



GEM OF A JEWELLERS

WORDS ELLEN MORGAN PHOTOS ANDRE CASTELLUCCI

If we told you there was a creative hub where SA jewellers can perfect their craft that's been going strong for decades, you might think we're talking about JamFactory. Gray Street Workshop may be lesser known, but it's supported around 100 jewellers and is going stronger than ever as it celebrates its 30th year. We meet some of the people inhabiting this decidedly creative space.

Among Adelaide's arts and creative industries are quiet achievers that have been bubbling away for longer than you might think. One of these is the Gray Street Workshop, which in March celebrates its 30th birthday. The workshop has changed a bit since 1985, but has stayed true to its philosophy: an artist-run space for contemporary jewellers to learn, create and exhibit their work.

Walking into the Gray Street Workshop – a revamped shed and gallery space nestled down a lane – you feel as if you've stepped into a big kids' playroom. The Gallery is a rainbow of creative flair exhibited in inventive and impressive jewellery. Further through is the workshop – a beautiful mess of communal work benches, materials and individual nooks spilling with everything from eighties toys and copper sheets to coloured glass and plastic piping. The energy inside is infectious, and the juxtaposition between artist spaces is amazing to see. Black-steel simplicity sits aside vibrant vintage toy creations.

There is an incredible sense of community and belonging, with a shared passion for an ideal balance between collaborative learning and individual creativity. Over cups of tea and chocolates, they share their stories: the history of the space, their creative process and works, and how they found a home here.

Established by Catherine Truman, Sue Lorraine and Anne Brennan, the workshop initially aimed at creating a financially viable workspace for burgeoning Adelaide jewellery artists. "It was a combination of pooling resources so you could afford it," Sue says. Both members of the Adelaide jewellers group, Catherine and Anne shared a studio in the early eighties. It was during an exhibition they took to Melbourne that they met Sue. Something clicked and Sue was beckoned to Adelaide.

"Australia was really making a mark with contemporary jewellery internationally," Catherine says. "It was a very potent time, and so we pooled our funding and decided to establish Gray Street Workshop."

Each had only \$500, but they made it work, joined by two other Adelaide jewellers – Julie Bylfield and Leslie Matthews – and inviting other creatives in contemporary jewellery design to rent and share the space.

"They just started to come!" Catherine says. "Adelaide is really well known for its craft community." Since then, students, emerging practitioners and all sorts from as far as Taiwan, the US and the UK have come to their doorstep, all drawn to the supportive nature of Adelaide's creative scene. As word spread, new workshops consulted Gray Street in the development of their own spaces, a compliment to these ladies.

The workshop has been through great changes in its time, including four location moves since the original Gray Street in Norwood (the name stuck), and the departure of partners Anne, Julie and Leslie in 2010. "2010 was a key time for us," Catherine says. "We could have either completely disbanded, or there was still an opportunity to stay here." Catherine and Sue promoted long-standing tenant and TAFE graduate Jess Dare to partner. "This was an enormous opportunity for us to change and tweak the things we'd been thinking about for a long time." So they rebranded with a new logo and opened the gallery space at the current location.

With the box of chocolates disappearing, I chat to each member of the space, a fascinating look into the people that make up this inspirational and dedicated creative community. The creative arts has such a vibrant culture in South Australia, and in workshops like Gray Street we can see this fostered and growing, all through simply helping each other out. "It's a definite two-way street here," Jess says. "Everyone gets so much out of the exchanges that happen in here all the time. And it all just happens over a cup of tea. You just wouldn't get that anywhere else."

So here's to you Gray Street. Happy birthday! May there be many more.



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Catherine Truman

Catherine Truman

The longest standing partner of Gray Street, Catherine boasts an incredibly established art and jewellery career that has taken her works internationally, with galleries and agents in Amsterdam, New York and Melbourne. Well known for her wood carvings, Catherine has previously focused on re-creating shells and corals. "My initial works focus on the liminal zone between the sea and the land," she says.

For the past seven years, Catherine has been involved in an artist residency with Flinders University where she explores further her passions in the relationship between art and science. "I'm interested now in the parallels between my studio and a scientific laboratory and how closely we are aligned in terms of creativity and even the tools we use."

Working aside Ian Gibbons, Professor of Anatomy and Histology at the university, Catherine has been investigating neuroscientists and the tools they use. "Firstly, we were looking at the way students were learning about the human body," she says. This was the thought behind The Microscope Project, a collaborative exhibition Catherine was involved in last year, exhibiting works that used a collection of decommissioned microscopes.

"I then decided to ensconce myself within the microscopy suite at Flinders," she says, laughing, "and I focused on the techniques behind preparing the specimens for examination, and I became very interested in the way people use their hands." With this the inspiration behind her current work-in-progress, she is set to produce another fascinating creation to join the anniversary exhibition.

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Sue Lorraine

With a 30-year career in jewellery practice behind her, Sue is a true expert of her craft. Working only with steel, Sue's work is a stark contrast to much of the work in the workshop which comes in all shapes and colours. "I like the dense black of it," she says, "there's nothing tricky or fancy about it."

Simple floral rings and beetle brooches adorn the gallery and workspace. "The cicada brooches are coloured vinyl records," she explains, pulling out a draw filled with the vibrant beauties. "I think this green cicada came from a vintage Police record. It's a reference to the sound and the noise that they make."

Working more with steel in sculptures for her upcoming shows, Sue shows me some of her prototypes and explains the ideas she's playing with. "The theme for our anniversary show in March is the 'theatre of detail', so we're each exploring our own little tangent of that." Sue is investigating light, and how to depict and explore this phenomenon in the physical dimension.

Jess Dare

Completing her work experience at Gray Street while at TAFE, Jess fell head over heels for the space, knowing she simply had to come back. Luck was in her favour, with several tenants wrapping up their time not long after she graduated. She's been here ever since.

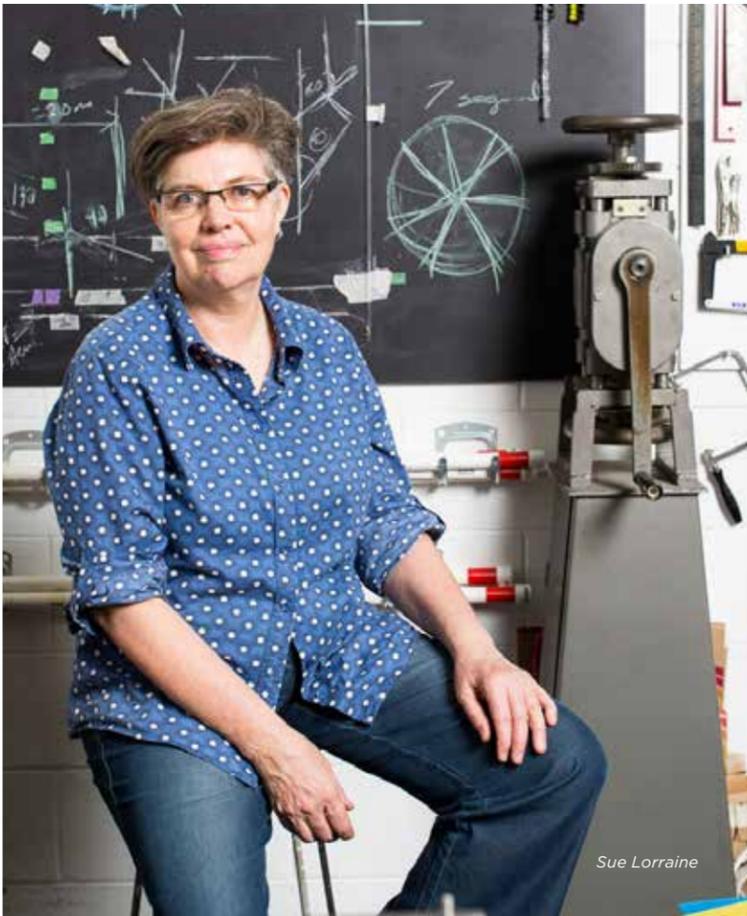
"It's so great here, it provides you with the inspiration that having a career in this field is actually possible," she says.

Jess's workspace is a rainbow of colour, an entire wall space plastered with a patchwork of coloured print-outs, photographs and magazine rippings of all sorts of different flowers, gardens and travel photographs.

"I mainly work in glass and metal," Jess says, walking through her space. Focusing on plants and flowers, she explores the parallels between nature and memory. Last year, Jess held an exhibition entitled The Nature of Memory, inspired by her love of gardens and her late grandfather. "My grandfather was an amazing gardener and I have grown up in some amazing gardens."

Having just returned from a residency in Thailand, Jess is now focusing her attentions on recreating the repeated patterns of traditional Thai floral garlands, Phuang Malai. "They really resonated with my previous work," she says.

While Jess sells a more simplistic production line of brooches, earrings and necklaces, she prefers the more artistic pieces. "I'm working on having my own solo show as well as the anniversary exhibitions next year. Knowing that my contemporaries believe in what I'm doing here is amazing."



Sue Lorraine



Jess Dare

"THE CONSTANT ADVICE AND HELP FROM SOMEONE POPPING IN AND MAKING COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS GIVES YOU MORE MOTIVATION TO KEEP GOING." KELLY JONASSON

Nadja Maher

With a three-year degree and a two-year JamFactory associate course already under her belt, Nadja is set to soar, though she says none of her work would be possible without the support of Gray Street. "I've only been here for just under a year and my work has just changed in the most dramatic way," she says.

After experimenting with different craft elements at university, Nadja started working with floral shapes and feminine colour palettes during the end of her time at 'The Jam', with previous Gray Street partner Leslie Matthews as her mentor. "But I really I needed some time to investigate myself and my work," she says. This is where Gray Street came in.

Studying with (now) fellow-tenant Kelly at university, Nadja was able to see the benefits of the workshop from the outside. "Kelly really came into her work, and I just thought 'that's what I want to do!'"

Nadja's work transformed into gorgeous floral creations using copper shim (a paper-thin copper material) and enamel paints to create broaches and necklaces to die for. "I would never have had the confidence to do that before, but because Catherine said 'I think you can do it', I did."

With her eyes on fashion couture, photography and parades, Nadja hopes to work with stylists and designers to feature her pieces. She's set to hold her first solo show in March 2016.

Lisa Furno

Entering Lisa's desk space is like stepping into a time warp: every draw filled with coloured plastic toys and playful objects of every shape and size, as if you'd just opened up your childhood drawers.

Lisa has been at Gray Street for three years, and she's got no plans for that to change. "I just can't seem to leave," she says, laughing. "It's so beneficial to me and my practice."

Much of Lisa's inspiration came after spending 11 months in Asia, picking pieces of colour and plastic off the ground. "All my stuff is in bits and pieces," she says, explaining the process of one of her eclectic necklaces comprising an old toy animal and a melted peg. "I'm extremely drawn to the more playful kind of work. Sometimes I wish I could make normal everyday jewellery, but I just can't."

With most of her materials found in op shops or donations from friends, Lisa says her process is not quite ordinary. "It's more just me messing around and doing experiments. I get a gut feeling – it feels good."

After a successful residency at a studio in New Zealand, Lisa has returned to Gray Street and sells some of her playful pieces at JamFactory, the Council of Objects and in a selection of stores in Sydney.

Kelly Jonasson

Kelly's vibrant imagination is obvious the moment you step into her space. Boxes of trinkets and bizarre materials are dotted about, not to mention drawings and works in progress which detail her incredible flair for difference.

"I think I'm drawn to things that are a little bit strange," she says, having a laugh as she opens a box of collected items that include dolls' hair. "I like using things in a way that they're not meant to be used. At the moment I'm scraping the outsides off paperclips."

Kelly came to Gray Street prior to her course graduation, using her initial time in the workshop to experiment. "I started experimenting with lots of different materials. I was interested in ceramics and textiles."

Now using a combination of these with other household materials, Kelly's wonderfully out-there creations take the form of brooches and necklaces. She sells some of her work in Sydney, and with the help of an Art Start grant, she hopes to expand further nationally and hopefully into New Zealand, as well as continue to exhibit her works in the gallery at Gray Street. "It's so nice to get used to chatting to people about my work with the gallery here. And the constant advice and help from someone popping in and making comments and suggestions gives you more motivation to keep going."



Nadja Maher



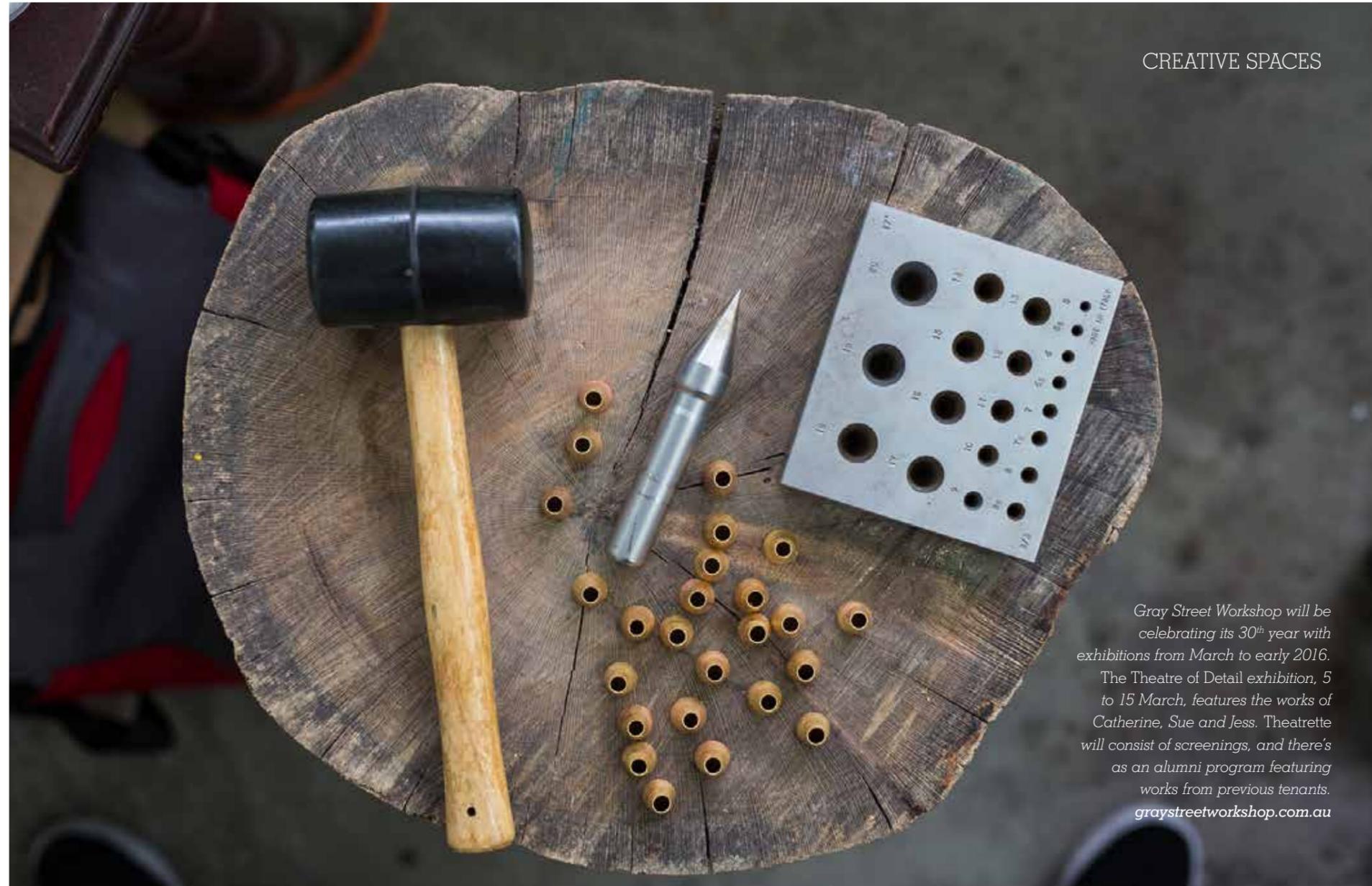
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Gray Street Workshop will be celebrating its 30th year with exhibitions from March to early 2016. The Theatre of Detail exhibition, 5 to 15 March, features the works of Catherine, Sue and Jess. Theatrette will consist of screenings, and there's an alumni program featuring works from previous tenants. graystreetworkshop.com.au

