



LIFE

# Goldfinger: a social enterprise on an environmental mission

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Lucianne Bell

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**A social enterprise is aiming to promote sustainability, aid employability, and bring together both sides of the Kensington community through the power of food.**

Goldfinger was founded by two design and sustainability pioneers Marie Carlisle and Oliver Waddington-Ball in 2013, with the flagship store located in Trellick Tower.

The brutalist towers renowned architect Erno Goldfinger inspired the name and motto, turning surplus wood into sustainable furniture.

Carlisle, who is also CEO, said: “We’re on a mission to make sure that wood specifically, but all material is used that it’s highest value and transformed into beautiful, timeless furniture.”

The tower is located in one of the most joint deprived wards in all of London, including generational unemployment, mental health, and hate crime.

So another aim of the enterprise is to bridge the gap between the affluent and the deprived inhabitants in **Kensington & Chelsea**.

So far Goldfinger has helped 20 individuals successfully start their own creative businesses and diverted 400 tonnes of landfill material to date.



Marie Carlisle Goldfinger CEO and Co-Founder Image Credit: Karen O’Leary, Goldfinger

Carlisle grew up in Hong Kong, which had many formative influences on her career.

From an early age she was sensitized to the juxtaposition between Hong Kong as a city of tremendous wealth and beauty but also a huge amount of poverty and pollution.

At eight years old, Carlisle recalled manoeuvring a boat around a floating fridge in the ocean, this sparked many questions about a man made object invading the beauty of the natural world.

She said: “I remember thinking, something’s not right here. Something’s really messed up.

“I obviously didn’t have the language for it at the time, but it was very much my awakening to the problems of the linear economy and now the circular economy.”

Carlisle went into the luxury beauty industry, working for large organisations such as: Estee Lauder, LVMH, Quintessentially and Conde Nast to name a few.

Despite the invaluable experience and knowledge she gained working for these iconic brands, she felt gradually more out of alignment with her values in trying to attain both beauty and ethics in a business.

Carlisle said: “That’s really my passion, bringing sustainability and luxury together.”



Goldfinger Crafter Image Credit: Karen O’Leary, Goldfinger

Goldfinger reinvest their profits into two charitable initiatives: The People’s Kitchen and The Goldfinger Academy.

Goldfinger’s on-site café Panella is home to The People’s Kitchen initiative, which began in 2015.

On every third Sunday of the month the café cooks up delicious Sicilian influenced meals from surplus ingredients.

It aims to tackle food poverty and isolation through the celebration of food and community through a monthly community meal.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the initiative transformed into a meal delivery service for the vulnerable and isolated residents in a bid to address social isolation and food shortages caused by the pandemic.

After fundraising enough money to fund a delivery service, and finding the vulnerable members of the community with the help of local charity groups and volunteers, Goldfinger managed to get 200 meals out on a weekly basis.





The Peoples Kitchen Image Credit: Karen O'Leary, Goldfinger

The Goldfinger Academy offers in-school woodworking course, craft classes, traineeship programmes and free career guidance for the North Kensington community.

Free spaces are offered to residents on low-income and the academy also delivers apprenticeships to those not in education, employment or training.

Carlisle said: "What I like to say is we see potential in individuals where others don't."

The academy runs three programmes throughout the year: Manufacto for 10-to-13-year-olds, Future Makers for 16-to-19-year-olds, and Soulcraft for adults.

It is mostly grant funded through donors, philanthropists, local individuals, and organisations, with Evri the largest funder and partner of Goldfinger.

They developed a curriculum and Goldfinger crafters teach the children, and they've also sponsored some apprenticeships for young adults keen on entering the craft and design industry.



The Goldfinger Academy Image Credit: Karen O'Leary, Goldfinger

Additionally Goldfinger aims to be a model to all businesses about how they can be a force for good, while not compromising on profits.

Carlisle said: "That's what I'd love to show the world, that you don't have to make a compromise. It doesn't have to be purely for profit or purely non-profit.

"I think it's businesses responsibility to reinvest some of their profits back into society."

For further information on Goldfinger's philanthropy work or bespoke furniture click [here](#).

*Featured Image Credit: Karen O'Leary, Goldfinger*