

Could you make money from your hidden talent like Lily Allen?

By Sarah Coles – July 2009

They're all at it at the moment. Celebrities, well known artists and famous people are getting into designing their own own jewellery, clothes, fashion accessories etc. Lily Allen has now hits Claridges to reveal she's been at it too.

Lily received as much attention for her wardrobe malfunction at the launch as she did for her jewellery, but needless to say it's likely to be a fairly lucrative career move for the singer.



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So if you have a secret talent, can you make money from it?

If you're a budding designer, author or artist there's a good chance there could be a few pennies in it for you. But there are five questions to ask yourself before you jump in with both feet?

1. Can you start small? These things are never going to be money-spinners from the outset, so you'll need to keep plugging on with the day job. Is your talent something you can build up in your evenings and weekends?

2. How much is your talent worth? Look around at what's on the market. If you are thinking of making money from crafts check out *etsy* (<http://www.etsy.com>), *ebay* (<http://www.ebay.co.uk>), *dawanda* (<http://en.dawanda.com>) and *folksy* (www.folksy.com) to see what other similar things are going for. If it's a novel you have in mind then you need to be pragmatic. The vast majority of books are never published, and of those that are, the typical deal falls far short of most people's expectations. Don't assume you have the next Harry Potter on your hands.

3. Does the maths work? Be honest with yourself about just what it costs to put together your creations. If you're making jewellery that costs £3 to make, £3 to send, and takes 5 hours to make, that's essentially costing you almost £40 to make at little more than minimum wage.

4. Do you like doing this enough to commit to it properly? If you're going to take orders and fulfill them, you have to be willing to give up your spare time. If you are invited for a big night out and you have to stay in twisting pieces of copper instead, how are you going to feel?

5. Do you need help? You don't always have to pay for help. etsy has a really useful blog for anyone with crafty ambitions. If you are interested in developing your artistic potential, is there anyone you can ask for advice? Galleries or art schools should be able to offer a reasonable assessment of whether your art is marketable and give you a few pointers on how to get started.

These questions can be daunting, but if you can make it work, it is rewarding in every sense.

I know of one part-time artist who has a show every three years, paints commercially attractive pictures, persuades a restaurant or bar to hang them for a couple of weeks, invites all her mates to a big opening, and makes thousands of pounds a time.

I know of a writer who started out as a doctor with a hobby, and went on to write several successful TV shows.

And I know of a full time jewellery designer who started in the evenings taking her mum's jewellery to pieces and reusing the stones in her creations. Now she does the same from her shop, and is the local recession sensation.

So you can make a packet from your talent, as long as you think things through.