



A goldsmith filing a pendant cast



The pendant being polished to perfection

Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery

SILVER LININGS

New traditions are often forged following difficult times and testing circumstances. A collaboration between STAHS and alumna Harriet Kelsall is one of these, with the award-winning designer, entrepreneur and jeweller creating a bespoke piece for the Class of 2021, in what will become a new gift for Year 13 leavers from STAHS.

Harriet said: 'I instantly thought this was a really lovely idea for the girls and was keen to be involved. After looking at the new School logo I had an initial idea for a design concept; I was keen to make a light and airy piece that would be both easy to wear and modern, with an element of timelessness.'

It is fascinating to hear about Harriet's thought process and how her school days directly influenced the design. 'After thinking a lot about education and what it meant to me, I realised that I used to think that education felt a lot like jumping through important hoops and that the High School was there to support and challenge me. It was these ideas that inspired the looped design at the top of the shield.'

'We all have to go through various stages of education like GCSEs, A levels and perhaps a degree or vocational qualification. When you look at the three loops from the front, they form the shield shape but from the side you can see the cycle of education and support that inspired the piece too.'

'When I was working on this project, I found myself reminded of my own Sixth Form years and I thought a lot about what I would have liked in a piece of jewellery at that point. I imagined myself once again walking down the corridors with arms full of folders; but then I thought they are probably just carrying iPads these days, and I'm positive that they no longer have blackboards and chalk!'

It is clear that designing a piece of jewellery is more than a creative exercise for Harriet and involves really thinking about the recipients. 'I obviously love visual balance and colour, but I also love stories. When somebody comes to us for a bespoke

design project, we think "how can we tell this story?". It might be a love story, a life story or a story of support and hope. I try to inject creativity into every piece so that it isn't just a lovely piece of jewellery which is beautifully made, but also a symbol of something special and personal for each project.'

The design is not the only important part of the STAHS piece though, with Harriet making a conscious decision to make the piece in recycled silver. 'We have done a lot to help move ethics on in the jewellery industry which has been a fascinating journey, but of course like every industry, everything is still far from perfect despite having come a long way. I am proud to say that my company was the first company in the world to be certified by the Responsible Jewellery Council and licensed to sell Fairtrade gold.'

'When it came to the STAHS piece, I asked the casting house if they could make them in recycled silver as I knew they had been considering using more recycled metal in their work but weren't doing it quite yet. They said that although they were not really ready to start working that way, they would get ready in order to do this for us, and I am just thrilled about this. So, in a way, this project from the High School has helped make ethical progress itself which is brilliant!'

'Young people are truly leading the way in environmentalism and are so inspiring to me – our customers who are my age rarely ask about ethical options until we suggest it to them. However, our young customers don't only ask us for them but even ask us brilliant questions like: "How can you prove to me that when you say this is Fairtrade gold, it really is?". These kinds of questions show me that the future will be in safe hands.'

A full version of the interview with Harriet can be viewed on the alumni portal: <https://alumni.stahs.org.uk/harrietskelsall2021>

