

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE STUDY GUIDE

SILVERSMITHING + JEWELLERY (BA)

Our reasons for decorating the body are wide-ranging and complex and the wearing of jewellery (shell beads) is the earliest recorded form of modern human behaviour, dating back over 100,000 years. Historically, people have expressed themselves through relatively superficial body adornment to extremely sophisticated symbols as a means of communicating the concept of position, rank, status, etc.

Contemporary studio jewellers continue to challenge perceived boundaries and use the artefact as a way of defining a personal response to social and cultural issues such as gender, relationships politics, and the environment. Similarly, silversmiths explore this interaction between fine metalworking and ideas, through the vehicle of the functional domestic object.

The Department embraces this diversity through informed debate and discussion. It encourages students to develop a personal approach to the research and development of lively design solutions together with a knowledge of traditional and cutting edge technologies and skill acquisition.

Whether they intend to enter the broad based jewellery and silverware industries, pursue personal expression through the gallery market or continue in academia, students will develop their skills in a supportive and confident Department.

Anna Gordon and Helen Marriott
Join Heads of Department

OUR ETHOS

The Silversmithing and Jewellery course aims to provide a broad, balanced programme covering aspects of body adornment and fine metalworking from the development of original design concepts through to the finely crafted finished work. The course embraces as broad an approach to silversmithing and jewellery as possible, from designing for the mainstream jewellery or silverware industries to the pursuit of very personal works intended for gallery exposure.

A strong emphasis is placed on the development of individual craft and design skills that increasingly allow each student the freedom to pursue and realise ideas in appropriate media. Consequently, we actively encourage exploration of a wide range of materials through project work. The course centres its basic technical studies, however, in the area of fine metalworking, providing students with the experience of working in gold and silver as well as other metals.

The staff of the department, as practising designer/makers/researchers, continually review new developments in the field, evaluate the place of silversmithing and jewellery in changing international cultural environments, and respond to technological advances in design and manufacture. The course is supported by guest lectures, field trips, professional practice workshops, live projects, themed department exhibitions, and seminar/study groups.

EACH YEAR OF STUDY

Learning and teaching in the Department of Silversmithing and Jewellery encourages self-motivation and sustained independent learning. The Department employs a variety of learning and teaching methods including lectures, seminars, talks, presentations and group discussions, individual or group tutorials, projects, practical workshops and critical reviews.

Students share responsibility for their learning within the Programme structure and private study is essential.

In addition to applications for first year level entry, the School also welcomes applications for second and, exceptionally, third year level entry from suitably qualified applicants. All students undertake a programme of study in Historical and Critical Studies.

The programme aims to:

- Enable students to develop their intellectual and imaginative abilities
- Encourage critical and creative thinking
- Develop students as self-critical, socially aware individuals
- Develop to a high level students' abilities to communicate both visually and verbally
- Develop in students a high level of technical skill and an integrated understanding of process
- Encourage team work and collaboration
- Develop in students a keen understanding of the broad spectrum of career opportunities in design

YEAR 1

First year is launched with a symposium where all GSA Design Heads of Departments present to introduce Design, Culture and Creative Practice.

Students are introduced to a range of creative and intellectual processes in relation to core and subject specific design skills through both specialist and generic projects in studio alongside other design disciplines. We introduce basic technical skills in the workshop during terms 2 and 3.

First year students work on a themed exhibition project in term 2 along with second and third year specialist students resulting in an exhibition which is open to the public.

YEAR 2

In second year, students are introduced to a range of techniques and processes in the studio and workshop, supported by classes in conceptual and observation drawing. Each student has a dedicated workspace in both the design studio and workshop area, and is expected to obtain a standard personal tool-kit to undertake practical work. Throughout the session, weekly seminars introduce students to the background of the subject, its history and contemporary activity across the world.

Project titles may include:

- Introduction to techniques, processes and materials
- Conceptual and observation drawing
- Development of skills associated with personal tool-kit
- Annual Atrium Gallery exhibition project
- Introduction to silversmithing
- Projects include: Wire and Line
- Sheet & Surface
- Christmas Workshop
- Casting
- Stone setting
- Raising and Forging
- Narrative exhibition project
- 'Banksy' project

YEAR 3

Third year refines and adds to the skills acquired in second year, but with a greater emphasis on design work and submission to national student competitions. A practical research core programme is also followed, with students directing their own topics of technical experimentation. A weekly seminar explores wider issues of interest to the group and to staff. A field trip is made during the middle term of this year to a suitable destination abroad. Recent locations have included Luxor, Barcelona, Boston, New York, Munich and Paris.

Core Activities:

- Acquisition of advanced making skills
- Technical programme
- Weekly student led seminar programme
- International study visit
- Development of idea generation and design process
- Annual Atrium Gallery exhibition project
- Projects include:
- Precision casting
- Goldsmiths Crafts Council
- Young Designer Silversmith Award
- Christmas workshop
- Royal College of Art intern
- Gold project
- Student led project
- Narrative exhibition project
- Live project
- Level 4 research

YEAR 4

The fourth and final year follows an agreed programme which is self-directed with on-going tutorial and technical support and guidance. During this year the senior students are expected to develop an individual 'voice' and to present a coherent and well-supported body of work for their final degree assessment and exhibition.

Core Activities:

- Self-directed programme
- Preparation and presentation of work for degree assessment and exhibition
- Professional Practice Programme - Employability
- Preparation for New Designers

UCAS Information:

Institution Name: GSA
Institution Code: G43
UCAS Code: W721

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