

EDITORS

Susan B. Johnson
Jana E. Miyahira-Smith
Thomas W. Overton

2010 BOOK REVIEWS

American Luxury: Jewels from the House of Tiffany

Edited by Jeannine Falino and Yvonne J. Markowitz, 207 pp., illus., publ. by Antique Collectors Club [www.antique-acc.com], Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK, 2009. US\$65.00

This book pays tribute to Tiffany & Co.'s enduring ingenuity since 1842. What sets it apart from others written about Tiffany is the series of original essays by well-known authorities. Editors Falino and Markowitz contribute sections and are joined by Elise Misiorowski, Elizabeth Ann Coleman, and Gerald W. R. Ward, who each lend a wealth of information.

The reader will enjoy learning how Tiffany & Co. earned its reputation. The United States, a country of unbridled progress through the late 19th and 20th centuries, offered the ideal environment for the firm to evolve and grow, lavishly meeting the luxury needs of the affluent while developing a quintessentially American style using native materials and motifs. Tiffany displays at the International Expositions were met with great success, further enhancing the company's reputation and earning it a place beside great European jewelers such as Cartier and Boucheron. The firm was quick to adopt technological advances, including the raised diamond mount (the "Tiffany setting"), new diamond-cutting techniques, and a system of hallmarking.

One section covers Tiffany's renowned gemologist, George Frederick Kunz. Having Kunz on staff during the latter 19th and early 20th cen-

turies kept Tiffany at the forefront of new and unusual gemstone discoveries. Kunz was allowed to collect both personally and for Tiffany, and this trust enabled him to fulfill his passion while leading the company in a creative direction.

Other sections review the work of artistic greats such as Paulding Farnham and Louis Comfort Tiffany. One learns of the turbulent relationship between Farnham and LCT, and why pieces designed by both artists are rare. Founder Charles Lewis Tiffany's successors in the 20th century continued to create extraordinary adornments designed by artists such as Jean Schlumberger, Angela Cummings, Elsa Peretti, and Paloma Picasso.

Of particular interest is an entire section devoted to men's jewelry. It covers the fascinating evolution from military, civic, and fraternal objects such as rings, badges, and swords to more recent items such as NFL Super Bowl rings.

There is some repetition from one chapter to the next. Although the reader benefits from the individual perspective of each author, perhaps the editors could have planned the subjects a little tighter to avoid such overlap.

Through the years, Tiffany & Co. has understood jewelry's ability to evoke memories and people. This book is a must for the bookshelves of appraisers, designers, jewelers, and antique and estate dealers.

MELINDA ADDUCCI
*Joseph DuMouchelle Appraisers
Grosse Point Farms, Michigan*

Gemstones

By Karen Hurrell and Mary L. Johnson, 319 pp., illus., publ. by Metro Books [www.barnesandnoble.com], New York, 2008. US\$12.98

Billed as a "complete color reference for precious and semiprecious stones of the world," that covers "every aspect" of gems, this reference guide doesn't quite meet such lofty claims. Yet it does provide a useful elementary overview and may be handy as a quick resource for basic physical properties of common gems.

The book's attempt to address a wide range of topics may also be to its detriment; each section is simple and brief, and the work may be spread too broadly for such a concise volume. The clearly written text is excellent for anyone interested in learning about gem materials, though the more complex terminology and descriptions of advanced testing equipment may be lost on the layperson.

The guide begins with a simple, easy-to-understand introduction. The first section explains the basics of minerals, gems, and precious metals, and contains simple definitions of some gemological characteristics. The bulk of the book showcases 130 gems, gem minerals, natural glasses, and organic gems that are attractively laid out in a fashion similar to a field guide. The gem minerals are divided into sections based on the crystal systems (an arrangement not obvious to the lay reader), but the question remains as to how the gem entries are organized within each section, as there does not seem to be an intuitive order.

Unfortunately, the entry headings and subheadings do not have a consistent format. Some primary headings identify the mineral species, with the subheading citing the mineral group; other main headings denote the gem variety, followed by the species as the subheading. Also, some common mineral groups (such as tourmaline and garnet) are identified within the headings, while others (e.g., feldspar) are not noted. At least one of the large bold entry headings (that of iolite) was misspelled (as "Lolite").

Each gem entry has four sections containing basic information on properties and characteristics, as well as cutting, setting, and valuing. The top of each page contains a quick reference list of physical properties along with notable geographic sources. Most common gemstones are included in this guide, although hematite is conspicuously missing. The book does not include listings of synthetic gemstones, and treatments and enhancements are not addressed.

This reviewer did not take on the arduous task of checking the accuracy of all technical data; however, a quick spot check unveiled some confusion or errors in the stated refractive indexes for three of four random gemstones. This seemed largely related to the approach of listing the maximum extent of the value's ranges. (Instead, the reviewer believes that citing *standard* R.I. values with their tolerances listed separately would have corrected much of the confusion and been more useful.)

Following the gemstone directory is an attractive thumbnail photo gallery of each cut gem that is described. This can be used as a quick and basic reference guide to the gems' colors. The color representations are okay, although the illustrated color for the padparadscha sapphire looks distinctly red. The next section, "Identifying and Collecting Minerals and Gemstones," contains five informative subsections, each comprising two pages. The first, "Identifying minerals," cannot aid in the identification of individual speci-

mens, but it provides a general and very simplified approach for the curious hobbyist. "Identifying Gems" attempts to consolidate a very complex "course" into little more than a page of instruction. "Further Testing" contains information that is beyond the elementary nature of the rest of this book, but is interesting for a more knowledgeable reader or tech-savvy hobbyist. "Gemstone Evaluation" provides a very good overview of the traits and methods by which gemstone values are judged, and "Mineral Evaluation and Storing" is very informative as well as interesting. The last subsection, "Gemstones by color," is a valuable aid that lists gemstones under corresponding color headings.

Incidentally, the bangle in the photo in the "Identifying Gems" section is misidentified in the caption, which describes gas bubbles in "jadeite"; since jadeite does not contain gas bubbles, this reviewer guesses that the caption contained a typographical error and meant to indicate that the bangle is a jadeite *imitation*—probably glass.

The book also contains a "Resources" section that is conveniently divided into two parts for gemology and mineralogy. Books, peer-reviewed journals, trade publications, selected gem testing laboratories, associations and societies, clubs, appraisal references, and useful websites are included. Note, too, that the book's style and design are very attractive, it is nicely colored with abundant photographs, and has a high-quality paper and stiff paperboard cover.

Although this book is not suited for use by a practicing gemologist or serious field collector, it is an enjoyable and useful reference for anyone interested in learning about the basics of gem materials, or for a beginning collector-hobbyist. It may also have an appeal in jewelry stores as a counter reference for employees and as a colorful and attractive marketing aid for their colored-stone clients.

CHERYL WENTZELL
GIA Laboratory, Carlsbad

Diamonds: The Quest from Solid Rock to the Magic of Diamonds

By Christine Gordon, 430 pp., illus., publ. by Tectum Publishers, Antwerp, 2008. US\$135

This beautifully produced coffee table book presents the story of diamonds from mine to wearer through magnificent photographs and clearly written text. It is aimed at the general reader rather than professional geologists or gemologists, and for its audience it succeeds brilliantly. The photographs are reproduced in full-page splendor, and the last 200 pages are nearly all photos with short captions. My only quibble is that many captions are either absent or do not identify the mine, person, or collection of diamonds being portrayed.

The first chapter briefly discusses the formation of diamonds deep in the earth's crust, some up to 3.5 billion years ago, and includes a useful timeline of diamond history. There is an interesting aside on carbonado, the grayish black diamonds found in Brazil and the Central African Republic. They are very old, hard, and tough, and may have formed in the heart of giant red stars that exploded and scattered debris throughout the galaxies. Chapter 2 examines the countries in which diamonds are produced. There are beautiful images of the ice road and the Ekati mine in Canada, the Mir mine in Siberia, and many large mines in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, and Australia. There are also snapshots of small-scale artisanal miners in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone.

Some errors have crept into the section on Botswana, where diamonds were first discovered in 1960 (not 1974 as stated), and the first mine opened in 1970. The latest diamond mine to come onstream, and the first one not connected with De Beers, was the Lerala mine, located in northeast Botswana, which started in 2008 and closed six months later because of the global financial crisis. However, it had no connection (as the book states)

with the AK6 project, which is located near Orapa and is being developed by Dublin-based African Diamonds.

The discussion of trading in rough diamonds mentions the shift from the near monopoly of De Beers in London to centers in Antwerp, Tel Aviv, Mumbai, and Dubai, and the requirement of a Certificate of Origin by the Kimberley Process. Before being traded, diamonds must be sorted by size, category (industrial or gem), shape (cuttable or noncuttable), and color, and this sorting may be repeated many times in more detail.

The chapter on cutting describes the shift from the traditional centers in Amsterdam and Antwerp to the producing countries of Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, and from Antwerp to Tel Aviv, Surat (India), and Guangzhou (China). The next chapter covers the four Cs (cut, clarity, color, and carat weight) and grading reports issued by GIA, HRD, EGL, and IGI. The text is rudimentary but is accompanied by beautiful photographs in which the true color of the diamonds is revealed.

The subsequent chapter, on creating a jewel, is very short on description but shows some magnificent images of crown jewels from Portugal, France, and especially England. A chapter on celebrities shows them wearing beautiful diamond jewelry, and a final chapter on industrial diamonds contains a magnificent photograph (over 1½ pages) of a collection of industrial rough.

The book is not inexpensive, but discounts may be found. Regardless, it is a worthwhile addition to one's library.

A.J.A. (BRAM) JANSE
Perth, Western Australia

Schiffer Earth Science Monographs

Publ. by Schiffer Publishing
[www.schifferbooks.com], Atglen,
PA, 2008–2009. US\$19.95 each

The Schiffer Earth Science Mono-

graphs are (currently) a seven-volume series of collectors' guides to (1) the mica group, (2) the epidote group, (3) fluorite, (4) the axinite group, (5) the vesuvianite group, (6) the three phases of titania (rutile, anatase, and brookite), and (7) the pyroxene group. (Volumes 2 and 3 were reviewed in the Spring 2009 and Winter 2009 issues of *G&G*.) Robert J. Lauf is the author of all the monographs except the third, Arvid Eric Pasto's *Collector's Guide to Fluorite*. This series was created for mineral collectors and addresses topics of general concern to them, without requiring a doctorate in mineralogy to comprehend the material. Each monograph follows a similar format, with sections on "Taxonomy," "Formation and Geochemistry," and "The Minerals."

In "Taxonomy," special attention is given to how the minerals of each group or subgroup vary from the basic formula. The compositional diagrams, listings of accepted species with their formulas, tables of obsolete and correct names of minerals, and diagrams of crystal structure on the molecular level are tremendously useful. The crystal-habit diagrams are particularly helpful to any collector who is attempting to identify a specimen. Information on substitutions of atoms and on solid solutions and their extent is also provided.

The "Formation and Geochemistry" section explores the conditions and geologic settings essential to the formation of the minerals. This information is vital to collectors, as it explains differences in crystal habits and associated species that are seen in various formations. It can also be of great assistance to field collectors who know which kinds of geologic environments are likely to contain minerals of interest. Because of the unique relationship the titania minerals have with each other, their phase relationships are explained in volume 6.

For the true mineral collector, though, the heart of each volume is the "Minerals" section. An abundance of color photographs of speci-

mens, often from the best-known localities, grace this section. Most are fine examples of their species, often crystals rather than the massive ore-type specimens that typically appear in geology manuals. Many photos show the species in question with associated minerals or on matrix, providing a valuable visual aid. Each soft-cover 8½ × 11 inch volume contains about 90–120 color photographs of the minerals, as well as tables and diagrams.

Though not specifically written for a gemological audience, this series offers information of value to the gemologist. Where applicable, cut examples of the gem varieties of mineral species are shown in color with brief descriptions. The first volume is perhaps of least interest to gemologists, since few mica species appear as cut gems. Axinite and vesuvianite minerals and the three phases of titania are sometimes cut as gems for the collector but are not often seen in your local jeweler's showcase. The pyroxene volume, however, describes many different kinds of gem species, including jadeite, spodumene, and diopside, and is worthwhile reading for the gemologist.

MICHAEL T. EVANS, G.G.
Gemological Institute of America
Carlsbad, California

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Minéraux Remarquables. By Jean-Claude Boulliar with photography by Orso Martinelli, 252 pp., illus., publ. by Plage [plage2@wanaadoo.fr], Paris, 2009, €69 [in French and English]. This dual-language coffee table book depicts the finest specimens from the Mineral Collection of the University of Paris-Sorbonne. The specimens are arranged by mineral group and displayed in full-color life-size photos. Also included is a series of short essays on photographing minerals, the history of the collection, and mineral collecting in general.

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