

# BOOK Reviews

## Editors

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### Mikimoto

By Nick Foulkes, 80 pp., illus., publ. by Assouline Publishing [www.assouline.com], New York, 2008. US\$18.95

Assouline Publishing has a reputation for releasing sparkling and glamorous books with pretty pictures worthy of the coffee table, and its profile of Mikimoto is no different. This slim book is equal parts biography of Kokichi Mikimoto (1858–1954), timeline of the company he founded at the turn of the 20th century, and broad history of the pearl itself. Nick Foulkes, the British journalist and historian known as much for his dapper appearance as for his reporting, has written on luxe topics such as trench coats, the Marbella Club, Bentleys, and the rise of America's upper class. And with Mikimoto's pearls, Foulkes imparts the same nostalgic sheen with which he inevitably coats each of his subjects.

Foulkes begins with a comprehensive overview of the pearl throughout history, focusing on its myths and legends, its literary and artistic references, and its popularity among rulers of all cultures and civilizations. In fact, his detailed account of the various queens and kings who worshipped the pearl may draw more attention than Mikimoto's own life and company history. Did you know, for example, that Cleopatra had a taste for pearls dissolved in vinegar?

Foulkes then delves into Kokichi Mikimoto's childhood and early youth, highlighting his humble origins as the son of a noodle maker, his

involvement in "marine product" (the arrangement of pearl, mother-of-pearl, and shellfish displays), and his marriage to Ume, a member of the samurai social elite. It is said that the untimely death of Ume at the age of 32 propelled him to work tirelessly at perfecting his brand and product in the ensuing years.

The history of the company is described as a quick ebb and flow of successes and setbacks: Mikimoto and Ume creating their first cultured pearls in 1893 (despite a devastating case of red tide that had killed more than 5,000 oysters the previous year), his first success in culturing perfectly spherical pearls, the opening of his first shop—in Tokyo's Ginza district—in 1899, the company's difficulties during World War II, and its swift resurgence afterward.

What is absent from the history of Mikimoto's pearl business is any discussion of his competition. Foulkes says that Mikimoto was backed by naval officer Yanagi, and relied on previous studies by Professor Kakichi Mitsukuri in his quest to assist nature in culturing pearls, but he does not mention the work of others such as Tokichi Nishikawa or Tatsuhei Mise. Likewise, his discussion of the company's grading scale and practices is never balanced by any perspective from authorities outside the Mikimoto organization.

The second half of the book is composed solely of photos, provided by Mikimoto or taken from fashion magazines, that highlight cultured pearl trends over the 20th century. These photos are the most worth-

while element of the book, as they include some of Mikimoto's most famous and exquisite designs, such as Yagurama ("Wheels of Arrows") from the World Exposition of Paris in 1937, shown in both its deconstructed form and its assemblage as a sash clip.

The book appeals to the same audience as every other volume in Assouline's inventory: the social elite and those aspiring to the top. Foulkes is no stranger to this audience, and judging from the way he praises the brand's quality and immortality, it seems that he might sell a strand of Mikimoto's cultured pearls better than any sales clerk at Saks or Bergdorf.

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### The Occurrence of Diamonds in South Africa

By M. G. C. Wilson, N. McKenna, and M. D. Lynn; 105 pp. with two wall charts, illus., publ. by Council for Geoscience [www.geoscience.org.za], Pretoria, South Africa, 2007. US\$68.00

This is a slim softcover book on diamond occurrences in South Africa. It does not focus on the geology of diamond deposits or the mineralogy and chemistry of kimberlite or the crystallography of diamond, but rather it describes the various deposits in South Africa, both primary and secondary, where diamonds have been found. The first 20 pages present a good summary of our general knowledge of diamond: physical properties;

classification of gem, industrial, and synthetic diamonds; the history of diamond discoveries; the diamond market; classification and genetic models of diamond deposits; ages of intrusion of kimberlites; and methods of exploration for kimberlites and alluvial diamond deposits. Not discussed are the subjects of nitrogen atoms in the diamond lattice, the division of diamonds into different types, and carbon and nitrogen isotopes in diamond. Further, the two kimberlite groups (I and II) and the role of indicator minerals in diamond exploration are only briefly mentioned. However, these omissions are unavoidable in a concise, easily understood text.

There are, however, errors that should have been avoidable. In the section on history of discoveries, it is correct that the town of Kimberley was named in 1873 after Lord John Wodehouse, the first earl of Kimberley, who was at the time the Secretary for the Colonies in London. He was not, as is stated on page 8, the governor of South Africa and high commissioner for southern Africa. Nor was the first diamond found on the farm Dorstfontein. In April 1860, that large farm had been divided into Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, and Vooruitzicht, and the first diamond was found in the mortar of the farm house on Dutoitspan.

The section on primary sources contains two beautiful and instructive full-page color illustrations (figures 2 and 5 on pp. 13 and 16) on the origin of diamond and the intrusion of kimberlite pipes. However, it appears that the color coding for the shale and sandstone in the stratigraphic profile in figure 4 (p. 15) has been reversed. Also, it is difficult to distinguish the color coding of the maps in figure 6 (p. 19) and figure 7 (p. 22), depicting the different groups of kimberlite and their ages; nor is it adequately explained what the symbols K1, K2, K12, and K21 represent. It also comes as a surprise to see in figure 8 (p. 22) that 67% of the South African kimberlites fall in the 120 Ma age group, as all the traditionally known and eco-

nomic kimberlites around Kimberley are in the 80–85 Ma group. The editor should have spotted that the y-axis of figure 9 (on p. 30), representing South Africa's percentage of world production, goes up to the 120% mark.

The sections on the distribution of kimberlites in relation to structural/tectonic features and on the genesis of alluvial deposits and their methods of exploration are well described and easy to understand. While primary deposits are discussed in just 20 pages, alluvial deposits receive a 50-page treatment, since the book is aimed at those who might invest in the less capital-intensive alluvial mining sector.

The book is accompanied by two large maps printed on sturdy, glossy paper. The main map, "Diamond Deposits and Kimberlites of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland," is derived from the De Beers database for this area. Simplified geology is shown in color on the map and in the legend, and every diamondiferous kimberlite and alluvial diamond deposit appears on the map and in the legend. The symbols for kimberlites are color coded (K1, K2, etc.) but again difficult to distinguish and inadequately explained. The second map, "Alluvial-Diamond Occurrences of the Northwest Province," highlights farms on which mining licenses have been issued, historical production is recorded, and recent workings have been confirmed by field visits. This is the region between Mafikeng-Lichtenburg-Ventersdorp to Potchefstroom in the north and Schweizer Reneke-Wolmaransstad to Bloemhof in the south. Scrutinizing the map and the text, one can see that not all alluvial deposits have been investigated in detail and additional economic ventures may await.

In summary, this is a most useful book for readers familiar with South Africa. For casual readers, the information on individual occurrences is perhaps a bit too specific and detailed.

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## Gemlore: Ancient Secrets and Modern Myths from the Stone Age to the Rock Age

By Diane Morgan, 232 pp., publ. by Greenwood Press [www.greenwood.com], Westport, CT, 2008. US\$55.00

Gem lore arises from a constellation of sociocultural beliefs and traditions. The universally appealing mystique that surrounds gems springs from imagination and magical thinking that morphs and mutates on contact with real people and events. *Gemlore* compiles many of gems' greatest fables and twice-told tales, multiplied exponentially over the ages.

Prolific author Diane Morgan is adjunct professor of religion and philosophy at Pennsylvania's Wilson College. She has written many books on related subjects, such as emerald's mystique and Eastern religious experiences in American life. As she conveys in her excellent introduction, Morgan appreciates the power of belief as perhaps the strongest magic of all.

Morgan chooses to profile 34 gems long associated with mythical powers—most of which were well known to the world's ancient and distant civilizations—such as lapis lazuli, peridot, and the chalcedonies. Whether a gem is revered by denizens of the 21st century or has been relegated to the dungeons of fashion, the author addresses each with humility and respect.

Each chapter begins with a synopsis of the gem's hardness, chemical composition, geographic distribution, and other physical information. Next are the stone's mystical links with planetary bodies, zodiac signs, anniversaries, chakras, and dream meanings.

Morgan's narrative provides cross-cultural accounts of each gem's lore as it courses through ancient civilizations to modern crystal healers. While many of these tales will be familiar to gem and birthstone enthusiasts, Morgan entertains readers with obscure associations, historical quotes, and tidbits of medical anthropology. Contemporary gem and crystal healers

give older tales a modern-to-occult twist, thereby tweaking each stone's lore with a new spin that may seed further myth and mystery for future generations.

The author's unconventional sourcing style contributes to a sometimes staccato narrative. Shunning footnotes, Morgan instead employs frequent quotation marks and repetitive attributions to her short list of references. In contrast to each chapter's synoptic opening, the narrative drifts between epochs and occasionally loses organizational structure. References to the teachings of Greco-Roman physician Galen are followed in nearly the same breath by comments from a modern crystal writer who calls herself Melody. Are they truly all the same?

Morgan relies heavily on the *Book of Secrets*, a text the author calls a compendium of 2,000 years of gossip, which may date to at least the 13th century. While the brief bibliography gives modern sources—heavily represented by crystal therapists—no reference to *Secrets* is provided. The book's index, however, is commendable.

Gem enthusiasts and those interested in the symbolic allure of gems should find this book enjoyable, if not indispensable. Morgan's wry and often unexpected wit adds a dose of humor, while her informed perspective provides readers with an engaging roundup of gem magic's relentless grip on our collective imagination.

MATILDE PARENTE

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### **Gems & Jewelry Appraising: Techniques of Professional Practice, 3rd Ed.**

*By Anna M. Miller, edited by Gail Brett Levine, 235 pp., illus., publ. by Gemstone Press [www.gemstonepress.com], Woodstock, VT, 2009. \$39.99*

This third edition of the late Anna Miller's classic guide is better de-

scribed as a new-century update, and it does an admirable job of bringing one of the first "how-to-be-an-appraiser" books up to the present day. Edited by Gail Brett Levine, a renowned jewelry appraiser in her own right and a self-described protégé of Miller's, this latest edition follows the organization of its predecessors, eliminating most obsolete entries and adding important new information. The subtitle is what the book is really about—it lays out much of what a jewelry appraiser may encounter in the daily, weekly, or monthly practice of the profession.

In speaking to the novice, the book discusses what a professional appraiser is, explains how to open a practice, and answers key questions for the uninitiated. It continues with the basic appraisal concepts of purpose and function and limiting conditions, and handling the typical insurance appraisal. Most of the significant elements of the process are addressed, section by section, with new information superseding that from previous editions. For example, the discussion of digital photography, which did not exist in the first edition and was only in its infancy in the second, now reflects the current state of the art.

The characteristics of value in various gem categories have been updated where necessary (i.e., treatments, synthetics, etc.), with an expanded section on pearls to reflect how much that sector of the trade has grown. Not surprisingly, the sections on period and ethnic jewelry are largely unchanged, but there have been revisions to the sections on coins and silver flatware and hollowware. The appendix with charts, tables, and sample reports has been expanded, as have the glossary and bibliography. One disappointing element is that the same black-and-white photographs from the first edition are still being used, with a few more added in the new sections.

Where the book falls short is in reminding the reader about the importance of actual *experience* in the trade.

Seemingly hidden among the pages are a few key statements, such as, "Recognizing the limits of your knowledge and getting help when needed will keep you out of trouble" (p. 127). The danger of not repeating this idea regularly is that it might lead novices to think they only need to read a "how-to" book, take a few classes on theory, and do some online research to somehow bypass the many years, if not decades, of trade experience required to become a true professional appraiser.

Overall, this new edition for the 21st century provides a good starting point for the novice and a wealth of reference information for the veteran appraiser.

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### **OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED**

**The Opal Story: A Guidebook.** *By Andrew Cody and Damien Cody, 39 pp. with DVD supplement, illus., publ. by the authors [www.nationalopal.com], Melbourne, Australia, 2008, US\$37.00.* This wonderful, beautifully illustrated and produced little book is best described as a love letter to opal. Into less than 40 pages, the authors have packed virtually everything the beginning opal enthusiast could want to know about this stone's history, formation, mining, production, characteristics, care, and basic valuation. A seven-minute DVD supplement is included.

TWO

**Growth and Morphology of Quartz Crystals Natural and Synthetic.** *By Ichiro Sunagawa, Hideo Iwasaki, and Fumiko Iwasaki, 202 pp., illus., publ. by Terrapub [www.terrapub.co.jp], Tokyo, 2009, ¥7500.* This book details the growth and morphology of natural and synthetic quartz. The growth of chalcedony and opal is also addressed.

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