

# SIGNS OF SUCCESS

Former women's-wear exec Beth Bugdaycay talks about her inspirations for Foundrae, the symbol-centric jewelry brand she launched in 2015.

BY MARIE CHABROL



**B**eth Bugdaycay was the CEO of women's clothing brand Rebecca Taylor for nearly two decades before she and her husband created jewelry company Foundrae in 2015. Their collections draw on a broad lexicon of symbols from different cultures and time periods — such as scarabs, arrows, horseshoes and the elements — and the meanings behind them. Manufactured in New York, their jewels have quickly found customers all over the world.

Since starting Foundrae, Bugdaycay says she has reached a place of balance. “I feel complete for the first time in my life, that I’ve been able to harmonize my family life, my values and my professional life in [such a way that they feed into] each other, rather than short-changing each area.”

## What's your creative process?

I always start with the symbols: the idea that I'm trying to communicate, and then the form. In terms of the line evolution, I tend to think in terms of maps, layered and complex maps, so as we start each collection, I'm really trying to peel one of the layers of the maps in order to illuminate it more. Then we have many conversations with the jewelers that are in our studio, as well as the skilled craftsmen of the workshops that we work with. We talk about how we might achieve the look we are after before we start.

## How did your fashion experience help you develop the brand?

I think that I have more of an appreciation for the consistent inherent value of our raw materials than many other jewelers have. I came from a world where clothing inventory had almost lost its complete value in just a few months, so for me, the idea that I can

melt gold and reset diamonds is completely liberating. As a result, I feel very comfortable playing with design concepts and melting them until they are right.

## What's the specific energy of the diamonds used in your jewels?

I have a deep belief in the potency of the symbols we use. I think they speak to a deeper knowing within ourselves and help us to actualize [it]. But for the energy of the stones themselves, such as diamonds or other gemstones, I honestly think the real power is in the individual. If an individual is carrying rose quartz in his or her pockets and thinking of love, then I think they start acting and living with more love, which is a beautiful result. But were someone to just put rose quartz in their mattress and forget about it, I don't think the stones themselves would yield tangible results.

## What are your main sources of inspiration?

I often look to Victorian and '70s [styles], but also the Arts & Crafts period, 1880 to 1910. The Arts & Crafts movement is considered to be a reaction against industrialization. It stood for traditional craftsmanship using simple forms, and it often used medieval, romantic or folk styles of decoration. It also advocated for a new set of principles for living and working, which resonates with me. I feel that at Foundrae, we are committed to living beautifully, meaningfully and fully. We want that not just for ourselves, but for everyone we come in contact with.

## How do you feel about having contributed to the trend of female self-purchasers?

The interesting thing is that I hadn't known any different. As soon as we started our Instagram, I was always speaking to the end consumer. I had envisioned Foundrae as tools of self-expression and self-discovery, so I had really intended for it to be a personal

purchase from the very beginning. I had no idea that it wasn't a common practice in jewelry, and for Foundrae, the majority of our sales have been self-purchased since we started.

## Who inspires you in your personal and professional life?

Most people I meet inspire me. I think people are a wonder. I love to hear about the diverse backgrounds people grow up in, challenges they have faced, the beauty they see. I think that as a society, we get so busy that sometimes we forget to take the time to understand the real human depth that is in all of the people we pass on the street.

## Who are your muses?

I have so many and for so many different reasons. Some for their style, some for their courageous acts, some for their creativity, some for their fire, some for the light they shine: Dolly Parton, Caroline de Maigret, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, Cher, Diana Vreeland, Debbie Harry, Hanya Yanagihara, Alicia Keys, Willie Nelson, Lisa Bonet, Kristen Stewart, Patti Smith, Maggie Rogers and Aldo Cipullo, to name a few.

## What is your favorite personal jewel?

A vintage sterling silver Mexican coin my mother gave me that she wore throughout the '70s.

## Where is your jewelry sold?

We have our own flagship store in New York, as well as an e-commerce website. We also sell to about 20 great specialty accounts and just have plans to add only one or two new international retail partners this year. We want to keep a tight distribution that allows us to ensure that the experience our customer has is very personal. [foundrae.com](http://foundrae.com) ■

## ELEMENT COLLECTION



Gold and lapis lazuli Air badge medallion.



Ether medallion with diamonds and a variety of colored gemstones.



Earth badge medallion in gold with onyx and green sapphires.



Bespoke leaf bracelet in gold and diamonds.  
Above: Beth Bugdaycay.