

BOOK Reviews

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Famous Diamonds, 5th Ed.

By Ian Balfour, 335 pp., illus., publ. by *Antique Collectors' Club* [www.antique-acc.com], Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK, 2009. \$95.00

For nearly 30 years, diamond historian Ian Balfour has unmasked legends and provided factual accounts of the most exceptional diamonds. In this new edition of his now-classic reference, he makes each entry monumental through the dogged unearthing of the mythology and history of these famous treasures.

Diamonds are personal, as illustrated by Balfour's story of the Emperor Maximilian diamond. Worn by the emperor in a satchel around his neck when he was executed by a firing squad in Mexico, it was returned to his widow, Carlotta, who "as the result of these events, was to remain mentally deranged until her death near Brussels in 1927. The gem was sold in order to help pay her medical expenses" (p. 97). Balfour brings this personal touch, whether tragic or inspiring, to each diamond with a known history (regrettably, the origins of some diamonds have yet to be revealed).

The abundant details he provides on the possessors of these unequalled gems deepen our thirst for more. And because diamonds are also visual, his accounts are liberally illustrated with paintings, sketches, and photographs, each drawing us further into the story. Balfour offers images of owners as they display their proud possessions: a duke or duchess, a king or

queen, or Hollywood royalty such as Audrey Hepburn or Liz Taylor. Each image complements the richness Balfour describes, causing us to pause and to celebrate.

In this fifth edition (the fourth was released in 2000), Balfour adds several new or significantly revised entries. These include the Donnersmarck, a pair of Fancy Intense yellow diamonds (a 102.54 ct cushion and 82.48 ct pear) that once belonged to La Paiva, one of the most celebrated courtesans of the mid-1800s; the Kazanjian Red (known as the Red Diamond in earlier editions, and lost until recently); a 5.05 ct squarish emerald cut once mistaken for a ruby by an American general when it was recovered from Nazi war loot; the Lesotho Promise, a 603 ct crystal discovered in 2006 and the 15th largest gem diamond ever found; and the Natasha and Victoria-Transvaal, "champagne"-colored pear-shaped diamonds (64 and 67 ct) cut from the same 280 ct crystal. The entry for the 55 ct Sancy, a storied pear-shaped double rose cut, was modified to reflect the research of Susan Ronald, whose 2005 book, the *Sancy Blood Diamond*, has rewritten the history of this stone. She traced the diamond from its first report in the late 1300s, through its ownership by Cardinal Mazarin and then the French royal family until the Revolution, when it took numerous twists and turns before being brought back to Paris for exhibition at the Louvre. There are also a number of new stones in the Notable Diamonds list at the end of the book.

Diamonds are personal. Diamonds

are visual. That we cherish them and objectify the largest and rarest with appellations is no great surprise. These unique marvels possess a mystique that exerts a powerful pull on our imaginations. The gift of any talented chronographer is the ability to suffuse the reader with thoughts that not only stay with us, but somehow stir and wrest from us new inspiration. In this, Balfour succeeds.

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Editor's note: Additional information about this book is available in the G&G Data Depository at www.gia.edu/gandg.

Cameos: Old & New, 4th Ed.

By Anna M. Miller, edited by Diana Jarrett, 382 pp., illus., publ. by *Gemstone Press* [www.gemstonepress.com], Woodstock, VT, 2009. \$19.99

Books on cameos have been written for centuries. One only needs to look in the bibliography or early chapters of *Cameos: Old & New* to see the amazing history of the "glyptic arts," which literally spans millennia. The first three editions by the late Anna Miller were filled with a tremendous amount of information and hundreds of black-and-white and color images on the subject. The fourth edition, edited by gemologist and journalist Diana Jarrett, is indeed the charm, a significant update that adds more

than 100 pages and revitalizes Ms. Miller's book for the new century. It features rewrites and improved organization of content—from the history, romance, and mythologies in the beginning of the book, to transparent gems, coral harvesting, alternate cameo materials, recent production processes, and sources and suppliers.

New finds of vintage cameos from flea markets, yard sales, and antique shops are illustrated and grouped by era. Pages of information on evaluating cameo authenticity are new, as are pointers to helpful websites. The glossary and suggested reading list are expanded as well. The historical value of cameos is addressed in depth, including the accomplished artists of more recent times. Among them are 21st century masters who are keeping the form alive in newly discovered *ateliers* in places such as Panama and Turkey, as well as in the traditional carving centers of Germany and Italy.

Overhauled for this edition are the chapters on buying and selling, with entries and tips on auction houses, the Internet, and TV shopping. The color plates in the center section give a broader representation of the full range of the art, with different types of carvings, materials, styles, and subject matter. The final chapter, new to the 4th edition, speaks to the direction in which the glyptic arts are headed, with inspirational quotes from the contemporary artists who continue this ancient skill.

Whether or not you have an earlier version of this book in your library, this edition belongs there.

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MEDIA REVIEW

Expedition to New Ruby Mines in Winza, Tanzania

Sapphire Mining in Madagascar

Contributions to Gemology No. 8, 46

mins., released by GRS Gemresearch Swisslab [www.gemresearch.ch], Lucerne, Switzerland, 2009. \$40.00

This DVD follows *Contributions to Gemology No. 7* (see abstract on p. S13 of the Summer 2009 *GeW*) as a video supplement and contains two separate documentaries.

The first presents a visit to the Winza ruby mines in Tanzania by a team from GRS in August 2008. Footage from inside the mine shafts is included, as are interviews with the miners and local officials. Following their tour of the mines, the team visited buying offices in the nearby boomtown of Mpwapwa and customs offices in the capital, Dar es Salaam.

The second documentary reviews a 2007 visit to sapphire mining areas in Madagascar. The team began in Ilakaka at the Manga Tuka mine and several other open-pit mines, and then visited smaller shaft mines. Regardless of the size or depth of the workings, most mining in Madagascar is conducted entirely by hand, and aspects such as ventilation must be improvised from available materials. Mining also occurs within exposed riverbanks, though this is very dangerous because of the risk of cave-ins. Some mechanized mining also takes place, and Sri Lankan dealers support much of this activity. The video concludes with a review of gem buying and trading in Ilakaka.

This DVD is an interesting and informative video that could easily have stood on its own by virtue of the content. Thus, it is unfortunate that the producers felt it necessary to repeatedly embellish both films with distracting visual effects such as split-screens (sometimes three or four at once) and eye-straining graphics. It is also clear that the English title cards were not drafted by a native speaker, as they are frequently marred by errors in spelling and grammar.

In spite of such shortcomings, these documentaries are well worth viewing for their educational value.

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OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Profiting by Design: A Jewelry Maker's Guide to Business Success.

By Marlene Richey, 135 pp., illus., publ. by MJS Press [www.mjsa.org], Providence, RI, 2008, \$34.95. The author, a successful jewelry designer, discusses how to turn good designs into good business. The nuts and bolts of setting up a design shop are addressed in detail, as are the steps to surviving the all-important first year of a small business. Also included are resources for designers.

TWO

Cristalli: L'Ordine dal Caos [Crystals: Order from Chaos].

By Adalberto Giazotto, Federico Pezzotta, and Giovanni Pratesi, 240 pp., illus., publ. by Giunti Editore [www.giunti.it], Florence, Italy, 2008 [in Italian], 48.00. This Italian-language coffee-table book is a feast for the eyes of any mineral collector. It begins with a brief introduction to crystallography and crystal formation, recovery, and preservation. The bulk of the book, however, is a review of the first author's impressive collection of large mineral specimens, all illustrated in gorgeous full-page professional photographs.

TWO

Gill's Historical Index.

By Joseph O. Gill, 647 pp., illus., publ. by the author [www.archive.org, search for "Joseph Gill"], 2009, Free. This online work-in-progress, a comprehensive update of the author's 1978 book, provides a searchable, annotated bibliography of gemological publications since 1652. Offered to the global gem community at no charge, this new version contains hyperlinks to many works now available on the Internet. This is a valuable resource for gemological researchers and anyone interested in the history of gemology, though it could be improved with input from a professional editor.

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