Gems & Jewellery

Autumn 2023 / Volume 32 / No. 3



UK-BASED JEWELLERY DESIGNERS

GLOBAL INDUSTRY FORECAST

THE WORLD OF WALLACE CHAN

GEM AND JEWELLERY PODCASTS

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Gems&Jewellery
AUTUMN 2023

INDEPENDENT UK JEWELLERY DESIGNERS

Ten UK-based artists speak about their experiences as contemporary jewellery designers.



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INDUSTRY REPORT FOR SECOND HALF OF 2023

Industry analyst Russell Shor discusses the factors that have led to a downturn for many in the trade, and a surprising upturn for some other players.

AN INTERVIEW WITH WALLACE CHAN

Mr Chan reflects on his fifty-year career following Christie's London hosting the largest exhibition of the world-renowned jewellery artist and innovator's work to date.



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COVER PICTURE

Our cover image shows pieces from Scottish jewellery designer Alison Macleod's Happenstance collection, using tourmalines, emeralds, diamonds and sapphires and 18K single-mine-origin gold in their composition. Photo by Laura Sparrow, courtesy of Alison Macleod Jewellery.

Published by
Gem-A (The Gemmological Association of Great Britain)
21 Ely Place, London EC1N 6TD
t: +44 (0)20 7404 3334
f: +44 (0)20 7404 8843
e: editor@gem-a.com
w: www.gem-a.com

Registered charity no. 1109555

Copyright 2023 ISSN 1746-8043

Gem-A is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England, number 01945780

Editor-in-Chief: Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta
Contributing Editor: Olga González
Design and Production
Zest Design +44 (0)7768 233653

Editorial and Advertising
For editorial enquiries, media pack and advertising rates please contact editor@gem-a.com.

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Gems&Jewellery

Autumn 2023 Edition Featured Contributors



1. SMITHA SADANANDAN

Smitha Sadanandan is a freelance journalist specialising in the luxury industry. She tracks international trends in the jewellery and watches sector and provides an insightful perspective as an analyst. Ms Sadanandan also consults with brands on media-strategy projects. She has contributed to the *Financial Times*, *South China Morning Post*, *Prestige* (HK), *Vogue* (India), *Solitaire* (Asia Pacific), *Natural Diamond Council*, *The Adventurine*, *Solitaire International* (GJEPC) and *Marie Claire* (Arabia). She is the editor-at-large of the South Africa-based *JZA* Magazine.

2. RUSSELL SHOR

Russell Shor is the owner of Russell Shor Communications and Consulting, based in San Diego, California. He has more than 40 years of experience in the diamond industry, including 19 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.

3. BETH WEST

Beth West is a gemmologist, writer and educator specialising in diamonds, with over ten years' experience in the industry in varying roles. She is an FGA and a DGA (Bruton Medal winner) and a member of the Federation of European Education in Gemmology. Ms West has worked for a number of auction houses and museums; she has also taught diploma-level gemmology at Gem-A's headquarters in London. She currently works as an ODL tutor for the Association, whilst taking on additional writing and consultancy work, principally for the De Beers Group.

Special thanks to Trish Barrameda, Christopher Dobranski and Susan Wheeler.

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Straight from the heart

Opinion and comment from CEO Alan Hart FGA DGA



I hope that the beginning of autumn has found everyone enjoying the change of seasons and preparing for the final months of the year. Since the Summer issue, the results of the June examination have been released, and we want to send our congratulations to everyone who passed. We also admitted a new group of Students for the Fall intake, onsite and via ODL, and we are thrilled to welcomed them to Gem-A.

As ever, we at London HQ are working on many projects, and are excited to unveil those to all of you in the coming months. First, our Annual General Meeting will be held at Gem-A's Ely Place Headquarters on 18 October at 17:00.

The annual Conference and Gala Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, 5 November. We are very enthusiastic about the programme and are sure our attendees will find the day both educational and enjoyable. The Graduation and Presentation of Awards will be held on Monday, 6 November at Goldsmiths' Hall, and we are looking forward to celebrating the accomplishments of our graduates.

We also want to let you know that we will be launching a new and exciting website by the end of 2023. This site will include the launch of our new Membership hub and portal, where Members can update their information, communicate and network globally via the online platform and engage in forum discussions. They can also post and search for jobs, share ideas and expertise, access resources and publications and renew their Memberships. This last capability is especially timely, as the Membership renewal period will begin very soon.

Our Photographer of the Year competition is currently open and accepting entries from the public, with the first-prize winner receiving a one-year Gem-A Membership, along with a voucher to Gem-A Instruments. Two runners-up will receive £50 vouchers to Gem-A Instruments. The deadline to submit photographs is Tuesday, 31 October. Details of the Photographer of the Year contest are found on pp. 40–41 of this issue.



Wallace Chan's Soaring Clouds Ring has, at its centre, a 4.81 ct rectangular emerald. It also uses diamonds (including yellow diamonds), titanium and The Wallace Chan Porcelain in its composition. Photo courtesy of the artist.

All that's left to do is introduce the rest of this issue. In our lead article, independent jewellery designers from around the United Kingdom, from rural Scotland to the Bailiwick of Jersey, spoke about their creative process and inspiration. They generously gave us an inside view of what it is like to be a jewellery artist in 2023. Longtime industry expert Russell Shor explained the outlook for the rest of the year and beyond. He discussed current demand and the challenges that the trade will face heading into 2024.

In early September, world-renowned gem artist Wallace Chan held a six-day show at Christie's London headquarters. He was generous enough to not only share photos of some of the 150 pieces that were on display during the *Wheel of Time* exhibition, but to answer some of Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta's questions about his process and philosophy. And Smitha Sadanandan interviewed the hosts of six jewellery podcasts. She provided thorough insight into the decision making that goes into creating these successful trade-related programmes.

This issue is chock full of fascinating content, with something to appeal to every reader. Happy reading!

Best Wishes,



Alan Hart FGA DGA

Independent jewellery designers from rural Scotland to the Bailiwick of Jersey spoke to us about their creative process and inspiration.

Gem-A News

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

GEM-A WARNS MEMBERS AND PUBLIC AS FALSE CREDENTIALS, LOGOS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE

The Association is issuing a warning to its Members, the gem trade and the general public about an ongoing issue with fraudulent jewellery parcels, bearing fake Gem-A credentials and logos, that are being distributed.

Many of the affected individuals who have contacted Gem-A report receiving a 'diamond solitaire ring in platinum' in a grey or pink ring box. This is placed inside a tell-tale pink gift bag with the word 'Princess' in gold lettering. There are no identifying postage labels, receipts, confirmation letters or information documents inside the parcel; this leads individuals to contact Gem-A for guidance.

The parcel includes a fake laminated 'Identification Certificate' bearing information about the ring. It is labelled with 'Fellowship of Gemological Association of Great Britain' – note the correct spelling is 'Gemmological' – and is also marked with the logos of the International Gemological Institute (IGI), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), Platinum Guild International and the Gemological Institute of America (GIA).

Individuals receiving these parcels are from geographically diverse areas, including the United Kingdom and northern Europe.

Gem-A was initially alerted to the issue in March 2023, when a handful of isolated incidents were reported via social media and email. In recent weeks, however, the practice appears to have resurfaced, with multiple affected parties contacting Gem-A HQ about jewellery items they hadn't ordered that are branded with a Gem-A logo.

Gem-A CEO Alan Hart FGA stated that "Organisations in the jewellery and gemstone sectors are no strangers to fraudulent practices, but this strange pattern of behaviour whereby unsuspecting members of the public receive items of jewellery with fake 'identification certificates' is baffling and worrying. As an educator and membership organisation, we don't produce jewellery, nor do we provide any kind of grading or stone identification services. Although our Members and those in the trade are undoubtedly aware of this, the public is less informed. We are monitoring the situation closely."



An example of the false identification certificate alongside the 'diamond and platinum ring' that accompanies the document. Photo courtesy of Gem-A.

Anyone who receives such a parcel is advised to report it to Gem-A. If you are then approached for any reason by an individual or company claiming to be the sender, whether they say they are from Gem-A or not, please do not be lured in.

Alan Hart added, "We have received no reports of follow-up requests from the sender(s) attempting to extort money or data from any of the recipients of these fraudulent parcels. However, we are asking everyone to be on high alert. We urge you not to share your personal or business details in this scenario and encourage you to seek advice before taking any next steps."

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD FINDS 2.95 CT DIAMOND AT CRATER OF DIAMONDS PARK

A seven-year-old girl visiting Crater of Diamonds Park in Murfreesboro, Arkansas (see Summer 2023 *G&J*, pp. 12–13) for her birthday finished the day with a 2.95 ct golden-brown diamond, the second-largest diamond found at the park this year.

Aspen Brown picked up the gemstone, which was about the size of a green pea, and brought it to the Diamond Discovery Center to have it identified. "Aspen's diamond has a golden-brown colour and a sparkling lustre," said Waymon Cox, assistant park superintendent. "It is a complete crystal, with no broken facets and a small crevice on one side, created when the diamond was formed. It's certainly one of the most beautiful diamonds I've seen in recent years." Told that many people who unearth diamonds at the park name their finds, Aspen's father, Luther Brown, noted that the Aspen Diamond is the perfect name for the gemstone.

In 2023 alone, 563 diamonds totalling more than 89 carats have been registered at Crater of Diamonds State Park, but only one, a 3.29 ct brown specimen found in March, was larger than Aspen's.

Crater of Diamonds State Park is one of the few places in the world where the general public can search for real diamonds in their original volcanic source. For more information, visit *https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/crater-diamonds-state-park*.

While celebrating her birthday at Arkansas' Crater of Diamonds State Park, seven-year-old Aspen Brown found this 2.95 ct golden-brown diamond. Photo courtesy of Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism.



CIBJO TO REVIEW GEM MATERIALS, PEARL SUSTAINABILITY REPORTS AT CONGRESS



A document advising pearl producers on science-based actions to meet European sustainability standards is one of several Special Reports released prior to CIBJO's Congress in Jaipur, India, in October 2023. Photo by Andrey Cherkasov/Shutterstock.

With their Congress in Jaipur, India, scheduled for 3–5 October 2023, the World Jewellery Confederation (CIBJO) is preparing to review content related to recently released Special Reports. Among the topics are the gem materials list and the pearl sustainability section for the organisation's Pearl Guide.

CIBJO's Gemmological Commission has compiled the first draft of a gem materials list, which includes variety names accompanied by detailed descriptions, to be presented at the Congress. This report, issued on 6 September, presented a number of challenges. "Although the names of mineral species are defined by the Commission on New Minerals, Nomenclature and Classification (CNMNC) of the International Mineralogical Association (IMA), the organisation has never addressed the names of mineral varieties," Dr Hanco Zwaan, head of the Gemmological Commission, explained in the report. "Consequently, in the gemstone trade, the validity of certain variety names, and also the differences between variety names and trade names has become unclear... Examples include the lines that separate ruby from pink sapphire, and the differences between padparadscha and pink or orange sapphire, or fancy sapphire, in relation to colour stability."

The document that will be presented in Jaipur will list gemstones by name in alphabetical order along with a short description, and a clarification whether it is an accepted mineral name, a gemstone variety name or a commercial name. This list was compiled by the CIBJO Committee on Varietal Names, an ad hoc body established at the CIBJO Congress in 2021. The gem materials list may undergo further revision. "During our work thus far, it became clear that it is often difficult to reach consensus. Depending on the specific distinction criteria that will be discussed [at the congress], other experts will be asked for their input as well, to find the best solutions possible," Dr Zwaan noted.

CIBJO's Pearl Commission, led by Kenneth Scarratt, released their report on 13 September. The recent adoption of European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) for large and listed organisations doing business in and with Europe requires that pearl producers report on their impact on the environment and and on people. They must also provide science-based evidence of compliance with accepted environmental standards, rather than rely on voluntary corporate social responsibility programmes. To assist with this transition, the Pearl Commission has assembled a special committee to compile "Social, Environmental and Economic Impact of Natural and Cultured Pearls," a sustainability section that is intended for inclusion in the CIBJO Pearl Guide. Created with the input of representatives of the pearl sector in Bahrain, Japan and Australia, and from GIA, the Swiss Gemmological Institute (SSEF) and the Bahrain Institute for Pearls and Gemstones (DANAT), the report awaits discussion and approval at the Jaipur Congress.

HALLMARKING DROPPED MORE THAN 12% IN AUGUST

Assay Office Birmingham announced that the total number of items hallmarked by all four locations dropped 12.2% in August as compared to the year before. A total of 778,960 pieces of jewellery were hallmarked in August 2023; this was a decline of 107,786 items from August 2022, when 886,746 pieces were submitted.

Gold hallmarking dropped 11.2% from 364,652 pieces hallmarked down to 323,993 items. However, while 375 gold decreased 17.7% from August 2022, 916 gold saw a 19% increase in hallmarking numbers from the same time last year.

The total number of silver pieces hallmarked also saw a decline from 485,662 to 425,200, a drop of 12.4%. Platinum declined 18.3% from 36,094 down to 29,488, and palladium decreased from 886,746 to 778,960, a total of 12.2%.



This gold ring shows English hallmarks dating from the 1950s. Photo by iStockphoto.com/vandervelden.

THE CANADIAN GEMMOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TO CELEBRATE SIXTY-FIVE YEARS AT CONFERENCE

The Canadian Gemmological Association (CGA) celebrates their sixty-fifth anniversary this year. This milestone will be recognised at their conference, to be held at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. This year's three-day event, from 20-22 October, will include their graduation banquet and will celebrate the CGA's remarkable achievements and positive impact on the gemmological community over the years.

The CGA will host a welcoming reception on Friday, 20 October; the next morning, Donna Hawrelko, current president of CGA, will officially open the conference and welcome all guests. The keynote speaker will be Edward Asscher, chairman of the Royal Asscher Diamond Company in Amsterdam and current vice-chair of the Responsible Jewellery Council. Following Mr Asscher's address, delegates will hear from other respected experts from North America and Europe on diverse topics ranging from diamonds to jade to law enforcement in the industry. The banquet gala dinner on Saturday, 21 October, a highlight of the conference, will see the CGA's newest graduates being recognised and presented with their fellowships.

The Canadian Gemmological Association invites Gem-A Members and Students to join them at the 2023 Gemmology Conference and Graduation Banquet and celebrate their sixty-five years of success in the field of gemmology. There are single-day and three-day ticket options; to register, go to *https://canadiangemmological.com/*.

OBITUARY

Christopher William Sellors (1958–2023)

Gems&Jewellery *is saddened to announce the passing of Christopher William Sellors, founder of the family jewellers C.W. Sellors, on 4 September. Mr Sellors, a longtime Gem-A Member, was a passionate advocate for British gemstones as well as domestic jewellery design and manufacture.*



Christopher began his journey as a hobbyist, designing pieces featuring the Blue John of Derbyshire surroundings in his parents' garage. By the age of 21, he had established his business – C W Sellors Fine Jewellery – and subsequently opened his first boutique in 1985 under the name of Blue John Gallery in Bakewell, Derbyshire. One of his first retailers was Chatsworth House, thanks to the early and influential support of Her Grace The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire. The friendship that developed based on their business relationship led to her presence at the official opening of his purpose-built jewellery workshop and retail boutique in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, in 1989.

Following his success in Derbyshire, and while working to open more Blue John retail outlets, Mr Sellors grew focused on promoting Whitby jet and acquired W Hamond — The Original Whitby Jet Shop. Over time, he opened more boutiques to promote the sale of jet, both under the W Hamond name and under other brands. At the same time, he would come to be known as an ambassador for British gemstones. In addition to showcasing handcrafted Derbyshire Blue John and Whitby Jet to trade customers, for many years he would take his British gemstone jewellery to the Tucson, Arizona gem shows, not just to provide exposure for the materials but to build new business and personal relationships. Mr Sellors arranged a collaboration with Fabergé to use Derbyshire Blue John for a new jewellery and *objet* collection to celebrate his fortieth anniversary in business in 2019. This was followed in 2020 with a Whitby jet Fabergé collection to mark the 160th anniversary of W Hamond.

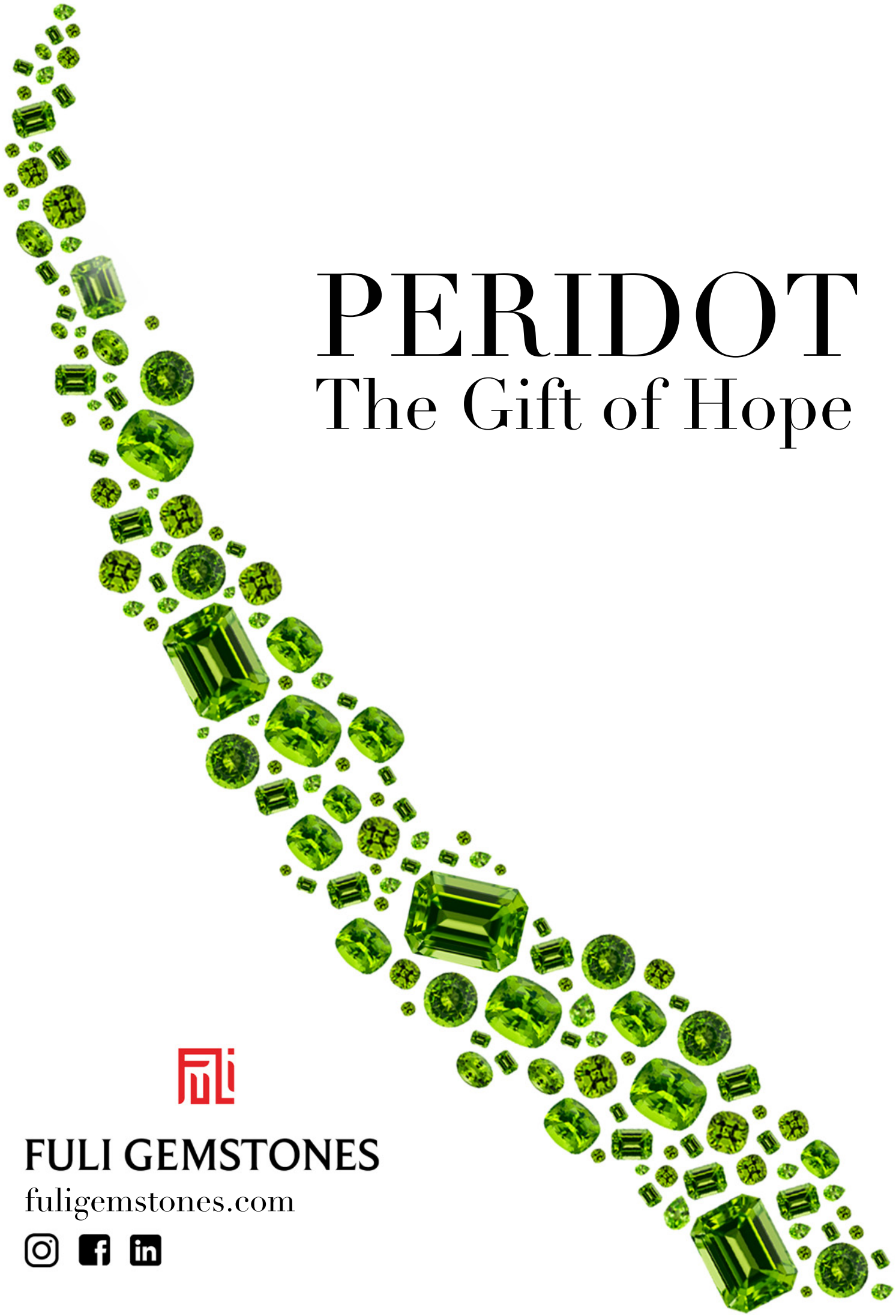
Mr Sellors was also greatly concerned with education about the trade. In 2018, he opened The Museum of Whitby Jet to give people opportunities to learn about the material. In 2007, he began working on a national home for British jewellery manufacturing and design. He witnessed the early development of C W Sellors Carsington, which is due to open in spring 2024 and will be open to both industry members and the general public. Visitors will learn about gemstones and jewellery manufacturing and design, along with jewellery and watch retail.

Mr Sellors spent additional time in service to the industry via his involvement with the National Association of Jewellers, to which he was appointed vice chair in June 2018, and as a council member of the British Hallmarking Council since March 2020.

G&J sends our deepest condolences to Mr Sellors' family and friends.

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Lessons from Spartacus, The Gem Carving

When gem carver Christopher Dobranski decided to honour his cat, Spartacus, with a gem carving after her death, he didn't realise that he would learn lessons about patience, technique and respecting his own creative process.



While growing up in Edmonton, Canada, I developed an interest in wood carving, which eventually led me to stone carving. In 2011, I was invited to participate in the first World Jade Symposium with gem carvers from around the world. I had never carved hard stone before, but I won first place for my piece, Dreamspeaker. Encouraged, I decided to move to Idar-Oberstein, Germany, to train under master gem carver Alfred Zimmermann.

In 2015, I moved to the village of Niederwoerresbach, just outside of Idar-Oberstein, with my best friend: my cat, Spartacus. Unfortunately, Spartacus contracted feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), and she died on 16 March 2018. Her death hit me very hard, and Alfred was also deeply upset by her passing. I decided that I would honour her by carving her with the skills I'd learned.

The process began by selecting the stones that most closely resembled her colouring. As a Himalayan Persian, Spartacus was a grey-white cat, and thus quartz was my best option. She had wonderful blue eyes, and we tried many stones that simply could not match the colour. Finally, I purchased two indicolite tourmalines that, with palladium, achieved the touch of life and the sparkle that was always present in Spartacus's eyes. Precise plotting for the quartz took some time, and the actual carving went on for months, until the holiday season of 2018.

After a Christmas fair, my teacher Alfred had a major stroke and lost the ability to carve. I finished Spartacus and took the piece to show him in hospital, where he told me that this was the greatest cat carving he had ever seen. Later that night, I realised I had carved Spartacus looking over her shoulder at me, as if to tell me it was alright to go on and she would always be with me.

The Spartacus carving was the result of over 600 hours of work, during which I defined my technique of contrasting high polish with matt details. The method I used for her eyes also became a signature of my work. I believe the eyes are just as important as the correct proportions to any animal carving. The eyes bring vitality to my pieces, transforming them from cold stone to a piece that is as close to living as possible.

Working on the Spartacus carving showed me how to hone my technique, allowing me the space and time to create and producing the highest-quality work regardless of the amount of time needed. There is nothing fast about my process, but every carving since Spartacus has improved in terms of technique and difficulty. I have continued to carve animals. I love how the final carving of an animal, so warm and expressive with character, brings smiles to people's faces. I realise that I not only crafted the carving, but I played a role in the person's joy. I want to believe that everyone has that experience when they encounter my work. When I look at Spartacus and my other carvings I still think 'Wow... I carved that'.

In her carved form, Spartacus has travelled the world to be admired by others. She is currently on display at the Deutsches Edelsteinemuseum in Idar-Oberstein. She was loved by many people in life, and now she is widely loved again. This carving is one of my most profound works, professionally and emotionally, as she was the doorway to what I am known for today. ■



This gem carving, called Spartacus, was cut by Christopher Dobranski in honour of his beloved cat of the same name. The body of the 2475 g carving (10.00 x 10.12 X 19.00 cm) uses a single crystal of quartz from Minas Gerais, Brazil; the eyes are made from 2 g of indicolite tourmaline with palladium from Afghanistan. Photos by Daniel Hofmann.



Ten artists from different parts of the United Kingdom spoke to Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta about what it is like to be a contemporary jewellery designer.

The country currently known as the United Kingdom has a long history of jewellery, with the Mesolithic-era Star Carr pendant found in Yorkshire and jet necklace beads known from the Bronze Age. Over the millennia, multiple trends have had their starts in the British Isles, such as mourning jewellery and the Arts and Crafts jewellery movement. It is no surprise that today, so many jewellery-related artisans call the UK home.

Ten independent designers took the time to share their thoughts about what it means to have a jewellery practice in the UK (or, in one case, in a Crown Dependency) in the twenty-first century. We enjoyed learning about different aspects of their creative approach and how they promote themselves; they also shared with us the different challenges they face and the ethical practices they have embraced. Becoming more familiar with these talented artists, and their work, was a pleasure; we look forward to seeing what they accomplish in the future.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DESIGNING JEWELLERY? IN WHAT MEDIUM DO YOU WORK?

Alison Macleod (Alison Macleod Jewellery, Dumfriesshire, Scotland)
I work with 9K and 18K single-mine-origin (SMO) gold with diamonds and coloured gemstones: tourmalines, diamonds, emeralds, rubies and aquamarines.
I've been in the trade for twenty years, and it's been an incredible journey.
I graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in 2003. Initially, I started creating mixed-media jewellery, but around 12 years ago, I began working extensively with gold. This marked a significant turning point for my brand and brought about wider recognition for my work. Over the past two decades, I've honed my artistic skills and learned the intricacies of the business side of things.

Claire Skelton (Belfast)
I focus on transforming heirloom gold into contemporary pieces. I work with clients to create bespoke jewellery pieces; often this means transforming sentimental items, such as their mother's gold-and-diamond engagement and wedding rings, into a new contemporary statement ring. Favourite recent pieces featured sapphires, diamonds and gold of various colours and fineness.
I studied Contemporary Applied Art: Silversmithing and Jewellery, graduating from the University of Ulster (with a year spent in Finland) in 2016, and launched my business in 2018. Any training since has been through short courses or through a mentor.

Esme Rogers Evans (Duxford Studios, South Wales)
I have worked at my craft for five years, primarily using an ancient process called lost-wax casting, in which a metal object is cast from a mould made from an original wax model. I use ethically recycled sterling silver, gold vermeil, Fairtrade gold and recycled and ethically sourced gemstones. I was awarded a first-class degree in Fine Art Sculpture from the Bath School of Art and Design. I then went travelling and did a short course in jewellery making in New Zealand. I continued to teach myself wax carving and jewellery-making skills while living in Vietnam. After that, I moved back to the UK to start Duxford Studios.

Fei Liu (Fei Liu Fine Jewellery, Birmingham)
I received training as a silversmith from the School of Jewellery in Birmingham and have been in the trade since 2004. I love all coloured stones, as they mirror the vibrant spectrum of the rainbow. Platinum, in particular, holds a special place in my heart, for it possesses the magical ability to produce the best jewellery pieces. Moreover, I love to incorporate wood and rock into my designs, as they lend their distinct characters, making the creations even more interesting.



Fei Liu's Ruby ring features a 10.00 ct unheated gemstone from Mozambique, with 5.00 tcw hand-cut white diamonds set in 18K white gold. Photo courtesy of Fei Liu Fine Jewellery.



Rhiannon Lewis of Birmingham created a gemstone necklace in which the first letter of each gemstone spells out the word DEAREST (Diamond, Emerald, Aquamarine, Ruby, Emerald, Sapphire and Tourmaline). The gems are delicately claw-set in a 9K yellow-gold minimal curved pendant. Each natural gemstone stone measures 2mm in width. Photo courtesy of Rhiannon Lewis Jewellery.

Jenny Gordon (Jenny Gordon Goldsmith, County Down, Northern Ireland)
I studied Foundation of Art and Design at the University of Ulster. I then obtained my BA (Hons) in Silversmithing, Goldsmithing, Jewellery Design and Manufacture from Kent Institute of Art and Design. I graduated and entered the trade in 2002, working with precious metals, stones and vitreous enamel.

Jordane Symington (Isleware, Isle of Skye, Scotland)
I graduated from the Glasgow School of Art's Jewellery and Silversmithing programme in 2014, and I established Islewear, a silver-and-gold retail line, in 2017. I work mainly on bespoke projects for fine jewellery, on weddings, engagements and remodelling of heirlooms. I use silver, gold and platinum in my work; most of the time, the gemstones I work with are sapphires and diamonds. I also use lots of pearls within my designs.

Lucy Crowther (Minka Jewels, London and Wiltshire, England)
I create fine jewellery using precious metals set with top-quality gemstones; we use mostly sapphires, tourmalines and diamonds, but we are open to using other gemstones. I work between London and Wiltshire, often designing in the countryside and having the pieces made in London. My first job in jewellery was with a designer called Kiki McDonough, then I spent six months in Buenos Aires training with a silversmith. I then worked in Jaipur, India, for Munnu Kasliwal of the Gem Palace for nearly two years. When I returned to England I attended Gem-A and then I worked for G.F. Williams in Hatton Garden. It happened pretty organically that I started to design, and there was a goldsmith in the building; after a few years I was brave enough to go it alone. I have never looked back.

Rhiannon Lewis (Rhiannon Lewis Jewellery, Birmingham)
I work with silver, 9K and 18K gold and platinum at my studio workshop. I've been in the industry for eleven years; I started with a degree in Jewellery, Silversmithing and Related Arts at London Metropolitan University and shortly after was accepted into a business incubation scheme in Birmingham Jewellery Quarter. After setting up my business I earned a Gem-A Gemmology Diploma at Birmingham City University.



Victoria Liddell created this tube-set birthstone ring in sterling silver. using one 3-mm peridot, one 4-mm aquamarine and one 3-mm Swiss topaz. Photo courtesy of Victoria Liddell Jewellery.

Sarah Heulwen Lewis (Heulwen Lewis Bespoke, Harpenden, England)
I create bespoke fine jewellery through sketching, gemstone/diamond sourcing and computer-aided design (CAD). I work alongside a workshop that performs 3D printing, finishing and setting. I predominantly use silver, gold, platinum, diamonds and other gemstones in my work. I have been in the gem and jewellery trade for eighteen years; I trained for an MA in Applied Art: Jewellery at North Wales School of Art, which was then followed by an MA: Fashion Artefacts at London College of Fashion.

Victoria Liddell (Victoria Liddell Jewellery, Bailiwick of Jersey)
I have been making jewellery for thirteen years now. I work from my garden studio at home on the beautiful Island of Jersey. I create pieces using recycled sterling silver, gold and rose gold. I work with all gemstones, especially birthstones.

WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOUR JEWELLERY IDENTIFIABLE WITH YOUR REGION OF THE UK?

AM: The incorporation of texture and colour sets my jewellery apart and makes it identifiable to Scotland. Rural Scotland, with its rich and diverse landscapes, provides a constant source of inspiration. This region holds a special place in my heart, not only due to its historical significance but also because of my personal connection to it. The land and its people evoke a sense of home for me, and this emotional attachment is reflected in the jewellery I create. The textures and colours in my pieces often mirror Scotland's natural beauty and cultural elements, encapsulating the joy and deep connection I have with this region. →

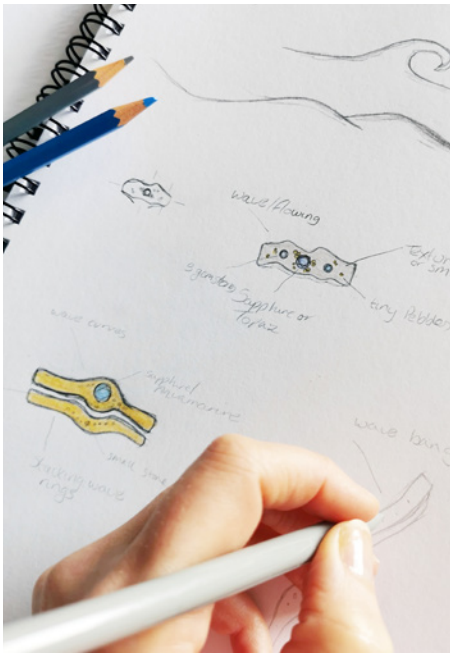
> "The pandemic posed a challenge to my processes and to my customer outreach, but I was very fortunate with my clientele in that they actively wanted to support me."



Two pieces from the Kiss Hug collection of Jenny Gordon of County Down, Northern Ireland. Left: Silver Kiss Hug gem-set bangle bracelet, in which X 'kisses' alternate with blue sapphires and aquamarines as hugs. There are fifteen round stones in the bracelet in total. Each stone weighs 0.10 ct. Right: 18K yellow-gold fine openwork hoop earrings. Each earring features delicate kisses alternating with four round white diamonds in rub-over settings as hugs (0.24 tcw in each earring). Photos courtesy of Jenny Gordon Goldsmith.

CS: Possibly a lack of ostentation and the desire to story tell.

FL: What makes my jewellery identifiable is its emphasis on colour and three-dimensionality — each piece of jewellery is created to sparkle from all perspectives. My designs draw inspiration from everyday life, incorporating vibrant colour palettes that reflect the diversity of the UK. Additionally, we take pride in creating pieces that are not only visually striking but also possess a tangible sculptural quality, representing the beauty of individual perspective.



A look at Victoria Liddell's sketchbook, which shows new ocean-inspired designs. She explained, "I want to capture the graceful movement of ocean waves." The jewellery will be set with a blue stone, probably aquamarine to represent the colour of the sea, and 9K gold granules. This will be a collection of rings, bangles and pendants. Photo courtesy of Victoria Liddell Jewellery.

JG: I live beside the beautiful Strangford Lough in County Down. I take a lot of inspiration from the sea and surrounding countryside. Whether through themes or colours within my work.

JS: My jewellery is identifiable with Scotland, and the Outer Hebrides in particular, due to the natural source material I use within my processes. My designs originated with my immediate local environment, which is particularly exposed to harsh elements. I use natural objects that feel particularly rooted in the culture and heritage of my surroundings. For my retail pieces, I use natural material such as rock textures, which I relate to the local environment by using Lewisian Gneiss and Scottish marble. I use native Scottish wildflowers known as machair, and I even use seaweed both to inspire and to actually shape the design.

WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS? WHY DO YOU THINK THEY SEEK YOUR JEWELLERY OUT?

FL: I create jewellery for both commercial collections and bespoke collectable pieces. Those interested in my silver work are individuals seeking everyday wear and relishing the experience of the adorning themselves. Meanwhile, my private clients view jewellery not only as an investment but also as a form of decorative art.

LC: Our customers are a bit of a mix, women buying for themselves — milestone jewellery and remodelling, engagement rings and repeat customers, typically husbands buying for their wives for birthdays and Christmas. I think the reason they love our jewellery is because of the quality and the individuality. Each stone is sourced for its beauty and sheer quality.

RL: All of my jewellery is made to order or bespoke, and so I encourage my customers to get in touch and feel free to adapt designs to their own specification; for example, using a different metal or different gemstones. I like to open the conversation up to other design possibilities that make each piece of jewellery a sentimental one off for that person.

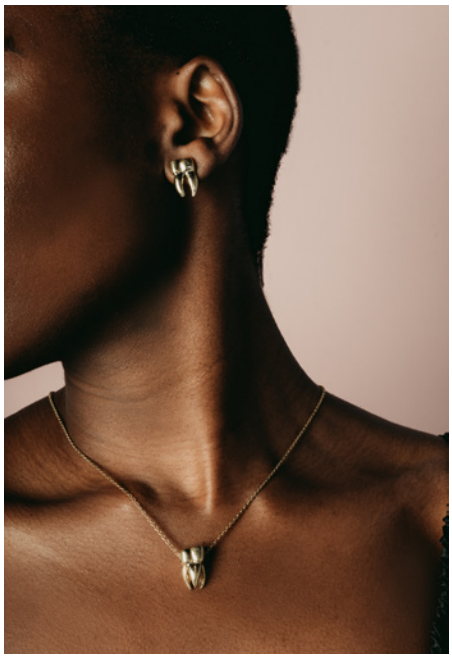
SHL: My customers are those seeking a unique piece that meets all of their needs and desires. The age range tends to be 30–70. I have found that there seems to be a shift in expectation, timing-wise, for major life events, with a trend towards people getting engaged and/or married later in life. People in this age bracket also tend to inherit jewellery that they either won't or can't wear, and therefore are looking to repurpose. I believe customers seek to work with me due to the quality of design and service, which is reflected in the presentation of the final product.

> "Rural Scotland, with its rich and diverse landscapes, provides a constant source of inspiration."

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS IN A FEW SENTENCES?

CS: I begin a project by listening to my clients' wishes and their story. When designing, I find visualising is more important for me than drawing on paper. I usually like to restrict myself to certain rules such as, 'use every speck of gold dust' or 'must echo the original piece' because it helps me find reasons for using one technique over another. I find it's easier to be creative if you first give yourself boundaries.

ERE: My jewellery serves as records of personal experiences and traces of being in the world. Drawing on my contemporary artistic grounding, my work enables me to explore the ephemerality of life from birth to death and celebrate humanity's place in the universe. As a contemporary British jewellery designer, it is important to me that each piece represents an idea, or an intangible feeling, and my custom commissions serve as exciting collaborations between me and my clients. I hope to make timeless heirlooms that draw your attention, wake your imagination and are treasured for generations.



The Tooth pendant and earring (shown here in 18K gold vermeil) are part of Duxford Studios' Memento Mori collection, which is inspired by parts of the human body that have played a role in how our species have evolved over time. Photo courtesy of Duxford Studios.



In the Machair II pendant from Islewear (located on the Isle of Skye), foraged flowers and stems have been pressed and preserved using signature techniques and are transformed into precious metal; in this case, 9K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Islewear.

RL: I often sketch ideas whenever they come to me and will sit with them for a while, developing other design elements that may work together. I like to move into 3D fairly quickly. I like to have something tangible to work with so will start working with stones, checking the placement and arrangement and how well the sizes work together.

VL: All jewellery is handmade by me. My family birthstone rings are made to order, and I work with the customer to see what birthstones or style of band they prefer. I make the rings with silver wire and will often personalise the inside of the ring with a date or name using metal stamps and a hammer. I make the settings using tube and cut a seat with burrs. I like to make my customers feel that they are getting a personal experience by choosing handmade jewellery.

HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF? HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CLIENTELE?

AM: Social media, especially Instagram, is vital for showcasing my creations and connecting with my audience. My reputation in the industry, cultivated over two decades, plays a significant role in my promotional efforts. Word-of-mouth and positive reviews from satisfied customers have been instrumental in enhancing my brand's visibility and attracting new clients. As for my clientele, it's a diverse mix of both domestic and international customers. I've reached a global audience, and international clients usually discover my work through online platforms, social media or recommendations from others who have experienced my jewellery.

ERE: I mainly sell within the UK at the moment, but would like to continue to grow my international audience over time. I have a presence on social media and am passionate about my contemporary jewellery blog (duxfordstudios.com/blogs/news), where I share industry tips and advice on all things jewellery with my customers. I also do a range of pop-up events in cities around the UK, and I'm a member of the Makers Guild of Wales.

VL: I would say my website is my main source of traffic for my business. I also use Facebook and Instagram to reach customers globally.

GIVE OUR READERS SOME INSIGHT INTO ONE (OR MORE) OF YOUR COLLECTIONS.

ERE: My flagship collection is called Memento Mori, which is the name for the Latin theory and practice of reflection on mortality and the transient nature of life. Inspired by life, death and the journey along the way, each piece depicts a part of the human body which has played a role in how our species have evolved over time.

Memento Mori is at the heart of all of my jewellery. I want to celebrate the uniqueness and beauty of humanity. Although for some people, death is something that's painful to think about, many cultures celebrate life through recognising the inevitability of death. For me, death is an equaliser to us all in a world of difference and inequality. We all live, we all die, and we should all cherish the time we have.

FL: The Whispering collection that has become a signature for my brand. This collection captures the subtle beauty of nature, with pieces that exude a delicate charm and feminine silhouettes of the orchid flower. In addition to this collection, I've created a few bespoke pieces that truly capture the essence →



The Mermaid ring by London- and Wiltshire-based Minka Jewels is inspired by the shape of that mythical creature's tail. The piece is composed of a 5.30 ct ocean-green tourmaline, 3.39 tcw Santa Maria aquamarines, 0.32 tcw diamonds, and 18K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Minka Jewels.

of my design ethos. The one-of-a-kind pieces that have garnered acclaim include the Waterfall neckpiece, the Poppy brooch and the Ruby ring.

JS: Landscape is my signature collection. Each of the designs are imprinted with Scottish rock textures. I record these using casting techniques to get a true impression from the source material. Another collection is called Machair, in which I preserve Scottish wildflowers; then, with the process of lost-wax casting, I use the flowers to embellish and decorate my designs.

VL: Of my four main collections, the two most popular are called Meaningful and Coastal. A lot of my local customers love anything to do with the sea, as we live on a small island. I take a lot of my inspiration from the natural world. Being surrounded by the sea, I'm always fascinated by the movement of the waves and the deep colours of the ocean.

HOW HAS BUSINESS BEEN OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS?

CS: Starting out about five years ago was very promising, though the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic shortly thereafter were difficult. The most positive thing to come out of those times was the continued interest in bespoke jewellery. My portfolio grew for the better, particularly after focusing on learning more stone-setting techniques.

JG: Business has been consistent both in terms of sales from collection pieces and bespoke commissions. We have had returning customers while gaining some new ones.

JS: The pandemic posed a challenge to my processes and to my customer outreach, but I was very fortunate with my clientele in that they actively wanted to support me. Since then my work within the wedding and engagement industry has continued to grow organically.

RL: Business has been good, with positive growth for my collections and bespoke work; in particular, there has been a large growth in word-of-mouth recommendations from previous customers.



Kamila's Ring, by Belfast-based designer Claire Skelton, features a sapphire weighing approximately 0.34 ct and a diamond of about 0.40 ct mounted in 9K and 14K rose gold (incorporating metal that has been repurposed from the client's mother's engagement ring). Photo courtesy of Claire Skelton.



The Whispering Long earrings of Birmingham jeweller Fei Liu use 18K gold, two green amethysts weighing 15.00 ct each and 0.20 ct. diamond-set curl detail with black rhodium plate in their composition. Photo courtesy of Fei Liu Fine Jewellery.

WHAT ETHICAL PRACTICES HAVE YOU EMBRACED IN YOUR BUSINESS?

AM: My business operates with a steadfast commitment to ethical practices. I conscientiously evaluate every facet, from our processes to the materials we use and the partnerships we cultivate. Embracing Fairtrade Gold has been a cornerstone of our ethical approach, aligning seamlessly with our principles. However, as we encountered rising costs, increased administrative demands, and rigorous audits, we sought alternative solutions.

This led us to adopt single-mine-origin (SMO) gold. SMO gold offers complete traceability back to its source. It also involves substantial investments in the well-being of mining communities, encompassing aspects like environmental sustainability, healthcare and education. This transition reflects our unwavering commitment to responsible and ethical sourcing.



This 18K gold wedding-and-engagement ring set from Heulwen Lewis Bespoke incorporates tsavorite and diamonds into its design. The wedding band has 0.16 tcw tsavorites and 0.25 tcw diamonds, while the engagement band has a 2.56 ct pear-cut tsavorite with 0.65 tcw diamonds. Photo courtesy of Heulwen Lewis Bespoke.

CS: My focus on remodelling the heirloom jewellery of clients ensures we know the provenance of the materials used and reduces the environmental impact of jewellery making.

RL: I registered with Fairmined gold a couple of years ago and use recycled gold where available. I also only produce and buy what I need when I need it, not keeping stock and reducing the amount of waste.



The Pink Sapphire Triple Facet Ring by Rhiannon Lewis of Birmingham features nine pink sapphires that are grain-set into the ideal stacking ring or alternative wedding band. The gemstones are mounted in 9K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Rhiannon Lewis Jewellery.

SHL: I have become known in my area as the 'remodelling lady'! With each new design, I try to use all diamonds, gemstones and metals that my client presents to me. I will even check with them whether they have any chains that they can upcycle for any pendant designs. With pieces that are designed or sourced from scratch, all metal used is recycled and I always try to source traceable gemstones and diamonds. All pieces are manufactured in the UK, where I can ensure that working conditions are fair and just.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN ESTABLISHING YOURSELF AS A JEWELLER-DESIGNER? WHAT CHALLENGES DO JEWELLER-DESIGNERS GENERALLY FACE?

FL: My most significant challenge has been building a reputable brand and gaining recognition in a highly competitive market. The industry, as a whole, faces several challenges. One is market saturation. The jewellery market is crowded with established brands, making it challenging to stand out. Another is changing consumer preferences; meeting the ever-evolving tastes and preferences of consumers requires constant adaptation and innovation. Finally, protecting intellectual property and designs from counterfeiting and imitation is an ongoing challenge. Navigating these challenges while maintaining creativity and craftsmanship is essential for both individual designers and the jewellery industry as a whole.

JG: All my pieces are handmade by me; even if it's cast I will finish the piece. I have a price point that reflects that. However, I am competing with bigger, more well-known brands who get their pieces made or finished in foreign countries and therefore can charge less for each piece. Also, visibility can be a problem; it's hard to compete against big brands that advertise a lot.

SHL: My biggest challenge has been finding funding and support; there is a lot I would like to design – and steps I would like to take – to enhance my business. When making big business decisions as a sole trader and designer, it would be great to have someone or somewhere I could go to for help.

VL: I definitely think word-of-mouth is key in establishing yourself and also doing markets is great at getting yourself out there; relying on social media isn't enough. Customers want to see that you are a real person behind the brand.



This handmade sterling silver shell necklace by Victoria Liddell, a jewellery designer living and working on the island of Jersey, is inspired by the beauty of the ocean. The shell has been cast from a real shell found on the beach. The centrepiece of this necklace is the 3-mm aquamarine set in 9K gold. Photo courtesy of Victoria Liddell Jewellery.

WHAT KIND OF FUTURE, OR GROWTH, DO YOU HOPE TO SEE FOR YOURSELF, YOUR COLLECTIONS, YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS AND YOUR BUSINESS?

AM: In the near future, I'm focused on growing my brand and creative process through exciting collaborations like the one I had this year with Edinburgh jewellery store ætla, which has been truly enriching, taking part in a trunk show and putting together a collection to show in store. These opportunities allow me to connect with a broader audience and showcase my work beyond traditional craft and jewellery fairs. While my location and personal commitments as a parent may sometimes make me feel hidden, I've found value in the conversations and interactions at these events. Gradually building my network is a priority, and I'm determined to expand my reach. Identifying partnerships and →

places where I envision showcasing my work, such as ætla and Tom Foolery, has been a significant step forward.

Additionally, I'm looking forward to opening my new atelier in early 2024. This space represents a fresh start and, more importantly, a significant growth opportunity for Alison Macleod Jewellery. It will provide a platform to further develop my creative process and expand my business, allowing me to continue creating meaningful and beautiful jewellery for a growing audience.

CS: I hope to see my portfolio grow along with my skillset. I want to be constantly learning and experimenting with my materials.

ERE: I'm currently on a journey of teaching myself how to set stones. I love making jewellery that people build relationships with, so breaking into the wedding industry is something I definitely see in my future! What's more important to someone than their engagement ring or wedding band?

> "I love all coloured stones, as they mirror the vibrant spectrum of the rainbow."



Also from Minka Jewels' Mermaid line, this 20" necklace comprises white and Tahitian pearls with 18K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Minka Jewels.

I see myself running my business full-time with a thriving range of ethical collections and bespoke service. As well as this, I would love to partner with universities and design a curriculum to support creatives with starting their own thriving businesses. While studying for my Fine Art degree, there was no focus on the business side of pursuing a creative career, and I feel that gap slowed me down in progressing my own business as quickly as I'd have liked. I would love to work to ensure that budding artists have the tools they need to hit the ground running when they leave education. It can be a tough industry to break into, but less so if you've gone through the right preparation!

FL: I hope to continually evolve and refine my creative process. I aim to explore new techniques, materials, and design concepts to push the boundaries of my craft. One aspect I particularly enjoy is crafting versatile pieces that can be worn in various ways, offering my clients more value and flexibility.

JG: I'd like to take the time to explore and improve some of my existing skill set. I would enjoy learning more specialised setting techniques and acquiring other skills, such as hand engraving. I want to invest more in my workshop, to have the equipment to enable me to do more myself. Sometime in the near future I'd like to hold an exhibition of one-off pieces. Regarding my collections, I really want to develop some of my existing themes in more depth.



At her South Wales-based Duxford Studios, Esme Rogers Evans works with ethically sourced sterling silver and 18K gold vermeil, as seen in the Mihi bracelets shown here. Photo courtesy of Duxford Studios.



Alison Macleod's Catkin rings. From left: Three round sapphires measuring 1.2 mm in diameter set in 9K single-mine-origin (SMO) gold; an oval aquamarine (0.350 ct), one brilliant-cut champagne diamond (0.025 ct), and a round sapphire measuring 2.2mm in diameter mounted in 9K SMO gold; an oval emerald (0.475 ct), alongside a brilliant-cut champagne diamond (0.080 ct) seated in 14K SMO gold; a pear-cut tourmaline (0.125 ct) with a brilliant-cut champagne diamond (0.030 ct) in 14K SMO gold; an oval tourmaline (0.38 ct) and two brilliant-cut champagne diamonds (0.080 tcw) set in 18K SMO gold; a pear-cut aquamarine (0.13 ct) and two brilliant-cut champagne diamonds (0.045 tcw) mounted in 9K SMO gold. Photo courtesy of Alison Macleod Jewellery.





Claire Skelton's Current Pendant (detailed view on left) features a diamond (~0.20 tcw) set in 18K gold (from rings) hanging from an 18K white gold chain (right). Photo courtesy of Claire Skelton.

JS: I'd like to develop my CAD work and discover how this could be combined with the organic source material. I would also love to explore working with source material from other environments to see where that could lead, particularly as I am developing my London workshop. I have ambitions to continue to grow my wedding and engagement collections, working more within bridal, and explore how best to market this to my customers. I've got lots of dreams and ambitions for the Islewear brand and am planning behind the scenes to make these ambitions a reality. I'd love to have the designs become more recognisable and increase brand awareness.

LC: Next year we are opening a showroom and office space in Mayfair. Something small, but a place where our clients can come for private appointments to try on our jewellery and or pick out beautiful gemstones. The ten-year plan is to expand into various countries, be a global and household name would be wonderful and to have made some exceptional pieces that are really recognised for the design.

RL: I would like to have a bigger international customer base and have developed a collection of more one-off pieces using larger and more unusual gemstones.



The Green Moissanite Ring, by Heulwen Lewis Bespoke, comprises a 2.99 ct oval green moissanite with 0.35 tcw diamonds and 9K yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Heulwen Lewis Bespoke.





Islewear's Sealeaf Studs are crafted using real Hebridean seaweed; they are shown here in yellow gold. Photo courtesy of Islewear.

SHL: I hope to move to a slightly bigger studio premises and employ a few members of staff, such as a design assistant, apprentice and administrator. This will give the much-needed support to ensure Heulwen Lewis Bespoke continues to grow whilst still offering a very personable design experience. My ten-year plan would be to continue to grow but to maintain my position as the head designer — being able to make a difference and be a part of each client's journey is what I truly adore! I would also really love to be able to design limited-edition fine jewellery collections. It would be a privilege to have the opportunity to really show both my fashion and jewellery background, whilst maintaining the importance of creating pieces that are remembered through time. ■

Global Challenges Dampen Industry Outlook in the Second Half of 2023

Industry analyst Russell Shor discusses the factors that have led to a downturn for many in the trade, and a surprising upturn for some other players.



Wholesale prices for lab-grown diamonds have declined dramatically as sales of the material have become more competitive.

Like the world in general, the diamond and jewellery industry is beset by challenges going into the final months of 2023. These challenges include:

- Declining confidence among Americans despite a decent economy. The reasons for the disconnect are that inflation, while moderated from last year, remains an issue.
- Economic warning bells sounding from China, the world's second-largest consumer market for diamonds and jewellery.
- Competition from lab-grown diamonds, which are already making serious inroads into the lower and middle segments of the market.
- Pent-up demand for travel after the lifting of the last COVID-19 restrictions is siphoning consumers' discretionary spending away from jewellery.

In China, jewellery sales have continued to rise as shoppers re-emerge from the country's belated reopening after COVID lockdowns.

According to the Consumer Confidence Index, a report released by the not-for-profit group The Conference Board, American consumers remain secure about their economic near-term prospects. This seems reassuring when it comes to a population that creates half of the global demand for diamond jewellery. However, the costs of housing, rent, food and vehicle fuel have risen higher than inflation in general and keep rising. This has cut into discretionary spending, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and reports from major American jewellery enterprises.

Signet Jewelers, the world's largest retailer of diamond jewellery and operating in the U.S. as Kay Jewelers, Zales and Jared among other brands, reported a sales decline of 9.6% year on year through July. The company has lowered its guidance for the rest of the year, saying these pressures are unlikely to ease. In addition to concerns about inflation and spending on necessities, retailers claim that declining marriage rates in the United States are threatening to cut into the 'essential' American engagement ring market. While changing lifestyles is cited as the official reason for this change, the same inflationary trends for rent and housing certainly are having an impact on this trend.

In China, jewellery sales have continued to rise as shoppers re-emerge from the country's belated reopening after COVID

lockdowns. The largest retailer, Hong Kong-based Chow Tai Fook, which owns Hearts on Fire in the U.S., reported store sales increase of 8.5% in mainland China and an astounding 64.2% in Hong Kong and Macau for the first quarter of the fiscal year (which ended 30 June). The lofty increases in Hong Kong and Macau reflect their post-pandemic border re-openings with the mainland. According to Chow Tai Fook's financial statements, except for the top price tiers, gem-set jewellery demand declined.

This sales growth in China is hardly assured going forward, however. The alarm bells for the Chinese economy have been sounding all year: a number of major real estate developers are teetering on bankruptcy, leaving millions of pre-sold apartment units unfinished; graduates face a bleak job market; and colossal public and corporate debts are causing many economists to fear a 2009-style meltdown in the country. As the world's second-largest consumer market for diamonds, and among the largest for gold and coloured gems, such a crash in China could have a severe effect on the industry worldwide.



Signet Group, parent of Kay Jewelers and Zale Corp., saw its retail sales decline in the first half of 2023, reflecting the squeeze of middle-class jewellery consumers and decline in demand for diamond engagement rings.

LAB-GROWN COMPETITION

This year is the first in which lab-grown diamonds have made serious inroads into the natural diamond market – mainly in the United States.

The *Financial Times* reported that lab-grown diamonds will account for about 16.5% of all diamond sales this year by value – approximately $14.6 billion (£11.74 billion) out of total polished retail diamond sales of $80 billion (£64.35 billion). If this estimate holds up – and other estimates corroborate these figures – it will mean that natural diamond sales will have declined about $10 billion (£8.04 billion) from previous years' totals.

In carat terms, the lab-grown market share is much higher – 30% or more – because, while increasingly popular, they have become less expensive, with wholesale prices for carat-sized stones falling under $500 from some sellers, about one-fourth of what they cost three years ago. Indeed, Pandora, the world's leading seller of inexpensive jewellery, reported that its lines of lab-grown diamond jewellery have become its fastest-growing segment and announced plans to invest in expanding its offerings. At the same time, retailers are finding lab-grown stones more profitable than their natural counterparts because, while wholesale prices have plunged, retail →





The luxury jewellery market has seen substantial sales growth this year, as reflected in several auctions. The 126.76 ct Light of Peace diamond (left) sold for £10.8 million, with a portion of the proceeds donated for US for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. Photo © Christie's Images Limited 2023. The Mozambican ruby known as 55.22 (right), formerly called the Estrela de Fura, sold for £27.3 million. Photos courtesy of Sotheby's.

prices have fallen much more slowly, allowing for greater profit margins — at least until competition catches up.

While demand for lab-grown diamonds is soaring with no slowdown in sight, their manufacturers are facing a major challenge: extreme price competition and growing over-supplies. Prices have plunged by 70% in the past three years and dealers report accumulating inventories, which further drive down prices. Indeed, producers who once claimed to operate 'low-carbon footprint' facilities in the U.S. are moving their productions to India and China to save costs and stay profitable.

One area where lab-grown diamonds have not made inroads is the luxury market. LVMH, the French luxury group that includes Tiffany & Co. and Bulgari, reported an 11% increase in jewellery and watch sales for the first half of 2023. Richemont, the Swiss luxury group which includes Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels, reported a 19% increase in jewellery sales for the first half of 2023. The major auction houses reported generally good results at its sales during the year. A few key lots soared way above their estimates, such as the 126.76 ct Light of Peace diamond ($13.6 million/£10.8 million) – which had a portion of its proceeds donated to USA for UN High Commissioner for Refugees – and the 55.22 ct ruby from Mozambique ($34.8 million/£27.3 million) sold by Sotheby's and Christie's, respectively. (For more on 55.22, see Summer 2023 *G&J* p. 8; Autumn 2022 *G&J* pp. 16–17.)



Russia's Alrosa, the world's largest rough diamond source by value, continued to sell unabated despite international sanctions, which helped contribute to the excess inventories that depressed prices for both rough and polished diamonds.



Jewellery sales in Hong Kong soared during the first half of the year, after the border between the island and mainland China reopened. However, there are multiple indicators that economic storm clouds are building over the Chinese economy.

OVERSTOCKED PIPELINE

The challenges at the retail jewellery levels have had profound effects on the diamond pipeline.

The pandemic lockdowns benefited jewellery retailers by limiting competition from leisure travel. Coming off several good years, diamond dealers and jewellery manufacturers prepared for 2023 by overstocking in case prices for gold and gems rose. But polished diamond prices have declined nearly 10% year on year and are about the same levels of those of 2005, leaving some diamond firms overstocked and in debt.

Diamond manufacturers have pared their rough buying this year, with De Beers' first half sales down 21%. Russia's Alrosa, the largest diamond producer by volume, saw its sales increase slightly despite official sanctions from the United Kingdom, the United States and other major diamond-consuming countries. While Alrosa's production remains primarily diamonds that polish out to less than one carat, diamond manufacturers in India have reported that the company is under-pricing De Beers for comparable goods in an attempt to maintain sales volume.

The UK, along with the U.S., Canada, the European Union and several other leading world economies renewed the drive to limit entry of Russia's diamonds into world markets via a tracking procedure at a September 2023 meeting, but at the time of this writing the proposal remains under debate.

Looking ahead, diamond-mining companies will be facing increasing challenges as operating costs rise while prices for their output remain static. In addition, with lab-grown diamonds predicted to account for 50% of the diamond market by volume, this will likely place extreme price pressure on the smaller, lower-quality production that comprises the majority output of most operations.

As the retail numbers indicate, demand is holding up at the higher end of the market, and at the lower end, where lab-grown diamonds offer an appealing and entirely new category of merchandise. The challenge remains in the middle, both because of pressures on consumers and competition from travel and lab-grown diamonds. ■

Photos by Russell Shor unless otherwise indicated.

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Travelling The Wheel of Time with Wallace Chan

In September 2023 Christie's London headquarters hosted the largest exhibition of world-renowned jewellery artist and innovator Wallace Chan's work to date. Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta reached out to Mr Chan for reflections on his fifty-year career.

For six days in September 2023, Christie's King Street headquarters in London was transformed by the genius of jewellery artist and gem sculptor Wallace Chan. From 4–10 September, 150 pieces of jewellery and six titanium sculptures were on display, some for the first time in public view. Called *The Wheel of Time*, which is a metaphor for Mr Chan's labour-intensive process, which combines traditional aspects of Chinese aesthetics with a respect for the intrinsic qualities of his working materials, including their colour; the unique skill employed in carving them; and the element of time involved in their creation. The pieces, the largest exhibition of Wallace Chan's work to date, spanned his fifty-year career as a jewellery creator and visual artist.

While the *Wheel of Time* explicitly refers to Mr Chan's method, it could also be interpreted as a reference to his fifty-year career, which began in 1973 when he embarked on his calling as a gem carver at the age of 16. Since that time, his work has been shown around the world. He was the first Chinese jewellery artist to exhibit at the Deutsches Edelsteinmuseum (Idar-Oberstein, Germany), the Biennale des Antiquaires (Paris, France) and Masterpiece London, among other shows. Mr Chan is also the first Chinese contemporary jewellery artist whose



The Beauty of Greatness brooch comprises green tourmaline, rubellite, aquamarine, tanzanite, fancy-coloured diamond, diamond, obsidian, yellow sapphire, pearl, titanium and The Wallace Chan Porcelain.



The Wheel of Time necklace is an artistic representation of the Chinese zodiac intended not only to signify cycles of time, but also to express our personal relationship with the complex dimension. The necklace features pearl, diamond, yellow diamond, sapphire and titanium.

work is included in the permanent collection of the British Museum. In an interview from his book *Winged Beauty: The Butterfly Jewellery Art of Wallace Chan* (2021), he stated "The many years that I devoted to training and improving myself is the reason I am here. It is meaningless to discuss time in that context, likewise it is meaningless to tell you that it takes three months or three years to create a piece." Still, when asked what he sees as he looks back over these 150 pieces, developed over five decades of work, refinement and achievement, he notes that 'each creation is a life on its own, a story on its own, but together they become a montage' of Mr Chan's life and calling.

Of particular interest to many attendees was Legend of the Colour Black, a remarkable black diamond shoulder and brooch sculpture. The impressive centre stone of the piece, one of the largest cut black diamonds in the world, weighs 312.24 ct. It is mounted alongside silver-grey diamonds, crystal sapphire, black agate, titanium and the Wallace Chan Porcelain – a material Chan spent seven years researching, developing and refining – which is five times stronger than steel. Other objects of note include the Secret Abyss, a necklace with 1,111 emeralds set within a rutilated quartz to create a 'cloud' effect; the Microscopic ring, comprising sapphire, aquamarine, pink tourmaline, diamond, pink sapphire, the Wallace Chan Porcelain →



Wallace Chan with his sculpture TITANS I.

and titanium; and the show's namesake, a necklace inspired by the Chinese zodiac that is composed of pearl, diamond, yellow diamond, sapphire and titanium.

When asked about September's London show, Mr Chan voiced gratitude to Christie's, who not only let him take over the whole floor, but also allowed him complete freedom to curate the exhibition. The sculpture room was arranged by Christie's curator James Putnam, but everything else concerning the jewellery, from showcases to the flow of the exhibition, were all curated and created by Wallace Chan himself. He wanted to invite viewers to look at his works →



The Secret Abyss necklace was a decade in the making, with Wallace Chan completing the piece by drilling and polishing a 42 × 7 mm tunnel within a rutilated quartz, then using that tunnel to set 1,111 emerald pieces to create the 'cloud' effect. The necklace is composed of diamond (including yellow diamond), rutilated quartz, emerald, amethyst and titanium.



Forever Dancing – Wind's Tale, one of Wallace Chan's mesmerising butterfly brooches, incorporates two pairs of membranous butterfly wings are encapsulated between carved rock crystals and leaves of mother-of-pearl. The entire piece uses diamond (including yellow diamond and fancy-coloured diamond), morganite, tsavorite garnet, crystal, butterfly specimen, mother-of-pearl, pink sapphire, titanium and The Wallace Chan Porcelain.



The gemstones used in the Blue Mile necklace (aquamarine, amethyst, sapphire and diamond with titanium) are intended to remind the viewer of the sea.

In creating the Microscopic ring, Wallace Chan used sapphire, pink sapphire, aquamarine, pink tourmaline, diamond, titanium and The Wallace Chan Porcelain.



Each creation is a life on its own, a story on its own, but together they become a montage of Mr Chan's life and time.



The Quatrain ring is inspired by music; Wallace Chan calls it 'a rhythmic expression of physical form'. Shown here from two different views, it is composed of diamond (including yellow diamond), pearl, tsavorite garnet, titanium and the Wallace Chan Porcelain.





Another piece inspired by the ocean, The Hours – with a 58.38 ct Wallace Cut aquamarine as its centrepiece – invokes 'the juxtaposition of the water's apparent tranquility with the with the knowledge of the immense forces hiding beyond the surface'. The necklace consists of aquamarine, diamond, sapphire, titanium and The Wallace Chan Porcelain.

from different perspectives, so he created showcases that required viewing from various eye levels for the exhibition.

Within and outside the trade alike, Wallace Chan is known as an innovator, and not only for his stunning gemstone creations. He mastered the use of titanium in jewellery after an eight-year study of the metal. He is also the inventor of the aforementioned Wallace Chan Porcelain, The Wallace Cut (an illusionary three-dimensional carving technique invented in 1987), a patented jadeite luminosity-enhanced technology as well as an elaborate type of gemstone setting without metal claws. In this last endeavour, he created techniques that enabled him to set one gemstone within another. The diamond-claw setting method allows diamonds and other gemstones to act as claws, holding other gemstones in place. With the inner mortise- and tenon-setting method, gemstones are giving special cuts to form joints so they can fit together perfectly, eliminating the use of claws. Beyond his intricate and stunning work, Wallace Chan has created quite a legacy.

However, Mr Chan himself does not think in those terms. While the *Wheel of Time* is the largest exhibition of his five-decade career to date, he is reluctant to call the Christie's show a retrospective just yet. He is tirelessly working on new creations and innovations and will work, he said, until his last breath.

"Never linger in the garden of success," Mr Chan explained. "Only history will tell whether any so-called success today will have a place in the long timeline of humanity." ■



The Joy of Life, another brooch that uses Wallace Chan's butterfly motif, is made up of pink sapphire, sapphire, tsavorite garnet, diamond, yellow diamond, pearl and titanium.



The Legend of the Color Black shoulder brooch and sculpture depicts a deconstructed neuron, with the main body representing synapses. The centre stone is a 312.24 ct black diamond, the largest-cut known black diamond in the world (to date). A corresponding form carved from crystal – with a pattern inside the crystal, embellished with diamonds and sapphires resembling the human brain – hangs beneath it. The Legend of the Color Black comprises diamond (including the 312.24 ct black diamond and silver-grey diamond), crystal, sapphire, black agate, titanium and the Wallace Chan Porcelain.

Editor's Note:
Wallace Chan does not, generally, release the carat weights of the gemstones used in his work. He feels that "no one would ask about the weight of paint on a canvas," and the carat weights become a distraction in understanding the works as art creations. Therefore, the majority of jewellery pieces shown here do not feature gemstone carat weights.

When a gemstone is a major factor that influences a piece's creation, such as the 312.24 ct black diamond in *Legend of the Color Black*, Mr Chan will make the carat weight public.



Jewellery Podcasts

TURN ON, TUNE IN, LEARN ABOUT

Ever wonder what it's actually like to produce a podcast that focuses on the gem trade? Smitha Sadanandan caught up with a few podcasters who have been spreading the word on jewels, craft, history, marketing, diversity and so much more.

To be sure, at first glance podcasts do not seem like the most ideal way to communicate about jewellery or gemstones. But since the first podcast, in the format that we know today, aired in 2003, the interest in the format has grown. Today, there are an estimated two million podcasts, with about 464.7 million listeners around the world. Why wouldn't there be some way to cover the trade effectively among those many millions of episodes? Below are just a few of the podcasts that cover the gamut of topics that are relevant to gem and jewellery enthusiasts.

PODCAST #1: THE RAPAPORT DIAMOND PODCAST

Sonia Esther Soltani, editor of *Rapaport Magazine* and co-host of *The Rapaport Diamond Podcast*, walked us through how their podcast came together. Back in 2017, "our then-publisher, John Costello, a huge fan of podcasts, had the idea of us launching a regular programme for the diamond trade. We were the first to have our own podcast."

The original vision was to bring analysis and interesting points of view from a wide range of people in the industry in an easily accessible format,



The Rapaport Diamond Podcast *has aired nearly 100 episodes since 2017. Photo courtesy of Rapaport.*

shared Ms Soltani. Episodes run up to 30 minutes — they are never longer than one hour. "We are still doing this, covering the latest news and events and hosting personalities from the trade that have strong opinions and great stories to share. We wanted to have a light-hearted conversation that is engaging, but the in-depth approach Rapaport is famous for can be found in the content."

If the podcast team, which includes co-hosts Joshua Freedman and Leah Meirovich, thinks the community would be interested in a topic, they talk about it. "We don't shy away from controversial subjects, but we are always mindful of what makes for a good episode and help our listeners, both in their daily business activity and to understand the bigger picture of what's going on in the industry." Lab-grown material, prices and grading have figured among the topics, alongside trends in jewellery, auction results and retail issues. Guests who have

a "strong story to share and want to discuss newsworthy, thought-provoking subjects" are always high priority.

"The team writes stories on so many different topics everyday so a lot of research has already been done. Each of us has specific areas of interest, so it also makes for lively pre-recording conversations," pointed out Ms Soltani. Mindful of the lack of visuals, speakers and hosts alike tend to be as descriptive as possible. "I think people have grown so used to listening to podcasts about visual topics such as art, fashion or travel — the storytelling power of the hosts and guests makes for the lack of visuals. Vanina (Pikholc, the podcast's producer) also creates short videos for promotion, so there are ways to add visuals post-production."

The team concurred that they "always finish a recording on a high" because they learned something new from their guests or from each other. This is the result of discussing topics in an environment that differs from a news meeting, observed Ms Soltani. "We have had so many fascinating personalities on the show and the team podcasts are always fun because there is a nice camaraderie between us."

The *Rapaport Diamond Podcast* is approaching their one-hundredth episode. Podcasts can be accessed directly at *rapaport.com/podcasts/*.

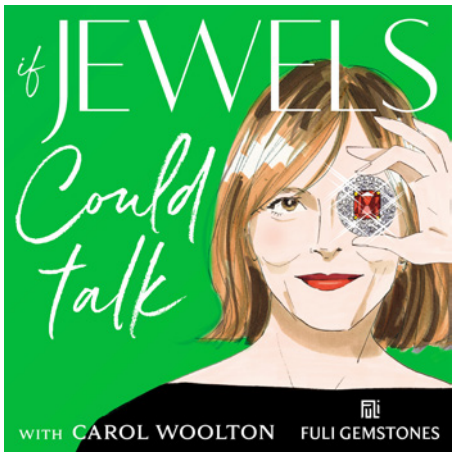
PODCAST # 2: IF JEWELS COULD TALK WITH CAROL WOOLTON

One of Britain's leading authorities on jewellery and gemstones, Carol Woolton, produces a podcast titled *If Jewels Could Talk* that is well into its fifth season. "It is a podcast for everyone. For people who do like jewellery; for people who don't realise they love jewellery; and anyone intrigued by new ideas, fascinating facts and forgotten histories," said the historian, editor, curator and author of five books on jewellery. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms Woolton pondered what she could do to feel more in touch with other people. "I thought I could do a podcast about what I want, and about all the things that I find quite interesting — and that's how I started it." Her idea worked; the show has put Ms Woolton in touch with people all around the world, who respond and even suggest topics.



Jewellery overlaps with so many other subjects, observed Ms Woolton. "It covers theology, fashion, war, revolution, romance... contemporary and ancient culture. Suffice to say, anybody who's interested in these topics would be interested in jewellery." One insightful episode had Stefano Palumbo, the late Elsa Peretti's former right-hand-man. Ms Woolton recalled meeting Elsa Peretti on a few occasions and had invited her to be on the podcast. "I was very, very keen to have her voice on the podcast." Sadly, the opportunity never came up with her sudden passing. "Everybody around her was distraught. Stefano had agreed that after the time of grieving, he would come on and share the stories and her life's works which was amazing. It was very kind of him," Ms Woolton added. "Elsa Peretti changed the way everyone around the world wore jewellery." And *If Jewels Could Talk* recently took listeners to Puglia on a romp of high fashion and high jewellery. Sessions wherein Ms Woolton discussed The Turquoise Mountain Project, her conversations with shamanic practitioner and healer Andréa Ararê, or the history of piercing are all well worth a listen.

Ms Woolton does a lot of research, gives guests general guidelines and plans out how she might want to steer the conversation. But "I want people to be spontaneous and surprising. I want listeners to get the most out of conversations. I think that it helps that I am a journalist. I have done this for so many years; you are used to interviewing people and steering conversations and asking questions, and I think that does make a difference. What I like about my podcast is that I intersperse them with academic, fashion, technique and so forth" she explained. In different episodes, Beatriz Chadour-Sampson talked about the history of rings and how they relate to love, loyalty and friendship; a fashion-based take on jewellery brought Brooke Shields to the conversation; Daphne Guinness talked about her relationship with the late Alexander McQueen. Every season she tries to include a great master jeweller; this season, listeners can learn more about Suzanne Belperron. "To finish the season, we are going have a very personal look at Elizabeth Taylor," shared Ms Woolton.



The graphic for If Jewels Could Talk with Carol Woolton, *available on multiple platforms. Photo courtesy of Carol Woolton.*



Carol Woolton is a successful podcaster, as well as an author, historian and editor. She has informed the readers of British Vogue *and* Tatler *on jewellery-related topics for twenty-five years. Photo courtesy of Carol Woolton.*

If Jewels Could Talk with Carol Woolton is currently sponsored by Fuli Gemstones. To find a platform that plays the podcast, visit *carolwoolton.com/podcasts*.

PODCAST # 3: THE JEWELRY DISTRICT

The Jewelry District, described by the team as 'a podcast by *JCK Magazine* and *JCK Online* about industry news, trends, interviews, weird stories and more,' is helmed by JCK's editor-in-chief Victoria Gomelsky and news director Rob Bates. The show, which started in 2019, has yielded over 100 episodes. Among the topics that have been discussed on the show are Tiffany's new flagship store, top takeaways from JCK Las Vegas, Lightbox's foray into lab-grown engagement rings and more. The guest list over the past four years has ranged from CEOs and other industry leaders to less well-known and equally fascinating up-and-comers. What makes a great guest? For Mr Bates, it's often someone with an intriguing backstory. Ms Gomelsky agreed, particularly when the guest is a power player. "Hearing that they had to work their way up the ladder makes them relatable."

"Rob and I together draw up a list of questions for our guests so they can have a sense of direction and understand where we're going. We always do our research, and although we always put together a pretty good list of questions, we rarely have time to cover all of them. And then, of course, Rob and I really do this off-the-cuff; we stick to the list, more or less, but if something comes up and takes us on a tangent, we follow it," shared Ms Gomelsky. She also enjoys bringing on guests who don't have a specific focus on jewellery, but who shed new light on timely topics by giving listeners a perspective from outside the industry. She recalled one guest who spoke about marketing to Gen-Z shoppers that had thoughtful insight into what mattered to their generation. In another episode, the conversation concerned how retail research might evolve. "Every now and then, we like to bring in 'outsiders' because they offer our listeners something outside the trade focus; I think we are overdue for that," she added.





The hosts of The Jewelry District, *Victoria Gomelsky (left) and Rob Bates (right). Photos courtesy of JCK.*

For a good portion of last year, the show had a lot of very trade-centric guests. "Artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact, diversity and inclusivity issues in the business, gender dynamics, sustainability... obviously, there's just so much we are grappling with right now, and we really strive to address all these conversations on the show."

The discussions are very conversational, and the hosts aim to be somewhat informal. "We want to make them feel like they're here to chat with us; that's one of our hallmarks, I think." What else is important to the show? "Finding guests who are conversant, eloquent and very insightful," Ms Gomelsky emphasised. "We really try to vary the perspective and so we try not to talk to five, or even two, retailers in a row."

To listen to *The Jewelry District*, go to *www.jckonline.com/category/news-trends/podcasts/*.

The logo for The Jewelry District, *JCK's successful podcast on industry-related matters. Photo courtesy of JCK.*

PODCAST # 4: THE JEWELRY JOURNEY

Sharon Berman is managing principal of Berbay Marketing and Public Relations, board member of nonprofit organisation Art Jewelry Forum, and host of *The Jewelry Journey*. This last is a podcast about jewellers, makers and curators. "It covers anything related to jewellery," she explained. Whether it be lab-grown diamonds, gem courses, curators discussing jewellery shows, organisations giving a grant, makers who work with alternative materials — these engaging topics have found airtime on Ms Berman's podcast.

The idea for *The Jewelry Journey* started about ten years ago, when Ms Berman attended and was engaged by a jewellery history conference. The idea of a forum where jewellers could dive deeper and talk more about "how they were doing and what they're doing as opposed to what their technique is, or how did they stay inspired after doing something for 30 years?" appealed to her.

Extensive research about each guest before they appear on the podcast aids the conversation. Sometimes they send in enough information; other times Ms Berman investigates on her own. Since starting the podcast, she has doubled its length to allow more time for interviews; it now runs from 45 to 50 minutes per episode. The beautiful thing about podcasts, mused Ms Berman, is that people do not have to be in front of a screen. She keeps the visuals to a minimum. For several months, *The Jewelry Journey* podcast only featured a headshot for each guest. "We record both the video and the audio, but we only post the audio along with a headshot of the person and five images that they think represent their work."

Ms Berman believe that podcasts such as this one have varied impacts. "It lets people, who otherwise wouldn't hear a lot of this content, get access to it." On other occasions, it helps listeners think of new ways to do things or overcome their professional challenges. "There are people who reach out to me, especially because we have the form on the website asking them to submit whether they think that the person or entity is worth a podcast," shared Ms Berman. It is helpful, she observed, when the interviewee understands that the framing of their answers can make the listening so much more fun.

To find out what *The Jewelry Journey* has discussed and what they have in store, visit *https://thejewelryjourney.com/* or *https://www.youtube.com/@thejewelryjourney893*.

PODCAST #5: JOY JOYA JEWELRY MARKETING PODCAST

Laryssa Wirstiuk's digital marketing agency, Joy Joya, has been dedicated to the jewellery industry since 2016; the namesake podcast was launched two years later. Within the agency, of which she is the founder and director, she collaborates with various jewellery businesses and focuses on a strategic, story-driven approach to digital marketing. As a strong advocate for content marketing, she saw the podcast as a way to "build brand awareness, share knowledge, and foster relationships with customers." The podcast strictly centres on marketing and brand development for jewellery brands, all of which largely reflect Joy Joya agency's approach to these topics.

A new entrant into this industry, Ms Wirstiuk's podcast offered a platform whereby people got to know her, while also allowing her to share her passion and expertise. "While the format has evolved over time — I used to conduct interviews, and now I don't — the core mission and vision have stayed the same," she explained. Occasionally, people reach out to discuss topics they are keen on. She has produced over 240 episodes of *Joy Joya*, which also has a YouTube presence for those who prefer a visual aspect to the storytelling. She continually looks at ways to improve and align the podcast with the content she wants to present. Every episode is unique and presents its own challenges and opportunities for connection. She works on a six-month roadmap to guide the podcast's direction and ensure a coherent narrative across episodes. "At this stage, it's almost habitual for me," reflected Ms Wirstiuk.

Occasionally, new topics that that catch her attention during visits to shows and conferences are integrated into the shows. However, for the upcoming autumn and winter seasons, she is this year, she is closely following her pre-established agenda. Currently, Ms Wirstiuk is focused on following Hilary Finck Jewelry as they navigate their marketing journey with Joy Joya's support. "This theme will continue through January," she confirmed.

It is helpful when the interviewee understands that the framing of their answers can make the listening so much more fun.

The Joy Joya Jewelry Marketing Podcast can be accessed directly at *joyjoyapodcast.com/*, or on YouTube at *www.youtube.com/@joyjoyamarketing.*

PODCAST # 6: THRIVE BY DESIGN

Tracy Matthews is not only a jewellery designer, author and mentor to designers via the Flourish & Thrive Academy; she also hosts a fabulous jewellery marketing podcast called *Thrive by Design*. As a designer starting out in the late 1990s, she always wished that she had a mentor or coach who could guide her on the path forward in her business. Emerging designers often reached out for mentorship and help — and what →



started as a private consulting business soon transformed into the Flourish & Thrive Academy in 2012.

Thrive by Design, which first aired in 2016, has more than 430 episodes under its belt. She initially did a weekly video blog, filmed by a camera crew, in her tiny New York City brownstone apartment. But filming every six weeks became cumbersome, and Ms Matthews decided to record whenever she wanted to create new content. Podcasts had become a popular option by that point. "When I launched the first episodes, we were one of the first jewellery marketing podcasts out there. We've had millions of downloads at this point and have built a dedicated niche following because of the consistency we bring every week," shared Ms Matthews.

The vision for the podcast was to add value to her audience, and her focus was initially on marketing and sales. Now, after seven years, the content delves into a breadth of issues that are relevant to marketing, sales, branding, financing, leadership and productivity. The podcast also explores seemingly off-topic conversations, including stories of successful entrepreneurs and artists outside of the industry. She is keen to bring a unique voice to *Thrive by Design* through guest correspondents and industry veterans. "It's a way to feature successful industry members and also chat about upcoming, relevant issues," she noted. Her most successful shows "average about 5,000 downloads per episode."



Tracy Matthews of Thrive by Design*, which started as a weekly video blog in her Manhattan apartment. Photo courtesy of Tracy Matthews.*



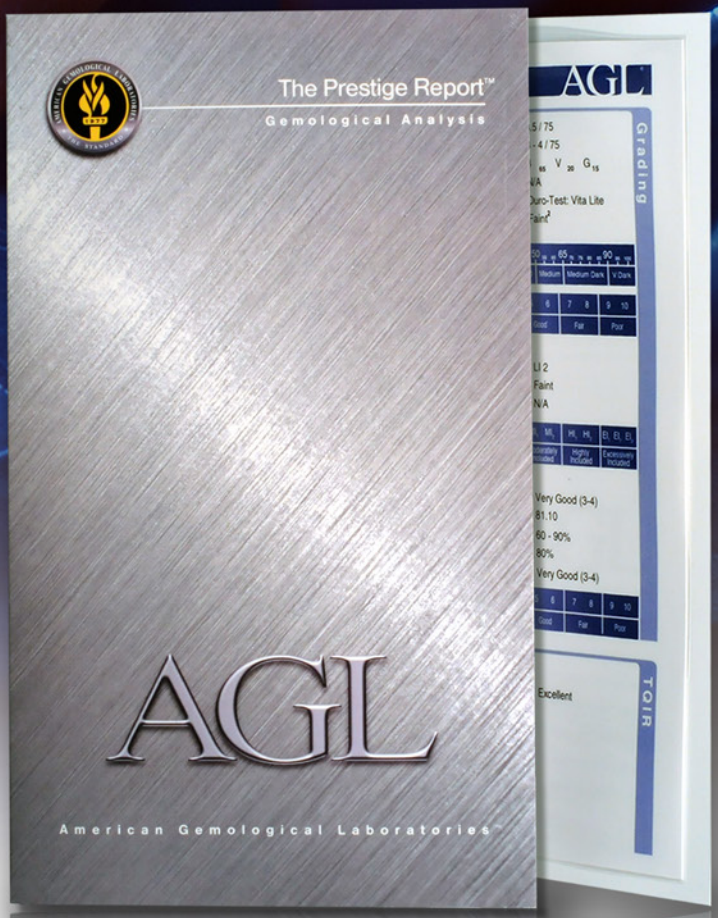
When planning her content, she explores a series of questions: "What are people asking about? What is our audience struggling with? What do they need?" She filters through the different types of listeners — some are in the beginning stages of their businesses versus those who have been around for a long time. "Annual revenue for these brands ranges anywhere from $2,000/month to $250,000/month or more. That's why I try to hit a variety of topics to support people at different stages in business," she elaborated. Panel discussions are centred around topics that come to the forefront such as "potential trademark, plagiarism and copyright issues when it comes to using AI and platforms such as ChatGPT."

For inspiration, aside from jewellery shows and events, Ms Matthews attends events outside of the industry. "It helps me think outside of the box in ways that I might not find just at a jewellery event," she noted, adding that a 'women in business' retreat inspired a recent episode, while another retreat on copywriting, in October, might spark ideas for topics on crafting a brand voice and personality though copy. She records a video version for all guest interviews, which are hosted on YouTube. She also posts visual references on her blog. "My podcast is also very conversational and hopefully entertaining, so I do what I can to keep the listener engaged through the audio I deliver. We also offer a full transcript of the podcast on our blog for people who prefer to read each episode."

To access the audio version podcast directly, *www.flourishthriveacademy.com/podcast/*, or visit on YouTube at *www.youtube.com/@FlourishThriveAcademy*. ■

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When doped with boron, lab-grown diamonds produced by chemical vapour deposition (CVD) turn blue. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

PURE GENIUS

THE RISE OF CVD LABORATORY-GROWN DIAMOND

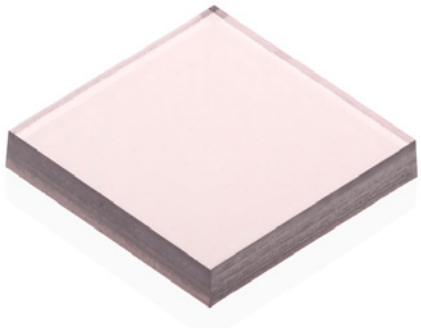
To close our two-part series on the history of synthetic diamond, Beth West FGA DGA relates the background and technological, even lifesaving, impact of material produced by the chemical vapour deposition method.

If we were to anthropomorphise the two methods of industrial synthetic diamond manufacture, we could consider them as siblings, each with their own respective attributes. The elder of the two, the high-pressure high-temperature (HPHT) process – which was discussed in part one of this series – flaunted its 'brawn' through primarily exploiting the material's strength. In turn, the slightly younger chemical vapour deposition (CVD) process could be considered the 'brains' between the two, because as diamond science advanced, CVD allowed for manipulation of the material's non-strength-related properties. The journey to conception for both began at the same point in history, however, in the middle of the twentieth century, as research into the multiple properties of diamond was beginning to make headlines.

On 28 December 1950, the *Daily Mirror* published an article by Len Jackson with the title, "If it squeaks it's a real gem." The opening line states, "If your boyfriend has given you a ring for Christmas, there is no need to wonder if that handsome stone in the middle is a real diamond or just a piece of glass." What one is required to do, according to this article, is to press the stone against a piece of dry ice. A diamond will conduct the heat from your finger and make a squeaking sound; this is a vibration created by the diamond's reaction to the dry ice. "If it is glass," Jackson notes, "nothing will happen."

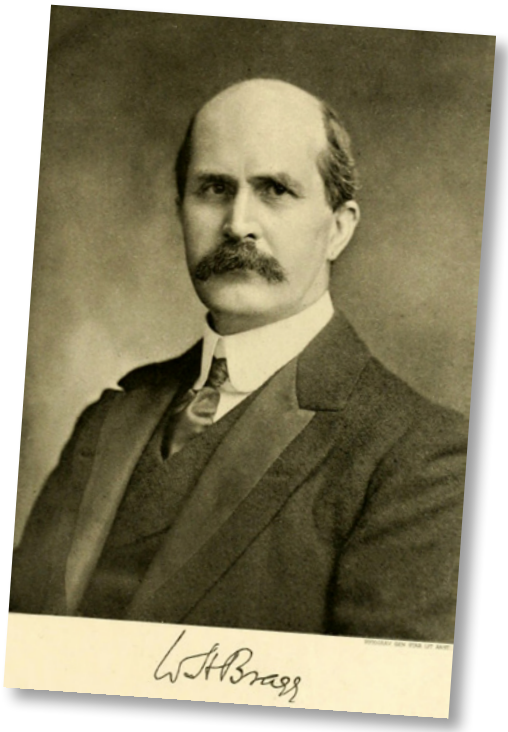
The dry-ice test may be one of the least convenient ways of determining if you, the consumer, have been duped. But the method, which relies on a diamond's high thermal conductivity, does highlight the many properties that characterise diamond beyond its hardness. This was an area of research that was growing in scope and importance. More material was available to study after the discovery of diamond deposits in South Africa in the late nineteenth century. There was a notable turning point in research in 1913, when the 23-year-old British physicist William Lawrence Bragg determined the crystal structure of diamond using the nascent technique of X-ray diffraction (Bragg, 1913).

On the back of Bragg's research, physicists speculated that the rigid carbon lattice seen in diamonds, void of free electrons, could offer benefits well beyond its hardness, namely thermal



A single-crystal CVD synthetic diamond that contains deliberate and controlled levels of nitrogen-vacancy centres – resulting in the pink colour – for diamond quantum technologies.

conductivity and electrical insulation. In the 1930s, diamond was separated into type I and the rarer type II, based on the latter's transparency to ultraviolet (UV) radiation down to 230 nm (Robertson et al., 1933). Over the next two decades, the cause of the lack of transparency within type I diamonds was determined to be the presence of nitrogen impurities in the crystal structure. The potential applications for the unique optical properties of these 'flawless, water-white type II stones', however, were recognised



British physicist William Lawrence Bragg changed the direction of diamond research when he used X-ray diffraction to establish the crystal structure of diamond. Photo courtesy of WIkimedia Commons.

(Robertson *et al.*, 1933). One line of study that received particular attention was the use of diamonds as radiation detectors, known as 'diamond counters'.

In 1950, during a sorting at the De Beers laboratory in South Africa, another property was added to the list. A scientist discovered that some of the blue and brown diamonds sorted from the ore using electrostatic separation had ended up in the tailings; he concluded they must be electrically conducting (INDIAQUA, 1981). His boss, Dr Jan Custers, confirmed and published this information in a 1955 issue of *Nature*, separating out the type II category into IIa and IIb, the latter being the newly discovered electrically conductive group. This property was later proved to be caused by the presence of trace levels of boron in the diamond lattice.

Over the next few decades, following a collaboration between De Beers and a number of English universities, there was an acceleration of progress in diamond science. This work concentrated specifically on the many properties of the gem and their potential applications. However, regardless of the successes within the laboratories, any commercial applications would be very limited. Natural type IIa and IIb diamonds of sufficient size or quality also happened to be very expensive.

Concurrently with this progress, William Eversole of the American company Union Carbide had begun investigating the synthesis of diamond under metastable conditions at low pressures using what came to be known as the chemical vapour deposition (CVD) method. In the period between February and October 1953, Eversole confirmed growth of diamond through the pyrolysis of carbon monoxide onto a diamond seed, finally patenting his means of synthesis in 1958 (Eversole, 1958). But with an incredibly slow growth rate, Eversole's process was not commercially viable.

Despite this roadblock, research resulting from Eversole's line of experimentation continued. A series of discoveries were made by American and Russian research laboratories, including the vital role of atomic hydrogen in the nucleation and growth process. But it was not until the early 1980s, when Japan's National Institute for Research in Inorganic Minerals (NIRIM) took up the challenge, that CVD synthesis really began to show its worth. Primarily using microwave-plasma methods, they were →

Over the next few decades, there was an acceleration of progress in diamond science concentrated specifically on the many properties of the gem and their potential applications.



Among its other significant properties, CVD synthetic diamond has an incredibly wide transmission spectrum, making it ideal for high-grade optical applications. This polycrystalline CVD lab-grown diamond optical window is used in laser-cutting technology to control the powerful infrared beams.

able to achieve thin-film growth on a silicon substrate at a rate of up to ten micrometres an hour. The basic principle of the technology involved microwave energy and carbon-bearing gases within a vacuum chamber. The microwave energy heated the gases to extreme temperatures to produce a plasma, breaking down these gases and allowing the carbon atoms to find their way on to the surface of a diamond substrate, furthering the crystal's growth.
This led to the birth of a new 'wonder material'; the technique has not diverted significantly from the original technology.

In 2002, the industrial diamond division at De Beers was rebranded as Element Six. Their scientists, in collaboration with ASEA and Brown Boveri (ABB), published the first report on the outstanding properties of a single-crystal lab-grown diamond produced by the CVD technique (Isberg *et al*., 2002). This type IIa synthetic material had entered the commercial sphere. The era of the CVD synthetic diamond really began at this point.
If the specimen could be grown to specifications, atom by atom, its extensive properties could be put to use.

Today, CVD diamond synthesis is inherently scalable; once optimum growth conditions are reached, each crystal can be precisely and reproducibly controlled. Therefore, production of type IIa lab-grown specimens is achievable, run after run. The material's strength, thermal conductivity, electrical insulation, transparency, radiation resistance, biocompatibility and chemical inertia can be used for numerous applications. These include, but are certainly not limited to, heat spreaders, optical windows, speaker tweeters, output windows for high-powered lasers, radiation detectors, hip joints and surgical blades.

If desired, defects can be added to the stone. Doped with boron – the main cause of blue colour in diamond – it becomes a semiconductor which, in the form of an electrode, can be used to purify water. If irradiated and annealed to induce the nitrogen-vacancy centre (which artificially causes pink colour in diamonds), it can be used, in combination with numerous other quantum applications, as a magnetic field sensor in medical diagnostics.
A study in Bristol University suggests that diamond can be used to recycle nuclear waste. And in December 2022, scientists from the U.S. Department of Energy used diamond in the first successful attempt to create net energy using nuclear fusion, possibly paving the way for a clean and abundant source of energy in the future (Clery, 2022).



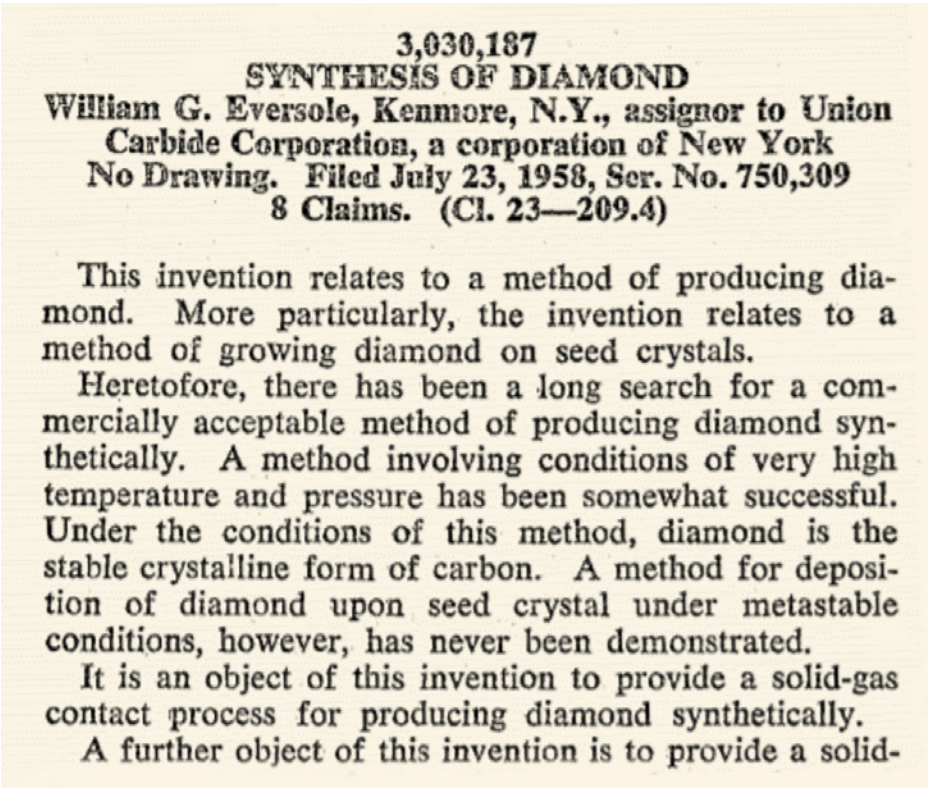
While lab-grown diamonds are increasingly used in jewellery, such as in the ring above, the majority of their application remains industrial, where their potential, even in the medical field, is staggering. Photo by Mark S. Johnson/Shutterstock.

Investigations into the many other applications CVD synthetic material could offer continue. There is little doubt it has plenty more up its sleeve beyond the bling that is filling the jewellery shops and making the press. While synthetic diamonds offer the consumer a cheaper alternative to natural gems, they have a proud heritage and bright future as the workhorse of industry, made even more promising through the advances in chemical vapour deposition technology.

At the July 2023 Lab Grown Diamond symposium in Dubai, Dr M.S.R. Rao, senior professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, highlighted that lab-grown gem-grade diamond produced by both HPHT and CVD technologies is only one of six applications for the manufactured material, and within the next decade gems will likely account for less than 20% of the lab-grown diamond market. This is a statistic the industry should rally to support. Synthetic diamond, supported by the incredible minds behind its evolution and continued progress, has the capacity to improve conditions and save lives. ■

The views and opinions expressed are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Gem-A or Gems&Jewellery.

A list of references may be obtained via a request to the Editor.



3,030,187
SYNTHESIS OF DIAMOND
William G. Eversole, Kenmore, N.Y., assignor to Union Carbide Corporation, a corporation of New York
No Drawing. Filed July 23, 1958, Ser. No. 750,309
8 Claims. (Cl. 23—209.4)

This invention relates to a method of producing diamond. More particularly, the invention relates to a method of growing diamond on seed crystals.

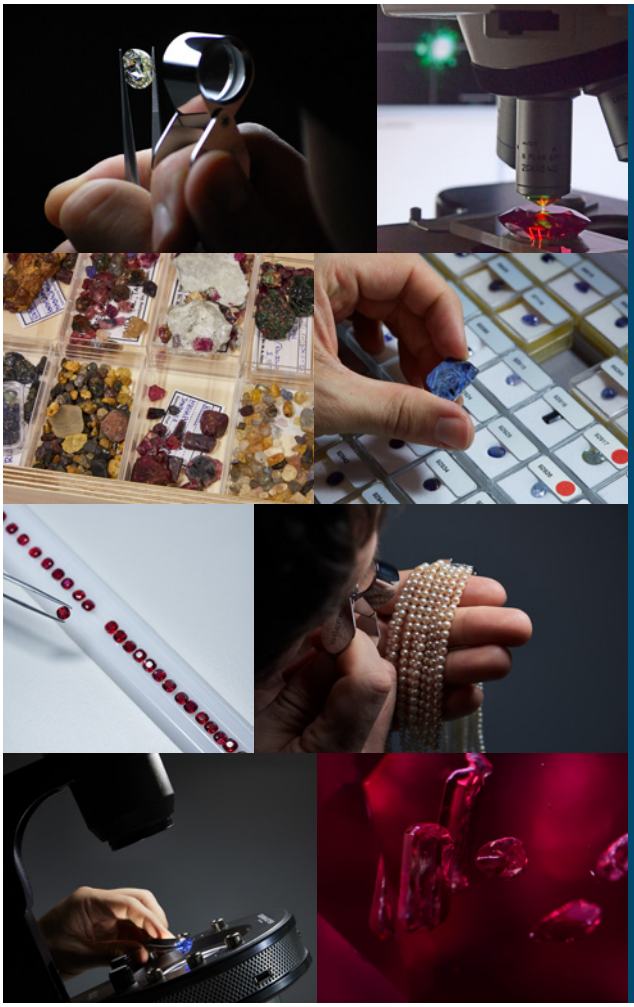
Heretofore, there has been a long search for a commercially acceptable method of producing diamond synthetically. A method involving conditions of very high temperature and pressure has been somewhat successful. Under the conditions of this method, diamond is the stable crystalline form of carbon. A method for deposition of diamond upon seed crystal under metastable conditions, however, has never been demonstrated.

It is an object of this invention to provide a solid-gas contact process for producing diamond synthetically.

A further object of this invention is to provide a solid-

William Eversole's original patent for the synthesis of diamond, filed in July 1958. Eversole patent accessed at https://www.freepatentsonline.com/3030187.html.

All photos courtesy of Element Six unless otherwise specified.



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The 2023 PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR Competition Is Open

Gem-A's popular annual photography contest is open and accepting submissions from all over the world! Rules, information on public voting and prizes are found below.

It's that time of year again! Each autumn, we at Gem-A HQ look forward to receiving the entries that our Photographer of the Year Competition generates. There is so much talent and creativity among the members of our trade. We love seeing the moments our Students, Alumni and Members, along with other members of the industry, have captured under their microscopes, at their jeweller's bench and at remote mining localities.

This year we have decided to forego any themes or categories; we simply want to see your best gemmological-related images from the past year. We are eager to see that single instance that you were moved to record and share with your colleagues, students and friends.



Whether it be a remarkable jewellery suite, an outstanding gem carving, an industrious miner working a gem deposit, an unusual inclusion scene or something completely different, your photos come together to help show what is beautiful about the world of gemmology.

> Your photos come together to help show what is beautiful about the world of gemmology.

After a curated shortlist is subject to a public vote on social media, our guest judge will have the challenging task of selecting one first-place winner and two runners-up; honourable mentions may also be granted. Among other prizes (see below), the first-place winner have their photograph on the cover of the Winter 2023 issue of *Gems&Jewellery*.

The cover of our Winter 2020 issue featured 'Helvite Merry-Go-Round', taken by first-place winner Melissa Allen FGA GG. Triangular helvite inclusions, each measuring approximately 1 mm, are positioned within a rough morganite tabular crystal purchased in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1989 by Sid Tucker. The photomicrograph was taken with diffused fibre-optic lighting in addition to darkfield illumination. Field of view 4.5 mm.



E. Billie Hughes FGA received an Honourable Mention in 2016 for 'Chasing Fortune'. Her photo depicts miners hunting for sapphire in the Banque Suisse mine of Ilakaka, Madagascar. The mine was named for the enormous wealth of gems allegedly hidden in its subterranean 'vaults'. Photo by E. Billie Hughes.

The Photographer of the Year Competition is free and open to the general public; submissions are welcome from first-time participants, longtime contributors and previous winners alike. We are excited to receive the beautiful and diverse range of photographs our entrants will send from around the world.



Maryam Mastery Salimi FGA won in the Humanity in Gems category (2018) for her photo of a Persian turquoise dealer presenting a variety of Persian material – including his finest blue turquoise, which is temporarily mounted in a ring – near Neyshabur, Iran.

COMPETITION RULES

- A maximum of three photographs may be entered per person.
- Photographs must be high resolution (a minimum of 300 dpi and ideally at least 1 mb in size).
- Photomicrographs must be accompanied by field of view for proper digital representation.
- Entries must be accompanied by your name and post-nominals (if applicable).
- Images must be captioned and a description of no more than 150 words telling the story behind the photograph must be included.
- All photographs entered into the competition must have been taken within the last twelve months.
- By entering the Photographer of the Year Competition, you accept and acknowledge that your image may be used in *Gems&Jewellery* magazine, on the Gem-A Blog and on Gem-A's social media channels. You will always be credited as the creator of the work.

HOW TO ENTER

Email all entries to *editor@gem-a.com*. Please send files larger than 10 mb via Dropbox.com or WeTransfer.com to *editor@gem-a.com* (these are free-to-use media transfer services).

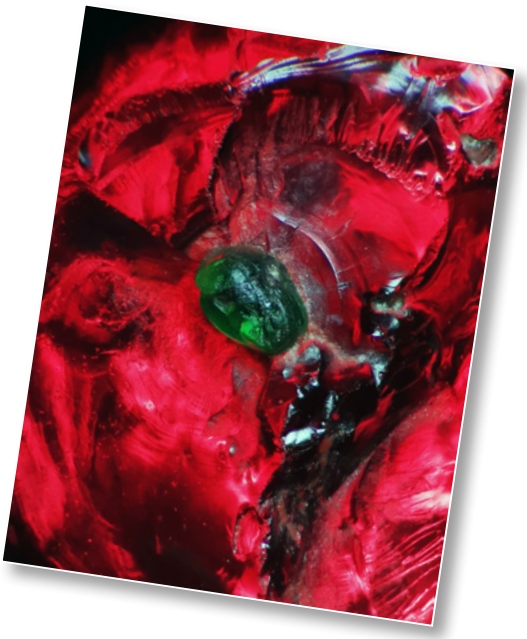
The competition is now open, and anyone may enter at no cost. We will be accepting photos until 31 October 2023. The ten photos selected for public voting will be posted to Facebook, and voting will be open until 1 December, with the five shortlisted finalists announced in early December. The winner and runners-up will be announced on Gem-A's social media channels in early December; all three will be featured in the Winter 2023 issue of *G&J*.

For more information on the contest rules, or on how to enter Gem-A's Photographer of the Year Competition, please contact *editor@gem-a.com*.

JUDGING PROCESS

The *G&J* team will select ten entries, which will then be posted to our Facebook page for a public vote to create a shortlist of five finalists. Your 'Like' may be the one that pushes a photograph onto the shortlist, so be sure to follow us on Instagram (@GemAofGB).

A guest judge will then choose a first-place winner and two runners-up from the shortlist.



'The Colours of Christmas', by Sammantha Maclachlan FGA, was a runner-up in the 2021 competition. The photo shows a red chrome pyrope ant hill garnet rough hosting a green chrome diopside crystal. These gems are found on the Navajo Nation in Arizona, in the southwestern United States and are collected by Navajo women from the tops of desert ant hills. Garnet from the collection of Sid Turner.



The winner of the 2022 Photographer of the Year contest was Valentin Fejoz, whose photo of a scene within in a Sri Lankan sapphire showed negative cavities containing black and hexagonal graphite inclusions, diaspore needles, a fluid inclusion and many gas bubbles, among other inclusions. Field of view 4 mm.

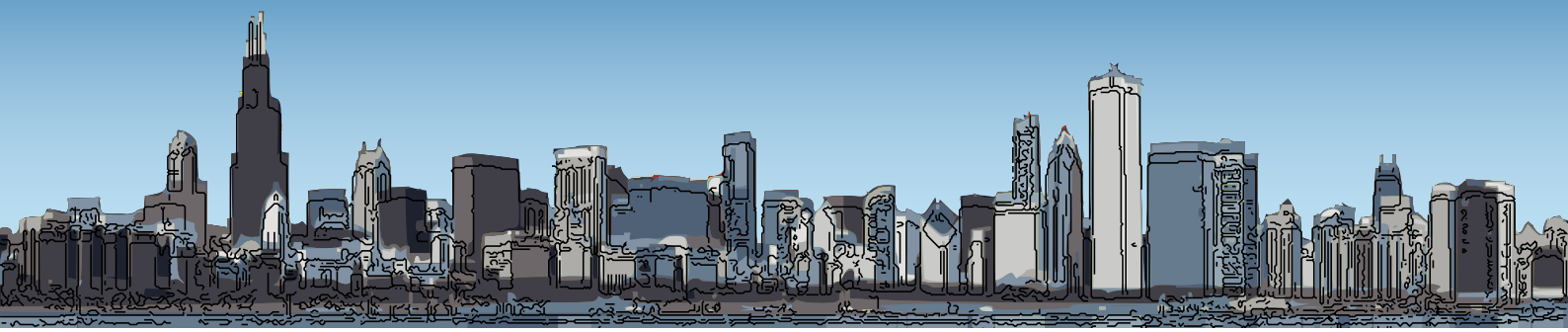


Enrico Bonino received a Special Mention in 2022 for his photograph 'Pollen Grains Over Anther Baltic Amber'. Here, four grains of pollen seem to take off from the rough surface of an anther. The scene is embedded in Baltic amber that is dated about 40 million years old. Field of view 1.9 mm.

PRIZES

The first-place winner will have their photograph on the cover of the Winter 2023 issue of *Gems&Jewellery* magazine. Additionally, the first-place winner will receive a one-year Gem-A Membership and a £300 voucher to spend at Gem-A Instruments. The two runners-up, who will be featured within the Winter 2023 issue, will each receive a £50 voucher redeemable at Gem-A Instruments.

Good luck to all who enter! ■



CHICAGO RESPONSIBLE JEWELRY CONFERENCE

Members of the gem and jewellery industry convened in August 2023 for the seventh Chicago Responsible Jewelry Conference, discussing matters related to transparency, supply chain equity and human rights.

The seventh annual Chicago Responsible Jewelry Conference (CRJC) was held 11–12 August 2023, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois, with attendees participating both in-person and online. The Responsible Gem Boutique, where multiple suppliers sell gemstones to other members of the trade, was held on Sunday, 13 August from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Founded by **Susan Wheeler** (Susan Wheeler Design, the Responsible Jewelry Transformative, Virtu Gem), the purpose of the CRJC is to build upon the passion and desire to bring benefits to all sections of the supply chain while creating partnerships among like-minded members of the industry.

The conference opened with remarks from **Andrea Hill** (Hill Management Group), who under the brand StrategyWerx is partnered with the CRJC, before the keynote address from Susan Wheeler. Ms Wheeler's remarks involved incorporating the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN Women Goals. She named just a few of the SDGs, as well as the four strategic priorities of UN Women Goals, which intersect with the SDGs – including freedom from gender-based violence and the ability to achieve economic autonomy – and how some industry members have made progress on these goals, but it must be acknowledged there is still much work to be done. She noted that everyone has an idea of how best to improve and protect the industry, but at all times we must be aware of risks, such as forgetting about poverty at the beginning of the supply chain. The needs of these people must be addressed, and their issues must not be 'greenwashed'.

The first session, "Opening Markets for Artisanal Gemstone Miners" was moderated by **Anna Samsonova** (Samsonova Consulting). A driving issue of this session was voiced by **Pauline Mundia** (Virtu Gem Zambia, Federation of Small-Scale Mining Associations of Zambia and African Women in Mining Association – Southern African Chapter): "What kind of value are we adding? Is it a value that will sustain the artisanal miner, or the cutter?" (For more on Virtu Gem's work, see Summer 2023 *G&J* pp. 14–19). **Sejal Karavadia** (Brilliant Earth); **Cristina Villegas** (Pact and Moyo Gems) and



Chicago Responsible Jewelry Conference founder Susan Wheeler before her keynote address on 11 August 2023.

> The conversation navigated the difficulties of obtaining clear-cut, transparent information and the building of trust with brokers, miners and other important parties.

Jessica Hudson (Virtu Gem) addressed the importance of adding value to activity at the start of the supply chain so people engaged at those points can benefit from their labour in an equitable way. While traceability is vital to ensuring that these workers are compensated fairly, other issues that must be addressed include communication; education at multiple levels, ranging from setting up a legal, licensed business, to understanding the market value of rough and polished gems, to lapidary training; and collaboration between supply chain members and local and national partners. Ms Villegas pointed out that "Africa, for many years, was exporting raw, unprocessed material. Now, it is exporting high-end, faceted, beautiful gemstones. That is a huge power shift in the industry."

Deep-sea biologist **Lisa Levin** (Scripps Institute of Oceanography and University of California, San Diego) presented on the implications of seabed mining, as gold and silver production from underwater environments creates vulnerable marine ecosystems that can have irreversible consequences. About 95% of the habitable volume of the Earth is deep ocean, but less than 25% of the seafloor has been mapped; approximately two-thirds of the ocean is international waters, without jurisdiction. Among the extractable minerals found in the deep sea are gold and silver, which are found in hydrothermal vents. These vents are essential ecosystems that host sea animals and export nutrients, including iron, that contribute to a productive ocean. Deep-sea mining involves breaking up rocks in the seabed and bringing them to the surface; hydrothermal vents are one of three ecosystems that are targeted in this fashion. This method disturbs ecosystems and interrupts the microbes that support the lives of larger animals, leading to long-term complications.

It has been difficult to address the extraction of silver, which often occurs as the by-product of mining for other minerals, such as gold, lead, zinc and copper. While there are fewer risks in silver mining than in gold extraction, there are still ways to alleviate poverty and support members of the silver supply chain. In the session "Responsible Silver," **Mark Hanna** (Richline Group) and **Will Nevins-Alderfer** (WR Metal Arts) address the issues around responsible silver sourcing, including mercury use and human rights violations, in ways that have not been widely addressed to date in the jewellery industry. This session was a key step in starting the conversation around sustainable silver production.



Virtu Gem cofounder Jessica Hudson participated in a panel on opening gem markets up to artisanal and small-scale miners.

Mkhululi Ncube (African Minerals Development Center) gave a virtual presentation that functioned as an introduction to the African Mining Vision (AMV) based on the African Union's conception of how the production of minerals found in the continent's fifty-four countries should continue. Mr Ncube pointed out that Africa has 'been languishing in mineral wealth but economic poverty'; this plan addresses specific challenges faced by those in the African sector. The AMV was launched in 2009 and became a project of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in 2013 but was turned over to the African Union in 2019, the year after the Republic of Guinea won a competitive bid to host the program. In 2022, an Interim Secretariat was chosen. The framework provides an assessment framework for viability, progressivity and sustainability in the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector through training, finance, marketing, technology and other factors.

"Sex Trafficking in Marange, Zimbabwe" began with a video from the Marange Women's Alliance (MWA), a grassroots organisation that works to prevent and raise awareness of human-rights abuses against women and girls, who are often trafficked into sex work and suffer gender-based violence in the diamond-rich region. Following the film, Susan Wheeler and **Brandee Dallow** (Grandview Klein Diamond Group) engaged with **Abigail Sibanda** (MWA), who gave a history of artisanal mining in Marenge, and the subsequent smuggling →



Lisa Levin (Scripps Institute of Oceanography and University of California, San Diego) spoke about the implications of deep-sea mining to obtain gold and silver, as well as other minerals.



Participants in the panel on in-country traders in the gem supply chain included Brecken Branstrator of GemGuide (as moderator), Stuart Pool (Nineteen48) and Pauline Mundia (Virtu Gem Zambia, Federation of Small-Scale Mining Associations of Zambia and African Women in Mining Association – Southern African Chapter).

and trafficking of informal miners to military and police. Women face difficulty because they are viewed as prostitutes even if they set out to the diamond fields to work as miners. Actions taken by MWA, including sponsorships and other campaigns, to intervene on behalf of survivors and in the service of prevention were also discussed.

Day two of the conference launched with a breakdown of the So Fresh So Clean Student Exhibition 2023, an online international showcase held by Ethical Metalsmiths (for more on Ethical Metalsmiths, see *G&J* Summer 2022 pp. 10–13). **Shannon Kurzyniec** and **Chelsea Rowe** (Ethical Metalsmiths Student Committee) explained that the contest challenges participants to consider how their work can reflect the movement towards a more ethical jewellery practice. This year's entrants were asked to think about their work's lifecycle; they had to consider whether the work was ephemeral, whether it would eventually break down, if it was made from uniquely sourced materials, and if it was possible for those materials to re-enter the supply chain.

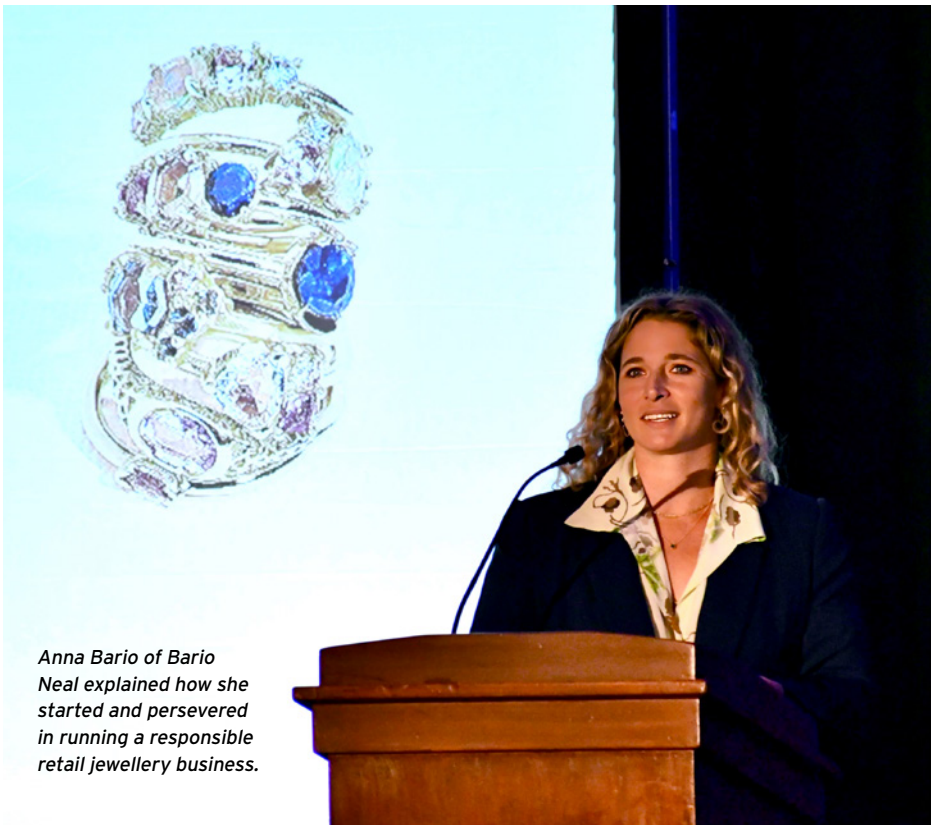
Anna Bario (Bario Neal) took to the stage to discuss the concept of "Responsible Retail." As the founders of Bario Neal prepared to open in 2008, they found there was little information about the source of their gold, or about the risks related to gemstone mining. In response, the company looked to begin a jewellery brand that affected social and planetary change. "We wanted to create a model for a brand that could create value rather than just focus on extraction and consumption." While acknowledging that running a mission-based, conscious-design business is a journey, Ms Bario shared some lessons from the past fifteen years. This includes educating end-consumers about the origins of the materials in their pieces, making Fairmined gold the default option for their jewellery, building relationships with ethical suppliers, developing a set of parameters to create a low-waste practice, and creating documentation rooted in the SDGs. This last step includes a code of conduct, sustainability reports and an eight-step process to evaluate whether a supplier and/or material is appropriate for Bario Neal.

Jewellery designers, gem cutters and others who want to establish responsible, transparent global supply chains can benefit from the experiences of trade members who have already developed such relationships. "Source Country Traders in the Gemstone Supply Chain," moderated by Breken Branstrator (GemGuide), focuses on industry players who have created a rapport with workers at and near gemstone deposits. **Eric Braunwart** (Columbia Gem House), **Chiko Manda**, **Ola Erogbogbo** (Deinte Fine Jewelry), **Stuart Pool** (Nineteen48), Pauline Mundia and Susan Wheeler participated in a conversation that navigated the difficulties of obtaining clear-cut, transparent information and the building of trust with brokers, miners and other important parties. They discussed how to leverage existing relationships that local partners already have; what constitutes 'fair' payment in different regions; what gaps are found in local communities where companies can assist and provide; and the ability to remain in compliance with governments and other organisations.

In "Gold and Agriculture," **Roy Maconachie** (University of Bath) and **Laura Galvis** (Alliance for Responsible Mining) explained their work in Sierra Leone and Colombia, respectively, and spoke about the links between farming and low-tech, labour-intensive mining. Dr Maconachie explained that over the last decade in Sierra Leone, interest in producing gold from alluvial deposits is growing, as this is more stable and dependable than diamond mining. This is especially true for women miners, who are looking to support and educate children. Gold mining in Mabai and Bandafayie – his areas of focus – occurs during the dry season, and money earned is frequently invested back into farming activities and other agricultural businesses, such as reselling produce in Freetown. Ms Galvis clarified that, in Colombia, gold mining – which happens underground – happens concurrently with farming, rather than in a separate season. She summarised the activities of three certified gold mines that also invest in farming. Andrea Hill discussed with Dr Maconachie and Ms Galvis the commonalities and differences



Laura Galvais (Alliance for Responsible Mining) discussed the connections between gold mining and agriculture for three Fairmined certified mines in Colombia.



Anna Bario of Bario Neal explained how she started and persevered in running a responsible retail jewellery business.

in gold mining and agriculture between these two countries.

Andrea Hill and **Sara Yood** (Jewelers Vigilance Committee) reviewed "Russian Sanctions," and sanctions in general. Ms Yood provided a brief background of the status of Alrosa in the industry prior to the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the immediate response of the United States to the declaration of war with sanctions on Russia, to be followed by an executive order banning the direct import of rough and polished diamonds from Russia – among other products – into the United States. As the war between Russia and Ukraine continues, the industry is impacted, directly and indirectly, by the sanctions on diamonds and other jewellery-related materials that are sourced from Russia. Ms Yood discussed how sanctions, in general, affect the trade, and how the sourcing of diamonds may have fundamentally and permanently changed due to the current war.

A midday "Initiatives Clinic" gave participants the ability to discuss, in breakout groups, how to apply the UN SDGs in ways that improve transparency along jewellery supply chains. The ideas generated concerned marketing, outreach and consumer education. One example called for the development a common language that addresses the transparency goals and helps trade members to educate the general public, via positive storytelling, without confusion. Another suggestion involved a social-media movement composed of jewellers, posting at a specified time each day, with such topics as "where did my diamond come from?" while a third involved outreach from ethical jewellery organisations to retailers.

Dr Saleem H. Ali (UN International Resource Panel and University of Delaware) presented on "Migration and Minerals: The Impact of Our Supply Chain on the Global Movements of People." Dr Ali identified key features and challenges of the UN's work on natural resource security, along with broader issues of social responsibility and how this related to SDG 17 (Partnerships). Mining often involves the phenomenon of resource rushes, and migration itself – whether forced or voluntary – can have an impact on different resource issues. One example was the discovery of sapphire in Ilakaka, Madagascar, that resulted in a domestic rush, but also a migration of people from Sri Lanka. A major takeaway of the report was the 'refugee camp phenomenon', in which concerns that refugees will degrade the land on which they are living are misplaced; in fact, refugees tend to cultivate the land. Refugees living in camps can be trained in skills that would be of value to the gem trade, would give the displaced people vital and marketable skills, and would meet the requirements of SDG 17. Dr Ali gave Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (Burma) living in Bangladesh as one such group who could be assisted this way.

The conference closed with a panel, moderated by Natasha Braunwart (Columbia Gem House) on "Casting a Wider Net: Responsibly Sourced Designs Inspiring Consumer Engagement." **Hannah Smythe** (Toast Fine Jewelry and DEH Jewelry Solutions), **Megan Cochran** (Megan Cochran Jewelry Design) and Eric Braunwart discussed the MJSA Challenge 2023: Responsibly Sourced Designs. Each year, the Manufacturing Jewelers & Suppliers of America asks several designers to render a custom piece of jewellery based on a fictional scenario, and to incorporate gemstones from Columbia Gem House into the design. Renderings are posted throughout the year and a winner is chosen by *MJSA Journal* readers in an online poll every October. The group discussed the story on which the renderings were based, and the designs and process of Hannah Smythe and Megan Cochran, who participated in the competition. ■

> **While traceability is vital to ensuring that these workers are compensated fairly, other issues must be addressed.**

For announcements relating to the Chicago Responsible Jewelry Conference, including the announcement of the 2024 dates, visit chiresponsiblejewelryconference.com.

All photos courtesy of the Chicago Responsible Jewelry Conference.

Chanel High Jewelry



Reviewed by Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta

By Julie Levoyer and Agnès Muckensturm, translated from the original French by Lorna Dale, hardcover, 528 pp. illus., publ. by Thames & Hudson, Ltd., London, UK, £150.00.

What does one expect from a book about Chanel? Nothing less than luxury, and *Chanel: High Jewelry* delivers in abundance. This stunning volume was published in celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of Gabrielle Chanel's first jewellery line, and it does the House of Chanel justice. The text by Julie Levoyer and Agnès Muckensturm (translated from the original French by Lorna Dale) provides a comprehensive and informative view of the important and innovative work that Chanel has done for the world of jewellery since 1932.

After a brief introduction that explores Gabrielle Chanel's sources of inspiration – the camellia, Venice and summer are mentioned, among others – we learn that she created the first collection of Chanel jewellery in 1932, as a 'showcase for diamonds' (this was revived in 1993 when the company relaunched Gabrielle Chanel's Comète necklace, and the line continues today). The introduction is followed by four sections: the first of these, Origins, explains the motivations behind the establishment of the jewellery line in greater detail. Three years after the crash of the stock market and the start of the Great Depression, the London Diamond Corporation sought to boost the market by asking Mlle Chanel, who had designed costume jewellery to impressive results, to create a collection that would feature and promote diamonds. This request set in motion Chanel's first high-jewellery line, Bijoux de Diamants; translated into English, this simply means 'Diamond Jewellery'. The release of the collection, via a private viewing at Mlle Chanel's rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré home on 5 November resulted in a significant rise in Diamond Corporation stocks over the course of two days, leading to a revitalised diamond market and in groundbreaking changes to the world of jewellery.



Constellation du Lion necklace from the 1932 Collection (2012). Photo by Julien Claessens and Thomas Deschamps, © Chanel 2013.

Gabrielle Chanel had changed the way that people thought about women's fashion, and she styled her jewels in much the way that she styled clothing. Her designs were clean and simple, so that the focus was on the (perfectly faceted) gemstones rather than elaborate settings or complicated mountings. The fifty-odd pieces in the line used white and yellow diamonds mounted in platinum and yellow gold, making them suitable for day wear. Even so, Bijoux de Diamants was an opulent collection, utilising motifs that have become identified with Chanel jewellery to this day. Stars and comets are found throughout this collection. "Why look any further?" she asked in a 1932 article from *L'Illustration*, quoted in the Origins section. Obviously, the constellations I've scattered in the hair, the comments landing on shoulders followed by a shower of stars, the crescent moons and the suns were made by the best craftsmen in Paris... my stars — those are all very romantic! But is anything more becoming or more eternally modern?" The House of Chanel continues to use star-and-comet designs in their pieces; of particular note from the 1932 collection is the Soleil 19 Août necklace, comprising white gold and 18K yellow gold set with white and yellow diamonds with a 22.10 ct cushion-cut Fancy Vivid Yellow diamond as its centrepiece. Another piece from this line, the Comète Volute, is a convertible brooch/bracelet that uses the comet design with panache.

> The lavishness of the photos cannot quite be captured in a review; they must be experienced to be genuinely appreciated.



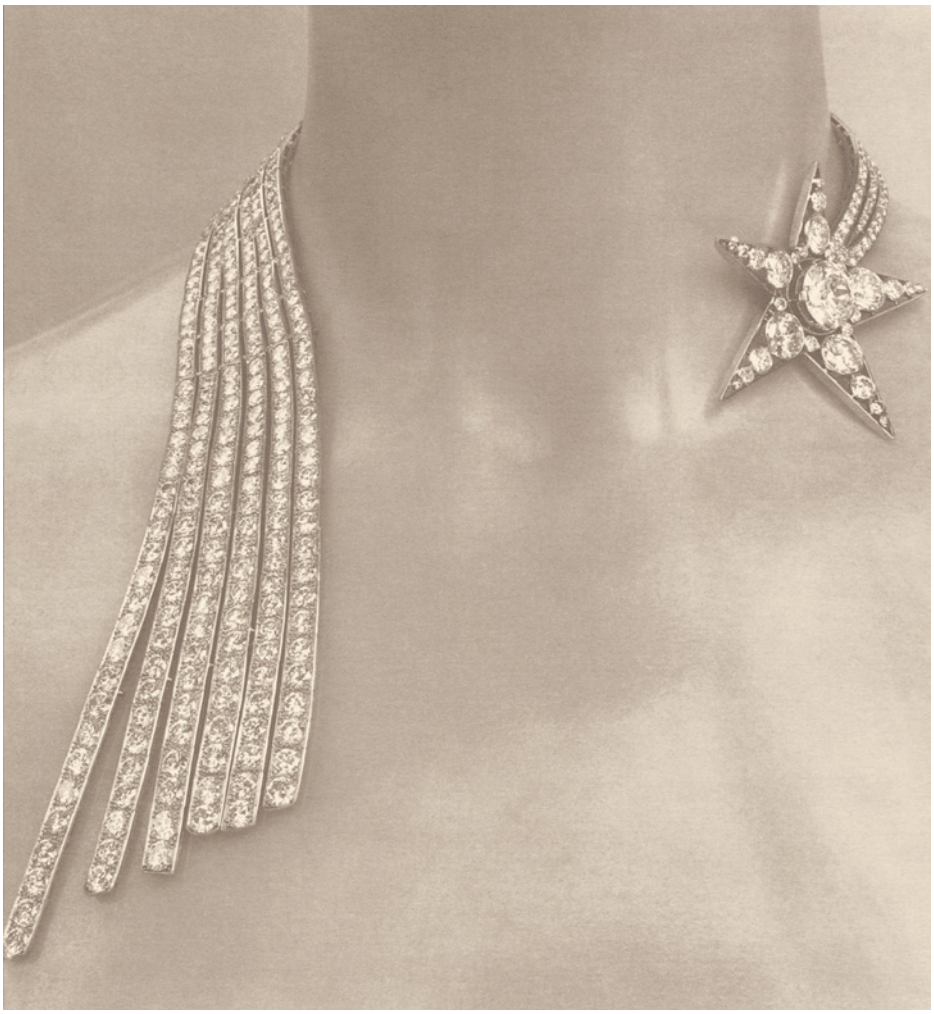
The sapphire-and-diamond Allure Céleste necklace from the 1932 collection (2022). Photo by Atelier Mai 98 (Thomas Dhellemmes and Jeremy Zenou), © Chanel 2022.

Other motifs used by Mlle Chanel are described in this section as well. Fringe began appearing in her evening gowns and other clothing items in the 1920s, either using threads or beads. She brought this design element back when designing the Bijoux de Diamants, incorporating it into headpieces, bracelets and other jewels. Model Monika Krol and actress Carole Bouquet both appeared in a re-edition of the Franges necklace that is based on Gabrielle Chanel's design from 1932. Though the notes indicate that this is a 'necklace', both Mlle Chanel's sketch and Ms Krol use it as a headpiece, while Mlle Bouquet wears it around her neck. Feathers were a theme Mlle Chanel first used in 1925 and would return to many times over the years in her clothing designs. Bijoux de Diamants saw the use of an oversized feather, set with diamonds and completely flexible, in a jewel that could be coiled and worn as a brooch, or unfurled for use as a tiara. The re-issued piece, based on the design from the 1930s, is shown as a tiara, using 18K white gold set with diamonds. She also used ribbons, which called back to her early days as a milliner, in her haute couture and jewellery designs. A more modern take on this design motif is found in the Boucle de Diamants ring from the twenty-first century Lumière collection.



Chanel Watches and Fine Jewelry Boutique, 18 place Vendôme, Paris. Photo © Chanel 2022.

Of the remaining three chapters of the book, two are dedicated to symbols (in the section of the same name) and locations (entitled Spirit) that inspired Gabrielle Chanel's work throughout her life, and thus the work of the House of Chanel after her death (the fourth chapter, Allure, is an extension of the excellent photography found throughout the earlier part of the book; see below). An inveterate traveller, Gabrielle Chanel would also be motivated by the locations she visited, and in turn, the company has continued to create jewels based on the places that she loved to visit or, in the case of Russia and the Far East, absorb the culture at second-hand. In this latter case, one can see the influence of Coromandel screens both in her work and in the work that followed her death. With regard to symbols, some of these themes are established in the introduction; others, such as the symbols of the lion (Mlle Chanel was a Leo), tweed, pearls and the number five are spelled →



The Mète necklace from the Bijoux de Diamants collection created by Gabrielle Chanel (1932). Photo by Robert Bresson, Bijoux de Diamants, Chanel, 1932. Photo © Adagp, Paris 2022.

> Gabrielle Chanel had changed the way that people thought about women's fashion, and she styled her jewels in much the way that she styled clothing.

out in greater detail. Of these, perhaps the connection between the final entry on this list and 'Russians in Paris', in the Spirit chapter is the most intriguing.

Mlle Chanel considered the number five an auspicious number, and she launched all her collections on the fifth day of a given month (including, eventually, the Bijoux de Diamants collection, on 5 November 1932). When creating her perfume, she chose the fifth vial presented to her, and named the product after the vial, sure it would be a success, as indeed it was. Chanel No. 5 was created in 1921 by Ernest Beaux, former perfumer of the Russian Tsar, and after this triumph Mlle Chanel's 'fashion took on a Russian flavour'. Part of this was the influence of her intimate friend, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, cousin of Nicholas II, but she would also meet other Russian émigrés, such as Igor Stravinsky and Serge Diaghilev, who would have an impact on her design choices. The House of Chanel would go on to create jewellery that has roots in these symbols, including the 55.55 necklace in white gold and diamonds. From the Le Paris Russe de Chanel collection, the Roubachka necklace in yellow gold and platinum is set with cultured pearls and yellow and white diamonds, including a 9.50 ct Asscher-cut Fancy Vivid Yellow diamond.

While the text is beautifully written, the major focus cannot help but be on the photography, which is splendidly done. The lavishness of the photos cannot quite be captured in a review; they must be experienced to be genuinely appreciated. Alternating between black-and-white and colour images, beauty shots of jewellery from 1932 – such as the breathtaking Mète necklace – through the present



The Comète Volute transformable brooch/ bracelet from the 1932 collection (2022). Photo by Atelier Mai 98 (Thomas Dhellemmes and Jeremy Zenou), © Chanel 2022.



The Horizon Lointain necklace from the Coromandel collection (2018). Photo by Julien Claessens and Thomas Deschamps, © Chanel 2018.

day are intermingled with historical documents such as newspaper articles and photographs of Gabrielle Chanel at different periods of her life. The authors make use of original sketches, which are peppered throughout the book. Jewellery models and celebrities – including Isabelle Huppert, Julianne Moore, Poppy Delevingne, Vanessa Paradis and Lily-Rose Depp – are featured in stunning pieces. One layout shows actress Keira Knightley in a trio of photos, as if from a photo booth, wearing a re-edition of the Harmonie ring from the Bijoux de Diamants collection. Directly opposite these images, the ring itself appears on a black background, the eye drawn to the two square-set diamonds on their band in this spare setting. The effect is undeniably beautiful.

Jewellery that uses coloured gemstones is given its own time to shine; an extraordinary example is the sapphire-and-diamond Allure Céleste necklace from the *1932* collection; the authors have elected to show both the sketch and a photograph of the necklace in one layout. Another stunning piece is the Golden Burst necklace, from 2021's No. 5 collection, featuring topazes and diamonds, including a 4.51 ct emerald-cut diamond, set in yellow gold and platinum. The necklace is shown at various stages of assembly, and finally, turning the page, the reader finds it around the neck of a model, set against a 'little black dress'. It is beautiful, elegant and très Chanel.

At nearly 530 pages, *Chanel: High Jewelry* is a long, detailed journey through the ninety years of jewellery that Gabrielle Chanel inspired. While this is not a book for one sitting, it is one to be savoured, to be pored over, to be enjoyed for the sheer mastery of clean lines and extravagant beauty that Chanel does so expertly. This book is an investment, both in time and in money, but it is worth the expenditure, in every sense. ■



The 55.55 necklace from the No 5 Collection (2021) is made up of 18K white gold and white diamonds, including a 55.55 ct emerald-cut diamond. Photo © Chanel 2021.

One Jewellery Designer's Meticulous Approach

We were lucky enough to feature the work of Alison Macleod on our cover. From her studio in Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, she sent us some thoughts about how her Happenstance collection was inspired by the gemstones themselves.

My creative process starts by surrounding myself with inspiration. My studio is full of tiny treasures found at flea markets and antiques shops. Usually I lay out ideas in my sketchbook, exploring a multitude of compositions, colours and themes. These loose drawings allow me to work through ideas quickly, always seeking a sense of balance and harmony, like arranging various elements on a desk where diverse components gradually find a connection and form a cohesive whole. This philosophy has always been integral to my creative approach.

Moving into the workbench, I start to bring these imagined pieces to life. My favourite tools are at hand: piercing saw, tweezers, soldering torch, files, mallets and planishing hammers. Each jewellery piece features my signature fish-scale pattern, a technique I've developed called Catkin. I start each new piece in silver, individually creating every tiny scale, then building up the design, soldering each one in place. I cut the finished silver pattern to my desired shape, a mould is made and the shape is cast in gold. This process is marked by its meticulous attention to detail and intricate nature, setting my signature style apart, making it distinctive and memorable. Then each unique jewellery piece is composed. Sometimes the casting is reformed, sometimes I add clusters of stones by making tiny settings to hold each one in place. I work intuitively, responding to the stones I have gathered and the shapes around me while constantly referring to my sketchbook. Finally each piece is given a matt sheen; this soft finish allowing the gems to shine through.



This ring from Alison Macleod's Happenstance collection uses 18K single-mine-origin gold set with an oval tourmaline (0.340 ct), a marquise-cut aquamarine (0.080 ct), a round ruby (0.060 ct) and a brilliant-cut champagne diamond (0.032 ct).

Over recent years I have built a small team around me, each taking on specialised parts of the process and allowing me the space to focus on the creative elements at which I am most adept.

Some of my favourite pieces are from my Happenstance collection, which originated from a collection of gemstones I had gathered over many years. These pieces bring together little groups of stones in an un-curated manner, resulting in unique and unexpected combinations. Unlike many of my other designs, my Happenstance collection did not originate in my sketchbook, but with the stones themselves. Grouping gems together can spark off ideas and inspire new pieces.



Alison Macleod's Happenstance Pear Aqua ring is composed of a 0.57 ct pear-shaped aquamarine, a 0.10 ct brilliant-cut yellow diamond from Botswana and a 0.20 ct oval emerald set in 18K single-mine-origin gold.

An array of precious jewels, encased in single-mine-origin gold, encircle a Catkin-patterned shape to form one-of-a-kind rings, earrings and necklaces.

This has also been a lovely way to approach remodelling my customers' own unworn heirlooms. It brings me such joy to create new from old, giving pieces a new life while still retaining their sentimental value. Jewellery being such a personal item, it is always heartwarming to hear their family stories along the way. The evocative nature of jewellery, alongside the design and handcrafting elements, are the reason that I will never tire of my job. ■



The Happenstance Pink Tourmaline ring features an oval toumaline (0.860 ct), a pear-green tourmaline (0.125 ct) and a brilliant-cut yellow diamond (0.100 ct) mounted in 18K single-mine-origin gold.

All photos by Stacey Bentley, courtesy of Alison Macleod Jewellery.

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