



"The installation at the Le Creuset flagship store in Sydney (top) was complex," says artist Samantha Gazal (above left), seen here in her studio. "The paper work was too fragile to transport ready-made, so it was bought, in pieces, to the store and assembled there during trading hours." Cockatoos (above right) were also part of the Le Creuset display. Samantha's studio is filled with props including these woollen pieces for Wool Week (left).

ART PROFILE

Samantha Gazal

This creative talent uses paper and Paddle Pop sticks to form her exquisite work, encountering a few bumps and blisters along the way **WORDS LEE TRAN LAM**

Crafting butterflies out of 10,000 Paddle Pop sticks and making flowers out of scribbled notes at a Papier D'amour installation happen at the hands of Samantha Gazal. She's even conjured up "melting beach balls" for Westfield shopping centres, which was "the first really strange and challenging paper commission I made", she says.

This Sydney-based artist describes her work as "extreme crafting". On any given day, you might see her and her team hand-rolling 100 balls of yarn to accompany crocheted signs and knitted mannequins for Wool Week, an initiative from The Woolmark Company. It also results in extreme injuries, too – particularly with the hot glue gun. "My pharmacist voted my blister 'best and largest blister' she had ever seen in her life. At drop-off time at my daughters' school, children were running up to me in the playground to take a look," she says. "It made installation quite tricky." Unveiling works in storefronts – while dodging light fittings – is already a challenge. "A bit of bumping and squeezing goes on," she says. "It's like a combination of yoga and Twister."

Having created imaginative displays for everyone from Le Creuset cookware to Jean Patou perfumes, Samantha's career path may seem surprising given she studied economics and trained as a research analyst at a stockbroking firm.

The artist has always had a creative spark, though. Growing up, she loved everything from felt mice to Swedish tapestries. "And I always drew – it was the one constant. Later, it became like a guilty pleasure to take the time to draw, to really uncover the beauty of an object by drawing it."

In 2002, she gave her scalpel a workout and created a paper lamp with professional lighting film. "I realised I could transform my drawings

"I realised I could transform my drawings into silhouettes and give another dimension to my work"

into silhouettes and give another dimension to my work". The design appeared in this magazine and a Royal Botanic Gardens show in Sydney. It sparked the start of a career she's only recently had a full-time chance to realise, now that her youngest child, Evie, is in school.

Samantha is currently collating shopping and to-do lists from acquaintances who are mothers and would like to create a room-sized paper sculpture installation with the results. She's fascinated by the voyeuristic and intimate quality of what people jot down. And in her studio, Samantha keeps her children's craft nearby, as a source of inspiration. "Having their work around is always uplifting." ❖

 For info on Samantha Gazal and her upcoming exhibitions, visit samanthagazal.com.