

Ruth Schmid turned her creativity into a business with her handbag label QHere

Bag of passions

When it comes to unique fashion ideas, you often find that functionality gets left in the designer's studio. Cue a colourful collection of handmade bags by Ruth Schmid at her new company QHere, which combines design and durability with creations in tarpaulin.

Ruth has always had a passion for arts and crafts, and as a teenager longed to become a teacher in the subject she loved. However, she put her dream aside to study Sociology at the University of Zürich and although she undertook many important research projects, Ruth remained unfulfilled by her career.

Everything changed five years ago, when Ruth and her family moved to Cambridge. She grasped the opportunity to start something completely new and different by using her creativity and seeking a new craft to embark upon.

It was a friend from her native Switzerland that first



suggested making bags with tarpaulin – which was, incidentally, the material that Ruth's beloved and much-used shoulder bag was made from. Ruth embraced the idea, and on her next visit to Switzerland purchased some tarpaulin to make a colourful bag for her



of this versatile fabric made her bags strong, durable, long lasting and waterproof. The fact that this kind of bag was not yet available anywhere in Cambridge continued to encourage Ruth to develop different design ideas for more styles, such as the very functional shoppers, school bags and swim bags.

Ruth sold bags to friends and neighbours at bag parties and shared Christmas stalls with a jewellery maker. She also ran a regular stall at the Art and Craft Market in All Saints Garden in Cambridge.

It was at this point that Ruth made the decision to create her own company; QHere was born and a dream has been realised. Ruth is now busy making plans to develop and expand her range of bags and

accessories. Ruth's aim for the future is to source materials that she can recycle and make her bags from, such as advertisement banners.

Given that 13 billion plastic carrier bags are used every year here in the UK, it is not surprising that one of Ruth's most popular bags is the shopper. QHere's very practical shopper is strong and extremely long lasting, it has enough capacity for those big trips and is a pleasure to shop with.

"I believe more and more people will see the purpose of getting a practical and long lasting shopping bag in order to help reduce the vast amount of flimsy one-way plastic carrier bags that pollute our environment," she explains.

QHere bags are supremely unique, not only because they are practical and long lasting, but they are also fashionable, funky and totally different. Colour and interest are added to the bags with an exciting range of zebra or leopard design fabrics used to complement each other; and QHere also custom makes 'just-for-you-bags' to suit individual needs. You can choose a combination of favourite colours and practical shapes in order to get a very stylish design with the personal touch.

To make it easier to buy QHere bags and accessories, Ruth has relaunched her website (www.qhere.net) with the addition of an online shop offering an array of funky and contemporary handmade bags to suit the whole family. Ruth makes all the bags in her Cambridge studio, where you can view the wide range of bags and have a sneak preview at the latest designs.

QHere, 22 Marlowe Road, Cambridge (01223 353145) www.qhere.net



daughter's cherished clarinet. From that moment on, Ruth fell in love with designing and making bags from tarpaulin, not least because it is so light and easy to handle. She also discovered that the other advantages