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2010 BOOK REVIEWS

Blood on the Stone: Greed, Corruption, and War in the Global Diamond Trade

By Ian Smillie, 252 pp., publ. by Anthem Press [www.anthempress.com], London, 2010. US\$29.95

Ian Smillie starts his new book by saying that it will address how diamonds fueled some of the most brutal wars in Africa. *Blood on the Stone* achieves this goal comprehensively and compellingly. More importantly, it also explores the larger issue behind this story—that of the extraction of mineral resources from developing countries and the struggle to force corporate accountability for the abuses and imbalances that have resulted.

The prologue relates the history of Smillie's own involvement in the conflict diamond issue, beginning with a meeting in the Ottawa offices of the nongovernmental organization Partnership Africa Canada, where he worked in 1997, and leading into his travels as a UN-appointed expert, which took him from war-torn regions of Africa to the White House.

Over a period of 10 years, Smillie became renowned for his knowledge of the conflict diamond issue and as an advocate for change. He takes pains to stress that diamonds did not *cause* the rebel wars in Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. But they did prolong these conflicts by providing huge amounts of money to finance them. There has been much debate as to whether greed or grievance was the cause—the answer, according to Smillie, was both.

During the 1990s, perhaps 25% of the world's trade in rough diamonds

was infected by some sort of illicit activity. The context for how this activity came to be so commonplace lies in the nature of the product and the trade: the portability and accessibility of diamonds, the industry's inherent secrecy and preference to avoid paperwork, the lack of government controls, and the difficulty of obtaining accurate data to track the flow of goods. Diamonds have long been linked to tax evasion and money laundering. In the 1990s, though, they were used to bankroll wars that claimed millions of lives and caused untold suffering.

Students of gemology will appreciate Smillie's review of the history of diamonds, with its concise and precise descriptions of their geology and timelines of important discoveries. Unlike many popular accounts of the diamond trade, this section is both scientifically accurate and well researched. Background on De Beers and its control of much of the rough diamond trade sets the scene for how combatants were able to use diamonds to fund conflict.

But it is in the surprisingly evenhanded historical accounts of the diamond trade and politics in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the DRC that Smillie's measured analysis and historical knowledge comes into its own. In these chapters, the reader is taken deep into the sordid tales of African history since independence. From the De Beers-funded International Diamond Security Organisation in West Africa during the 1950s to the shadowy 1980s terrorist training camps in Libya, the training grounds for the perpetrators of the madness that gripped Sierra Leone

and Liberia in the 1990s, Smillie paints a grim picture of the damage wreaked by the sale of diamonds.

Any consumer who has recently purchased a diamond will learn that there is a 60% chance it came from Africa, and a 90% chance it traveled to the cutting centers of both Antwerp and India. They will also learn that before the 2003 implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), one out of four diamonds were at some point likely stolen, illegally mined, or used to launder money or evade taxes.

The book ends with a discussion of how the NGOs forced the diamond industry to accept responsibility for the problems occurring in Africa and their search for a solution. The drawn-out negotiations and politicking between governments, industry representatives, and NGOs to establish the KPCS makes for compelling reading. It took a dozen meetings between May 2000 and November 2002 to set up an international certification system for rough diamonds, which was launched in January 2003.

Yet Smillie is critical of the current state of the KPCS and argues that it will fail unless it can deal decisively and effectively with new problems as they arise. What the author does not discuss is the fact that he himself resigned from involvement in the scheme in May 2009. He is now active with the Diamond Development Initiative, which seeks to redress some of the imbalances caused by the global trade in diamonds.

Smillie's skill is the ability to write a scholarly record of the circumstances that created conflict diamonds

while also providing an entertaining, fast-paced read full of intrigue. It is unfortunate, then, that the book lacked the attention of an experienced editor. Each of the 13 chapters feels self-contained, and consequently there is considerable overlap between them, at times almost verbatim.

Blood on the Stone will be welcomed by anyone interested in Africa, corporate social responsibility, and geopolitics. Though a troubling book for many in the jewelry trade, it provides an important lesson for those keen to learn more about the topical issue of accountability and traceability of the product they sell. As the author points out, the diamond trade is disjointed. It portrays the romance and beauty of diamonds from gleaming showcases in major cities. Yet the product often starts its journey in an alluvial river bend in West Africa, where ownership is often fleeting and dangerous, and never forever.

EDWARD JOHNSON
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Jewellery in the Age of Queen Victoria: A Mirror to the World

By Charlotte Gere and Judy Rudoe, 552 pp., illus., publ. by The British Museum Press [www.britishmuseumshoponline.org], London, 2010. £50.00

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on 19th century jewelry. The authors have done a remarkable job of interpreting how jewelry was designed and worn during this prosperous age. Rather than presenting the subject in a strictly chronological manner or by describing the work of individual jewelers, their approach is to identify the cultural and emotional significance of jewelry in Victorian society.

I must warn you that nothing about this work is lightweight. It is a heavy book, literally and figuratively. There is no cozy reading in bed with this tome—it requires a library table to support its weight! Gere and Rudoe have done exhaustive research on

every cultural aspect that might have had any bearing on Victorian jewelry, as is evident in the six-page bibliography and 33 pages of footnotes. Keep a bookmark placed in the footnotes as you read each chapter, as they contain many tidbits of additional information you won't want to miss.

The book is also heavily illustrated with images of jewelry, portraits (both rendered and photographic), as well as newspaper articles and jewelry advertisements. Be sure to read all the captions, as they provide valuable information to support the text. Happily, the authors have a light touch, making the book enjoyable and absorbing.

Ten chapters focus on the various cultural influences of the era. The first chapter, by far the longest, is an overview of Queen Victoria's life (1819–1901). It shows how jewelry fashion and styles were influenced by her coronation, her marriage to Prince Albert, the birth of her children, the tragedy of her husband's early death, her 40-year widowhood, and her management of a burgeoning empire.

The next four chapters address social factors of jewelry design. Gere and Rudoe explore the role jewelry played in public and private life as dictated by etiquette (jewelry appropriate for wear during the stages of mourning, for example), and how jewelry interacted with the prevailing clothing fashions. The authors decipher the hidden messages jewelry carried during this sentimental age, as well as the fascination with novelty that pervaded the 19th century and how this was manifested in jewelry.

Chapter 6, "Britain and the World," underscores the enormous impact of the International Exhibitions. From the first Great International Exhibition in London in 1853 to the Paris Exposition of 1900, these extraordinary events introduced art and artifacts from India, the Islamic world, China, and Japan to Europe and the West. This cultural integration had a profound effect on jewelry design and manufacture.

The wide range of historical and archeological revival styles are covered next. The authors do a great service by

neatly categorizing the different influences, as they are often intermingled in a single piece of jewelry. Gothic and Renaissance revival styles are deciphered in chapter 7, followed by the different motifs that emerged from archeological discoveries in Egypt, Italy, Greece, Ireland, and Scandinavia.

Cameos—arguably the quintessential jewel of the Victorian era—are examined in chapter 9. We learn why these mini-sculptures in hardstone and shell were so highly prized. The final chapter is devoted to the various types of souvenir jewelry brought back from travels abroad. These include painted enamels from Switzerland; Italian *pietra dura*, micromosaics, and carved coral; and delicate ivory carvings from Germany.

It is important to understand that *Jewellery in the Age of Queen Victoria* deals with the jewelry worn by royalty and the very wealthy. Jewelry of the Arts & Crafts movement and Art Nouveau style were not favored by the Victorian elite, so readers should not be surprised that these are not mentioned. Gere and Rudoe have masterfully interwoven the cultural influences of the age into a marvelous and colorful tapestry, providing a clearer understanding of why fine jewelry took the forms that it did during Queen Victoria's reign.

ELISE B. MISIOROWSKI
Exhibit Curator

"All That Glitters:
The Splendor and Science of
Gems and Minerals"

San Diego Natural History Museum

Amethyst Uruguay

By Reinhard Balzer, 304 pp., illus., publ. by Christian Weise Verlag [www.lapis.de], Munich, 2009. US\$65

This is a well-written historical account of how the gem cutting industry in Idar-Oberstein, Germany, fueled the mining and trading of agates in South America during the early 19th century. The promise of land and new resources was the driving force that led German families in the gem cutting business to settle in

South America.

The author supports the historical information by reproducing original letters between German miners in South America and their families in Idar-Oberstein, which offers a very real connection with these early miners. Overall, the book is thorough in both the information presented and the period photography. The text reads well, though the dual-language German-English format makes the book rather bulky. The highlight for this reviewer lies in the photos of the modern mining areas, as well as the amethyst specimens, which are nothing short of spectacular. The quality of the photography reveals tremendous detail. The final chapter showcasing these specimens leaves little room for the imagination, painting a vivid picture of the treasures these early miners would likely have discovered.

While the history and lore of a mining area contributes to the value of many gems, amethyst is not typically considered one of them. Nevertheless, this book makes a noteworthy attempt to give the reader a deeper understanding and appreciation for this material and its rich history in Uruguay.

Overall, this book is recommended for anyone interested in gems and their history, and it is an essential read for those with particular interest in amethyst.

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The Fancy Color Diamond Book: Facts & Secrets of Trading in Rarities

By Eden Rachminov, 231 pp., illus., publ. by Diamond Odyssey [www.diamondodyssey.org], Tel Aviv, 2009. US\$215.00

This attractive book by third-generation gem dealer Eden Rachminov was created for fancy-color diamond enthusiasts and trade professionals. Filled with photos of rough and faceted colored diamonds, it offers a wealth of information. Nine chapters cover diamond colors, cuts, and shapes; how to

read a diamond grading report; diamond trade nicknames (e.g., traditional terms such as *cape*, *canary*, etc.); treated diamonds; and diamond formation. The book's structure closely follows the GIA diamond grading course and applies it to colored diamonds.

One of the book's merits is that it impresses on the reader the rarity of fancy-color diamonds. It also reinforces the basic principles that govern diamond cut, shape, and grading. The inclusion photomicrographs deserve special mention for their quality. The book clearly compares the color grading process for near-colorless diamonds to that for fancy-color diamonds (with the latter far more complex), and presents color reference charts for yellows, pinks, and blues. Through simple scientific explanations, it also presents a brief overview of color origin in diamonds.

Unfortunately, because the colors in the charts are represented in the purest hues, the reader cannot appreciate the subtle nuances that give colored diamonds their distinctiveness and are critical to appreciating their rarity and value. For instance, a very pale colored diamond might be much more valuable than one of greater intensity if its hue is more desirable. Colored diamond hues, saturations, and tone are very specific. Rachminov does a superb job, however, of covering the vast palette, including the rarely featured chameleon, gray, brown, and black varieties. While the book includes an overview of treated diamonds, the lack of scientific explanation or photos in this section makes it difficult to grasp the complexities of diamond enhancements.

One of the book's greatest strengths is that it addresses (from a dealer's perspective) one of the most frequently asked questions: Which colors are the rarest and most expensive? Another is the value scale comparison for each of the different colors of colored diamonds, though it is disappointing that the prices are quoted in broad generalities, despite publicly available auction results. Additionally, the book gives an interesting answer to the important question of which color intensity is most valuable: deep,

intense, or dark? The author emphasizes very clearly the importance of cut and openly explains the fact—well known in the trade—that fancy shapes help lengthen the light rays within the stones and make colors look more intense. Therefore, traditional shapes are rarer and more valuable for colored diamonds. The author further explains that blue fluorescence has far less impact on a colored diamond than on a colorless one. The reader will learn how to read a diamond report, which information is the most important, and which is a potential deal-breaker.

Fancy-color diamonds are not for everyone, but for those who do their homework and choose selectively, they are prized possessions. With its lavish illustrations on a variety of subjects, the book delivers a complete overview of colored diamonds, one that will stimulate further interest in this fascinating topic.

DELPHINE A. LEBLANC
Hoboken, New Jersey

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Agates and Jaspers. *By Ron Gibbs, 239 pp., illus., publ. by theimage.com [www.theimagebooks.com], Weddington, NC, 2009, US\$40.00.* This comprehensive, meticulously photographed work sets out to be a complete guide to agates and succeeds admirably. Agate formation, properties, structure, and identification are reviewed in detail, with more than 1,000 photos and diagrams describing the structural features of agates and jaspers. TWO

Minerals & Precious Stones of Brazil. *By Carlos Cornejo and Andrea Bartorelli, 704 pp., illus., publ. by Solaris [www.solariseditora.com.br], São Paulo, Brazil, 2010, R\$148.00.* This massive volume presents a comprehensive historical and iconographic review of Brazil's minerals and precious stones. In addition to a detailed history of Brazilian gems, it provides a photographic record of the most important specimens of beryl, tourmaline, garnet, topaz, amethyst, and diamond, among others. TWO