



IT'S A BLING THING

Seeking out the finest antique gems and designing bespoke jewellery is all in a day's work for Clare Blatherwick, finds Morag Bootland

Diamonds are a girl's best friend, or so they say. So if you're in the market for an introduction to your next BFF, then Clare Blatherwick might just be your woman.

Clare is a jeweller who offers a uniquely personal and private service to anyone who would like to source a special piece of jewellery, design a bespoke item or get an insurance valuation. Based in East Lothian, Clare works all over Scotland and beyond and without the constraints of a retail outlet she is able to visit clients in their homes, offices or banks.

With over 20 years of experience in the industry, Clare started out her career when she was still at school, working as a Saturday girl in a local jewellers. She's worked in high-end retail, for an international gemstone dealer and before setting up her own business in 2017 was head of jewellery for Bonhams auctioneers in Scotland.

And with a faithful cohort of clients in Scotland to look after she also travels widely to lecture and talk about jewellery to insurance brokers, investment house banks and arts societies across the world.

'The best part of the job is building relationships with people', explains Clare. 'You might find me walking dogs on the beach with my clients. I know their families. It is very special when you receive photos of clients wearing something you've made for them.'

Clare works with an in-house designer who specialises in remodelling and redesigning old pieces of jewellery

LEFT: AMANDA FARNES HEATH.

FAR LEFT: Clare Blatherwick is a jeweller with a difference.
BELOW: A bespoke, handmade tanzanite, diamond and sapphire ring.



into something more to the client's taste, and so is well placed to provide guidance ahead of transforming a piece.

'Over the years, I've seen people who have taken a beautiful art deco Cartier bracelet to a jeweller and they've ripped it apart to make something new,' says Clare. 'For me, that's a bit criminal, because the piece is really important. It is worth so much more than the sum of its parts. So, in those circumstances I'd help the client sell it so that the piece survives and they can have something made using the funds.'

Clare's top tip is that if there is age to a piece, and it carries a signature, it will be desirable in the marketplace. 'There are times that something will have reached the end of its life and we need to reuse it, but I'd always want to help the client understand what they have.'

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A rare Victorian natural pearl necklace; Examining a pair of diamond earstuds; South Seas cultured pearls with handmade gold clasp and bead accents; Measuring a Victorian pearl and diamond pendant.



Over the years, Clare has handled and sourced some pretty amazing diamonds, coloured diamonds and gemstones, but is all too aware that the value in a piece isn't always monetary.

'When I was at Bonhams we broke world records for a blue diamond. That looked pretty good on my hand! It's great fun trying these things on and it's not uncommon for me to help people with six-figure pieces of jewellery. But it's also not uncommon to help people with not very valuable, but hugely sentimental pieces of jewellery. And to me that's as important as the big ticket items. Because without a doubt, in this business, sentiment is key.'

And when it comes to choosing a diamond, Clare's training in gemstones and years of experience allow her to source the best quality stones. Her advice is never to buy online, even if



LEFT & TOP CENTRE: AMANDA FARNESE HEATH.

the diamond comes with a lab report to verify its clarity and colour.

'You've got to see the cut of the diamond. You can have two stones that are the same weight, both G colour and vvs clarity, but if one is better cut they will look a heck of a lot different.'

'Another thing that we're seeing a lot of in the trade right now is lab-grown diamonds. In the last couple of years the value of lab-grown diamonds has dropped massively. As the technology is improving they can pump out large numbers of stones. They're called lab-grown, but frankly they are grown in factories and that doesn't feel like a luxury product that is going to stand the test of time.'

'My view is that these will eventually be used in low end costume jewellery. Because at the point when they can

produce thousands of carats a day it becomes a volume product. For me, it's important that things are natural and have provenance.'

Clare is happy to focus her business and expertise on quality and is proud that everything she does is handmade. 'I think it's so important, because British-made jewellery is fantastic. It's a real skill that we have in this country.'

And for anyone who might worry about the ethics of wearing diamonds Clare is quick to point out that with antique pieces and remodelling what she does is essentially 'luxury recycling'.

'When we're making pieces we encourage clients to reuse their own metal, as well as the stones. And we're using craftspeople in the UK to do the work. So, I think we're doing pretty well on that score.' 

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Field facts

For more information on Clare Blatherwick visit clareblatherwick.co.uk or follow her on social media.