



INSPIRED BY LIFE

words and images: hannah ritchie

Enigmatic jewellery designer, Holly Budge, creates limited edition pieces “inspired by life.” Part-time adventurer, her appetite for the extreme is evident in her bold designs and carefully selected materials sourced from the farthest reaches of the planet. By combining a creative spirit with her curiosity for the world, Holly enables the wearer to garnish themselves in adventure.

NOW BASED IN CHRISTCHURCH, Holly first came to New Zealand ten years ago to go skydiving. After six months she became a free-fall cameraman and the first woman to work in Lake Taupo as such. For the next four years Holly worked filming skydiving. She returned to the UK; university then further travels before moving to New Zealand permanently in 2010.

Holly’s voyage into jewellery design began alongside her Mother, Linda Budge, who introduced her to bead classes. The two started coming up with their own designs and soon discovered the hobby had turned into a fixation. “We started working with quite small glass beads and crystals that we’d bought. Now when I look back, our designs were so basic and the materials we used then, I wouldn’t give a second look

now,” says Holly. “It was a good start because we didn’t know any better.” Twelve years on, Holly says that there has been a lot of education in terms of the materials and techniques she employs. Holly and her Mother are mainly self-taught but when one picks up a new technique they’ll teach the other. This has allowed their work to become more explorative and dynamic over the years. These days, they are both silversmiths and make their own glass beads for the designs. “We’ve really come a long way but I think you could spend a life time learning about all the different gem stones and techniques. It is definitely a real journey that we are doing together,” says Holly.

Holly and Linda Budge have been selling their designs for several years now. Their collections can be seen online, including their first collection for 2010; Earth, Air, Fire,



Water and Space. Later in 2010, inspired by the earthquake, Holly designed and released the 7.1 collection. She launched this in Christchurch as a fundraiser for the earthquake appeal, to which she donated 7.1% of the proceeds. “The 7.1 collection was very much based around circles which I made in sterling silver chains; they represented the tremors, and also the strength of the community in Christchurch. Then I used semi-precious gem stones like turquoise, coral and smoky quartz and put them next to raw stones like lava. That was a comparison between the past and the present. Shiny nice stones next to raw and textured stones,” says Holly.

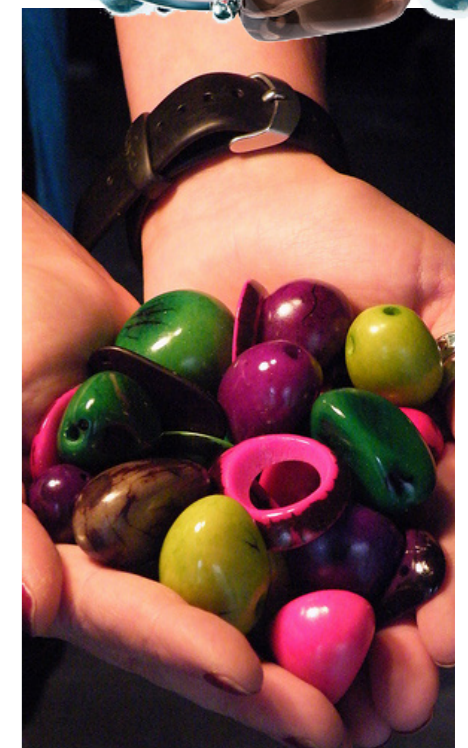
Selling online is the ideal format for Holly and Linda as geography prevents a collaborative arrangement in one location. Holly, based in Christchurch, doesn’t let distance slow down the process. “What I love about it is that even though Mum is in the UK and I’m in New Zealand, we chat nearly everyday and we’re constantly bouncing ideas of one another. It keeps the design fresh, with two heads going through the creative process rather than one. It is quite bizarre, even though we are on opposite sides of the world

and going through different experiences and seasons, our style is really similar. Mum made some pieces for the 7.1 collection and her style totally blends with mine. It is lovely being a team, especially with your Mum.”

One of the unique things about the jewellery is that the materials are carefully and ethically sourced from many unusual locations, making it impossible to replicate any of the pieces commercially. Each is individual with all of the materials having slightly different properties. “The great thing about our jewellery is that it really tells a story. In many cases the beads are from places that I’ve been to through my adventures,” says Holly. In 2008, she was the first woman to skydive over Mt Everest. On her way to base camp she found a Nepalese woman selling Yak bone beads. “Some people really enjoy the stories about where I’ve found the materials that make up the pieces. They’re not just bought and thrown together, there is a



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story and a meaning in each piece,” says Holly. “Our slogan is Life Inspired Jewellery; it is really inspired by our adventures. Mum came to Everest with me and it is really special when we find our beads and a story behind them together.”

Wearers of Holly’s designs can enjoy not only items inspired by plummeting at speed towards the highest peak in the world. There are pieces crafted into existence as a result of galloping 1000km across Mongolia; where Holly happened to find some turquoise and other local beads. She has spent a great deal of time in Thailand rock climbing, allowing her ample opportunity to seek out many interesting materials for her work. She was joined there by Linda and between them sourced over five kilograms of materials for their designs, including; silver from the Chang Mai region and shell and stone items from the islands. Australia and New Zealand have provided some interesting stones, in particular greenstone. “I’m always on the look out for materials. Mum and I are planning to take a month and go around the world to South America, Asia and Australia. We are now at the point where we want to go on some missions especially dedicated to finding good materials.”

In addition to sourcing materials; Holly creates her own glass beads. “Making glass beads is a freedom in itself because you can create something specifically to match the gem stones. You are not limited by supply, you can create exactly what you need,” she says.

The word distinctive springs to mind in describing Holly’s work; she is self-proclaimed as being incapable of making delicate jewellery. “When I think of things, I think big, bold

stones and big chunky bits of silver. For me, it is about making jewellery out of the best possible materials that I can get my hands on,” she says. “Then I sit in my workshop and see this massive array of colours, shapes and textures. I play around and put different things together until it evolves naturally. I try to make all of my creations limited edition or one off so the pieces remain special. Commissions are good too, if someone comes in with an idea in their head, it’s great to be able to make that happen for them.”

Holly’s latest venture with her jewellery is the setting up of Bead Workshop New Zealand. The studio doors have been opened to students who can come and learn introductory bead making. She and Linda have also just released their latest collection called Eco-Chic; created using Vegetable Ivory - a plant seed found in the Amazon. “Vegetable Ivory is replacing elephant ivory. A sustainable material; it is very similar in texture to elephant ivory and also very hard. It is dyed into the most amazing colours and keeps the colour well. The whole Eco-Chic collection is made with this sustainable material,” says Holly.



From February 15th – 23rd Holly will be exhibiting her work at the prestigious New Zealand Academy of Fine Art in Wellington. There are three guest jewellers showing their work alongside the fine art in the Borderless Exhibition, run by the New Zealand Art Guild.

Her work, adventures and further information can be found at www.hollybudge.com or www.beadworkshop.co.nz. ■