

All bets on House of Kallie

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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In 2015, I decided to do a short eight-week beginners course in jewellery-making at the Ruth Prowse Art School in Woodstock, Cape Town. I ended up with torn nails, bruised hands and an appreciation of the hard work done by creators behind this artform.

From silver to gold, wood to metal, carvings to engravings, jewellery-making has produced timeless pieces that have left fond memories for their wearers and a sense of gratification for their creators.

One such creator is Kallie Doran, founder and owner of [House of Kallie](#) – a design and manufacturing house based in Muizenberg, Cape Town, that produces a range of jewellery including custom pieces for the general public, brands and designers.



When I first stepped into the House of Kallie's creative space, I was immediately immersed in its authenticity and novel style. Upon meeting Doran, I immediately became charmed by her open and humble spirit and when she relayed her excitement with regards to a piece of jewellery that was busy melting down, I knew she was passionate about the work that she does.

“ I get a very big kick out of providing our clients with more than they hoped for, especially because jewellery, by its very nature, is sentimental and meant to last forever and signify something of meaning to the wearer.” ”

Doran confesses that she is a process person and that the fire for her lies in the making of a thing, rather than the thing

itself. "Jewellery, for me, is a great playground for processes and as much as I love what I make, I am also looking to branch out from there, taking what I know with me and applying it in other areas."

The road less travelled

Following one's passion has not always been easy, but today things are a bit different. Gone are the days when our parents had to just do the necessary to put food on the table. Today, more opportunities exist... along with more challenges.

After resigning from her job as a bench jeweller at the V&A Waterfront, Doran decided that she wanted to have more of her own time and work independently.

"I found a small garage space to rent, I had the basic tooling which I bought with money that had been saved for me by family. I had no idea what to make, where to sell it, how much to charge and probably a few more uncertainties that I have forgotten. Things ticked over slowly, mostly private work here and there and then a few markets here and there, but no real sense of style as yet. Then I signed up for a market that was around the corner from my workshop. They were just starting out too so there were not very many people attending at first. Sales were next to nothing and the sense of rejection was a little hard to swallow... But I pushed on, I had made a decision and then another decision to stick by that."

Doran explains that one Friday she found herself at an all-time low with no money and no stock. I suppose that is how most entrepreneurs start out, with an idea, and so little, yet with drive and passion to never give up and continue to pursue that which sets their soul on fire.

"I had no silver, only a few chains, and a market that night that I was obligated to pay for. I had also a brown paper bag with four 1c coins inside that I had bought at an antique shop a few months earlier - and then I had a brainwave! I took those coins, cut two into an Africa shape and two into a heart shape, put a little link on them and strung them onto the chains. That night I sold them all, and I tell you no lies when I say that I have produced them every week for the last four and half years. From that success I grew other designs, and they are still growing from that same seed."



Image source: House of Kallie - [Facebook](#)

Trying and then testing some

Going out on a limb and trusting not only yourself, but your work, takes real guts. Sure, it can be scary, sure that resounding voice in your head could say that you won't make it, that you're wasting your time, but then, light bulb moments stay on and you push through, because let's face it, the heart wants, what the heart wants...

The right fit for Doran came in the form of the Kalk Bay Co-Op where she had rented corner space and began doing markets. Someone then suggested that Doran join the Cape Craft and Design Institute. "I was interested in their exhibition space, but I did not expect that they would end up being the solution to my production challenge."

By this time, Doran had been operating for two years - that was the minimum requirements for all applicants, as the CCDI were looking for SME candidates and not startups. However, another premises had become available in Muizenberg – it had been a bakery before and was run by Mitchell Penning who today is one of her business partners. "I was in a position where I had to take a leap of faith and move my whole workshop without any guarantee that the funding would come through. The funding did come through, and the premises and the people attached to it have played and still play a vital part in how the House of Kallie came to be as it is."

The Three Musketeers

Penning began assisting Doran in the marketing sphere of the business and took her on as his first client, exploring avenues in online sales. As with all businesses that begin to come into their own, a higher demand for product grows and that's exactly what happened once Doran opened shop.

"I was selling online overseas, but it was challenging, a lot of running around to the post office, dealing with Paypal, long shipping times - that immediately cancels out a whole lot of 'special occasion' buys - if your product won't be there on time,

they don't buy from you."

Penning then began looking for a local platform to sell online, which he found in [Hello Pretty](#), who still hosts their online store today.



Image source: House of Kallie - [Facebook](#)

Doran met Nic Mossmer, who shared the creative premises, and brought him on as a support system for the manufacturing side of things. Mossmer's medium is wood (with an interest in metal casting and metal work), with refined methods in manufacture and machine building.

"Between Mitch, Nic and myself, we have a crazy skillset to draw from. We basically had to put our money where our mouths were and buckle in for a crazy beautiful yet utterly insane ride! I had to relinquish a lot of what had been all mine, trust that the soldiers at my side had it under control and knuckle down to just focusing on manufacture and design."

Doran says that they made a big shift, moving away from markets into online sales alone and that was an achievement that was hard fought by Penning, who handles the company's marketing.

House of Kallie as we know it

It's amazing when you can look back and see how far you've come. Whether it's in your personal or your professional life, growth is invaluable. Looking at Doran's story, success does not happen overnight, it takes hard work, dedication and, much like the jewellery, time and precision.

"I can say that we are a strong team of real people doing real things at the end of the day. The three of us have each since managed to afford and train new team members to support our departments. We keep to our departments still to this day, no longer from necessity but rather choice. It brings clarity and maintains respect through clear boundaries. Partnerships, good partnerships, rely on that principle."

Being able to speak to the local South Africa community has set the House of Kallie apart, not only through their product,

but through their ethos – of being a small brand, with a big heart.

“We do it so that we can do what we love. We have built a platform that is stable enough that we can follow our true passions, in each department as individuals, to their full potential. We want to make incredible things for incredible people, whatever that may be. Sometimes the incredible thing we want to make is a difference to someone’s life. Sometimes it’s music, sometimes it’s a ring of deep meaning, sometimes it’s furniture - one day it will be something we don’t even know how to make yet and that right there is an opportunity. It’s potential and we love it. In the beginning, when its potential started to show, it was its potential that kept us going when there was not much else to trust, but that!”

Visit their Facebook page [here](#) or drop by their showroom to see who they really are.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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