

Shine on

Many would argue that the most flawless diamonds have no colour. But Salina Khan, founder of Diaz Fine Jewelry, hopes to add a touch of green to her creations. **Jonie Chiu** finds out how

Most jewellers will boast the quality of their materials, or the originality of their designs. Diaz Fine Jewelry does neither. What this company does proudly boast, however, is the eco-ethical approach it adopts to create its "diamond" pieces.

The foundation of Diaz, an online business that sells diamond alternatives in the form of cubic zirconia, is built around promoting socially responsible business practices. With a passion for saving the planet and a husband who loves to design jewellery, Salina Khan Fuchigami launched DIAZ Fine Jewelry in 2007.

Using the same custom-made meticulous craftsmanship as diamonds, but without the human rights issues and ecological factors that are inevitably attached to the industry, the lab-created jewels are pretty, shiny stones that are almost identical to diamonds.

To some, these might be considered fake, but Khan admits that the less value that is attached to them, the easier they are to produce. And unlike diamonds, cubic zirconias are always flawless.

"I'm not saying cubic zirconias are perfect," explains Khan, "but I strongly believe they do less harm than mined diamonds simply because zircon mining is less invasive and there are no

ethical issues attached to their production. It's a fact that every single consumer product that exists on this planet makes use of some sort of natural resource in its production. There is not one single product that is 100 per cent eco-friendly when considering all the steps, from extraction of the natural resource used to the production process, the transportation process, and the eventual disposal. I think it's important to evaluate the degree of harm a product poses to the planet and to question the true need to demand something that has such a high cost to our planet."

Of course despite labour and human rights issues attached to them, diamonds are still a girl's best friend... Khan is a fan herself, and starting Diaz was in no way an attempt to boycott them. Instead, Khan hopes to raise awareness of the footprint that diamond mining leaves on our planet.

Through Diaz, customers can also contribute to diamond mining restoration: a portion of the proceeds are regularly donated to One Sky, a grassroots non-profit organisation that aims to repair communities in Sierra Leone that have suffered from unethical practices in the diamond industry.

Home grown

Although Diaz' business has mainly concentrated on sales in

Japan, each piece is crafted in a factory in Kowloon, coincidentally where Khan's grandmother used to have her own jewellery made.

Growing up in Hong Kong, Khan has fond memories of fresh air and blue skies, but returning to Hong Kong as a mother, she realises her son will not be brought up in the same environment. This prompted Khan to jump-start TheWayToGo, an environmental initiative that serves as an all-encompassing platform dedicated to all things eco-friendly, such as eco-news education and action. Her work has paid off, earning her a nomination as an Outstanding Earth Champion by the Earth Champions Foundation.

Helping Khan balance her roles as an entrepreneur and an environmentalist is her husband, Takashi – he has taken a more hands-on approach to the production process and together the couple tries to build a brand that strikes a fine balance between style and sustainability.

Diaz Fine Jewelry may offer the ideal alternative to diamonds for the socially conscious. There's no word on whether Diaz will open a bricks and mortar store soon, but a new collection is in the works, as well as a line of bridal jewellery. Can future brides-to-be be content with a diamond alternative? Maybe not, but if it's for a good cause, it's definitely worth considering. ☺

