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## Lark & Berry: The diamond disruptors

*"If we can't grow it, we don't use it"*

Laura Chavez. Founder, Lark & Berry

The craftsman of the Atelier Asymmetric Bow suite that won the 2019 Goldsmiths' Craft and Design Council Graff jewellery award was delighted. The Graff Award was the jewellery industry's equivalent of the Oscars award for Best Picture and conferred immense prestige on its maker. The judging team said, "Judges were looking for jewelry that reflects Graff's house style of luxury, innovation and excellence, where diamonds need to be the predominant precious gemstone."<sup>1</sup>

The company who supplied the gems for the winning suite – an 11.6 carat diamond necklace, a pair of 2.5 carat diamond earrings and a 2.4 carat diamond engagement ring and wedding band, valued at almost £200,000 – was also delighted. "We are just beside ourselves with excitement," said Laura Chavez, CEO and founder of luxury jewellers Lark & Berry.<sup>2</sup> (See *Exhibit 1. Lark & Berry Atelier Asymmetric Bow suite*)

The Graff Award was handed out by the House of Graff, an illustrious family jeweller who, for over half a century, had represented the rarest gemstones and "employed their expertise and experience, personally selecting every stone and – uniquely among diamond houses – presiding over every step of its journey. No stage is bypassed. No shortcuts are taken. Only perfection matters."<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the euphoria of the win lasted barely 24 hours for Laura. The award had made history: it was the first time that a piece made exclusively with lab-grown diamonds had scooped the top Craft and Design Council prize – or any award in the luxury diamond field.

The awards judging panel, which was comprised of 60 high-profile members from the world of architecture, photography, fashion, art and communication, subjected the piece to extremely close scrutiny before deeming it the winning entry; none detected that it was made with cultured diamonds.

When Lark & Berry announced their win, the awards committee realised it had been made with lab diamonds and immediately asked Laura to take down and recant all their announcements, stating that they were not allowed to reference Lark & Berry's role at all in producing the Bow collection – even though they had designed and commissioned the piece.

Understandably, Laura refused. After all, she was simply announcing to the world that a Lark & Berry piece had won the award. The awards committee then then "got mad", in Laura's words, insisting that it was the craftsman who had won the award, rather than Lark & Berry. Laura reworded Lark & Berry's press announcements to say that the craftsman had won for

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