



'People respond to miniaturisation – they get excited and that seems to spark the imagination'

"Up until then, we'd worked from our respective flats," says Fouracre, 32, "but as we were both moving house, we knew the time had come to find proper premises. We don't need anywhere vast – just as long as there's room for a band saw, scalpels and rulers. Although the materials come in large sheets, they are cut to size."

The women forged their partnership more than a year ago while freelancing at Abacus Modelmakers in Glasgow. They enjoyed working together and were aware they could bring complementary strengths and design disciplines to Finch and Fouracre.

Finch graduated in product design from Glasgow School of Art, while Fouracre studied industrial design at Loughborough University before settling in Glasgow. Fouracre has experience in cabinet making and woodwork, whereas Finch enjoys the more structural side, such as graphics and instructions, and looks after the design of their website.

With no strategic game plan, the women tapped into the range of expertise on offer at Scotland's specialist business support service, the Cultural Enterprise Office, gathering advice on business structure, marketing and valuing their work, while simultaneously seeking reassurance that they were on the right track.

Although the two key strands of Finch and Fouracre are architectural commissions and the production of model kits, they have also received commissions for niche projects such as a magnetic table planner for nearby restaurant Fanny Trollope's, and are in the early stages of working on designs for a notebook and a wall mural.

Both women enjoy working with architects and attending discussions at the early stages of a building. "Different architects have different ideas for model styles," says Fouracre. "From the outset, it's important to find out whether they want a detailed model or an overview of the building."

The pair agree that the essence of model-making is problem solving and their motto is "measure twice, cut once". Where possible, materials are locally sourced, and include whisky barrel staves from Glasgow Wood Recycling which they use to make timber chimneys. "When you cut into them, you can still smell the whisky," says Finch.

A similar degree of precision applies to the "tenement kits" which come in red or blond sandstone flat-pack card models, or a 6in-high etched, folding model in nickel silver with the detail extending to tiny drainpipes and TV aerials. The kits are available online and stocked by The Lighthouse in Glasgow and the Red Door Gallery in Edinburgh.

"They make great gifts, don't result in excess baggage and have even found their way to Australia," says Finch, who based the proportions of the tenement models on the buildings opposite her own flat. "People identify with them – it's such a personal thing. We both live in tenements and love the fact there's so much variation between them. People respond to miniaturisation – they get excited and that seems to spark the imagination. They love picking the models up and looking inside." ▶

SMALL WORLD

Their tiny models of Glasgow tenements are a hit as far away as Australia. But designers Finch and Fouracre have much bigger plans for the future

Small may be beautiful for designers and modelmakers Finch and Fouracre in terms of their work and their studio, but the diversity and volume of their commissions are huge. First there are architectural models requested by clients such as The Lighthouse and Highland Housing Fair 2010, which require precision and patience. No less demanding are the small but perfectly formed model kits of traditional tenements which Franki Finch and Beth Fouracre create for the retail market.

As for their work space in the so-called Hidden Lane, just off Argyle Street, Glasgow, both agree the buzz of working in a courtyard that's home to creative businesses such as fashion, recording and artists' studios, anchored by an excellent cafe, more than compensates for the limited square footage. "Everyone's got different projects going on," says Finch, who is 25. "There is a lot of cross-collaboration. From the moment we saw our workspace last October, we knew it was for us because the exterior was painted in the same green as our company's signature colours. All we had to do was paint the postbox pink for the full Finch and Fouracre experience."

Main picture: Franki Finch (on left) and Beth Fouracre outside their office in the so-called Hidden Lane in Glasgow. From top: examples of their work include a cut-and-fold postcard of the lane; a model tenement made from etched metal; and a model kit

STYLE/MODEL-MAKING



► Aside from models and kits, Finch and Fouracre are keen to take on work that is more artfully edgy, such as the Model Me Real project, which saw them working with disabled artists across Scotland, in partnership with Disability Cultural Projects (DCP). "We appreciate that we are often approached by clients who don't know who else to ask," says Finch, "and as we normally work to specific plans, we enjoy these unusual challenges. Silvie Fisch of DCP came across us when she bought one of our tenement kits, then called us out of the blue about Model Me Real." The DCP project involved Finch and Fouracre creating paper models of the work produced by the individual artists. The models could also be downloaded and printed out to bring the artwork to a wider audience.

As for inspiration, the women say they are fired up by good music, graffiti and design, and modern architecture such as the Casa de Musica in Portugal as well as beautiful old buildings such as the Templeton's carpet factory in the east end of Glasgow.

Fouracre is also a singer-songwriter, and on the day of our interview is going to play the Wickerman Festival in Dumfries and Galloway. "There's always music playing in the studio and fortunately our tastes are pretty similar," she says, "although Fleet Foxes are currently banned due to overkill." ■

Visit www.finchandfouracre.co.uk.

Top: a sample for the Highland Housing Fair. **Right:** a miniature version of the Tolbooth in Glasgow. Among the materials the pair use are recycled whisky barrels



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