

Gems & Jewellery

Autumn 2025 / Volume 34 / No. 3



INTRODUCING EMERGING
MILLENNIAL JEWELLERS

REFLECTING ON HELEN
SERRAS-HERMAN'S
GEM ARTISTRY

MEDITATING ON THE
WORLD OF AKACHEN

EXPLORING THE
EDWARDIANS AT
THE KING'S GALLERY



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The Gemmological
Association of
Great Britain

Pricing The World's Most Precious Gems

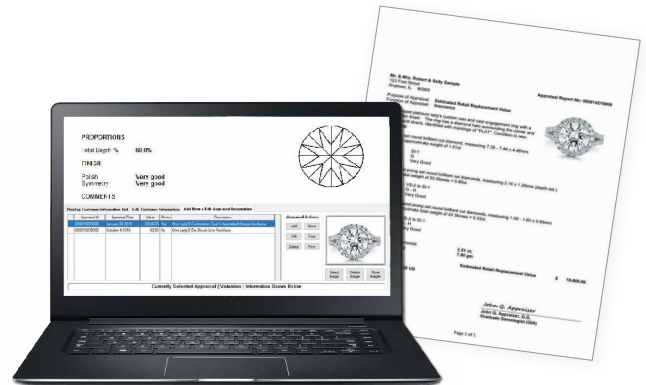


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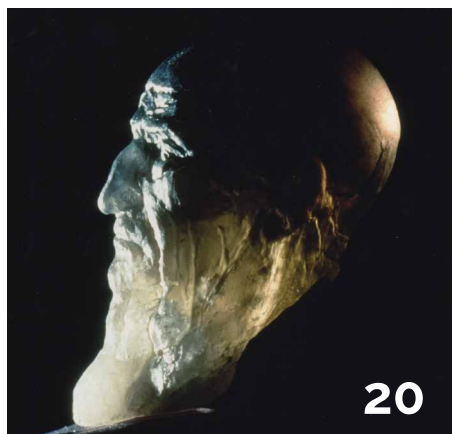
AUTUMN 2025

MILLENNIAL JEWELLERS

Olga González FGA DGA interviews eight designers who are helping to shape the future of the trade.



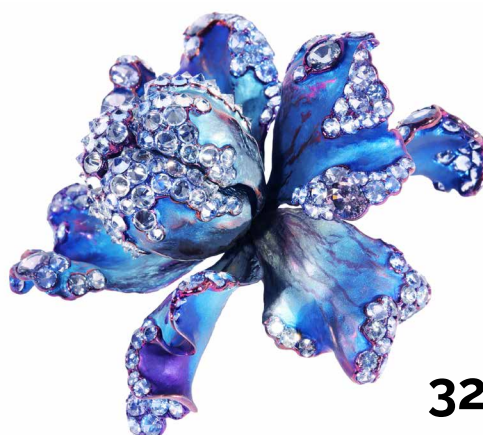
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ARTISTIC MILESTONES RETROSPECTIVE

Helen Serras-Herman MFA FGA reflects on pivotal pieces from her forty-plus years working with gemstones and precious metals.



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AKACHEN

Florian Van Den Brande FGA DGA EG speaks to the groundbreaking Taiwanese artist who has delighted audiences with his creations for three decades.

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COVER PICTURE

At the centre of the Reimagined Jasper necklace is a brown jasper fragment (1st–2nd century CE), surrounded by 19.02 taw round orange zircons, 7.76 taw Umbralite garnets and four Tahitian grey pearls. The finished piece hangs from an 18K gold French 'book' chain (ca. 1865). Photo courtesy of Rebecca Rau Jewels.

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Gems & Jewellery

Autumn 2025 Edition Featured Contributors

1. RACHEL CHURCH

Rachel Church writes and lectures widely on jewellery history and design. She is the author of *Rings* (V&A/ Thames and Hudson 2011 and 2017) and *Brooches and Badges* (V&A/ Thames and Hudson 2019), alongside many shorter articles and contributions to catalogues. She worked as a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum for over 20 years and was part of the team which redeveloped the European Silver Galleries, the Sacred Silver and Stained Glass Galleries and the William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery. She is particularly interested in the social history of jewellery and is currently researching male jewellery. Since 2021, Ms Church has been a freelance lecturer and jewellery researcher, available for both private commissions and institutional projects. Her website, www.thelifeofjewels.com, looks at the stories and history behind jewellery.

2. SAMEER DIN MUHAMMAD FAQIR

Sameer Din Muhammad Faqir is a graduate gemmologist from the International Institution of Gemology (IIG); he is also a certified Coloured Gem Professional through the Gübelin Academy. With over seven

years of experience at Metal Testing Gemological Laboratories (MTGL) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, he specialises in gem identification, grading and analysis. He is a previous contributor to *Gems & Gemology*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Gemological Institute of America.

3. HELEN SERRAS-HERMAN

With over forty years of experience in unique gem sculpture and jewellery art, Helen Serras-Herman MFA FGA has exhibited her award-winning, one-of-a-kind artwork around the world. Her work has been published in over four hundred trade magazines and books. Born in New York City, Ms Serras-Herman studied sculpture (MFA) in Berlin, Germany, and received her Gemmology Diploma from Gem-A in 1988. In 2003, she was inducted into the National Lapidary Hall of Fame. Ms Serras-Herman's book *Carved Gems – Inspiration & Expertise*, published in 2021, follows her artistic journey and her work. She is also a frequent article contributor to a number of magazines, including *Gems & Jewellery*. Ms Serras-Herman has been a member of the American Gem Trade Association (AGTA) since 2003, and the Gem Artists

of North America (GANA) since 1997; she served as president of the latter organisation in 2002–2003. For more information on Ms Serras-Herman and her art, visit www.gemartcenter.com.

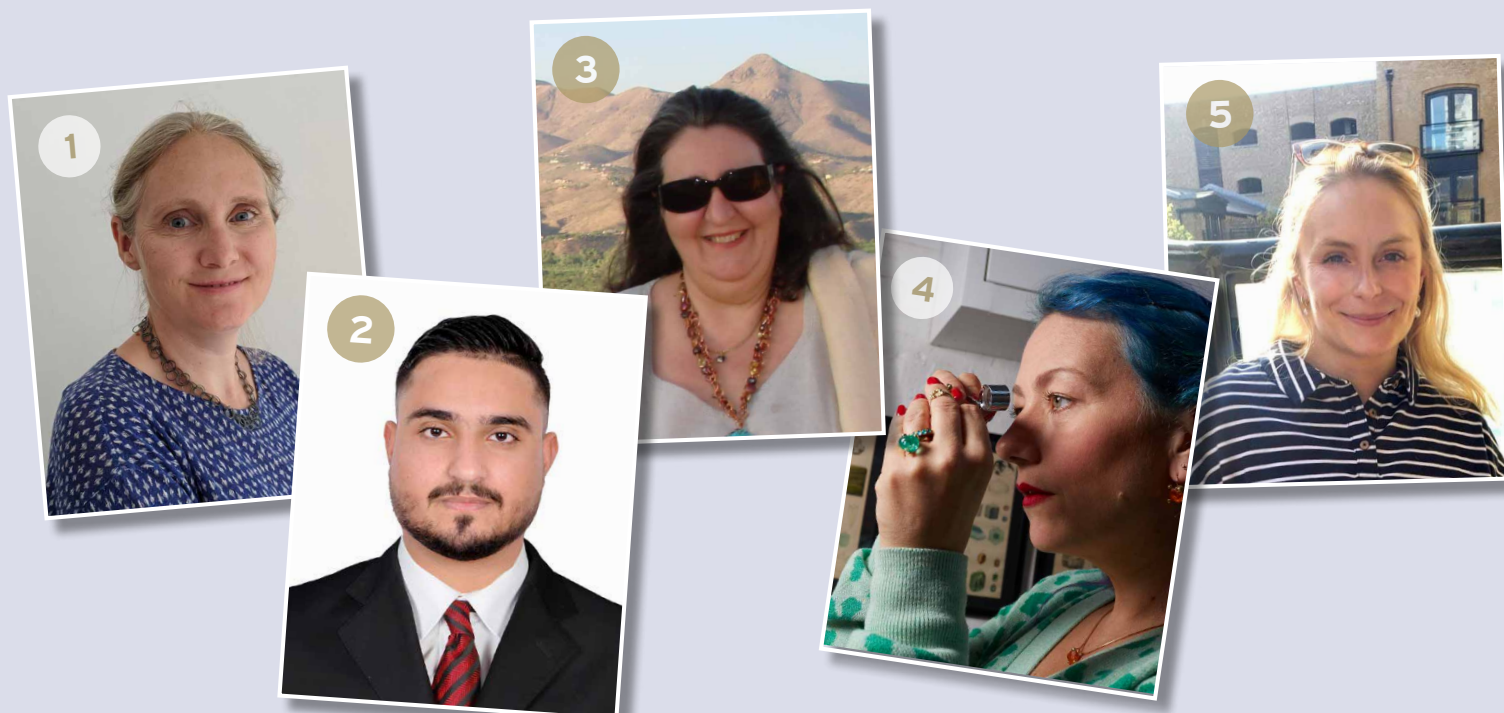
4. SUSI SMITHER

As the founder of The Rock Hound, Susi Smither has dedicated herself to the craft of designing and creating jewellery that is transparent and ethically and responsibly sourced. Her designs show the intersection of her interest in science and her obsession with colour. Since starting The Rock Hound in 2015, her award-winning work has been featured on the pages of *Vogue*, *Professional Jeweller* and other publications. Ms Smither earned her FGA from Gem-A in 2011; she also holds a JDT from GIA and a BSc in maths and management from Kings College London.

5. FLORIANE VAN DEN BRANDE

Floriane Van Den Brande holds both an FGA and a DGA, and is a member of the Federation of European Education in Gemmology. She has worked for two major gemstone dealers in London's Hatton Garden while teaching the Foundation Course at Gem-A's headquarters. Ms Van Den Brande recently moved to Sweden, where she is working at Kaplan's, one of Scandinavia's leading auction houses focused on jewellery, watches and fashion.

Special thanks to Mackenzie Rush.



From the CEO

Opinion and comment from CEO Cath Hill

I hope you are all having a wonderful autumn. Gem-A's London HQ is an absolute hive of activity, with students studying our Foundation, Gemmology Diploma and Diamond Diploma courses during the day and in the evening. It is very exciting for me to meet so many keen gemmology students in one place! The autumn courses have seen an excellent uptake; online student numbers are good as well. Having passed my Foundation exam, I myself am now enjoying the Diploma classes on Monday and Tuesday evenings onsite at HQ.

I attended the annual conference of the Jewellery Valuers Association (JVA) in September, and it was wonderful to meet more members of the gemmological community. I was delighted to be able to address the audience and to have the opportunity to talk about the future of Gem-A. Two of the keynote speakers at the event, both holders of Antonio Bonnano Awards for Excellence in Gemology, offered to come to London after the JVA conference to talk to our students. We were very honoured to host Robert Weldon, former director of GIA's Richard T. Liddicoat Gemmological Library and Information Center at GIA in Carlsbad, California and a world-renowned gem photographer, who spoke to our Foundation and Diploma evening students. Dr Çiğdem

Lule FGA DGA, the leading expert in archaogemmology and a speaker at the 2025 Gem-A Conference, spoke to our daytime Diploma class. My thanks again to both Robert and Çiğdem!

I also attended the annual Goldsmiths' Fair in late September and met up with old friends and new, including Juliette Hibou FGA DGA (Gem-A); Beth West FGA DGA (De Beers); Joanna Hardy FGA DGA, chair of the Gem-A Board; and Laurent Cartier FGA (SSEF). I also saw Mia Vilcins, recipient of the Gem-A Award at the 2025 Goldsmiths' Craft & Design Council Awards for her Dirty Martini piece, composed of carved agate, silver and glass. This piece was shown in the Spring 2025 issue of *Gems&Jewellery*.

I am pleased to announce that the annual Photographer of the Year competition is open for submission. This year, we are looking for the best photomicrographs from the past twelve months, and our panel of judges are looking forward to selecting the best images. The first-prize winner receives a one-year membership to the Association and has their photo on the cover of the Winter 2025 issue of *G&J*. This year's contest also includes a People's Choice award, bestowed on the photo that receives the most votes on Facebook. Details can be found on Gem-A's social media channels and in this issue of *G&J*.



Speaking of *G&J*, the Autumn issue has content to capture the interest of all our readers. Our lead article is about jewellery designers from the millennial generation, which makes up about 25% of contemporary consumers. This cohort is well informed about their purchases and values intentional, ethical consumption from brands that align with their principles. Olga González FGA DGA converses with eight up-and-coming designers who embrace these ideals and are helping to shape the jewellery industry for years to come.

Arizona-based gem artist Helen Serras-Herman MFA FGA is a longtime supporter of Gem-A who has delighted and intrigued people with her work for over forty years. Her inspiration comes from her early education, her travels and her life experiences. She has provided a retrospective of her four decades in the trade, in which she explores the themes and resulting designs of her extraordinary career. Other articles include an introduction to the Taiwanese gem artist Aka Chen, founder of the eponymous studio; and reviews of *The Edwardians: Age of Elegance* and *Cosmic Splendor: Jewels from the Collections of Van Cleef & Arpels*, at the King's Gallery and the American Museum of Natural History, respectively. ■

I hope you all have a wonderful autumn, and that you enjoy this issue of *Gems&Jewellery*.



Cath Hill (centre) with Laurent Cartier FGA (left) and Joanna Hardy FGA DGA (right) at the Goldsmiths' Fair in September 2025.

Harmonious Features in a Rare Opal

Sameer Din Muhammad Faqir examines a stunning gemstone that shows a combination of visual characteristics not usually found in the same specimen.

This remarkable opal is a 10.47-carat oval cabochon of Australian origin, exhibiting a semi-transparent white bodycolour with striking dendritic, or branchlike, inclusions. It was presented to the Metal Testing Gemological Laboratories (MTGL) in Saudi Arabia for analysis because of its unique combination of features. While dendritic opals are relatively common, the presence of such patterns alongside a vivid play-of-colour makes this gemstone extremely rare. This coexistence of tree-like inclusions and spectral flashes immediately drew professional interest.

Using a gemmological microscope at 50× magnification with fibre-optic illumination and a 15-mm field of view, detailed photomicrographs were captured, highlighting both the dendrites and the play-of-colour. The inclusions are consistent with manganese or iron oxides, which form under special geochemical conditions that normally interfere with the formation of precious opal's silica-sphere structure. In this case, however, both features — the dendritic inclusions and the play-of-colour — developed without disturbing one another. The dendritic patterns spread across the stone like fine brushstrokes, as though painted by nature itself, yet they do not obscure its beautiful play-of-colour. This perfect harmony between inclusion and structure makes the specimen exceptional. It is not only an aesthetic rarity, but also a scientifically significant gemstone, providing insight into the geological processes behind opal formation. Such pieces are ideal candidates for academic study, museum display or inclusion in high-end collections, as they combine natural beauty with gemmological importance. ■



This 10.47-carat Australian opal shows an unusual combination of features: play-of-colour alongside dendritic inclusions. Photos by Sameer Din Muhammad Faqir; field of view 15 mm.

GETTING TO KNOW MILLENNIAL JEWELLERS

Olga González FGA DGA profiles eight jewellery designers who are helping to shape the future of the trade.

Across studios from New York to Geneva, a new guard of millennial designers is reshaping fine jewellery with intention at its core. These groundbreaking jewellers are part of a generation that was born roughly between 1981–1996 and are known to prioritise real-life experiences; ethical, sustainable consumption, and self-expression. These attitudes are shaping the jewellery industry of the future. Members of the trade and customers alike prize resonance over spectacle, story over trend and craftsmanship that is meant to be worn. In their hands, gold becomes language, stones become memory and technology is a tool in service of touch.

This feature brings together eight distinct voices, whose work spans sound and science, antiquity and imagination, architectural restraint, colour and connection, heritage and modern grace. Each designer invites us to see jewellery not only as adornment, but as a way to mark who we are and how we move through the world.

RUVEIL: SOUND, SCIENCE AND SOUL

Gabrielle Saunders,
Designer/Founder
Instagram: @RuveilDesignHouse

Gabrielle Saunders sees jewellery as more than ornamentation; rather, it is energy made visible. As the designer and founder of Ruveil, Ms Saunders approaches each creation as both an artistic expression and a spiritual practice. "I was born with the love of adornment," she says. "Jewellery design was the only path I wanted to pursue. I like to say that it chose me."

From a young age, Ms Saunders was fascinated by how something small could hold immense meaning. Her early years were spent in pre-college programs at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), the Rhode Island

School of Design (RISD) and the Tyler School of Art before formally studying jewellery design at Pratt Institute. That foundation evolved into a deep curiosity about gemstones: their structure, vibration, and the emotions they carry. "That curiosity led me to earn my Graduate Gemologist and Graduate Pearl diplomas at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA)," she explained. "Over time, jewellery became both my creative language and my spiritual practice."

Ruveil's 200hz Ring is composed of a 3.5 ct hexagonal-cut smoky quartz and 0.87 taw conflict-free natural white diamonds set in 14K yellow gold. Photo by LenFlash Photography.



The Apollonian Gasket earrings from Ruveil are made from 12.00 taw ametrine, 14.00 taw fluorite and 0.36 taw white diamonds. Photo by LenFlash Photography.

How is the millennial perspective reflected in the way you design?

I think millennials value meaning over materialism. We want connection, purpose and authenticity in what we create and share. For me, that means designing jewellery that goes beyond adornment. My work is about resonance: emotionally, energetically and aesthetically. I also love being transparent about my process and values.

Describe a new collection, and the story behind it.

My latest collection, Cymatics, is inspired by the way sound frequencies shape matter, and how vibration gives rise to form. Each piece draws from cymatic patterns that emerge when sound moves through sand, water or small particles, revealing intricate mandalas of resonance. I wanted to explore the intersection between gemmology and sound, and how the crystal lattice of each gemstone has a unique vibration, creating its own frequency signature. It is a celebration of the unseen and the energy that connects everything.

One of my favourite pieces is a pendant from the Cymatics collection that mirrors the 528Hz 'love frequency' pattern. The 528Hz frequency is found in almost every living organism, from human DNA to chlorophyll. Bees buzz,

plants vibrate and even the air we breathe pulses at this frequency. The creation of this piece was the first time I felt a true synthesis of my two worlds of gemmology and sound. Bringing this design to life felt like channelling something larger than myself, and it inspired a full collection that continues to grow and expand.

What role does technology play in your design process?

Technology allows me to bridge the seen and unseen and create a balance between technical precision and creative intuition. In my latest collection, I used computer-aided design (CAD) modelling to bring precise cymatic geometries into form, and sound visualisation software to translate frequencies into design patterns.

How do your personal identity and background influence your work?

As a certified Sound Meditation facilitator and trained gemmologist, I love blending precision with flow. The Crystal Alchemy bowls I use are infused with gemstones and precious metals, and I curate them not just for their sound frequencies, but for their crystal structures and energetic qualities. My work really lives at the crossroads of sound, science and design.

As she continues to grow Ruveil, Ms Saunders hopes the jewellery world will evolve alongside a new generation of mindful creators. "I hope we continue to see a shift toward mindful luxury — jewellery that carries emotional resonance, not just aesthetic appeal," she says. "We're drawn to pieces that tell us who we are, where we've been and how we want to show up in the world."

Her advice for emerging designers is simple yet profound: "Stay true to your vision, even when it doesn't fit the



The 963hz Pendant, from Ruveil's Cymatics collection, uses 0.80 ctw conflict-free natural white diamonds mounted in 14K yellow gold. Photo by LenFlash Photography.

traditional mould. The world doesn't need another version of what already exists." Through Ruveil, Gabrielle Saunders invites us to listen closely to the frequencies of beauty, story and soul.

REBECCA RAU JEWELS: WHERE ANTIQUITY MEETS IMAGINATION

Rebecca Rau, Principal
Instagram: @rebeccaraujewels

Fourth-generation antique dealer and designer Rebecca Rau sees jewellery as an intersection of history, art and storytelling. Ms Rau draws upon her deep family roots in antiques, fine art and jewellery dealing to create modern masterpieces that reimagine the past. "Like so many of us in this old-world trade, I entered the business thanks to

family," she shared. "But it never fully scratched my creative itch. I've always been artistically inclined, so I decided to take a leap of faith and pursue jewellery design as a professional path. It's allowed me to combine passion and expertise."

Who or what are some of your biggest creative influences?

I love craft and visionary art. I love to mesh the high and the lowbrow. I'm enchanted by imperfections and aesthetic quirks, especially when it draws attention to something handmade.

Describe a new collection, and the story behind it.

I'm currently launching the THEN & NOW collection, which combines rare ancient artifacts as old as 1200 BCE with modern gemstones. It is a way for me to demonstrate and celebrate my love for human history and manmade objects while creating pieces that are less than conventional. There's so much magnificent jewellery already in existence in this world, and I want to bring something unique to the conversation if I am going to contribute. →

Ms Rau sees the modern jewellery landscape as one in flux, a tension between fast fashion and fine craftsmanship.

When I created the Criss-Cross necklace, I felt as though I was really hitting my stride with THEN & NOW. The bronze pendant base dates from 1200–800 BCE. I wanted to maintain its exquisite ancient patina while adding some complementary bright pink sparkle. When I realised we could use its existing holes/negative space as stone seats, and use gold to sandwich the bronze to hold the gems in place — rather than lasering or soldering to it, which would change its appearance — it felt like we were really cooking with gas. To me, the piece beautifully marries masculine with feminine, new with old. And finding the exquisite Victorian lariat book chain to hang it from was the cherry on top.

Do you see yourself as keeping jewellery-making traditions alive, reinventing them or creating something entirely new?

Right: The centrepiece of the Protectrice necklace from Rebecca Rau Jewels is a thirteenth-century Spanish gilt-bronze harness, accentuated by a 11.68 ct unheated pink tourmaline alongside Tahitian baroque pearls and hung from a 18K yellow-gold Victorian chain.

Below: The Beyond Bactria necklace from Rebecca Rau Jewels is anchored by an extraordinary wheel-shaped bronze seal stamp with geometric motifs dating to 1200–800 BCE. It is accented by grey spinels and Tahitian and South Sea pearls, and is set in oxidised silver.

I am trying to reinvent traditions ancient and recent, but I aspire to experiment with technology more in the next few years. Thus far I've only used 3D scanning of gemstones for their utilisation in CAD designs. But I have long wanted to try scanning organic or found materials, scaling and distorting them in my jewellery design. I've noticed there seems to be a rift

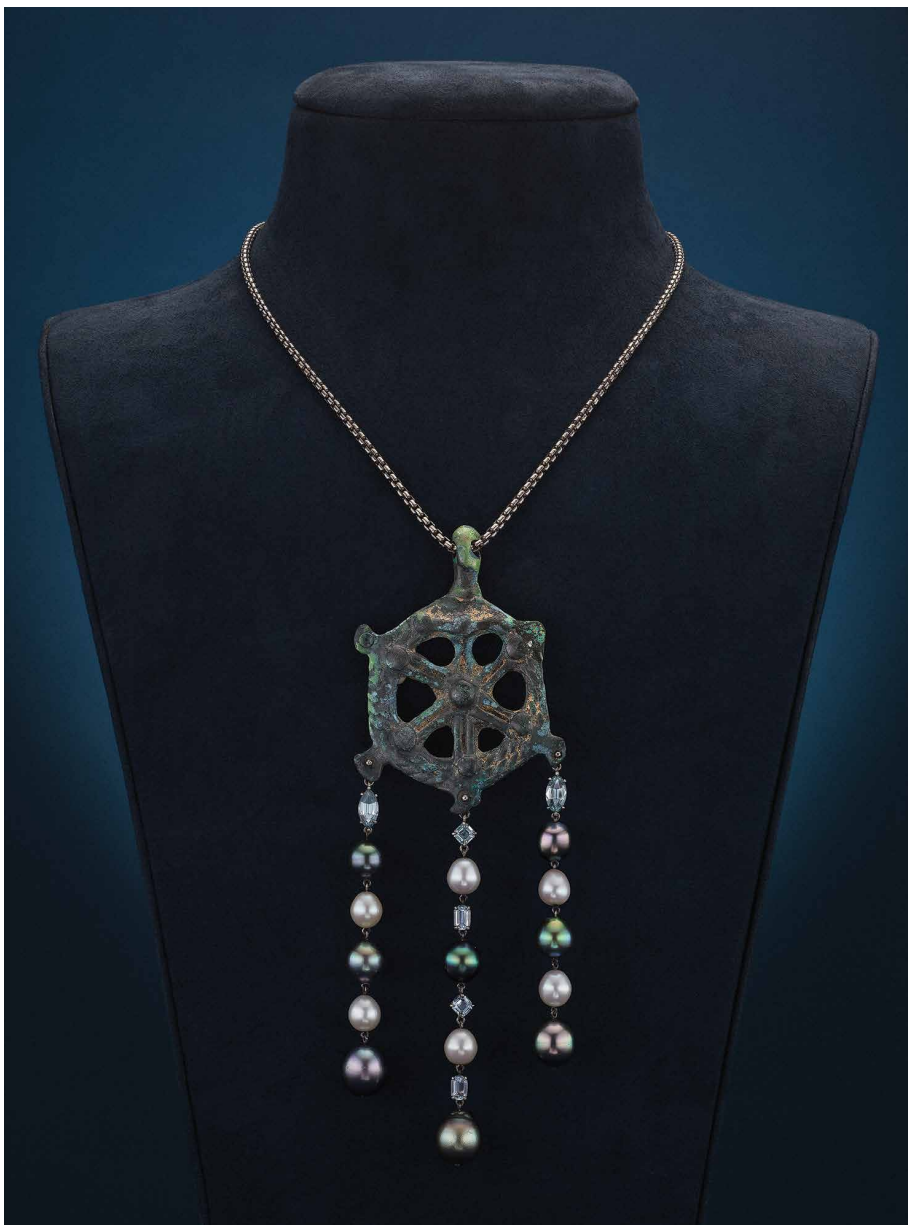
between the high and fine jewellery world and the art jewellery world, and I'm curious to see if I can help these meet somewhere in the middle.

What values are reflected in your work, and how do you integrate those values into your collections?

I'm 'all-natural gems, all the time'. I believe in supporting this ancient tradition and the global economy. I work with AGTA-vetted dealers to help ensure integrity and quality in my gem sourcing. In the future, when I'm more established, I am interested in exploring single-mine-origin gold.

Ms Rau sees the modern jewellery landscape as one in flux, a tension between fast fashion and fine craftsmanship. "I occasionally see the fast-fashion mindset tainting our generation's relationship to jewellery," she reflected. "There's hesitancy around larger investments, even among those who have achieved wealth. I encourage my peers to worry less about trends and care more about style." For her, jewellery is both adornment and artifact, a bridge between eras, ideas and emotions. "I'm trying to reinvent traditions, ancient and recent," she said. "Jewellery is the perfect medium for exploring what endures and what evolves."

When asked what she hopes to see in the industry's future, Ms Rau did not hesitate to say "that I want more independent jewellers to get the recognition they deserve. It's amazing to see the innovation happening outside the big houses." Her advice to emerging designers is equally straightforward: "Do your gemmology studies and try to learn CAD before diving in."



MADE BY MALYIA: SCULPTING STORIES IN GOLD

Malyia McNaughton,
Founder/Designer
Instagram: @madebymalyia

For Malyia McNaughton, founder and designer of Made by Malyia, jewellery is movement, memory and meaning cast in gold. Her pieces balance strength and sensuality, structure and story. "Jewellery started as my refuge," she says. "It became a way to express what I couldn't always say out loud."

Ms McNaughton came to jewellery through self-expression rather than inheritance. After several years as a fashion buyer, and with a background in fashion merchandising and product development, she began creating jewellery as a hobby. "I wanted jewellery that spoke differently," she recalled. "The first necklace I finished led to quiet requests from friends, then clients. Only later did I realise the spark began when I was five, when my mother gave me my first gold bangle. Its weight, curve and simplicity still guide my proportions today." Her approach evolved through travel and study. Encounters with artisans and materials across Botswana, South Africa, India, France and the UK deepened her appreciation for how culture, craftsmanship and nature intertwine.

Formal training at GIA cemented her expertise, allowing her to merge creative intuition with technical precision.

Who or what are some of your biggest creative influences?

New York trained my eye. I'm that person who stares up at bridges and notices the quiet hardware that holds the city together. Bolts, rivets, fire escapes, the rhythm of subway grates. Those lines show up in my work as clean geometry, engineered joints and negative space that lets light breathe.

My Caribbean heritage keeps me grounded in warmth, movement and storytelling. I think about the curve of a bangle my mother gave me, the glow of skin against gold and the way celebration lives in small, intentional details. The ocean is a constant reference. Shell spirals, wave edges and constellations guide the proportions I choose and how stones are set.

From learning how diamonds move through Botswana and South Africa to visiting cutting rooms in India, to studying design sensibilities in Paris and London, I collect textures, colours and forms. Museums and street art are right next to architecture in my sketchbook. I am as inspired by a Richard Serra curve as I am by a wrought-iron gate or a hand-painted sign in a market.



In her Soleil pendant, comprising 1.25 tawny round and marquise-cut diamonds set in 14K yellow gold, Malyia McNaughton captured the beauty and energy of the Sun.

"When supply chains reward integrity and design excellence, everyone wins."



The two-finger Wave ring from Made by Malyia uses 1.36 tawny diamonds set in 14K white gold.

Because I came to jewellery through fashion, I design with the body and wardrobe in mind. I love pieces that shift with you. A pendant that clips into a choker, an ear cuff that stacks with studs, a ring that can be worn two ways. I look to design houses that balance bold shape with timeless proportion, then translate that into mechanisms and silhouettes that feel modern, personal and easy to live in. Nature, architecture, art and travel are not separate lanes for me. They are one conversation about structure and emotion. My job is to distil all of that into gold and stone so that the piece feels like a story you can wear.

What is a jewel that you designed that has a particularly meaningful story for you?

My Muzo Emerald Embrace ring holds a special place in my heart. It is crafted in 18K yellow gold around a beautiful Muzo emerald, and it was my first coloured-gemstone piece. That project challenged me and taught me something essential about my voice as a designer. I prefer to design from the stone outward. I let the gem lead, then build a form that protects it, frames it and lets the light do its work.

The ring's language comes from the ocean. I shaped the gold to suggest two waves meeting, with intentional negative space so the emerald feels

suspended, like water catching light. The hue of the stone carries the story. A few weeks after I finished it, I wore the ring outside and a bee landed right on the emerald. It felt like nature nodding back at me, a quiet confirmation that the piece captured the feeling I hoped for. I am proud of the clarity and restraint in that design, and it continues to remind me to listen to the stone first and let the rest unfold.

What innovative approaches are you using to reach today's consumer?

I meet clients where they are. I provide short-form videos of my process, virtual try-ons, micro-content that teaches gem basics and pop-ups that feel like studio visits. The power of social media can't be understated. I create videos to provide consumers with a peek into my process. I show the inspiration of my travels on my designs through posts related to what inspired a particular piece.

What are your hopes for the future of the jewellery industry as more Gen Z and millennial voices rise to the forefront?

I want an industry that is transparent and easier to enter, with less barriers. My hope is that we open the doors wide so Gen Z and younger creatives can see how this world really works, from design concept to CAD to the bench. The learning curve can be steep, and that alone keeps great talent out. Clear pathways, paid apprenticeships, school-to-studio pipelines and accessible education would change that.

I also want consumers to have a real peek behind the curtain, so they understand what it takes to make a piece, who touches it and why responsible sourcing and fair labour matter. When supply chains reward integrity and design excellence, everyone wins. More visibility creates more trust, more ideas and more authentic self-expression. I am committed to that future through my

From the Tough Enough collection, Farine Jewels' Harmony earrings use ~0.25 tcw green tourmaline set in 18K yellow gold. Photo by LenFlash Photography.



Rachel Kupasrimonkol crafted the Savor necklace for Farine Jewels from a 1.83 ct peridot, 18K yellow gold and platinum. Photo by LenFlash Photography.

own teaching and mentorship, and by showing the process to my community so the next generation can see themselves in this craft.

Ms McNaughton's advice for emerging designers is clear: "Start small and start now. Your voice is your asset. Learn the bench basics, know your numbers, document your process and find mentors who will trade knowledge with you. The right people will find you when you show up consistently and with purpose." Through Made by Malyia, Ms McNaughton continues to redefine what modern fine jewellery looks like: intelligent, intentional and deeply human.

FARINE JEWELS: BUILDING CONNECTION THROUGH COLOUR

*Rachel Kupasrimonkol,
Founder and CEO
Instagram: @farinejewels*

Rachel Kupasrimonkol of Farine Jewels believes that every design begins with a conversation. Her jewellery is a language of memory, connection and quiet confidence, pieces that invite wearers to see themselves reflected in stone and metal. "When I design," she said, "I think about how people connect. I want my pieces to feel like shared experiences made tangible."

Ms Kupasrimonkol's path to jewellery was not linear. After a career in tech and marketing, she found her calling during the stillness of the pandemic. "The beauty that nature creates in gemstones pulled me in," she recalled. "I went down a rabbit hole of learning online—each post about gemstones led

Her journey to jewellery began not in a studio, but in the stillness of reflection.



me to research more. I couldn't believe how little I knew as a jewellery lover." When a layoff in 2023 forced her to reconsider her next move, she took it as a sign. "My mother-in-law suggested, 'Why not now?'"

What is a jewel that you designed that has a particularly meaningful story for you?

The Reinforcement Initial is one of the simplest, but most significant, pieces for me. When I started in my brand and business, I was full of self-doubt; honestly, some days I'm still questioning whether or not I'm doing things right. But I would notice that if I got a compliment or a vote of confidence every once in a while, it would give me the fuel I needed to push through to my next goal. That positive reinforcement has really played a role in helping me put one foot in front of the other and to keep my business moving forward, even when things felt stalled or lagging. It was a reminder that I was just in my own head. People were seeing my progress, and their positive reinforcement pushed me out of my slump. The Reinforcement Initial is my way of honouring those people. The piece is an initial that has a strategically placed rondelle that rotates. Every time I start to doubt myself, touching the pendant and feeling the motion of the rondelle breaks me out of my shell and brings me back into reality, where my business is growing and moving.

What values are reflected in your work, and how do you integrate those values into your collections?

Transparency and commitment to quality are two values on which I will not compromise. I think that sometimes consumers gripe about pricing or assumed quality because they don't understand the process that a piece has to go through in order to arrive at their doorstep. I'm committed to honesty around how my pieces are made and I share a lot of that process through my social media channels. Additionally, I personally review every piece we make at every step of the process. I will never send something out that I wouldn't personally wear. I started out photographing my pieces

on my own and refused to manipulate the photos of those pieces, because I wanted people to see what they really looked like. To get the photos I wanted, the pieces had to be flawless.

What do you think Gen Z and millennials are looking for in jewellery today, as compared to other generations?

I think these generations aren't really looking for timeless designs as much as the older generations did. They want to tell their own stories through their jewellery, and they are seeking unique or even custom designs. This feels evident through how engagement rings have evolved, from just a simple solitaire to Taylor Swift's engagement ring by Kindred Lubeck or Kira Kirby's engagement ring by DYNE.

Farine Jewels' Mega Double Date pendant, from the Moments of Joy collection, is composed of 4.41 tcw teal tourmaline and ~0.10 tcw natural diamond mounted in 18K yellow gold. Photo by LenFlash Photography.



Rachel Kupasrimonkol's vision for the jewellery industry is as bold as her use of colour. "I hope we can find new fine materials to work with," she said. "Gold will always be beautiful, but its rising cost makes jewellery less accessible. I want to explore alternatives without sacrificing quality or emotion." Her advice for emerging jewellers mirrors her own journey: "Take your time. Draw from within. Everything's been done before—but not by you. Your quirks are your power. Be intentional, be meticulous, and let your story lead." For Rachel Kupasrimonkol, Farine Jewels conducts an ongoing dialogue between memory, material and meaning, proving that beauty lives where vulnerability meets design.



COCOEROW FINE JEWELRY: SCULPTING THE BOLD STORIES OF HERITAGE

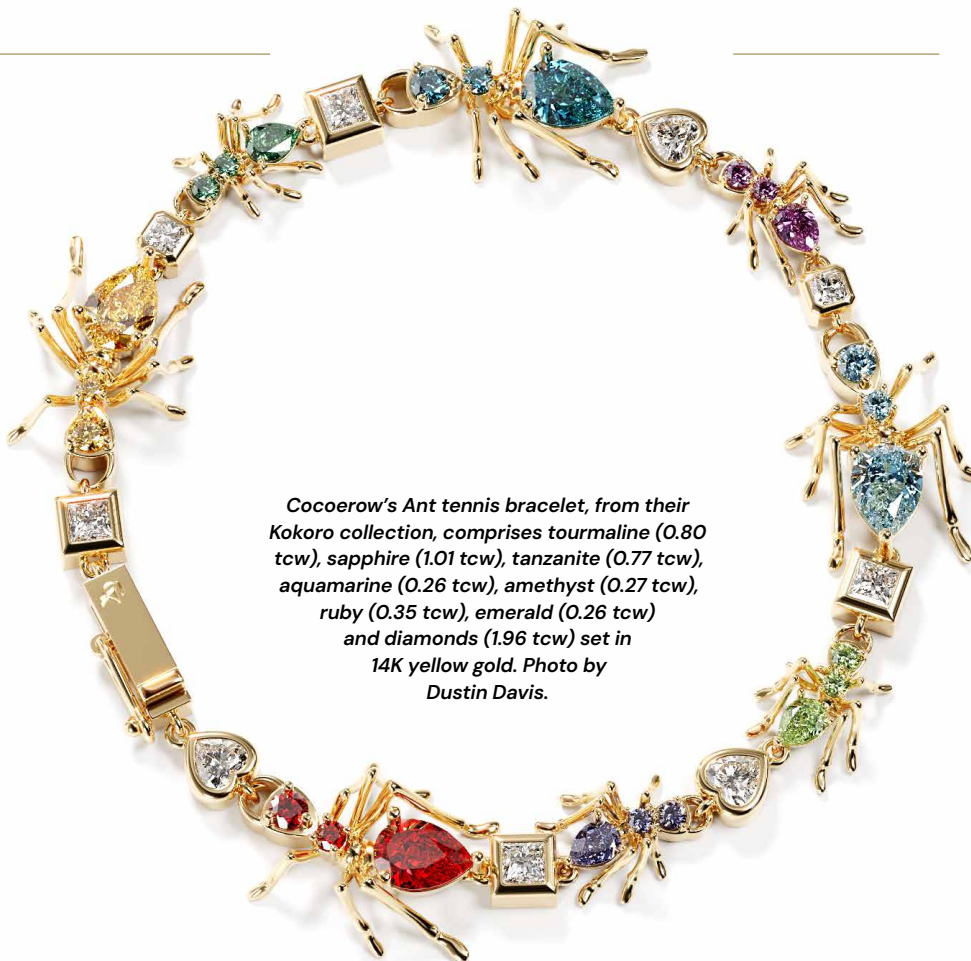
Christine Olowonira,
Founder and Designer
Instagram: @cocoerow

Each piece that Christine Olowonira creates for Cocoerow Fine Jewelry acts as a vessel of heritage, form and emotion. They are sculptural translations of her dual identity as a Nigerian-American woman raised in a world where beauty and meaning were inseparable. "My journey into jewellery began with a desire to see my identity and experiences reflected in the pieces I wore," she remarked. "I wanted to create adornment that felt personal, powerful and rooted in story."

Her childhood was shaped by two profound creative forces: the bold elegance of Nigerian women and the architectural sensibility of her father. "My father was trained in architecture," she recalls. "He taught me to see structure and space in everything." That foundation—form meeting spirit—remains the core of Cocoerow's design philosophy today. At Cocoerow, jewellery is not just worn; it's lived, reminding us that beauty, like heritage, is a story forever in progress.

Before launching her brand, Ms Olowonira honed her eye in high fashion, working with houses including Valentino, Oscar de la Renta and Céline. "Those experiences taught me the business of luxury," she says, "but I also noticed a gap. Fine jewellery rarely reflected diverse stories or cultural nuance. Cocoerow was born to fill that space." As a first-generation Nigerian-American, Ms Olowonira brings a vital perspective to an industry long dominated by Western narratives.

"I wanted to create adornment that felt personal, powerful and rooted in story."



Cocoerow's Ant tennis bracelet, from their Kokoro collection, comprises tourmaline (0.80 tcw), sapphire (1.01 tcw), tanzanite (0.77 tcw), aquamarine (0.26 tcw), amethyst (0.27 tcw), ruby (0.35 tcw), emerald (0.26 tcw) and diamonds (1.96 tcw) set in 14K yellow gold. Photo by Dustin Davis.

"My background lets me merge tradition with contemporary form," she stated. "It's about duality—heritage and modernity, symbolism and sculpture."

Describe a collection you're working on, and the story behind it.

I am currently working on my fourth collection, titled DINE. This body of work is centred on the indulgence of life's pleasures and how we experience them through sight, touch and taste. My goal with this collection was to create jewellery that feels deeply sensory, pieces that are not only worn but savoured, much like a memorable meal or a moment that lingers in your memory. Inspired by the enchanting beauty of nature and the art of culinary creation, DINE explores how pleasure and desire can be awakened through form, texture and colour. The designs are sculptural and bold, echoing the organic curves of food while capturing the richness and ritual of dining — from the gleam of diamonds reminiscent of seeds and sauces, to vibrant gemstones that mirror ripe fruit, rare spices and crafted cocktails. Each piece is designed to invite touch and spark curiosity,

encouraging the wearer to experience jewellery in a more intimate and indulgent way. In this sense, DINE is not only about adornment; it is also about experience. It transforms indulgence into something tangible, wearable and lasting – a reminder that life's most beautiful pleasures are meant to be worn, celebrated and enjoyed.

What is a jewel that you designed that has a particularly meaningful story for you?

Two such pieces are the Kokoro stud earring and the Ant tennis bracelet. Both pieces celebrate boldness and the profound impact that even the smallest things can have. The Kokoro pieces, cherished by my clients and myself, are regarded as sacred heirlooms, symbols of memory, connection and legacy. Kokoro translates to 'ant' in Yoruba, reflecting the strength and presence found in the smallest forms. Through these designs, I create jewellery that allows the wearer to see themselves within a shared narrative; I create a story to be treasured and passed down to those they love. For me, these pieces are about strength, heritage and the enduring beauty of objects imbued with meaning.

Many jewellers emphasise storytelling. What story do you share with your jewellery?

The story I share with my jewellery is one of connection, heritage and the beauty found in life's smallest moments. Each piece is designed to be more than an adornment. I create jewellery that invites the wearer to see themselves within a shared story. They allow the wearer to feel intimacy, strength and joy through each design. My pieces are meant to be worn, cherished and passed down, becoming part of the wearer's own legacy.

How do you see the role of jewellery evolving?

I see jewellery for my generation evolving to serve expression, and investment, with a stronger focus on personal meaning and storytelling. There's also a clear shift toward conscious consumption, with ethically sourced materials and designs meant to be inherited rather than disposable.

What are your hopes for the future of the jewellery industry?

As more of the voices of millennials and Generation Z rise to the forefront, I hope to see major jewellery brands invest in talented small designers and retailers expand their offerings to include independent creators, particularly Black and Brown designers. This is critical because the fine-jewellery industry has long been dominated by white men, with 62.8% of jewellers identifying as white compared to just 2.7% identifying as Black or African American. This lack of diversity is reflected not only in the workforce but also in leadership, marketing and the stories being told. Elevating a broader range of voices is essential to fostering innovation, equity and a more vibrant, inclusive creative landscape for the future.

Ms Olowonira's hope for the future of jewellery is one of representation and renewal. At its heart, Cocoerow Fine Jewelry creates modern heirlooms infused with story and strength.

"If you have a story to tell or visuals to share with the world," Ms Olowonira advised, "don't stop until your story is heard and your work is seen. Stay persistent, stay true and let your passion guide you. The world needs your vision." In her hands, luxury becomes language. Each Cocoerow creation embodies both lineage and innovation.

CARO VILLA JEWELS: REDEFINING REFINEMENT

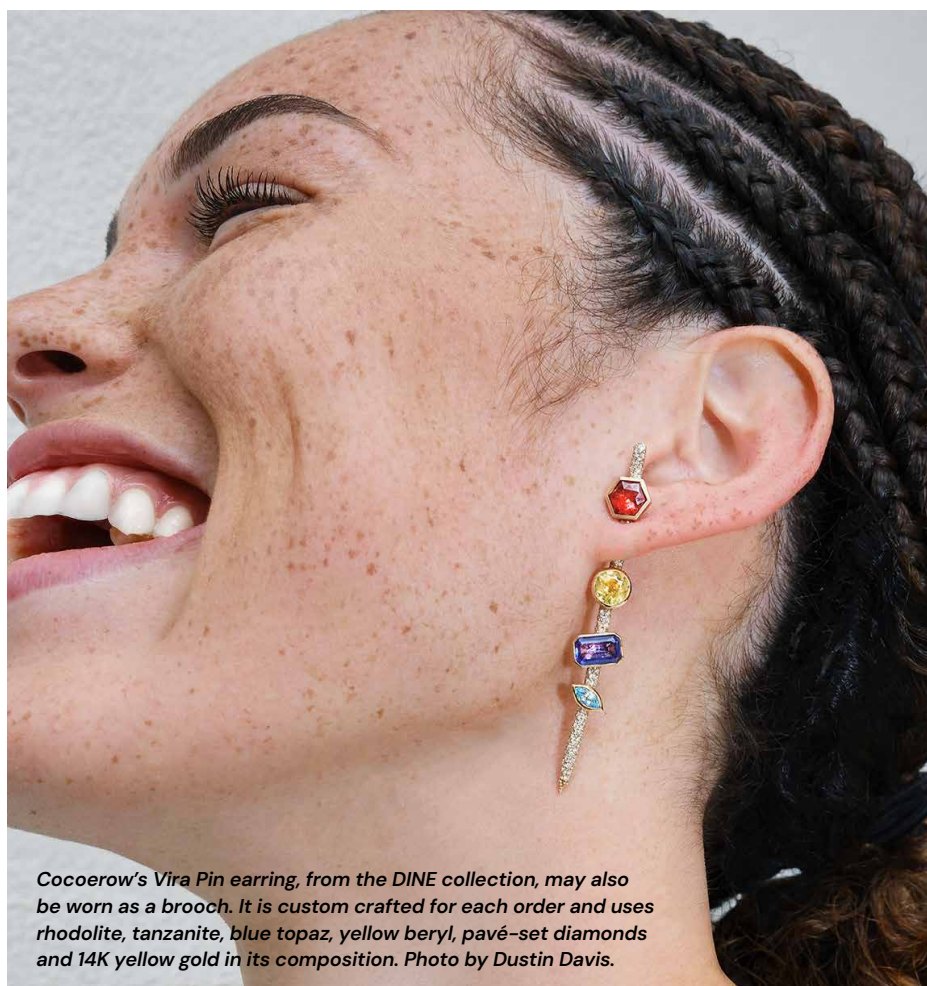
Carolyn Villa Fulton, Founder
Instagram: @carovillajewels

Carolyn Villa Fulton considers jewellery to be an exercise in quiet precision. Her pieces are not about excess but equilibrium, meticulously proportioned designs that marry strength and softness, architecture and intimacy. "I've always been drawn to balance," she observed. "Whether in a building's curve, a photograph's light, or the line of a ring, beauty lies in restraint."

Born and raised in Geneva, Switzerland, Ms Villa Fulton's earliest memories are of gazing into watch-shop windows and studying auction catalogues, circling her favourites with a child's fierce conviction. "My parents weren't collectors," she remembered. "The pull toward jewellery was entirely my own." That fascination led her, years later, to London, where she joined the celebrated Glenn Spiro Atelier in 2017, a move that would prove formative. "Working there was exhilarating and demanding in equal measure," she said. "I learned craftsmanship, judgment and the discipline that fine jewellery demands." As her experience grew, so did private commissions. "Friends began asking me to design engagement rings. Evenings filled up, and soon I was busier after hours than during the day." In 2023 she took the leap, founding Caro Villa Jewels to bring her refined design language to life.

Describe a new collection you're working on and the story behind it.

Solace is a capsule collection of everyday heirlooms that are quietly bold and wearable. It was born during a season of big changes in my life and is inspired by the calm, anchoring forms I kept sketching: oval and round silhouettes,



Cocoerow's Vira Pin earring, from the DINE collection, may also be worn as a brooch. It is custom crafted for each order and uses rhodolite, tanzanite, blue topaz, yellow beryl, pavé-set diamonds and 14K yellow gold in its composition. Photo by Dustin Davis.

protective halos and rhythmic pavé. Stones are set low and close to the skin, settings are softly domed for comfort and proportions are architectural. It will be launched in the first quarter of 2026. The word 'solace' is meant to be associated with pieces designed to feel calming, protective and reassuring — soft profiles, close-to-skin settings.

What role does technology play in your design process?

Technology supports the craft; it doesn't replace it. I begin by hand—with sketches on an iPad, then sometimes carve into wax to determine actual scale on the body—then move into CAD for precision and iterations.

We use 3D-printed resin for try-ons when scale matters. Every piece is ultimately hand-made and hand-set by craftspeople.

Many younger jewellers emphasise storytelling. What story do you share with your jewellery?

Each piece is a chapter in the client's story: their milestones, promises and private symbols. My role is to translate those moments into forms that will live beautifully for decades: low profiles for

daily wear, hand-finished details for tactility, proportions that age gracefully. I call this 'bespoke treasures, crafted with trust and integrity.'

How do you see the role of jewellery evolving for your generation?

Jewellery is increasingly about self-expression first, with investment value as a welcome byproduct. Clients expect heirloom quality but demand everyday comfort and low-profile settings that suit real life.

What are your hopes for the future of the industry as more millennial voices rise?

Radical transparency on sourcing, fair pay for craft and less trend churn. I would love to see longevity become the trend, with pieces designed to be repaired, resized and passed on. I am not an advocate for lab-grown diamonds; this is not because of fashion snobbery, but because my passion is the gemmology of the natural world: geological time, the inclusions that tell a stone's story and the rarity that emphasises heirloom value. I will always educate clients neutrally and help them make an informed choice,

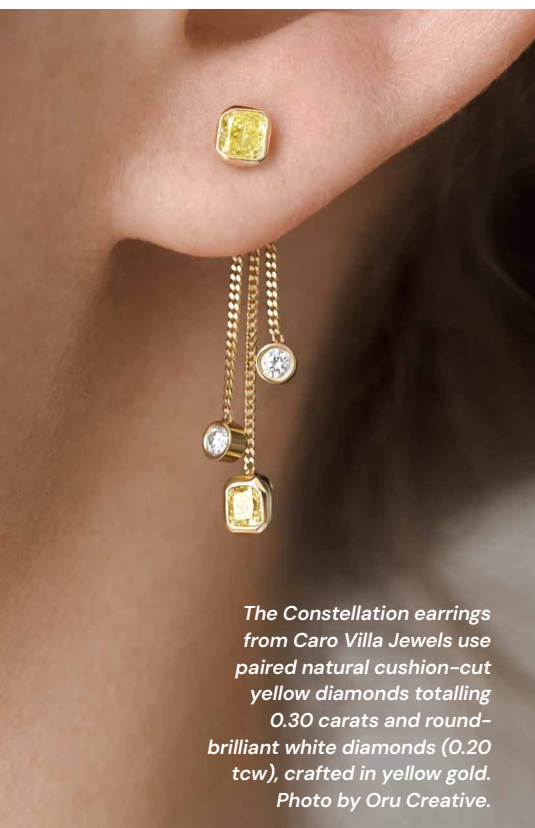
but my own practice is centred on natural gems that earn their place in a family's history, whether big or small.

Community and mentorship remain vital to Carolyn Villa Fulton's journey. "My peers — many now close friends — are constant sounding boards," she shared. "We exchange notes on stones, makers and even accounting pitfalls. I am also a member of the Young Diamantaires, a network that keeps learning dynamic and collaborative." (For more on the Young Diamantaires, please see Summer 2025 G&J, pp. 40–43.)

Ms Villa Fulton's vision for the future of the jewellery world centres on transparency and longevity. "We need standardised disclosures—on sourcing, treatment and labour—so that trust becomes the industry norm," she noted. "Clients deserve clarity, and artisans deserve recognition." As for her own legacy, she hopes to keep creating what she refers to as 'modern heirlooms', treasures designed to be worn daily yet last generations. "Fine jewellery should move with you, not sit in a box," she clarified. "If my pieces bring calm, confidence and beauty to someone's everyday life, then I've done my job."



A 18K rose-gold three-stone Toi et Moi ring from Caro Villa Jewels features three natural round-brilliant diamonds (2.31 tcw) and is finished with 0.25 tcw micro-pavé diamond shoulders. Photo by Oru Creative.



The Constellation earrings from Caro Villa Jewels use paired natural cushion-cut yellow diamonds totalling 0.30 carats and round-brilliant white diamonds (0.20 tcw), crafted in yellow gold. Photo by Oru Creative.

Her vision for the future of the jewellery world centres on transparency and longevity.

BECKY DUNN DESIGN. SCULPTING MAGIC FROM METAL AND MEMORY

Becky Dunn, Owner and Founder
Instagram: @becky_dunn_design

For the Australian-born founder of Becky Dunn Design, jewellery is the meeting place between imagination and form. It is a space where fantasy becomes tangible, and art takes shape as wearable sculpture. "I think there's a synergy between sculpture and jewellery design," Becky Dunn explained. "It's a common leap from one to the other." That leap came early for Ms Dunn; after studying fine art and majoring in sculpture, her fascination with material, proportion and movement led her to enrol in a three-year jewellery and object design programme in her hometown of Sydney. "I fell absolutely in love with it," she reminisced. "Eighteen years later, I still very much am."

Since then, Ms Dunn has carved an unconventional path, working both as a bench jeweller and production manager for some of New York City's leading jewellery houses, all while building her namesake brand. "I moved to New York fourteen years ago to learn everything I could about the industry. The world – and the jewellery business – has changed so much since then. Millennials like me have had

to constantly adapt, evolve and stay resilient. We've learned how to balance innovation with empathy."

How does the millennial perspective get reflected in the way you design or run your business?

I think that being a millennial affects so many areas of running a jewellery business. I moved to New York over fourteen years ago to learn everything I could about the industry here, and have worked as both a bench jeweller and production manager for many NYC-based companies while also running my own business. Both the trade and the

"I think there's a synergy between sculpture and jewellery design. It's a common leap from one to the other."



In the Seafoam ring from Becky Dunn Design, a pink opal cabochon is mounted in 14K yellow gold.

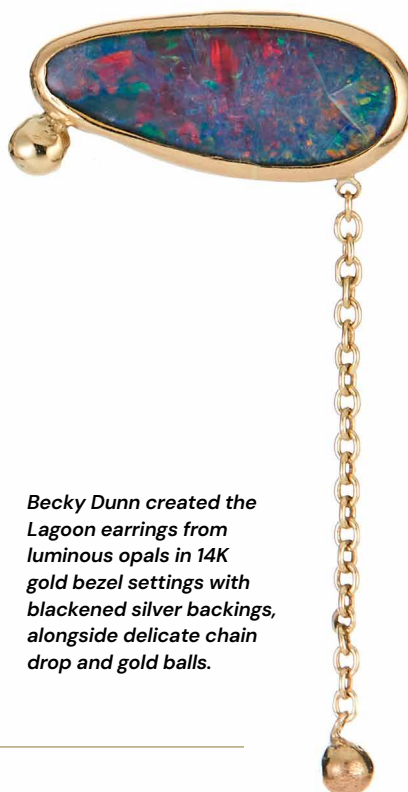
world have changed so much in that time. I think millennials have become so used to keeping up with those changes, shifting and adapting to the times, whereas previous generations didn't have to deal with things changing quite so quickly or frequently. I also think we have so much patience and compassion for those coming up in the industry now, and we tend to be more understanding bosses and clients.

Who or what are some of your biggest creative influences?

I was an avid reader and lover of all things fantasy growing up. My favourite movie as a child was Jim Henson's *Labyrinth*, so much so that I went to art school because I wanted to be like the film's conceptual artist, Brian Froud. As an adult I am inspired mainly by my favourite sculptors, including Lee Bul, Olafur Eliasson, Fiona Hall and Anish Kapoor.

Describe a new collection, or collection, you're working on and the story behind it.

My latest collection is called The Muses, and was inspired by the female muses of ancient Greek literature. Throughout history, muses have been stereotyped as alluring women who were passive sources of inspiration for male artists. I was inspired by one of my favourite musicians who made a podcast a few years ago that flipped the narrative back to the achievements of the women who inspired the artists, the muses themselves. A little bit of the old world meeting the new, which is a common theme running through my pieces.



Becky Dunn created the Lagoon earrings from luminous opals in 14K gold bezel settings with blackened silver backings, alongside delicate chain drop and gold balls.



Named for the Greek muse of history, Clio, these earrings from Becky Dunn Design use two white amethyst slices set in 14K yellow-gold prongs and hung from halo settings. They are inspired by the evil eye and Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, with whom amethyst is associated.

I designed the Erato Sygnet ring from The Muses collection for my partner. It features a bloodstone, said to offer protection and offer wearer strength and courage. It is the only jewellery he wears, and it means the world to me to see him wear it.

What do you think Gen Z and millennials are looking for in jewellery today, compared to other generations?

I think members of these generations are much more conscious of sustainability and ethical materials than older generations, which I think is fantastic. They want to know about the company and all of the materials they use. I think this is, in part, because social media allows you to share all of these things with the consumer and really lets them see behind the scenes.

How do you see the role of jewellery evolving for your generation in terms of adornment, investment, self-expression or all of the above?

It seems to me that people have never worn so much jewellery (at least in my lifetime). Every time I get on the subway, I notice people layering and decking themselves out with jewellery. I see this very much as an expression of individuality and style. People have multiple ear piercings and wear layers of necklaces and bracelets and stacks of rings. I love that men are embracing

“I hope we continue to see a shift toward mindful luxury — jewellery that carries emotional resonance, not just aesthetic appeal.”

this trend, too, and I’m loving the rise of gender neutrality in jewellery. The other obvious major shift in recent years is the introduction of lab-grown diamonds, which has shaken up what people view as precious and valuable.

For Becky Dunn, jewellery is about storytelling, both ancient and new. “We’re redefining what’s precious,” she stated. “There’s a beautiful shift happening where consumers care about where things come from and what they mean.” Her hope for the industry’s future is for inclusivity, youthfulness and imagination. “I love that Gen Z and millennials are reshaping tradition to reflect our values. We’re making fine jewellery feel alive again — not untouchable or old-fashioned, but personal, expressive and ethical.”

Ms Dunn’s advice to emerging designers is simple: “Be bold, and be scrappy,” she laughed. “Don’t wait for perfect conditions. Learn by doing — and never lose your sense of play.” Each piece from Becky Dunn Design feels like a talisman infused with meaning. Whether it’s a muse reborn in gold or an ocean dream caught in opal, her work speaks to the collector who sees jewellery not as a luxury, but as living art. “I love when someone connects with a piece and tells me how it makes them feel,” she said. “That’s the magic of it. Jewellery outlives us — but in that small way, it keeps us alive.”

ANTY: EGYPTIAN SYMBOLS MEET MODERN GRACE

Amany Afify,
Principal Founder and CEO
Instagram: @anty.co

As the founder and CEO of ANTY, Amany Afify creates pieces that speak to both her Egyptian heritage and her modern sensibility. “Jewellery has fascinated me since I was young,” she remembered. “It’s not just an accessory, but something that transforms with the person wearing it.”

Ms Afify’s journey to jewellery began not in a studio, but in the stillness of reflection. “When I moved to the U.S., I realised that the styles I connected with most weren’t easily found here,” she recalled. “Then, during the COVID-19

pandemic, I finally had the time and clarity to pursue what had always been my true passion." With that clarity came ANTY, a brand that weaves symbolism, strength and refinement into jewellery designed to tell deeply personal stories.

Who or what are some of your biggest creative influences?

I'm deeply inspired by women: their strength, softness and the way they express individuality through jewellery. Growing up in Egypt, I was surrounded by rich symbolism, history and craftsmanship; this continues to influence my sense of form and storytelling. My design philosophy is rooted in balance — between boldness and simplicity, heritage and modernity, art and emotion. Every piece I create is meant to feel personal, expressive and timeless.

Describe a new collection, or collection, you're working on and the story behind it.

We are launching a new 925 silver collection with diamonds and coloured stones, inspired by the cycles of day and night. Designed to be versatile, trendy and stackable, the pieces will debut for the end-of-year season.

Which of your designs has a particularly meaningful story for you?

One of the most meaningful collections I have designed is Pharaoh's Grace, which I created in collaboration with designer Heidi Bastamy. The collection draws inspiration from ancient Egyptian symbols, like the lotus flower, which represents rebirth. At the time we designed it, I was experiencing my own personal and professional rebirth; after years working in economics, I finally discovered my true passion for jewellery. Every piece in this collection reflects that journey of transformation, resilience and embracing what truly inspires me.

How do you see the role of jewellery evolving for your generation, adornment, investment, self-expression or all of the above?

For my generation, jewellery is evolving into a personal archive of versatile, meaningful pieces that mark milestones, reflect identity and move seamlessly through everyday life. Jewellery is no longer just for



The Criss Cross ring from ANTY is composed of forty round-brilliant diamonds (0.62 tcw) set in white gold.

adornment or investment. Rather, it is wearable storytelling that blends beauty, memory and lasting value.

Through ANTY, Amany Afify has created a bridge between worlds. Her designs transform the sacred symbols of her heritage into heirlooms, pieces that feel at once ancient and new. "Jewellery," she said, "is about rebirth — of ideas, of self, of beauty. It carries our past but points toward our future." In her hands, every creation becomes a reflection of that truth: that we are all, like her jewels, works in progress: shaped by time, refined by experience and illuminated by purpose.

Each of the millennial designers spotlighted here have a thoughtful and successful practice. Taken together, these designers chart a shared philosophy that jewellery should carry meaning, remain timeless and feel as considered as the lives it accompanies. Their work combines rigorous craft with clear values as they invite transparency into the process and open space for personal narrative. The next chapter of the jewellery trade belongs to makers who are defining it through the principles of the millennial generation: who give primacy to materials while honouring memory and the people who will wear their work every day. ■

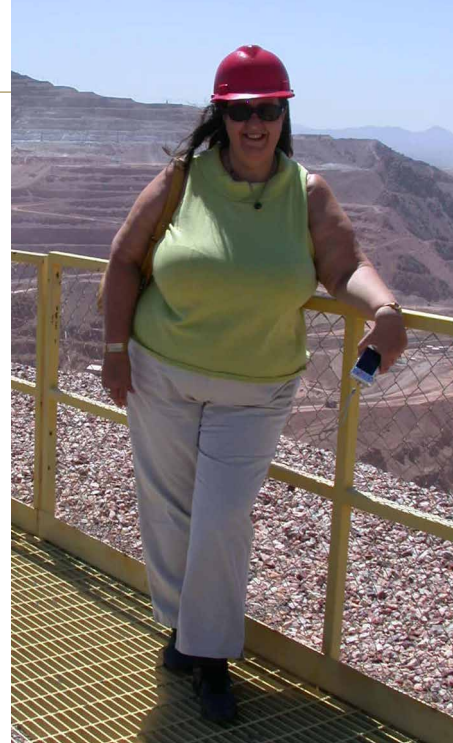
All photographs are courtesy of the individual designers whose work they depict.



The Ra Sun Flare necklace from ANTY is designed to reflect both a modern and classic aesthetic. It is composed of 4.11 tcw pear-shaped rubies and 18K yellow gold.

A Retrospective of ARTISTIC MILESTONES

Artist Helen Serras-Herman MFA FGA reflects on pivotal pieces from her forty-plus years working with gemstones and precious metals.



Helen Serras-Herman at the Morenci mine in Arizona. Photo © Andrew Herman.

I have a passion for gemstones, particularly colourful, natural, unique and vibrant gems, including larimar, ocean jasper, opal, turquoise, sapphire and drusy gems. That love is reflected in sculptures and jewellery that feature carved gems as centrepieces. My artwork is intertwined with my own life: people who have influenced me and places that inspire me, ancient Greek mythology and the desert environment of my adopted home state of Arizona. Each of my pieces tells a story.

In looking back at my career, spanning more than four decades, I selected pieces that I consider artistic milestones in order to tell the story of my own artistic development. A number of turns — some intentional, some by chance, some maybe by fate, have changed the route of my life and work.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN BRIEF

I was born in New York City in 1956. My parents, Paul and Eva Serras, were Greek immigrants who came to America after World War II, and were married in New York City in August 1947. But in 1961, they decided to move back to their homeland, where I grew up in Athens, studying drawing and painting (1973–76). In 1976, I was accepted into the prestigious Hochschule Der

Nik KIELTY Lambrinides. An entire new world — the gem and mineral world — opened up. During that period, I also earned my Gemmology Diploma from Gem-A (1988), and have maintained my FGA ever since. Also in 1988, two years after my father passed away from a sudden heart attack, I moved to Chevy

A number of turns — some intentional, some by chance, some maybe by fate — have changed the route of my life and work.



Kuenste (University of Arts) in what was then West Berlin, Germany, to study sculpture. I received my master's degree (MFA) after six years of study (1976 – 1983). Soon thereafter, I returned to Greece and worked in clay, plaster, mixed media and bronze.

While carrying on my large figurative sculpture work in Greece, I studied gem carving (glyptography) for five years at the Glyptography Center in Athens, the school created by the late English master

A simple face carved in 256.00 ct rutiled quartz is among one of Helen Serras-Herman's favourite pieces. The face of Venus is set in 18K yellow gold as a slide pendant, with the yellow rutilated needles embracing her face like hair. The pendant is now part of a private collection. Photo © M.J. Colella.

Chase, Maryland, where I established my studio, the Gem Art Center. From that point on, I completely devoted my work to the fine art and science of gem sculpture.

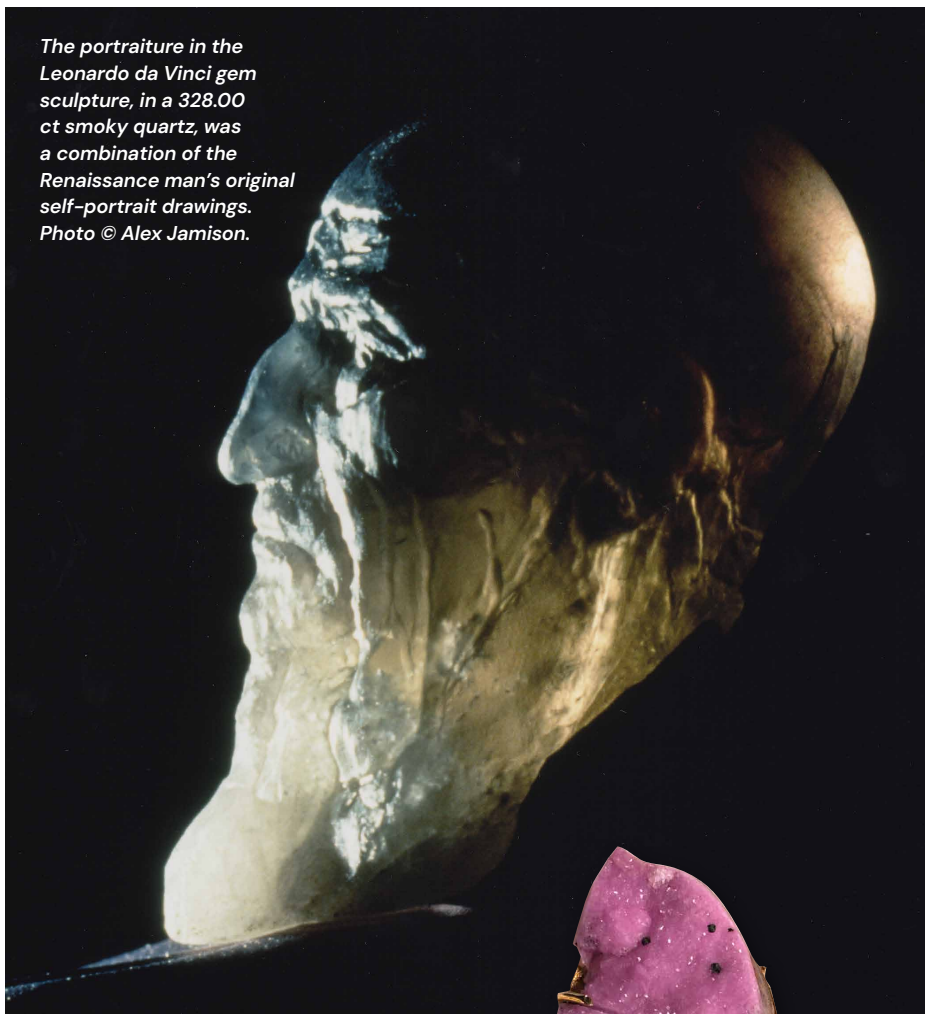
In the early 1990s I met my late husband Andrew Herman, an aeronautical electrical engineer who was fascinated by the mining history of gold, minerals and gemstones. He was a GIA Graduate Gemologist (GG); he had also learned to cab and facet gemstones. We were married in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1996, and a new life, and an intense and very productive work chapter began. My husband's endless love for me, his support and encouragement for my artwork, helped me grow and flourish as a gem artist, vendor and writer.

COLLECTIONS FROM MY CAREER

The First Artistic Influence. While at school in Berlin, I joined Professor Harro Jacob's sculpture studio. I was mesmerised by his figurative work, tall and elongated, reminiscent of the art of Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti. Harro Jacob created series of sculptures by removing mass from one plaster cast to the next, reducing the volume and creating dynamic space within the sculpture. His elongation method and his no-frills, no-details figurative work approach, was my first major artistic influence. It used a starkness and minimalistic figurative style, displaying dynamic facial expressionism and feature elongation, a style that I continue to employ to this day. My Red Beryl Satyr gem sculpture reflects my captivation with this totemic poise that still penetrates my artwork. It holds a detachable pendant/pin with two red beryl crystals from Utah weighing 74.00 total carat weight (tcw), seated atop an elongated sterling-silver base.

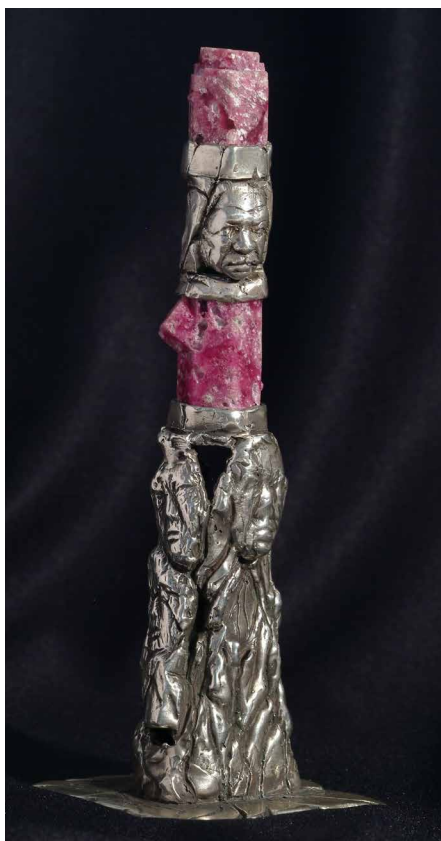
Many of my large sculptures and gem carvings, especially drusy gems, are scored with lines or grooves engraved into the stone, creating a distinct

The portraiture in the Leonardo da Vinci gem sculpture, in a 328.00 ct smoky quartz, was a combination of the Renaissance man's original self-portrait drawings. Photo © Alex Jamison.



Left: Helen Serras-Herman's Red Beryl Satyr gem sculpture holds a detachable pendant with two red beryl crystals (74.00 tcw) from Utah, sitting on top of a totemic sterling-silver base. It is now in a private collection. Photo © M.J. Colella.

Right: The Pink Panther slide pendant may best represent Ms Serras-Herman's distinct line-engraving technique. This piece uses a 110.50 carat carved and engraved natural pink cobaltocalcite, a 6.92 carat ruby cabochon and four round-faceted 'anthill' pyrope garnets (1.43 tcw), all in a hand-fabricated 14K gold setting. Photo © M.J. Colella.



deep-line engraving structure, which I call 'construction lines'. These lines frequently continue on the back of the stone connecting the volumes, giving dimension and organic feeling to the work. They are set off by the light as the pieces move, and offer an additional element of mystery, with viewers wondering if these lines in the stone are natural. My pink cobaltocalcite-and-gold Pink Panther slide pendant may best represent my distinct line-engraving technique.

Portraits on Gems. Faces and figures have been at the core of my sculptural artwork. These include portraits; mythological beings such as gods, heroes, nymphs and spirits; and masks of the living and those in the underworld. I try to portray them with grace and elegance, but also with exaggeration, pushing the visual limits. A simple face carved in a 256.00 ct



rutilated quartz — the face of Venus, set in 18K yellow gold as a slide pendant, with the yellow rutile needles embracing her face like hair — became one of my favourite pieces. The theme played on the alternate name for rutilated quartz, Venus' hair stone.

Among my five portraits titled 'Homage to a Master', honouring other artists, is my now-iconic representation of Leonardo da Vinci. This piece has been exhibited and published a number of times. I created the portraiture to be a combination of his original self-portrait drawings; some showed him bald and beardless, while others depicted him with a beard and long hair. In my portrait, Leonardo's head is sculptured in a 328.00 ct smoky-quartz crystal, using the white root for the beard. The torso is carved in a 700.00 ct rock-crystal quartz with the spine engraved as an intaglio, offering an illusion X-ray of the chest. Of this portrait, Marc Wilson, past curator of the Minerals Section at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), once said that "You look



*The mangrove trees of Singapore left a strong impression on Ms Serras-Herman after her visit there in 1984. They inspired a series of mixed-media sculptures, *The Trees*, reflecting the parallel course of man and nature. Shown here (front and back views) is the 6-foot-high *Parallel Lives* (1986), which is part of the Hatzisavvas Collection. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.*

at it and you can just see the character engraved in that face. It is just abstract enough so you can tell who it is, but it is not a dry representation."

Another important portrait was of Queen Sikirit of Thailand, mother of current king Rama X, carved from an aquamarine crystal in high-relief style. The final carving weighs 547.70 carats. The posture of the Queen was chosen so that she would look at the viewer, but not straight forward, with only one ear revealed. A slight elongation gives a serene expression. The coiffure offered an unlimited field for abstract expression of interlocking forms and volumes. I was truly honoured when this gem portrait graced the cover of the June 2002 issue of *Lapidary Journal* magazine.

From The Trees to the Silver Faces: The Second Influence. I encountered enormous mangrove trees for the first

time during a trip to Singapore in 1984. These gigantic, tropical, eternal trees left a strong impression on me, and inspired a series of mixed-media sculptures called *The Trees*. These works reflect the parallel course of man and nature. Faces interlocked with tangled roots appeared in my work. All the mixed-media sculptures from that series are in private collections in Greece.

Harro Jacobs' elongation method, his no-frills, no-details figurative work approach, was my first major artistic influence.

The Portrait of Queen Sikirit of Thailand is carved from an aquamarine crystal in high-relief style. The final portrait weighs 547.70 ct. Photo © M.J. Colella.



My Echoes necklace features a handcrafted focal slide pendant. Faces carved in relief in wax and cast in 18K yellow/green gold surrounded a 13.03 ct carved Lightning Ridge Australian opal and a 41.78 ct natural specimen with Colombian emerald crystals in matrix.

This necklace was designed to create a feeling of echoes, of people wanting to talk to us. The necklace won the first prize, Jewelry Division, at the 2003 Historic Manning House show in Tucson, Arizona, and is currently in a private collection. The pendant is part of a six-strand detachable necklace with Colombian emerald beads (262.65 tcw) and 18K gold beads. With over 60 grams of 18K gold in addition to gold beads and clasps, this piece would likely be prohibitive to create with the current gold market value.

A Tribute to Fallen Heroes. My best representative work of Silver Faces may be my most emotional gem sculpture: Victory Laments. The sculpture portrays the goddess Victory with her wings closed as she laments over the sea of fallen heroes. I carved Victory in tourmalinated quartz (quartz with black tourmaline needles) with



Above: Victory Laments (12" h x 3.5" w x 2.5" d) portrays the goddess Victory with her wings closed as she laments over the sea of fallen heroes. She is carved in tourmalinated quartz, while the heroes' faces are sculpted in wax and cast in 550.00 grams of sterling silver. The neon-blue drusy hemimorphite represents the 'sea', and the red flames in the alunite base symbolise the blood of the heroes. Photo © M.J. Colella.



Left: Echoes is a handcrafted slide pendant with a carved 13.03 ct Australian opal and a 41.78 ct specimen with Colombian emerald crystals in matrix. The two gems are surrounded by sculptured faces cast in 18K yellow/green gold. The focal pendant is part of a six-strand detachable necklace with Colombian emerald beads (262.65 tcw) and 18K gold beads. The necklace is in a private collection. Photo © M.J. Colella.

the face left unpolished for contrast and to reflect sadness. The heroes' faces were sculpted in wax and cast in 550.00 grams of sterling silver. The 'sea' is embodied by a shimmering neon-blue botryoidal hemimorphite, from Wenshan, Yunan Province, China. I carved the soft wax to fit the drusy specimen, but after it was cast in silver, setting the hard metal without damaging the drusy surfaces was a challenge in its own right. The statue stands on a base of sculpted alunite, a creamy material with red flames from Arizona, symbolising the heroes' blood. In August 2012, Victory Laments



The tiny sculpted seal called Satyr & Maenad is carved in a 121.50 ct Russian champagne topaz as a high-relief cameo (left) with an intaglio seal engraved on the bottom (right). Photo © M.J. Colella.

received an Honorable Mention Sculpture Award in the Artavita International Fine Art Competition. It was also juried into the 2014 Gem Artists of North America exhibit at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

Satyrs & Gargoyles. When creating what became my Satyrs & Gargoyles collection, I carved several of my gem pieces as high-relief cameos in larimar and other gem materials. The theme allowed for dynamic expressionism, infinite variations and exaggerated and distorted features, which emit pathos and may induce awe and admiration. One piece in the series, Satyr, is carved in chrysoprase from Australia in high-relief-cameo style and weighs 165.50 carats. It is set as a pendant in hand-fabricated 14K yellow gold. I chose the vibrant colour of chrysoprase and the earthy matrix as they reflect the satyrs' lust for life and their woodland origin.

My tiny sculpted seal, Satyr & Maenad, is carved in a 121.50 ct champagne topaz from Russia as a high-relief cameo with an intaglio seal engraved on the bottom. The cameo features a satyr, and the seal depicts a maenad (mad woman), one of his female followers. Maenads were dressed in faun skin and wore garlands of ivy. Each carried a *thyrsus*, a staff with a pine-cone-like decoration on the end. These mythological women would gather in the mountains and sing in celebration of the god, and that is exactly how I represent the maenad on this seal.

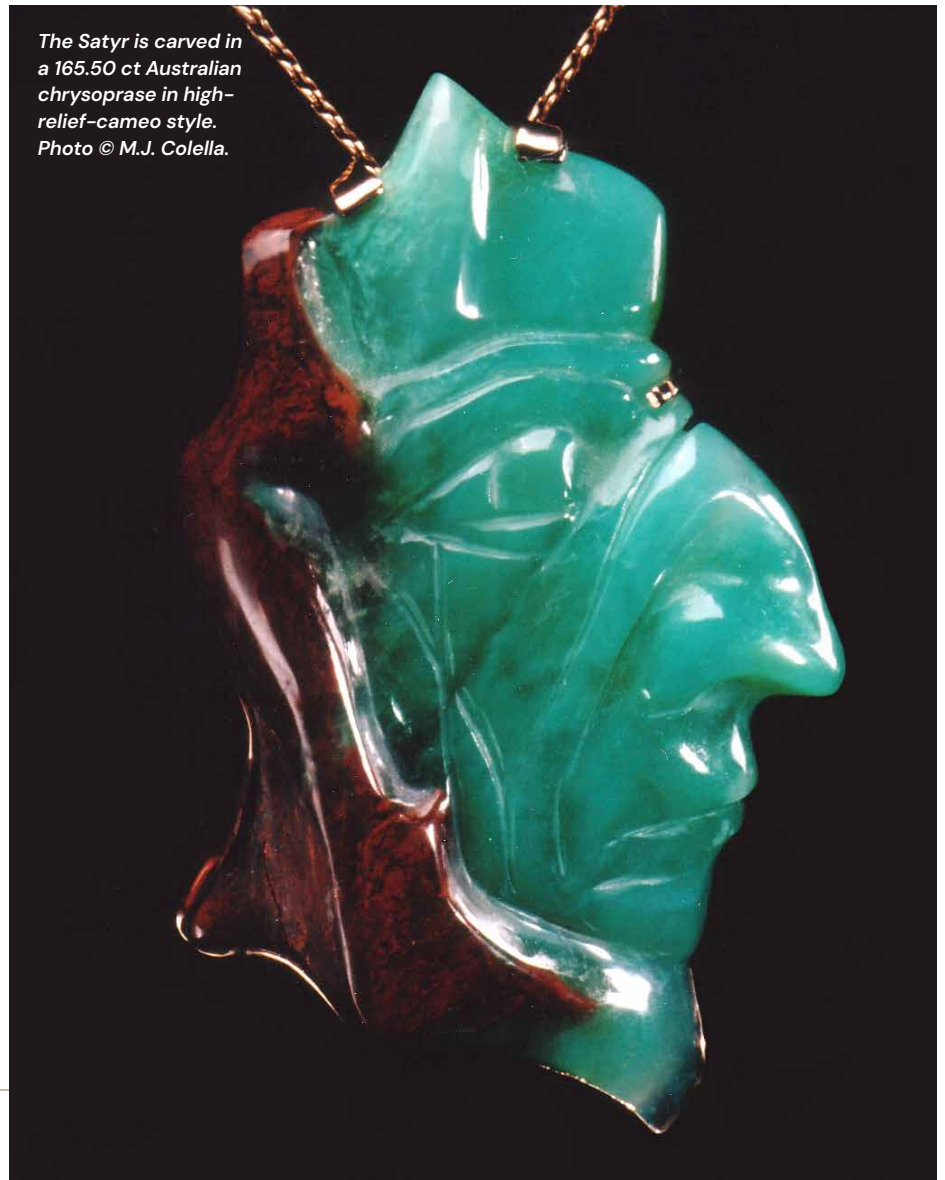
The Third Artistic Influence.

The Copper Trails collection is inspired by my travels, as well as my visits to most of the operating and historic mines in Arizona. These latter trips gave me a better understanding of

the magnitude and importance of copper, gold and silver mining.

Having lived in Arizona for the past twenty years, my work has been influenced by the Southwestern environment. This is reflected in the colour palette echoing desert scenes — the bright cactus flowers and vivid sunsets and sunrises — and through the use of local gemstones, including natural turquoise, gem silica, azurite and cuprite. My Desert Pantheon necklace is set in sterling silver and 14K gold. The focal pendant features three of my Silver Faces portraying desert nymphs, set with a 19.72 ct chrysocolla-in-chalcedony quartz from the old Inspiration mine near Globe, an exceptionally deep blue 36.93 ct drusy azurite from the Morenci mine, three

The Satyr is carved in a 165.50 ct Australian chrysoprase in high-relief-cameo style. Photo © M.J. Colella.





Left: The Copper Trails collection is inspired by Ms Serras-Herman's visits to most of the operating and historic mines in Arizona. The Emerald Blue Islands slide pendant and pin — comprising a 44.40 ct gem silica (chrysocolla in quartz) with dendritic malachite from the Inspiration mine, 1.39 tcw Colombian emeralds and 1.54 tcw Montana sapphires — is set in 18K gold. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

Bottom: The Pluto & Persephone gem sculpture (110 mm h x 55 mm w x 38 mm d) features the ancient Greek gods of the underworld and his wife. The carving comprises a 58.98 ct natural Oregon sunstone from the Dust Devil mine and a 280.00 ct carved gem silica (chrysocolla in quartz with malachite) from Arizona's Inspiration mine. The Silver Faces (another series by Ms Serras-Herman) are carved in wax, 115.10 grams cast sterling silver and 5.50 grams 14K rose gold. Photo © M.J. Colella.

faceted rare chrome pyrope 'anthill' garnets from the Navajo Reservation (2.50 tcw), and three fire opals from Mexico — two of which were trillion cut (1.30 tcw), and one of which was a 2.42 ct oval cabochon — all chosen in homage to the desert. Carving the wax for this rather large piece, which measures 4" high and 1.5" wide, and calculating breathing room for all the gemstones to be set properly, was another challenge.

I visited the Eleusis archaeological site near Athens, Greece, in 2004. I was stunned to see the Cave of Persephone, the cavern through which the daughter of Zeus and Demeter (the earth goddess) went down to the underworld.

Persephone is a symbol of the seed-corn that is buried, rises and falls again in a cycle of constant renewal, as she spent the winter in the underworld and rose each spring to live with her mother, Demeter. I stood in front of the cave where the symbolic passage took place, and contemplated the myth's power: the metaphors and allegories used to teach and explain the world and the changing of the seasons, reflecting the cycle of life, death and rebirth. My Pluto & Persephone gem sculpture features the god of the underworld and his wife carved in a 59.98 carat natural Oregon sunstone. They receive the souls of the dead crossed over the subterranean River Styx, represented

here by a 280.00 carat freeform-carved chrysocolla-in-quartz (gem silica) with malachite inclusions from the old Inspiration mine near Globe, Arizona. The Silver Faces on the base represent the spirits of the underworld.

Carving Turquoise from the American Southwest. Over the years, I have carved turquoise pieces from various mines in Arizona and New Mexico. I had the opportunity to hand-pick turquoise from the Sleeping Beauty mine at their store in Globe before the mine ceased



The theme of the Satyrs & Gargoyles series allowed for dynamic expressionism, infinite variations and exaggerated and distorted features, which emit pathos and may induce awe and admiration.



The Turquoise Sky necklace, which also uses Silver Faces, features a slide pendant and pin with a 260.00 ct carved natural turquoise from the Hachita mine (New Mexico) with golden limonite inclusions. Also used are 0.74 tcw peach-coloured faceted sapphires from Montana set in 14K yellow gold. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

production in 2012. This material is renowned for its brilliant colour, and I was very attracted to the all-natural blue pieces with a hint of green, many with natural silver and pyrite inclusions.

I try to share with the public that all-natural turquoise, which has not been subject to stabilisation or treatment, accounts for only about one percent of mined material. The rest of the turquoise is either not hard enough and has to be stabilised with resins (polymers), which is considered an acceptable trade treatment, or the colour is too pale and is enhanced, a treatment which is required to be disclosed.

I am always interested in featuring new gem materials, those with stories that capture my imagination. In recent years I created the Natural Crystals collection. Here, I use natural-shape crystals, which I simply groove or drill to be worn as pendants and earrings. In this series I use gem crystals,



Over the years, Ms Serras-Herman has carved turquoise pieces from various mines in Arizona and New Mexico. The natural turquoise from the Sleeping Beauty mine is renowned for its brilliant colour, seen in this 112.00 ct carving. This piece is now part of a private collection. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

including aquamarine, tourmaline and natural ruby from Madagascar, that show amazing trigon formations. I feel that I don't always need to overcarve every gemstone; rather, I can let the gemstones speak for themselves.

I am hopeful that sharing autobiographical reflections intertwined with my forty-plus-year artistic journey, the sources of inspiration and the lessons and passion imparted by my teachers and my husband shed light on the background of my artistic endeavours. It is my sincere hope that every person who reads this article is inspired to follow their dreams: gem and jewellery artists to create beautiful, eternal art; gemmologists and appraisers to further the science while understanding the labour and tribulations that lie behind gem artworks; rockhounds to get excited about finding beautiful material

that will touch our spirit and become the focal points of our artwork; and gem enthusiasts to embrace, collect and promote this work.

My advice to young enthusiasts is to enrich yourself with knowledge of world history, history of art and of mining, drawing and gemmology. Take classes on various aspects of lapidary and jewellery work until you find your niche. As I shared in my book *Carved Gems – Inspiration & Expertise*, "Don't be afraid to start carving and experimenting in different lapidary forms. There may be disappointments, stumbles, snubs or rejections, but for those who persist, I can promise that you will enjoy the journey and become captivated and spellbound by the beauty and potential of the Fine Art of Gem Sculpture." ■

To learn more about the work of Helen Serras-Herman, visit www.gemartcenter.com.



Above: The Desert Pantheon pendant features Silver Faces portraying desert nymphs, set with a 19.72 ct chrysocolla-in-chalcedony quartz, a 36.93 ct blue drusy azurite, three 2.50 tcw faceted rare chrome-pyropes 'anthill' garnets (2.50 tcw), and three fire opals (3.81 tcw), all chosen in homage to the desert. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

Visits to these mines gave me a better understanding of the magnitude and importance of copper and silver mining.



Left: In recent years, Ms Serras-Herman has created the Natural Crystals collection. This series uses natural-shape crystals – such as natural ruby crystals from Madagascar – that show amazing trigon formations. She grooves or drills these crystals to create pendants and earrings. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman.

THE EDWARDIANS

AGE OF ELEGANCE AT THE KING'S GALLERY

Rachel Church reflects on the objects that adorned and fascinated the royal family and aristocracy at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Looking at an enamelled Fabergé cigarette case or a Cartier garland-style jewel, we see a fantastic piece of craft, a finely made and glamorous object. But these works of art were made to furnish a crowded, even cluttered world. *The Edwardians: Age of Elegance*, at the King's Gallery of Buckingham Palace, brings this lost world of glamour and aristocracy back to life. The exhibition by the Royal Collection Trust includes over three hundred paintings, ceramics and luxurious objects; roughly twenty percent comprise precious metals and gemstones. The show recreates the busy, lavish interiors of the royal palaces and aristocratic houses of the party-loving Edward VII and his consort, Queen Alexandra, and their successors, George V and Queen Mary.

The show is an examination of the tight social circles and activities of the aristocracy, with their balls, court events, hunting, horse racing and yachting. These scenes are brought to vivid life by Queen Alexandra's sketches and photographs, as well as by society portraits and court dress.

A fascinating group of small jewels and accessories commemorates the royal family's chosen leisure activities.

It also demonstrates the external forces influencing the court and wider British life, from the influx of rich and well-dressed American heiresses – as portrayed in the television show *Downton Abbey* – to the impact of the British Empire, then at its apex.

The Edwardians: Age of Elegance marks the moment before wholesale social and economic changes rocked

the social hierarchy. The final section of the exhibition covers the onset of the First World War, which heralded women's suffrage, growing protests against the economic inequality that supported the upper-crust of society and the eventual break-up of the British Empire.

The Edwardian age began with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. After sixty-three years on the throne, Victoria was a symbol of stability, but also of stagnation. The new century started with the accession of her oldest son, Albert Edward (King Edward VII), whose troubled relationship with his mother was not helped by his series of extramarital affairs. Nevertheless, his marriage to Princess Alexandra of Denmark had endured; they were blessed with six children, five of whom survived to adulthood. The new Edwardian court swept away the perpetual mourning of Victoria's later years. It ushered in a new, younger set, dressed by Charles Worth, Paris' most fashionable couturier. These feminine, romantic confections were immortalised in paintings by Philip de Laszlo and John Singer Sargent and helped to create an abiding impression of the period.

Splendid dresses required equally splendid jewels, and the exhibition includes some wonderful pieces from the Royal Collections. One of the stars of the displays, Queen Alexandra's coronation robe, was newly conserved and looked magnificent. The coronation of Edward VII and Alexandra was intended to be spectacular, a new start after Victoria's long reign, and

Edward VII's longtime mistress, Alice Keppel, gave him this Fabergé cigarette case in 1908. It comprises two-colour gold and guilloché enamel with brilliant and rose-cut diamonds.





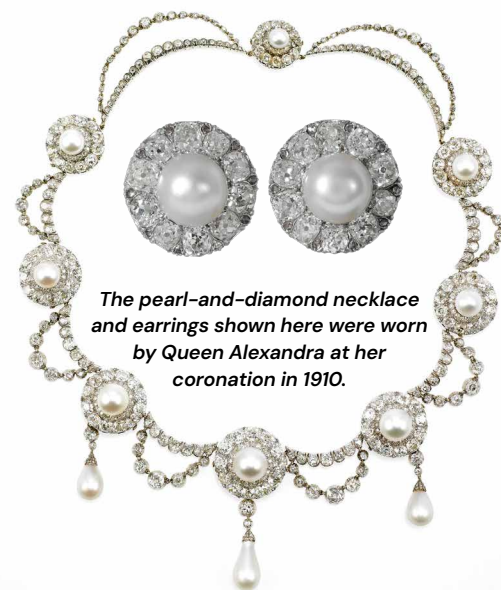
The coronation dress and mantle of Queen Alexandra and Edward VII, respectively.

Alexandra's attire set a new standard for royal fashion. It was designed by the female-led Parisian firm of Morin Blossier, embroidered with golden spangles that sparkled in the electrical lighting specially installed in Westminster Abbey. Although the dress was designed in France, it incorporated roses, thistles and shamrocks, the national emblems of the United Kingdom. Alexandra wore it with pearl-and-diamond jewellery by R&S Garrard, the British firm who had been supplying the royal family for over one hundred years.

Alongside the paintings and court costumes of the Edwardian world,

visitors to the exhibition can enjoy some of the magnificent jewels that were made for members of the royal family. A brooch featuring an ancient Egyptian blue-green glazed steatite scarab (ca. 700 BCE) flanked on both sides by cobras was acquired by Prince Albert Edward in 1862, as he toured Egypt, as a gift for Alexandra of Denmark. Phillips of London may have reset the scarab before Alexandra received the brooch as part of her wedding gift in March 1863. Alexandra is wearing the brooch in a marble bust sculpted by Mary Thornycraft; this bust is part of the exhibition.

The Dagmar necklace was commissioned for Princess Alexandra by her uncle, Frederik VII of Denmark, as a wedding gift. The necklace combines loops of pearls, surrounded by diamonds and diamond chains, with medieval-style quatrefoils and pendant pearls. It also includes a replica of the enamelled cross that was buried with Queen Dagmar in 1212, creating a powerful link with Alexandra's Danish heritage. The necklace became a reliquary object with the inclusion of



The pearl-and-diamond necklace and earrings shown here were worn by Queen Alexandra at her coronation in 1910.

a fragment of the 'True Cross' from Christ's crucifixion and a scrap of silk from the grave of the legendary King Canute. Alexandra wore the necklace for her coronation in 1905; it is visible in a portrait by Samuel Luke Fildes.

Queen Alexandra's Kokoshnik tiara was inspired by the Russian headdress worn by the Queen's sister, Empress Maria Feodorovna (Dagmar of Denmark). The emergence of this headpiece style, particularly the diamond kokoshnik on display, marked the stylistic influence of Russia, encouraged by the family relationships linking the British and Russian Imperial courts. The 'Ladies of Society', led by the Marchionesses of Salisbury and of Ailesbury, commissioned the tiara from R&S Garrard as a silver anniversary present to Queen Alexandra →

This brooch uses an ancient Egyptian scarab that is thought to date to 700 BCE. Princess Alexandra of Denmark received it as a wedding present from her groom, then The Prince of Wales, in March 1863.





Inspired by Russian headpieces, the Kokoshnik tiara was gifted to then-Princess Alexandra for her silver (twenty-fifth) wedding anniversary in 1888. It has since been worn by generations of royal women.

in 1888. She wore it to the wedding of her son (the future George V) in 1893. The kokoshnik was subsequently worn by George's wife, Mary of Teck; George and Mary's daughter-in-law and consort to George VI, the former Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon; and finally, Queen Elizabeth II.

Exhibition visitors can also enjoy objects from Queen Mary's exceptional jewel box. The Girls of Great Britain and Ireland tiara, made in 1893 by E. Wolfe and Co. for R&S Garrard, was a wedding gift to Queen Mary, who gifted it to her granddaughter, then Princess Elizabeth, in 1947 upon her marriage to Philip Mountbatten (later Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh). This tiara has been featured in a number of recent exhibitions. The Love Trophy Collar – also from Queen Mary's collection and attributed to R&S Garrard – is a delicate tracery of gold and diamonds, decorated with trophies of love,

in the style of the eighteenth century. Chokers or dog-collar necklaces were made fashionable by the French Empress Eugénie and Queen Alexandra, but were going out of vogue by the time Queen Mary commissioned this choker. It was a favourite jewel, appearing in her state portrait of 1911 by William Samuel Henry Llewellyn, which is also on display.

Smaller, more personal items are on view alongside the impressive court jewels that are intended for balls and official events. A fascinating group of small jewels and accessories commemorates the royal family's chosen leisure activities. Horse racing was a huge preoccupation, recorded through paintings of favourite horses as well as tie pins, desk seals and brooches to mark particular equestrian exploits. R&S Garrard made jewels in Edward VII's racing colours of red and blue, with the names of Persimmon and

Minoru, two of the King's favourite horses. When Minoru won the Epsom Derby in 1909, Edward VII became the first reigning monarch to own a winning horse. A circle pin with Minoru's name spelled out in diamonds also includes rubies and sapphires for the royal racing colours.

Yachting, a sport enjoyed by royalty across Europe – including Edward's cousin, the Russian Emperor Nicholas II, and the rest of the Imperial family – as well as by American millionaires, also inspired jewellery. A brooch with the triangular burgee flag of the Royal Yacht Squadron enamelled under a

The new Edwardian court swept away the perpetual mourning of Victoria's later years.

rock-crystal dome and bearing the name of the Prince of Wales's yacht, *Aline*, is shown alongside a painting of the ship. It sits next to a cigarette case enamelled with flags spelling out the naval alphabet, showing how naval customs and practices impacted fashion, from white yachting costumes and sailor's caps to appropriately decorated jewellery and accessories.

King Frederik VII of Denmark presented the Dagmar necklace (right) to his niece, Alexandra of Denmark, as a wedding gift in 1863. The jewel is so named because it includes a replica of a twelfth-century enameled cross that was buried with Dagmar, Queen of Denmark, in 1212. Frederik also asserted that the cross contain a fragment of wood said to be from the True Cross, as well as a scrap of silk from the grave of King Canute. The necklace can be seen, slightly modified, in Queen Alexandra's coronation portrait (far right).





Like Fabergé, Cartier created objects of luxury for the Edwardian upper class and the royal family. This pencil case uses smoky crystal in its composition, along with a diamond and ruby-set clasp with cabochon ruby button. The front of the case is decorated with an enamelled Imperial crown.

Edward VII's complicated personal life gives a frisson to a bright-blue enamelled cigarette case, sold by the London branch of the Russian firm of Fabergé to the King's long-term mistress, Alice Keppel. The royal family was introduced to Fabergé by Queen Alexandra's sister, Empress Maria Feodorovna. This caused such a demand that Fabergé opened a new branch on Dover Street in London. Fabergé, and their competitor, Cartier, supplied the British upper classes with little luxuries such as animal figures, photograph frames, desk tidies, letter openers and enamelled jewels. These items are shown throughout the exhibition. Many of the items chosen by Alexandra were gifts for her husband, Edward VII, although some of the animal figures were commissioned by the King himself. The cigarette

case, however, was a gift from Mrs Keppel. The case is a wonderful piece of enamelling, with an engraved ground imitating moiré silk under the translucent royal blue. The diamond-set snake is an *ouroboros*, an ancient symbol of eternity that was often used in sentimental jewellery to represent everlasting love, just as diamonds signified eternity.

The international, outward facing side of Edwardian court life is represented towards the end of the exhibition. Objects from Russia, Japan and Africa were given to the royal family or collected on their travels. India, the jewel of the British Empire, is represented by a selection of jewelled punch daggers and swords as well as a belt comprising rubies, emeralds and diamonds. This last piece, intended as a gift for then-Princess Alexandra, was presented to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales by the Maharajah of Mysuru (Mysore) in 1876. India was also the setting of the 1911 Delhi Durbar, a celebration of the coronation of George V and his consort, Mary, and an opportunity for the United Kingdom to display its strength and wealth. The Durbar was an opportunity for the Indian Maharajahs to present magnificent, heavily jewelled gifts to the new King and Queen, but the event also became a focus for growing nationalist resentment and protest.

The Edwardians: The Age of Elegance brings together rarely shown items from royal palaces. It successfully shows the high point of a social and artistic world that was about to be swept away by the tides of war. The exhibition truly captures this world of costume balls, garden parties, fabulous dresses and



Queen Mary commissioned the Love Trophy Collar necklace from R&S Garrards. The necklace is composed of seven diamond-set panels. Each panel features a bow, quiver and torch that combine to form an amatory, or love trophy.

sparkling jewels, making a visit to the King's Gallery an atmospheric and visually rich experience. ■

As part of Royal Collection Trust's charitable aim to ensure that as many people as possible can access and enjoy the Collection, £1 tickets for the exhibition are available to those receiving Universal Credit until 23 November 2025.

In addition to £1 tickets, The King's Galleries will continue to offer a range of concessionary rates, while visitors who purchase standard tickets directly from Royal Collection Trust can convert them into a 1-Year Pass, allowing free re-entry for 12 months.

Visitor information and tickets for The King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace can be found at www.rct.uk, or by calling +44 (0)30 3123 7301. The King's Gallery is open Thursday to Monday, and is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Both Edward VII and his son George (later King George V) kept homing pigeons at Sandringham. This figure, made from banded agate with cabochon rubies, is one of six examples of pigeons and doves by Fabergé in the Royal Collection.



MEDITATING ON THE WORK OF AKACHEN

Floriane Van Den Brande FGA DGA EG speaks to the groundbreaking Taiwanese artist, who has delighted audiences with his creations for three decades.



When I speak to Aka Chen for the first time over a Zoom call, I am greeted at the same time by a beautiful greyish-blue parrot. Her name, I learn, is Le Le, and she happily tweets away in the background as she flies past a large wall covered in sketches of animals and plants in a myriad of colours. This instantly draws me into an atmosphere of open-minded, almost playful yet industrious creativity, with strong roots in the natural world so characteristic of Chen's works.

Aka Chen, the Taiwanese artist and founder of AKACHEN studio, has thirty-five years of experience in the jewellery industry. It was his curiosity as a young boy that gradually led him to the world of jewellery. He wanted to create something — at first anything — while exploring new possibilities. He started to delve into different forms to express his ideas, experimenting with a

wide range of different materials such as wood, stone, ceramic, gemstone and even meteorite. Eventually, he started to wonder why people wear jewellery, and began to research the history of the form to understand how ornamentation emerged and evolved.

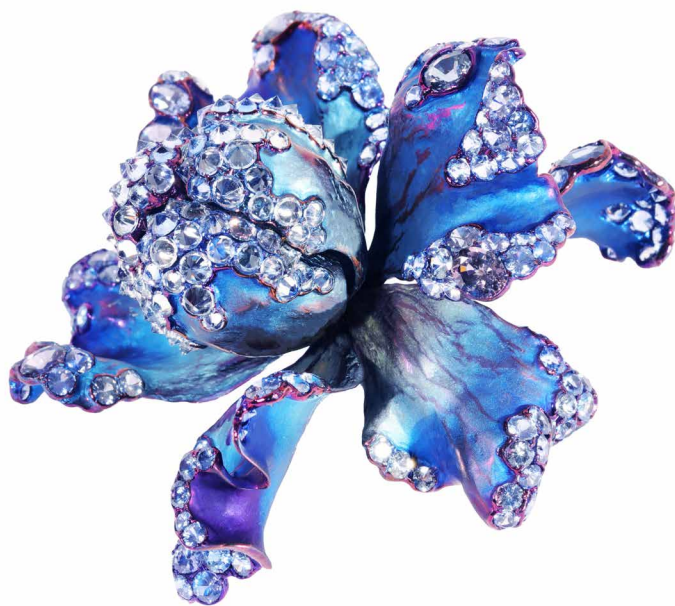
I ask Chen how he sees jewellery, and what place it holds in people's lives. He replies that it is, first and foremost, a luxury — not an absolute necessity in everyday life. Therefore, he wants his jewellery to embody something deeper, something more spiritual by serving as an extension of someone's personality. He does not want his pieces to be worn purely as a status symbol, impressing by its size and expensive gemstones. When a client commissions a piece, Chen doesn't ask what style they want; instead, he listens to their stories and experiences seeking to understand the personality that lies behind. This enables him to create a piece with a unique bond to its wearer. Therefore, he does not call

Aka Chen with his bird, Le Le (left), and the Spring ring (right). Of the inspiration for the ring (ca. 2020–2023), Chen stated, "The four seasons in nature are like our lives: Every stage has its own meaning and beauty... we need to learn to appreciate the impermanence. Spring is the time when birds build nests and prepare to hatch eggs, and life starts." The ring uses 124 sapphires (24.86 tcw), forty-four tsavorites (6.35 tcw) and nine diamonds (0.14 tcw), along with 99.9% titanium, in its composition.

himself a designer but prefers to describe himself as someone who, through the act of making, is trying to understand people and the human experience.

Chen's works transcend jewellery's traditional use as a body ornament. He looks for ways to bring meaning to them in different contexts. His work Zen, acquired in 2020 by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, is a stunning example of this blurring of disciplinary boundaries. The piece consists of three buds suspended on a branch, the titanium a soft yet intense

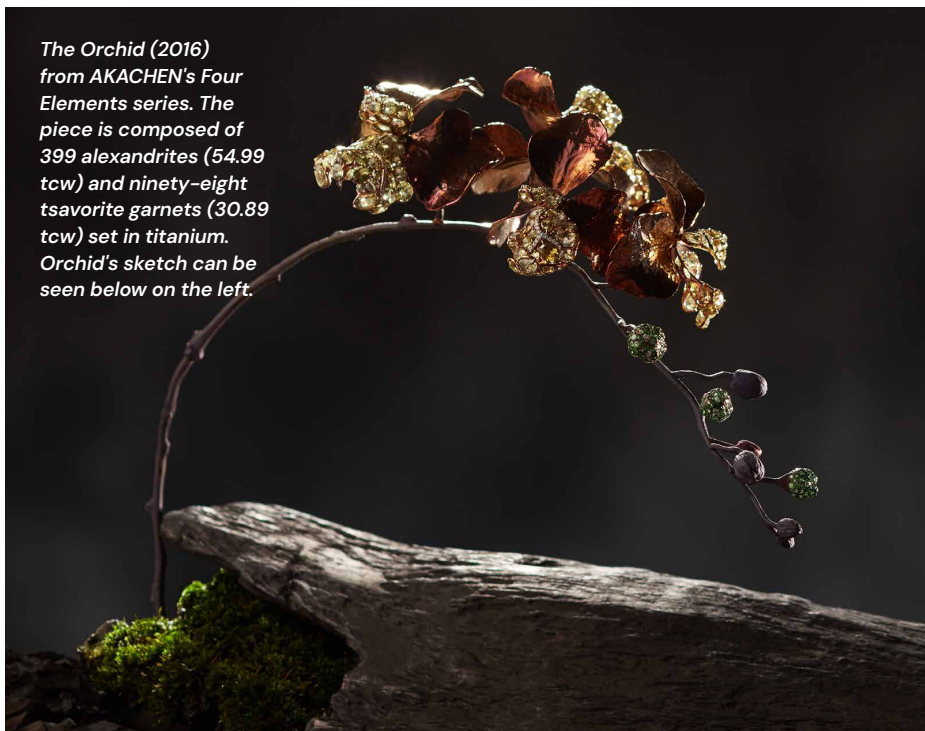
Heart (2021) during its creation (left) and in finished form (right) is made from 245 sapphires (43.81 tcw) and sixteen spinels (11.81 tcw) mounted in titanium.



purple colour, lined by small gemstones perfectly complementing the colour of the titanium. The buds can be taken off to serve as a brooch with matching earrings, seamlessly merging the worlds of jewellery and sculpture, as the piece can also be enjoyed as an installation. For Chen, there is no need to define jewellery as one thing or another. Whether worn, sculptural or collectible, a piece's meaning is derived from the perception of (and the connection with) the people standing in relation to it.

Asian jewellery, Chen tells me, has always had a strong focus on gemstones. In the first fifteen years of his career, his focus lay more on traditional materials such as gold and platinum serving as a framework for lots of gemstones. It was a conversation with a friend that would start steering AKACHEN onto a different path and lead the team into years of

*The Orchid (2016)
from AKACHEN's Four
Elements series. The
piece is composed of
399 alexandrites (54.99
tcw) and ninety-eight
tsavorite garnets (30.89
tcw) set in titanium.
Orchid's sketch can be
seen below on the left.*



experimentation. A friend gave him the challenge of doing something new, of designing jewellery without gemstones. During a dentist's visit, he became inspired by the use of titanium in the medical world. It wasn't the first time, however, that he had come across this metal. Years before, while exhibiting at a jewellery show in Hong Kong in 1998, he had seen a brooch measuring about 25 cm with a beautiful blue colour and a lightness unexpected in a piece of this size. This material would prove to be the answer to two of his design conundrums: It would enable him to create jewellery without the necessity of using gemstones to imbue a piece with colour, and the pieces could be large without the risk of being too heavy to wear comfortably.

Titanium is a highly specialised material with properties very different from traditional precious metals such as gold, platinum and silver. Attempts to work the material with conventional methods and tools led nowhere. Chen started to research titanium and found the information he needed in the medical world, where advanced technology for processing titanium has been well-established. He soon realised that he would have to adapt pre-existing tools to fit jewellery making and develop his own methods. It would take him more than seven years to successfully work with titanium. Chen is keen to emphasise that the use of titanium in jewellery is not new; it has been used for at least fifty years. It is, however, relatively rare and underexplored in the creation of jewellery. A great deal of patience, trial and error was needed to get AKACHEN where they are today. He tells me that the first time they put fire to titanium the metal just disintegrated, as it

cannot be heated at room temperature. "There has been frustration over the years, but also a lot of fun," he says with a smile.

Chen likes to think of titanium as his canvas because of its specific texture and innate ability to show off an incredible array of colours. This latter quality is a key characteristic of titanium that makes it such a special material to work with. It can display a variety of iridescent colours, not through the addition of colouring agents, but through anodisation of the metal itself. When looking at AKACHEN's pieces, one can't help but be mesmerised by this effect. Gemstones still play an important role in most pieces as they are encrusted in the titanium, but they serve more to complement, rather than to define, the piece. The stones Chen tends to work with are corundum and spinel, as they have the perfect lustre to balance the titanium's complex colours. While diamonds are sometimes used, they

Chen's pieces are intended to provide a refreshing antidote to the general rush and pressures many of us experience daily.



Oath of Light (2018), shown in process with its sketch on the left, and in finished form on the right, is composed of 748 coloured diamonds (32.50 tcw) and twenty-one diamonds (0.31 tcw) set in titanium.

play a less-important role as 'they can be too sparkly to look at for a long time'.

A source of inspiration Chen often draws from is painting. He mentions the Chinese master Chang Dai-chien, whose works are characterised by the 'splashed ink' technique and, like Chen's titanium, display an array of colours that seamlessly blend into one another. An important work for Chen is *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains* by Wang Ximeng, which shows blue and green working together to create a vast, almost mythical, landscape of rolling hills. The pure, bright colours of Western Impressionism and its special focus on the changing qualities of light can also be recognised in Chen's play with colour.

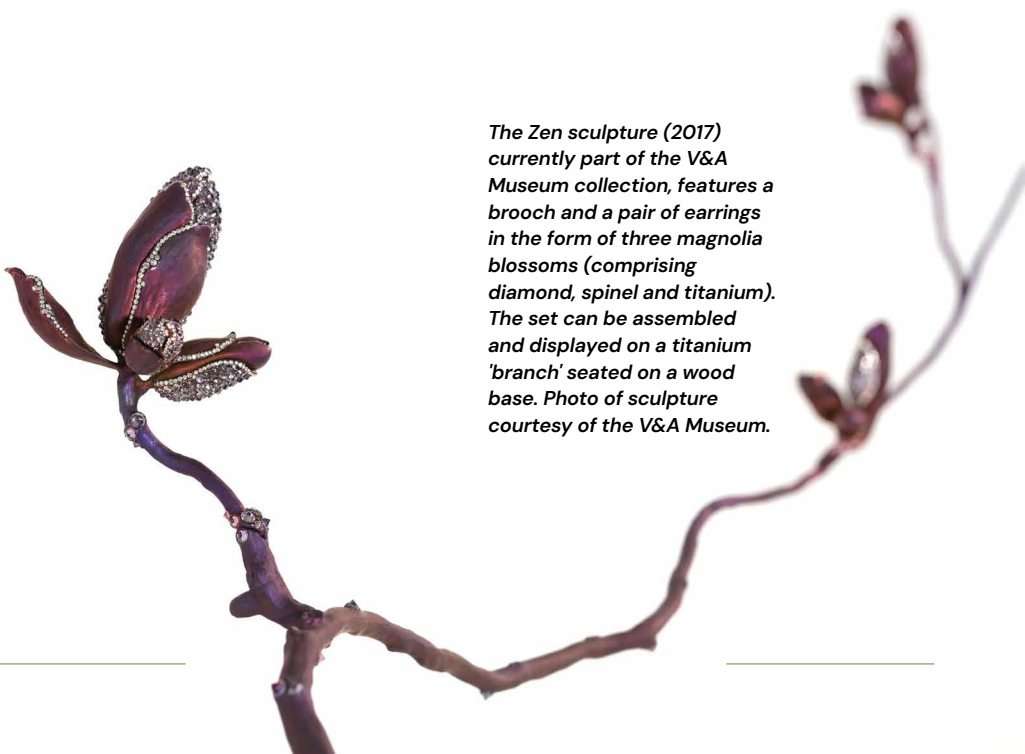
While AKACHEN has developed ways for specific colours to come through, the process cannot be completely controlled. This, Chen says, is how he likes it, as 'there is a lot of beauty in the imperfect'. It is important to not be too stubborn in the creative process. This openness to small surprises is approached with meticulous preparation, as with all aspects of AKACHEN from design to marketing (even sales are overseen by Chen himself). In his series of butterflies, each wing has more than ten thousand fine lines to resemble the effect of woven silk threads. He refers to a meeting the team will have about a pair of butterfly wings that they are in the process of designing. As he tells me this, he gets up and shows me two unattached pieces. The team will discuss what the surface finish will be, the various angles the wings could have and

how each would create a different impact – perhaps subtle, yet important – on the overall effect of the piece. It happens that pieces need to be put aside to come back to at a later date – sometimes even years later. Multiple times during our conversation, Chen picks up a work in progress that is lying nearby. The ideas, but also the tools to bring these ideas to fruition, might need time to mature. Creation for Chen is not linear, and it cannot be rushed. He never compromises to finish a piece quickly.

Chen's pieces are intended to provide a refreshing antidote to the general rush and pressures many of us experience daily. In admiring them one cannot but be in the moment, drawn in by the iridescent colours, the subtle sparkle of the gemstones and the

overall beauty and tranquillity of the jewellery. It comes as no surprise to me when Chen says that, from childhood, he has meditated every day. As a child he would sometimes meditate for up to four hours at a time. Not only does meditation allow him to look at ongoing work with a refreshed mind, but it also often even leads to new ideas.

If there is one work that holds special significance for Aka Chen, it would be the *Eternal Garden*, the central piece of the exhibition of the same name. Composed of ten paintings arranged side by side, the piece spans a total width of 8.8 meters. It draws inspiration from the spatial aesthetics of traditional Eastern gardens and the spiritual essence of Zen philosophy. The image for the *Eternal Garden* first emerged in Chen's mind years ago while meditating.



The Zen sculpture (2017) currently part of the V&A Museum collection, features a brooch and a pair of earrings in the form of three magnolia blossoms (comprising diamond, spinel and titanium). The set can be assembled and displayed on a titanium 'branch' seated on a wood base. Photo of sculpture courtesy of the V&A Museum.

He realised that this work would be a technical challenge, but it also became a long, spiritual journey. Over two decades the piece gradually took shape. Chen believes that everyone has a garden within themselves with our thoughts and actions as seeds that need time to grow.

Chen hopes that when people stand before the Eternal Garden, they will feel both a sense of connection with the natural world beyond themselves and also turn inward, reflecting on the state of their own inner garden. Following the Taoist spirit, Chen believes that as human beings, we are not separate from nature; rather, we are an inseparable part of it. Nature, therefore, serves as AKACHEN's most important source of inspiration. Butterflies, birds, branches and buds are some of the recurring themes in his jewellery. Every weekend Chen tends to his garden in the mountains. With joy, he shows me the scratches which bear witness to his efforts from the past weekend. Sometimes he climbs up into the trees to look at a bird's nest or a specific branch. In his words, "Often we need to only look outside to find exactly what we need to know." One day he brought back a blooming branch from an old cherry blossom tree that has been in his garden for over fifty years. He placed it in a vase inside the tearoom where he holds a tea ceremony for the AKACHEN team every afternoon. Unexpectedly, his beautiful bird, Le Le, flew over and gently landed on the branch. This peaceful moment formed the inspiration behind the work *Living in the Moment*.



The Wings of Serenity comprises 258 diamonds (9.20 tcw) and six coloured diamonds (2.12 tcw) alongside titanium.

Aka Chen prefers to describe himself as someone who, through the act of making, is trying to understand people and the human experience.

AKACHEN has featured in multiple exhibitions over the last few years, including two solo exhibitions in the United States. I ask how this level of success feels and what it means to the team. Chen chuckles, and replies in a very down-to-earth way that he tries not to dwell on it too much. He wants to continue experimenting, learning and giving form to new ideas. The last thing he wants to do is overproduce his work and repeat himself. He says he stays open-minded and doesn't exclude the possibility of making more multidisciplinary creations, potentially incorporating music or architecture into his works. His aim is to carry on creating pieces that are characterised by a strong sense of spirituality combined with innovative craftsmanship and technology.

It has been a real joy to delve deeper into Aka Chen's magical world of titanium jewellery. It is a world of captivating beauty imbued with spiritual profundity. His pieces showcase exceptional technical skill while they mesmerise the viewer by their colours, play of light and visions of the natural world. ■

To learn more about the artist and his studio, visit www.akachen.com.

Photos courtesy of AKACHEN unless otherwise indicated.



Taiwanese artist and innovator Aka Chen, of the eponymous studio, at his desk.

Now Accepting Entries for the 2025 Photographer of the Year Competition!

Gem-A's annual photography contest, focusing on photomicrographs, is open for submission.

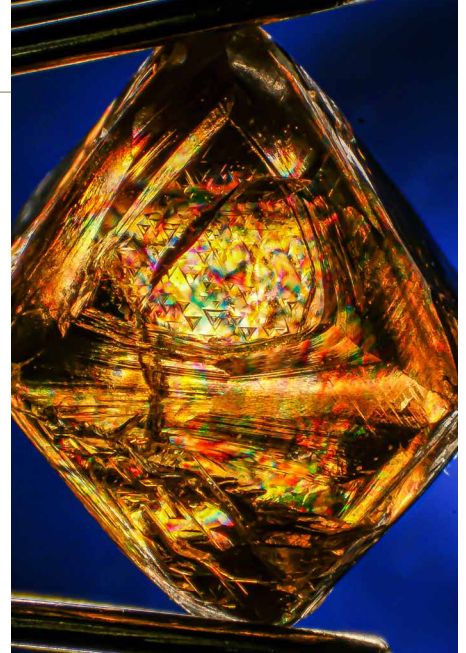
The Photographer of the Year Competition is officially open! Each autumn, Gem-A receives submissions for this contest, not just from our Students, Alumni and Members, but from our colleagues and peers around the world. These images showcase the stunning world of gem photography as seen through the eyes of professional and amateur gemmologists.

This 2025 competition will once again focus on the landscapes and inner worlds of gemstones. We are requesting that our entrants send in the best photomicrographs that they have taken in the past year. The microscope reveals so much hidden information about gem materials. We want to see the inclusion scenes, internal features, patterns and unusual finds that captivated you during the course of your work. As in previous years, our first-prize winner will receive a one-year membership to the Association and a voucher to Gem-A Instruments; their photo will

also grace the cover of the Winter 2025 issue of *Gems&Jewellery*.

This year's contest will also include a People's Choice Award, based on the number of votes an image receives from the general public. Once the deadline for submissions has passed,

This year's contest will also include a People's Choice Award, based on the number of votes an image receives from the general public.



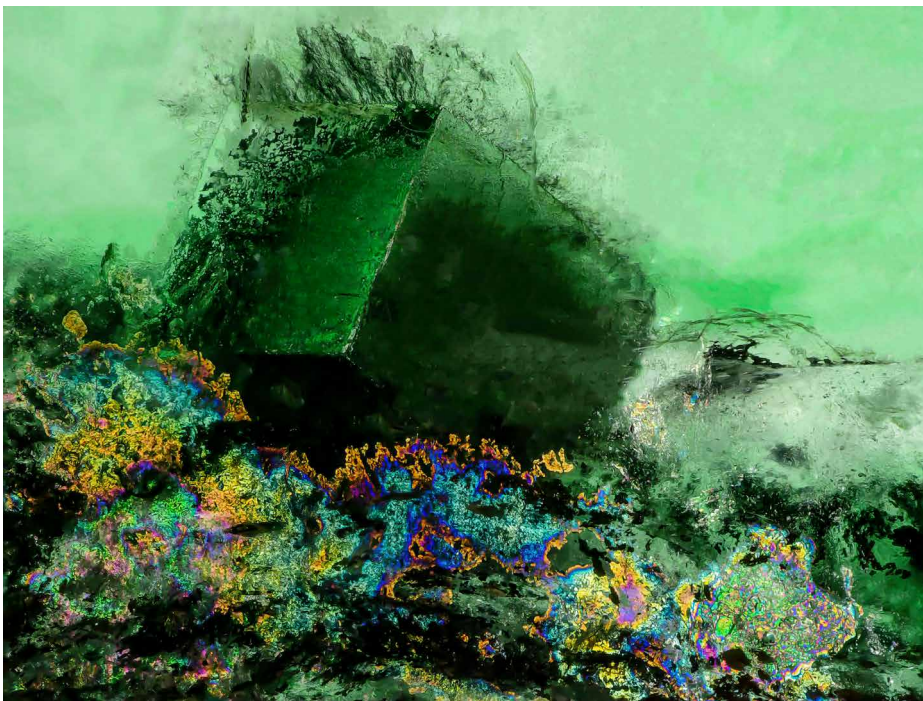
The winner of the 2023 Photographer of the Year competition was Randy Lightfoot, for his photo "Heavy 'Knotted' Strain Throughout Natural Brown Diamond (Octahedral Habit)." The field of view of the photo is ~8.00 mm.

a longlist will be curated and subject to a public vote on Facebook. The image that receives the most votes will receive a prize alongside the first-place winner and two runners-up, which will be chosen by our team of three judges.

Submissions are welcome from all areas of the trade; previous winners and runners-up are also encouraged to enter. We look forward to seeing what our entrants have uncovered in the past year.

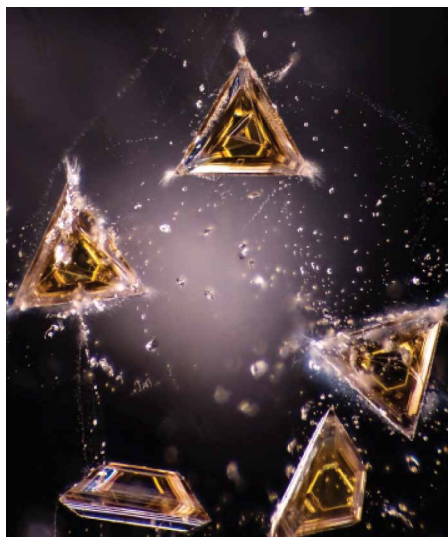
COMPETITION RULES

- A maximum of three photographs may be entered per person.
- All photographs entered into the competition must have been taken within the last twelve months.
- We are only accepting photomicrographs for this year's competition. Any photos that are not photomicrographs will be eliminated.
- Photographs must be in .jpeg or .tiff format; no other formats will be accepted.



Theodore Rozet placed on the 2024 shortlist with his photomicrograph of a large rhombohedral calcite crystal with schiller-like effect in an emerald from Swat, Pakistan. This perfectly formed rhombohedral calcite seems to have crashed in the emerald, creating a wave of darker residues around it after its impact. Underneath, the schiller-like effect is seen as multicolour due to film interference with fluids in fissures. The photo was taken with a Digital Microscope Keyence VHX-7000 at Bellerophon Gemlab. The mineral inclusions have been identified with Thunder Optics Micro-Raman. Photomicrograph by Theodore Rozet; field of view 1.98 mm.

- Photographs must be high resolution (300 dpi); it must maintain 300-dpi resolution when the size is increased to G&J's cover measurements of 210 × 297 mm (8.27 × 11.70 in.).
- Photomicrographs must be accompanied by field of view for proper digital representation*.
- All image editing or manipulation that has been performed on the photo(s) must be disclosed in the photograph description. Please note that the judges reserve the right to request the original, unmanipulated image to compare the two outcomes.
- Entries must be accompanied by your name and post-nominals (if applicable)
- Images must be captioned and include the following:
 - Host material and inclusion type
 - Locality of material (if available)
 - Illumination used to capture the scene
 - Equipment used to take the photomicrograph (e.g., camera, microscope)



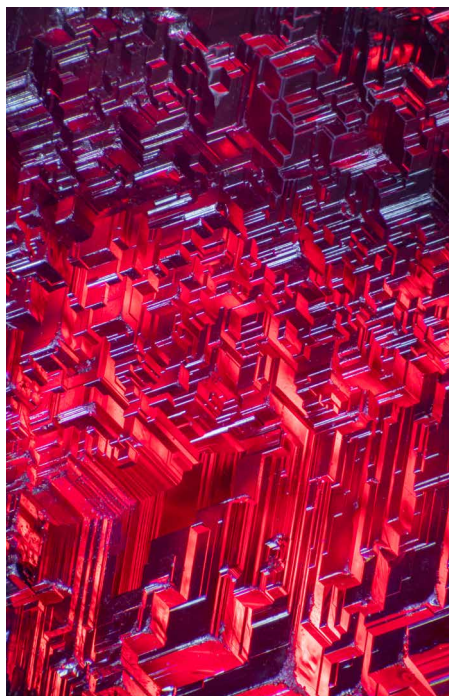
For her photo 'Helvite Merry-Go-Round,' Melissa Allen FGA GG was awarded first prize in the 2020 Photographer of the Year competition. Here, triangular inclusions of helvite, each measuring ~1.00 mm, are seen inside a rough morganite tabular crystal, which was purchased by Sid Tucker. Photomicrograph by Melissa Allen; field of view ~4.50 mm.

- Any image editing or manipulation that was performed to create the final image
- A description of no more than 200 words telling the story behind the photograph must be included
- 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 WeTransfer.com to editor@gem-a.com

'Crimson Geoscape' by Melissa Allen FGA GG, shows the surface of an 'etched' spessartine rough garnet crystal from the Navegadora Mine, Brazil. Brightfield and direct overhead illumination were used to illuminate the edges of the garnet structure. This image was a runner-up in the 2019 contest. Photomicrograph by Melissa Allen, field of view 8.00 mm.



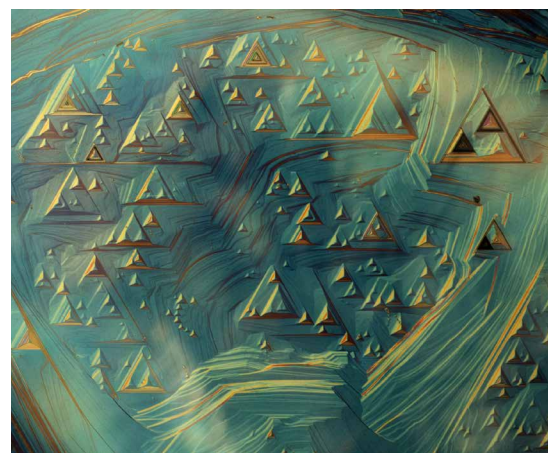
*To calculate field of view, multiply the magnifying power of all of the optics between the sample and the camera. Determine the physical sensor width of the camera sensor (which should be published by the camera manufacturer). Divide the physical sensor size in mm by the magnification factor to determine the field of view.

Alternatively, you can capture an image and, using the same magnification and camera arrangement, use a small scale (calibration slide, or table gauge) to physically measure the same field of view as the image that was just taken. This would be useful when taking a photo with a mobile phone should it not be possible to determine the magnifying power of the optics built into the phone's camera.

(these are free-to-use media transfer services). There is no cost to enter the competition. We will be accepting photos until 24 November 2025.

The G&J team will mask the identities of the photographers and will receive the input of at least one of the competition judges, along with other gemmologists, to select ten entries to make up the Longlist. These images will be posted to Facebook so that the general public may vote for a People's Choice winner. Voting will be open until 10 December 2025. The winner, runners-up, and People's Choice selection will be announced on Gem-A's social media channels in mid-December; all four will be featured in the Winter 2025 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.



Ziyin Sun won the 2016 Student Award by capturing trigons and growth marks on a diamond macle using episcopic differential interference contrast (DIC). Photomicrograph by Ziyin Sun; field of view 2.81 mm.

PRIZES

As previously mentioned, the first-place winner will have their photograph on the cover of the Winter 2025 issue of *Gems&Jewellery*, along with a one-year Gem-A Membership and a £300 voucher to Gem-A Instruments. The two runners-up and the People's Choice Award Winner, who will also be featured within the Winter 2025 issue, will each receive a £50 voucher redeemable at Gem-A Instruments.

Good luck to all who enter! ■



On view in the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery of the American Museum of Natural History, *Cosmic Splendor* showcases nearly seventy celestial and mythological jewellery creations that celebrate the wonders and mysteries of our universe. Photo by Alvaro Keding/© AMNH

JEWELRY FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF VAN CLEEF & ARPELS

Mackenzie Rush considers the cosmos-inspired jewellery from the world-renowned luxury maison, now showing at the American Museum of Natural History.

The cosmos, with its celestial bodies and mesmerising constellations, has been the focus of mythology, folklore and scientific theory since antiquity. In collaboration with Van Cleef & Arpels, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City has tapped into that fascination. The museum previously collaborated with the maison on the well-received *Garden of Green* exhibition (see Winter 2023 *G&J*, pp. 34–36). The French luxury brand has returned to AMNH with *Cosmic Splendor: Jewelry from the Collections of Van Cleef & Arpels*, which opened on 11 April. Located in the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery, within the Museum's Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals, the exhibition features

The Zodiac collection of the 1970s included this Virgo pendant, made from malachite, diamond, yellow gold and white gold.



nearly seventy exquisitely detailed pieces of jewellery created over the last century. Van Cleef & Arpels' work illustrates humanity's millennia-long enchantment with the stars, Moon, Sun and other aspects of the universe, even branching into the topics of astrology and science fiction.

This assemblage of astronomically inspired jewellery spans decades and collections. A common theme throughout the maison's history was the Moon. Early pieces include timepieces; one of these, a pocket watch composed of platinum and enamel, was the first to show the daily phase of the Moon alongside the date and time. A table clock (ca. 1930), made from yellow gold, silver, enamel and glass, is a lovely example of the maison's craft of decorative objects. Van Cleef & Arpels continued to make space-themed watches well into the twenty-first century; one such piece, the Midnight



This pocket watch from 1929 (left) is the first of the Van Cleef & Arpels timepieces to provide the daily phase of the moon alongside time and date. It is made of platinum and enamel. The Midnight Planétarium watch (1951) is composed of agate, sugilite, turquoise, serpentine, chloromelanite and jasper alongside pink gold.



Planétarium watch (1951) uses colourful materials such as agate, sugilite, turquoise, serpentine, chloromelanite and jasper alongside pink gold. Other early items include a spiral clip (1941) using rubies, platinum and yellow and rose gold in its creation, and a meteor clip from 1951 that is composed of diamonds, yellow gold and platinum. This last piece was representative of a shift in the 1950s, when the maison's

jewellery and timepieces began to use asymmetrical gold threads to emulate the movements of meteors, creating a sense of light and motion.

While Van Cleef & Arpels began creating astrology-related objects in the 1950s, the Zodiaque collection of the 1970s tapped into the popularity of New Age topics while diversifying the jewellery house's output in terms of materials and functions. Van Cleef

& Arpels created colourful pendants on long necklaces, bracelets and even belt buckles. The Virgo pendant, with its depiction of the goddess in yellow gold, also uses malachite, diamond and white gold, making it a striking and memorable piece. A notable high jewellery piece related to both astrology and the lunar theme is the Diane (Diana) clip, from the Bals de Légende collection (2011). The clip features a number of sapphires, including blue and mauve stones and a purple star sapphire, with a white gold centre depicting the Moon goddess surrounded by diamonds.

While the Moon was a theme in the maison's jewellery and precious objects for decades, a pendant from the Van Cleef & Arpels collection adds a historical and scientific twist to this exhibition. Made in 1969, the pendant was created to celebrate the Apollo 11 Moon landing of that year. The piece was created with textured yellow gold to represent the rough surface, with a single ruby to mark the landing spot of the Apollo 11.

Just as the Moon was an astronomy-related theme that was used over the past century, the stars, including our Sun, are also present as an inspiration. Pieces from the recent from Sous les

Just as the Moon was an astronomy-related theme that was used over the past century, the stars, including our Sun, are also ever-present as an inspiration.



This spiral clip (1941) takes its inspiration from the galaxies. It uses rubies, diamonds, yellow gold, rose gold and platinum in its composition.

Étoiles High Jewelry collection (2021) include the Danse Stellaire earrings and the Étoile Mystérieuses necklace, both of which allowed the maison to interpret the stars using a variety of gem materials. The former, a pair of dangling earrings, use diamonds, red and angel-skin coral, yellow sapphires and spessartine garnets set in rose gold. The latter incorporates hundreds of blue sapphires placed using the famous Mystery Set technique; the necklace also uses diamonds and rose and white gold. Solar-inspired jewellery dating from the 1970s is also on display, not only in a yellow-gold clip, but in a similarly styled pendant that uses green chalcedony and diamonds set in yellow gold. And in the Fleur de Soleil clip (ca. 2016), Van Cleef & Arpels recreates the Sun with yellow sapphires, spessartine garnets, diamonds and yellow and white gold.

Other breathtaking pieces in the show include a pair of clips taken from the Sous les Étoiles High Jewelry line from 2021. Called the Doubles Galaxies clips, both are jewelled wonders set in rose gold. One, in an ovoid shape, incorporates diamonds, rubies and pink sapphires swirling around a mauve sapphire centre, while the other is more spiral in shape, with a pink sapphire in the centre and mauve sapphires scattered among the rubies and diamonds. Also from the Sous



Doubles Galaxies from the clips from the Sous les Étoiles High Jewelry collection (2021). Top: Doubles Galaxies Saphir Mauve clip, which includes a mauve sapphire alongside pink sapphires, rubies, diamonds and rose gold. Bottom: the Doubles Galaxies Saphir Rose clip, with a pink sapphire centred among mauve sapphires, rubies, diamonds and rose gold.



Using diamonds (including yellow material) and white gold, the Étoile Filante clip of 2021 is Van Cleef & Arpels' depiction of a shooting star.

les Étoiles collection is the Étoile Filante, or the Shooting Star clip. This jewel, inspired by the streaks of light that can be seen in the night sky, is detailed enough to include gems dangling from the 'tails' to represent sparks of light at the end of the star. Comprising diamonds, alongside yellow specimens, set in white gold, the clip is an exquisite homage to its namesake.

Music in the background of the exhibition contributed to the environment, with a track list that included David Bowie ("Space Oddity"), Frank Sinatra ("Fly Me to the Moon") and Frank Ocean ("Moon River"). The setting of the exhibition was exquisitely curated by the Museum's award-winning team, including Alexandrine Maviel-Sonet, director of

The yellow-gold Moon pendant, created by Van Cleef & Arpels to commemorate the Moon landing in 1969, marks the spot where Apollo 11 touched down with a ruby.

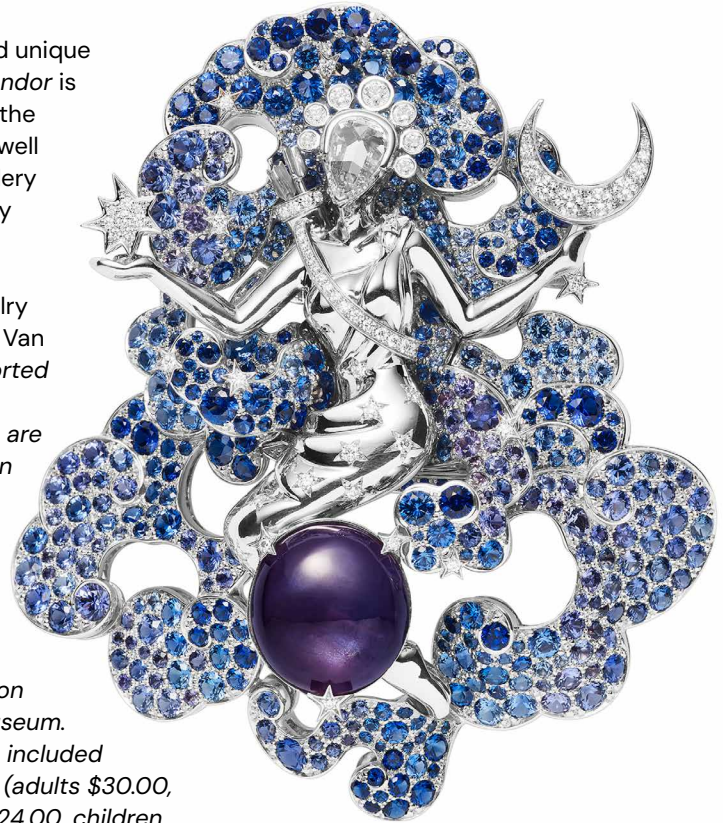


Van Cleef & Arpels' work illustrates humanity's millennia-long enchantment with the universe.

patrimony and exhibitions at Van Cleef & Arpels, along with guest curator Kate Kiseeva, assistant curator in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and Division of Physical Sciences. Consultation and collaboration was provided Denton Ebel and Ruth Angus, who both work in the museum's Division of Physical Sciences, adding to the incredible setting. Together, they were able

to create a stunning and unique exhibition. *Cosmic Splendor* is an inspired addition to the Meister Gallery, and is well worth a visit from jewellery admirers and astronomy enthusiasts alike. ■

Cosmic Splendor: Jewelry from the Collections of Van Cleef & Arpels is supported by the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation. The pieces are on view at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City through 4 January 2026. It can be found within the Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals, on the first floor of the museum. Admission to the hall is included with general admission (adults \$30.00, students and seniors \$24.00, children 3–12 \$18.00). The American Museum of Natural History is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; it is closed on Christmas Day.



The Diane (Diana) clip, circa 2011, from the Bal du Siècle, Bals de Légende High Jewelry collection, comprises a purple star sapphire, blue sapphires, mauve sapphires, diamonds and white gold.

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The World of David Morris: The London Jeweller Since 1962

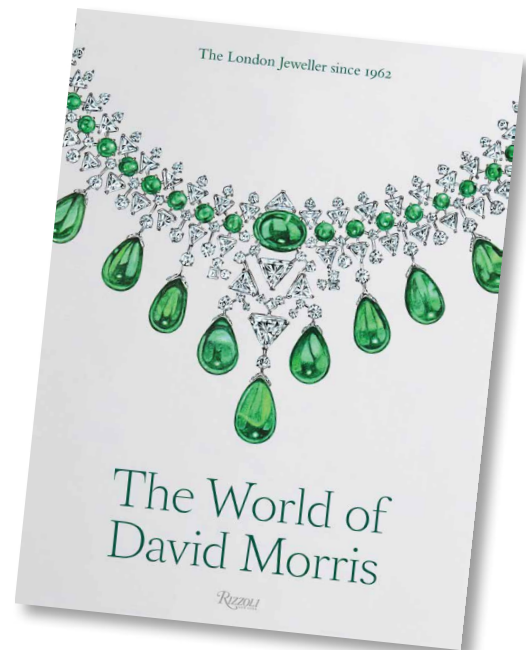
Reviewed by Susi Smither BSc FGA JDT

When I was asked to review a book on David Morris, I knew I would be in for a treat, and I was not disappointed.

With a penchant for high-end coloured gemstones of exquisite saturation and colour in breathtaking, bold high jewellery, *The World of David Morris: The London Jeweller Since 1962* is a sumptuous kaleidoscopic delight. From cover to cover, from the opening title page through to the last, the Morris family welcomes us into their world. Established in 1962 at the height of

the Swinging Sixties, David Morris soon made his mark on the industry with his award-winning designs adorning the rich and famous from 'musicians, actors and royals the world over'.

In the safe and capable hands of Annabel Davidson (editor of *Vanity Fair on Jewellery* and writer for *British Vogue*, the *Telegraph* and the *International New York Times*, among other publications), we are treated to a highly detailed deep dive into the entire Morris family. The journey begins with patriarch David Morris and his wife Suzette; to their son, Jeremy Morris, who is the current CEO; through to third-generation members (and Jeremy's daughters) Phoebe and Cecily Morris. The sisters – the former of whom is a GIA-qualified gemmologist and special projects coordinator for the company, while the latter directs all brand content, visual merchandising and social media for the brand – grew up spending school holidays in the workshop. There is a real sense that Annabel Davidson has been given full access into the Morris family's world and then, with a knowing eye, managed to condense a lifetime of stories and tales of adventure into this tome. I found the narrative really evoked the intimate relationship that can develop between a client and their jeweller which, in turn, can give unique access to even the grandest of settings. This allows the opulent travels and grand escapades to be retold with a sense of nostalgia, such as flying jewellery out



By Annabel Davidson and Phoebe, Cecily and Jeremy Morris, hardcover, 272 pp., illus., publ. by Rizzoli International Publications, New York, NY; 2024, £88.50.

Title image: The closing image of the book is David Morris's *Still Life Ribbon* necklace, on which a suite of *Lightning Ridge* black opals is showcased.

Left: The *Sapphire Reflection* necklace, with purple sapphires, turquoise and white diamonds.

five or six times a year to the Sultan of Brunei by invitation, or responding to the late-night requests of no less than Elizabeth Taylor.

There is a dual arc to the book within the eight chapters, with a clever combination of storytelling by Ms Davidson of the rich history of the

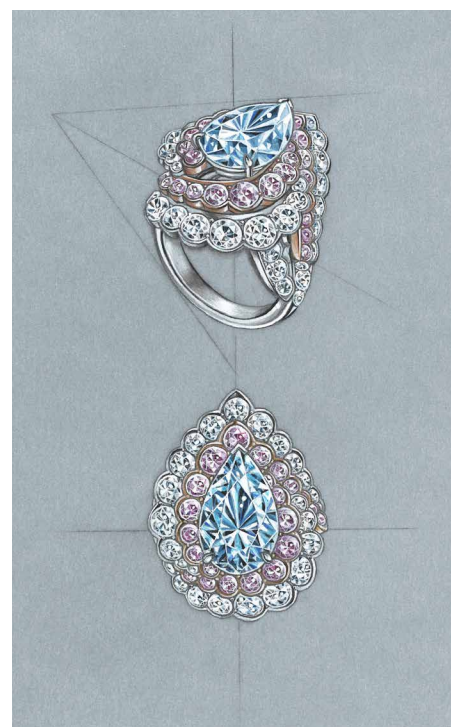


This external viewpoint really evoked the intimate relationship which can develop between a client and their jeweller which, in turn, can give unique access to even the grandest of settings.

jewellery house (with chapters such as 'A Family Portrait' and 'The Glorious Past') combined with a glimpse into the design methods. These techniques are brought to fruition in chapters such as 'Hunting for Gemstones' and 'Tradition, Meet Technology'. Dropped into this are ten subsections revealing some of the world's most desirable gem materials, from the Paraíba tourmaline to the conch pearl, to the padparadscha sapphire.

The reader is given matchless insight into the day-to-day running

of this world-class jewellery house. All of this activity takes place under the roof of a townhouse in New Bond Street, where they have been based since 1996. From the boutique on the ground floor to the atelier on the top it is a hive of creativity. At the helm is Jeremy Morris, who is not only CEO, but the creative director of David Morris Ltd. A true rockhound, he is 'on a perpetual hunt' around the world for gemstones. To quote the narrative, "the world is his mine, and he's having a ball exploring it." We see



In the Aurora Maelstrom ring, a swirling composition of blue, pink and white diamonds captures the colours of daybreak.



This mood board reflects the Greek influence in some of David Morris's work. The 'evil eye' is ever-present in Greek culture. The Reflection necklace and colourful ring designs are inspired by summers spent exploring the island of Mykonos.



A mood board of colourful inspiration for the Ribbon designs, including the mounts for the opals (bottom left), which were bought at auction.

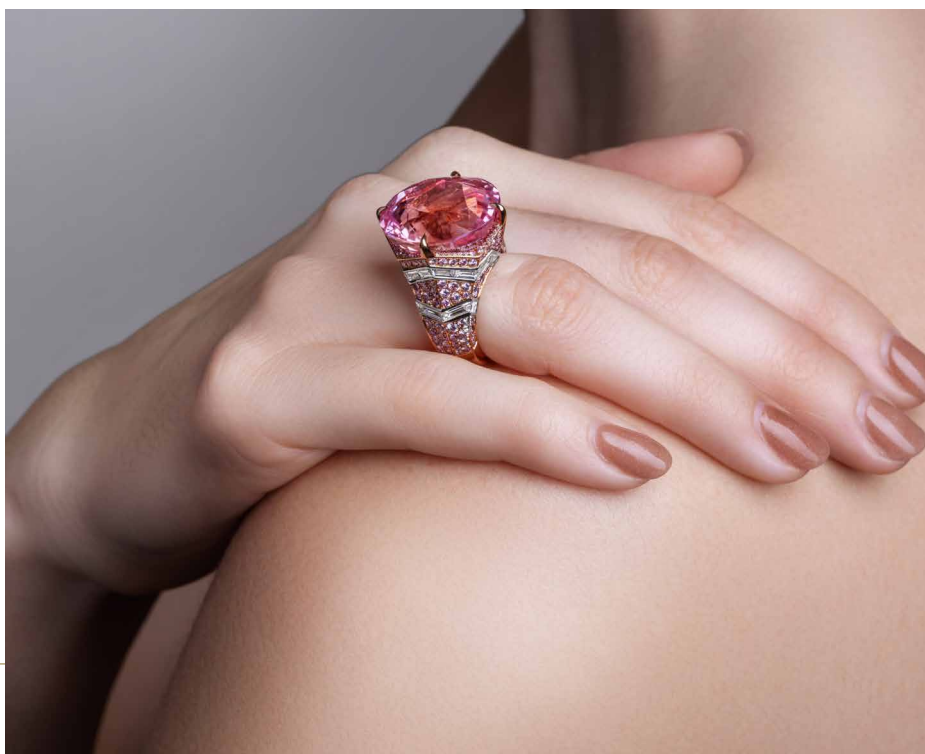
how the purchases Morris *finds* makes are put to use by the firm. Conch pearls bought from a harbourmaster whilst on holiday in the Bahamas end up in the cascading Horizon earrings, which showcase the spectral range of their pink hues. The hunt for 'cobalt-blue' spinels from Vietnam takes him to a family-run stand hidden deep in the Hong Kong gem fair, located via Instagram! Jeremy Morris also has an eye for unveiling a gemstone's full potential. "I'm always on the lookout for stones which have the potential to be improved in some way," he explained. "I love taking a gamble on something that is thought to be one thing, but I know I can turn into another." With Jeremy Morris bringing together rare material and bountiful ideas, the responsibility of executing these jewels passes to senior designers Julian Medwell and Devyn Downing.

The extended David Morris family can be found all through the atelier, right to the top floor of the building, where each piece of jewellery is

meticulously handmade. I particularly love that through the personal perspective Ms Davidson used, we are introduced to all the craftsmen. This gives a real sense of the effort which goes into each jewellery piece, and the pride every member of the staff feels as part of the David Morris team. The long tenure held by many employees is testament in itself to what it means to be part of this family firm.

Photographs capture the gems and jewellery in magnificent detail; often one hero image is carried over a few pages and printed in such high resolution you'd think you could pick a ring or a necklace up off the page. This visual aspect gives gemmologists, designers and collectors the delight of seeing these rare gemstones in unworldly dimensions; it allows the reader to bask in the jewels' beauty

The Horizon ring, with a 34.88 ct padparadscha sapphire centred and complemented by pink and white diamonds.



while appreciating the subtle shift in the gemstones' tones. One of my favourite photographs is the closing image of the central black opal from the Ribbon necklace. What I love is that, at a distance, someone may perceive the gemstone as mauve but on closer inspection the opal has complementing waves of orange, pink and violet light. The image captures the full glory of the play-of-colour displayed in this gemstone — from crimson to acid yellow, verdant green and through to violet, giving a sense that the viewer is being lured past the visible spectrum.

In addition to the jewellery photographs, throughout the book we are treated to a mix of collages and skilled gouache designs, often with a cascade of gemstones. This gives the sense that we have leaned over the desk of the design team mid-flow. I loved the intimate feel the inclusion of these sketches provided. They also hint at the wide range of influences the design process draws upon, from Jeremy Morris taking in the latest exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts to his home on Mykonos. The reader also gets the feeling that the city of London is often their muse, with the impact of architecture, galleries and even "wandering the Kensal Road market on a Sunday morning." This influence gives weight to their appellation as 'The London Jeweller'.

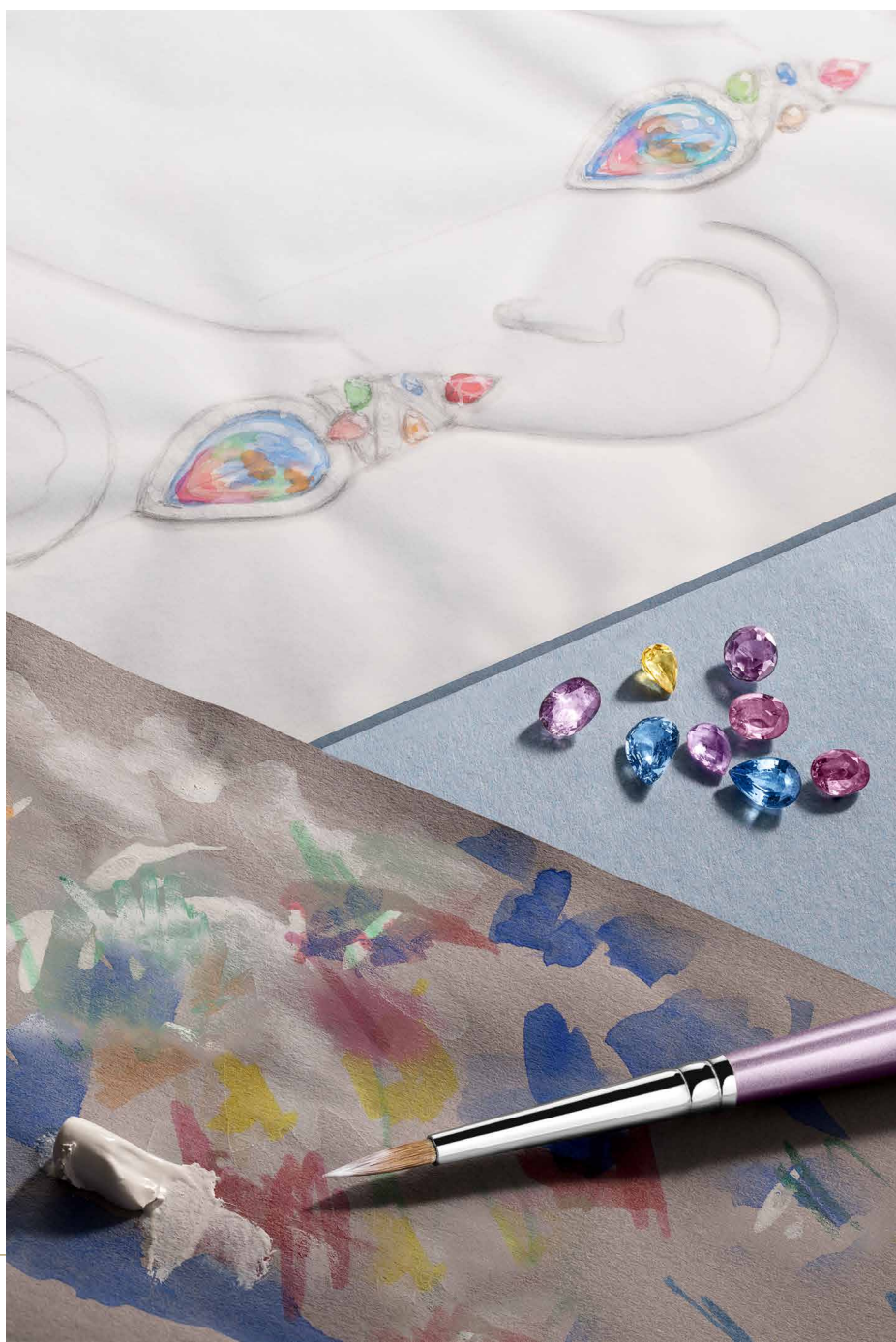
After all the work spent on design and creation — a timeframe that the team notes can reach into thousands of hours — the story doesn't stop with the finished piece. It is made clear that the atelier maintains their relationships with their clientele. Or, in the words of Jeremy Morris, "I have a clutch of top clients who I really know. I know their tastes; I know what they have in their collection. I know where there are gaps. In that way, I feel like a curator who is helping them build an important portfolio."

This book is particularly good for jewellery designers of all levels. Not only is there a lot to learn from the detailed gouaches and design flow, but the way the book walks the reader through the creation of their jewellery

The personal perspective Ms Davidson used gives a real sense of the effort which goes into each jewellery piece, and the pride every one of them feels as part of the David Morris team.

really helps distil down the multitude of stages taken to make *haute joaillerie*. Even with fifteen years in the trade, I have picked up some tips and tricks from this book, that only come from sixty years of refining their craft. From 'second-skin flexibility' on a necklace to the hidden hinges

on a necklace, the reader feels lucky to be privy these secrets. With a mix of the 'glorious past' and recent hero pieces, *The World of David Morris: The London Jeweller Since 1962* manages to be both a sumptuous delight and an educational volume for anyone with an interest in jewellery design. ■



The painterly palette of rare spinel jewels alongside a sketch of the Still Life earrings.

Rebecca Rau's Passion for Antiquity and Craftsmanship

The founder of the eponymous brand delves into the inspiration behind her work.

As a fourth-generation antique, art and jewellery dealer, I am always on the hunt for objects. Primarily, this has been to source inventory for my family's gallery, M.S. Rau (New Orleans, Louisiana). For the gallery, I seek items of great impact, whether due to provenance, scale, beauty or rarity. These traits tend to translate into desirability and collectability, which has kept our business growing since it was founded in 1912.

Over years of examining objects in museums, galleries, auction houses and residences, my eye eventually wandered to intimate objects of diminutive scale, those which embody a legacy of craftsmanship and care, but perhaps forego conventional beauty or are easily overlooked due to their scale. I am drawn to asymmetries and imperfections, to details that reveal an artefact's age and hand-wrought nature. I began to collect some of these small artefacts. In an age of accelerating technology, it is grounding to reflect on the impulses we share with previous generations of humanity—adorning the body, working with our hands and embedding significance within things.

The artefacts I have collected for Rebecca Rau Jewels are central to The THEN & NOW Collection, my inaugural body of work, which reimagines antiquities within contemporary jewellery designs. Many of the objects I have worked with, which date from 1200 BCE to 1880 CE, were originally worn for spiritual or functional purposes. But others were never wearable; they are pieces I have converted into jewellery because of their unique gravitas.

Gemstones are my other passion, especially coloured stones; their breadth and variety never cease to inspire me. I am constantly seeking

compelling gemstones; I acquire those that speak to me on a visceral level, and trust that they will come to life in jewellery in powerful ways.

While designing in my New York studio, I look for innovative, unexpected visual pairings between objects and gemstones. Some designs arrive fully formed from my imagination, while others are the result of lengthy layout explorations at my desk. I will, of course, at times need to seek out a missing piece to complete a concept.

Top: The Granulated Goddess necklace comprises an axe-shaped pendant (ca. 600–400 BCE) adorned with fine gold granulation, an ancient goldsmithing technique; a 3.02 carat unheated pink sapphire; and rubellite (3.25 tcw) and teal tourmalines (0.56 tcw).

Bottom: The focal point of the Criss-Cross necklace is the bronze Bactrian amulet (ca. 1200–800 BCE) displaying a layered green patina. The amulet is accentuated by a 1.01 ct cushion-shaped pink spinel, a 0.87 ct trillion-shaped rubellite and 0.22 tcw step-cut pink sapphires and a baroque South Sea pearl. The piece is set in 18K yellow gold and hangs from a 14K gold book-style lariat chain (ca. 1880).



But throughout my creative process, I aim to utilise what is already in front of me by working intuitively and 'thinking with my hands'. My other primary objective is to preserve the artefacts by building the jewellery in technically innovative ways to avoid altering the patina or form. Once the designs are finalised and drawn in detail, the collaboration with the goldsmiths begins.

Some favourites include The Granulated Goddess, a pendant centred around a Phoenician high-karat, axe-shaped gold votive pendant dating from 600–400 BCE. To complement its beauty, I selected a 3.02 ct unheated cushion-cut pink sapphire, while the addition of round teal tourmalines and rubellite cabochons lends a playful touch. The piece is set in 22K gold.

The Criss-Cross Necklace features a bronze amulet (ca. 1200–800 BCE) from the ancient Iranian civilisation of Bactria. The four-spoked votive wheel represented the Sun, divinity and celestial travel. To protect the amulet – which shows a rich patina – we used existing openings in the bronze as stone seats and placed small gold plates at the back to secure the pink sapphires, pink spinel and rubellite without heating the bronze. The baroque South Sea pearl hangs from the 18K gold settings on the reverse. To give it extra allure, I sourced an exquisite 14K gold late-Victorian-era lariat chain.

At its core, Rebecca Rau Jewels is a celebration of human history, craftsmanship and bodily adornment. The brand aims to inspire curiosity about the past—its cultures, traditions and rituals—and to remind people that fundamental human impulses have largely remained constant over the arc of history. Our work embodies both gravitas and whimsy. ■



亞洲寶石學院及鑑定所 Asian Gemmological Institute And Laboratory Limited

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Applicants admitted to this programme must satisfy the entry requirements of academic-route or professional-route admissions:

Academic-route

- Possessed a recognized Higher Diploma or Associate Degree in Gemmology, Jewellery Management, or a relevant discipline or equivalent from an institution recognized by the University for the purpose.

Professional-route

- Having obtained the Diploma's qualification of the Gemmological Association of Great Britain (Gem-A), including both Gem-A UK QF Level 5 Gem Diamond Diploma (DGA) and Gem-A UK QF Level 6 Diploma in Gemmology (FGA), or equivalent qualification recognised by the University.
- Preferably with at least one year relevant work experience in the jewellery industry

Core Courses

- Advanced High-Tech Gem Testing and Instrumentation
- Gems and Jewellery: Production and Quality Management
- Optical and Physical Behaviour of Gemstones
- Structural Engineering, Workmanship and Appraisal of Antique and Contemporary Jewellery
- Professional Practice

Language of instruction

English (supplemented with Chinese)

Career Prospects

- Gemmologist
- Jewellery merchandising manager
- Jewellery designer
- Jewellery laboratory and research professional
- Jewellery appraiser
- Auction house jewellery specialist

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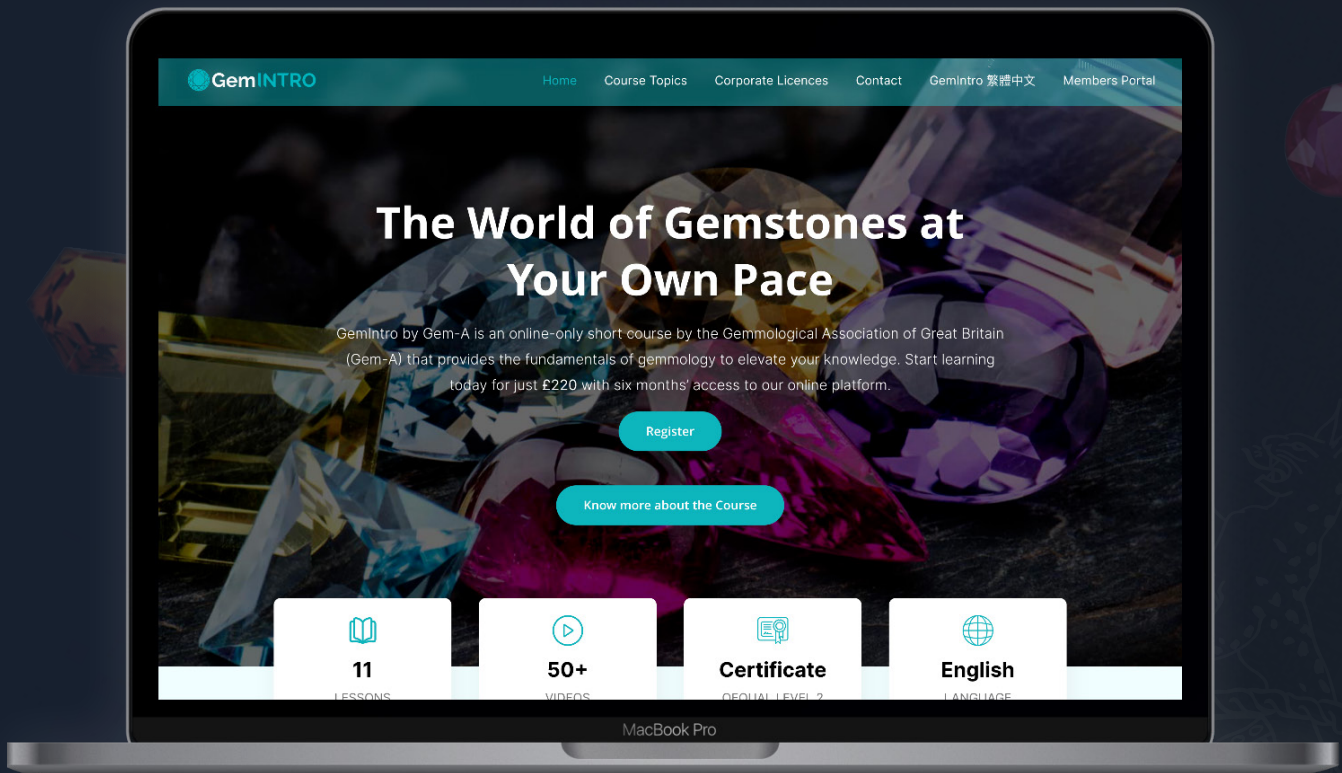
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