



Rare Gemstones: How to Identify, Evaluate and Care for Unusual Gems

By Renee Newman, 137 pp., illus., publ. by International Jewelry Publications, Los Angeles, 2012. US\$19.95.

As consumer interest in the unique continues to grow, many jewelers and designers have discovered that non-traditional gems can set them apart from their competition. These gems have the benefit of increased availability from new finds, affordability, higher visibility due to the marketing efforts of television shopping channels, and even the enthusiasm generated by metaphysical practitioners and crystal healers. And so begins a wonderful adventure into the world of rare gemstones.

The book's most striking feature is the approximately 450 color photos throughout its pages. These show mineral specimens, rough crystals, jewelry, and various fashioning styles contributed by a number of cutters, designers, jewelers, and dealers.

The first section, titled "Rare Gemstones Used in Jewelry," features one- to five-page descriptions and photos of 37 gems. Each profile starts with the gem name, phonetic pronunciation, and chemical composition. This is followed by an info box summarizing the gem's optical properties, physical properties, and treatments. Often included under the treatments heading are precautions regarding the use of ultrasonic and steam cleaners. The remaining text covers a wealth of information, such as name derivations, trade terms, and common fashioning/cutting styles. Also included are historical and current sources, phenomena, and uses in traditional and modern jewelry and even industrial applications. Some retail prices are also provided.

The second section, "Rare Gemstones Sometimes Used in Jewelry," follows a similar format and features 19 gems.

While these two sections offer a tremendous amount of reference material, they do not deliver on the promise given in the book's title when it comes to identifying and evaluating. The stones are listed in alphabetical order and split into two sections, which would make gem identification difficult, and the property charts provided in the appendix include numerous stones not found in the book. Evaluation would require much more detail on value factors, and the book's pricing information is minimal.

There are additional sections on care and cleaning and where to find a jewelry appraiser, plus appendixes of gem identification terms and listings of Mohs hardness, refractive index, and specific gravity.

Overall, this book is a visual and informational delight that would greatly benefit those working in the trade, as well consumers looking for the unique and unusual.

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Suzanne Belperron

By Sylvie Raulet and Olivier Baroin, 351 pp., *Antique Collector's Club*, Woodbridge, UK, 2011. US\$150.00.

With this remarkable volume, authors Sylvie Raulet and Olivier Baroin give a well-documented historical account and critical analysis of the renowned French jewelry designer Suzanne Belperron. This is the first exclusive biography ever written on this creative genius, thanks to the authors' access to Belper-

ron's archives. A true pioneer in jewelry design, she was the one of the first women to become an independent designer, selling pieces under her name starting in 1942. In the fashion world, she could be rightfully compared to Coco Chanel, another self-made woman from humble beginnings.

The preface relates how Baroin discovered Belperron's archives after the passing of her beneficiary. A useful chronology immediately follows. The first chapter, "An Artist's Life," retraces the main events of Belperron's life and her rise to prominence in the jewelry industry. This chapter, lavishly illustrated with personal photos, displays important pieces of handwritten correspondence along with official documents.

Born in 1900 in Jura, a region of France renowned for its watchmaking, diamond cutting, and cold climate, Belperron showed early artistic promise. After completing a decorative arts vocational school program, she moved to Paris in 1919, joining the Maison Boivin as a model-designer and eventually becoming co-director. In 1932, she joined the Maison Bernard Herz as artistic and technical director. Up until then, Herz had primarily been a pearl and gemstone dealer. But Belperron had other ideas, and she propelled the house to prominence. During World War II, Bernard Herz was arrested and deported. Belperron joined the French Resistance, while running the business by herself. After the war, she formed a new venture with Monsieur Herz's son. She retired in 1974 and passed away in 1983.

The second chapter, "My Style Is My Signature," provides notable insight on Belperron's designs and her fruitful collaboration with remarkable artisans such as lapidary Adrien

Louart and setters Groëné and Darde. Belperron's work often had a special iconic quality due to the minimalist style of her oversized pieces, which were usually round and monochrome or bicolor. Most illuminating are the close shots of jewelry pieces, sketches, and parts and tools. The author clearly delineates her abilities as a Renaissance woman in the jewelry industry, personally designing, drawing, and overseeing the manufacture of all her pieces.

Of even greater interest for the gemologist is the next chapter, "The Stones and their Combinations," which showcases Belperron's particular taste for gemstones. She was masterful at experimenting with unusual combinations of ornamental stones such as blue chalcedony, quartz, and agate, along with more valuable gemstones such as sapphire and diamond. Instead of using metal mounting, she created individually carved gemstone matrices, nesting a small metal gallery to set more precious gemstones. She brought back to prominence the ornamental gems mentioned above, as well as topaz, smoky quartz, wood, jade, lapis, coral, green chalcedony, and moonstone. She was extremely innovative in using cabochons or beaded gemstones such as sapphires, rubies, and emeralds. The definition of the photos allows the reader to recognize some of the natural inclusions in the gemstones. Although she rarely used calibrated and matched stones, Belperron still managed to harmonize the components through her superior design ability. This characteristic sets her apart from more traditional Place Vendôme jewelers such as Van Cleef and Cartier.

The next chapter addresses "Themes and Influences." Belperron's work was undeniably influenced by Egypt and Africa. She was also captivated by Chinese arts and crafts, an endless source of inspiration for her. Her volute motif is clearly a tribute to Chinese porcelain decorations. Her jewelry salon and apartment were decorated with Chinese pieces of fur-

niture, and she often wore traditional silk kimonos.

The fifth and final chapter demonstrates the prominence of Belperron's style, which catered to the tastes of female elites. While Cartier and Van Cleef were settling in Place Vendôme, Belperron was welcoming her guests in an elegant and exclusive jewelry salon, by appointment only. She had a reputation for offering personalized designs and exquisitely tailoring her jewelry pieces to their owners. As a result, Belperron had an endless waiting list of socialites, aristocrats, politicians' spouses, and fellow fashion designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli. Numerous photos show Belperron's jewelry featured next to the most famous French jewelers' creations. The remarkable fashion editorials displayed in the book evoke an era of great elegance.

Despite the meager detail on jewelry size and gemstone carat weights, one of the strengths of this book lies in its documentation, including personal sketches and designs. The photo quality of the sketches is excellent, and one gets a sense of Belperron's eye and drawing style. The authors also show how general sketches of architectural detail, leaves, or flowers were translated into striking jewelry motifs. One of the most interesting shows the plaster mold casts she used to keep track of her creations. This technique (made extinct by CAD/CAM computer-generated 3D renderings) shows the actual imprints of jewelry pieces from three or four different angles. These detailed imprints also demonstrate the technical aspect of the jewelry piece—the clasps, attachments, and sometimes the back of the piece. This is an invaluable contribution to jewelry historians. One of the chapters shows Madame Belperron's personal jewelry collection, auctioned this May by Sotheby's Geneva. Her personal pieces were surprisingly simple and modest compared to the masterful creations designed for her clientele.

The documentation paired with the quality of the jewelry makes this

volume a real treat for students, gemologists, appraisers, and any jewelry professional who seeks to understand the Art Deco style that Belperron exemplified so masterfully.

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Gems and Minerals: Earth Treasures from the Royal Ontario Museum

*By Kimberly Tait, 225 pages, illus.,
publ. by Firefly Books Ltd, 2011,
Buffalo, New York. US\$40.00.*

Although many similar volumes have been published, this one features specimens from the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, many of which can be seen on display in the Teck Suite of Galleries: Earth Treasures. The author, Dr. Kimberly Tait, is associate curator of mineralogy at the ROM.

The introduction, "Minerals: Products of a Changing Planet," gives a brief discussion of several topics, including the wonder of crystals, gemstones, meteorites, physical properties of minerals, and crystallography. Although lengthy, the section provides a solid foundation for the novice. It is packed with very good color photos and diagrams. The crystallography section tries to explain *space groups*, the various ways atoms can be arranged in a crystal in a homogeneous way, in a rather brief manner, as such the reader will not fully understand the space group nomenclature given for most mineral species in the following chapters.

The 14 chapters remind one of *Dana's System of Mineralogy*, where mineral species are classified by their chemical composition. Many other books have followed this general format, and it makes sense from a scientific standpoint. Chapters include: "Native Elements," "Halides," "Carbonates," "Tectosilicates," and "Cyclosilicates." For each species, there is at least one photo accompanied by information such as chemical

formula, crystal system, space group, hardness, habit, environment (formation and deposition), notable localities, and name origin. Under "Habit," many possible shapes and forms are included, as well as colors, luster, and transparency.

For notable localities, Canadian sources appear first, which seems appropriate enough for this book. What constitutes a notable locality is never really explained, though. Is it output, the quality of the specimens, or perhaps a unique environment? For rutile, it is a mystery why Graves Mountain, Georgia, USA—the source of the largest fine crystals known—was not included. For that matter, why not spodumene from the Pala District of California? Other examples could be cited, but it's fair to concede that it is a big world after all.

The photographs are excellent, some covering an entire page. Most of the specimens chosen are well-formed examples that a serious mineral or gem collector would covet. Dimensions are given for each one, often contributing a "wow" factor. The photos are also useful for identification purposes. Perhaps the most impressive specimen depicted is the world's largest faceted cerussite. Named the "Light of the Desert" for its incredible fire, it was found in Namibia and weighs in at 898 ct. Dr. Tait has kept up to date with current mineral species names—for instance, annite in place of biotite, and for groups such as stilbite the use of stilbite – (Ca) and stilbite – (Na). The species anatase, brookite, and rutile are correctly stated as having the same chemical composition but different crystal structures (polymorphs), but perhaps there should have been a clarification as to why the different species rutile and anatase are both tetragonal. Below each species name, additional information is usually given and often includes the mineral's uses. One topic that wasn't well addressed in the chapters is the importance of the species to the mineral collector and what would constitute a good or even a great specimen,

other than the pictures themselves. The single-page glossary is perhaps too brief, covering just 32 entries. Additional Reading cites several books, journals and websites. Some peer-reviewed journals such as *Gems & Gemology*, *The Mineralogical Record*, and others were not included.

There is not as much on gemstones as the title might suggest, though beautiful plates of gemstones are included. This is primarily a mineralogy book in an introductory format. Although there are many similar books, very few can compare to the beauty of these 400 color images and the novelty of the specimens.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

Diamonds: The Antoinette Matlins Buying Guide—How to Select, Buy, Care for & Enjoy Diamonds with Confidence and Knowledge, 3rd ed. By Antoinette Matlins, 240 pp. illus., publ. by Gemstone Press, Woodstock, VT, 2011. US\$18.99. This new edition of the popular buying guide (first reviewed in the Spring 2002 *G&G*) contains updated, easy-to-understand information for diamond shoppers. Added chapters include fancy natural-color and treated-color diamond price comparisons, synthetic diamonds (including a pricing guide), and choosing the right metal for a setting.

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Granitic Pegmatites and Mineralogical Museums in Czech Republic. By Milan Novák and Jan Cempírek, Eds., 56 pp., publ. by the Department of Mineralogy, Geochemistry and Petrology, University of Szeged, Hungary, 2010. Published as Volume 6 of *Acta Mineralogica-Petrographica, Field Guide Series*, this guidebook accompanied a five-day field trip that took place in conjunction with the

20th General Meeting of the International Mineralogical Association, held August 2010 in Budapest. The trip visited seven granitic pegmatites in the Moldanubian Zone of the Czech Republic, including rare-element bodies that are the type locality of lepidolite and rossmanite. Pegmatite geology, mineralogy, and internal structure are reviewed. Mineral exhibitions and collections from a five-museum tour are also described.

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Dallas Mineral Collecting Symposium 2011. DVD (2 discs), approx. 3.5 hours, released by Blue Cap Productions [www.bluecapproductions.com], Marina del Rey, CA, 2011. US\$19.99. This DVD set features presentations by Dr. Jeffrey Post on the Smithsonian's National Collection; Dr. Joel Bartsch on the expansion of the Houston Museum of Natural Science; U.S. Judge Francis Allegra on the tax implications of donation; Dr. Gene Meieran on science for the collector; Dr. George Rossman on crystal color; and Dr. Barbara Dutrow on tourmaline group crystals.

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What's Hot in Munich 2011. DVD (1 disc), approx. 94 minutes., released by Blue Cap Productions [www.bluecapproductions.com], Marina del Rey, CA, 2011. US\$24.99. Bryan Swoboda and Peter Lyckberg host a look at this three-day mineral show, Europe's oldest and largest. The DVD features interviews with exhibitors and displays of remarkable mineral specimens.

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