Letting the light in
Jim Rokos is a designer with a difference – his beautiful homeware creations are more than just functional. At his company Rokos, he explores the physical properties of materials to create intriguing pieces of exceptional quality.

After a Master's degree in Industrial Design at Central Saint Martins, Jim began to pursue his passion to create original, visually arresting concepts that would also improve people's lives. He has already gained significant recognition, winning a 2012 Faces of Design award and an RSA Design Directions award in 2008. He came to UCL Advances in August 2013 for assistance with finding a manufacturer who could blow glass to very particular technical specifications.

Looking for the best
"We were using a very specific – and expensive – kind of glass to make the vase,” explains Jim. “This was increasingly the price of the product and because of that, restricting the size of the market we could penetrate.”

UCL Advances’ Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is funded by the European Commission’s Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). It provides support to businesses looking to grasp opportunities present in the European market that might otherwise go unnoticed, specifically designed for SMEs.

Just the right help from EEN
Staff from the EEN in London found a possible lead through their counterparts in the Czech Republic, who had local knowledge of manufacturers who could fulfil Rokos' specialised requirements. Sklárná, Novosad & syn Harrachov is the oldest still-working glass factory in Bohemia, with a history dating back to 1712. It specializes in the production of stemware and decorative items such as candleholders, bells, carafes, vases, bowls and chandelier parts.

As well as producing Rokos’ design, the two are also looking to expand production to new designs, including metal-based products; the company has also suggested a manufacturer for packaging the product as well. In September 2014, Jim won the Enterprise Europe Network awards for new markets, with help from UCL Advances and UCL Enterprise.

A perfect manufacturing match
"I know how incredibly difficult it is to find the right manufacturer and I can only imagine it must have taken a lot of work and brilliance,” says Jim.

"I can’t recommend the Enterprise Europe Network enough, and have already done so to former design colleagues who struggle to find the right match to make their product ideas happen."

Madalina Nazare, EEN Manager at UCL Advances, says, “Small and medium enterprises often need extra help in reaching good leads in foreign markets. This was the case for Jim, who came to us with an interesting puzzle. We were delighted to help him, together with our Czech partners, to find the right partner and bring his product to a wider market.”
About UCL

UCL (University College London) was established in 1826 and is ranked as one of the world’s top ten universities. The university is a modern, outward-looking institution, with more than 4,000 academic and research staff committed to engaging with the major issues of our times. It has a global reach, with 34% of its students coming from outside the UK, from almost 140 countries.

www.ucl.ac.uk

About UCL Advances

UCL Advances, UCL’s centre for entrepreneurship, helps anyone who wants to learn about, start or grow a business. Its primary role is to promote a culture of entrepreneurship on campus and engagement with entrepreneurs and small businesses beyond UCL’s boundaries. It works to support start-ups and small businesses across London by helping them to access the technical and business expertise of UCL’s staff and students through a series of programmes to help support ambitious young companies.

UCL Advances is affiliated with UCL Enterprise, which provides UCL’s structures for engaging with business for commercial and societal benefit.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances
www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise

About Business Support

UCL Advances provides direct business support for internal and external organisations through a variety of programmes and activities such as 1–1 advice, problem solving through student consultancy, student internships, training, mentoring and Enterprise Europe Network (EEN).

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is your gateway to competitiveness and innovation. The Network supports businesses to make the most of the opportunities in the European market.

The EEN team at UCL Advances help local organisations to find the right business partners, build their innovation capacity and meet their capital requirements. We can offer help in:

• Going international by connecting you with potential business partners across Europe.
• Access to funding and finance
• Technology collaborations
• Intellectual property and patents

The Enterprise Europe Network is strong of approximately 600 business support organisations in 51 EU and non-EU countries, promoting international cooperation locally. The newly integrated consortium comprising of 21 partners from England, Northern Ireland and Wales, bring together a range of skills and expertise.

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