

NEWS

# Toast's New Makers programme champions contemporary craft

*This year's iteration of Toast's New Makers programme has launched and it features crafts from around the globe*



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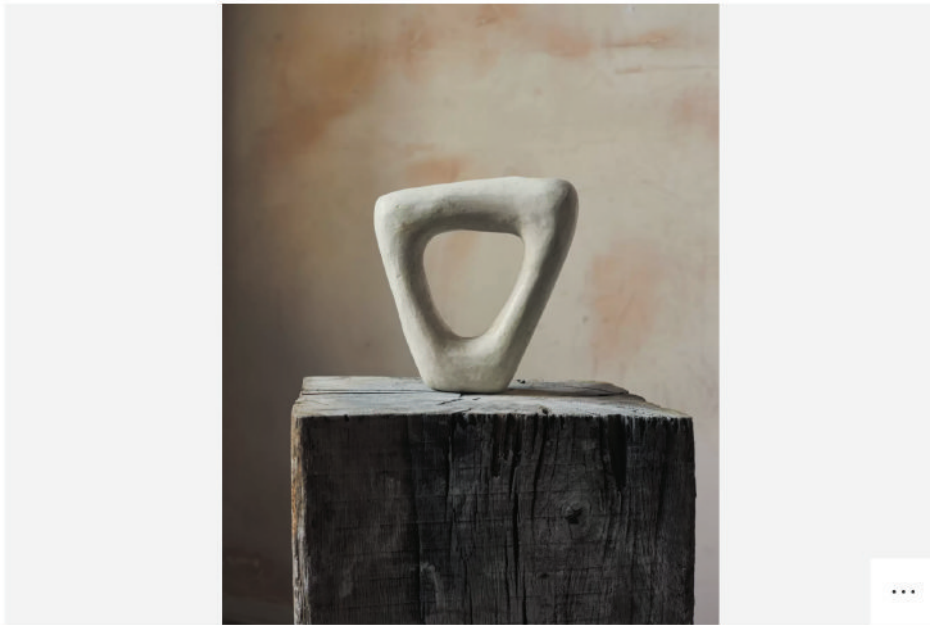
**H**ow can you thoughtfully contribute to people's lives? How do you help propel creatives careers? These are two of the many questions that Toast's CEO Suzie de Rohan Willner wanted to address by launching the New Makers programme three years ago. Promoting the work of emerging craftspeople, the not-for-profit programme provides five makers not only with a platform to sell their work, but also mentorship on everything from business development to production advice. 'It's one of the initiatives that I'm most proud about,' says Suzie de Rohan Willner, who joined the fashion and homeware brand in 2015.

This year's line-up, which was whittled down from 800 applications and has just launched, includes East Sussex-based basketmaker Julie Gurr, sculptural artist Corrie Williamson, French product designer Aude Arago, Canadian ceramicist Kelsey Rose Dawson and Scottish jewellery designer Jodie Metcalfe. Last year, the programme opened up to makers from across the world. 'We want to create a melting pot of creativity, with makers from different countries, of different ages and working with a variety of materials,' explains Judith Harris, Head of House & Home at Toast.

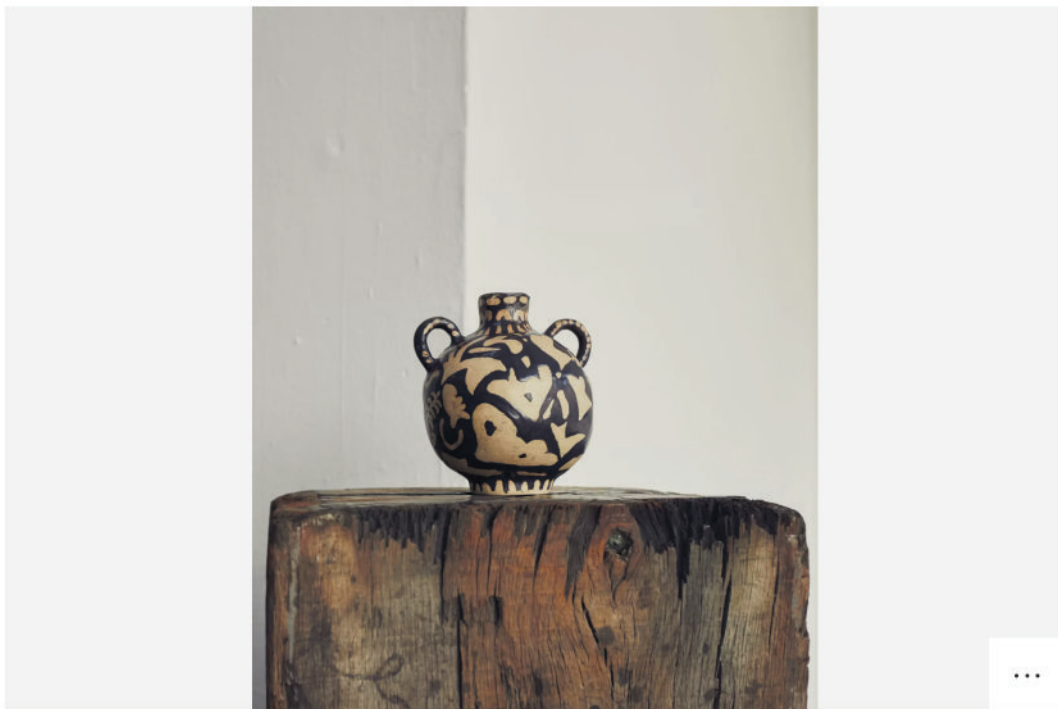
'A combination of factors attracted us to these makers, but more often than not it's the stories behind the pieces that drew us to them,' says Judith, who sifted through the applications with her team. Kelsey Rose Dawson, for instance, digs her own clay from the lakeside near her home in Cambridge, Ontario to create handsome wheel-thrown and hand-coiled pots, while Julie Gurr weaves sculptural baskets from willow that she grows with her husband. For her sculptural jewellery, Jodie Metcalfe forages the shoreline near her home in Scotland for gemstones in a move towards entirely circular production. 'We look for makers that share our ethos and really think about the sustainability of their work,' Judith explains.

Pieces by this year's New Makers are available to pre-order online now or from Toast's recently reopened store on Redchurch Street, E2. From April 26, this store will also play host to a number of pieces by craftspeople who were selected for the New Makers programme in 2019 and 2020, including woodworker Ambrose Vevers and ceramicist Polly Yates. 'We want to be ambassadors for those we've worked with in the past, while also creating an evolving community of makers who can learn from each other,' explains Judith. Suzie encourages past and present New Makers to call for advice whenever they need to. 'We want craft to survive and flourish in the future,' she says, 'This is all about creating long term, lasting relationships.'

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A sculptural piece by Aude Arago.



A vessel by Canadian ceramicist Kelsey Rose Dawson.



Willow baskets by East Sussex-based weaver Julie Gurr.