Jewelry History

On View Now at the Newark Museum: The Glitter & The Gold

August 28, 2013 by EraGem

Unique Among the Treasures

Newark Museum’s "The Glitter & the Gold" aims to demonstrate each piece’s contribution to the ongoing drama of jewelry history, while at the same time highlighting Newark’s unique place among the treasure house of American jewelry history.

Among the exhibits most iconic pieces, the Whiteside & Blank’s Butterfly Lady brooch not only represents the city’s contribution to jewelry history, having been manufactured in Newark by leading jewelers and goldsmiths, but it also serves as a portofolio into some of the most intriguing events which took place at the turn of the century.

Femme Volante

The 1900s dawned on the emerging power of art and woman to captivate, to enthrall, and to liberate. The concept of the Butterfly Lady began in France in the 1880s as femme volante, the "flying woman." Represented by lady acrobats walking the tightrope, sitting on trapezes, and walking the high-wire, these flying women represented perfectly the emerging Art Nouveau pursuit of "nonutilitarian delights" cited.

In 1896, Femme volante reached American shores, emerging in a new style demonstrated by Lule Haller, reputed to be a pioneer in modern dance. Swirling and twirling in her ethereal dress, she introduced a new interpretation of the flying woman, one which quite literally transformed her into the butterfly woman we see depicted in so many Art Nouveau jewels.

The exhibit is on view in the museum’s latest addition, the Lore Ross Jewelry Gallery, on the second floor of the historic 1885 Ballantine House. While the museum has been collecting European and American jewelry since 1911, this is the first time a collection of jewels have been showcased in their own exhibition.

The Imagination and Innovation of Jewelry Designer Wallace Chan

August 18, 2013 by EraGem

Wallace Chan’s exquisite sculptured jewels have captured the imaginations of jewelry enthusiasts and collectors. His style stands in a class of its own, and his designs appear to defy modern technology.

Translucent enamels in pale pastels and bright blush pink enliven the wings with a hint of reality. Two diamonds serve as eye spots on each of the top wings, and golden antennae emerge from behind her fluid hairline.

The Wallace Cut

In 2003, recognizing his genius with the ancient gemstone, commissioned Mr. Chan to apply his "patented jadeite luminosity enhancing technology" cited. This piece was acquired in 1993, by the Newark Museum through The Millenium Pinvest Fund. Today, it sits as one of the many offerings in the museum’s "The Glitter & The Gold" exhibit.

Jadeite Luminosity

His growing enchantment with color and light, coupled with his vivid imagination filled with visions of cicadas, serpents, and butterflies (all important symbols of Chinese and Buddhist lore) led him to soon exchange the larger colorless crystals for the color-rich world of gemstones.

Beginning with Chinese jadeite, Mr. Chan sought innovative ways to cut and set the precious green stone. In 2003, recognizing his genius with the ancient gemstone, commissioned Mr. Chan to apply his "patented jadeite luminosity enhancing technology" cited to create the only pair of jadeite wathetwatches in the world.
The research of one man in the 1950s or 1960s, Dr. Klaus Schneider, traced the stone directly from the stone's merchant to King Philip of Spain. However, a more recent inquiry, the results of which were published in Gems & Gemology in 2008, call into question Mr. Schneider's version of events. These researchers, Ralf Desicht, Jürgen Evers, and Hans Otzmann, were unable to find evidence that the treasurer of King Philip's court purchased any stones from India and Portugal in 1564, as Mr. Schneider had claimed. Furthermore, the archivists they spoke with were unsure of any records being lost during the Spanish Civil War, and which is the claim Herr Schneider made for the lack of documentation on the stone.

The Path of the Diamond

This does not change a white lot in the known path the diamond made through the continents. However, it is not quite as romantic as Herr Schneider's story, which found King Philip of Spain claiming the most exquisite stones out of a recent purchase from Portugal and India as a wedding gift for his young daughter, the Infanta Margarita Teresa (1655-1670).

Instead we have the report of a marriage contract, being a date December 18, 1651, which makes no mention of a stone matching the characteristics of the large blue diamond which would later be known as the Wittelsbach Blue. According to the research team, the Infanta Margherita Teresa acquired the stone after the contract was negotiated. This does not rule out the possibility that her father gave it to her, but it doesn't rule out other possibilities either.

The first solid record of the stone comes in 1673, on the heels of tragedy. Only six years after her marriage to Emperor Leopold I of Austria, the young Empress, weakened by multiple miscarriages, lost her life. It is reported that in her will she left all of her belongings to her daughter, Maria Antonia, except “a precious ornament which she brought from Spain” (1). This she left to her husband, Leopold I, with the following description: “a great breast ornament with a great diamond in the midst” (1). Herr Desicht and his colleagues are reasonably certain that this diamond of untold color is the stone presently known as The Wittelsbach-Griff Diamond (formerly The Wittelsbach Blue).

Time Marched On

Time marched on, and once again, the latest research refutes the claims of Herr Schneider, who wrote that upon Leopold’s death in 1701, the lore-strewn emperor left all of his jewels, including Empress Margaret's Teresa's diamond gems, to his third wife, Empress Eleonora Magdalena (1). Herr Schneider further reported that the Empress later bequeathed the jewel to her step-granddaughter, the Archduchess Maria Amalia.

Herr Desicht and his collaborators failed to find supporting documents for such claims. In fact, Empress Eleonora’s will, sometime between 1711 and 1712, made no mention of bequests to her grandchildren. Instead, she is reported to have given all of her jewels to her children, none of which was the Wittelsbach Blue.

These modern-day sleuths did discover a paper trail leading to the House of Wittelsbach in 1685, twenty years prior to Leopold’s death, when the Archduchess Maria Antonia, daughter of Leopold I and Margarita Teresa, married Bavarian Elector Maximilian Emanuell I Emannuel Wittelsbach.

'A Thick Stone in the Midst'

A general inventory of her possessions was prepared that year, which lists, among other jewels from her mother's dowry, “a large ornament with a thick stone in the midst” (1). This document lends solid credence to the conclusion that Leopold I gave the stone, not to his third wife, but to his daughter, Maria Antonia (1), as part of her dowry.

Later, in 1852, Electress Maria Antonia’s will stipulated that the stone was to remain in the Bavarian Crown Jewels. However, by reason of a failing marriage and a series of wars, the jewel was actually returned to the House of Hapsburg in Vienna, where the Electress resided during the Nine Years War (1688-1697). Upon her untimely death, it was likely held in trust by her father, Leopold I, until her son, Elector Joseph I Ferdinand returned with it to Munich, the seat of the Bavarian Empire, in 1801.

'A Large Blue Brilliant'

In 1722, Emperor Joseph I’s daughter, Maria Amalia, was about to unite the House of the House of Wittelsbach in 1705 to the Bavarian style of the Wittelsbachs. "The large blue brilliant, encrusted with small brilliants" (1), was included as part of Maria Amalia’s dowry, with an assigned value of 240,000 guilders ($17,500 today).

That year, the Archduchess Maria Amalia, granddaughter to Emperor Leopold I and Empress Margarita Teresa, married Crown Prince Charles Albert of Bavaria, son of Maximilian Emanuell Wittelsbach. A portrait painted of the new Princess on her wedding day ‘is the oldest visual record of the diamond” (1).

In 1742, Charles Albert was elevated Emperor of Bavaria, and the blue diamond was set into a crown reminiscent of the crests of the Ottoman Empire. This crown was worn by Empress Maria Amalia, and during their brief tenure the diamond became firmly established as the Wittelsbach family’s most sacred emblem.

Order of the Golden Fleece

In 1799, Elector Maximillian III Joseph (1727-1777), son of Charles Albert and Empress Maria Amalia, had the diamond mounted in a badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece. This badge featured a large oval brooch centered by the blue diamond. Around the great blue stone rested a halo of round brilliant diamonds. Surmounting this inner circle was a larger and more ornate mounting set with yellow and white diamonds of differing sizes. Suspended from one larger round brilliant, a diamond bow held a large blue diamond is made in 1606, when the First King of Bavaria, Maximilian I Joseph von Wittelsbach, had the grey-blue stone mounted prominently in his royal crown. For over a century, the Wittelsbach Blue rested among the vaults of Bavaria in the Treasury of the Munich Residence (1). In 1867, an appraisal was made of Der Wittelsbach Blau, with an assigned value of 100,000 florins ($157,200) (1).

In the wake of World War I, Bavaria was converted to a republic. According to Ian Balliu (cit), the Bavarian Crown Jewels were collected by the State, along with all of their accessories and possessions, and placed in trust with the Wittelsbach Ausflugstihle (RAS) for public display in museums. In order to realize cash from any of their possessions, members of the Wittelsbach family had to secure approval from the Bavarian government.

The Wittelsbach-Griff Diamond: A Detailed History

August 12, 2011 by EraGem

The Wittelsbach-Griff Diamond. Photo has been released into the public domain.

As of today, the Wittelsbach-Griff Diamond holds 4th place on our Top Twenty Diamonds & Jewels Sold at Auction...

One of the most notable aspects of this diamond is its light weight. At one time weighing in at 35.56 carats, the Wittelsbach-Griff Diamond stunning blue diamond is believed to have been discovered in the famed Golconda mines of India, where many of the world’s most historic diamonds were found during the 17th century. According to Scott Sucher, the unique shape of the diamond, referred to as a Stellar Brilliant Cut by some experts, dates the cutting of the stone to Europe in the 1650s (cit).

The cut of the stone is an elliptical shape. This is known as one of the most beautiful cuts, allowing maximum sparkle and fire between the gemstones, which are unimpeded from releasing all of their colors.

Captive Setting Gemstone to Gemstone

While historians are uncertain as to who carried this beautiful stone from India to Europe, many surmise that it came over in the pouch of the legendary explorer and gems trader, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier.

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Onyx, Diamonds, Emeralds

Note

An Uncanny Resemblance

The World's Most Famous Diamond

A Landmark Public Auction

Of Monumental Significance

Corroborating Evidence

The World’s Most Famous Diamond

The Inaugural Debut

An Uncanny Resemblance

Note

La Panthère: Cartier’s Enduring Panther Motif

Hiding in Plain Sight

According to Mr. Dretschel and his team, in 1971 the WAF sold the diamond secretly to an undisclosed merchant. Later that same year, the diamond was sold again, this time to one of Antwerp’s foremost diamond dealers, Ronni Goldmanitz [1].

In 1958, the public would once again catch a glimpse of the glorious blue diamond. However, very few knew of its true provenance. At the World Exhibition in Brussels, Herr Goldmanitz included the diamond in an exhibition of his premiere wares. The diamond was displayed without title, and it spent six months hidden in plain sight. Even Joseph Komkommers, a man who would later play a part in identifying the stone, did not recognize it.

It would be another four years before this fellow, Belgium diamond dealer Joseph Komkommers, would receive a request, likely from Herr Goldmanitz’s heirs, to ‘improve’ the cut of the diamond. Expecting an Old Mine cut diamond, Mr. Komkommers was shocked when a dark blue Stella Cut stone shone brightly from within the small package [1].

By Angela Magnotti Andrews

Regardless, by the writing of this account, the two have become synonymous, and panther-like characteristics which inspired her to develop such an iconic association with these beautiful creatures.

One could easily assume that it was her otherworldly crush on the fantastic creatures which led her friend/lover, Louis Cartier, to nickname her ‘Panthère’ [2].

It is unclear in the literature precisely when, or even if, this fated exclamation dripped from Mme. Toussaint’s lips, but it is obvious that a fantastic encounter with at least one of these rarefied beasts left an indelible impression upon her.

She is reported to have exclaimed, “Onyx, Diamonds, Emeralds—A brooch!” [3]

Her fascination with the big black cats of Africa is reported to have begun (culminated at the least) on the arm of her ... Cartier, who was took her to Africa on a business trip. Upon catching her first glimpse of the magnificent black cats, Mme. Toussaint became the first woman to head the design team at a prestigious jewelry firm. Her way was assertive and independent, her imagination was rich and bold, and her eye was keen and discerning.

Riding on the heels of the heightened eroticism surrounding the lithe and sensuous beauties of the Art Nouveau movement, as well as the supremely powerful Art Deco women, jewelry scene.

The story of Cartier’s Panthère encompasses not only the reign of this alluring and luxurious cat as an enduring symbol of the Maison for nearly 100 years, but also the influence of the mysterious and indomitable women who inspired and engineered these bold and magnificent jewels, now collectively referred to as the ‘Big Cats’.

The sleek black panther, a symbol of elegant femininity, bold courage, and the allure of danger, actually emerged on the European art scene several years prior to her debut in high jewelry. According to Hans Nadelhoffer, right at the turn of the 20th century the medieval Lady with a Diamond was being replaced by the ‘bold image of the Lady with a Panther’ [Stadtfeld, p. 228].

Unlike her vintage counterparts, the sleekly-clad, sinuously curved lady with her big black cats came to represent the darker side of feminine seduction. By 1919, with Fernand Knöpfli’s La Carrousel, the stage was set for La Panthère to make her entrance onto the high jewelry scene.

Onyx, Diamonds, Emeralds

Riding on the heels of the heightened eroticism surrounding the lithe and sensuous beauties of the Art Nouveau movement, as well as the supremely powerful Art Deco women, La Panthère stalked onto the jewelry scene, subtly at first, with the bold involvement of Mme. Jeanne Toussaint at Cartier Paris.

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All Things Panther

It is unclear in the literature precisely when, or even if, this fated exclamation dripped from Mme. Toussaint’s lips, but it is obvious that a fantastic encounter with at least one of these rarefied beasts left an indelible impression upon her.

By the early 1900s, Mme. Toussaint’s fascination was bordering on the obsessive with all things panther. She decorated her apartments with their luxurious furs, she wore their spotted skins as coats (cited Jouyelroux), and she favored personal accessories designed with the big cats as inspiration.

She is reported to have been the first to own one of Cartier’s Pâturier vanity cases, made around 1917 [Stadtfeld, p. 228]. The vanity is a wonder in miniature, featuring a life-like diamond panther or onyx or sapphire spines stalking along a ruby and diamond road between two jewelled cypress trees against an all-black background.

One could easily assume that it was her otherworldly crush on the fantastic creatures which led her friend/lover, Louis Cartier, to nickname her ‘La Panthère’, it would make just as much sense to assume it was this nickname and her recognition of her very panther-like qualities which inspired her to develop such an ironic association with these beautiful creatures.

Regardless, by the writing of this account, the two have become synonymous, and La Panthère would, with her astounding obsession, effectively launch one of high jewelry’s boldest and most luxurious motifs.
Coaxing the Panther to Life

On Display at Cartier

In 1952, the trend endures with the Duchess of Windsor adding to her collection the articulated panther bracelet which remains the _pièce de résistance_ of the Cartier collection. The bracelet is "set with calibre-cut black onyx and diamonds and is so finely articulated that it wraps around the wrist like fabric" [2]. This bracelet holds the _world record_ for most expensive bracelet ever sold at auction.

In 1954, the Duchess placed a special order with Cartier for a Tiger (Léopard) eye watch. The _marche_ features a regally marking tiger made of gold and black Champlevé enamel eyes [4].

In 1957, Barbara Woodworth Hamilton, millionaire heiress to the Woodworth fortune, likely inspired by the Duchess's Tiger Léopard, commissioned Cartier to create a golden tiger watch with matching earrings, inlaid Mombasa and Wallis Simpson's tiger watch, a modern edge "in yellow gold and diamonds, with sharp corners, a streamlined profile and gaping jaw" [20]. The snow leopard returns in diamonds and onyx, with innovative techniques lending the animal's coat realistic texture {20}.

In 2012, Cartier released _L'Odyssee de Cartier_, the journey of the fabled panther through exotic lands. The jeweled snow leopard steals its jeweled skin and comes to life, ready to embark on a grand adventure through the exotic lands of Cartier's greatest inspirations. Beginning in Russia, the big cat races across the snow toward the mighty mountains, on its way to China.

Meeting with danger, the cat press onward into a monster reptile with living beings. Crossing it, he reaps the benefit of an elephant, finding itself in India, where it catches a ride aboard another unexpected and historic vessel. Alighting in Paris, it makes its way into a magnificent mansion, where it finds a beautiful woman dressed in an exquisite red Ysl Yves Ysl Yves dress, shopping with Cartier inc. And all of this takes place inside the signature red Cartier box.

January 2013, Cartier released the latest version of the panther, a grizzled version of a panther's head in 22K yellow gold as the facsimile of a 42K yellow gold Cartier watch case. The Panther Divine watch emerged in January, as a lone diamond and onyx leopard turns back to gaze at the watch on a platinum Cartier watch face. Slick yellow and white gold cats also emerged, some playful, others fierce, many of which feature exotically gazed eye in emerald green.

In 2014, Cartier celebrates 100 years of its panthers' glorious reign over their Parisian atelier. There is no doubt in this writer's mind that even now the great house is preparing for an exhibition of the greatest of their Big Cats. Perhaps they will even successfully coax the new owner of Wallis Simpson's articulated panther bracelet to lend it to them for the show.
Wallis Simpson's Onyx & Diamond Panther Bracelet by Cartier. Source: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth.

The Wallis Simpson panther bracelet, with its single-cut diamonds and calibré-cut onyx, was the third and most inspiring in a series of Big Cat jewels made for the Duchess by Cartier. With its diamond-encrusted ears turned back and its menacing green emerald eyes staring boldly into you, honing its sharp platinum teeth, this life-like panther appears to be stalking anyone who comes near.

Wallis Simpson's panther bracelet, arguably the most famous bracelet in the world, represents a trifecta in jewelry history. In the first corner we have one of fashion's most famous style icons, Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor. Though denied the right to become Queen of England, Ms. Simpson, alongside her dashing husband, the former King Edward VIII, rose to become Queen of Style.

Through boldly designed jewels and a dedication to incomparable clothing, Wallis Simpson became one of the world's best dressed women, setting style trends that endure today, over 70 years after she took center stage. Two times at auction, her jewels have commanded record-breaking prices.

Indeed, it was the sale of the Duchess's jewels through Sotheby's in 1987 which changed the face of auctions, rendering them sold commodities in the world's market for jewelry and launching a new trend in art jewelry. Furthermore, it was this exquisite bracelet, commissioned and co-designed by the Duchess in 1952, which in 2010 smashed the record for highest bracelet ever sold at auction.

In the second corner of our main event, we have another woman whose astute design analysis has forever linked her name to panthers, Cartier, and the Duchess of Windsor: Jeanne Troussaint.

According to Gilles Auguste and Michel Gustatz, Mme. Troussaint was “a true original,” a woman who “embodied a type of feminine elegance which was very assertive and independent” (cited: Luxury Talent Management, p. 35). Her reputation earned her the nickname La Panthère, and her conceptual genius and keen eye for detail established one of the most enduring motifs for Cartier, the Panther.

In the third corner, we have the world-renowned Maison de Cartier. Beginning in 1914, under the direction of La Panthère, the panther began its rise to its prominent position as one of the most recognizable trademarks of the esteemed jewelry house. Beginning in 1914, with a wristwatch featuring onyx-and-diamond flecking suggestive of panther skin, the Maison went on to incorporate the panther into more and more designs until the motif culminated in the three-dimensional Big Cat jewels, which were first made for the Duchess of Windsor.

In a tête-à-tête with Peter Lemarchand and his intricate drawings of the big cats at the Zoo de Vincennes in Paris, Mme. Troussaint brought to life the Duchess's desire for a lifelike, stalking panther to adorn her wrist. This bold cat, crafted entirely of articulated platinum paved in single-cut diamonds and calibré-cut onyx, swiftly became one of Ms. Simpson's absolute favorites.

In repose it lies flat with one paw stretched out, appearing to languish in its velvet-lined box. However, upon the wrist of its wearer, the panther curls around the wrist "seductively" (cited), assuming a menacing stalking pose.

In all, the Duchess owned three of these revolutionary Cartier cats, and together this trio started a trend that has been reinterpreted throughout ensuing decades, right up to the present contemporary era.

In 1987, Mohammed Al Fayed purchased this breathtaking Cartier panther bracelet for over $1.4 million during Sotheby's. Exceptional Jewels and Precious Objects Formerly in the Collection of the Duchess of Windsor sale, along with at least 19 more of Wallis Simpson's personal jewels. It was this sale that changed the face of jewelry auctions forever, with total sales reaching $31.7 million, more than 10 times the market-value estimates set forth in the sale catalog.

Twenty-six years later, this iconic bracelet came under Sotheby's hammer once again, at which time four telephone bidders drove the price higher and higher until one of them, who to date remains anonymous, overtook the rest with a staggering bid of just over $7 million.

In a surprising twist of fate, the $12.5 million realized from this jewel and the 19 others sold that day, which once belonged to a woman of style scorned by the British Royal family, have been earmarked for a children's charity in honor of Mr. Al Fayed's son, Dodi, who perished in a tragic accident alongside his mistress, another woman of style scorned by the British Royal family.
The Empress Josephine Tiara. Photo credit: Flickr by Angela Magnozzi Lammens
Why?

A Born Peacemaker

The story really belongs to Tsar Alexander I of Russia. It begins in 1801, the day of his ascension to the Russian throne. A born peacemaker, Alexander set to work immediately mending the fences between Russia and the other European nations. He successfully negotiated peace with Britain and began working toward peace with the Holy Roman Empire. Some have argued that this was due to a fear of Napoleon; however, I believe that it was more of a personal mission on the part of Alexander to promote peace in Europe. He was a man obsessed with making peace in Europe, and also in the character, integrity, and maternal anxieties of the Lady of France, Empress Josephine. The answer lies in the character and integrity of Alexander I, a man obsessed with making peace in Europe, and also in the character, integrity, and maternal anxieties of the Lady of France, Empress Josephine.

Why would the man who now ruled the French and Russian Empires appear to dote on a woman who possibly during one of his visits received her last and most poignant letter from his sworn enemy, a man Josephine loved deeply until the day she died?

The tide of victory ebbed and flowed, with France winning some major victories and Russia winning her fair share, as well. The two nations had been allies for a number of years, and the treaty of 1813 was supposed to secure peace in Europe, and now that Bonaparte was dethroned, making friends with France’s beloved Empress would ensure

In March of 1814, we have Tsar Alexander I plotting the demise of an archenemy seven years in the making. One month later, we find this same Tsar on French soil, visiting the Empress Josephine during the first of several visits. It was on such a visit that the Tsar is reported to have given the Empress the bracelet diamonds that are now set in The Empress Josephine Tiara, diamonds which Josephine loved deeply until the day she died. The story really belongs to Tsar Alexander I of Russia. It begins in 1801, the day of his ascension to the Russian throne. A born peacemaker, Alexander set to work immediately mending the fences between Russia and the other European nations. He successfully negotiated peace with Britain and began working toward peace with the Holy Roman Empire.

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Promises of an Endowment

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Here is where our story of the diamonds takes an intriguing turn of events. After the Treaty of Tilsit, which ended the Napoleonic Wars, the Tsar allowed the Empress Josephine to return to Malmaison. However, the Tsar’s loyalist, Count Feodor Michahilovich Melikhov, had other plans. He decided to exploit the permission you have been kind enough to accord me, Madame, I look forward to presenting my respects to you on Friday at your dinner hour.

The Empress Josephine Tiara

I am most convinced that Alexander’s first visit was more political in nature than anything. He had embarked on a personal mission to promote peace in Europe, and now that Bonaparte was dethroned, making friends with France’s beloved Empress would ensure

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How to Determine Which Cut Grade is Best for You

How Light Interacts With a Diamond

In the context of diamond quality, Cut refers not to the shape of a diamond, but to the size, number, and relative proportions of the facets placed on a diamond's surface. Cut refers not to the shape of a diamond, but to the size, number, and relative proportions of the facets placed on a diamond's surface.

In the elaboration of Byzantine mosaics, which filled the cathedral, Verdura found his sweet spot. Upon returning home, he set to work creating this pair of cuffs which would become the signature choice of not one, but two extremely influential women.

Not only did she favor his designs, but Ms. Chanel also favored him as escort to the various parties she attended. His delicious taste in jewelry and keen eye for style naturally evolved into a brand new line of jewelry: Verdura for Chanel.

A diamond of Good quality will deliver “an above average appearance” by reflecting most of the light that enters it. A Very Good diamond, under normal lighting, will reflect a significant portion of the light that enters it, rendering it observably similar to an Excellent Cut stone.

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How the Cut Grade is Determined

Cut is the most crucial and “the only element of the 4Cs influenced by the human hand” according to the Gemological Institute of America (GIA). It is the most complex and technically difficult to analyze.

HOW THE CUT GRADE IS DETERMINED

By arming yourself with an understanding of the GIA Cut Grades and precisely how cut affects a diamond’s interaction with light, and by taking the time to compare various diamonds side by side, you can ensure that you will choose the very best diamond for your very special occasion.

The Five Cut Grades

According to the GIA, there are six Cut Grades: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor. If a diamond has a grading that differs from this wording, you can be sure the retailer is not using the GIA standards to determine cut.

A diamond of Excellent Cut will reflect “nearly all of the light that enters it, creating exceptional sparkle and life.”

A diamond graded Good will deliver “an above average appearance” by reflecting most of the light that enters it.

A Fair Cut is suitable primarily for smaller stones, as much of the light that enters the diamond will leak out the sides and bottom. Perceived fire and brilliance are greatly reduced in a Fair diamond.

A diamond of Poor quality will appear dull even to the untrained observer. Very little of the light that enters the stone will reflect from the crown, having leaked out the sides and the bottom.

In the context of Good and Fair diamonds, due to a number of different factors related to symmetry and/or the depth of the pavilion, a portion of that light will either pass completely through the bottom or make a 90-degree turn and leak out the sides of the stone. Only a moderate amount of the light which enters will return to shine through the crown of the diamond to reach the observer’s eye.

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How Light Interacts With A Diamond

A diamond of Poor quality will appear dull even to the untrained observer. Very little of the light that enters the stone will reflect from the crown, having leaked out the sides and the bottom.

In the elaboration of Byzantine mosaics, which filled the cathedral, Verdura found his sweet spot. Upon returning home, he set to work creating this pair of cuffs which would become the signature choice of not one, but two extremely influential women.

By arming yourself with an understanding of the GIA Cut Grades and precisely how cut affects a diamond’s interaction with light, and by taking the time to compare various diamonds side by side, you can ensure that you will choose the very best diamond for your very special occasion.

How to Determine Which Cut Grade is Best for You

While Excellent and Very Good cuts are the cream of the crop, they often cost more per carat than stones rated Very Good or Good. Especially when selecting a stone for a solitary engagement ring, it is often economically advantageous to choose a larger stone with excellent clarity and color with a Cut Grade of Good, or even Fair, though it is never wise to sacrifice cut if the clarity and color of the diamond are low.

Stones with a Cut Grade of Good or Fair should still flash with the brilliance and fire diamonds are so famous for, and they will be striking in their larger size. In order to elicit more sparkle from a diamond in this category, you may want to choose a setting that reveals as much of the pavilion as possible. That way, even the light leaking out the sides will catch the eye of the observer. Solitaire and tension set rings are ideal for this purpose.

The surest way to determine which cut is best for you is to sit down with a diamond expert and compare diamonds of various cuts and sizes in various settings. Looking at loose and set diamonds side by side will demonstrate the subtle, and not so subtle, differences between the cut grades in proportion to cut size and color. There really is no substitute for seeing in person the play of light diamonds of high cut quality will manifest.

Celebrity Vintage Jewelry: Verdura’s Maltese Cross Cuffs

July 25, 2013 by EraGem


It all started in 1925, when Linda and Cole Porter introduced Fulco di Verdura to their friend, Coco Chanel. Enamored with the Duke’s keen eye for design, Chanel employed him to create a whole new line of trinkets for her.

Not only did she favor his designs, but Ms. Chanel also favored him as escort to the various parties she attended. His delicious taste in jewelry and keen eye for style naturally evolved into a brand new line of jewelry: Verdura for Chanel.

Together, the two set out on an excursion around the world to view exhibitions and visit galleries in search of inspiration. On one such visit to the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, the Maltese Cross motifs for which Verdura became famous were born.

In the elaboration of Byzantine mosaics, which filled the cathedral, Verdura found his sweet spot. Upon returning home, he set to work creating this pair of cuffs which would become the signature choice of not one, but two extremely influential women.

Coco Chanel, of course, because the first to wear the grenades and white-emerald silver pair of Maltese Cross cuffs. True to form, those Verdura bracelets, which appear more like armor than fine jewelry, blended precious and semi-precious gemstones and metal mixed with enamels in a way that no one had yet dared to do.

Within the year, Diana Vreeland, one of Coco’s closest friends, had adopted the bold look as her own, later adding her own Fair with Kenneth Jay Lane’s black-and-white enamel bracelets “with jewels mounted on the white cuff, and reversed out on the black.”

Two remarkable women, wearing the bold and magnificent work of a cutting-edge jewelry designer, influenced a whole new trend in powerful jewelry for the new woman of the 20th century. This trend for wearing large, matching cuffs continues into the 21st century on the runways, the stage, and on screen.

Note


The Graff Pink Diamond

July 25, 2013 by EraGem

Graff Pink Diamond. Copyright 2013 Top5Bin.
The Eccentric Pearl King

Bad Press

His Outlandish Dream

The Competition Was Fierce

A Fortuitous Decade

by Angela Magnotti Andrews

the grand bonfire in 1932, when he set fire to 720,000 inferior pearls cultivated by sloppy competitors. It was during ... scene that Mikimoto established that quality trumps quantity and that poor-quality pearls were useful only for burning.

Pearl King.

By 1930, Kokichi Mikimoto had realized his dream. Despite a worldwide pearl crash, Mikimoto pearls rose to the top, ... counterparts. In these later years, Mr. Mikimoto transformed his look and grew into his reputation as the eccentric

"This isn't a cultured pearl, it's a real pearl...It is one of the wonders of the world that you were able to culture ... is supposed to be biologically impossible," Mr. Edison raved {4}. A fortuitous report of Mr. Edison's endorsement in

Still, the battle raged between natural and cultured pearls. The brave inventor fought valiantly on the shores of London, ... to establish the cultured pearl's place on the world's stage until 1927, when a visit with Thomas Edison settled the

Kokichi Mikimoto had become the first man to ever grown a pearl! Unfortunately, later that year his precious Ume died ... of surgery. Now faced with raising his five children alone, Kokichi was even more determined to achieve perfection. He

Their early attempts met with failure, and in 1892, disaster struck in the form of a devastating red tide, which killed ... to establish his oyster farm, and the next year they found the world's first semi-spherical cultured

Just four years prior, after over 50 years of unsuccessful attempts made on behalf of the USA, Commodore Matthew C. Perry successfully negotiated a landmark trade agreement between Japan and the US. For the first time since 1639, Japan opened its doors to

In 1875, this entertaining custom attracted the attention of the crew aboard the

In 1885, he earned a position among the province's most successful traders. A summons from the Emperor's mother established

Upon returning home, he set about collecting seed pearls from the North Pacific Ocean and selling them throughout the

According to author and journalist Victoria Finlay, Kokichi Mikimoto "is the perfect slightly flawed protagonist—a poor boy made good, a stubborn man who ignored everyone who told him his dream was impossible" {2}. After studying the man for myself, I

The Competition Was Fierce

concur with her conclusion. Here, I will attempt to prove her assertion correct.

According to journalist Victoria Finlay, "Mr. Mikimoto..."{2}. And that was before Mr. Graff turned it

In layman’s terms, this translates to a pink diamond that is nearly perfect in every way, including its covered rectangular-cut shape with its elegantly mounded corners. According to Graff Diamonds, it was in celebration of the diamond’s new classification that

In addition, the purity of this diamond afforded it a classification of Type IIa, which accounts for only 1-2% of diamonds on the market. Furthermore, most pink diamonds fall below 5 carats, so one that weighs over 24 carats warrants a designation of astronomically rare.

Now that The Graff Pink has been modified to remove its 23 flaws and to enhance its color grade, one can only imagine how much this magnificent stone will be worth the next time it comes to market. For now, it appears that Mr. Graff is completely satisfied to count it a member of his own personal collection.

Designer Spotlight: Mikimoto, The King of Pearls

July 24, 2013 by TimesGem

In 1905, this entertaining custom attracted the attention of the crew aboard the USS Portland. Enthusiastic about the pearl potential of the region, the crew bought a small pearl oyster and took it back to their home port of Boston. Mikimoto, eager to further their pearl cultivation in Japan, began collecting seed

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The unsucessful death of his father forced the 11-year-old boy to grow up swiftly and take on the responsibility of providing for his family. To amuse himself on slow days, he took up the sport of juggling his wares with his hands.

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Holding to his high standards until his death in 1954, Kokichi Mikimoto left a legacy of dedication persistence in innovation and unwavering excellence in culturing pearls. Today, Mikimoto remains true to these standards of excellence and perfection established by its founding father.

The company developed a rigorous grading scale based on pearl's luster, surface, perfection, color, and shape. Only Japanese cultured pearls which rise to the top 5% of this strict scale are considered worthy of the Mikimoto name. When you purchase a Mikimoto pearl, you can be sure that you've purchased the cream of the crop.

**Bibliography**


**OUR GUARANTEE**

We offer only high quality jewelry and stand behind all purchases with a no questions 60 day money back guarantee.

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**TESTIMONIALS**

"It is a bit nerve wrecking to buy anything really expensive online, especially a wedding ring. But EraGem put me at ease with their prompt communication and answered all my questions."

Marc N, Yelp

[Read More Testimonials](http://www.mikimotoamerica.com/blog/about-our-heritage/triumph-against-adversity)

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