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Book Reviews

Living Jewels: Masterpieces from Nature

By Ruth Peltason, 224 pp., illus.,
publ. by The Vendome Press
[www.vendomepress.com], New
York, 2010. US\$50.00

In a time of skyrocketing gold prices, it is interesting to see organic materials such as leather, wood, amber, and feather making a strong comeback in the jewelry industry. Yet this “new” trend is as old as jewelry itself. Peltason takes the reader on a thematic journey to explore the variety of “living jewels,” traditional as well as exotic. Organic materials are just as challenging as minerals for gemologists, whether it concerns identification, treatment detection, disclosure, or ultimately valuation. This book is intended for jewelry amateurs and professional dealers interested in estate pieces, as well as jewelry designers.

Lavishly embellished with more than 350 color illustrations, *Living Jewels* presents a vast selection chosen according to three main criteria: originality, historical importance, and the aesthetic prominence of the organic material. It is therefore a subjective selection comprising famous jewelry houses such as Van Cleef & Arpels, Cartier, Tiffany, Boivin, Belperron, Verdura, and Grima, while also spotlighting contemporary jewelers such as Marguerite Stix, Patricia Van Musulin, Ted Muehling, and Jennifer Trask. The book is well organized by material: amber, coral, horn, ivory, pearls, shell, tortoise shell, wood, and “exotica.”

Among the most noteworthy elements is a detailed 40-page section on pearls. It features classical pearl jewelry such as Victorian fringe necklaces as well as the most contemporary

pieces such as the “Queen Anne’s lace” pin by Ted Muehling. Also in this section are coveted pearl treasures, including the late Elizabeth Taylor’s Peregrina pearl and the so-called Baroda pearl necklace by Cartier. Non-nacreous pearls such as melo and conch are also discussed.

Two other sections of particular interest deal with wood and exotica. The wood section shows how this versatile material, so prominent in the decorative arts, is used by jewelers. A most welcome glossary on selected varieties of wood provides simple and useful descriptions for identification. After highlighting Art Deco and 1970s pieces, Peltason reviews interesting works of contemporary studio artists such as Noma Copley, Christine J. Brandt, Liv Blåvarp, and Anthony Roussel. She features Lee Hale and Kiff Slemmons, who use reclaimed everyday materials such as pencils and rulers. Equally interesting is the exoticas section, which displays the use of scarabs, butterflies, feathers, teeth, animal skins (snakeskin and stingray), and even various type of hair (elephant and human). She also rekindles the memory of Harry Emanuel, an English Victorian jeweler remembered for his exquisite hummingbird ear pendants.

Peltason’s elegant writing style is one of the book’s main assets. One might hope, however, for more content on this rich topic. For instance, the materials are presented very succinctly, with room for more detailed gemological content. The antique jewels come with very little contextual information on art period, manufacturing techniques, and provenance. Some of the jewelry in the exotica section warrants more detailed ethnological explanation. The photos are obviously of various sources and

reproduction quality, with different magnifications often on the same page. Unfortunately, this makes it more difficult to evaluate the rarity and quality of an individual piece. This becomes particularly evident in the pearl section, where assessing the actual size of the jewelry and gemstones is a challenge, some pieces being magnified and others minimized. Jewelry size information isn’t noted either.

Nevertheless, *Living Jewels* is an elegant and interesting book for antique jewelry enthusiasts, one that explores a rich topic with a wide scope of interest from 19th century jewelry to the most cutting-edge creations.

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The Extraordinary World of Diamonds

By Nick Norman, 302 pp., illus.,
publ. by Janaca Media
[janaca.co.za], Auckland Park,
South Africa, 2010. R199.96

The world of diamond is an extraordinary one indeed. The author has made a brave attempt to outline this world in 300 pages. The book is illustrated with many well-chosen archival and contemporary photographs acquired from the Brentwood Library in Johannesburg, De Beers, and various diamond mining companies.

The first 40 pages give a summary overview of where diamonds are found, a history of their discoveries, prospecting and mining methods, and cutting and polishing. The next 150 pages discuss in greater detail the development of discoveries from ancient India, Brazil, and Venezuela,

to more recent times in South Africa and the rest of the continent, Russia, Canada, and Australia. Earlier narratives such as Legrand's 1980 book *Diamonds: Myth, Magic and Reality* are used extensively, but for recent developments the author has drawn upon firsthand accounts from known experts. Included are discussions of the recently discovered diamond mines in Canada, the Bunder prospect in India, and the Argyle mine in Australia.

The next 60 pages present a more detailed account of modern exploration and mining, beginning with criteria for area selection, defining drill targets, and conducting feasibility studies. Also included are case histories of the alluvial deposits at Oena in the lower Orange River, Verneukpan in Namaqualand, coastal and offshore deposits along the Atlantic, and kimberlites in Botswana and Canada. There is also a discussion of Clifford's rule, kimberlite indicator minerals (e.g., G10 garnet and the Gurney Cr/Ca diagram), and the distribution of carbon in the mantle and subducted crust. This is followed by a discussion of microdiamonds formed by meteorite impact (exemplified by Popigai in northern Siberia), microdiamonds found in meteorites, graphitized diamonds in the Ronda ultrabasic massif in southern Spain, and a possible cosmic origin of carbonado.

This is followed by a chapter on diamond deposits along the Atlantic coast of South Africa and Namibia, and how the diamonds traveled from inland kimberlite deposits. This chapter seems a bit misplaced, as its content really belongs in the section on case histories. A final chapter on the supply chain discusses the Central Selling Organisation and the breakup of its "single-channel marketing pipeline" in the wake of conflict diamonds and new mines in Australia and Canada that were outside De Beers's control.

The author effectively uses text boxes to present short biographies and specific subjects, and he tells the story in clear language. There are some

lapses, though. In the glossary, for instance, a *diamantaire* should be defined as a trader in diamonds, not just a cutter. The case history for the discovery of Orapa should have linked Gavin Lamont with Manfred Marx, the young De Beers geologist who actually discovered the mine by collecting soil samples on the site and noting the large numbers of garnets in them. And while the Popigai and Ronda occurrences are mentioned, the very large source of microdiamonds near Kokchetav in northern Kazakhstan is omitted. There, diamonds are contained in Cambrian metasediments that were deeply buried and subsequently uplifted. In contrast to Ronda, however, the tiny diamonds were enclosed in garnet and zircon crystals and thereby preserved from graphitization.

It is the maps, which appear to have been adapted from a simple atlas, that let the book down. All nine maps contain some mistakes—misplaced symbols, misnamed or omitted occurrences, and inconsistent terminology in the captions.

Overall, this is an interesting story that should have been edited more tightly, as the sequence of subjects jumps around and parts are repetitive (beach and offshore mining are discussed in three different sections in the book). The first 40 pages are spent summarizing the rest of the book, and a detailed discussion of the subject matter doesn't begin until page 60. In a book that tries to cover the whole world of diamonds in 300 pages, that seems a waste of space. The book is written as a story rather than a scientific text, so it falls between two stools. It is not up to the standard of a textbook on diamond geology, but at the same time it is sometimes too detailed for the interested layman who would have to be well versed in geology and geography to fully appreciate the text. Otherwise, it is a well-told story and a reasonably priced book.

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The Workbench Guide to Jewelry Techniques

By Anastasia Young, 320 pp., illus., publ. by Interweave Books [www.interweave.com], Loveland, CO, 2010. \$34.95

In this meticulously prepared work, Anastasia Young presents over a hundred jewelry making processes and techniques, organized in a bench reference style. The book opens with a contents section that goes beyond a simple listing of topics and page numbers. There is a "technique file" that numbers all the methods described and the relevant page numbers, making it simple to quickly locate a specific topic. There are also mini-indexes called "finders" strategically placed throughout the book. As a result of this well-considered structure, navigating the book is a pleasure.

The first chapter opens with a short piece on how to set up a small workshop. The rest of the chapter is about the tools and materials used to make jewelry. As an unreformed toolaholic, I was delighted with this section. Each item was represented by a small high-quality photograph of each tool, the techniques it is used for, and how it is used. I particularly liked the fact that the author noted the skill level required for each tool. Essential tools for beginning goldsmiths were also identified by a symbol to help novices assemble a tool kit. The materials section of the chapter gives a broad overview of both traditional and nontraditional materials used in modern jewelry, ranging from gold to concrete.

The second chapter is the heart of the book. It begins with essential techniques that must be mastered, including sawing, filing, soldering, sanding, and polishing; these become more advanced as you go farther into the chapter. Each technique is described in some detail and then illustrated using three or four photographs accompanied by captions. The method is effective in conveying a basic understanding. Jewelers who have

mastered the core techniques should be able to incorporate the more advanced techniques into their own projects using the examples provided.

Given the broad range of techniques the author describes, it would be unfair to expect a lot of detailed or highly technical information. The section on chasing and repoussé is typical of her approach. Its four pages cover three techniques, well described and illustrated, with three excellent photos of jewelry made using the techniques and about a dozen paragraphs discussing materials, tools, and the basic operations involved. While she mentions that chasing tools can be handmade by the craftsman, she does not go into the details of annealing, shaping, hardening, and tempering them, although she does point out the necessity of these steps. Clearly, if you want to master one of these techniques, you will need to look beyond this book. On the other hand, if you would like to try some of them out and see how they apply to your work, it is a great starting point.

The chapter ends with a section on outwork. This section discusses the kinds of work that might be contracted out to someone with advanced expertise or specialized equipment. Many books written about our field mistakenly give the impression that the craftsman should master every technique and “do it all.” The fact is that there have *always* been specialists, and it is perfectly appropriate to send out work to someone who can do it faster or better. The jewelry industry is seeing the rapid development of many highly technical and expensive processes, and none of us has the time or capital required to master it all. This section discusses the kind of jobs that might be outsourced and contains many common-sense suggestions about how to work with subcontractors to achieve good results.

The third chapter is a brief 10 pages on design, including inspiration and where to find it, sketching, and technical drawing. I particularly liked

the Design Checklist and the notion of a “brief” to define and give structure to a project. The last section, Design Realization, shows how to convert drawings and concepts into finished items. The idea of using models or 3-D sketches made from inexpensive or easily worked materials such as paper or modeling clay to work out final shapes and solve assembly problems is excellent. I was impressed with the author’s emphasis on keeping detailed notes and drawings so that the sequence for constructing the piece has been worked out before expensive materials and labor are applied.

Next, the Going into Business chapter covers a topic often omitted in books of this type. In today’s global market, understanding the business side of our craft has become more important than ever. The first half of the chapter covers photography and promoting one’s work. The author has included a technique file that shows how software can improve an image, plus a brief discussion of the difficulty in getting quality images of jewelry. Her section on promotional material is only one page, but it is full of great ideas for communicating a clear identity or brand to the world. The balance of the chapter deals with pricing jewelry and deciding where to sell it and how to display it.

This book is very attractive; almost every page has a photograph of jewelry that relates to the text on that page. The layout is pleasing and user friendly, the text well written and packed with good information. This is a valuable book for students and beginning goldsmiths, who will discover the broad range of techniques and materials available today. Professional designers and goldsmiths who seek innovative techniques or materials to meet the changing demands of today’s jewelry market will also find plenty of inspiration here.

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World Hallmarks, Volume I: Europe, 19th to 21st Centuries, 2nd ed.

By William Whetstone, Danusia Niklewicz, and Lindy Matula, illus., publ. by Hallmark Research Institute [www.hallmarkresearch.com], San Francisco, 2010. \$228

This is a wonderfully organized volume that has long been needed by appraisers, collectors, and museums. The authors have a gift for taking this very complex subject and making it easily understandable.

The book’s “5S” approach to identifying hallmarks stands for Strike, Shape, Style, Standard, and System. Strike is the actual stamping of an impression onto a tested metal and the resulting placement and quality of that impression. The shape of the mark is its outline, while the style refers to its design and imagery. Standard marks indicate the fineness of a particular metal. Lastly, the System of sequential hallmarks involves the mark image and the existence of a surrounding frame with specific shape and fineness numbers, sometimes with a date number or letter.

The fifth S, System, also includes four subcategories: Implied, Symbolic, Inclusive, and Sequential (ISIS). In this methodology, an implied hallmark is recognized by the core image and/or frame shape. These alone can indicate type of metal, metal fineness, and country or location of assay. A symbolic hallmark uses a formal or national symbol representing the assaying country but provides little other information. A hallmark with letters and numbers added to a core image is considered an inclusive hallmark. The most informative and easily read hallmarks are sequential hallmarks, consisting of a series of marks in a line or cluster.

The chapters that follow give a brief history of the European hallmarking systems by country. The 5S system is applied, and a timeline of precious metal use in each country is provided. Additional hallmarks, along with ancillary marks that serve a spe-

cific purpose, are described with assay office marks and identification symbols.

In the back of the book is an analytical index containing a convenient listing of hallmark images. Although this image index does not include all hallmarks, its orderly arrangement makes looking for the image less overwhelming than one might suppose. A historical timeline illustrates various periods of political transition for the countries that once formed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire and the USSR, and Yugoslavia. The glossary of hallmark terms is helpful in reading this book, and an extensive bibliography completes the work. Companion volumes featuring hallmarks of other countries are in the works.

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Mineral Treasures of the World

By The Geological Museum of China and The Collector's Edge Minerals Inc., 125 pp., illus., publ. by Geological Publishing House [www.gph.com.cn], Beijing, 2010. ¥286

The "Mineral Treasures of the World" exhibit opened in the summer of 2010 during China's World Fair in Shanghai. Cosponsored by the Geological Museum of China and The Collector's Edge Minerals, it showcased many of the world's greatest localities for fine minerals with very rare and exquisite examples. This book was written to accompany the exhibition, while educating readers and serving as an infomercial for The Collector's Edge.

The book's Gallery of Treasures section contains splendid color photographs of specimens from the exhibit. They are outstanding examples, worthy of the finest collections—treasures indeed! Each specimen is described with its name, chemical formula, size, and a brief narrative. Many of these are gem species.

The book's educational purpose is accomplished by the first five chapters. They cover the mining of specimens, their trimming and cleaning, identifying superb specimens, worldwide market trends, and how to start collecting fine minerals. These chapters are richly illustrated with color photographs that accentuate the subject matter. They build a strong case for collecting fine minerals, comparing them to fine works of art that justify their high prices. The effort and expense of their mining and the careful cleaning and trimming necessary to bring out their best are chronicled in the story that follows one piece from mine to mineral cabinet. The criteria of excellence are given as a general guide to help the reader recognize a fine mineral specimen and why it holds greater value.

The book extols the virtues of collecting and preserving fine minerals for their enjoyment and as an investment, while also setting out on its third purpose, to be an advertisement for The Collector's Edge Minerals as a prime source for their acquisition. In relating its care and know-how, the company makes a strong case for itself.

The Mineral Treasures of the World exhibit ended in July 2010, but this accompanying book stands as a permanent record of its excellence. Readers of *Gems & Gemology*, especially those who also collect minerals or appreciate gem species in their natural finest forms, should enjoy this book. Although it does mention that some of these specimens are affordable, it should have elaborated on this point, as most people only dream of owning such a specimen, let alone an entire collection of them. And while The Collector's Edge is a great resource, there are many other excellent dealers to choose from. With these last few points in mind, this book is highly recommended, especially for the beginner.

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OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Collectors Guide to Granite Pegmatites. *By Vandall T. King, 96 pp., illus., publ. by Schiffer Publishing [www.schifferbooks.com], Atglen, PA, 2010, US\$19.95*

Collectors Guide to Silicate Crystal Structures. *By Robert J. Lauf, 96 pp., illus., publ. by Schiffer Publishing [www.schifferbooks.com], Atglen, PA, 2010, US\$19.95*

These works, volumes 8 and 9 of the Schiffer Earth Science Monograph series, review the formation and mineralogy of pegmatites and the crystallography of silicates, respectively. Typical for the series, both books are aimed at the educated collector rather than the academic reader. Both are also well illustrated, though the pegmatite volume curiously features several photos of Colombian emerald and red beryl, neither of which form in pegmatites.

TWO

Gems and Gemology in Pakistan. *By Tahseenullah Khan and Allah Bakhsh Kausar, 231 pp., illus., publ. by Geological Survey of Pakistan (www.gsp.gov.pk), Quetta, 2010, Rs. 3000.* This special publication by the Geological Survey of Pakistan reviews the exploration, mining, manufacturing, and marketing of gem materials from that country.

TWO

Diamond Math. *By Kenneth A. Glasser, 451 pp., illus., publ. by Kenneth A. Glasser Co. [www.diamondmath.com], Las Vegas, 2010, US\$75.00.* This pocket-sized handbook contains a set of charts allowing quick estimation of a diamond's weight based on its external measurements. Separate charts are provided for rounds and a wide variety of fancy cuts.

TWO