



L-R: Jim Woods, Local Enterprise Office Carlow & Mary Bourke, DeBurca Design



INSPIRED TO CREATE...

Mary Bourke is the experienced goldsmith behind the jewellery brand DeBurca Design

Mary recalls where and how it all began, going back to her early childhood, growing up on their farm in Mayo, rambling through woods, finding beauty in every day and gathering tiny treasures from hazelnuts to smooth pebbles. Later while working towards a PhD in Neuroscience, Mary found herself drawn to a course in jewellery making at NCAD. This sparked a desire to create and make jewellery. Driven by this passion she continued her training over a number of years, including the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland's renowned Jewellery and Goldsmithing Skills & Design Course, perfecting her jewellery making and designing skills.

It is very evident that Mary cherishes her home studio overlooking the Barrow valley in rural County Carlow. The natural beauty of Carlow that can be discovered off the beaten track influences her jewellery designs. The curl of a leaf, how the sun sparkles on the River Barrow, these scenic elements spark her imagination to design and make beautiful jewellery. Mary has developed many jewellery ranges in both silver and gold, frequently using pearls and precious gemstones. She speaks passionately about creating original, one of a kind pieces for individual clients

“When working with clients I’m inspired by listening to their personal story, creating bespoke jewellery for them to capture a special moment in time that they want to treasure forever.”

DeBurca Design commenced trading in 2003. A number of years later Mary took a career break to raise her family and on returning in 2017, she quickly realised the landscape of business had changed. So much was now online. As a micro business Mary runs all aspects of DeBurca Design. As well as the core business she takes care of all orders, her website, social media, PR and packaging.

Finding herself in a very different landscape in 2017, Mary sought out the support of her Local Enterprise Office.

Her initial focus was to rebrand her business, “changing the logo and packaging and starting to develop a presence for DeBurca Design on social media”. “The LEO were having a marquee at the Ploughing Championships held in Carlow in 2019 – spotlighting local businesses”. “I focused on using that as a launch date for my new branding and packaging”.

Mary is keen to point out that Local Enterprise Office Carlow offer great support for small businesses in the county. She explains that through their focus on craft based businesses, FORM Designmade in Carlow was born.

Mary explains that FORM Designmade in Carlow is a group of creatives who “aim to raise the profile of designer-makers and craftspeople producing high quality work in Co. Carlow and to promote Carlow as a destination for high quality design and craft”.

Following on from the Ploughing Championships in 2019 Mary was successful in receiving training for building her Craft & Design Enterprise with DCCI and the LEO.

Opportunities arose within the training, including a trip to London alongside other craft practitioners to visit the COLLECT exhibition. Indeed numerous other future workshops and projects were being developed on foot of that training when Covid struck

However Mary points out that Local Enterprise Office Carlow “stood up, supporting local businesses” in the early days of Covid.

In Mary’s own words:

“DeBurca Design would no longer be in existence if I had not received those supports. While the financial support through grants and vouchers is super, it’s the mentoring and training and the friendly voice at the end of the phone line that kept me going through these past 18 months”.

“ A short while after Covid stuck, I received a phone call from a LEO staff member to see if I was okay and what did I need help with. This was totally unexpected and meant a lot to me. I was more than just a number. As a micro business you are very much on your own and having reliable support is invaluable”.

Through the online supports offered by the LEO, Mary developed a social media strategy that she implemented immediately. In addition Mary said she received “solid practical advice”.

Mary’s primary focus was to get her business online. She applied for the TOV (Trading Online Voucher Scheme) and built her website on the Shopify platform. Additionally she made use of the Trading Online Voucher to obtain professional photography, which Mary points out is essential for precious jewellery. As a result of the TOV Mary was able to secure her place on the Design Ireland website run by DCCI. Design Ireland is dedicated to promoting the breadth and quality of Irish design and craft. For Mary to obtain her position on this prestigious website was a huge win as it assists greatly in terms of brand recognition and ultimately placing DeBurca Design on a firm footing for the future.

As a successful applicant to the Craithub in August 2021, Mary aims to maximise her opportunities within the Craithub project and is looking forward to sharing her work and learning about the work of other EU based makers. She is excited to collaborate with other participants over the duration of the program and is enthusiastic about the opportunities that may arise.

Mary is planning to once again upgrade her website, tailoring it more for export markets. As Mary points out “online selling means that the ability for a small business to export is very real”.

To date due to her relationship with the Local Enterprise Office, Mary has received the following supports:

- DCCI and LEO Building Craft and Design Enterprise Training
- Mentoring Supports
- Trading Online Voucher
- Become an active participant within the PowerHouse Women in Business Network, established by the LEO
- Member of FORM Designmade in Carlow
- A successful applicant to Craithub
- Obtained her listing on Design Ireland
- Received training as part of Carlow Creatives, Training and Mentoring Group

Through the harshness of Covid, Mary has grown her brand identity, developed her marketing strategy and aligned her goals for the future. As she says herself:

“as a result of the LEO supports that I have already availed of, DeBurca Design has a firm business footing in the online space. I am part of an established network of business owners that I can ask for guidance and advice as my business develops. I know that by discussing my business goals with the LEO they will point me in the direction of future supports that I can avail of to grow my business”.