The Art and Science of
Rug Hooking
Ania Knap
A Brief History of Me

• First daughter of shiny new Americans
• *Age 3:* Why don’t flowers drink like I do?//I love my periwinkle crayon
• *High School:* Honors Physics, Adv Bio, Calculus II//I love knitting, crochet, sewing and imprinting chicks
• *University:* BA biology, BS chemistry, math minor & PhD (physical organic chemistry)//very practical...still knitting, crochet, crafts and orienteering
• Scientist & Project Leader Ciba-Geigy/Novartis//practical...and still knitting, crafts and orienteering
• Leadership in startups/small biotechs - both coasts//stamping, jewelry, polymer clay
Inevitable Entrepreneurship (not practical!)

- 2003: Launched MaxThera – funded by Federal Grants
- 2004: Launched Ania Creative Designs (ACD), a jewelry design side hustle
- 2008: Adult Ed, pressure valve: evening traditional rug hooking class
- 2010: Sold MaxThera//got serious about rug hooking
- 2011: Began training/workshops for rug hooking teacher accreditation
- 2015: Certified McGown rug hooking teacher
- 2010 – present: creating original artwork, teaching hooking and fabric dyeing
Fundamentals of Business (any business)

• Develop the concept, something that people/companies will pay for
• Develop the business plan
• Work out financials – capital requirements/sources, cash flow strategy, etc.
• Competitive advantage: Continually probe and assess direction of market
• Execute: R&D, production, marketing, financial controls and taxes

• Develop the concept
  • Focus on high quality materials and craftsmanship
    • Sterling silver/14Kt gold, vermeil, semiprecious stones, Swarovski, vintage Lucite
  • Original designs
  • Meticulous craftsmanship
  • Brilliant colors

• Develop business plan
  • Home parties
  • Arts & Craft Fairs
  • Pound the pavement – sales partners

• Source of capital
  • Self financed
If it’s not evolving, or growing, it’s dead

• Optimize inventory
• Assess the market
  • Review, re-tweak, revise, research what others do/did, repeat
• Competitor analysis
  • Major Jewelry retailers-cheap pieces for high prices
  • Local designers leveraging Asian labor for high profit margins
  • Kids selling for charity/fundraisers/allowance supplement
  • Hobbyists with no inclination to make money/profit
• Make the hard decisions – sometimes its dead
  • Most feasible path forward is cheap foreign labor
  • Skills, network and financing gaps – time to move on
Lessons learned from ACD Jewelry

• Don’t compete where there is no way to win
• The only thing constant in Business, Science and Art: Change
• Research, Refine, Reconnect, Repeat
Pivot: ACD Rug Hooking

AKA - exploring a new concept

• Teaching rug hooking
  • Basics to advanced skills, from how to hold a hook to the physics of the fabric and how light interacts with it

• Teaching dyeing of wool and other fabrics
  • What dyes for which fabrics, visual effects, color stability

• Leveraging scientific understanding of color, light and chemistry
  • Advanced color planning for visually appealing designs
  • Presentation and visualization of color in design - actual versus perceived
  • Troubleshooting (and avoiding) dyeing catastrophes
Wait... ...Rug Hooking?

...what’s rug hooking?
Rug Hooking is...

The art of pulling strips of fabric through a woven backing – e.g., rug warp, linen or burlap, using a hook...

...we’re called hookers
Wool, cut into strips, is the most commonly used fabric, either from old clothes and blankets or dyed wool.
Rug Hooking is...
Artistic Expression
Rug Hooking is... Crafting Whimsy
ACD Rug Hooking- the Business

• Workshops and materials sales
  • Teaching – groups and 1 on 1
  • Original pattern sales
  • Materials sales – dyed and modified fabrics
• Presentations at rug hooking guilds and schools
• Exhibits and competitions
• Sales of finished artwork (?)
Rug Hooking Competitive Landscape

- Established (30/40+ years) hookers teaching and selling dyed wool
  - Formal rug hooking schools
  - Weekly/monthly sessions with masters
  - Interest driven workshops
- Retail outlets for colorful wools and hooking supplies
  - Bricks/mortar stores and online outlets
  - Stores often offer instruction to novices
ACD Rug Hooking Plan

• Can’t acquire 40 years of experience in less than 40 years
• Grow organically – VC investment not a viable option
• Actions: building visibility and market awareness
  • Attending workshops and schools
  • Presenting completed artwork at hooking schools, county fairs and public buildings
  • Increasingly developing completed works from original designs
  • Interacting with online hookers through Facebook and Instagram pages
  • Monthly blog: “My Mother’s a Hooker” - partnership with Monique Frechette
    • https://aniacreativedesigns.wordpress.com
ACD Rug Hooking
Business Plan

Market research ongoing
ACD Rug Hooking
Business Plan

• Competitive advantage - differentiated products and services
  • New inventions for the Art of Rug Hooking
    • Shimmer wool
    • Metallic wool
New Materials

Using ACD modified wools to create stained glass effects
ACD Rug Hooking
Business Plan

• Demonstrating value
  Science based solutions to vexing dyeing problems and new techniques
ACD Rug Hooking Business Plan

• Demonstrating value
  Scientific and color theory solutions to design and fine shading challenges
ACD Rug Hooking
Business Plan

• Demonstrating value
  New designs incorporating mixed materials
ACD Rug Hooking Business Plan

- Market research ongoing
- Competitive advantage - differentiated products and services
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    - Metallic wool
  - Demonstrating value
    - Science based solutions to vexing dyeing problems and new techniques
    - Scientific and color theory solutions to design and fine shading challenges
    - New designs incorporating mixed materials
- Merge things/Morph things/weave one into the other

*Rug Hooking — Science—Jewelry —Art*
ACD Rug Hooking Business Progress

• Break even or better since 2012
• Continually exploring new revenue generating opportunities
• Focused on finding the most effective way to scale the business
• Always learning
• Follow ACD Rug Hooking online to see what’s next

Rug Hooking — Science—Jewelry —Art
Thank You
For Your Attention

• ACD Rug Hooking References:
  • https://www.facebook.com/aniacreativedesigns/
  • https://www.instagram.com/ania_creative_designs
  • https://www.linkedin.com/in/aniaknap/
  • https://aniacreativedesigns.wordpress.com/
  • https://www.mcgownguild.com/

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