

#MonthlyMotivation: Lily Woodhouse (class of 2020)



Having always wanted to produce affordable and sustainable clothing, lockdown gave Lily the opportunity to give it a go!

When did you set up your business and what is your focus?

I have always wanted to produce affordable clothes that make me feel confident. I took the opportunity of lockdown to start designing and making my own dresses and by the end of July I was selling them on my [Depop shop](#).

What inspired you to set up your own business?

I have made clothes for myself for quite a while and take inspiration from designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier and Roberto Cavalli. As several friends began asking me for their own versions, I started my business! Often, trendy clothes within a student budget are limited to fast fashion brands which have extremely damaging effects on the environment. I wanted to create a more sustainable alternative for my peers.

How do you go about making your dresses?

Ultimately, I try to manufacture my clothes using a sustainable framework. I use a process called sublimation printing which, unlike regular dyeing, uses no water. I

then construct my dresses with French seams that encase the raw edges of the fabric and prevent it from fraying. To help reduce waste, I rework scraps left over from the cutting process into patchwork tops.

Recently, I have learnt about the manufacturing techniques used in the industry and as such have invested in different needles suited to the stretch fabric. I believe this create professional finishing's and maintains a high standard for quality that encourages returning customers.

What have been some of the highlights?

I love seeing my designs being worn! I feel such a sense of pride when my friends dress in my products.

What have you learnt during the early stages of your business?

I began marketing my designs as 'made to measure' and created bespoke dresses for each customer order. However, I soon realised this was not a suitable model

for a business as it was difficult trying meet my customers' needs, and mistakes were costly!

My knowledge of different scales of production that I learnt during Textiles theory at school helped me to switch to a batch system - allowing me to make my stock ahead of time and reducing my turn around time by a week!



What would your top piece of advice be for pupils or alumnae who are thinking about setting up a business?

You can read up on and research as much as you want in advance, but there will always be things you can only learn through experience. It is better to make those mistakes and improve them than wasting time trying to prepare for things you cannot predict.

Additionally, don't be afraid to ask for advice during the improvement process - people want to help you. The [alumnae program](#) is a great way to get in touch with people that have been down the same path and overcome the problem you are facing.

What are you hoping to do next?

This year I will be attending a foundation in Art and Design at Central Saint Martins. Alongside this, I hope to carry on expanding my business which will provide valuable experience when I start applying for a degree specialising in Fashion and Textiles.