

guardian.co.uk

How to buy ethical jewellery

For a unique take on the world of fashion, [sign up to the Guardian's fashion email](#) and get all the latest news delivered straight to your inbox

Kate Carterguardian.co.uk, Thursday 10 June 2010 16.44 BST



Gold and diamond rings - but are they ethical? Photograph: Alex Segre/Rex Features

FASHION DILEMMA

What's wrong with a bit of bling?

This week Fashion Statement is celebrating the third annual [London jewellery week](#). From workshops to competitions via launches and career advice, the event aims to promote London's place in the world of all things shiny. But the bit FS is really looking forward to is the [Essence ethical event](#) at Treasure, which will feature ethical jewellery designers and also act as forum for debate about ethical jewellery.

Which brings us to our dilemma - what's wrong with a bit of luxury sparkle? In many cases, nothing. Small-scale jewellery shops and sites promoting fabulous handmade pieces are great, and get the big FS thumbs up. Take [Gaudion Bowerbank](#) (full disclosure: the company is co-owned by our own Kelly Bowerbank, who runs the fashion desk AND a company. FS can barely even run for a bus). All their pieces are handmade to order by the designers, which means unless our Kelly has a secret dark side, we're pretty sure the designers are treating themselves quite well and no whips or poisonous chemicals are involved.

And that, we're afraid, is more than can be said for a lot of jewellery. Most of us now know about blood diamonds, what with that [Leonardo DiCaprio film](#) and all. Thanks to the impact of the [Kimberley Process](#), the amount of diamonds from conflict countries is now vastly reduced - down to a fraction of 1% compared with 15% in the 1990s. So De Beers - which produces 40% of the world's diamonds - can now call all its stones conflict-free.

This is all great, but unfortunately just because a diamond isn't a conflict gem doesn't

mean all is happy and shiny and workers are trilling their way to work, skipping through the fields. Social and environmental conditions can still be grim; often the workers are children, the pay is appalling, and toxic chemicals (arsenic and mercury, among others) are used, which have devastating human and environmental consequences. For a positively biblical vision of hell, have a look at [Sebastião Salgado's famous photo-essay](#) on Brazil's Sierra Pelada goldmine (which is now defunct, leaving a giant open pit that has turned into a polluted lake). Still want a solitaire for Christmas?

As of yet, there are no certified Fair Trade diamonds or precious gems. Many companies such as [CRED](#) are trying to change this, by working with the [Alliance for Responsible Mining](#) (ARM), among others. This Colombian-based organisation was born out of the [Oro Verde](#) (green gold) movement, which has been producing a responsible and traceable supply chain of gold since 2004. Ethical companies such as [Fifi Bijoux](#) use this gold for their pieces.

Ethical gold was given a big fillip earlier this year by the announcement of [new Fairtrade standards for gold](#). For the 100m people who depend directly or indirectly on small-scale gold mining, that is very good news indeed. So FS implores you to look out for the soon-to-arrive FAIRTRADE mark on gold jewellery, and to buy responsibly. And we also promise that we'll stop being so serious now.

BANG ON TREND



From left: silver

pendant by Annabel Panes at CRED, gold and diamond pendant by Fifi Bijoux and silver charm at Avasarah

Pendants

So now we've had our lesson in the ethics of jewellery, how about the actual pieces, eh? The fashion-forward and yet oh-so-caring designers on display at Essence during London jewellery week have an array of lovely necklaces (and other sparkly bits, of course) all made from ethically sourced metals and stones and/or recycled materials, so we've decided to plunder their wares for this week's Bang on Trend.

First up, [April Doubleday](#). She gets her inspiration from the coastline of Devon, where she is based, and FS particularly likes her [glass collection](#) (pendants from £75). [Avasarah](#), a rather fabulous online ethical jewellery shop, has its own range too, with some excellent prices. This [sweet hummingbird disc](#) is made from 100% recycled silver, and is manually produced (no heat or chemicals involved). You can add on charms, but we think it's nice just as it is, and for a bargain £29 too. More natural inspiration - but with a rather fabulous twist - can be found at Leblas, where this recycled silver and spearmint enamel pendant (£160) is a great combination of wearable yet distinctive. Note: the spearmint is not edible. Alas.

Over at CRED (the host for the ethical section of the show, no less), we're in love with [this gorgeous pendant by Annabel Panes](#). Inspired by Nepali designs, it's handmade from 100% recycled silver by the Harigni Cooperative in Nepal (£85 for silver, also comes in gold).

Yet more inspiration from nature (honestly, what is it with these ethical designers? You'd think they, like, care about the planet or something) can be found in the lovely designs of Fashion Statement's longstanding favourite, Fifi Bijoux. If money were no object we'd like [this stunning pendant please](#). Ethical 18ct gold, diamonds from a co-operative mine, cut in fair trade workshops - but yes, it is £1,200. Christmas? Please? We'll be good, we promise.

FASHIONISTA OF THE WEEK

Billie Piper



Billie Piper at the

2010 Glamour Women of The Year awards. Photograph: Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images

Billie Piper wore a gorgeous 20s-style frock to the Glamour Awards this week, showing the likes of Cheryl Cole that you don't actually need to wear less than approximately 3cm squared of fabric to look great. Of course, she didn't look [quite so classy by 2am](#), but which of us can claim we would, either?

FASHION GRAVEYARD

Kylie Minogue



Kylie Minogue at

jewellery shop Tous in London. Photograph: Antony Jones/UK Press

Kylie, we think you picked up the wrong dress. This one is either a) three sizes too big for you, or b) belongs to someone three feet taller than you. Hiding behind a retro 80s

sweatshirt with a picture of you on it (even one with a mullet) does not detract from the fact you are wearing something that looks like it ought to be investigated by the Marine Stewardship Council.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

I knew the signs and when it started happening I tied my hair into a nice side plait, put on my bronzer and off I went.

Nicole Ritchie tells Vogue about giving birth the second time round. Yes, giving birth. Not spotting a lurking photographer. **GIVING BIRTH.**

OUT AND ABOUT



Ethical fashion from

People Tree. Probably not taken near Brick Lane.

Fairtrade fashion pioneer and FS favourite [People Tree](#) is holding a series of sample sales just off Brick Lane in London. The sales will take place on 11-13 June, 25-27 June, 9-11 July and 23-25 July, and hours are Fridays 6-8pm, Saturdays 10.30-6.30pm and Sundays 11.30-5.30pm. *People Tree, 5 Huguenot Place, 17a Heneage Street, London E1 5LN.*

And more good news for ethical shoppers - the weekend of 26 and 27 June sees a new fair, [Ethical Just Got Fabulous](#). It will showcase up-and-coming ethical brands at fair trade-friendly prices. It's also just seconds away from the People Tree sale. Entry is free. *Saturday 26 June, 1pm-6pm and Sunday 27, 11am-6pm, The Rag Factory, 16-18 Heneage Street, London E1 5L.*

[Oliver Goldsmith](#) is hosting a summer party at its new store on All Saints Road on 19 June. There is a 10% discount on the day and Claire Goldsmith will be at the store for expert advice. *Oliver Goldsmith, 15 All Saints Road, London W11 1HA.*

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, clean skincare brand REN has opened a pop-up shop in the Front Room at St Martins Lane. The shop will feature a 'Living Wall' showcasing different visions of natural beauty, taken by - well, you. Top entries will win a luxury prize, and all entrants will get 10% off REN products. To enter just send your picture of 'natural beauty' to REN via post, popup@renskincare.com, or hand-deliver to the store. *REN Pop-Up, 45 St Martin's Lane, London WC2, open till 1 July 11am-7pm (closed Sundays).*

SHOPPING NEWS



Jewellery by Suzanna

Dai ("Designer crush of the week") at boticca.com

FS has found a fab new jewellery site - boticca.com is a curated marketplace where handpicked designers sell their designs directly to the consumer. There are already more than 100 designers on the site, and you can get at least 30% off their 'designer of the week'.

A new fashion brand, womenlikeusclothing.com, has just launched, designed by Tina Malhamé (formerly at Next, Monsoon and Per Una). The collection comprises stylish tunics and shirts from size 10 to 22, and jewellery and accessories.

[Anna Lou of London](http://AnnaLouofLondon.com) has a short but sweet sale on this weekend, with 50% off all full-priced jewellery and accessories. The sale runs from 6pm on Friday 11 to 8am on Monday 14.

Want some retail therapy without spending any money? Join [Big Wardrobe](http://BigWardrobe.com), the UK's biggest online fashion swapping site. Sign up for free and be one of their 37,000 plus members with 85,000 items up for swapsies.

Saveyoursole.co.uk is a new website helping you resole your posh shoes in style. If your Louboutin famous red soles are scuffed, fear not. They even have a brochure to suggest the right sole for your shoe.

OFFCUTS

Check out our indispensable [guide to the best summer dresses](#) on the high street.

Simon Chilvers [scouts out the next big things](#) at Graduate fashion week.

This week's [key trends gallery](#) shows men how to work the neutral look.

We pick the [best-dressed fashionistas at the CFDA fashion awards](#) in New York.

For all the latest fashion news, visit guardian.co.uk/fashion

News to tell us? Email kate.carter@guardian.co.uk

HOULIHAN FEVER? SOMEONE GET A GRIP.

Ads by Google

Ethical Fine Jewellery

Conflict Free Gems & Fairtrade Gold Because Love Shouldn't Hurt!

www.IngleAndRhode.co.uk

Eco Friendly Rings

Wedding Bands Which Recall Thoreau Nature, Reflected in Your Rings

www.greenKarat.com/KindredSouls

Native American Jewelry

50% OFF! Huge Selection Navajo Zuni Hopi, Indian Jewelry, Art, Kachinas

www.SilverTribe.com

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2010