

## Symphony of Jewels: Anna Hu Opus 1

By Janet Zapata, Carol Woolton,  
and David Warren, 167 pp., illus.,  
publ. by Vendome Press, New York,  
2012. US\$75.00

Anna Hu is a rising star in the world of jewelry. Her firm, Anna Hu Haute Joallierie, has boutiques in New York and Shanghai. Her Shanghai store is located next to mega-jewelers Graff and Harry Winston, and an exhibition of her work was recently held at the renowned Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris.

This luxurious hardcover book celebrates "Opus 1," as Hu calls the collection of her first 100—a feat the designer intends to repeat every five years until she has completed ten opuses. Hu's foreword details the Gnosienne brooch/necklace, a beautiful crane motif that marked the beginning of her symphony of jewels, embodies who she is: a Taiwanese artist trained in Western craftsmanship, and a musician with a deep understanding of the melodic harmony of gems. From Hu's single-minded dedication to becoming a virtuoso cellist, playing with masters such as Yo-Yo Ma at age thirteen, to her years spent studying under renowned jewelry designer Maurice Galli at Harry Winston, the reader is given insight into her passion. The section by jewelry historian Janet Zapata summarizes Hu's studies, which include the Walnut School for the Arts in Boston, Parsons School of Design, Columbia University, the Fashion Institute of Technology, and GIA. Apprenticing at Christie's and Van Cleef & Arpels added to her knowledge of the gem and art worlds. Zapata relates how Hu evolved as a designer of traditional jewelry design to forge her own elaborate and poetic style.

Carol Woolton, jewelry editor of British *Vogue*, describes how Hu's designs fit in the modern fashion world and follow the path of many great couturier designers before her. This section reveals how the jeweler's formative years in Taiwan provided a rich source of inspiration for later work. Her parents were gem dealers from Thailand, and this early influence produced a natural gravitation toward high-end colored stones and diamonds. When a shoulder injury ended her career as a cellist, she took a jewelry design course. For Hu, designing jewelry is like composing music. She transferred her passion for creating beautiful music to fashioning objects of beauty, each with an energy of its own.

David Warren's "Appreciating Rarity" chapter gives the art world perspective on her works. Very few designers show the vibrant originality that "gives you a rush of excitement" and moves the soul. Warren describes what it takes for jewelry to stand the test of time, comparing Hu's work to pieces from the Art Deco, Belle Époque, and Art Nouveau periods. There are designers who take their inspiration from the great brands such as Cartier, Bulgari, and Van Cleef & Arpels, but Hu's pieces represent a truly creative new age fusion of Asian and Western influences that moves the soul.

The "Opus 1" catalogue takes the reader on the journey Hu traveled with each work. The 99 pieces are beautifully photographed, many with original drawings and sketches. Informative captions give the title of the piece and describe the gemstones used and the artistic inspiration. The designs draw upon nature, gradation (the blending of colors), organic forms, butterflies, koi fish, birds, and snakes. The "Fantasy Garden" section show-

cases Hu's botanical repertoire. Time spent in Monet's garden in Giverny at age 20 is revealed in her Monet's Water Lilies necklace and Van Gogh's Iris bangle. The four seasons are another recurring theme in her works. Beautiful photos help the reader understand how Hu's pieces represent, in her own words, a "song in love of jewels."

For the gemologist, *Symphony of Jewels* shows how important gemstones are being used today. It features mouthwatering Burmese rubies, jade, Kashmir sapphires, Golconda diamonds, tsavorite garnets, moonstones, alexandrite, Paraíba tourmaline, sapphires of all colors, and pearls. For the modern jewelry designer, it offers a look at a contemporary Asian design aesthetic, and the direction of high-end jewelry in this decade.

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## Celebrating Jewellery: Exceptional Jewels of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

By David Bennett and Daniela  
Mascetti, 323 pp., illus., publ. by  
Antique Collector's Club, Wood-  
bridge, UK, 2012. \$US125.00

In this extraordinary tome, jewelry auctioneers Daniela Mascetti and David Bennett reunite to deliver a sequel to their classic *Understanding Jewellery* (first published in 1989). Some of the jewels presented here are among the finest ever created. One could almost think of their work as the catalogue of an extraordinary jewelry exhibition. This remarkably hefty volume highlights 125 jewelry

pieces auctioned by Sotheby's over the past 30 years. The selections, based solely on the authors' personal tastes, include creations by Belperron, Boivin, Boucheron, Bulgari, Castellani, Chaumet, Giuliano, JAR, Lalique, Lemonnier, Schlumberger, Van Cleef & Arpels, and Vever.

*Celebrating Jewellery* takes the reader on a historical journey in five chapters, from before the 19th century through the 20th century. The authors have carefully selected some of the most exceptional jewelry pieces of each period. For instance, the emerald and diamond tiara of Princess Henckel von Donnersmarck is one of the iconic pieces of the "Nineteenth Century and Earlier" chapter. "Revivalism" displays artful creations from 1850 to 1890, with references to jewelry inspirations from antiquity. One of the strongest visuals of this chapter is the micromosaic Gorgon brooch. The most outstanding examples from the Belle Époque chapter is the Mountbatten Kokoshnik tiara. One of the most magnificent Art Deco pieces is Daisy Fellowes's emerald bead and diamond necklace/bracelets. The book's final chapter, "The Twentieth Century—The Nineteen Thirties and Later," is well illustrated with an opulent multi-gem cabochon bib necklace by Bulgari.

After a short historical introduction to each era, the authors' selections are described in brief vignettes, as in an exhibition catalogue. Illustrations are clearly the strong suit of this volume. The renderings are consistent throughout. Some of the photos are so clinically precise that the reader can observe abrasions on diamonds, culet sizes, and colored stone inclusions. One can also sense the thinness of mountings, types of settings, metal finishes, and other details. Some pieces, particularly in the Art Deco section, are displayed to

showcase their flexibility and articulation. Micromosaic, granulation, and filigree textures are perceptible in other photos.

Two chapters are particularly captivating from a historical viewpoint: "Nineteenth Century and Earlier" presents extremely rare jewelry that has seldom been displayed. The historical context provided is of great value in understanding the uniqueness of the pieces. And the Belle Époque chapter is noteworthy for the magnificence of the jewelry and the stylistic contrasts between the garland-style and Art Nouveau creations. One might wish to see the actual jewelry sizes, since these details were available to the authors. Similarly, no mention is made of the end of the photo magnifications, which differ from one page to the next.

Even so, this volume is a must-have for jewelers, collectors, and antique jewelry professionals. The outstanding quality of the photos is an exceptional asset to that end.

DELPHINE A. LEBLANC  
*Hoboken, New Jersey*

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## OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

**Jewels of the Early Earth: Minerals and Fossils of the Precambrian.** By Bruce L. Stinchcomb, 160 pp., illus., publ. by Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 2012. US\$29.99. This book addresses the geology, mineralogy, and paleontology of the earth's first two billion years, the Precambrian era. Topics from the nine chapters include: the geology of the shield areas and their rocks and minerals; outcrops of rocks that contain fossil evidence of the earliest life on the planet; early limestone that converted to marble, yielding decorative rocks and gemstones for mankind; pegmatites and the gems and miner-

als contained within; ancient rock belts of greenstone and their association with the planet's gold deposits; and the curious banded iron formation strata, rock associated with the very atmosphere. These and other topics are contained within 160 pages and supplemented by over 650 color photographs.

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**The Queen's Diamonds.** By Hugh Roberts. 319 pp., illus., publ. by Royal Collection Publications, London, 2012. US\$95.00. Published to coincide with Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, this work documents the personal jewelry collections of the female monarchs of Great Britain, from Queen Adelaide in 1831 to the present. Roberts provides a wealth of information on the jewelry, the makers, and the queens themselves. Includes extensive photographs, both black-and-white and color.

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**Amethyst: Uncommon Vintage.** By H. Albert Gilg, Suzanne Liebetrau, Gloria A. Staebler, and Tom Wilson, Eds., 124 pp., illus., publ. by Lithographie, Ltd., Denver, 2012. US\$35.00. This monograph is a collection of articles from several contributors on topics such as amethyst's origin, mineralogy, optical properties, localities, and lore. It is lavishly illustrated with color photos of mineral specimens, localities, and jewelry. Also included are a glossary of terms and a bibliography.

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