

Gems & Jewellery

Spring 2025 / Volume 34 / No. 1



TUCSON GEM
SHOWCASE REVIEW

DIAMOND INDUSTRY
ANALYSIS

WOMEN MINERS OF
EAST AFRICA UPDATE

JAPANESE PEARL
MAINTENANCE REPORT



GemA
The Gemmological
Association of
Great Britain

Pricing The World's Most Precious Gems

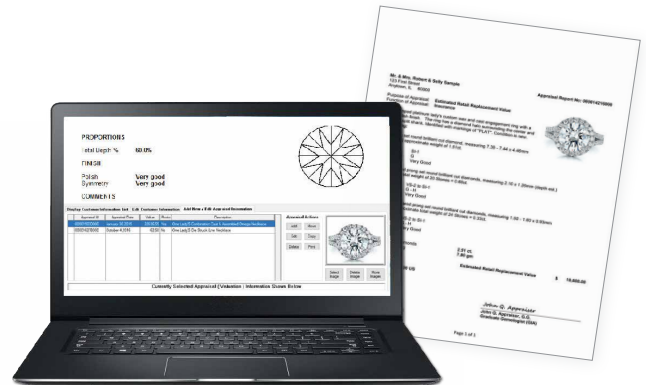


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Gems & Jewellery

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TUCSON GEM SHOWCASE REVIEW

A look at the styles that captured visitors' attention at this year's shows.



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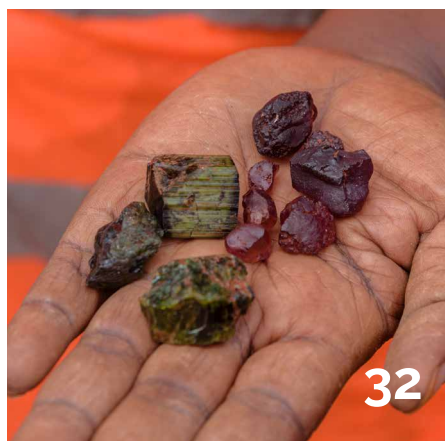
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DIAMOND INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Reviewing factors that will have an impact on the diamond market in the coming year.

WOMEN MINERS OF EAST AFRICA UPDATE

The challenges and triumphs of women who mine coloured gemstones in Tanzania and Kenya.



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COVER PICTURE

The AGTA Spectrum award-winning platinum ring on our cover consists of a 10.33-carat emerald-cut moonstone accented with twenty-six fancy orange sapphires (0.33 tcw), thirty-four Brazilian Paraíba tourmalines (0.46 tcw) and sixty-eight diamonds (0.42 tcw). Photo courtesy of Omi Privé.

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Gems & Jewellery

Spring 2025 Edition Featured Contributors

1. NICOLE AHLINE

Nicole Ahline completed her undergraduate studies in geology at Cornell College. She then enrolled at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) for the Graduate Gemologist (GG) program, followed by the Gem-A Gemmology Diploma program. In 2016, she was hired to work in the gem identification department at GIA in Carlsbad, California, where she is now a senior staff gemmologist. While at GIA she has been a frequent contributor to gemmology journals and has given talks on numerous topics. Miss Ahline's current research interests include origin of colour in coloured diamonds and geographic origin of corundum and emeralds.

2. BRITNI LECROY

Britni LeCroy is a senior staff gemmologist at GIA in Carlsbad, California. She earned her bachelor's degree in geoscience from the University of Texas in Dallas before receiving her GG from GIA and her Gemmology Diploma from Gem-A.

Ms LeCroy is a frequent contributor to *Gems and Gemology*. Her areas of interest include pearls, organic gem materials and historical gemmology.

3. SAMMANTHA MACLACHLAN

Sammantha Maclachlan FGA DGA FIRV MJVA is an independent jewellery valuer based in Glasgow, United Kingdom. She has over twenty years of experience in the industry and worked in high-end jewellery and watch sales before finding her passion for gemmology and valuations. Ms Maclachlan is a Fellow of Gem-A and past winner of the Gordon Ness trophy for the top mark in the Gemmology Diploma exam. She also holds the Diamond Diploma with Merit from Gem-A. Ms Maclachlan is a mentor and tutor for new and student valuers as part of the National Association of Jewellers' Institute of Registered Valuers and sits on the committee of the Scottish Gemmological Association. A passion of Ms Maclachlan's, when she is not in the office providing valuations, is photomicrography. She can often

spend hours catching just the right image to be shared online, as well as in the *Roskin Gem News Report*, where she has a magazine page.

4. ALISON MACLEOD

Alison Macleod is an experienced goldsmith who established her own brand, Alison Macleod Jewellery, twenty-one years ago. An alumna of the Edinburgh College of Art, she works from her atelier in rural Scotland, drawing inspiration from antique jewellery and its deep sentimentality. Her jewellery celebrates the emotional charge and personal connection imbued in each piece. Dedicated to ethical practices, Ms Macleod uses fully traceable single-mine-origin gold in her collections. She developed the distinctive 'catkin' technique, creating pieces with a decorative, organic aesthetic. Ms Macleod's jewellery has been exhibited internationally and is available through stockists throughout the UK, and on alisonmacleod.com.

5. NORBERT MASSAY

A seasoned development professional from Tanzania, Norbert Massay has dedicated two decades of work to engaging diverse East African communities. For more than a decade, he has worked with Pact Tanzania



at the intersections of community development, environmental sustainability and artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Since 2016, Mr Massay has played a critical role in co-designing and implementing all of Pact's innovative programs that improve the livelihoods of gemstone and gold miners in-country. He co-founded Moyo Gems and has worked across Africa via the GIA artisanal-mining education programme. He now coaches the 'next generation' of talent, East Africa's world-class youth, to gem leadership and industry success.

6. AYAKO NAITO

Ayako Naito FGA DGA is a gemmologist and educator in gems and jewellery in Tokyo. Ms Naito graduated university with a degree in developmental psychology and started her gemmological education with Gem-A in 2005. Her background includes interning at an auction company in London and working in antique jewellery retail, at a jewellery industrial magazine and a pearl-testing laboratory. She also acted as a Gem-A representative in Japan for many years. Ms Naito is currently putting an emphasis on teaching gemmology while working as an online distance learning (ODL)

tutor and organising seminars and field trips for gem enthusiasts.

7. ESTHER NDEKI NJUNGE

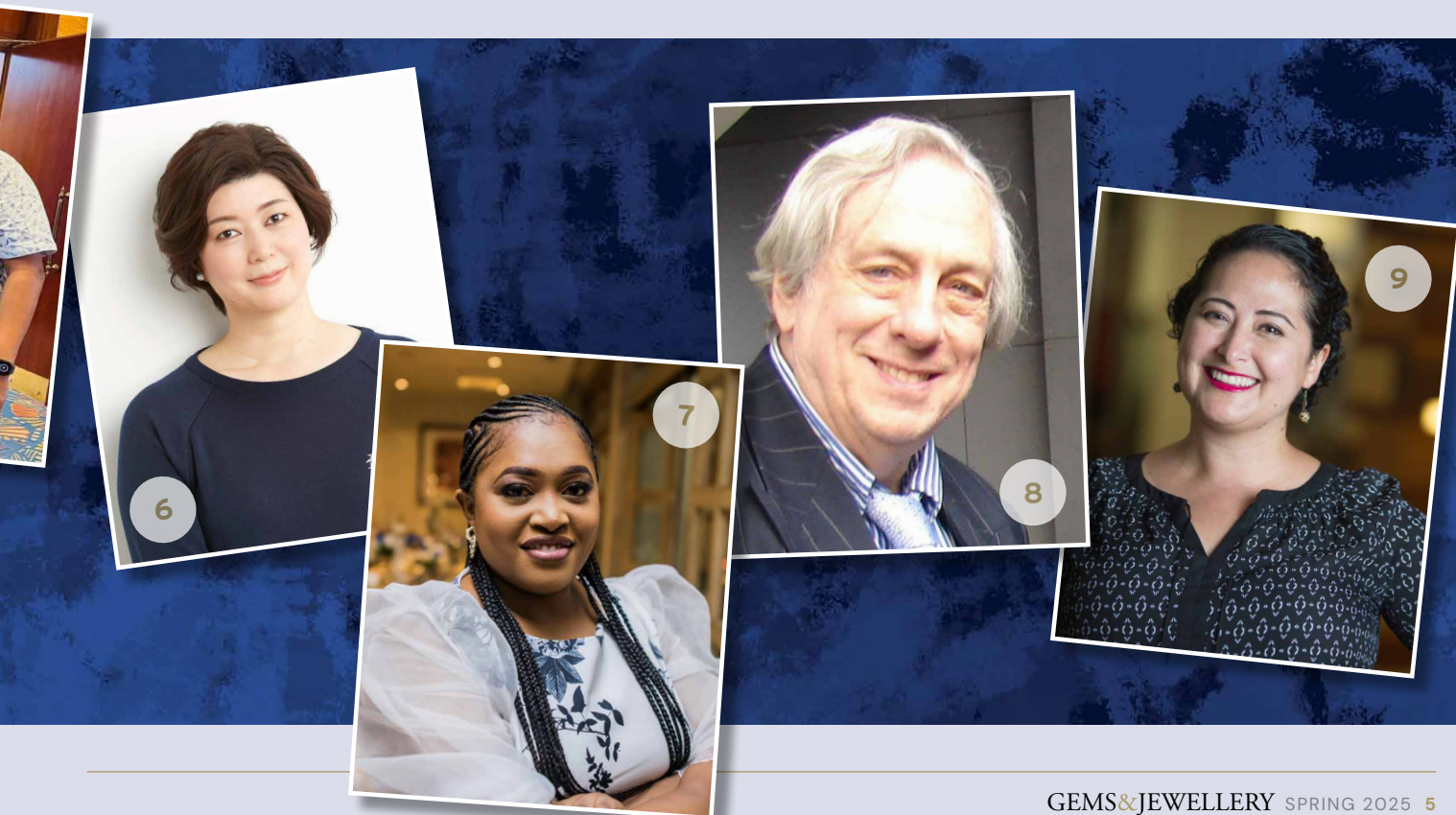
Esther Ndeki Njunge is a senior program manager with Pact Kenya. In her role, she is responsible for managing, identifying and building strategic partnerships for Moyo Gems in Kenya. She leads the programme's strategic growth, policy alignment, initiatives focussed on youth leadership and beneficiation and industry collaborations to green supply chains. Ms Njunge has policy-level expertise in mining sector governance, gender mainstreaming and community health. Her passion is in women's economic empowerment.

8. RUSSELL SHOR

Based in San Diego, California, Russell Shor is the owner of Russell Shor Communications and Consulting. He has more than forty years of experience in the diamond industry, including nineteen years at GIA as a senior industry analyst. Previously Mr Shor served as a senior diamonds/economics editor at *JCK Magazine* and as editor of *New York Diamonds*. He holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University in the United States.

9. CRISTINA VILLEGAS

Cristina Villegas is a senior sustainability advisor with Pact, an international nonprofit organisation building solutions for human development that are evidence-based, data-driven and owned by communities. She is a double-award-winning supply-chain leader who has worked directly with national women mining leaders across East Africa for more than a decade. For almost twenty years, she has worked hand-in-hand with local communities, global brands, governments and development stakeholders to improve sustainability outcomes in raw-material supply chains. She has been an integral member of Pact's renowned responsible supply chain programmes, which work with global brands seeking to perform on the leading edge of sustainability and human-rights performance. Ms Villegas is regularly consulted as an ASM expert on gold, gemstones and conflict minerals by such organisations as USAID, U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Labor, the World Bank, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and others. She lectures on extractives for Columbia University's Massive Open Online Course, and she is a technical advisor to the Conservation X Prize's Amazon Grand Challenge.



Gem-A News

A round-up of the latest industry news from Gem-A

GEM-A AWARDS PRESENTED AT CRAFT & DESIGN COUNCIL COMPETITION CEREMONY

The awards ceremony of the Craft & Design Council Competition was held at Goldsmiths' Hall on Monday 3 March. Among the honours given were two Gem-A Awards: a Gemmology Foundation online-distance learning (ODL) course for each winner. The Gem-A Award is open to all competition entrants that include a gemstone, or multiple gemstones in their 2D and 3D submissions. Interested applicants must tick the entry form box and submit a 200-word statement explaining how the coursework would benefit the craftsperson and support their career development. Gem-A CEO Cath Hill was on-hand to confer the awards.

Heather Blake took the first of two Gem-A Awards for Lapidary & Carving. In her statement accompanying her Garlic Amulet, carved from Cacholong opal, she explained that "A powerful and potent plant in a humble form, garlic has been used for well over 4,000 years for

healing, warding off evil spirits and to enrich the flavour and nutritiousness of food... Using the subtle colour variations of cacholong, its translucent centre and opacity near the crust, I have carved the form of a garlic bulb."

The second of the two awards was given to Mia Vilcins, whose Dirty Martini composition of carved agate, silver and glass won in the Lapidary & Carving, Conceptual Jewellery and Jewellers category. "In this curiously abandoned glass is gemstone masquerading as a bar snack. The agate stone cocktail olive is pierced with sterling silver, and can be removed to be worn as a brooch pin. The concept of display items worthy of a modern cabinet of curiosities, that include elements that can be removed to be worn, and then re-homed into the glass when the cocktail party ends."

Gems&Jewellery is delighted to welcome Heather Blake and Mia Vilcins to the Gem-A community.



Above: Heather Blake's gold award in Lapidary & Carving was received for her Garlic Amulet, carved in Cacholong opal.

Below: Mia Vilcins won the Gem-A Award with her Lapidary & Carving, Conceptual Jewellery and Jewellers entry, entitled Dirty Martini. It was composed of carved agate, silver and glass.

Photos by Richard Valencia.



BRITISH HALLMARKING COUNCIL'S TOUCHSTONE AWARD

The Touchstone Award is issued annually by the British Hallmarking Council (BHC) for work relating to hallmarking. Launched in 2012, the award is granted to the authority, or individual working for an authority, for the most innovative or effective exercise in work relating to hallmarking. Presented at the annual conference of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), the Touchstone Award maintains the high profile of hallmarking and reminds all trading standards departments of its continued importance.

The award, which is sponsored by the four UK Assay Offices and the National Association of Jewellers, has four categories of applications: an

enforcement operation or activity an educational activity, an information activity or a published article. Previous applications have included a wide variety of cases, from un-hallmarked items described and priced as precious metal to entirely false information, such as silver-and-cubic zirconia

rings sold as platinum and diamond online. Several cases have resulted in prosecution and significant penalties under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

For more information on the Touchstone Award, visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/british-hallmarking-council.

GEM-A SEEKING CHAIR OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Following the retirement of its last chair, Justine Carmody FGA, after eight years of service, the Gem-A Board of Trustees is now accepting applications for the next chairperson. The person selected will provide leadership of the Board of Trustees and will work with the Association's new CEO, Cath Hill. For more information, visit gem-a.com/about/careers/chair-of-board-of-trustees-invitation-to-applicants. To apply and receive the full recruitment pack, applicants are asked to send a CV and brief cover letter to Cath Hill (cathhill@gem-a.com).

CIBJO RECOMMENDS NEW DEFINITION OF 'RECYCLED GOLD'

In March, The World Jewellery Confederation (CIBJO) advocated for a new definition of 'recycled gold' to be used in the jewellery and watch sectors in order to promote greater clarity and consistency across the trade and within the marketplace. According to CIBJO, the definition was created with the input of industry experts as well as the International Standardisation Organization (ISO). The ISO's input resulted from work on a wider standard under development for responsibly sourced gold (a project in which CIBJO actively participated). Industry bodies such as the London Bullion Market Association and the World Gold Council (WGC) are considering how to incorporate the main elements of this definition into their guidance and responsible sourcing practices.

The definition provides for pre-consumer recycled gold (recycled materials recovered during manufacturing and fabrication processes before being sold to consumers), and post-consumer recycled gold (recovered from materials after they have been sold to consumers and that are no longer required or desired, or can no longer be used for

their original purpose). This distinction was developed through extensive discussions among industry experts. CIBJO's definition specifically excludes gold that is in investment product form (e.g., bullion bars and investment coins) unless that product was entirely generated from pre-consumer/post-consumer recycled gold.

"There has been growing confusion about the different names and labels for re-refined gold," explained CIBJO

president Gaetano Cavalieri. "The new definition provides a clear statement and set of criteria for recycled gold, which is more stringent than definitions for many other materials. The industry needs a clearer definition to avoid consumer confusion and greenwashing, and to enhance trading practices and supply-chain transparency."

The recycled gold definition will be incorporated into the next update of CIBJO's Precious Metals Blue Book. CIBJO also plans to apply the definition of 'recycled' to other precious metals, including but not limited to silver, platinum and palladium.

Gold jewellery that can be sorted for post-consumer recycling. The World Jewellery Confederation (CIBJO) has called for adopting a new, consistent definition of recycled gold. Photo by LankS/Shutterstock.com.



FAIR LUXURY AND GOLDSMITHS' CENTRE JOINTLY HOST SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

On 9 June 2025, the Goldsmiths' Centre and Fair Luxury will collaboratively host a conference on "The State of Sustainability in the Jewellery Industry." The event comes almost one decade after Fair Luxury held their first conference, which was also the UK's first responsible jewellery conference.

Attendees of the June conference will review the progress made since the first event while considering what organisations, makers and

manufacturers are doing to promote further positive change all along the supply chain. Speakers and panels will discuss the mining industry, human rights and conditions, carbon emissions, sustainable manufacturing and responsible marketing and communication.

Founded in 2015, Fair Luxury is a voluntary collective of jewellery professionals from different parts of the trade, including retailers and wholesalers, designers, suppliers

and educators. These individuals are greatly concerned with conservation of the environment, ethical sourcing, equitable treatment and eliminating poverty. Out of their concern came a vision for a responsible and sustainable gem and jewellery industry (for more on the origins of Fair Luxury, see Summer 2021 G&J, pp. 24–25).

"The State of Sustainability in the Jewellery Industry" conference will not be streamed or recorded. To see a list of speakers or to purchase tickets for the event (£35.00/per person) visit may be purchased at www.goldsmiths-centre.org/whats-on/conference-the-state-of-sustainability-in-the-jewellery-industry/.



fair LUXURY

EXPLORING QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY THROUGH THE USE OF SPINEL

The United Nations declared 2025 the International Year of Quantum to mark one hundred years of progress in quantum science and engineering (the theoretical and experimental study of how particles behave at the atomic and subatomic levels, and the application of that information to the building of devices, systems and applications). Earlier this year, the Chicago Tohoku Quantum Alliance released a study that demonstrated spinel is capable of storing quantum information, making it a viable material to be used in



Spinel (shown here as rough crystals) has demonstrated the ability to store quantum information, according to the Chicago Tohoku Quantum Alliance. Photo by Huangpu/Shutterstock.com.

quantum technology. The team — a collaboration of researchers from Tohoku University (Sendai, Japan), the University of Chicago and Argonne National Laboratory (both in Illinois, USA) — published their findings in the journal *Applied Physics Express*.

At the heart of quantum information technology are collections of quantum bits, or qubits; these groupings are known as qubit systems. In one such system, solid host materials such as diamond retain quantum information through atomic defects

that serve to trap electron spins. The gemstone's transparent properties help to isolate these qubits in a manner stable enough for manipulation. "Think of it like a snow globe; the glass of the snow globe protects the objects from outside disturbances, yet we are still able to manipulate it when we shake it," explained Manato Kawahara, a PhD student at Tohoku University's Research Institute for Electrical Communication. "In the case of qubits, we use magnetic or electric fields to control the spin of the qubit."

Building upon previous research, the current group experimented with spinel. They tested the material by directing a laser beam onto it (laser incident) to excite it; then they measured the photoluminescence (emitted light) to analyse the material's response. The Alliance was able to demonstrate that the cerium centre in spinel can hold qubit information at temperatures as low as 4 degrees Kelvin. To be fully operational for the qubit, the system needs to demonstrate three functions: initialisation, manipulation and detection. The findings here demonstrate that spinel possesses the first and third functions, i.e. the ability to initialise and read the qubit state.

According to team co-leader Prof. David Awschalom, Liew Family Professor and Vice Dean for Research at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering, "Looking forward, we plan to manipulate and control the spin qubit for emerging quantum applications across sensing, communication, and computing."

Above right: The diamond Apricot Blossom bangle (shown here in the pink JAR case that is included in the sale) is composed of found diamonds, reddish orange and yellow enamel, blackened silver, yellow gold (French mark) and bronze. The bracelet, which was created ca. 2009 and was signed by JAR, is currently estimated at CHF 280,000–550,000 (£252,840–496,650). Photos courtesy of Christie's.

Below right: JAR's multi-gem chain necklace includes round brown diamonds; emeralds; tourmalines; tsavorite and spessartine garnets; peridots; purple, orange, pink and blue sapphires; topazes; fire opals; rubies; pink and purple spinels; amethysts; aquamarines; 18K rose gold and blackened silver. The pink JAR case is included. The sale price has been estimated at CHF250,000–350,000 (£225,700–315,980). Photo courtesy of Christie's.

JAR JEWELLERY AUCTION AT CHRISTIE'S GENEVA

Christie's Magnificent Jewels auction in Geneva on Wednesday, 14 May will feature twenty-one jewels created by designer Joel Arthur Rosenthal (JAR). The pieces in *Bouquet of Gems: Superb Collection Of Jewels By JAR* have never appeared in the market or been sold at auction; they were acquired by a private collector during the early 2000s and 2010s. The assemblage of jewels, led by the Apricot Blossom bangle bracelet, are amongst the most important JAR collections to come to auction.

JAR produces only 70–80 pieces each year; thus, his work highly exclusive and coveted by collectors. Since selling JAR's first auctioned jewels at auction in 1984, Christie's has sold approximately two-thirds of all JAR pieces that have come to market. This includes the ruby-and-diamond Camellia brooch (2003) that sold in 2012 for US\$4,323,240, four times its low estimate. In addition to this, Christie's has sold the Top 10 JAR jewels at auction by value to date.



From the CEO

Opinion and comment from CEO Cath Hill

In my first letter in *Gems&Jewellery*, I would like to thank everyone for the warm welcome I have received as the new CEO of Gem-A. In the past several months I have met Students, Members and industry professionals at events such as the Gem-A Midlands Branch Conference in February and the Goldsmiths' Craft & Design Council's (GC&DC) Awards in March. The members of the gemmological community have greeted me with openness and enthusiasm. It is wonderful to receive such a kind reception!

It was a pleasure to discuss my background and plans for the Association in a Q&A with *G&J* Editor-in-Chief Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta (see pp. 22–23 for this conversation). I hope that the discussion addresses the curiosity that some Members may have about me, and I am hopeful that I will get to answer more of your questions, and get to know more Members, in the near future.

I am equally enthused about our upcoming projects. We are preparing to release the revised Course Notes for our Gemmology Foundation, the launch of which will start late in 2025 and continue through 2026. After this, we will introduce the updated Gemmology Diploma material; this will be followed by a review of our Diamond Diploma course. We are, of course, busy planning for the

2025 Conference; as in 2024, this year's event will take place over two days (1–2 November). This year's itinerary is sure to be of interest to our Members and the trade at large. Please save the date, and check our website (www.gem-a.com/conference) for future updates.

And now I am delighted to present the rest of the Spring issue of *Gems&Jewellery*! The annual Tucson Gem Showcase included a record fifty-two shows, covering a range of goods for every price point. Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta and Olga González FGA DGA spoke with a number of exhibitors to find out what the general mood was among trade members, as well as what trends captured the attention of customers. Participants spoke about lighter foot traffic, sales generated and the popularity of colour-change gems, talismanic jewellery and ethical production, among other topics.

A number of factors have led to a downturn in the diamond industry as of late; these causes include geopolitical issues and the dominance of synthetic diamond production. For these and other reasons, the next year's diamond market is difficult to forecast, particularly in the retail sector. Industry analyst Russell Shor takes a look at the circumstances that are creating an unpredictable diamond market in 2025.



There are several techniques practiced in the Japanese pearl industry that are unknown to people outside Japan. These skills include the threading and restringing of jewellery as well as processes of restoring damaged pearls, methods that come into play in the aftermath of natural disasters or other destructive events. Ayako Naito FGA DGA reviews the practices related to maintenance and restoration of pearls in Japan.

While country-to-country numbers are hard to verify, women are approximately one-third of all artisanal and small-scale gemstone miners. In the East African countries of Kenya and Tanzania, women make up an estimated 10–20% of the mining population. Great strides have been made to help empower these women to benefit from the extraction, sale and jewellery production of the material they produce. Cristina Villegas, Norbert Massay and Esther Ndeki Njunge explore the great strides made by women miners in Tanzania and Kenya.

Other content includes a report on the exhibition of jewellery designer Melanie Eddy's work at Bermuda's Hamilton National gallery, a look at the evolution of cluster rings and a review of materials that can be found in Mocha Mousse, the 2025 Pantone Color of the Year.

We hope that the wide range of content has something for each of our readers.

Cath Hill (right) at the Goldsmiths' Craft & Design Council Awards ceremony in March 2025. She is shown here with Prime Warden of The Goldsmiths' Company Richard Reid and Gem-A Award winner Heather Blake. Photo by Julia Skupny.



Rhapsody in Cognac

Jewellery design artist Zoltan David shares a gentleman's ring that pays tribute to his birth city of Budapest, Hungary.

This ring, called Hungarian Rhapsody, is an homage to my beautiful birthplace of Budapest. The capital of Hungary, Budapest is a historic city formed from an artistic marriage of eastern and western cultures. I honoured the city and its heritage by presenting a very rare 20.00-ct radiant-cut cognac diamond in a gentleman's ring.

The details and structure of this design demanded a focussed and precise execution throughout the entire goldsmithing process. The ring's creation was a challenging assembly of eleven hand-finished individual pieces of platinum and gold, with inlaid, hand-engraved and shaped 22K gold within the platinum elements. In addition to the cognac centre stone, the ring utilises twenty-eight flawless diamonds. This ring was a sixty-hour journey of goldsmithing and gemstone setting; I estimate that an additional eight hours went into design production time.

The ring ergonomically and proportionally balances a blend of fundamental geometry, a square within a circle, as seen from the top view; meanwhile, the flowing lines of organic symmetry are seen in the perspective view. The completed Hungarian Rhapsody is a design that combines beauty and wearability. ■



In his gentleman's ring called Hungarian Rhapsody, Zoltan David mounted a 20.00-ct radiant-cut cognac diamond in platinum with gold inlay. An additional twenty-eight flawless diamonds (0.22 tcw) are also a part of the ring's design. Photo courtesy of Zoltan David.





NAVIGATING THE WIDE-RANGING TRENDS OF THE

TUCSON GEM SHOWCASE

Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta and Olga González FGA DGA review the styles that captured the attention of visitors to the annual gem shows.

Just as it has been for decades, starting in late January members of the gem trade, from miners to buyers to designers, descended upon Tucson, Arizona. These vendors were closely followed by attendees, who come to the shows to learn about the trends for the upcoming year, to network with their industry colleagues, to attend seminars and workshops and, of course, to buy. According to Visittucson.com, the Gem Showcase usually generates about 65,000 visitors. With a record-setting fifty-two shows across Tucson (the same number as in 2020), there were plenty of options for gemstone and jewellery enthusiasts to visit this year.

There was reason for optimism among show administration and exhibitors alike. Traffic at the Tucson Convention Center, where the AGTA GemFair was extended by a full day this year, comprised daily averages of anywhere from 3,400 to 3,600 guests. "Exhibitors on the GemHall floor did extremely well," noted AGTA CEO John W. Ford Sr. "There were a lot of retailers present who were stocking up on

middle- to upper-range and very fine goods. Brands were restocking and the mood was upbeat and optimistic, with some exhibitors reporting their best show ever. One was even concerned he would run out of invoices!"

There was, however, mixed feedback from vendors when compared to previous years. Attendance was down from previous years, and some exhibitors we spoke to told us that they noticed this lighter foot traffic; this translated to low sales for some. Designer Mary van der Aa told us that this year, "people were definitely more price conscious." Our respondents named a number of factors that may play into this cautiousness, including possible trade disruption due to impending U.S.-imposed tariffs

and economic uncertainty among consumers, as well as shifting jewellery preferences and shortages of material.

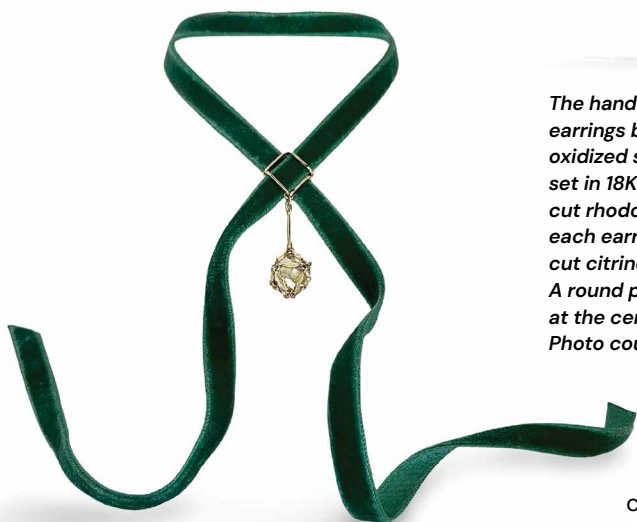
However, these smaller crowds were not necessarily indicative of overall performance. Some of our respondents told us those in attendance were there to buy, noting that sales were high relative to the number of people stopping at their booths. Though some respondents noticed that blue and green material was widely requested, as well as alexandrite, shoppers were searching for a wide range of colours. This year, there was an increased interest in ethical, responsible jewellery. Attendees also sought nature-inspired and cultural and spiritual motifs, as well as original looks that enhanced their individuality.

Right: Ben Kho (Kho International) took second place in the North American Mined Gemstones category of the AGTA Spectrum Cutting Edge Awards with this 12.88 ct cushion Portuguese-cut rhodochrosite from Colorado. Photo courtesy of AGTA.



LOOSE GEMSTONE OBSERVATIONS

The Tucson Gem Showcase is, of course, known for its huge selection of coloured gemstones. While customers tend to consistently seek out the 'Big Three' coloured gemstones at the Showcase, it is always fascinating to see what other colours will be in vogue for the year. Dudley Blauwet, with booths at multiple shows, noticed an interest in both the classic gemstones — particularly sapphire — along with more diverse varieties in a range of



Above: Renata Cambauva created this 'bolo tie' by upcycling a vintage (ca. 1941) velvet ribbon from France. It is adjustable by slipping the piece over the head and pulling the charm up and down. The Herkimer diamond quartz charm sits in a fixed cradle composed of responsibly sourced 14K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Renata Cambauva.

colours. "I had my best star sapphire—and ruby—buying trip in a decade in the late fall of 2024. I sold out about eighty percent of these new stars under six carats. I sold literally half of the sixty opalescent sapphires that I sourced from Vietnam. Pinks and padparadscha colours were popular, as was my best five-carat dark blue specimen that showed colour like an Australian opal with orange and pink flashes." Mr Blauwet also noted that colour-change gems, including sapphire and garnet, were popular at his booths, a trend that was noticed by other respondents. Alexandrite, for instance, was widely requested among vendors.

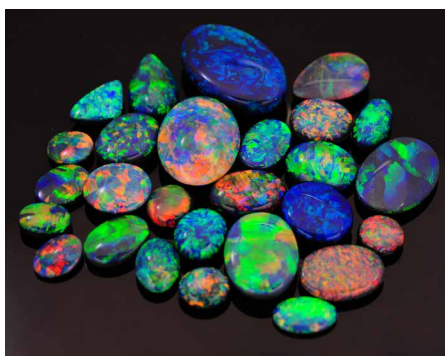
Rocstoc, a company that deals in loose gemstones as well as estate jewellery, held booths at both the



The hand-sculpted Double Fold Hyacinth earrings by Karin Jacobson are created from oxidized sterling silver; all the gemstones are set in 18K yellow gold. A 5.0 x 3.0 mm pear-cut rhodolite garnet is mounted at the top of each earring, while a 5.0 x 2.5 mm marquise-cut citrine is suspended from the bottom. A round post-consumer diamond is seated at the centre of each earring (0.05 tcw). Photo courtesy of Karin Jacobson.

Pueblo Show and the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show (TGMS). The

company's founder, Yvonne Jiew, indicated that they have a strong client base for their spinels. This year, she stated that "buying per customer was stronger; they were more selective, with emphasis on eye-clean stones... I found that serious buyers generally knew what they wanted and made decisions fairly rapidly." While she noticed that blue gems were popular this year, as well as emerald- and fancy-cut stones, she also told us that "there seems to be an uptick in turquoise and Oregon sunstone again." The shows were successful for Rocstoc, with much of their estate inventory selling out on opening day.



Noelle Habib, who has been exhibiting at Tucson for the past, also found that people were open to new varieties of gemstones in different hues. "I'm known for carrying interesting colours and cuts, so many of my clients come to me looking for the less-traditional gems," she explained. Grey spinel has been a top seller for me for the past 3–4 years and this year was no exception. Red and champagne-coloured zircon did really well, and so did anything bicolour. I also noticed an increase in demand for alexandrite and emerald." Natasha Braunwart of Columbia Gem House — one of the founding members

Green materials that made a splash this year included chrome diopside, malachite and tsavorite.

of the AGTA Gem Fair, found that the gem shows can still hold surprises for longtime exhibitors. "Tourmaline was a surprise. It was the first time tourmaline has outsold individual sapphire groups for us. Now, if we were to add up 'all sapphire' sales, sapphire was still our biggest seller, but since we separate everything by origin, tourmaline was the largest percentage of individual gem variety sales this year." Their mint-green tourmaline was particularly popular, as were their new line of calibrated Lightning Ridge opals.

Other respondents confirmed that Australian opal attracted a great deal of attention, even if this did not result in sales. Patrick Cody of Cody Opal, which

Australian opals caught the eyes of customers, even if that attention did not always result in a sale. Of particular interest were the high-quality black gems from Columbia Gem House's calibrated material from Lightning Ridge (facing page, top) and Cody Opal (left). Photos courtesy of Columbia Gem House and Cody Opal.

has been exhibited at the Tucson gem shows for 26 years, explained that "Our high-quality black opal always attracts loads of interest and demand continues to grow, especially amongst the famous fashion houses and top designers." This year's customers, who saw Cody Opal at GJX, were drawn to heart shapes, high-dome ovals and small calibrated stones. Steed and Dani Sutherland – opal cutter and jewellery designer, respectively, of family-run company Opals by Steed – noticed interest in the Australian opal they brought to their 22nd Street show booth. "We found the red/pink colours in opals were the most popular. There were a lot of enquiries



Among the offerings from Rocstoc were an 18K gold ring (above) featuring a 1.95 ct Burmese red spinel framed by diamonds, and a platinum ring with a 5.00 ct emerald of Colombian origin without oil treatment. Photos courtesy of Rocstoc.



from people seeking the rare and elusive black opal. Rough opal was once again a popular seller for us from high-end, valuable material to inexpensive cutting parcels for hobbyists."

JEWELLERY INSIGHTS

Unconventional Combinations.

Enthusiasts embraced gemstones in unconventional ways, pushing the boundaries of traditional adornment by incorporating them into other luxury pieces. Unconventional jewels, gemstone pairings and jewellery combinations appealed to the Tucson clientele, which values uniqueness alongside craftsmanship and rarity. The ability to create such pieces is a source of pride for many of our respondents. This trend was evident at AGTA and Centurion, where jewellery and *objets d'art* featured unexpected gemstone embellishments. The intarsia box that was the first-place winner of the Objects of Art category of the AGTA Spectrum Awards is one example of this trend; the golf-ball markers created in a partnership between Doubloon Golf and Lashbrook Designs was another. The allure of mixing and matching

Smaller crowds were not necessarily indicative of overall performance.

unusual gems has led to designers exploring nontraditional pairings that create striking visual contrasts. These gemstone-infused pieces add an extra layer of thoughtfulness and sophistication, making them perfect for collectors and connoisseurs alike.

Yvonne Jiew of Rocstoc found that her vintage and art deco inventory was popular among visitors this year. She noted that alexandrite, sapphire and emerald jewellery is very strong overall for her company. "Estate (goods) can sometimes be cheaper than loose colour," she explained. Additionally, "it gives people something to wear straight away."



When creating her platinum Cosmic Confetti ring, Mary van der Aa used a 4.78 ct natural, untreated Sri Lankan padparadscha sapphire (faceted by Tucson Todd's Gems), 3.67 taw natural multicolour sapphires, also from Sri Lanka; and 1.00 taw natural, untreated diamonds. Photo courtesy of Mary van der Aa.

Gem dealer Noelle Habib found that grey spinel (below) and zircon (opposite page, bottom) was popular among her customers. Photos courtesy of Noelle Habib.



One extraordinary piece that sold this year was a platinum ring featuring a 5.00 ct Colombian emerald that did not show signs of oil treatment, an estate find. Green material that also made a splash this year included chrome diopside, malachite and tsavorite; a 10-carat example of this last gemstone was at the centre of an AGTA Spectrum award-winning ring for Niveet Nagpal of Omi Privé.

Mary van der Aa, who showed at both the Pueblo Show and at the Tucson Fine Mineral Gallery, told us that "I try to use rare and unusual stones, love using zircon and trapiche material, apatite and sphene also popular. Grey spinel and Maine tourmaline also big in my book."

Opals by Steed, a family-run company based in Coober Pedy, Australia, was exhibiting at the 22nd Street Show for the third year in a row. Like Patrick Cody, Steed and Dani Sutherland of Opals by Steed noticed that people were drawn to their black and white opals, which they offer in a number of gold and silver jewellery settings.



Charms for necklaces and bracelets, such as the nature-inspired gold-and-diamond options from Lene Vibe, allow the wearer to blend and change looks in order to express their personal aesthetic. Photo courtesy of Lene Vibe.



Mary van der Aa's Cosmos Petite line is a spinoff of her award-winning Garantus necklace. The centrepiece of this ring is a natural, untreated 2.40 ct demantoid garnet from the Green Dragon mine in Namibia, mounted in 18K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Mary van der Aa.

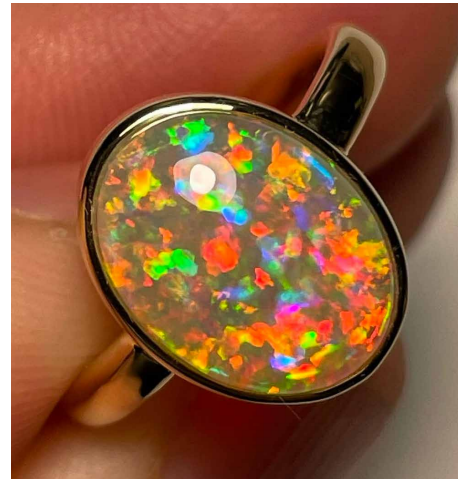
Other exhibitors noted enthusiasm for gem materials that branched out from classic choices. Alisa Thorpe, cofounder of Mercurius Jewellery, found that lapis lazuli, turquoise and jade are popular among their audience, and received a great deal of attention at the Melee Show. They also work with other green stones, such as malachite and maw sit sit. Their Intarsia Hoops, made with malachite, are "quite striking and feature very thin collaged stone. They are visually different from every angle, which is a fun feature to explore in earring design." Their take on the classic hololith ring, called the Cloak ring, resulted in a ring carved from a single, solid material (lined with metal to create a sturdier finished piece) and embellished with a bezel-set gemstone.

Precious Metals. Gold still reigned supreme among buyers, in spite of rising prices. Visitors to the shows were largely looking for yellow gold, rather than its white and rose counterparts. Designer Karin Jacobson, based at the Melee Show, stated "I have continued to see interest in yellow gold, although that is not new this year. And as mentioned above, each year I have more people enquire about Fairmined gold." Even so, the rising cost of the metal had some designers looking at other options for their work, and customers responded. Seth Michael Carlson, also at the Melee show, concurred. "I found that people, generally, still like 18K yellow gold, which I primarily work with. I have also found that more people are open to silver as a primary material with some 18K gold accents."





The Quetzal necklace, from Seth Michael Studio, is inspired by the bird from Latin America. It uses ethically sourced 18K gold and oxidised sterling silver in its composition. Photo courtesy of Seth Michael Studio.



This ring from Opals by Steed features a 5.50 ct crystal opal from Australia's Coocoran field, (Lightning Ridge) set in 18K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Opals by Steed.

Still, the cost of the precious metal has some designers wary. "The price of gold and silver is really hurting us, as everything costs more to create these jewellery pieces now," explained Helen Serras-Herman FGA, a longtime exhibitor at the AGTA GemFair. "Even though the inventory is 'worth more' the percentage of clientele that wants to pay these higher prices shinks. I have not changed my metal prices for a while now, so what happens is that the old pieces are sold but I am not able to reproduce anything similar." This has some designers turning to silver and platinum; other precious metals, such as titanium and palladium, were also on display. Mary van der Aa confirmed that "Due to the cost of gold, I did 95% of my new line in platinum." Alisa Thorp, co-owner of Mercurius Jewellery, also found platinum a popular choice. "the price of gold certainly has become a real hurdle in filling a case

This platinum ring by Niveet Nagpal of Omi Privé, featuring a 10.08 ct. tsavorite garnet accented by 0.60 taw tsavorites and 0.66 taw diamonds, took first place in the Engagement Ring category of the AGTA Spectrum Awards. Photo courtesy of Omi Privé.



with inventory! Platinum is on the rise! With current gold prices, no one is choosing white gold over platinum right now. Why would they? Since we love working in platinum and do so in-house, it has been a great trend for us.”

Detailed Designs for Everyday Wear.

A notable trend this year is the move toward smaller, understated jewellery pieces that are acceptable for work and in casual settings. While there was plenty of interest in large, bold luxury items, many visitors were searching for pieces that were at lower price points appropriate for daily, frequent wear. Designers who are known for their elaborate pieces have created lines for just this purpose. Rosario Garcia, who has exhibited in Tucson for four years and had a booth for his eponymous business at GJX, debuted a new diamond collection that was meant to be worn on an everyday basis; it was the focus of much attention. Mary van der Aa also created a new jewellery collection designed to appeal to this audience. “I definitely noticed the smaller, more ‘everyday’ pieces were selling over larger, more expensive pieces. I had planned for this. With my new line, Cosmos Petite, I tried to keep the price point lower, in order to have something that appeals to everyone.” These jewellery lines are an appropriate response to the economic uncertainty is affecting people in a number of income brackets.

The Appeal of Charm (Jewellery).

There has also been a shift that reflects a broader cultural movement toward jewellery that is both personalised and nostalgic. For years, charm bracelets reigned as the ultimate way to showcase personal stories, but the trend has now shifted toward charm necklaces as the new canvas for sentimental storytelling. From

delicate gold chains adorned with vintage-inspired lockets to chunky statement pieces layered with symbolic tokens, charm necklaces bring a fresh yet sentimental twist to everyday jewellery. Unlike the curated ‘neck mess’ layering of the past few years, where multiple necklaces were stacked for effect, charm necklaces offer a more intentional and meaningful approach to personal adornment. Each pendant, locket and trinket holds a unique significance. The beauty of charm bracelets and necklaces lie in their ability to evolve over time, with wearers adding new charms to commemorate special moments, much like how traditional charm bracelets were once collected. The trend also plays into the resurgence of heirloom-style jewellery, where pieces are passed down and continuously added to, creating modern pieces that tell the wearer’s story (Columbia Gem House noticed a

similar appeal for consumers in their stacking rings; see pp. 41–43).

Many designers, such as Danish jeweller Lene Vibe, who was at the Melee Show, are offering



Blue gemstones, including but not limited to the classic sapphire, were in demand across Tucson, including at Amáli Jewellery’s booth at the Melee Show. The necklace on the left features globes of London blue topaz hand-woven with strands of 18K gold chain. The ring on the right, composed of 18K yellow gold, is set with a 7.91 ct faceted moonstone. Photos courtesy of Amáli Jewellery.

Renata Cambauva’s Elo Modular Convertible pendant (in responsibly sourced 14K yellow gold) uses a patent-pending cradle setting with moveable rondelles and marquise-cut emeralds (3.0 x 1.5 mm each) in a bezel setting. Here, the cradle holds an ethically procured golden South Sea cultured pearl (14.5 x 15.0 mm). Photo courtesy of Renata Cambauva.



Gemstones are increasingly available from ethical supply chains, and designers are using this to great advantage.



Martha Seely's Constellation earrings (left) represent a cluster of stars through the use of bezel-set blue topaz, green and pink tourmaline, pink sapphire, green amethyst, iolite and diamond. Her Comet choker (right), with 3.5–6.5 mm fancy-cut Madeira garnets and 0.50 tcw white diamonds, has a unique front-opening style that allows the celestial adornments to converge and separate. Photos courtesy of Martha Seely Design.

mix-and-match charm collections, allowing customers to curate their own meaningful combinations. Ms Vibe explained the inspiration behind her pieces. "In my workshop, I create charm pendants in 18K gold, with genuine pearls and diamonds. Each has its own little story. Here, the whimsical meets raw elegance, where intricate details and bold shapes make every piece unique. The charms can be mixed and matched in countless ways, letting you create your own expression — dreamy, wild, or full of edge. A playful fusion of pearls, gold and diamonds that lets you blend the classic with the rebellious, they can be worn just the way you like it."

Nature-Inspired Designs. When preparing their 2025 inventory, a number of designers took creative inspiration from nature, creating pieces



Blue Boy, a collaboration between Philip Louer (North American Gem Carvers, LLC), Nicolai Medvedev (designer and fabricator) and Susan Helmich (gold work), won first place in the Objects of Art category at the 2024 AGTA Spectrum Awards. The intarsia box, featuring a 22K gold carving of a stingray, is accented by Australian opal, Virgin Valley opal, maw sit sit, Nevada turquoise, golden quartz, sugillite, malachite, dinosaur bone, diamond and tourmaline. Photo courtesy of AGTA.

that either depicted or alluded to plant and animal life. Natural motifs often have associations – flowers with romantic love, butterflies with transformation – that people can communicate through the wearing of these pieces. The trend crossed jewellery styles and price

points. In the luxury space, the Sophia D En Tremblant Butterfly brooch from Joseph Dardashti and Sophia D. Karmel took first place in the Evening Wear category of the AGTA Spectrum Awards.

Seth Michael Carlson of Seth Michael Studios, who was exhibiting in Tucson for the first time at the Melee Show, has focussed his goldsmithing and jewellery practice animal-themed jewellery. While he said he is best known for his insect designs, he hosted a jewelled menagerie at his booth. "I have a few bangles that synthesise my love of animals with the techniques that I enjoy the most including chasing and repoussé, anti-clastic raising and engraving." His Quetzal necklace, which uses the Central American bird as its inspiration, is made from ethically sourced 18K gold and oxidised sterling silver. He found that "While I had smaller-scale pieces, the larger pieces definitely gained more attention; perhaps due to the scale, they stood out more to the attendees."



Longtime Tucson exhibitor Columbia Gem House found that their Zodiac (left) and Occult (right) intaglio carvings were popular at their multiple booths, in keeping with this year's talismanic jewellery trend. Photos courtesy of Columbia Gem House.

Space-Related Jewellery. The trend toward appreciation for the natural world was not just limited to flora



Emerald Blue Islands, a slide pendant and pin created by Helen Serras-Herman FGA, features a 44-carat carved gem silica (chrysocolla in quartz) with dendritic malachite from the Inspiration Mine (Globe, Arizona). The piece, which also uses two faceted Colombian emeralds (1.39 tcw) and two round-faceted Montana sapphires from Montana (1.54 tcw) is set in a hand-fabricated custom 18K yellow-gold setting. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

and fauna. Attendees were also looking to the heavens for inspiration, seeking out jewellery that was representative of the cosmos. Designers who responded to this demand by putting their own spin on the stars met with great success. Martha Seeley, who had a booth at the AGTA GemFair, draws on the universe for her designs. "My entire jewellery line is about the universe, sky, stars, constellations and more. My jewellery is not traditionally what people think of as 'celestial', because it is a personal contemporary

vision, not the traditional vision of 'The man in the moon' or a big golden sun with rays."

Melissa Scoppra, who had a booth at Centurion in Phoenix, was delighted to see her cosmic collection garner attention. "This year, my Sundial pieces resonated with people in a way they hadn't before. I've been creating sundial jewellery for nearly a decade, but for the first time, it felt like people truly 'got it' — not just as a symbol of slowing down and valuing time, but as a delightful reminder that time itself



Nature-inspired jewellery and objets d'art were an emerging trend at the Tucson Gem Showcase. The Sophia D En Tremblant Butterfly brooch, with butterflies of different sizes gracing the design, was the first-place winner in the Evening Wear category of the AGTA Spectrum Awards. Joseph Dardashti, in collaboration with Sophia D. Karmel, created the piece with emeralds (0.55 tcw), rubies (3.02 tcw), sapphires (0.65 tcw), diamonds (7.55 tcw), 18K yellow gold and platinum. Photo courtesy of AGTA.

Attendees were looking to the heavens for inspiration, seeking out jewellery that was representative of the cosmos.



The Intarsia Hoops from Mercurius Jewellery (left, in malachite) feature very thin collaged stone and are visually different from every angle. Mercurius' Cloak rings (right, using dumortierite and tanzanite) are a play on hololith rings. Photos by Ella Sophie, courtesy of Mercurius Jewellery.



is one of life's ultimate luxuries. I think many have seen the classic celestial motifs – star-set gems, crescent moons (which I love, too) – and were intrigued by sundials as a natural extension of that theme."

Talismanic Symbols for Protection and Hope. Many consumers are turning to spirituality as a way to feel more grounded, and jewellery has become an integral part of their personal journeys. The resurgence of talismanic jewellery – featuring symbols like compasses, evil eyes, crosses and crystals – reflects a deeper cultural shift toward mindfulness and self-discovery. Natasha Braunwart of Columbia Gem House noted that there was a significant increase in sales of Zodiac and Occult Collection carvings, while Dallas Prince, a longtime AGTA exhibitor, stated that her Crosses line attracted a great deal of attention this year.

More than just accessories, these pieces serve as wearable reminders of personal intentions, whether to seek guidance, embrace cosmic energy or find their inner peace. Evil eyes, long believed to ward off

negativity, have remained a staple, while celestial motifs evoke a sense of universal connection and divine protection. Crosses, an enduring symbol of faith, hope and resilience, continue to be a powerful emblem worn for both religious devotion and personal strength. Crystals, too, are at the heart of this trend, with amethyst for tranquillity, rose quartz for love and black tourmaline for shielding against negative energy. Many consumers are curating their jewellery collections with these spiritual symbols, using them as daily affirmations of hope, luck and security in an unpredictable world.

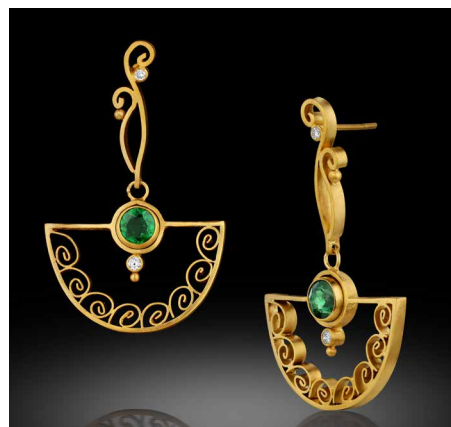
While this trend appeals to the aesthetics of many consumers, the style also intended to call to the emotional and symbolic weight behind the jewellery. Artisans and designers are embracing these meaningful motifs, infusing them with intricate craftsmanship and cultural significance.



The evil eye was a popular talismanic symbol this year, found in the work of multiple designers. The evil eye pendant designed by Subikksha Balaje of Goldstories (left) is composed of white diamonds, black diamonds and enamel. Melissa Scoppa created a pendant (right) using a 0.02 ct natural white Canadian diamond mounted in 14K Fairmined yellow gold, hung on a chain of recycled gold. Photos courtesy of Goldstories (left) and Melissa Scoppa (right).

The rise of talisman jewellery has allowed people to personalise their spiritual journeys, creating heirloom pieces that hold deeply personal meanings. Whether they represent cycles of growth or offer a sense of faith and perseverance, these jewels are helping their owners to bridge the gap between fashion and belief. This trend speaks to a larger desire for reassurance, offering a tangible connection to something greater – whether it's the universe, God, ancestral traditions or a personal sense of inner strength.

Ethical Efforts. Some sellers noticed that show attendees are becoming savvier about asking for the provenance of their jewellery components. Natasha Braunwart of Columbia Gem House,



Green gems were popular among the Tucson audience this year, who showed an interest in material outside the classic 'Big Three' coloured stones. These earrings from Rosario Garcia feature 2.00 taw chrome diopside and 0.10 taw diamonds mounted in 18K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Rosario Garcia.





Unconventional colour pairings, gemstone cuts and designs attracted the attention of this year's gem show attendees. Adam Neeley's Cromantica earrings took second place in the Evening Wear category of the AGTA Spectrum Awards. The earrings comprise tanzanites (20.66 tcw) garnets (23.62 tcw), diamonds (1.26 tcw), titanium and 14K white gold. Photo courtesy of AGTA.

The resurgence of talismanic jewellery reflects a deeper cultural shift toward mindfulness and self-discovery.

positive disposition towards Australian opal because of its durability and the responsible manner in which it is mined" – other varieties of gemstone are increasingly available from ethical supply chains, and designers are using this to great advantage. In a major difference from previous years, many vendors listed the sources and responsible status of their materials outright, before customers had to ask. Melissa Scoppa noticed that "There was a lot of emphasis this year once again on traceability, of where gems are coming from and being able to have the full story to share with clients and customers." The exhibitors we spoke to were delighted to share this information with Tucson show attendees, and glad to find people are increasingly interested in these options.

The annual Tucson Gem Showcase often helps members of the trade to forecast the year ahead. Like the feedback we received about the shows, the outlook for 2025 was mixed. Some exhibitors had no plans to do any other shows in 2025. Others, such as Cody Opal, were booked at high-profile trade events through the end



The Rex Premier golf-ball marker, part of a collaboration between Doubloon Golf and Lashbrook Designs, incorporates 22K gold nuggets and black titanium into its design. It is an example of how precious materials can be used in unconventional ways for self-expression. Photo courtesy of Doubloon Golf.

a pioneering company in ethical sourcing, pointed out that their staff has long been equipped to respond to these concerns. "Since this is our area of expertise, we always get these questions/concerns. But I think the sheer number of new customers we met this year indicates a 'yes' to the question of whether there is a growing awareness of these issues." A number of our respondents indicated that customers asked about their use of Fairmined gold and sourcing of their gemstones, and not just at the Ethical Gem Fair, where vendors are used to such questions. Karin Jacobson mentioned that "It used to be that I had to explain Fairmined gold to people, but this year there were more buyers who already knew about it and were looking for it."

Many designers and jewellers, like Karin Jacobson and Natasha Braunwart, were prepared to discuss their responsible practices with clientele. While some material is sought because it is known to be ethically produced – Patrick Cody clarified that "There seemed to be many customers with a

of the year. Daniel Tishby of Amáli Jewellery told us that, post-Tucson, he had "a stronger outlook for the year." This sense of optimism that some exhibitors articulated fits well with the wide range of possibilities, from colour to design theme to gemstone combinations, that are trending in the trade in 2025. ■



Dallas Prince's Meet Me at the Plaza reversible bangle, cast in 14K yellow gold, is designed to show graduated sizes of vivid pink sapphires (5.57 tcw) on one side and bright tsavorites (5.87 tcw) on the reverse. The bracelet received an Honorable Mention in the Business/Daywear category of the 2024 AGTA Spectrum Awards. Photo courtesy of Dallas Prince Designs.



INTRODUCING

Cath Hill



In an illuminating Q&A session, Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta learns more about the Association's new Chief Executive Officer.

Gem-A was delighted to announce, in December 2024, the hiring of Cath Hill as the Association's newest Chief Executive Officer. She is the first-ever female CEO in Gem-A's long history. Since her first day in office in February, Ms Hill has jumped with both feet into learning about all aspects of the field, from visiting trade members in Hatton Garden to learning about the supply chain to taking Gem-A's rigorous coursework.

Here, she answers questions about her educational and professional background, what she's learned about the industry thus far and her vision for the future of the organisation.

What is your educational background?

I have a first degree in history of art and a master's degree in business administration (MBA), as well as a master's degree (MA) in creative writing.

Can you give us a brief summary of your professional experience before joining the Association?

Prior to joining Gem-A, I spent four years as CEO of British Mensa, a membership association for people with high IQs. There, I was responsible for delivering an extensive transformation programme that

included refreshing the brand, implementing new systems, moving premises, re-launching the membership magazine alongside a suite of digital communications and implementing a new online community hub.

Before Mensa, I spent nine years as executive director of The Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS), a professional membership and education body with a similar portfolio and international footprint to Gem-A.

How has your previous professional experience at informed your entry into such a niche industry and close-knit community?

CIPS was close-knit in the manner of Gem-A. I was honoured to become a part of that community then, as I hope to become a part of this community moving forward.

The joy of having previous experience and a strong network in the world of membership and professional education is that I have knowledge of what has worked well previously in different sectors (and what has not been so effective!) and how this might work for Gem-A.

Are you taking any of the Gem-A courses at this time? How have you found the work? What about it did you find the most challenging, and what part the most stimulating?

I studied the GemIntro course while I was going through the recruitment process, as I wanted to experience one of our products first-hand. Before my official start date, I commenced our online (ODL) fast-track Foundation course; I am also attending Foundation evening classes twice a week at



In March, Cath Hill (front row, far left) visited London's Zambia House to see the Ethical Gemstones exhibition from the Women in Extractive Industry, Trade and Value Addition Association of Zambia.

Ely Place. It is really valuable for me to see the student experience for myself, both from the online and in-person perspective.

The first couple of weeks of the Foundation course ease the student into the subject fairly gently, and then in week three you hit the crystal structures! It's been a long time since I studied science and that was a bit of a shock to the system. We have just begun studying the gemstone pipeline. I've really been enjoying the mining section. Mining was a key sector at CIPS; I also ran a coal-mining museum many years ago (a story for another day).



Cath Hill, Chief Executive Officer since February 2025, in the library at Gem-A's London headquarters.

Have you been to trade shows, shops in Hatton Garden or other places where you've been able to see the trade 'in action'?

The Gem-A community has been extremely generous in introducing me to this world. I have been taken out and about in Hatton Garden and have met lots of different participants of the trade. It was wonderful to see a lapidarist in action, for example, in an anonymous office building that gave absolutely no indication that something so interesting was taking place inside!

Recently, Jason Williams, a Hatton Garden-based coloured-gemstone dealer, and Edward Johnson, corporate

responsibility director at Gemfields, took me to the Zambian High Commission in London. There, Deputy High Commissioner Mrs Lubu Chibwe Nxumalo showed us around their Ethical Gemstone exhibition of gemstones that were mined and cut in Zambia. The jewellery on display, also from Zambia, was handmade, mostly by women.

The gem and jewellery industry is a global community with a number of associated supply chains and professions. Which of the gem-related career paths were you most surprised to learn about, and why?

I was surprised at the artisanal nature of much of the coloured gem pipeline, and I'm intrigued by opal fossicking and noodling.

About which parts of the industry are you eager to learn more, and why?

I've already mentioned my interest in the gem pipeline, particularly extraction. I have been involved previously in the areas of responsible sourcing, corporate social responsibility and social value and these are all relevant.

At the other end of the pipeline, my interest in art history translates to a fascination with the auction world and the role of valuers. On a recent visit to the Birmingham Assay Office, I was delighted to meet Gem-A Members on the valuation team and in the lab and to witness their expertise.

There is a great deal of lore associated with gemstones, from the ancient healing properties assigned to material such as turquoise, jade and carnelian to the contemporary so-called 'curse' attached to the Hope Diamond. What is your favourite bit of lore that you have learned since joining the Association?

I recently read the wonderful book 'Precious' by Helen Molesworth FGA. I was particularly intrigued by the Han Dynasty burial suits, where the whole body was covered with over 2,000 plaques of solid jade joined with gold, silver, copper or silk thread. Believed to be mythical until the first discovery in the late 1960s, the

"My interest in art history means that I am fascinated by the auction world and the role of valuers."

jade was thought to preserve the body from decay, but also to support the transition from Earth to Heaven.

What are your plans, short and long term, for Gem-A Education and Membership?

Plans for Education include the relaunch of our courses with new, updated and redesigned Course Notes. We will soft-launch these in late 2025 and into 2026. With the Course Notes updated, we will build relationships with study centres around the world and with online students, to grow our student community.

We will also be reviewing our Membership offerings. In this way, we will encourage more of our Alumni to continue to be part of the Gem-A community.

Which events are you looking forward to attending in the year ahead, and why?

I attended the Gem-A Midlands Conference in my first couple of weeks as CEO, and it was a great introduction to the world of gemmology. I am attending the Scottish Gemmological Association conference in May. I intend to attend the Hong Kong show in the autumn, and I will, of course, be in Tucson next year for the 2026 Gem Showcase.

I am particularly looking forward to the Gem-A Conference, which will be in London on 1 and 2 November of this year. It will be fantastic to have the opportunity to meet so many of our Members and Alumni from around the world all in one place! As in previous years, the Graduation Ceremony follows the Conference, and I can't wait to help our new graduates celebrate their success. ■

UNCERTAIN 2025 FOR DIAMOND TRADE

Russell Shor reviews factors that will have an impact on the diamond market in the coming year.

The Trump administration in the United States has delivered the most significant challenge that the diamond and gemstone market has faced in a generation. The base 10% tariff, plus tariffs on trade from individual nations*, has had the immediate effect of raising prices as much as 27% in the world's largest market. While the event is too recent to gather reportable statistics on the effect on retail sales, the tariffs have already disrupted the trade at all levels, with order cancellations and memo deals halted. Even goods sent to gemmological labs in the U.S. have halted because they, too, were subject to duties.

The tariffs could not have come at a more difficult time for an industry dealing with inflation and changing consumer priorities. One of the most popular buzzwords of the past few years has been 'overtourism' which, simply put, is too many people visiting one place at any given time. Hordes of travellers clogged the wide expanses of the Champs Élysées, climbed to the viewpoints on Mount Fuji, ascended the

Half Dome rock formation in Yosemite National Park in California and filled the halls of the United Kingdom's British Museum. People are traveling to other parts of the globe in record numbers, and the fastest-growing segment of this phenomenon is luxury tourism. This niche – which includes \$2,000/night hotel rooms, exotic destinations and post-rail excursions costing \$20,000 or more – was expected to account for \$154.3 billion (£119.4 billion) in 2024, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. This drive towards luxury travel helps to explain why, despite a reasonably strong economy in the United States, worldwide demand for diamond jewellery remained weak in 2024, declining slightly from a dismal 2023. In the United States, the decline was estimated only at 1.5% to 2%; China, the world's second-largest consumer of diamond jewellery, saw much larger drops in retail demand as its economy ran into severe difficulties.

In the U.S., Signet Jewelers – the parent company of Kay Jewelers, Zale

Corp. and Jared Galleria – reported that store sales were down 2% for the final ten weeks of 2024, noting that customers moved to lower-cost merchandise over finer stock. In China/Hong Kong, Chow Tai Fook, the region's largest jeweller, reported a sales decline of 20.4% in the final quarter of last year. These declines at the retail level, however, were amplified to near-crisis levels down through the supply chain.

Mining companies faced even greater challenges than retail stores. De Beers reported that its rough diamond sales declined 25% by value in 2024, while rough prices also declined an average of 20%. The price declines were centred on smaller-sized rough, which is most affected by competition from lab-grown diamonds; nearly all the cuts came from smaller, lower-quality goods. The company, which is still reportedly on the sales block, said it will further cut production by an additional 10% in 2025. While De Beers trimmed production by 22% in 2024 to 24.7 million carats, this year, parent company Anglo-American,



Canada's Diavik mine (left), scheduled to close in 2026, reported an 18% decline in rough production (above) for the 2024 calendar year. Photos by Russell Shor.

* This article was submitted before the 90-day pause on most tariffs was issued on 9 April.



At this point, the outlook for diamonds and diamond jewellery is too unpredictable to anticipate. Photo by Toria/Shutterstock.com.

which has cut an additional \$2.9 billion (£2.2 billion), expects to offer between 20 and 23 million carats to the market. De Beers is currently valued at just \$4.1 billion (£3.1 billion), the total of its 2019 diamond sales.

The world's second-largest producer by value, Russia's Alrosa, remains under sanctions from the U.S. and the European Union. The company blamed that action for a 4.6% decline in production volume, though slowing trading conditions were also acknowledged. The company has a 'safety valve': the Gokhran, the institution under the Russian Ministry of Finance that buys goods such as those that Alrosa cannot readily sell in the open market. Alrosa, partly owned by Russia's federal government, announced that it would maintain steady production levels in 2025. Rio Tinto, which operates Canada's Diavik mine, reported an 18% decline in production for the calendar year, though impediments to its operations were responsible for some of the loss. Elsewhere in the pipeline, diamond manufacturing declined worldwide by an estimated 50% to 80% by volume, according to Israeli diamond analysts.

India's polished diamond exports alone plunged nearly 50% by volume to about twelve million carats between 2021 and 2024. By value, India's Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council estimated a decline of about 40%, from some \$22 billion (£16.99 billion) to \$12 billion (£9.26 billion) last year, reflecting a shift toward higher value goods.

The prevalence of lab-grown diamonds is, in part, responsible for some of this picture. Synthetic material has captured nearly half of U.S. diamond sales by volume, major retailers reported in a seminar at the

JCK Show in Las Vegas in June 2024. However, because of extreme price declines, that market share translates to less than 15% by value. The tipping point, these retailers noted, was the engagement ring category, where buyers on a budget opted for rings with half-carat or even carat-sized specimens for less cost than a quarter-carat natural diamond.

There was better news at the luxury end of the spectrum, where diamond prices saw fewer declines and retailers saw increases, or much smaller declines, in areas outside of Asia. The two largest luxury houses saw strong increases in fine jewellery sales, with the exception of China, according to their annual statements. Richemont, the parent company of Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels, reported a 14% rise in jewellery demand for the final quarter of the year. North American sales led the increase, climbing 22%, while sales in Asia fell nearly 8%. LVMH, the conglomerate that includes Tiffany & Co, saw a 5% decline in jewellery and watch sales in 2024 sales in North America and Europe increased, while China registered a sharp fall.

How will these trends carry through 2025? At this point, the year may still be too unpredictable to forecast, especially in the retail sector. Diamond producers and manufacturers believe that the sharp reductions in mine production have tightened inventories to the point where prices can stabilise and even rise a bit. Scarcities of some goods are already developing, according to Rapaport. In addition, industry analyst Edahn Golan reported that industry bank indebtedness is at record lows,



so diamond companies are not obliged to sell their inventories at discount or distress levels. At the same time, demand for lab-grown specimens may be peaking as a competitor to natural material. Retailers at the JCK Las Vegas panel said they saw the early signs of a return to natural stones, especially from consumers who bought engagement rings with synthetic diamonds that appeared too large for their incomes. Prices for lab-grown material are likely to continue to erode to the point where

The tariffs could not have come at a more difficult time for an industry dealing with inflation and changing consumer priorities.

they will become a complementary product rather than a competitor.

Retail demand, however, remains difficult to predict. The big question is whether American consumers will pay substantially higher prices for diamond jewellery. It is likely the tariffs will drive down sales numbers greatly across the board. Ordinarily, diamond and jewellery sales should have done well over the past several years. The U.S. economy outperformed other major consumer economies but the demand for gems declined. It is easy to blame inflation worries but, as previously noted, rising prices have not stopped Americans from taking luxury vacations and pampering themselves at resorts and spas. The souring economy in China has not stemmed the hordes of Asian tourists flocking to European capitals, New York's Fifth Avenue and Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles.

One position to consider is that jewellery purchases are 'feel good' items but, for many, the international mood is pretty dour. Another, more concrete answer is that jewellers and the diamond



Signet Groups, which operates H. Samuel (among other retail outlets), reported that UK sales declined about 5% (£483 million) in 2024. Photo by Nigel J. Harris/Shutterstock.com.

industry have not created effective marketing strategies and still rely on the '30%-off' promotions to entice customers. It is unlikely that De Beers, the most visible diamond advertiser, will be able to reposition diamond jewellery to something that will improve the buyers' spirits, and even less likely that major retailers will be able to host such a campaign to fight the allure of far-away places, palm-tree-lined beaches and sipping Prosecco in cafés.

Of the American economy itself, the forecast from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia is looking at a 2.4% increase in the U.S. gross domestic product this year. Bain & Company and McKinsey & Company are bullish on growth prospects for the U.S. diamond and jewellery markets. According to a report from Signet Groups, the rising cost of living in the United Kingdom is putting pressure on jewellery and watch sales. Signet Groups – which operates H. Samuel and Ernest Jones Jewellers – reported that sales declined about 5% for fiscal year 2024, resulting in a loss of £483 million. In China, the world's second-largest consumer market, predictions are calling for a return to growth as the housing market stabilises

and the government enacts stimulus measures, according to an analysis by Vanguard Financial Group. However, this year, even more than the four previous 'unpredictable' years, may defy every forecast. Think tanks still may be issuing moderately bullish forecasts, but there are too many uncertainties around the world to be sure.

First is President Donald Trump's ongoing threats of trade wars with China, Canada, the European Union and Japan. The high tariffs will aggravate inflation in the United States and slow economic activity in both the U.S. and exporting countries, especially China. Second, the dissolution of many American government programs may siphon billions of dollars from discretionary consumer spending. Finally, if an economic downturn does occur, the Trump administration has signalled it will not be willing to mitigate its effects, so the downturn may be steeper, more prolonged and severe than previous recessions. Internationally, Trump's desire to improve relations with Russia likely will see lifting of sanctions on Alrosa. This would not have much effect on diamond supply, as Alrosa goods are traded freely in India and China, but it would allow the company to increase its rough prices.

If these potential disruptions do not materialise, analysts see a year of consolidation and stability on the production side and a modest improvement in retail demand. This will unfold as China moves to recover from its economic slump. The global disruption of U.S. tariffs will certainly continue throughout the year and render the moderately bullish forecasts made in January obsolete, especially for diamond and jewellery sales. ■



Lab-grown diamonds have made significant inroads into the bridal market.

Photo by Russell Shor.



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Japanese Techniques of Pearl Maintenance and Restoration

Ayako Naito FGA DGA reviews methods used in Japan to care for cultured pearls.

There are many aspects of pearl technology that are challenging to research and explain, making it difficult to reach the essence of these actions. In the past, techniques of culturing pearls (including inserting a nucleus into the mollusc) were kept secret from the general public. Nowadays, we can observe the beading procedure and visit pearl-cultivation farms. In some regions, farmers exchange information about the environment, as well as the conditions and skills needed for cultivation, but ultimately pearl farming relies on the experience and efforts of individuals.

Stringing pearls, and thread changing, is a lost skill, particularly for antique jewellery (generally accepted to be over one hundred years old). Only a limited number of skilled technicians are capable of practicing the delicate threading technique for restoring these

jewels. There are other aspects of pearl maintenance and restoration that are not widely known. This article will introduce techniques that are practiced on cultured pearls in current-day Japan.

PEARL CULTIVATION IN JAPAN

In Japan, pearl cultivation using the akoya pearl oyster was successfully achieved in the early twentieth century. Since then, research has been carried out in various forms and the pearl industry has developed significantly. Normally, cultured pearls are polished to bring out their lustre and shine, and are then sorted, strung and threaded into necklaces. Usually cultured pearls do not undergo the same 'doctoring' with special equipment as was done with natural pearls.

According to the Fisheries and Aquaculture Production Statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and



An akoya cultured pearl showing sheen/brightness with light interference.

Fisheries, Japan's pearl farming industry peaked at 125 tonnes of production in 1967. This was followed by a pearl recession due to oversupply and a temporary recovery to seventy-three tonnes in 1993. Production has since been on a downward trend, totalling twelve tonnes in 2022. The impact of the COVID-19 on the akoya pearl farming industry, and efforts to improve the marine environment where the pearls are grown in order to restore production, was previously reported (See Summer 2023 G&J, pp. 28–31). These efforts, however, were made in the production areas. As the demand for pearls rises alongside the decline in production, the maintenance of pearls should be given more attention in order to preserve what is already in circulation.

PEARL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Pearl Threading. Some of the pearls found in antique jewellery from Europe are small, about 1/4 of a grain in size. They are strung together by piercing a hole in each specimen, threading a string through the hole, and fixing the string to a base cut from the mother-of-pearl with a thin thread. The thread used in this process is made from horsehair, which is strong and flexible, making it possible to create delicate, three-dimensional designs.

In Japan, the traditional thread used for pearl stringing was made of silk, which is also known for its durability and flexibility. The silk was also believed to add to the elegance of the final jewellery piece. Nowadays the most common threads are made of polyester and high-density polyethylene which, like horsehair, is durable and incredibly flexible. The restringing of pearl jewellery depends on the frequency of use and daily care,



*Strands of Japanese saltwater akoya cultured pearls in white, pink and gold.
Photo by Catherine Zibo/Shutterstock.*



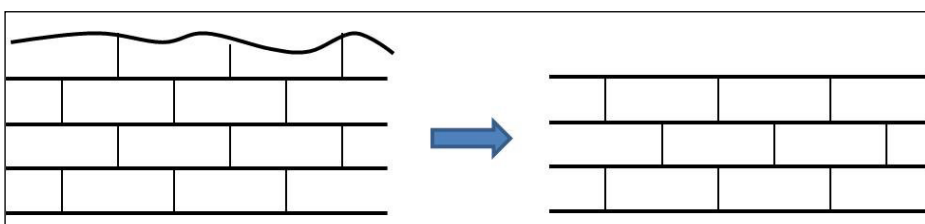
Cultured pearls are carefully threaded in a painstaking process.

but it is recommended anywhere from every 2–4 years. Japanese pearl-related companies do train their staff to change the threads, but there are only a few skilled people who can handle all kinds of intricate, delicate jewellery and antique pieces. In fact, the number of people with the skills to restring pearls is not just dwindling in Japan; a *New York Times* article from 2022 suggests that there are 'a handful of high-level pearl stringers left in London.'

Pearl Doctors. According to the literature, during the heyday of the pearl trade – which fell over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries– the centres of the gem trade were Hatton Garden (London), Rue Lafayette (Paris) and Maiden Lane (New York City). These locations were the home of 'pearl doctors'. These highly skilled professionals were able to improve the quality of pearls by delicately peeling dull areas and blemishes found on the surfaces of natural pearls. Their work required delicate scrapers, abrasives, patience and a great deal of knowledge about and experience with pearls (Kornitzer, 1935).

Usually, pearl doctors limited their work to large, potentially valuable pearls. Experts from different ethnic backgrounds brought different skills to their practice. German pearl doctors were able to fit small pearls of the same colour, lustre and texture exquisitely and snugly into perforated specimens, creating pieces of great beauty. Russian pearl doctors invented their own instruments, not with metal blades but with knives made of obsidian and bamboo splints that shaved in a special way that other Europeans did not. Chinese practitioners quickly performed many pearl surgeries directly in front of traders. The operations were sometimes unsuccessful, because of the high risk of damaging the pearls (Kornitzer, 1935).

Novices to the surgical removal or peeling of the nacreous layer have to acquire knowledge by trial and error on their own, often without a master practitioner to pass on knowledge and wisdom. Once the scratches and blemishes have been removed, the pearl doctor spreads fine ruby powder mixed with olive oil onto soft chamois leather and polishes the pearl.



This diagram shows the surface of pearls before and after the peeling of rough nacreous layers.

Japan has been hit by natural disasters, during which pearls owned and treasured by individuals as well as pearls stocked in shops, were heavily damaged.

Pearl Restoration. The Pearl Science Laboratory Co. Ltd., a Tokyo-based company, offers a service that can restore cultured pearls to their former beauty using technology reminiscent of pearl doctors. To make this feasible, the laboratory is staffed by people with 30–40 years of experience in pearls, an understanding of degradation phenomena and knowledge of structural and chemical properties. The laboratory also belongs to the Japan Society for the Conservation of Cultural Property (JSCCP), which publishes the lab's research on the conservation and restoration of pearls. The society aims to develop the chemistry and

technology involved in the conservation of cultural properties. It carries out activities such as research, education and the dissemination of knowledge on cultural properties to the general public. JSCCP deals with a wide range of objects, from damaged murals and oil paintings to museum collections, national treasures and world heritage sites. One of their concerns is pearl restoration, which is among the themes covered at their academic conference.

Pearls are made up of layers of aragonite (calcium carbonate) crystals surrounded by a protein called conchiolin, which reflects the light hitting the crystalline layers and gives pearls their unique sheen (or lustre) and brightness. However, when working with pearls it is important to remember that they are very delicate, with a Moh's hardness of 3.5–4. After using pearls, one must wipe off any perspiration, skin secretions or cosmetics that have adhered to them; they must avoid exposure to light and heat. This is because sweat, cosmetics and other substances may dissolve the surface of the pearl, resulting



A close-up of the surfaces of pearls before and after the peeling of rough nacreous layers.

in a diffuse reflection of light on the pearl's surface. Whereas the pearl doctors of old would use special equipment to manually peel the nacre from natural pearls one by one, the pearl refresher uses polish powder and a special brush to efficiently peel the delicate nacre. By peeling a few

layers of this damaged surface, the shine can be restored. This knowledge is the basis of the restoration process used by the Pearl Science Laboratory.

Pearls Submerged in Mud. Japan has been hit by natural disasters, such as earthquakes and torrential rains, several times in the past decade. During these disasters, pearls owned and treasured by individuals, as well as pearls stocked in shops, were heavily damaged. The Pearl Science Laboratory has restored these pearls on a volunteer basis.

The restoration of such privately owned pearls damaged by natural disasters in Kumamoto Prefecture in 2020 was the subject of a report. The mechanism of how the pearls commissioned by the jewellers had

As the demand for pearls rises alongside the decline in production, the maintenance of pearls should be given more attention to in order to preserve what is already in circulation.



Left: A pearl specialist observes the features of a specimen before starting the peeling process. Right: A strand of pearls is put through the Pearl Refresher, where the upper and lower brushes are coated with abrasives for polishing the pearls.

deteriorated was also investigated. A total of thirty-seven pearls damaged in the torrential rain were restored, including thirty-one strand necklaces and six Buddhist rosaries. This was presented by The Pearl Science Laboratory at the Conference of the Society for Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.

Most of the affected pearls were cloudy throughout. They had cracks on the surfaces and damage to the nacreous layer and pore openings; cracks inside and delamination of the nacreous layers were also observed. Experiments showed that when the pearls were exposed to weakly acidic muddy water created by heavy rainfall, the calcium carbonate of the pearls dissolved and deteriorated.



A pearl necklace affected by Great East Japan Earthquake. The discoloured pearls (from black to clouded whitish) can be seen throughout the necklace.

The uneven surface of the clouded whitish pearls caused diffused reflection of light, and the growth patterns that should have been visible on the surfaces was rough and indistinct. But when these areas were polished with a polishing cloth, the patterns became clearer.

During the restoration process, the pearls were divided into three groups according to the degree of damage, and work was carried out according to each situation. Less-damaged pearls had their surfaces polished using a machine with an abrasive brush. Pearls that were irregularly shaped, with gaps in the nacreous layers and with



Left: An akoya pearl necklace by the disaster in Kumamoto in 2020.

Right: The same necklace after nacreous peeling.

prismatic layers, were polished by hand using a polishing cloth. This method peeled only the nacreous layer in the rough areas. Pearls that were quite damaged were only lightly wiped with a microfibre cloth.

Pearls Immersed in Seawater. The company also has experience in restoring black pearls damaged by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. In this case, the tsunami had discoloured forty-seven pearls, changing them to a whitish colour as if they had been covered in salt. The specimens had lost their unique sheen and brightness. This was thought to have been caused by the dissolution of the nacreous layer due to prolonged immersion in seawater mixed with various chemicals. Prior to restoration work, a visible spectrophotometer was used to confirm that the mother oyster of all the pearls was a black-lipped oyster. Magnification and soft X-ray radiography were then performed to determine the thickness of the nacreous layer and the depth of the dissolution in each pearl. These tests



showed that each nacreous layer was thick enough and that dissolution occurred only on the surface layer. Only the damaged areas were peeled. The beautiful sheen and brightness was restored via the pearl refresher with polish powder and a special brush to efficiently peel the delicate nacre. This process was also carried out carefully on the micron-sized nacreous layers, so the size of the pearls were not altered.

Methods of maintaining pearl jewellery, including threading and the peeling of damaged nacreous layers to produce beautiful specimens have been found to be feasible for cultured pearls. However, even for experienced staff, it is very important to observe pearls without making assumptions about their care. This kind of technology, whether used on natural or cultured pearls, should be worthy of attention. ■

*The author wishes to thank
The Pearl Science Laboratory Co., Ltd.*

*References are available upon request
to the Editor.*



Left: A pearl that was discoloured by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Right: The pearl after nacreous peeling.



A miner shows her freshly mined and washed tourmaline and Umba garnets, which were mined in Tanga Region, Tanzania. The area is well known for its pink, purple and green garnet, as well as a wide colour range of sapphire.. Photo by Michael Goima/Pact.

THE HIDDEN JOURNEY OF WOMEN GEMSTONE MINERS OF EAST AFRICA

Cristina M. Villegas, Norbert Massay and Esther Ndeki Njunge document the challenges and triumphs of women who mine coloured gemstones in Tanzania and Kenya.

In the popular imagination of most consumers, miners are male and working on large, clean mining concessions in far-off places. Even those individuals who work in the coloured-gemstone trade are often surprised to hear that women are estimated to make up one-third of all artisanal and small-scale miners, the workforce that mines 70–80% of all coloured gemstones annually. This information is according to the World Bank, which has the best current and long-range data on the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector.

THE ROLE OF THE WOMEN GEM MINERS

The precise populations of women gem miners per country can vary dramatically based on the social context – such as whether women are allowed to work outside of the home in rural areas – and the geological context, such as the depth of the overburden, or the layers of earth that must be removed to reach the gem-bearing

deposit. In an article by the U.S. Geological Survey on the influence of geomorphology on the role of women at ASM sites, Katherine Malpeli and Dr Peter Chirico demonstrated a correlation between women's participation in ASM and their roles on a site to the thickness of the overburden layer in ASM diamond mining. They found that when deposits required a significant degree of manual labour to access the ore due to thick overburden layers, women were typically relegated to other roles. In other words, roles for women are closed in certain environments for physical reasons. However, it is often social as well: with high-value materials in conservative rural environments, women get pushed out quickly.

Salma M. is a Tanzanian woman, a former farmer and a member of TAWOMA whose life has been changed by gemstone mining. She now uses her knowledge to mentor other miners in the area. Photo by Michael Goima/Pact.

KENYA AND TANZANIA

In East Africa, women have been working in ASM for decades. This has been extensively documented by the work of Professor Doris Buss (Canada), Professor Rosemary Mwaipopo (Tanzania), Dr Jennifer Hinton (Canada) and countless others. International not-for-profit organisation Pact conducted an extensive baseline study in 2017 focussed



on Kenya's gemstone sector, studying both supply chain and gender dynamics in gemstones. This study and others estimate that in Kenya and Tanzania, women are approximately 10–20% of the mining population; that is, those who have some sort of role on a mine site.

The Kenyan Journey. The past two decades have been transformational for Kenyan women gem miners, according to Michelle Mwambela, CEO of the Association for Women in Energy and Extractives in Kenya (AWEIK). According to Ms Mwambela, women are finding it easy to get engaged in mining alongside the men, and even own mines, as compared to twenty years ago. Ms Mwambela points to slow changes in Kenyan cultural beliefs about women owning land. In the past, it was generally not accepted for women to own or inherit land, which made it difficult for them to obtain mineral rights. This inability to own land significantly hampered women's economic empowerment, making women dependent on male relatives for access to mining areas, according to Ms Mwambela.

Yet, some women found success in the gem-mining sector even in those early days. Miriam 'Mimo' Kamau Caplan is one of the most well-known Kenyan women gem miners due to the success of her company, Mimo Gem Traders Ltd. She began her journey as a miner working in the tunnels before being able to add staff and eventually reach the upper echelons of the trade. She has described the heat of the sun, the dust of the pits and the threat of wildlife from the neighbouring Tsavo National Park, but credits the pioneering women in mining who she watched and learned from for her success.

Building on the hard work of these women pioneers, over the past five years in particular, new opportunities and visibility have emerged for women in Kenya's gemstone communities. These include direct-sales opportunities via Moyo Gems and Virtu Gems, initiatives that are focussed on vetted ASM producers and have clear outreach priorities with women miners and sales opportunities, both locally and at national gemstone-focussed conferences organised by AWEIK. Among these efforts are Market Days,

The past two decades have been transformational for Kenyan women gem miners.

where miners are able to sell their production directly. To maintain orderly markets, each cluster of villages is assigned a specific Market Day and location to convene. Market dates are announced locally and are only open to those miners who are pre-enrolled and have passed the programme entry requirements. In Kenya, participants are required to be eighteen years or older, a registered member of a legal ASM mining cooperative and enrolled the free gemmology primer course offered to miners in the region by the Gemological Association of America (GIA) and Pact. Other organisations, such as Transparency International have brought gemstone miners to these highly successful events to show the miners what is possible if they organise

and formalise. Other local efforts have opened up trading opportunities for precision faceting for Kenyan youth who live in gemstone communities.

For women gem miners in particular, national observers give credit to the national and local governments of Kenya, but also to the proactive efforts from the not-for-profit community – specifically, AWEIK, Pact and Oxfam – and two private initiatives, GemFund and VirtuGems. These efforts so far are largely focussed in Taita Taveta County, the country's most famous gem region. Expanding to other areas will require public or private investments.

For Ms Mwambela, the increased recognition of ASM women by AWEIK, Pact and Oxfam has played a vital role in advocating for women's rights. The increased focus on skills development is equipping women miners with the knowledge and expertise needed to improve their mining operations and increase their earnings.

The Tanzanian Journey. Like their Kenyan counterparts, Tanzanian women gem miners have experienced fundamental shifts in their opportunities over the past twenty years. The turning point for Tanzanian women was the formation of the Tanzanian Women Miners' Association →



Women miners will modify mining movements to accommodate their differing physical strength capabilities to men. At this site, the Tanzanian women rotate roles frequently in order to better recover from the physical act of digging. Two women will dig at one time, while two women will share a sieve. The dirt will fall through the sieve and the pebbles and gems will remain in the sieve. Once the gem material is separated from the dirt, the members of the group will gather together to sort through the small stones to determine whether any are gemstones.

Photo by Michael Goima/Pact.

(TAWOMA), from which many women mining leaders have emerged. In its 2023/2024 report about ASM and gender, The World Bank noted the importance of women's mining associations and their potentially transformative power. The leadership of these organisations also matters. Collaborative partners should always be fully screened (on both sides) to ensure the group is who they say they are, that they are truly representative of miners and that donor funds actually reach mining communities.

In Tanzania, TAWOMA has been credited with securing numerous legal reforms to clarify women's rights to mine and hold mining licenses. The association demands security reforms when its members report harassment at major mine sites by calling the Minister of Mines directly. TAWOMA is also a consistent national presence at Ministry of Mines consultation events to ensure that the voices and rights of women are incorporated into short- and long-term sector planning.

Many of the TAWOMA members are gemstone miners, like Salma M., a 64-year-old woman from the Tanga Region. As with many artisanal miners across Africa, before she became a miner, Salma was a farmer. She focussed on maize, beans and coffee. When she got married, she moved to



All Moyo Gems participants have taken part in the free-to-attend GIA educational programme for artisanal miners at some point in the eight years that it has been available in Tanzania and Kenya. The translucent trays are distributed as a part of that GIA programme, are now found throughout the region and are highly prized by gem miners because they use them to sort their gemstones. Photo by Michael Goima/Pact.

another village with her new husband. She began mining in 2012 after seeing women who were involved in mining earn money to sustain their families. Today, Salma mines three times a week with women from her village. Her role on the site is to sieve the gem-bearing gravel and then to separate the gemstones from the remaining pile. Her group now has twenty-eight members – twenty-two women and six men – who have been mining together since 2017.

Through the pilot programme that

was first offered in her village by GIA and Pact eight years ago, Salma began learning about the value factors of rough coloured gemstones, along with how to clean and pre-sort them. Today, she knows how to identify quality gemstones from lower-grade material. She has also become a mentor for others, helping her fellow miners at the market, who often ask for her help sorting stones. This skills-building has led to improved earnings. How she uses her income is a common story among women miners. She bought five goats (which grew to twenty), has helped her husband build a house and is paying for the education of their four children – two in university and two in secondary school.

It was Pact and TAWOMA that first co-created the Moyo Gems programme in 2018 – an effort which also included international gem dealers ANZA Gems and Nineteen48 and technology company Everledger – and officially launched in Tanga Region in 2019.



Artisanal gemstone miners from Kenya's Turkana County, who were part of a delegation organised by Transparency International's Kenya team in November 2025. Transparency International hopes to show the miners what is possible when they self-organise, formalise and form international partnerships. The miners observed the Moyo Gems market in action to understand the benefits of transparent markets. Photo by Michael Goima/Pact.

Moyo Gems Kenya Manager Esther Ndeki Njunge checks in pre-registered miners into Market Day, which is held in a rural village lacking electricity. In the background, pre-enrolled miners await their turn to check in and then proceed to the sales desk. Photo by Cristina Villegas/Pact.

The goal was to focus proactively on the challenges of women miners, channel investments into their communities, promote direct trade as closely to the village level as possible and promote local economic development for women miners and their male allies, with whom they often mined. The programme was formed in response to a request from a group of women miners, who were the first participants of the GIA training. In the programme evaluation surveys, the miners asked if it would be possible to establish a direct market to help get them better prices. Pact returned shortly thereafter to respond to that request. Following codesign efforts and a successful pilot, Moyo Gems guaranteed miners that they would make 95% of the export price of their gemstones. This was a stunning achievement, as prior to the start of the programme women producers had made between 10–30%. In the past six years since the Moyo Gems initiative began, and for now, the 95% achievement still stands. The programme has become a popular, transformative to the region and a catalyst for ASM formalisation. The Regional Mining Officer for Tanga



Region routinely called the Moyo Gems programme a 'gamechanger'.

First in Tanzania and then in Kenya, Pact and its partners made the decision to include men in a women-focussed platform to promote ongoing security of the women miners, as well as community buy-in, shared economic benefits, skill sharing and market efficiency. When whole villages benefit, the villages protect the integrity of the programme. Now 50–50 women and men, with women prioritised in the line for sales, the women's mining associations now directly operate the Moyo Gems programmes locally with some light backstopping support from Pact.

THE ROAD AHEAD

While exciting progress has occurred in ASM of coloured gemstones in important corners of Kenya and Tanzania, the obvious next step is scaling the programmes geographically. However, the expansion cannot occur in isolation. It is now easier to convince ASM gemstone miners to formalise in order to join a readily accessible, voluntary market programme. However, the market programmes – whether they are Moyo Gems, VirtuGems or another option – can only continue to operate if there is market demand. Global buyers are needed to place orders for these materials, and that is where the gap currently lies. The global jewellery industry must choose to use these materials to spur supply. In other words, these initiatives survive and expand when companies place orders.

In both Kenya and Tanzania, local financial institutions are now eagerly exploring how to turn once-risky customers into savings account and loan holders. Most miners in ASM are considered risky customers because of ASM's lack of legal status;



Beatrice (24 years old) and Lewis (27 years old) are learning precision faceting from GemFund, a Kenyan social enterprise operated locally by two young women geologists. GemFund students acquire practical hands-on gem-evaluation skills at the Moyo Gems Kenya Markets. Their instructors purchase lower-value Moyo Gems material for the students to train on, giving these young people a competitive edge in the local job market. Photo by Cristina Villegas/Pact.



Davis Kambale Tayo is a local businessman from the jewellery company Taita Gems. He and his business partner requested to join the Moyo Gems Markets in Kenya as buyers. They buy direct from gem miners for use in their Kenyan-made jewellery. Photo by Cristina Villegas/Pact.

In Tanzania, most gem miners operate illegally. Another risk is that there is little formal record-keeping in rural mining and trading environments. With the emergence of market-based platforms that service ASM directly, some of these challenges can be addressed. For example, in the Moyo Gems programme in Tanzania, a core entry requirement is proof that the miner holds or is working on a legal license with the written permission of the license holder. In Kenya, they must be a member of a registered gemstone mining cooperative. Digital sales records, kept by Pact, from their participation in these local market programmes could be used as proof of their consistent income from mining, which may then be used to qualify for bank loans.

However, it is important to prepare these miners for loans. In Tanzania, for example, most miners participating in the Moyo Gems programme have only attended some primary school and would be unprepared for formal bank loans. Pact, TAWOMA and AWEIK have been operating village-based financial literacy and

savings programmes with miners for several years to begin this process and to encourage diversification of livelihoods. This is intended to reduce miners' vulnerability to economic shocks, such as global economic downturns. Michelle Mwambela noted that these targeted interventions address the historical financial exclusion faced by rural producers and women in particular.



Beatrice (right) is a gem miner and a student in precision faceting. She learned how to mine from her grandmother, who joined the Moyo Gems programme when it expanded to Kenya from Tanzania in 2022. Beatrice is now focussed on moving along the value chain. She is learning precision faceting at the GemFund school. Photo by Cristina Villegas/Pact.

Finally, one of the brightest spots on the horizon in both Kenya and Tanzania are its youth, defined as ages 18–35, who represent more than 70% of the Tanzanian population. In Kenya, youth comprise 80% of the national population. By 2030, Africa as a whole is projected to account for 42% of the world's youth. That should make Africa a workforce development priority for jewellery and all forms of manufacturing and economic investments, from design to fashion.

Both countries have youth-led movements focussed on world-class gemstone faceting prior to export. In Kenya, this is centred at GemFund, which is led by two young Kenyan women geologists. Taita Taveta National Polytechnic in Tsavo is collaborating with these two women in teaching and scaling this work. Pact has provided GemFund micro-grants for equipment and opportunities for its students to receive hands-on education at the Moyo Gems Market Days purchasing events. In Tanzania, the youth activity is centred with three organisations: TAWOMA's 'TAWOMA Youth' branch, the Tanzania Women in Mining and Mineral Industry and the international not-for-profit organisation Gem Legacy. All three entities focus on creating skilled work opportunities for Tanzania's young people.

Early movers Kenya and Tanzania, led by entrepreneurial women miners, male allies and youth faceters, are waiting for the industry to act. The continent of Africa is a young, dynamic place that is ripe with opportunities, if the jewellery industry invests in it. ■

Editor's Note: The three authors form a long-time programme team at Pact and operate its Moyo Gems initiative. Moyo Gems has received funding from the Brilliant Earth Foundation, the World Bank EGPS Fund, A Beautiful Story, The Netherlands RVO Agency and others. More information is available at pactworld.org/mining.



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A JOURNEY OF GEMMOLOGY

Gemmologist, valuer and photomicrographer Sammantha Maclachlan FGA DGA FIRV MJVA describes her path to success in the trade.

An internal gemstone scene that Sammantha Maclachlan favours is this photomicrograph of a Ramaura synthetic ruby that shows striking interference colours when viewed with crossed-polarising filters. Field of view 10.0 mm.

My fascination with jewellery and gemstones began when I was around seven or eight years old. My dad would take me shopping for crystals, and I found the number of colours and varieties mesmerising. I had a large collection of crystals that I would sit with for hours, investigating what they were and reading about how they were formed. I would love to say that this early interest eventually blossomed into a desire to pursue a career in jewellery; however, in all honesty this was not the case. As with many children, my interests changed, and my crystal collection was forgotten about until my passion was re-ignited many years later.

I commenced my career in the jewellery industry in 2003, when I applied for a temporary Christmas position at a local jewellery shop as a sales consultant. I quickly developed an interest in diamond and coloured gemstone jewellery and thoroughly enjoyed the company's training on various aspects of the trade. I was pleased when my temporary position transitioned into a permanent role.

Over the next few years I gained valuable experience working with Bernstones and Lewis Grant, both based in the historical Argyle Arcade of Glasgow. In 2006 I became a sales consultant at Laings of Glasgow. As a child I had often gazed through their windows at the sea of diamonds and brightly coloured gemstones, so getting to work with these luxury pieces every day was a dream come true.

Whilst at Laings I completed the Jewellery Education and Training (JET) courses, provided by the National Association of Jewellers, which gave

me a good basic understanding of gemmology and the jewellery industry. I was also delighted to be able to visit the International Gemological Institute (IGI) in Antwerp to take part in their diamond-grading course, which I passed in 2007. During this visit I was also able to see stones being fashioned by master cutters, from cleaving to polishing. This was a truly remarkable experience, one which strengthened my passion for diamonds.

After a number of years with Laings, which included promotions to senior sales executive and training officer, I was looking for a new challenge. Having assisted the valuer who visited our store to carry out valuation days, I

found his job extremely interesting. I spent the next few days researching exactly what I would need to do to become a member of the Institute of Registered Valuers (IRV), the gold standard in the industry. I found that in addition to sitting the exam for what was then known as the Certificate of Appraisal, or CAT (now called the Foundations of Appraisal Practice, or FoAP), I needed to fulfil other requirements. I needed to hold both a gemmological and diamond qualification, as well as five years of experience in the trade.

As I already had my diamond-grading qualification, my next step was to hone my skills and gain the necessary



**Sammantha Maclachlan FGA
DGA FIRV MJVA AJP PJDIP CPAA
at her microscope in her
Glasgow office.**

expertise in gemmology. My research told me that the most credible gemmological qualification would be the Gem-A Diploma in Gemmology, so in 2014 I took the first steps towards this qualification by undertaking the Foundation course. After earning my Foundation Certificate and CAT qualifications in 2015 I was asked to submit a body of my work to the professional review panel. To my delight, I was invited to become a Member of the IRV in 2016.

In 2019 I successfully completed the Diploma in Gemmology, which I found both challenging and rewarding. I was

current with industry standards and practices, I have actively pursued additional certifications and training in areas such as synthetic diamonds and advanced testing. I have attended workshops, seminars and conferences around the world, where I learn from leading experts in the field. These experiences have not only deepened my knowledge but also allowed me to build valuable networking connections within the industry.

In 2020 I left Laings to pursue my career as an independent valuer. This was the beginning of my company,

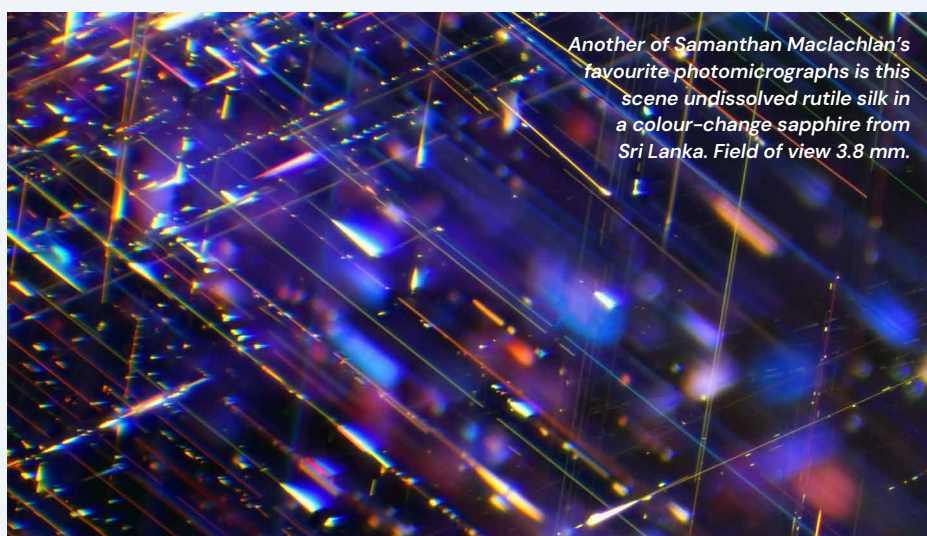
diamonds, detecting treatments and identifying specific chromophores.

Over the years, I have built a reputation for providing thorough and precise valuations. My clients appreciate my meticulous attention to detail and the comprehensive reports I provide. Whether valuing a cherished family heirloom or a newly acquired piece, I approach each task with the same level of dedication and professionalism.

One of the keys to my success has been my commitment to transparency and integrity. My clients trust me to provide them with honest, unbiased assessments, and I take that responsibility seriously.

I have had the honour of valuing exceptional pieces of jewellery, including a 15-carat D-Flawless type Ila diamond set in a pendant, as well as an exquisite necklace featuring fancy pink and yellow diamonds. My favourite items to value are those with an interesting family history. I enjoy being able to expand on that history by dating components like the cut of the diamonds or gemstones, or the date that the item was hallmarked.

As part of my research, I devote considerable time to examining gemstones under a microscope.

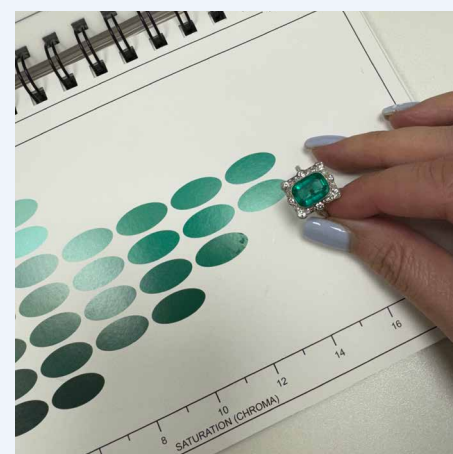


Another of Samanthan MacLachlan's favourite photomicrographs is this scene undissolved rutile silk in a colour-change sapphire from Sri Lanka. Field of view 3.8 mm.

thrilled to gain the FGA post-nominal; it is one of my proudest achievements to date. I still remember how delighted I was when my new business cards arrived! In addition to my other qualifications, in 2021 I decided to enrol in the Gem-A Diamond Diploma course, which I passed with merit. Having both the internationally recognised FGA and DGA designations is the gold standard for a gemmologist within our trade. These credentials not only validated my expertise, but also instilled confidence in my clients, assuring them of the accuracy and reliability of my valuations.

My education did not stop there. Recognising the importance of staying

Sammantha MacLachlan FGA Ltd. My business offers valuations of jewellery and watches to trade clients and to the public, either in their homes or at my office in Glasgow city centre, and trade clients. At present I am delighted to provide valuations for more than thirty retailers, designers and jewellery workshops across the United Kingdom. I am currently working towards building my own gemmological laboratory at my office. I offer standard gemmological testing along with photoluminescence (PL) and ultraviolet/visible/near-infrared (UV-Vis-NIR) spectroscopy, which helps in identifying synthetic



Colour grading, as with this gemstone, is part of Sammantha MacLachlan's daily duties as a gemmologist and valuer.

One of the keys to my success has been my commitment to transparency and integrity.

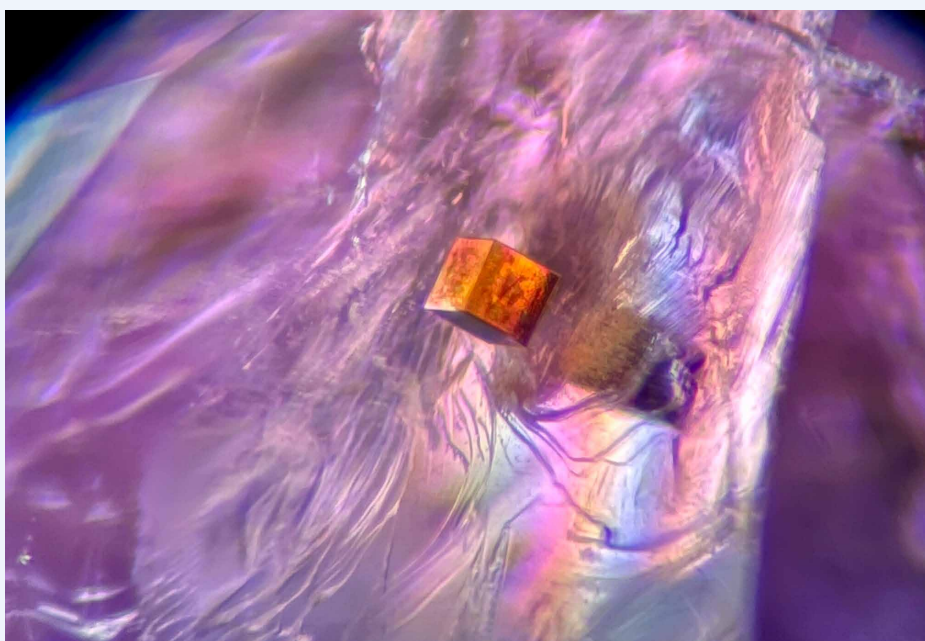
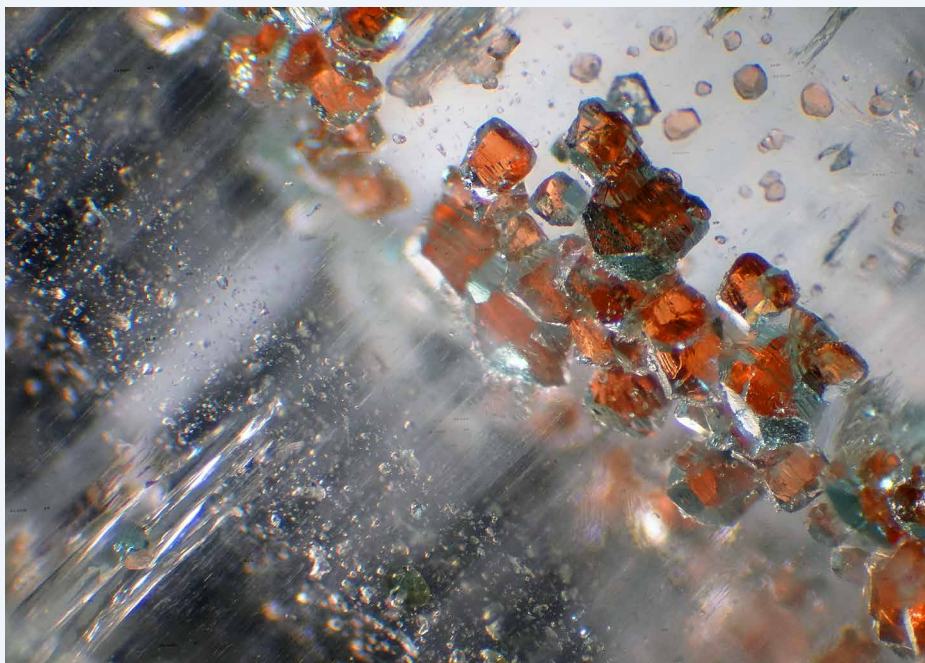
This has cultivated a keen interest in photomicrography, which involves photographing objects through a microscope. This subject has become a significant passion of mine, and I have had the opportunity to speak on it for numerous organisations in

My journey as a registered valuer has been marked by a relentless pursuit of knowledge, a passion for gemmology and a commitment to integrity.

the United Kingdom and the United States, including Gem-A, the Scottish Gemmological Association, the National Association of Jewellers and the National Association of Jewelry Appraisers.

In order to keep my collection of stones with interesting inclusions current, I travel each year to the Tucson Gem Showcase. This is an experience that should not be missed by anyone in the jewellery industry. My favourite places to visit for photomicrography materials are the Pueblo Show and GJX (see pp. 12–19 for coverage of the 2025 Tucson Gem Showcase). I usually pick up a number of specimens, such as quartz with interesting inclusions, rainbow lattice sunstone, Tanzanian sunstone and anything else which catches my eye. Of the photomicrographs I have taken, my favourites are of a scene containing undissolved rutile silk in a colour-change sapphire from Sri Lanka, and an image of a Ramaura synthetic ruby that, when placed under crossed-polarising filters, creates a beautiful rainbow of interference colours. I have placed second in the Gem-A Photographer of the Year competition on two occasions.

As I near my ten-year anniversary as an IRV I am pleased to have become a tutor, teaching the FoAT course to student valuers. I find this to be very rewarding; it is always an honour to see



Sammantha Maclachlan won both runner-up positions in Gem-A's 2023 Photographer of the Year competition. Top: Spessartine crystals with two-phase inclusions in aquamarine from Pakistan; field of view 1.0 mm. Bottom: Pyrite cube in Canadian amethyst; field of view 2.0 mm.

my students graduate, many of them with distinction. In 2024 I was thrilled to be elected Vice Chair of NAJ's Institute of Registered Valuers, working alongside my inspirational friend and colleague, Heather Callaway. As part of my responsibilities, I am pleased to serve as the content lead for our Valuer's conference, which will take place at the Edgbaston Park Hotel on 7–8 June 2025.

In conclusion, my journey as a registered valuer has been marked

by a relentless pursuit of knowledge, a passion for gemmology and a commitment to integrity. As I look to the future, I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead and the opportunity to contribute to the evolving world of jewellery valuations.

Together with my colleagues and the next generation of valuers, we will continue to shape the future of valuations, ensuring that the industry's legacy of precision, trust and excellence endures for years to come. ■

The Evolution of the CLUSTER RING

As this style of ring undergoes a renaissance, Nicole Ahline FGA considers its rich design history and cultural significance.

The reason behind a certain style or era of design may vary from the impact of cultural and social norms, the rise of an empire of civilisation and even the evolution of technology. As far back as antiquity, clothing was used as a social status symbol. In the twenty-first century, the fashion and jewellery industries allow consumers to follow updated trends and assemble a look that expresses their own personalities.

Jewellery designs – and their ability to incorporate different gemstones – have alternated from one time period to the next, from simple to complex in execution. Their ever-changing

styles and use of various metals and colour, have been greatly studied by historians and modern artists to get a better understanding of certain eras and their influences.

Rings that are adorned with a multitude of stones have been around for centuries, and have acted as symbolic pieces of jewellery for many generations across the world. One ring design that has continued to evolve and shape throughout the past few centuries is the cluster ring. At its most basic, the definition of a cluster ring is a single larger stone in the centre surrounded by small stones. There have been variations of this definition or design, such as the halo ring (one large centre stone surrounded by melee-sized diamonds) or the daisy ring (with a centre stone surrounded by stones of equal size).

The Georgian era (1714–1837) was a time that saw significant shifts in the social, cultural and political climates. It was the start of the Industrial Revolution; music was being composed by Johann Christian Bach and, later, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The Romantic poets emerged with the use of a florid language and flowers influenced jewellery.

The *giardinetti* ring became popular during this time, as it encompassed the cultural shift that was seen.



The Keto Meadow line of jewellery from Au3 Goldsmiths has grown since this version of the ring, crafted in 18K white gold with pink sapphires (0.37 tcw) and diamonds (0.28 tcw), won The Most Beautiful Ring of the Year competition in Finland in 2017. Photo courtesy of Au3 Goldsmiths.



This pearl, garnet and gold ring, dating from the seventeenth century, is an early example of a cluster ring and might be considered an example of the giardinetti design. Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

Introduced in the seventeenth century, the design became well known by the eighteenth century. The *giardinetti* ring consisted of a centre gemstone that was surrounded by smaller gemstones designed in such a way as to mimic greenery, such as leaf or a flower. Gemstones that were commonly used in these rings were diamonds,



corundum (both ruby and sapphire) and emeralds. As with the language used in poems of the period, these rings were used to show love and affection. It has also been stated that these rings were often used as both engagement rings and mourning rings, as the flower and natural element of the pieces can represent life and death.

During the same time, in Rome, the cultural movement of Neoclassicism was on the rise. Inspired by antiquity,



This Georgian-era ring features eleven old-rose-cut diamonds set in 14K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Levy's Fine Jewelry.

Neoclassicism pushed for an emphasis on simplicity and symmetry, which was showcased in jewellery design. The rings that were seen post-1770 in Europe were symmetrical, with an elongated oval or lozenge bezel-set centre stone. More variety was seen here in coloured gemstones, as there was peridot, aquamarine, amethyst and topaz alongside corundum and emerald. Rose- or brilliant-cut diamonds surrounded the coloured gemstones. Some designs had an additional row of coloured gemstones, known as the cluster bezel.

A century and half later, right before the start of World War I, the art deco style took the world by storm. It emerged in Paris in the 1910s and became synonymous with the Roaring Twenties. It was characterised by the rise of jazz and a more independent woman — with the right to vote in the

This 1920s platinum art deco ring has a ~0.33 ct baguette-cut diamond at its centre, with four smaller baguette-cut diamonds (~0.12 tcw) and seventy-two round diamond accents (~1.00 tcw). Photo courtesy of Levy's Fine Jewelry.



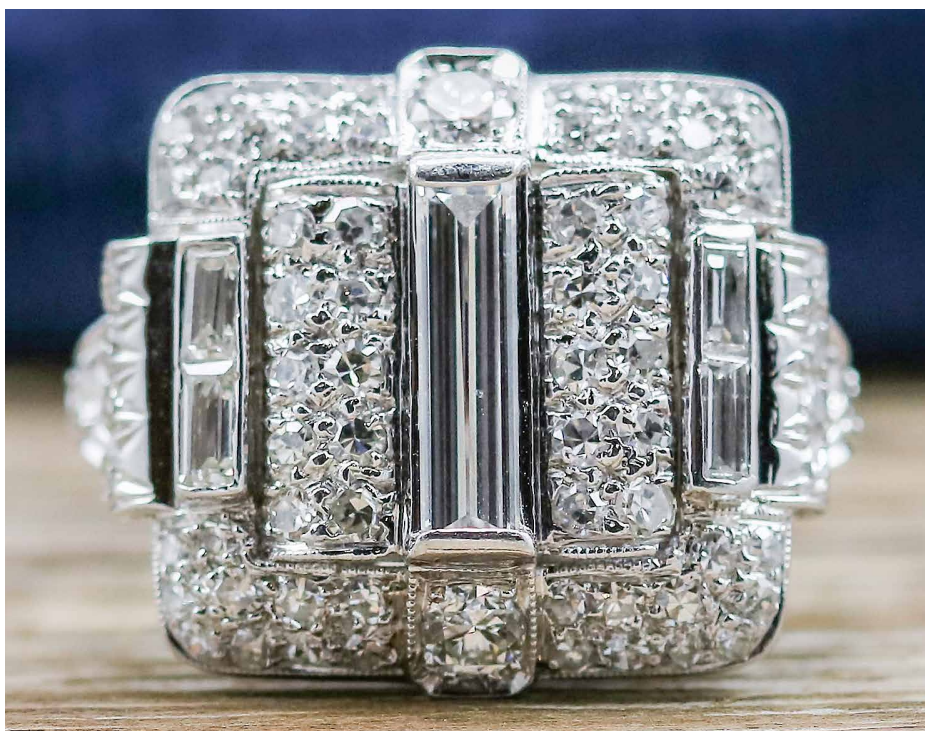
Eight diamonds flank a larger centre diamond in this nineteenth-century gold ring of French or American provenance. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

United Kingdom, United States and other nations, as well as greater presence in the workforce. Nothing was spared from the impact of the rise of this new movement. The Neoclassical love of symmetry and simplicity was no more; art deco relied on angular, sharp shapes and the use of bold metals, made possible by new technology. The centre stone was generally bezel set, and the surrounding smaller stones followed a very straight line or a clean geometric shape, such as a circle. These were commonly set in platinum or white gold. Advancements in stone cutting permitted for complex pieces to be set with geometric shapes like the baguette, half-moon or calibre cuts. The cluster ring designs of this era highlighted sleekness.

The more eye-catching the ring, the better, as it was worn on the woman's right hand rather than the left so that it wasn't mistaken for an engagement ring. These rings were meant to draw attention not to an upcoming wedding, but to the women themselves. Cocktail rings, with their opulence and larger size, did just this. There were a few designs that emerged during this time. There were rings that were set with a very large gemstone with diamond accents. Then there were elaborate designs that were composed of smaller stones that were clustered together to create a large, colourful piece.

Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, the cluster ring — in the updated form known as the cocktail ring — utilised a greater variety of gemstones and even more colour. Opals were used, along with coral, jade and amethyst, and with diamonds replaced by coloured gemstones as the side stones. The cocktail ring is still as noticeable as ever on the (right) hand of a person hailing a bartender for a drink.

Today, if one was to go to a jewellery counter and ask to see cluster rings, or even do an online search, a multitude of styles and shapes would be offered with one common theme — they aren't composed of single stones.



The Keto Meadow jewellery collection, from Finland's Au3 Goldsmiths, has what one might consider a modern cluster ring. Their ring is a single band that is set with a cluster of colourful gemstones ranging in sizes. Julia Weckman, marketing manager at Au3 Goldsmiths, said that "The vibrant gemstones were one key inspiration for goldsmith (and founder) Jussi Louesalmi in designing the jewellery. Keto is the Finnish word for a wildflower field, a cherished part of Finland's traditional landscape. Nature and the blooming flower fields were also strong inspirations behind this jewellery. Living in the northern part of Europe, we are deeply passionate about spring and summer that follows



The Edwardian floral motif is apparent in this filigree-style ring (ca. 1900–1915). The ring comprises thirty-nine old-European- and mine-cut diamonds (~1.00 ctw) set in platinum. Photo courtesy of Levy's Fine Jewelry.

The rings that were seen post-1770 in Europe were symmetrical, with an elongated oval or lozenge bezel-set centre stone.

our long, cold and dark winter. In his earlier works, Jussi has often used asymmetrical shapes, forms and stone placements, making the design of the Keto Meadow jewellery a natural progression of his artistic style." The company's Keto Meadow Pink ring, crafted in 18K white gold with diamonds and pink, blue and violet

sapphires, won The Most Beautiful Ring of the Year competition in Finland in 2017. Since then, the Keto Meadow line has grown into a large and versatile collection of jewellery, with 18K gold, platinum, diamonds and multicoloured sapphires used in their designs.

At the 2025 Tucson gem shows, there was an increase in cluster rings filling the cases of many sellers (for more on this year's Tucson Gem Showcase, please see pp. 12–21). One newer form, stacking rings, or a multitude of rings layered on each other, creates the allusion of a cluster ring. However, stacking rings allow for the wearer to mix and match, creating the 'cluster' for themselves. Columbia Gem House noticed that their Stackers collection of rings garnered a great deal of attention among their clientele.

Natasha Braunwart, the company's brand and corporate social responsibility manager, shared some thoughts as to why they believe this trend has risen in popularity. "In the past five years, there has been a significant

trend toward multiple smaller stacking rings. These rings sometimes feature a central stone. They often include a mix of shapes such as marquise, pear and baguette stones stacked together. While larger stones are still being used in designs with bigger settings, the current trend we see is shifting toward smaller stones in petite settings arranged in clusters." This trend may be driven by the rising cost of gold and the growing popularity of coloured stones, especially smaller, fancy shapes. Lighter settings and smaller stones offer a more affordable and customisable option, which the market seems to be responding to right now.

The cluster ring has numerous and diverse options in designs along with a rich history of inspiring the wearer. It represents the wearer's style while also depicting social and cultural change over the centuries. Its ever-evolving patterns, gemstones and sizes grants the consumer to find the right piece or pieces that captivates them and captures their self-image. ■



Columbia Gem House saw a strong interest in their Stackers collection, their line of stacking rings, during this year's Tucson Gem Showcase. From left: The company's neon-green beryl set in 14K yellow gold; Montana (top) and Australian sapphires mounted in 14K white gold; and Montana sapphires in 14K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Columbia Gem House.

Meditations on Form

JEWELLERY BY MELANIE EDDY

Britni LeCroy recounts the career of Bermudian designer Melanie Eddy, subject of the Bermuda National Gallery's first-ever jewellery exhibition.

Jewellery designer Melanie Eddy's signature quiet luxury speaks in angles and architecture, finding beauty in the austere and intrigue in asymmetry.

The Bermuda native's style has become synonymous with bold geometric forms citing the simplicity of her home island's architecture as an influence, alongside the angular shadows cast by the stark sunlight. Though she currently resides in Northamptonshire and works at a studio in London's Goldsmiths' Centre, her latest exhibition, *Meditations on Form*, acts as a homecoming for Ms Eddy. "Much of my work is rooted in a sense of place," she explained. "My work now is even more aware of my connections to Bermuda because of the time spent away. Often, I think my pieces are meditations on memories of Bermuda." Held at the Bermuda National Gallery in Hamilton, *Meditations on Form* is not only Ms Eddy's first solo show on the island; it is also the museum's first-ever jewellery exhibition.

The taut triangular sails of the Bermuda rig are a visible influence on Ms Eddy's work. "Triangles are important to me symbolically," she noted. The shape, which forms the backbone of every design, also references the Bermuda triangle and, more importantly, the triangle of trade that put Bermuda at the heart of the British Atlantic. Places and spaces are key inspirations for the designer, who lists Tadao Ando, Le Corbusier and Zaha Hadid as influences. "Much of my work is informed by our relationship to architecture, both how we inhabit



Named after Bermuda's palmetto palm tree, Melanie Eddy's Palmetto ring uses a 14.65 ct amethyst, a 0.17 ct sapphire and 0.14 tcw baguette-cut diamonds mounted in 18K rose and white gold.

architectural spaces and how they transform our environments," said Ms Eddy, who describes jewellery as "intimate architecture – the design of structures for the body."

Her time away from Bermuda has been well spent. In 2007, she graduated with an MA in jewellery design from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (where she later taught); it was here that she honed her distinct architectural motif. "I developed a

particular focus on how geometry is explicitly used in the creation of sacred spaces to foster a sense of solace, peace, and spiritual experience."

In 2020, she received recognition from *British Vogue*, where she was profiled as one of five Black British-based designers reshaping the world of fine jewellery. "This precipitated a shift in many senses," Ms Eddy stated. "I was used to my work being profiled, but not myself. It made me recontextualise the space I inhabited within jewellery. I had made ambitious pieces but high jewellery for me seemed beyond reach. It prompted the realisation that not only was my work seen as being part of that aspect of jewellery, but its very existence was challenging assumptions within this area."

The following year, Ms Eddy had several pieces chosen for display in *Brilliant & Black: A Jewellery Renaissance*. The exhibition, held at



The Trinity sterling silver bangle bracelets, in part influenced by Melanie Eddy's late grandmother, were part of Sotheby's first Brilliant and Black exhibition.

Sotheby's New York City in September 2021, showcased the work of twenty-one leading Black fine jewellers. Her collection, including the Trinity bangle bracelets, was so well received that she was asked to return the following year for a second iteration. *Brilliant & Black: The Age of Enlightenment* was hosted at Sotheby's London gallery in September 2022. Here, the designer unveiled a deviation from her signature minimalism: an exploration into the use of stones and softer angles with the exhibition of three bold, gem-set works, including the Loquat earrings. "Whilst the pieces for my first Sotheby's show were a love letter to Bermuda and my life there, these pieces were a shift in acknowledgement of wider thoughts and places which have shaped me,"

“Much of my work is informed by our relationship to architecture, both how we inhabit architectural spaces and how they transform our environments.”

explained Ms Eddy. "It was about being present where I am now, and all the gifts that has brought me." That same year, she was commissioned to create a set of two rings for the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, in honour of the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The rings, made from platinum and sterling silver, are designed to be worn together to highlight the differences between the two white metals. "At first glance, both silver and platinum appear silver in colour," Ms Eddy revealed in a writeup for the Goldsmiths' Company, "but having two white metals that have different tones and reflective properties in the same set allows

subtle discoveries as the rings play off of each other."

Melanie Eddy completed her first artist residency, at Penland School of Craft in North Carolina, in January 2023. The residency gave her the time and space to begin a new body of work on which she had been ruminating. The period proved to be transformative; not only did it allow her to focus solely on jewellery making, but the timing also coincided with the death of her beloved grandmother at the age of 108. The bangles she crafts are inspired by her grandmother, who always wore a stack upon her wrist. The time also marked the twentieth anniversary of her uncle's

death at sea, the result of having been taken by a rogue wave while fishing. Ms Eddy described the resulting *Breakers* collection, which marks a new way of working for the designer, as being birthed out of grief, but also love. "I was thinking a lot about Bermuda," she said of the collection, which is still in development. "I lost my uncle to the ocean, and the day I flew to Penland was the anniversary of the day he went missing at sea. Whilst at Penland my grandmother also took a turn for the worse and so I was thinking a lot about her. My making approach became much more intuitive and guided by form – the outline and profile of the pieces

Melanie Eddy's signature bold, angular designs are visible in her Faceted XL Hoops and bangle bracelet sets, shown here in sterling silver on model Kali Lespere. Photo by Meredith Andrews, courtesy of Bermuda National Gallery.



These faceted stacking rings, commissioned by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in 2022, were created to commemorate the seventieth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. The larger ring, made from sterling silver, is meant to be worn alongside the narrower platinum ring to demonstrate the differences in the two metals. Photo by Richard Valencia, courtesy of The Goldsmith's Company.

– rather than using templates, as I do with other collections.”

Connecting back to the theme of her home island, the designer continued, “This work is about Bermuda. It’s about the swirling currents around the island and how they shape both the island and us. It’s about the rogue wave that took my uncle, the waves I delight in and the reefs in between them. I liked the idea of making something sensual and smooth with softened edges out of such forces. Like rocks, or shards of glass worn smooth by water over time into the rounded pebbles, or sea glass that we find on the beach — still made of the same stuff, but visibly altered, the same but also different somehow.”

Melanie Eddy’s childhood has been a strong influence on her designs.

Growing up, her family worked a limestone quarry in the Warwick parish of Bermuda. “When I was young, our house sat right up against the limestone that the plot was cut out of,” she says. Her grandfather was a carpenter who laid the stone for her late uncle’s home. The shape of these limestone blocks and the tools used to cut them influenced her angular and geometric designs. In her younger years, as she was looking to find her personal style, she researched medieval jewellery and architecture for inspiration. She began studying Gothic architecture, with a focus on the ways cathedrals were built. “When they explained how the blocks would be cut from masons’ templates, I knew immediately what that meant, and that began the journey of finding a system to create my own templates.”

This approach to construction has become a thread in her practice and remains a consistent way of working almost two decades later. “The work that is now recognisable as my work



Above: A pencil, crayon, ink and gouache design drawing on vellum paper that preceded a pair of faceted rings in 18K white gold. This ring set was commissioned by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where it now sits on permanent display. The illustration has also become part of the V&A’s collection. Photo courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

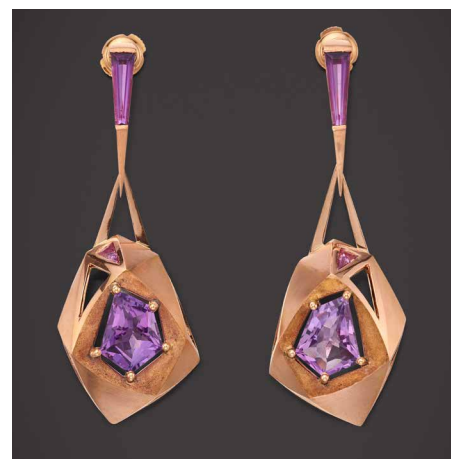
Right: The Bermudiana earrings, from Sotheby’s first Brilliant and Black exhibition in 2021, are reminiscent of the flower of the same name that grows on Melanie Eddy’s home island. Approximately 10.25 tcw amethyst and 0.30 tcw mauve sapphire are mounted in 18K rose gold that has been shaped in a distinct geometric style.



Melanie Eddy’s Loquat earrings — also created for Sotheby’s Brilliant & Black: The Age of Enlightenment exhibition — comprise 11.06 tcw citrine and 0.05 tcw yellow diamonds set in 18K yellow gold.

began with these sculptural pieces devoid of the ornamentation of gemstones, initially in sterling silver and then gold.” Ms Eddy’s practice has since expanded to include the intricate yet bold gem-set pieces that are seen in this most recent show, but form remains the driving force. “I always start with metalwork. Adornment comes in time. I start with the sculptural form.” This practice has served her well, and has won her an audience that will only grow with the attendance of this exhibition. ■

Meditations on Form: Jewellery by Melanie Eddy will be on display through 31 May 2025 at the Bermuda National Gallery in Hamilton. Admission is free, sponsored by The Christian Humann Foundation. The Gallery is open Tuesdays to Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



Photos courtesy of Sotheby’s unless otherwise indicated.

I liked the idea of making something sensual and smooth with softened edges out of such forces.

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Exploring the Possibilities of Pantone's Color of the Year 2025

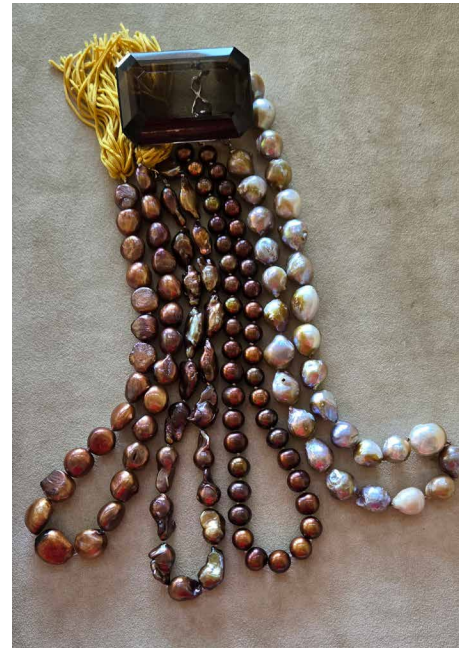
Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta considers all the options for people seeking to buy gemstones in Mocha Mousse.

Colour theory involves understanding the relationship between colours and how they can be used to evoke emotions and have a psychological impact on people. The Pantone Color Institute (PCI) understands this, and considers the role that their choices will play in the aesthetics of the coming year. In selecting Mocha Mousse (17-1230) as the 2025 Pantone Color of the Year, they have chosen a shade of brown that creates a sense of warmth and contentment, yet indulgence. While

For those with an understanding of the psychology of colour – a field associated with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Carl Jung, among others – brown has a number of connotations, including warmth, stability, reliability and practicality; at the same time and in certain settings, it can also conjure opulence. These qualities were considered by PCI when making their 2025; their process aims to “capture the global zeitgeist... a global mood and an attitude, reflecting collective desire in the form of a single, distinct hue.” In turn, their hotly anticipated announcement influences design professionals and colour enthusiasts around the world. By choosing Mocha Mousse, they have tapped into what they see as a desire for both extravagance and comfort. The shade evokes simple pleasures; at the same time, according to PCI, it “empowers you to create moments of luxury that may be intimate in scale, but can extend a sense of indulgence throughout the day.”

Further, PCI chose Mocha Mousse because it represents ‘restrained elegance’ and has ‘a weightless, luminous quality’. These are words that could also be attributed to diamonds which, of course, come in a variety of colours, including brown. One company that celebrates the brown diamond is Le Vian, which is observing the twenty-fifth anniversary of the launch of their Chocolate Diamonds line. Since 2000, the company has sourced mined brown diamonds for this highly successful collection. Le Vian only uses deeper, champagne-brown gemstones, those that fit

A surprising number of gem materials can be found in ranges related to Mocha Mousse (17-1230), Pantone's 2025 Color of the Year. Photo courtesy of the Pantone Color Institute.



Most Chinese freshwater cultured pearls found in the Mocha Mousse colour are dyed, as in the case of the three strands on the left (alongside natural-colour freshwater cultured pearls with golden hues). They are accompanied by a faceted smoky quartz. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.



Le Vian uses their Chocolate Diamonds in both fine jewellery and their couture lines. This ring has a 3.500 ct Chocolate Diamond, as well as 2.000 tcw Vanilla Diamonds, set in 18K Vanilla Gold. Photo courtesy of Le Vian.

this colour might not, at first glance, seem to connect to the gem trade, there are in fact several options in the Mocha Mousse range for the jewellery connoisseur to choose from. In the words of jeweller-designer Helen Serras-Herman FGA, “Mocha Mousse is a warm, sophisticated, earthy brown hue permeated with richness that ties in perfectly with hues of natural copper specimens, and a number of gems and lapidary materials.”

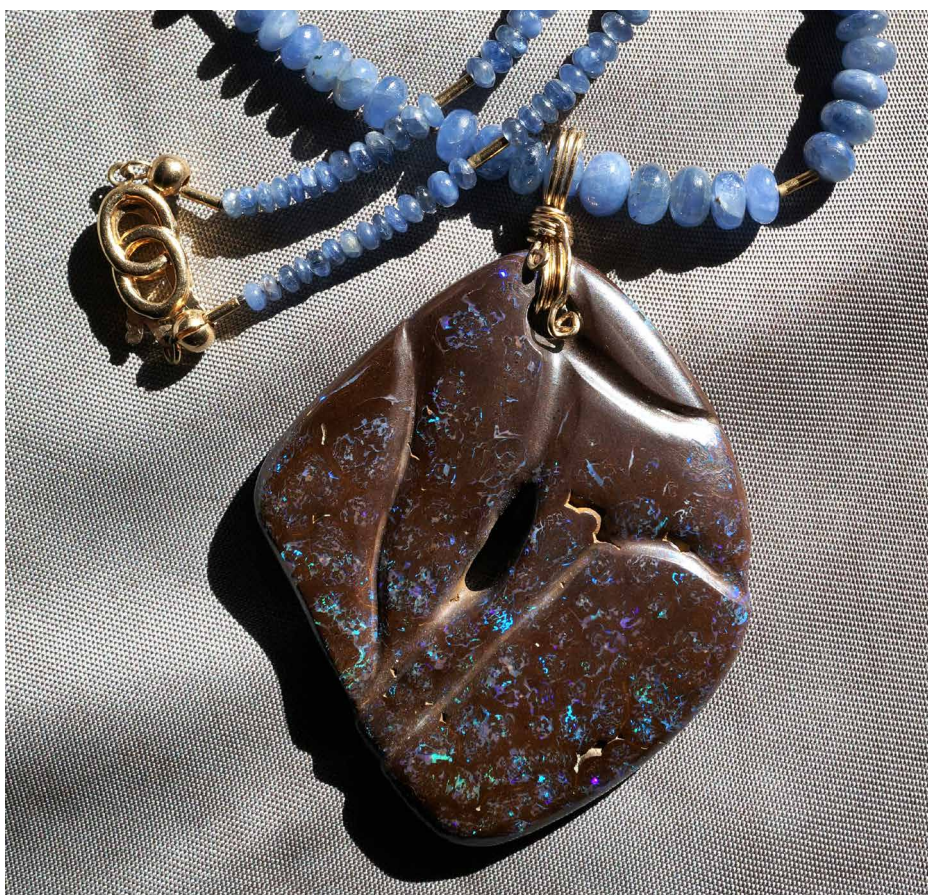
the ‘fancy dark brown’ category on the colour-grading charts of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA). In turn, the palettes created by PCI to represent Mocha Mousse are, according to company CEO Eddie LeVian, “closely aligned with Le Vian Chocolate Diamonds, Chocolate Ombré, Nude Diamonds, Crème Brûlée Diamonds and much more.” The company uses these gemstones to create an everyday diamond line for women who wish to be less ostentatious but still seek a beautiful piece of jewellery; this very nearly fit the rationale for the choice of Mocha Mousse as this year’s colour.



Brown has a number of connotations, including warmth, stability, reliability and practicality; it can also conjure opulence.

Le Vian also uses these trademarked diamonds in their couture designs.

Other gemstones on the market that fall into this year's colour range and were seen at the Tucson gem shows include topaz and smoky quartz; topaz is known to be found in various shades of brown, and may be enhanced to have a more desirable shade of brown. Zircon, some jaspers and chocolate opal are also known to be found in Mocha Mousse-related shades. The latter gem, a form



According to Helen Serras-Herman, this chocolate opal from Gem Arts International is a boulder matrix opal with brightly-colored but very thin fine opal veins from Queensland, Australia. This pendant, carved by Ms Serras-Herman, weighs 121.000 ct, on a detachable strand of blue sapphire beads, with a 14K gold clasp. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

As seen every year, vendors at the 2025 Tucson gem shows leaned into the colour range, showcasing gemstones that showed customers how versatile Mocha Mousse can be. Helen Serras-Herman of Gem Arts International was one such designer. An entire display presenting gem materials in the colour was part of her booth at this year's AGTA Show.

"I wanted to show attendees that the Mocha Mousse includes a wide range of colours," she explained. "I featured scenic jaspers such as the 'peanut' petrified wood from Australia, copper specimens, boulder and matrix opals from Australia and chocolate-coloured pearls. I also showed a rare flint of historic variety from the Greek island of Kefalonia, which my husband and I rockhounded and collected ourselves on the island." Ms Serras-Herman found that attendees were drawn to her eclectic display showing different possibilities for wearing this year's colour.

In choosing Mocha Mousse, the Pantone Color Institute sought to

provide a reminder that "colour is more than just visual: it's sensory, emotional and immersive. It invites us to infuse our lives with a touch of personal luxury." This is the same expression that many people would use for jewellery, making Mocha Mousse a delightful choice for 2025. ■



Cognac diamonds also fit into the Mocha Mousse range. The 18K yellow-gold ring shown here includes one 1.600 ct oval brown diamond that has been fracture filled. It is accented by four baguette and two marquise-shaped white diamonds. Photo courtesy of Levy's Fine Jewelry.

of the common opal, was originally found in Ethiopia, but is also known from other localities. Cultured pearls may also be found in 'chocolate brown'. In this case, pearls are subjected to treatment (bleaching and other modifications); both Tahitian and freshwater cultured material may be treated to attain the Mocha Mousse colour range.



The Le Vian Couture necklace featuring Chocolate Diamonds (15.625 tcw) and Vanilla Diamonds (4.750 tcw) set in 18K Strawberry Gold. Photo courtesy of Le Vian.

JEWELRY'S SHINING STARS

The Next Generation

45 Visionary Women Designers

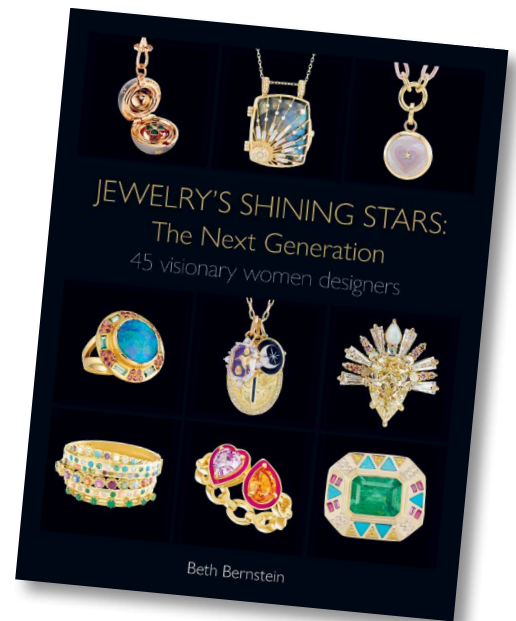
Reviewed by Alison Macleod

Beth Bernstein's *Jewelry's Shining Stars: The Next Generation* is the second in a series of books by the renowned jewellery historian and writer, following the publication of *Jewelry's Shining Stars* in 2013. Her latest offering provides an inspiring and vivid glimpse into the lives and work of forty-five women who are shaping the future of jewellery design. As both a coffee-table book and a valuable resource for enthusiasts and professionals, this latest volume balances stunning visuals with meaningful insights, celebrating a diverse group of designers whose creations go far beyond mere adornment.

In the introduction, Ms Bernstein describes how these designers use jewellery as a medium to empower the wearer, a sentiment woven throughout the book. The seven chapters – The Revivalists, The Trailblazers, The

Mystics, The Pop Artists, The Rebels, The Neoclassicists and The Rock Stars – group designers by their approach and philosophy. In multipage spreads dedicated to each individual or company, the designers are able to showcase their distinctive styles and artistic perspectives alongside vivid photographs of their pieces. From traditional craftsmanship to bold experimentation, the book demonstrates the many ways jewellery can resonate emotionally and culturally.

What makes *Jewelry's Shining Stars: The Next Generation* particularly engaging is its personal approach. Through a thoughtful series of questions posed to each designer, Ms Bernstein invites us to step into their worlds. We learn not only about their collections and processes, but also about their quirks, challenges and inspirations.



By Beth Bernstein, hardcover, 176 pp., illus., publ. by ACC Art Books, Woodbridge, UK, 2024, £50.00.



The Catena Autumn Flower and Leaf Mismatch earrings by UK jewellery designer Nadine Aysoy use 18K yellow gold, rubellite (6.47 tcw); orange (7.83 tcw), yellow (6.52 tcw) and pink sapphires (6.15 tcw); green amethysts (5.86 tcw); and brilliant-cut pave-set diamonds (0.35 tcw).



Whether revealing secrets, reflecting on mistakes or sharing the sentimental stories behind their first jewellery purchase, these women provide glimpses into the heart and soul behind their creations. For many, jewellery has been a lifelong passion. One example is designer Jesse Marlo Lazowski (Marlo Laz), who started her first line, called Shopgirl, at age 13. Others came to the jewellery world later, leaping from careers as an Olympic athlete (Erica Molinari) or nongovernmental-organisation founder (Ana-Katarina Vinkler-Petrovic, Anakatarina). These snapshots illustrate each designer's journey alongside the richness and diversity of experiences that shape their work.

The book is a beautiful object in itself. Large-scale photographs showcase intricate details and a dazzling array of vibrant coloured gemstones, perfectly capturing the



This pendant from Brooke Gregson's *Key to Your Heart* collection incorporates a one-of-a-kind Georgian-style bezel alongside a 6.41 ct opal, with sapphire (0.14 tcw), emerald (0.60 tcw), and diamond (0.15 tcw) pavé detail. The gemstones are set in 18K yellow gold.

growing customer preference for bold, expressive colour in jewellery today. Each piece is beautifully contextualised, with descriptions that often include stone specifications or design inspirations. These stories emphasise how jewellery holds sentimental value, often rooted in family traditions or antique influences. Many designers, such as Kirsty Stone (Retrouvaï) and Lizzie Mandler, cite heirloom or vintage pieces as cornerstones of their inspiration. The book's charm lies in its ability to connect these physical objects to deeply human experiences. Stories of gifting and inheriting highlight jewellery's

The *Claw Rings* from *Dru.* by Thea Miller are crafted from 14K yellow gold. From top to bottom: the *Diamond Claw Ring* (0.90 tcw); the *Solid* style, incorporating no gemstones; and the *Black Diamond* version (1.16 tcw).



Whether revealing secrets, reflecting on mistakes or sharing the sentimental stories behind their first jewellery purchase, these women provide glimpses into the heart and soul behind their creations.

emotional significance. Ms Bernstein's candid questions, like "What's the first piece of jewellery you ever bought for yourself?" or "What mistake did you make early on?" peel back the layers of branding to reveal the humanity behind these luminaries.

While *Jewelry's Shining Stars: The Next Generation* primarily focusses on American designers, it's heartening to see international representation, including UK-based talent like Vanessa Chilton, Zoe Benyon and Kate Pelham Burn (the trio behind fine jeweller Robinson Pelham); Nadine Aysoy; and Brooke Gregson. Their inclusion adds a familiar and welcoming touch for British readers.

Ms Bernstein's book resonates deeply, especially for those involved in jewellery design. As a designer myself, reading about the personal journeys, innovative processes and emotional connections of these women has



This 14K gold locket with diamonds (~0.32 tcw) by Celine Daoust allows the made-to-fit lapis lazuli to be removed; there is also an opening at the back of the piece that allows the lapis to touch the wearer's skin.

encouraged me to reflect on my own practice. *Jewelry's Shining Stars: The Next Generation* not only showcases exquisite craftsmanship but also celebrates the stories and sentiments that make jewellery meaningful. Whether are a designer seeking inspiration, a collector with an appreciation for artistry or simply a lover of beautiful things, this book is a compelling addition to any library. It is both a visual treat and a heartfelt reminder of the power jewellery holds in connecting us to our past, our loved ones and ourselves. ■

All photos courtesy of ACC Art Books.

Unexpected Encounters: From Sourcing Moonstone to Designing Moonglade

For Niveet Nagpal, the creative force behind Omi Privé's designs, a single encounter with moonstone led to a revelation that challenged the conventions of his brand.

Omi Privé is a multi-generational gemstone wholesaler. While our family got our start in the industry during the nineteenth century via the Burmese ruby trade, Omi Privé has since become synonymous with sourcing a variety of fine coloured stones from around the world; we expanded into fine jewellery in 2012. This latter move found us making our mark by designing with alexandrite.



These earrings comprise 7.05 carats of rainbow moonstone, as well as 0.63 tcw alexandrite and 0.16 tcw diamond.

I never thought I would work with moonstone. It is a stone I had always associated with everyday pieces rather than high jewellery. But one day, I was shown a parcel of moonstones, and among them was one that beamed with a stunning blue sheen. The second I caught sight of its glow, I knew that I wanted to design a piece of jewellery around it.

That first moonstone became the centre of an award-winning piece. Paired with sapphires, black rhodium and diamonds, creating something unlike anything I had designed previously. From that pivotal moment, moonstones became a signature gemstone within the collection. I began seeking out the rarest examples that exhibit ethereal adularescence.

Sourcing the right moonstones for fine jewellery is no small feat. Moonstones are incredibly diverse. While the most well-known variety exhibits a blue sheen, top examples will have a nearly transparent bodycolour with no visible inclusions. Our company also sources exquisite rainbow moonstones, which shimmer with multi-coloured flashes. Most moonstones I see are too opaque or lack that internal glow. I have to go through hundreds just to find the few that are worthy of being in our collections. But when I find just the right one, one that interacts with light in a way that feels as if it was sourced in the perfect time and place, that's when it becomes a part of a signature Omi Privé design.

One of the most exciting rings I have designed features a faceted moonstone in an open setting, which influences how the moonstone interacts with light. The most popular cut for a moonstone is a high domed cabochon, which allows the adularescence to billow and float across the gemstone from multiple angles. However, faceting introduces a new level of dynamism, creating a prismatic effect that captures light in unexpected ways. This decision to depart from the cabochon cut was made so that a faceted cut can emphasise the gemstone's overall refraction of light in multiple directions.

The centrepiece of this platinum ring is a 7.28-carat moonstone — the first ever acquired by Niveet Nagpal — framed with 0.32 carats of round blue sapphires, which are accented with black rhodium and flanked by two pear-shaped diamonds (0.21 tcw).



The faceting of this 15.13-carat gem is a departure from the usual cabochon fashioning of moonstones.

The Moonglade Ring (seen on the cover of this issue) is one of the most intriguing moonstone designs in Omi Privé's collection. The 10.33-carat moonstone, which has been faceted and mounted in an open setting, is from Madagascar. The gemstone displays a unique mix of orange and green-blue flashes, which shift depending on the angle of view. To enhance its glow, the design incorporates Paraíba tourmaline in the halo and unheated orange sapphires from Malawi. The combination of these colours reminded me of watching a sunset over turquoise waters.

Sourcing and seeking out rare and incomparable examples of coloured stones is the passion that drives me, as well as the vision for Omi Privé. Our team is always searching for the next inspiration to elevate and focus the spotlight on unique coloured stones and celebrate their phenomenal properties. The evolution of moonstone in Omi Privé's collection has proven to us that unexpected gemstones can be reimagined for high jewellery. ■

SAVE THE DATE

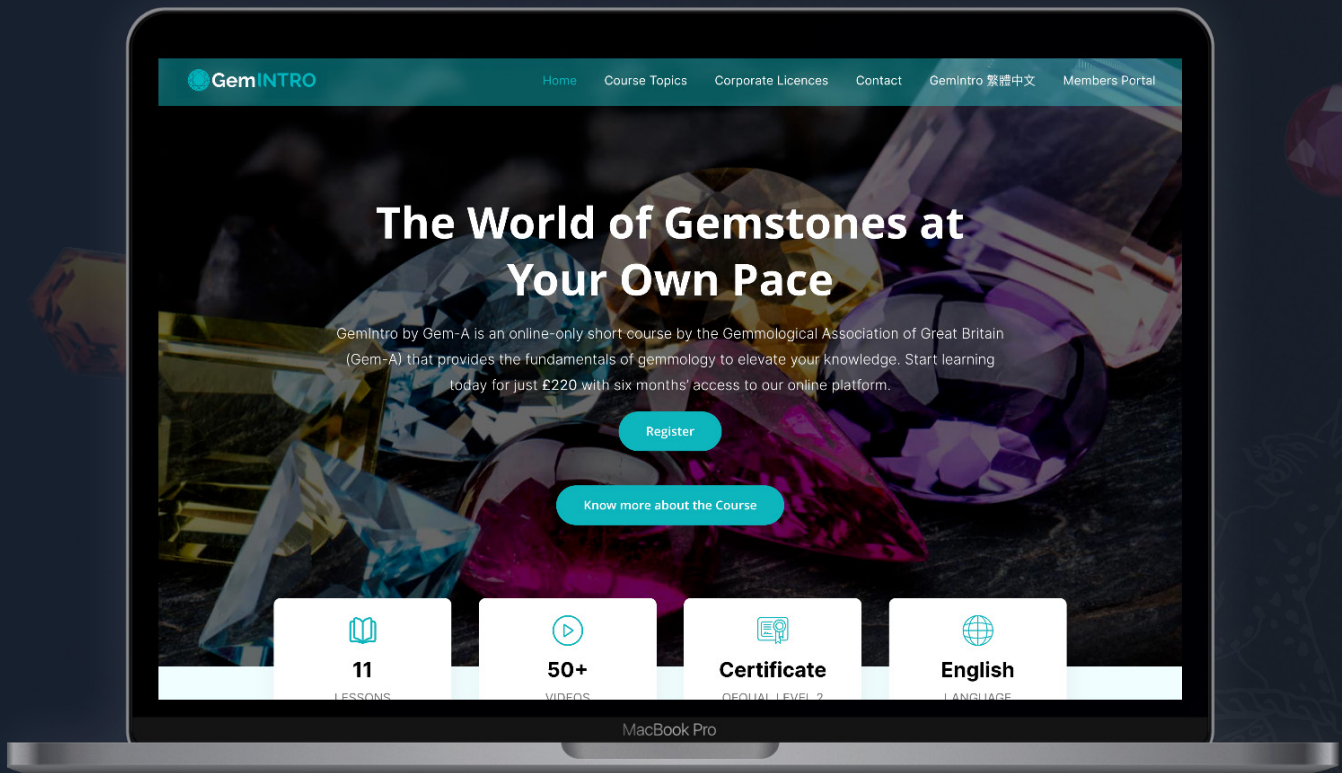
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