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FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001

FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

Tinker TAILOR

Faye Toogood is leading a revolution to take craft out of the woodshed and into a brave new world. By Aimee Farrell



"I really enjoy experimenting with pewter. I love the way it ages. When it's melted and poured into sand it makes these amazing shapes"

Faye Toogood is on a mission to modernise craft. "It's a word that conjures images of wobbly ceramics or someone chipping away in a shed, but its future is about bringing man and manufacturing together," says the 37-year-old designer, decorator, weaver, sculptor and self-described "tinker". She is perched on a communal workbench in her Islington headquarters, her hair close-cropped and peroxide-bleached, but her main concern today is that she might look too corporate. "I don't look like a scary businesswoman, do I?" she asks, a flicker of concern darkening her clear, green eyes.

Although she is not a "maker" in the traditional sense, Toogood's studio is a creative hothouse in which artisanal projects grow: the studio produces everything, from ceramics to weaving to interiors to installations for brands such as Hermès



and Alexander McQueen. There's even a fledging clothing line, Toogood, made in collaboration with her sister, Erica, who occupies a cutting room opposite Faye's workshop.

Every surface in the studio is covered with curios and assemblages. Alongside back issues of *The World of Interiors* (where she

began her career as a stylist when she was 21) and books on African masks are mementos of past projects – expanding-foam balls, slabs of sycamore – as well as endless trays of materials – metals, plastics, mesh – awaiting future assignment. Many of these bits will make their way

into her furniture collections, like Roly Poly, a series of chairs whose plump contours Toogood likens to a baby elephant, or Cage for Birds, a dressing table made of security mesh that she created in collaboration with a bronze foundry and a motorcycle maker. "Studio Toogood is >



THE ART OF ASSEMBLAGE: TOOGOOD'S ARCHIVE MATERIALS AND ARTIFACTS



MAKER'S MARK: FAYE TOOGOOD IN HER CANALSIDE STUDIO. HAIR AND MAKEUP: CAROLINE SIMS. SITTINGS: EDITOR: NURA KHAN. PHOTOGRAPHS: MARIUS W. HANSEN

FAYE WEARS TOP AND SKIRT: SPORTMAX. SLIPPERS: JIMMY CHOO



not selling an aesthetic," she explains. "The unifying factor is the approach. Be it a chair, an interior or a coat, we find two unexpected elements – raw and precious, handmade and industrial – and bring them together."

After growing up in the wild, unspoiled landscape of Rutland, Toogood now lives in a newly renovated house in Highgate with her husband (an architecture writer

"This felted wool and cashmere throw was made by my design team in the studio – we would just add to it whenever we felt like weaving"

"I knew I wanted to be a sculptor when I visited Barbara Hepworth's St Ives studio aged nine"



FROM TOP: TOOGOOD'S WORKWEAR-INSPIRED CLOTHING; A MOODBOARD FOR AN INTERIORS PROJECT; MODELS FOR THE POLY COLLECTION

"Craft is not just about looking back or creating a pastiche of the old"



and estate agent specialising in modernist property) and her young daughter, Indigo. Her days are spent in the studio sketching out ideas for furniture or installations with a designer, or experimenting with fabrics in her workshop.

She doesn't have a permanent office, she hates the distraction of email and only logs on when she gets home in the evening.

Toogood is passionate about reviving and reinventing artisanal skills. "It's important to acknowledge heritage and history, but craft is not just about looking back or creating a pastiche of the old," she says. Her philosophy is neatly summed up by her Armour Bench, a limited-edition gallery piece made from industrial rubber and studded with 17,000 nails, each one hand-hammered and patina-finished. "There's not much inherent value in upholstery nails and rubber," she admits. "It's what you do with them."

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