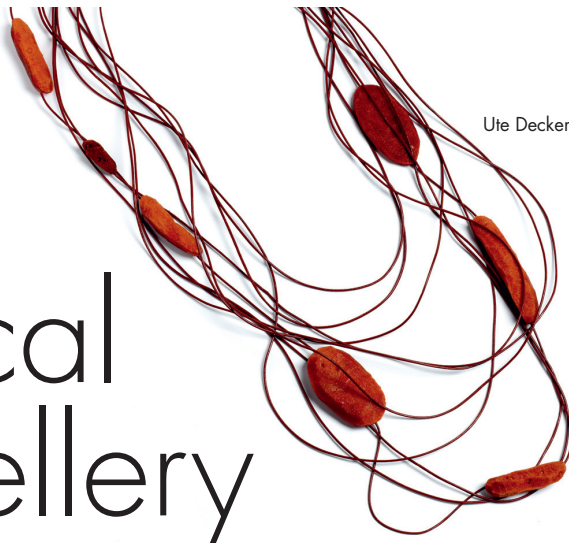


Ethical Jewellery



Ute Decker



Fifi Bijoux

The hot topic on everyone's lips these days, ethical jewellery has forced its way out of the shadows and is now a major issue for consumers, designers and suppliers alike. With greater understanding from buyers and more transparency from the industry ethical jewellery is no longer just a fringe issue.

The changing face of jewellery

Top jewellers have been using some recycled metals for years but the demand for ethical and responsibly-mined metals has grown at a fantastic rate recently. Certified Fair Trade Fair-mined gold jewellery will become a reality in 2010 and represents a significant milestone for the sustainable jewellery movement. Advances within the industry itself, such as the development of a 'Fair Trade sponsors mark' from the Assay Office in Birmingham, have meant that collectors and consumers can now choose ethical jewellery with confidence from a whole host of different designers and in a range of styles.

And it is the pressure applied through the supply chain that is making things happen. By educating consumers about what is available and encouraging demand for ethical jewellery, more jewellers, and their suppliers in turn, have to take notice. London-based designer Ute Decker works with a range of sustainable materials like bio resin. As she explained in a recent article in *The Goldsmith*, 'Jewellery is a largely emotional product and it is important to an increasing number of consumers that the story behind a piece is a positive one. For this reason I believe it to be essential to have the supply chains in place and certified for when the demand for these products will be more mainstream.'



Oria

Sources of supply

As the number of designers working with ethical materials increases so the numbers of suppliers are also growing. Greg Valerio, founder of CRED, was the first European retailer to sell independently certified Fair Trade gold and the CRED Sources supply business offers Fair Trade metals and ethically-sourced stones to jewellery designers. As Christian Cheesman, the director of CRED, states, 'CRED is driven by the desire to see artisanal mining communities benefiting from the jewellery trade and people given the chance to own jewellery that is traceable and delivers social and environmental benefits to producing communities.'

With mining partners like Oro Verde that share their belief in putting control back into the hands of artisanal miners and paying a fair price for their work, CRED Sources is working towards new international standards. As Greg says, 'Fair Trade and Fair-mined gold will guarantee a minimum price, creating security for producing communities. It will also include a 10% Fair Trade Premium that will support the development priorities of entire communities. 5% Fair Trade Ecological Premium will be payable to miners that mine the gold without the use of chemicals, thereby enhancing the environmental impact we can all have through the creation of beautiful jewellery.'

Designed differently

Many jewellery designers have embraced this same ethos. Leblas designer Clare Winfield explains that it was seeing the negative side of intensive production that made her choose to do things differently: 'After seeing the world of mass manufacture close up, you begin to appreciate that something needs to change as it simply can't sustain itself. At Leblas we set out to work on a more intimate and considered scale which has allowed us to find sources and workshops that operate in a fair way.'

Director of Fifi Bijoux, Vivien Johnson, says, 'Ethics are now an important factor in consumer goods of all description. Precious materials are a valuable natural resource and it's our belief that by imbuing each product with respect (from mine through to design and on to workshop) our customers take pride in owning a piece of jewellery which reflects the precious, exquisite nature of the materials we use.'

There is still a long way to go but giant strides have been made by UK jewellers who have made it their mission to create truly ethical jewellery.

Essence

To find out more about how your jewellery is produced you can attend one of the talks or debates at Essence, the first ever Ethical Jewellery Pavilion at this year's **Treasure** exhibition (see page 21). In association with CRED, Essence is a space for a group of designers who believe that sustainability can go hand-in-hand with great design and high quality materials. The Pavilion will also be your chance to view a live ethical design project curated by CRED, in association with London Metropolitan interior and product design graduates.



CRED



Eco gold and crystal mining, Fifi Bijoux

