



Modelmaking as a Career

ARTS
UNIVERSITY
BOURNEMOUTH

Professional Modelmaking

Modelmaking is a highly rewarding experience for anyone interested in making or design, and this booklet outlines some of the varied types of work that makes modelmaking such a diverse and fulfilling career.

Professional modelmakers are employed to make high quality models across a wide range of creative industries. Whether they are needed to test or communicate the designs of products, structures, vehicles or buildings; to create make-believe worlds in film, television, and theatre; or to educate and inform through museums, exhibitions, and advertising, the demand for models is extremely high. Medical prosthetics and forensic reconstructions also rely on modelmakers, with the career offering many different areas to explore.

Many design and architectural firms employ teams of modelmakers directly, while there are several hundred commercial modelmaking companies in the UK who make a range of models for clients all over the world. With the British film industry thriving, there is also extensive work for modelmakers making sets and props for major blockbuster movies.

Modelmakers need to be highly adaptable and able to use a variety of materials and processes – whatever best meets the requirements of each specific model they are working on. Constantly innovating, modelmakers are often called upon to come up with novel solutions to problems, and their broad skillset allows them to work on a range of projects. This makes modelmaking an exciting and varied career – one week a modelmaker might be making a timber model by hand, the next they might be preparing CAD files for 3D printing.

Entry into the profession is normally through studying a specialist degree course such as the BA (Hons) Modelmaking degree at Arts University Bournemouth. Many professionals discovered their love of modelmaking as children and have continued their passion through making models for industry.

If you are interested in modelmaking as a career, studying A-levels such as Design and Technology, Art, Engineering, Photography, Textiles, or Graphics is an ideal place to start. Develop your problem solving skills, be curious and experiment with different materials, and most of all, just enjoy making things.





Modelmaking for Design

If you have ever purchased a car, a mobile phone, a laptop, or even a bottle of shampoo, there were probably many different models made during the development of its design. Models are widely used in both product and automotive design to test new ideas, and to communicate those ideas to others once the designs have been finalised.

Companies such as Dyson, Heatherwick Studios, Honda, McLaren, Google, Apple, Jaguar Land Rover, the Ministry of Defence, and many others, employ modelmaking teams directly. Specialist commercial modelmaking firms also produce countless models for a huge range of global clients.

In making product or automotive models, a professional modelmaker might find themselves sculpting a car body at full size in clay, designing complex digital models to be 3D printed, or applying a high quality paint finish using a spray gun. Sketch models – rapidly assembled to test design ideas – form an integral part of the design process, and professional modelmakers will often be working alongside designers providing important input into the development of products.



Modelmaking for Architecture

Architectural models have been an integral part of the architectural design process for centuries. Many of the major architectural practices such as Foster + Partners, RSHP, Make Architects, SOM, BIG, and AHMM all have in-house modelshops where dedicated modelmakers produce thousands of models each year. Alongside these there are over seventy commercial architectural modelmaking firms who produce models for many different architects for use in competitions, planning applications, and public display and marketing.

The demand for architectural models has never been higher, and professional modelmakers are in great demand. Working as an architectural modelmaker involves many of the same skills as any other kind of modelmaking, and as with modelmaking for design, often involves working alongside architects during the design process making sketch models. As architectural designs progress, the level of detail required in a model increases, and so the most impressive and complex models are produced at the end of the process to present the final design to the public.



Modelmaking for Entertainment

Despite the extensive use of computer-generated-imagery (CGI) in movies today, modelmakers are still widely used in prop making and set construction. All the major film studios in Britain employ teams of modelmakers, who work on film and TV productions such as Star Wars, James Bond, Marvel, Doctor Who, The Crown, and Game of Thrones. Working on a film production can be quite intensive, often working to tight deadlines, however the experience of making a lightsabre or Iron Man's armour is very appealing to many modelmakers.

Aside from prop making, there are also career opportunities for professional modelmakers to work in animation, with Aardman Animations employing many modelmakers to work on productions such as Shaun the Sheep and Wallace and Gromit. Disney, the Tussauds Group, Jim Henson Productions, Hasbro, Merlin Entertainment, and West End theatre productions such as Lion King also employ modelmakers producing theatrical and performance sets and props, often at full size.



Modelmaking for Advertising and Exhibition

Models are in high demand for use in both advertising and exhibitions – including commercial trade shows and national museums. If you have ever seen the impressive Christmas window displays at Selfridges and other department stores, you will have seen the work of a professional modelmaker. Oversized props and set pieces for both windows and in-store display are a common projects for modelmakers to work on.

Museums and exhibitions such as the Science Museum, the Stanley Kubrick Exhibition, the National Space Centre, the Eden Project, the V&A, and the Natural History Museum all make extensive use of models from giant dinosaurs to historic replicas to interactive installations. Professional modelmakers also produce educational models for both museums and schools and universities, and modelmaking for display often involves working closely with experts from many different disciplines and industries.

Where Can I Find Out More?

If you are interested in modelmaking as a career, visiting the BA (Hons) Modelmaking degree course at Arts University Bournemouth on an open day is a great place to start. For more details of the course, go to www.aub.ac.uk/modelmaking, and you can find the dates of the university's open days at www.aub.ac.uk/opendays, or follow our Instagram account to see students' work and what is happening in our studio:

AUB Modelmaking (Bournemouth) - @aubmodelmaking

The following Instagram accounts also show the variety of projects that professional modelmakers work on:

Amalgam Modelmakers (Bristol) - @amalgam_modelmaking

Atom Modelmakers (Sunningdale, Berkshire) - @atommakers

Base Models (London) - @basemodelsltd

JSM Effects (Marlborough, Wiltshire) - @jsmeffects

Leviathan Workshop (Tamworth, Staffordshire) - @leviathan_works

Pipers Model Makers (London) - @pipersmodelmakers

Rainbow Productions (London) - @rainbow_mascots

Stitches & Glue (Somewhere) - @stitchesandglue

Association of Professional Modelmakers - @modelmakersorg

Arts University Bournemouth - @inspiredAUB



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