

AMI PEPPER JEWELLER

In the hands of Ami Pepper, shells and seaweed from Pembrokeshire become things of beauty, as she weaves their shapes and textures into rings, necklaces and earrings encrusted with precious gems

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PREVIOUS PAGES West Wales-based jeweller Ami Pepper finds inspiration in the seaweed and shells she finds in the rockpools and along the shoreline of the Pembrokeshire coast ABOVE Ami working on a necklace at the metalworking bench in her studio BELOW Ami collecting shells on Aberbach Beach



Were you to find a piece of Ami Pepper's gold jewellery on the beach, she reckons it might look slightly shiny but that it would blend in with the sea wrack that inspires her. The Welsh jeweller reinterprets the textures, forms and colours of seaweed and shells washed in by the tide, and barnacles in rock pools, as sculptural rings, earrings and necklaces. 'Because I'm constantly handling or looking at those formations, that naturally translates into the work,' she says.

Growing up in Pembrokeshire, Ami spent her childhood collecting marine 'treasures' from the shoreline. Beachcombing around Fishguard is now a daily activity with her one-year-old Afghan hound, Strumble (named after the local headland and lighthouse). Discoveries change with the seasons, as storms bring ashore mermaid's purses (egg cases of the lesser-spotted dogfish) and very low tides provide opportunities to forage for different seaweeds.

Her studio sits above the West Wales Arts Centre, a gallery run by her parents in Fishguard. It overlooks Lower Town and Dinas Island, 'an ever-changing expanse of sky and sea' that is 



ABOVE The majority of Ami Pepper's work consists of bespoke commissions, including pendants, earrings, as well as engagement and wedding rings. She designs the pieces and makes models at her Pembrokeshire base, then moulds are made from the models in Birmingham's famous Jewellery Quarter



ABOVE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Some more of Ami's beautiful jewellery – a sand cast ring of 9ct white gold with a seaweed band and grain set diamonds in 9ct yellow gold. Sometimes, Ami embeds grains of sand from a customer's favourite beach into her bespoke rings; shells collected by Ami when beachcombing; a Dusty Sunset Barnacle pendant, which is made of 9ct yellow gold and fancy rose-cut diamonds

reflected in her jewellery by the hues of the stones: green and blue sapphires, and diamonds in soft tones such as white and pink that evoke clouds and sunsets.

When working on a new piece, Ami arranges any inspiring seaside finds on her workbench and models her design in wax. She adds the stones and melts the wax around them to build an organic shape. She sends the finished model to Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, where a mould is made and filled with molten gold in a process called lost wax casting. If her design calls for the stones to be removed before casting, she encrusts the gold piece with gems on its return. The majority of Ami's work is bespoke commissions, including engagement and wedding rings. Clients often send her sand from their favourite beach to embed into the sentimental jewellery. 'People like the idea of holding something within them,' she says. Ami carries her own coastal surroundings into all her work. 'Nature is amazing. It's like the Japanese word *wabi-sabi*, so perfectly imperfect.'

FIND AMI PEPPER

- Browse Ami's jewellery at amipepper.com or follow her on Instagram [@amipepperjewellery](https://www.instagram.com/amipepperjewellery). To make an enquiry or to book a Zoom consultation, please email Ami on ami.victoria.pepper@gmail.com. Prices start from around £300. An Ocean barnacle cluster ring in 9ct yellow gold and 18ct white gold costs £330.
- Her work is sold at West Wales Art Centre at 16 West Street, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, and elsewhere at Diana Porter in Bristol, and also Flow Gallery and Tomfoolery, both in London.
- Ami is due to exhibit during the first week of the Goldsmiths' Fair in London from 27 September to 2 October 2022. Check goldsmithsfair.co.uk for more information.