



The recession's still biting and the high street is bearing the brunt of it, but pop-up shops are flourishing. Is this the new way to launch your crafty business?

POP!

PHOTOGRAPHY & WORDS LAUREN JOHN

All the best things in life start with a good idea, and this one was the brainchild of marketing company Vacant. It introduced the world to pop-up retail in 1999, feeding demand for rare and limited-edition products. They came, they sold, they created a buzz – and then left a global trend for pop-up shops in their wake.

Pop-ups have been around ever since, with an increase in global numbers reported as early as 2004, but it's not just about big-name brands testing out products, or outlets selling cheap perfume. There's a new wave of pop-ups sweeping through the nation and they all stem from grassroots arts and crafts.

Arts and crafts spaces can, and do, make an impact on the high street and beyond, and do this in all kinds of different ways. You may not be as far from a temporary craft store, pop-up tent at a festival or a shop run as a social enterprise as you think – and with people still very much feeling the effects of the credit crunch, this could be one very cost-effective way of getting your craft business off the ground.

Potential for rent-free space, discounted rates or little to no staff costs appeals to organisers, who often find it much less hassle than hiring a permanent space. Artists and makers benefit too, as pop-ups can open up craft selling to those who can't always afford the cost or risk of renting shop space or stalls at craft fairs. The end result is a greater variety of handmade goods, with the doors open to everyone from professional crafters to those making lower-priced items, or hobby crafters with a few pieces to sell.

One charity finding pop-ups to be beneficial is Fine Cell Work, which teaches UK prisoners to produce high-end needlework and embroidery items using donated designs from the likes of Emily Peacock. Its pop-up shop was set up last year in London's Mayfair – a venture that was so successful the store stayed open for an extra three months. People are at the heart of this type of project, and pop-ups in general – a sentiment founder of the Empty Shops Network and author of *Pop Up Business For Dummies* Dan Thompson very much agrees with. His company offers advice and resources to those looking to reinvent empty retail spaces and he believes that “pop-ups are also important social objects, they're the point at which we come together



1 Find out more about what Fine Cell Work gets up to over on its website, finecellwork.co.uk

2 One of Jazz Domino Holly's designs. Find out more about Jazz (daughter of Joe Strummer, no less) at jazzdominoholly.tumblr.com

TELL US

Your craft pop-up shop story. craftymag@practicalpublishing.co.uk

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as communities. They're about people – pop-ups need people to start with, not buildings. They need you.”

If the right opportunity comes a-knocking, then Fine Cell Work hopes to commit to another pop-up this year, and it's not the only one with exciting plans for 2013. Jazz Domino Holly is another who lives and breathes crafts. Not content with a book, magazine column and a blog, she's also set up her Handmade Hangout, which she describes as a “pop-up craft club where guests and visitors are invited to experience the world of the handmade in unique locations and unusual venues nationwide”.

If you missed out last year, Jazz and her DIY devotees will be visiting summer festivals, along with other UK and London dates in 2013, offering festival fashion workshops and selling Handmade Hangout bits and bobs. Last year they were full of headbands, flower garlands and dream catchers, but who knows what the festival making trends will be this summer. It does go to show, however, that our love of pop-ups shows no signs of abating and if you have an original idea, craft pop-up glory can be yours. ☘



CRAFTY POP-UP TIPS

/ The Arts Council welcomes applications for funding through its Grants for the arts funding programme. If your pop-up craft project fits the criteria, you may be able to get valuable support. artscouncil.org.uk

/ Speak to others with experience of opening a pop-up craft shop who can share their tips, along with nearby retailers – a good source of information on typical customers and their needs, as well as peak trading times

/ You don't have to spend a lot on display equipment and decoration for your shop. The venue owner may help out with signage, and covered boxes can easily add height to tables or window displays

/ Use social media to your advantage and set up Facebook and Twitter accounts to drum up support and local media interest

/ Get creative with your window displays to draw in new custom