

Queen of Hearts making 'precious

By LINNET GOOD

CAMILLA Gough says she hears stories of love every day. A maker of bespoke (made to order) engagement/wedding rings, she likes to find out how her clients are going to propose. "If they don't have anything really good in mind, I send them off," she says, giving them two weeks "to get back to me with something really impressive".

One man packaged the ring inside a craypot, out in the middle of San Francisco's bay. Gough had documented all their conversations, "about how

much he loved this woman", handwriting what he had said about her and printing all his emails. These went into the container with the ring.

He paid a fisherman to take them both out there on a day that was, unluckily, a bit rough. His girlfriend, who suffers seasickness, didn't want to go. "Just. Get. In. The. Boat," he insisted, and they fought about it the whole way out. "She was quite feisty," says Gough, "screaming, 'Why the hell am I doing this?' ... 'Because it's romantic!'" he'd replied through clenched teeth.

Unfortunately, he hadn't sealed it very well. After arguing further about her being asked to pull up the craypot herself, she finally did so ... "and found this sodden package". The ink had run all the way through the notes, making them unreadable, but the pair made paper out of all the "sodden bits" for their wedding invitations.

Gough's work is contemporary and highly specific to each client. She encourages them to talk about themselves so she can design rings that will not only be a symbol of the marriage between them but will

also, ideally, represent those two people for the rest of their lives.

One client had always wanted to be a science-fiction filmmaker, but had ended up a scientist. He wanted his ring to represent Darth Vader's Death Star. "Which," she says, somewhat awed, "I think I did achieve, because I have a mutual interest in the Death Star as an image."

Gough, 38, never set out to become a jeweller. "I just wanted to make art." She studied sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts, whilst supporting herself as a

bits of sculpture'

cook. She finished her degree in sculpture and printmaking at Kansas City Art Institute, and then taught herself the jewellery trade, a long and painful process. Making rings, she feels she is creating "really, really small, precious bits of sculpture".

Her clients tend to want the rings to represent a lot, and Gough is meticulous in her commitment to achieving that. One man's "almost unmakeable" ring had to be made from a technically complicated combination of metals, it had to have moving parts (yet last a lifetime), and he wanted to

have something hidden in his ring that he wouldn't be able to see. "And then somehow after a year he would be able to see it." His partner's ring "was reasonably outrageous as well", and Gough decided to do the hidden part for both of them.

The pair will return to the gallery where they ordered their rings in a year, when Gough will give them a clue to the hidden part of their rings, the elaborate details of which must remain secret until then.

Gough's studio in the Nicholas Building, in Swanston Street,



has many paintings on the walls: payments-in-kind from artists who couldn't afford the full cost of their rings.



Gough says she is good at identifying the couples that are most likely to last. "When they come in, for one, they don't argue! They've just got a nice respect for each other. And they're the ones you're really happy to work for, because you know. There's just something about it."