

Oxfordshire

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LIMITED EDITION

A CINDERELLA STORY...

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MAKING A STATEMENT

Limited Edition meets Bianca Elgar, the internationally renowned award-winning designer who is bringing her unique design aesthetic to Oxford's high street this Christmas



Oxford is a veritable advent calendar of a city – multiple doors each yielding something to surprise and delight, for at its heart Oxford is a city of secrets.

Despite the streams of visitors who amass in the centre, there are realms of Oxford which remain resolutely hidden, to be glimpsed only in passing or by chance. The verdant lushness of quad lawns, whispers of historical meeting rooms, myths and modern-day urban tales all woven into the very fabric of the honeyed stone. One such treasure is the internationally renowned Bianca Elgar, who creates stunning designs in her garden studio, concealed from view behind a simple terraced cottage on Osney Island.

When establishing her eponymous brand, Bianca had no experience in the fashion industry but she was sure about how she wanted to run her business. Five years later, she is an award-winning designer with a series of collections offering versatile uncomplicated clothing, exquisite design and an emerging range of lifestyle essentials. Her most recent print, *The Language of Flowers*, was awarded Platinum in the prestigious 2018 A'Design Awards, and her brand identity is clear: versatile, luxurious and sustainable design, created in the UK.

"I'm all about rolling up my sleeves and taking control of where my future is headed," says Bianca. "I've always wanted to make my passion [design] into a career and once my boys were settled in secondary school I realised this was my time".

"I'm very proud to be Dutch and it is a huge part of who I am, but my home is England. Perhaps it is because I come from another place that I can recognise the outstanding quality of traditional British manufacturing.

"There is a heritage in the UK that goes back generations and I knew I wanted to support this through my work. Plus, it gives me a wonderful opportunity to travel across the country and have personal connections – from the printers in Macclesfield who use state-of-the-art digital technology to print my screenprint-based designs onto silk, to the manufacturers in Somerset who make up my Sleeved Scarves."

What started off as a straightforward capsule collection of modern basics in modal and jersey, complemented by a range of statement accessories, has grown exponentially as new collections have been born and new products have launched, all of which start out as screenprints in Bianca's studio.

"Oxford is a constant source of stimulation for me. It's my adopted home town," she enthuses.



“Oxford is where my sons have grown up, and it’s where I feel most settled. As a designer, it is a gift of a city in which to live. In fact, it was during a visit to the Ashmolean Museum that I was inspired to work with silk. There are a selection of kimonos in the basement there. The design is, of course, beautiful but the outstanding quality is their longevity. Silk is not only delicious to wear against the skin, but has beautiful lustre and durability. By choosing to work with silk I am trying to create pieces which will be loved and will last. I want to create pieces which will be treasured and loved for a lifetime.”

Slow fashion can attract a premium price tag,

but Bianca has created an exclusive limited edition collection called Be Unlimited, which is currently stocked at Barley on Oxford’s bustling North Parade. The range includes vibrant square and oblong scarves and the unique Sleeve Scarf, an original Bianca Elgar design. “There’s no compromise on quality, for this limited edition I’ve experimented with different fabrics including a silvery jacquard for a festive scarf tie top, the fabric for which is produced in a family-run mill in Lancashire.”

“I’m becoming increasingly interested in producing equally impactful statement pieces for the home. I’ve taken the Men print from my Out of Africa

collection of silk scarves and adapted it for a range of products which would make wonderful gifts. The obvious next step was to create the Women prints. I’ve now developed this further and am delighted with the results.”

Between now and Christmas, Bianca has joined the collective at the well-regarded Liscious Interiors and Friends pop-up shop in Summertown, where she’ll be launching her Home collection.

“Up until now, my products have mainly been sold online, through my own website (www.biancaelgar.com) and my Etsy shop, so it is exciting for me to see my designs available to buy in two of my favourite shops in Oxford.”

