



Jan expands globally to Asia Pacific and Europe

Fast facts

Company: Jan Constantine

Industry: Creative Industries

Target Market: US, Japan, Germany, Switzerland, Korea

UKTI Services: Passport to Export, Gateway to Global Growth, Overseas Market Introduction Service, Events & Trade Mission, Tradeshow Access Programme

www.janconstantine.com



UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) invited Jan Constantine to join a Lifestyle Event at the British Embassy in Tokyo. Thanks to contacts that she made while there, Japan is now her top export market.

As a child, Jan Constantine loved sewing and dreamed of being a fashion designer. Her mother was a tailor and her grandmother a dressmaker, so it was perhaps no surprise when Jan herself went to Bolton Art College to do a Foundation Course before specialising in Fashion. After college, she worked her way up from junior designer to design director at Mr Ant, part of Shubette of London. After ten years in London, she moved to the Cheshire countryside and soon after started her own luxury collection of hand-embroidered products.

"I love embroidery and stitching and would often make gifts for friends and family," says Jan. "People told me that they were good enough to sell, but I felt I couldn't base a business on a few items that I would make myself. So I travelled to India to find suppliers and eventually found one that understood what I wanted to achieve and could produce a quality of work that I was happy with. Soon I was producing a range that included hand-embroidered cushions, textiles and accessories."

Exhibition support

Jan's first break came when she met a buyer from Fortnum & Mason at a trade fair and began to supply cushions and lavender hearts to the store's bed and bath department. This was followed by an order from Liberty's for tea cosies, aprons, Christmas decorations, stockings and haberdashery.

Looking to expand into new markets, in 2005, Jan joined Passport to Export, the UKTI programme that gives exporting companies the tools they need to grow their business internationally. Having been allocated an International Trade Adviser (ITA), she went on to receive funding through Gateway to Global Growth to exhibit at the New York International Gift Fair in 2006. With UKTI support, she returned to show her products in the US seven times, each time building up her confidence and connecting with new buyers.

"As well as providing financial support, UKTI takes a lot of the hassle out of exhibiting," says Jan. "Over the years, they have given me very practical help, such as providing stands for us to display our products on and advising on accommodation. Exhibiting with a group of Brits is a great boost - we have a lot in common and form a support network."

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Jan Constantine

“I also have a great relationship with my ITA. I know I can pick up the phone any time and ask her opinion about ideas that I have for exporting to new markets.”

Jan in Japan

In 2013, Jan decided to pursue new business in Japan. An agent had approached her at a trade fair and offered to represent her there. In March 2013, Jan took part in a UKTI Trade Mission and Lifestyle Event at the British Embassy in Tokyo, meeting buyers from Japanese stores. In preparation for her visit, her UK-based agent arranged for several of his contacts in Japan to come and meet her. Jan also commissioned an Overseas Market Introduction Service, asking UKTI to bring in specific companies that she wanted to do business with and arrange meetings for her with them.

One of the new contacts that Jan made during the UKTI Trade Mission was from the Hankyu Department Store. He invited her to take part in British Week, an in-store promotional event that took place in Osaka in October 2013. Hankyu bought a substantial amount of Jan's range ahead of the show. They sent a camera crew to film her in her home for a programme that was aired on Japanese television in the run up to British Week. People who bought Jan's goods at the fair were also given a special card autographed by the designer herself. The event was a great success. About 80 per cent of the stock that Jan had sent was sold. She also met buyers from other large department stores. Japan is now Jan's top export market.

Meanwhile, Jan exhibited at Maison & Objects in Paris in September 2013 with support from the British European Design Group (BEDG). This accredited trade organisation receives funding through UKTI's Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) to take British companies to interior design shows. Following the event, Jan secured orders from Germany, Switzerland

and elsewhere in Europe and from the biggest department store in Korea.

“The UKTI event in Tokyo was really well done and allowed me to meet a whole load of contacts, including Hankyu” says Jan. “Being associated with UKTI and the British Embassy definitely created an element of kudos that gave potential buyers the confidence to believe in me. I came away with several new clients. I was so honoured to be one of the 100 businesses featured at Hankyu's British Week. It was such a success that they have already invited me back for this year's event. Meanwhile, I keep in contact with UKTI and continue to use their support as I grow my export business.”

The export advantage

International trade has always played an important role in the UK economy. Today it accounts for almost 20 per cent of the nation's GDP.

Exporting can be challenging, but the benefits can be the difference between profit and loss. Research carried out by UKTI shows that:

- 34 per cent more productive in the first year alone
- 59 per cent of companies that exported either developed a new product or service or modified an existing one
- 85 per cent of companies reported that exporting led to a 'level of growth not otherwise possible'
- 87 per cent said exporting had significantly improved their profile or credibility
- 73 per cent said exporting had increased the commercial lifespan of products or services

For more information, please go to www.ukti.gov.uk/export

Helping you to do business abroad

Doing business in another country can be a challenge, so it's good to know that UK Trade & Investment is there to help you succeed.

Through a range of unique services, including participation at selected trade fairs, overseas missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, UK Trade & Investment can help you crack foreign markets and quickly get to grips with regulations and business practices overseas.

Through our Passport to Export programme we offer new and inexperienced exporters:

- Free capability assessments
- Support in visiting potential markets
- Mentoring from a local export professional
- Free action plans
- Customised and subsidised training
- Ongoing support once you're up and running

UKTI was delighted to support Jan Constantine in its business overseas.



To find an adviser in your chosen market and begin your own success story now, scan this code with your smartphone, visit www.ukti.gov.uk/trade, or email enquiries@ukti.gsi.gov.uk

UK Trade & Investment is the Government Department that helps UK-based companies succeed in the global economy. We also help overseas companies bring their high-quality investment to the UK's dynamic economy. We provide companies with the tools they require to be competitive on the world stage.