

GREAT BRITISH BRANDS

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VanLeles

A fine jewellery brand reflecting the passion and expertise of its founder

It was living above a renowned jewellery store in New York's Madison Avenue that made Vania Leles fall in love with the glittering world of high jewellery. As a model, Vania travelled the world working for leading designers and jewellery houses but she always knew that modelling would only ever be a stop-gap on a bigger path. And so she enrolled with the prestigious Gemological Institute of America, where she studied gemology and developed her design style, while honing the masterful core skills that make her the excellent technical designer and gemologist she is today.

She moved to London for love, 16 years ago, working for Graff as an in-house gemologist, before moving to De Beers and then Sotheby's fine jewellery department. It was only after a decade of hands-on industry experience that Vania felt the time was right to embark on her own journey and, in March 2011, she launched VanLeles Diamonds in London, combining her design and industry expertise with a passion to realise her longed-for dream.

Having worked in a small square mile – Bond Street – for over a decade, it seemed appropriate to find a home alongside the companies that shaped her. After a 16-month search, Vania chose a secluded spot on New Bond Street, now home to her beautiful by-appointment only atelier.

A true reflection of her personal style and in homage to her first and last name, VanLeles atelier strikes the perfect balance between feminine and chic, pairing grey velvet with highlights of pink, Vania's

favourite colour. From here Vania nurtures her existing clients, helping them build their jewellery collections but also welcomes new clients who come to her from all corners of the world.

VanLeles focuses only on ethically mined and sourced diamonds and gems, its philosophy of 'ethically sourced, passionately crafted' is at the core of everything it does. As Vania explains: 'Having grown up in Africa and knowing first-hand the brutality of the diamond trade, I have a moral duty and a social

responsibility to my community to procure and work with ethically mined precious gems, diamonds and metals in my jewellery. It's very personal to me and I sleep better at night knowing that I pass this on to my clients.'

VanLeles' clients are well-travelled women 'who've seen it all', according to Vania, and are in search of something really personal. They want to create beautiful memories through their jewellery; they are kind-hearted women who are interested in every step of the jewellery-making process, from the mine to

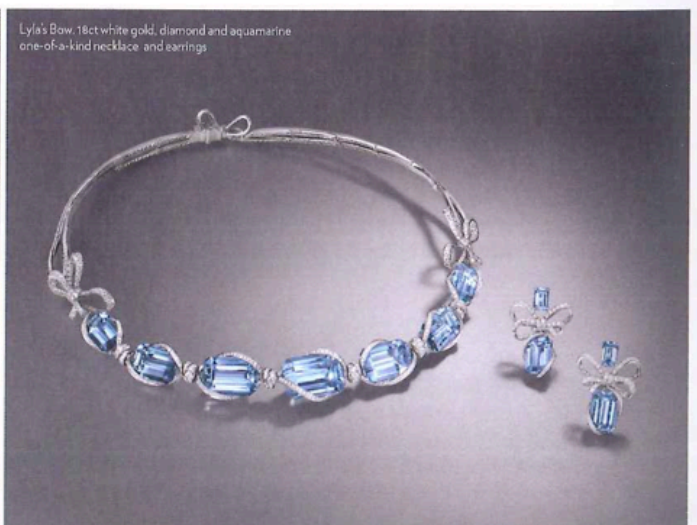
the finished piece. It is important for them to know that what they are investing in, both emotionally and financially, is ethically sourced. 'A woman's jewellery collection often celebrates the most beautiful milestones of her life, so I believe we should really think about the story of a stone and the people who mine it, and create jewellery that we can be proud of and will be truly fitting of these personal memories.'

On first launching her brand, Vania mainly worked on

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Dancing Butterfly. 18ct rose gold, diamond and rubellite earrings



Lyla's Bow. 18ct white gold, diamond and aquamarine one-of-a-kind necklace and earrings



LEFT: Legend of Africa, 18ct white gold, diamond and sapphire multicolour ring
BELOW: Enchanted Garden, 18ct white gold, diamond and sapphire earrings



engagement rings and timeless classic pieces, but when launching her first collections, she found she was able to be much freer in her approach, using bolder, more colourful stones and feminine designs which felt like a truer expression of her aesthetic. As Vania sums up: 'What I love is being able to travel to the most remote parts of the world to source our stones while helping local communities. I am so fortunate to be able to work with these incredible gems and some of the most skilled artisans in Europe who bring my designs to life.' It's no surprise then that the jewellery of VanLeles so brilliantly reflects the passion of its creator.