

[INTERVIEW WITH MASTER POLISHER STEPHEN M GOLDSMITH FIPG- MNGG](#)

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In this blog post we speak to Master Polisher Stephen M Goldsmith FIPG- MNGG who has over 45 years of experience in polishing jewellery and silverware. Now working with well-known society jeweller [Theo Fennell](#), he teaches our Precision Polishing Jewellery and Silverware short courses.

Tell us a little about yourself and your business.



With over 45 years of experience in the trade, I am today the ambassador for the Institute of Professional Goldsmiths and Master for Nederland's Gilde van Goudsmiden. I started my career with a 4 year apprenticeship with C.J Vander situated off Hatton Garden in a big workshop consisting of 7 polishers.

Once I finished my apprenticeship I moved onto Stuart Devlin, whose style was completely different. Stuart was part of what I'd call "The Brat Pack" consisting also of Christopher Lawrence and Gerald Benney. Before they came along everything was reproduction work and copies of antiques mainly.



I then moved to Nayler Bros., being the workshop for Garrard the Crown Jewellers, where I served 26 years. It was a massive workshop employing 60 craftsmen in one building in Bermondsey and while there I polished some amazing creations for Sultans and the Royal Family as well as most sports trophies including the Premier League Cup, the Americas and Wimbledon Cups, World Cricket and Brit Awards.

I also worked in the Jewel House within the Tower of London, restoring the fire gilt Wine Cistern, weighing in at $\frac{1}{4}$ of a ton. In 2003 I started up my own company, after being made redundant, enabling me to continue my craft. I was soon approached by the celebrity jeweller Theo Fennell who is a strong advocate of the craft.



He gave me my own dedicated workshop and has been extremely supportive of me as I have grown my business from strength to strength. I look after all of his silver stock across his empire and polish his bespoke jewellery created in his flagship workshop in Chelsea. I am in awe of the amazing craftsmen within the workshop and feel honoured to be part of the team. Theo also allows me to go off and share my craft with fellow craftsmen and students alike.

I was approached in 2007 by Dawn Meaden Johnson to run a Summer School at the School of Jewellery Birmingham and students came from as far as Australia, USA and Europe to spend a few days with me. This has led me to grow a consultancy business for different companies and I now travel all over Europe to give advice or setup workshops and in-house training.

At this moment in time I am a visiting tutor for the Goldsmiths' Centre, Design and Crafts Council of Ireland in Kilkenny, The School of Jewellery Ireland in Dublin, The School of Jewellery Birmingham, the Van Tool and Breet Academy in Den Bosch in the Netherlands plus "In The Studio Jewellery School" in Kegworth, so you can see I am doing my best to spread the word about polishing precious metals.

How did you get into the polishing trade? What made you decide on this vocation?

While at school I was very good at metalwork and art. I had desires to be a cartoonist, but the Careers Advisor said to me that they did not think I would make a living creating cartoons. Since I was good at metal and art it would be a natural progression to try and get into the pre-apprenticeship course at Rochester Design and Art College.

The course was for a year and covered all aspects of the trade much like today's Foundation Programme at the Goldsmiths' Centre. I decided I wanted to be a silversmith, but unfortunately there were no openings. My tutor was Norman Bassant and he discovered an opening for a silversmith's polishing apprentice. I studied day release in Silversmithing and the rest is history!



What is the most complicated piece that you have ever had to polish?

I have come across many challenges within my craft, including both the biggest creations to the minutest. I polished a ring designed by the late Zaha Hadid, which was very intricate, created by CAD in titanium; but also a million pound necklace for Forevermark, which was CAD created from stainless steel. The Innovation Centre in Birmingham arranges these challenges for me, so it gives me very varied experience.

I am also known for polishing sculptural creations: two sculptures of Kate Moss in 18ct gold as a naked angel, plus The Blind Leading the Blind for [Ottewill](#) in silver.

What attributes do you think a professional precious metal polisher needs?

You need patience and skill in order to understand the practicalities of how a creation is formed.

What advice would you give to students who are thinking of pursuing a career in precious metal polishing?



Spend a few days on one of my many courses to see if it is actually for you. Definitely start with a good foundation course and then make sure you work with the best craftsmen the world has to offer. This will rub off on you, well it worked for me!