



July 2020

The Cockpit Arts Turners Award 2019

12-month progress



Introduction

This Award supported by the [Worshipful Company of Turners](#) helps an aspiring or established turner, someone who practices the art and craft of turning on a lathe in wood or other materials, to develop their craft practice and business by providing a sponsored place at Cockpit Arts Deptford for a year including a studio and support services, as well as additional support from the Company.

The Cockpit Arts / Turners' Award was created to provide an aspiring or established turner with the space and time to grow their business, increase profitability and develop their profile. Previous Award winners include [Eleanor Lakelin](#) and [Frank Boggis Rolfe](#) (2011), [Chloe Robertson](#) (2012), Matthew Corbishley (2014) [Darren Appiagyei](#) (2017) [Rafael Santoliquido](#) (2018).

The Award includes studio space and access to a lathe and workbench for a year at Cockpit Arts Deptford, London SE8. In addition, the Awardee has access to the business and professional development services at Cockpit Arts, including on-site coaching, a personalised development plan and business skills workshops, as well as public selling events twice a year and a range of promotional opportunities.

Arturo Soto was selected for the 2019 Award. This report contains Arturo's six-month personal progress report, as well as input from the Cockpit Arts' business development team on support provided to date.

The current Award was due to finish on 30 June. Cockpit Arts extended the Award for the length of time of the government lockdown, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. We did this because our mission is to help makers and we want them to get the most of their Award year, which the current emergency has curtailed. **We are extremely grateful to the Turners Company for bearing the cost to extend the Award beyond the original commitment to ensure the best chance of success for Arturo as his Award and this period of valuable support comes to an end.** As such this is a progress report and we send a full and final report in September 2020.

Cockpit context

It's Cockpit's mission to enable makers to start and sustain successful businesses. Achieving that mission has never been more challenging and more vital.

We moved quickly and decisively to give studio holders a 67% discount on licence fees April-June. This 67 per cent reduction was the most generous that we could offer without endangering the future of the studios and the charity itself. We have since confirmed that discounts will continue for the following quarter: July 60% discount, August 55% discount and September 50% discount.

The buildings have both remained open and doors and key pads are cleaned daily. During the lockdown, at their own discretion, and following all the hygiene and social distancing protocols and Government guidelines, makers could access their studios.

70% of Cockpit staff are on furlough but we continue to support our makers. We launched a series of informal live video sessions called Cockpit's Key Points to help our maker community cut through all the noise and access the important information they need and have also been giving them one-to-one support.

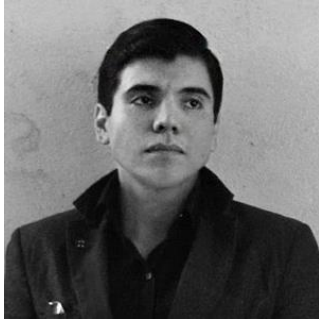
It's been uplifting to see how many makers are contributing to community initiatives, including turning their considerable skills to making PPE for local hospitals and health trusts - <https://cockpitarts.com/news-cockpit-makers-making-essential-ppe/>.

As we sadly had to cancel our Summer Open Studios event we put together a virtual Festival of Making taking place over the mid-summer weekend 19-21st June which makers responded to with enthusiasm and originality - <https://cockpitarts.com/the-festival-of-making/>.

We are now putting together our fuller return-to-making plan, with risk assessments and heightened measures. We are welcoming both our current makers and craftspeople new to the Cockpit community back to the buildings and ensuring that all can access their studios while following Government guidance.

We were thrilled to be recognised again as one of the 100 top performing social enterprises on the NatWest SE100 2020 - <https://cockpitarts.com/news-se100/>.

Arturo Soto



Arturo is a designer and maker who specialises in working with reclaimed and recycled materials to produce luxury items. He is focused on designing in a sustainable way to prove that we can make meaningful products using recycled, reusable materials. He believes that function equals beauty, and ultimate functionality leads to ultimate beauty.

Arturo has a Masters Degree in Visual Arts from the University of the Arts London - Camberwell College of Art.

<https://www.memoriesofgreen.net/>

Q. How are you finding Cockpit Arts and the Award?

A. I am deeply honoured to have received this Award. I really hope my design opens a very needed discussion in the turning communities about plywood and reused materials.

Cockpit Arts is a very design-oriented, creative business, inspiration, you can really see different stages of creative and business development from different designers. Everybody is very friendly and accommodating. The studios are open all day and night for its members and this has been a very important factor for me as I can work on my pieces at any time and use valuable time to refine and produce better pieces.

Q. Implications of the Covid-19 emergency on your practice?

A. Completely and absolutely, everything closed, Markets are barely open. My reclaimed and responsible wood sources were unable to deliver or have long delivery times. It was all a big mess. I was just not comfortable with the situation and the state in which I had to design. There was nothing for me to do but to plan ahead. I have been reading and planning my next collection.

Q. What activities have you taken part in recently? (workshops, coaching, exhibitions, the Festival etc.)

A. I took part in several shows such as Cockpit Open Studios and different set of workshops. I also exhibited in Top Drawer 2019 and Japanese Textiles and Craft Festival 2019 and several other small exhibitions like The Collective Market, Truman Brewery Boiler Room.

I will be assisting the Royal Kew Gardens in October 2020 designing some Japanese inspired turned products. Right now I am going every weekend to the old Spitalfields market just to take a look at how people are responding to the pandemic.

I will stay as a member of Cockpit Arts for the next year, I will move to a smaller studio within Deptford, this will allow me to wait until the workshop and coaching are live and not through the internet as I really don't like this approach of doing everything online.

Q. What are you working on at the moment and what do you have coming up?

A. I have been receiving critiques and comments from within the Turners community about plywood not being as accepted as the other woods. My theme focuses on developing and enhancing every single piece of discarded wood I find a transform it into beauty. Plywood has the beauty that it can be arranged and controlled perfectly, its flawless texture and elegance creates something that other woods can't.

Non-reclaimed and wasteful use of our resources has no place in this world anymore if we are going to make a significant progress towards bettering our future regarding the environment. Practices like mine, in which I am trying to create a new way to look at wood and turning, should be treated with more open arms.

It is very difficult because my practice and the way I work with wood and plants is something really new, it does not come from heritage, tradition or any conventional methods, fashions or experiences that other designers claim. It is purely a proper design-oriented process following the design principles of Dieter Rams. The next pieces are going to be even more incredible than the current collection. My next pieces are going to be closer and closer to monolithic expression of the powerlessness of humans and the immensity of Mother Nature. I will start small trying to connect terrariums and living sculptures to my pieces first and then evolving from that point.

Q. What difference has the Award made to your development and the development of your practice so far?

A. Thanks to this Award I was able to create pieces good enough to apply for the Exceptional Talent VISA and I could not be more thankful. I have been able to develop and create two streams of income, a stable one with markets and small exhibitions and a creative one with galleries and more exquisite pieces. It allows me to switch modes depending which I am more comfortable with.

Q. What are you looking forward to most in the coming months?

Cockpit Arts Christmas Open Studios – Royal Kew Gardens – Normality!

I will be forever thankful for all the Worshipful Company of Turners help and kindness, and Cockpit Arts, for letting me pursue my dream.



Comments from Business Incubation

I have really enjoyed working with Arturo and look forward to working him further in the future.

He hasn't engaged with our online workshops, but that is perfectly understandable given that English is not his first language. We have met for some one-to-one sessions.

Relative to other makers, he is entrepreneurial in his thinking. He is also particularly driven to succeed. On the positive, this has meant that his early results in terms of income and profit are better than we typically see. The challenge, sometimes, is to get Arturo to slow down a little and think of longer-term strategy rather than short-term tactics.

Lockdown has been difficult for Arturo. He is reliant on a variety of equipment at the Blackhorse Workshop in Walthamstow but they have been closed since March, so as he comments he has been unable to make.

I hope Arturo does stay on at Cockpit after his Award; he has real potential, and it would be great to continue helping him to realise it.

-- David Crump, Head of Business Incubation

Thank you for your continued – and additional – support.

We look forward to reporting on Arturo's progress with his completed Award in September 2020.