

ANNE AIMS TO WRAP UP U.S. MARKET



FAR EASTERN INFLUENCES: one of the scarves designed by Anne Selby, inset

An award-winning fashion designer from Bath is hoping for international success through a unique Government funding programme.

Entrepreneur Anne Selby launched her luxury silk scarf business from a home studio in Bear Flat last August.

Mrs Selby has been successfully trading in the UK for six months and is now looking to tap into American and European markets.

The former Bath Spa University student won funding to develop a machine to speed up and improve production of scarves made through the traditional Japanese method known as Arashi Shibori after scooping the university's coveted Innovation Award in 2007.

Earlier this year Mrs Selby signed up to a scheme run by the Government-funded UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) which has helped her to link up with buyers around the world.

She was able to use funding through the UKTI Passport scheme to attend an international conference in Paris to exhibit a prototype of her Complete Pleating Machine.

The scheme has also helped her develop contacts with American buyers, which has secured an invitation to demonstrate her pleating device at the Surface Design annual conference in Kansas in May.

Mrs Selby said the potential for successfully selling her scarves in the US was enormous. "Using the Passport funding to attend the Shibori Symposium in Paris proved to be exceptionally worthwhile and I am really optimistic of some positive outcomes," she said.

"It was no mean feat to transport a 4ft-long prototype machine in the back of an estate car from Bath to Paris, especially unloading it on the cobbled streets of the French capital. But it attracted a huge amount of interest and I have a number of potential buyers lined up.

"The USA is a potentially a huge market for me and I think attending the event in Kansas in May well open up a lot of doors. I am planning to follow up my contacts with the UKTI team from the US and will be meeting them when they come to the South West next year."

UKTI provides support for UK companies engaged in overseas trade and foreign business looking to locate in the UK.

The organisation's services are delivered through a network of international trade teams.

UKTI international trade adviser Norris Myers said travelling to foreign markets was essential to make effective relationships and boost sales.

He said: "I'm glad we were able to support Anne Selby on this occasion to visit a seminar in France that led to orders from the USA and look forward to hearing more of her success after she visits the States this year."