

Apron entrepreneur's work displayed at Venice Biennale show in American artist's shrine

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Sarah Pecci and husband Michelangelo with a selection of Sarah's aprons and cushions.

An enterprising designer is hoping to clean up with her new business — aprons.

After a career in theatrical costume design Sarah Pecci decided to launch her own business working from her Llandarcy home producing vintage and retro aprons.

And just weeks after putting her creations online on a craft website she was approached by American artist Patricia Cronin to make a batch of the kitchen garments for her exhibition at the world-famous Venice Biennale show.

Now Mrs Pecci has jetted out to Italy to meet the artist and to see her Welsh handiwork on display as part of the Shrine for Girls exhibition.

She said: "I can't quite believe what has happened.

"When the first order came in it was from Patricia Cronin — and she wanted 30 of my Victoria aprons. I thought it was a joke to start with.

"We made them and shipped them to her in New York and she loved them. Then just days before the exhibition she said she wanted more — another 15.

"We got them made in two days and sent straight to Venice in time for the show."

Mrs Pecci began her love of stage costume as a volunteer at the Royal Theatre in Windsor, before going on to work behind the scenes at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

She later moved to Wales, first to Ceredigion and then to Llandarcy — her husband worked at Tata Steel — and now works part-time at the Lee Mill Fabrics shop in Swansea when she's not working on her own designs.

But she said her love of clothes started at a young age.

She said: "I have always loved working with fabric.

"I learned to sew from my grandmother when I was five, and then started making my own clothes.

"My passion has always been the theatre, and I know from an early age I wanted to work with theatrical costumes.

"When it came to starting my own business I was drawn to aprons because they are practical items but they have so many design elements.

"You can do so many things with what is a very simple item of clothing, and I like the historical aspect of them too.

"I like to take a simple item and make it beautiful."

And the Welsh aprons look set to do some more travelling after the Venice show closes — the Shrine for Girls exhibition, which was inspired by the stories of Magdalene Laundries in Ireland, will be returning to New York before touring America.

Mrs Pecci said: "I'm looking forward to meeting Patricia and seeing her exhibition in Venice.

"I can't quite believe how quickly this has all happened."