

## EDITORS

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### Krystallos—Brazil: Gem-Crystals in Design

By Sonia Fonseca and Norman M. Rodi, Eds., 178 pp., illus., publ. by Terra das Artes Editora, São Paulo, Brazil, 2002. US\$120.00

*Krystallos* is an imaginative production that lovers of gem tomes may treasure as much for the experience as for its visuals and editorial content. The book's 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 12 inch (42 x 30.5 cm) size is the first clue its creators were thinking big and were emboldened to go over-the-top.

From the very first page, the book demands participation from the reader. Wrapping text is used to recapitulate a jeweler's design, a cutter's form, or the magic of nature's crystal shapes. Thereafter, artists' drawings trace design elements from creative spark to inspired experimentation, culminating in the finished pieces captured in superb photographs. Next, page cut-outs invite the curious as readers uncover and discover for themselves the Brazilian gem bounty that exalted explorers and continues to enthrall the world. This book is distinguished from other works featuring extraordinary photography by its elevation of visual photographic images into the experiential. Treated papers shaped to evoke crystals and mineral specimens unfold to invite touch and inspire wonder. Smooth surfaces commingle with rough to create an interactive encounter beyond two dimensions. The heavy paper stock, rich color, and sewn binding contribute added quality to a richly sensual experience.

The featured pieces are no less inventive. Soaring crystals and vivid

cut stones exemplify the spectacular trail of more familiar—but no less extraordinary—Brazilian gems. An aquamarine specimen suggests a horse's head and torso struggling to emerge from its stony confines while simultaneously appearing to melt off the page. Regal portrayals of Imperial topaz crystals validate the ancient Greek designation of *krystallos*, their word for transparent ice thought to have hardened into what we recognize today as a crystal.

The inventive layout uses English translations to mirror the Portuguese text in a bilingual format arranged to inform and underscore a design's essence. Speaking through their designs (and, sometimes, in their own words), the 16 artists herald an emerging Brazilian presence unconstrained by European traditions. Some designers incorporate native elements such as seeds and straw into their work. The German and Scandinavian design influences are like the book's few translucent pages, which allow light to pass through yet cast a distinctive beauty all their own. As one example, Ruth Grieco's tourmaline crystal cross is a stunning interpretation of a familiar motif taken to another level.

Editorial collaborators Fonseca and Rodi, the latter a graduate gemologist, have combined their talents with those of gifted photographers, lapidaries, jewelry artists, and book designers to celebrate Brazil's gem landscape and proclaim pride in their cultural heritage. Though the book requires more head-turning, effort, and reading space than most, jewelry designers, gemologists, gem and mineral collectors, and all who seek the unique and

extraordinary will find ample reward in the realm of *Krystallos*.

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### The Fabergé Menagerie

Organized by the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD, in cooperation with the Fabergé Arts Foundation, Washington, DC, 192 pp., illus., publ. by Philip Wilson Publishers, London, 2003. US\$25.00\*

In 1900, railroad magnate Henry Walters cruised the Baltic Sea on his yacht. In St. Petersburg, he was taken to visit the House of Fabergé, where he made the first of many purchases. In so doing, he became one of Fabergé's first American clients. Walters's collection of Fabergé animal carvings lies at the heart of an exhibition that was on display at the Walters Art Museum from February 13 through July 27, 2003.

Created to accompany the exhibition, this book contains a wealth of information on the House of Fabergé and the amazing objects produced in its workshops. Starting with a historical overview of the firm, the book then moves into a chapter devoted to Fabergé's clients and some of the magnificent items made especially for them. Notable in these chapters are the amazing Easter eggs created for the Russian czars. Also included is a discussion of gem and jewelry arts in Russia during the 17th through the 19th centuries. The catalog of the exhibition follows, with each item beautifully photographed. Interestingly, the exhibition begins with pieces that can be viewed as precursors to Fabergé's

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work as well as a collection of Japanese netsuke, the tiny animal carvings once used as belt toggles. The influence of these items can be seen in many of the Fabergé pieces. Well written and beautifully presented, this book can be enjoyed by anyone, even those who did not have the good fortune to visit the exhibition.

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### The Great Book of Amber

*By Elżbieta Mierzwińska, photos by Marek Żak, 160 pp., distrib. in the U.S., Canada, and Australia by Amber#1, San Francisco, CA, 2002. US\$45.00*

From the moment you see the cover, with its gallant hippocampi (horses with serpent-like tails), you'll know this is no ordinary book about amber. While amber's scientific value as a window into the past is well known, its value as a material of fine art is often overlooked, and few museum collections have exhibits devoted entirely to amber. Malbork Castle in Poland, once home to the Teutonic Knights and now a renowned museum, features a huge assemblage of rare amber ornaments known as the Malbork Amber Collection. The 2,000+ items, which started out as lumps of ancient tree resin, have been artistically transformed into caskets, altars, sculpted figures, folk art, and other objects in shades of off-white, yellow, brown, and orange. These items, along with unusual specimens in their natural state, are featured in the more than 150 beautiful color images accompanied by a historical timeline. Written by the senior custodian of the exhibit, this book explains the creation of ancient amber forests, details the development of amber artistry in the Baltic region, and displays amber objects dating from Neolithic to contemporary times.

Unfortunately, the book suffers somewhat from Polish-to-English translation problems. The organization is also odd (it lacks both a table

of contents and an index), and the text layout makes the book difficult to read in spots. Explanatory details are sometimes lacking in discussions of the featured pieces. Nevertheless, my overall impression of this book is positive. It is of a good size, and the materials are high quality. The information is very interesting, and some of the scenic and scientific illustrations dating from as early as the 1500s are quite impressive. My personal favorite was of men in boats "fishing" for amber in the sea.

The writer's stated purpose is to further the knowledge and love of amber in Poland and throughout the world; in this she has succeeded. Amber collectors, historians, and European travelers will find this book of great interest. Much like the ancient resin that protected the trees from invaders and preserved the insects for later study, this book serves well to preserve and protect the works of master amber craftsmen throughout time.

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### The Rings Book

*By Jinks McGrath, 128 pp., illus., publ. by Krause Publications, Iola, WI, 2003. US\$24.95\**

This book describes the basics of ring making, although it is most appropriate for the intermediate jeweler. Ms. McGrath assumes that the reader has a practical knowledge of the essential techniques of jewelry making, as she does not cover the specifics of soldering, filing, sanding, and the like. Project based, the book is divided into four major sections: building shanks, mounting, setting, and finishing. In addition, there is a gallery of contemporary rings, a glossary of terms, and a list of suppliers.

In the first section, on the building of shanks, the projects proceed logically from the simple to the complex. The first project is the simple band, which is followed by a half-round ring, a double-banded ring, hollow rings,

tension-set rings, and so on—a dozen rings in all. Carving wax, enameling, anticlastic raising, fusing, and texturing are covered. The discussion of each ring is preceded by a list of requisite supplies and contains various tips. There are numerous clear photographs, and the text is understandable and concise. The second section describes the construction of mounts and contains effective diagrams and useful formulas. Various styles and shapes of bezels are discussed, as well as how to fabricate a claw mount. Each mount is made to be soldered to the rings fabricated in section one. The third section deals with the actual setting of stones into the mounts; bezel, gypsy, and bead setting are covered. The final section deals very briefly with finishing issues: polishing, matte finishes, sizing, and the like.

While there is useful information in this book, at 128 pages (including the photo gallery) it is far too brief to adequately cover all of the subjects addressed. In general, the sections on shanks and mounts are useful, but those on setting and finishing could be much expanded.

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### OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

**The Ultimate Orient: Philippine South Sea Pearls.** *Photography by Scott Tuason, 175 pp., publ. by Jeweler International Corp., Makati City, Philippines, 2001, US\$65.00. E-mail: sales@jewelmer.com.* This book is a striking collection of images captured by award-winning underwater photographer Scott Tuason. More than 160 photos follow the journey of the Philippine South Sea cultured pearl from the *Pinctada maxima* oyster to finished jewelry. Also shown are Philippine pearl farm seascapes and colorful images of marine life.

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