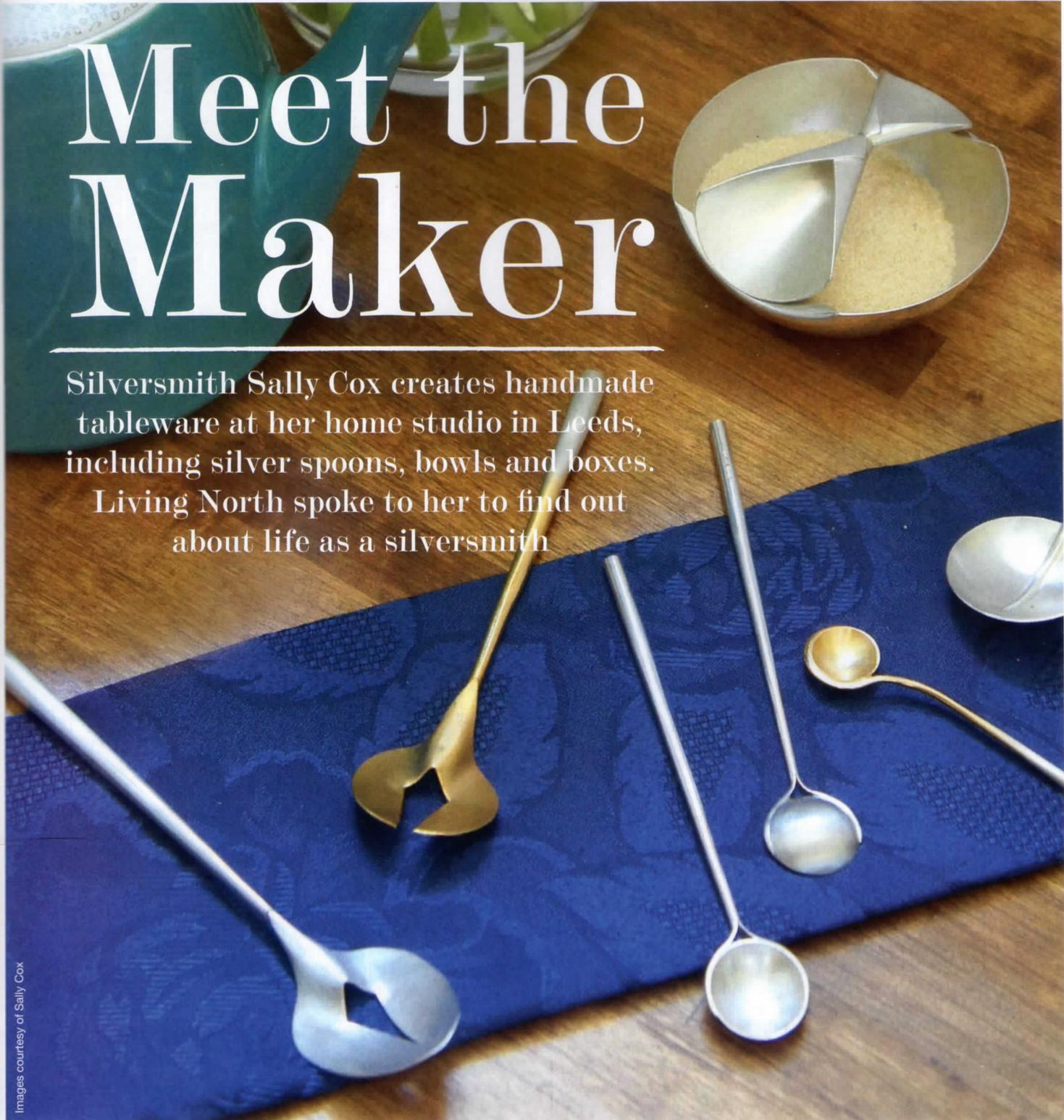


Meet the Maker

Silversmith Sally Cox creates handmade tableware at her home studio in Leeds, including silver spoons, bowls and boxes. Living North spoke to her to find out about life as a silversmith



Images courtesy of Sally Cox

How did you become a silversmith?

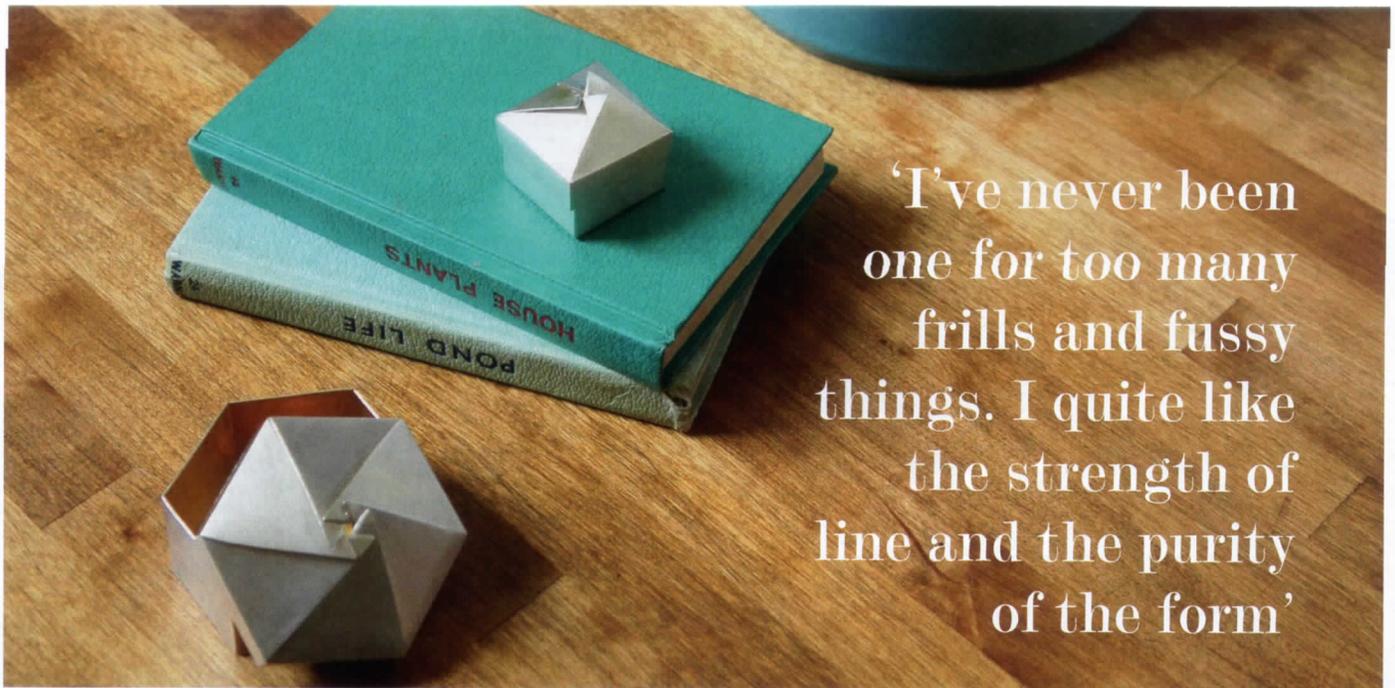
I did my art foundation at Leeds College of Art and Design, and at that point I just enjoyed art as a subject and wasn't too sure where I was going to take it. I loved making things with my hands, so I did a Design Crafts course at De Montfort University in Leicester and that led me towards metal. I was quite fortunate in that my course was a mixed craft course. You did a bit of ceramics, glassblowing and textiles, but for me the metal just worked.

How has your art background influenced your silver work?

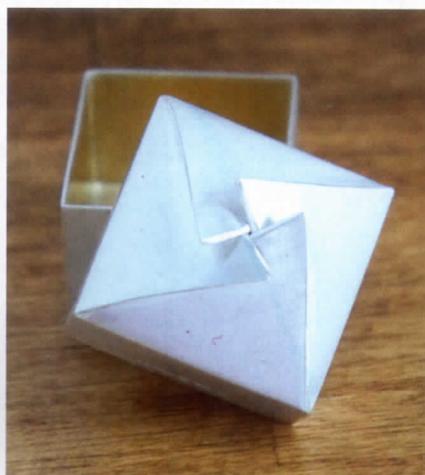
I've always loved making things since I was little. When I was younger I always had paintbrushes and pens around me but as I got exposed to other tools I thought, actually, there is so much you can do with a hammer. I think that everyone who does arty things, in whatever sense that is, finds that the more you do the more you realise what you enjoy doing. You discover your style in that way.

Why did you decide to set up your own company?

I have always liked the idea of being someone who made products and had the pleasure of doing that as their job. I never saw myself as a nine to five sort of person. I have always known where my passion is. I am most happy when I have tools in my hand and I'm making, so the business came about as a way of earning a living and enjoying what I do.



‘I’ve never been one for too many frills and fussy things. I quite like the strength of line and the purity of the form’



What inspires you?

I love origami and I also really like iron work. I’ve always loved Leeds as a city because there is something really nice about the mix of architecture in the city and then having the Yorkshire Dales on the doorstep. You’ve got that benefit of being out in the open and then being inspired by the beautiful iron work or tree formations in the city.

How would you describe your designs?

I would probably describe my designs as elegant and timeless. They’ve got a classic nature to them, in the way the lines and the folds work – they are never going to go out of style. Looking at origami, it was about the purity of the form and creating something a little bit different. You can have these angles but at the same time they are very soft. They are beautiful but I make sure everything is functional too. I’ve never been one for too many frills and fussy things. I quite like the strength of line and the purity of the form.

How do you make your products?

There are a few techniques in silversmithing that I really enjoy using, one of those is forging. I think it really lends itself to the shapes I produce for the handles of the spoons I make. When you say forging, a lot of people will think of a blacksmith – someone with a big hearth, heating the metal. It’s similar but the difference is that I work the metal when it’s cold. You heat the metal to soften it and then let it cool before using various hammers to alter the shape of the rod you are working with.

What challenges have you faced?

I don’t think it was ever going to be easy but I did find the first couple of years after graduating really hard. There are a lot of questions you

ask yourself and there is a lot of doubt that happens at that point. But the more you persevere with it and find your footing, it becomes more manageable. Once I had conquered that part of it, it moved forward as I hoped.

What are you working on at the moment?

At the moment I am working on orders and commissions for my designs. I would like to develop the collection and create a few slightly larger pieces, including vases, cake slices and service equipment. A lot of the time with silverware, it tends to be an object that is either for a special occasion or just something you have in your home and I think those objects sit well with that.

Where would you like to be in five years’ time?

I would like to be able to focus on my business and become more established. I would love to have a workshop in the garden, where I can run classes. I have run a couple of jewellery classes in the past and I think there is something really fun about passing on a skill and explaining the techniques I use. One of the other things I have done recently is to help people create their own wedding bands, which is quite a lovely thing to be able to do.

To buy Sally’s products contact her directly or visit the Kath Libbert Jewellery Gallery in Saltaire

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