers who lavish love and care on everything they make.



Whether it be some lovingly stirred chutney from Wiltshire or honey from bees on its very own roof, everything it sells is the very best of its kind. So an exhibition of joyous handmade pieces, each

with a story of its own to tell, fits in perfectly with all that Fortnum's stands for.

On the first floor of its lavish department store in London's Picadilly Circus can be seen (and bought) some of the most inspirational, creative work currently being made by British crafts people today. There are some 500 hand-crafted pieces re-made by over fifty different British

craftsmen and women.

Introducing the colourful catalogue to the exhibition Lucia van der Post comments that it's wonderful to see that these skills, whether of silver-smithing, wood-turning, glass-blowing or pot-throwing, are still alive and more than well.

"It's inspiring to see the tea-pot, the plate, the place mat, the glass, the bowl being endlessly re-invented, their forms and shapes



Kate Malowe's
unique ceramics

Katherine Morling's
ceramic designs



refreshed. It's lovely to find that wit and humor can turn what could be mundane, everyday things into objects of great beauty that one longs to own. What I particularly love about this exhibition is that it celebrates true quality and the value of craftsmanship. I like, too, that it invites one to ponder on the perennial delights of food and dining and why they matter, an underlying Fortnum's proposition. "In a world where many of us already have too many things, we

are looking for pieces that have meaning. We want things that are truly special, that have not been churned out in their hundreds at the cheapest possible price. We need to have our hearts stirred. Here we find that. Each piece is singular. Whether it is Chris Keenan's exquisite Celadon Tea set (whose heart wouldn't lift at being served tea from that lovely teapot), Sian Matthews delicate silver "doilies", Anna Barlow's funky ice cream cones or Kenny

Menczer's beautiful wood sculptures each has a strong and personal statement to make.

"What I particularly love about this exhibition is that it celebrates true quality and the value of craftsmanship", van der Post concludes.

Among the most striking and unique works on display are Gary Alison's hand-turned wooden bowls and plates, ceramics by Katharine Morling and Kate

Marlowe and glass works by Phil Atrill.

Gary Alison from Cornwall designs and makes hand-turned wooden bowls and plates using traditional techniques and locally sourced sustainable timber such as oak, walnut and ash. His work is inspired by the local Cornish landscape where strong gales blow in off the Atlantic sea to erode and shape rocks and plants alike, smoothing and bending them into rugged and beautiful shapes. The



Crafts



work best echoes the weathered Cornish landscape when the plates are stacked forming layers of contrasting tones and timbers. Kate Malone's passion for ceramics began at school when she discovered the magic of making things out of clay. The inspiration for her exuberant shapes comes from nature – fruits, seeds, plants and the very essence and spirit of growth. She is also interested in the human character

a pot can suggest with reference to the lip, hip, belly, foot and shoulder. A pot can look like a man with a wide neck and strong shoulders, or like a lady with a waist and a more delicate form. Each pot is nurtured slowly from raw, soft clay to its high fired ceramic finished state - a process that she admits to finding addictive. Kate is fascinated by the chemistry of the glazed surface and has experimented with hundreds of

carefully formulated very specifically kiln-fired glaze recipes over 25 years.

Katherine Morling's technical skills include manipulating clay through moulds throwing and hand-building and adding layers of rich glazes that flambé together in the kiln to create a majolica style. She draws on her life experiences to create sculptures that express the joy and beauty of life, although what evolves is often unexpected and surreal.

London glassblower Phil Atrill works with handmade blown glass combining traditional Venetian techniques with contemporary designs. Drawing from a vibrant palette of colours he creates individual pieces suitable for any modern interior. The designs in this latest work are inspired by the way the light changes in different weather conditions, from stormy skies to clear summer days, capturing those changeable moments and the mood they create.

