

The beauty in provenance



For beauty entrepreneur Liz Earle, a move into Fairtrade jewellery seemed the natural next step. As she launches her first jewellery line, **Ruth Faulkner** catches up with her

Ask any woman over the age of 25 in the UK what comes to mind when they think of Liz Earle, and a mention of her eponymous Hot Cloth Cleanser – a beauty product that has won over 100 awards – won't be far from many people's lips.

Renowned the world over for her hugely successful line of natural skincare products, Liz Earle is now a household name and she plans to leverage this status as she embarks on a new venture: her own range of Fairtrade jewellery.

Developed in conjunction with ethical jeweller Cred, and bearing the strapline "Fair and fine", the 14-piece range is based on Earle's own love affair with botanicals and is, she explains, a natural next step for her, following the success of her beauty line, which she sold in 2010.

"I think there are a lot of similarities with the world of beauty and jewellery, because jewellery makes you feel good and it is something that you wear on your skin or next to your skin," says Earle.

Add to that the fact that she has always had a passion for jewellery – having bought and remodelled pieces from jewellery auctions as a hobby – and her previous experience in the jewellery industry, having designed a pendant and brooch for her charity LiveTwice, and worked with British luxury jeweller Boodles to create a necklace from ethically sourced pink sapphires. It almost seems as though Earle was destined to do something else involving jewellery at some point in her career.

Earle admits that she has always been an advocate of responsible sourcing, something which she held dear as she developed her beauty line almost 20 years ago. It was on these



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sourcing trips for her beauty range that she said she first became aware of Fairtrade and the work they are doing in regard to precious metals.

"Having travelled a lot with my botanical sourcing trips, particularly to East Africa, I had seen the difference that Fairtrade makes," she explains. "Now with Fairtrade mines coming on board in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, there is much more availability of Fairtrade gold."

"As I had learnt with the beauty company, it is all about provenance and the quality of the ingredients – and the ingredients in this case are the precious metals."

All of the pieces in Earle's new range are made of Fairtrade sterling silver and then finished with 24ct rose or yellow Fairtrade gold vermeil – something that was important to her as she endeavoured to create something with an accessible price point that could be enjoyed by as wide an audience as possible.

Like so many of today's advocates of the Fairtrade movement in the jewellery industry, Earle believes that

the debate around provenance and responsible sourcing is really starting to gain traction and it is her hope that, by using her name, she will further increase the awareness of Fairtrade gold and silver among end-consumers.

"I would love to be able to encourage the jewellery industry, in the same way I encouraged the beauty industry 20 years ago, to look at sourcing, to look at provenance, to look at labelling, because the customers are asking for it, more so than ever before," she explains.

"The rise in social media is making everything so much more transparent, so much more visible and so much more immediate. Customers want an immediate response, so I think there is a huge halo effect to be gained from jewellery retailers offering a certain amount of Fairtrade within their selection."

"It doesn't have to be 100%. If you can, like Cred, then that's amazing, but I think the commercial reality for a lot of the smaller independent jewellers is that that is not going happen. But, just to have a little bit – and hopefully that's where I come in with my name, as it just adds



Earle confesses she hasn't 'felt this excited about a new project for a long time'

another level of customer recognition.

"When a customer walks into a jewellers, they are likely to recognise the Liz Earle name as a brand that is known, trusted and loved for quality, reliability, honesty and great design."

Earle is quick to praise the team at Cred Jewellery for their assistance in helping her jewellery range to come to life. She explains that she has worked closely with Cred designer Annabelle Panes, who has interpreted her sketches of different botanicals and turned them into pieces of jewellery, which are a true representation of the various different plants.

"It is wonderful for me to be able to bring these plants to life in a realistic representation and that is the other thing that I think is different about my collection," she enthuses. "It is called The Botany Collection and it is all about genuine representation of botanicals. You can really see the variety of the flowers and the pieces look like genuine, authentic plants with real attention to detail."

The full range of The Botany Collection



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necklace be well-received, she would be given more slots to promote the range in the run-up to Christmas.

Not only that, Earle also plans to wholesale the range and says she is already talking to several potential stockists about taking the collection. "I would like to get one prestige outlet to start with, and I have had some interest already, so watch this space," she says. "It is very, very early days, but it is really exciting to see where it goes."

Earle's excitement and passion for what she is doing is palpable and it is obvious that she is well and truly behind the cause. "With up to 35 million artisan miners, just think how many of those lives could be transformed by using Fairtrade gold and silver.

"This is an amazing story of making proper change for the better and at very little additional cost to the end-user. I get a tingle when I think about it in the same way that I did when I launched the beauty brand and I haven't felt this excited about a new project for a long time."

Such is Earle's belief in the cause, she has already written an open letter to The Huffington Post explaining why she is backing Fairtrade gold and silver here in the UK; proof if ever any was needed, that the jewellery industry has found a real advocate for the need to focus on provenance.

"I am delighted to put my name and reputation on something that I think absolutely stands up to close scrutiny," she adds. With conviction like that, perhaps in another 20 years, jewellery will be the main reason why most people have heard of Liz Earle. ●



is available direct to the consumer via Cred Jewellery's website, with retail prices ranging from £136 for the Eucalyptus ring up to £190 for the interchangeable Wild Rose stud earrings with Adaptagem leaf and crystal drops.

Earle also launched the Neroli necklace, which is also available via Cred, with home shopping giant QVC back in September – something of a homecoming for her, given the success that her beauty line enjoyed on QVC when it was launched about 17 years ago.

Although she remained coy about whether she was banking on the same level of success for the jewellery line on QVC, Earle did say that she was hopeful that, should the Neroli

All pieces in the Botany Collection are made using Fairtrade silver and then plated

