

Inspiration from within



To commend her 50th milestone in business, we speak to award-winner Elizabeth Gage MBE on a successful career as one of the world's most prestigious jewellery designers of our time. **Daniel Moore**

Many artists take inspiration from other peoples' work, but renowned jewellery designer Elizabeth Gage MBE is an exception to this rule, using her own vision to produce timeless and traditional jewellery for men and women around the world.

Elizabeth's work has been described as unique and avant-garde, combining exquisite stones, baroque pearls and ancient bronzes with brightly coloured enamel and detailed goldwork to craft elegant jewels worn 'day into night'. In recent years, she has brought nature into her designs with the addition of myrtle leaves - an item traditionally worn on bridal dresses during the Victorian era.

One of Elizabeth's proudest achievements was receiving the Queens Award for Export accolade in 1989, followed by a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008 from Retail Jeweller magazine, which commended her 40th year in business. Some of the jeweller's earlier projects proudly sit on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum, where many gather to admire Elizabeth's creative flair and traditional handmade techniques.

The jewellery entrepreneur first discovered her artistry as a little girl when she started making dolls clothes and houses out of anything that provided inspiration. Elizabeth later trained as a goldsmith at the Sir John Cass College in the 1960's, commissioning her first pieces for Annabelle Jones.

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- Elizabeth Gage MBE





The jeweller adored the designs notably for their bold and glamorous detailing that differentiated from other designers' work on display. The famous zodiac rings took off shortly after she moved to Richmond Virginia, following which a lovely article appeared in Connoisseur magazine.

Elizabeth's first major project was for Cartier's new catalogue in New York in 1968 that proved a resounding success, leaving the artist to pick up multiple accolades including the De Beers International Diamond Award in 1972 for her 'Agincourt ring' – heralded as a masterpiece that challenged the norms of contemporary jewellery design. From this point on, the entrepreneurs business grew exponentially employing twenty-five staff tasked with bringing her visions to life. And although it was a male dominated industry at the time, this didn't stop Elizabeth from producing gorgeous creations from gemstones that, to this day, still carry historic and iconic references.

The designer's inspiration comes from animals and nature that are engraved onto earrings, bracelets and various other lines in her collection. She also looks to the jewels worn by Catherine the Great and used to question why other jewellers weren't influenced by those 18th century designs. She says she soon found out why.

Reflecting on her portfolio, Elizabeth said. "My inspiration comes from the very first thought that enters my mind and it always comes from the stone and never anything else. I have a vision of how the stone will look and what will go well with it and so I look for beautiful stones".

Wearing expensive and visible jewellery carried connotations of wealth and power in the 18th and 19th century, particularly among royalty and the upper classes. In recent times, it is worn for style and individuality,

which resonates through Elizabeth's portfolio. Adding to this, she provides further insight. "The Americans were the first people that took to my jewellery and if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have been where I am today. They weren't afraid of buying something that they'd never heard of before. When they discovered my rings, they thought they'd be too big to wear but they started with my smaller rings and worked their way to bigger ones which were a huge success".

Nowadays, Elizabeth's work is collected worldwide with a strong client base in the UK and America. The designer can be found showcasing her collections in New York and is continually grabbing the attention of high-end fashion publications and celebrities. In 2015, after the death of Hollywood star Lauren Bacall, Bonhams auction house sold one of the designer's gold and diamond 'Camel' brooches for \$23,750. Prior to this, she had purchased a total of 23 pieces from her range.

Elizabeth no longer works at the bench and is focusing on the design aspect of the business while her team of goldsmiths continue bringing out new lines through her vision. Anyone wishing to make a purchase or enquiry can do so by visiting: www.elizabeth-gage.com. This also contains a link where you can browse her popular collection of Zodiac Rings, Animal Kingdom and British Summertime pieces, as well as her latest book 'The Unconventional Gage', written by Elizabeth detailing the designer's journey to success.



As the jewellery mogul continues producing timeless classics for the summer months, Elizabeth Gage MBE gives some final words of wisdom to young, aspiring designers. "Follow what you love doing, and if you have a spark of love to make jewellery, go for it, but what is important for me is that I have a great love and passion for what I do".