

TRADE TALK



S.V.S DESIGNS LTD

Stan Somerford is considered by many fellow craftsmen in the UK trade to be one of the greatest diamond mounters working today. Based in London's Hatton Garden Stan has struck out on his own to form S.V.S Designs Ltd to offer bespoke jewellery making, reproductions and restoration work to the trade. Gordon Hamme recently visited his new Kirby Street workshop to find out about his background and plans for the future.

There are few craftsmen with such a glittering array of industry awards as Stan Somerford:

- i. Jacques Cartier Award in 2000
- ii. Goldsmiths' Craft & Design Council Senior Diamond Mounter 15 times: 10 consecutively 1991-2000
- iii. Goldsmiths' Company Award in 2005

Stan has entered the Goldsmiths' Craft & Design Council competitions for more than 25 years. Though he was never formally apprenticed, he trained in the trade at Clifford & Tull then J.H. Lucas learning traditional skills on the job. Stan is as passionate about skill and precision, seeing it as integral to the long-term future of the craft.

In 2000 he won the Cartier Award for the Neptune Ring, a hand-carved ring made from 24.5g of 97 platinum - a feat that he estimates took him around 148 hours. Stan says his style is influenced by mid to late C19th Italianate jewellery, as well as Italian art and style. When asked about his influences he mentions St Peter's in Rome and Camillo Pertazzi but also admits that he is influenced by his London environment, with the fish on the Neptune ring inspired by those on London Bridge.

For the Neptune ring, he let the design grow organically, working straight on the piece rather than design drawings, starting with the idea of a water-themed fancy coronet cluster. The ring is made of four separate components: the centre collet, the head, bottom bezel, and shank, which were soldered together using hard and medium solders.

Stan admits that it would have been cheaper to carve the model in wax and cast it, but he preferred to work straight into the metal, saying: "With an idea such as this it was far more challenging to carve straight into the metal and see the final result evolve. Not having to spend many more hours cleaning up the casting which may have not captured all the fine detail. Even though platinum is difficult to carve, it is easier to work straight into the metal if you are confident enough. Platinum does have its advantages: it is a very pure metal, and is more forgiving than silver and gold, so it can withstand repeated heating without pitting or tarnishing the metal."

GOLDSMITHS' AWARD: 2005

The piece that Stan created for entry into the 2005 Craft and Design Competitions was a lacework exhibition piece measuring approximately 8cm square, which was hand-pierced in white gold. The piece was completed over a two year period, on top of Stan's everyday workload, so consequently he's not sure of the number of hours spent on it, though he estimates it was well over a hundred hours.

The piece bears the initials of Stan's wife and a scroll-leaf pattern of engraved acanthus leaves, set against a grid of 2500 squares (50 x 50), each less than 2mm in size, all pierced out by hand. The grid, which was initially conceived with the idea that the border and the outer edge would be set with stones which presented Stan with many technical challenges.

With 35 years experience in the trade these are both exhilarating but also nervous times for the master craftsman who can now offer his amazing craftsmanship to the whole industry. 📧

S.V.S Designs Ltd.

for fine bespoke jewellery



S.V.S Designs Ltd
5 Kirby Street
EC1N 8TS
Tel: 0207 404 7337
s.somerford@hotmail.co.uk