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Jewelry Shopping Guide

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Choosing a Gem

A gemstone is the naturally occurring crystalline form of a mineral, which is desirable for its beauty, valuable in its rarity and durable enough to be enjoyed for generations.

There are more than 40 popular gem varieties and many more rare collector gemstones. Although some gemstone varieties have been treasured since before history began and others were only discovered recently, they are all nature's gifts to us.

Please enjoy surfing through our **Gem by Gem** list of the worlds most fascinating gemstone varieties.

Emerald



Emeralds are fascinating gemstones. They have the most beautiful, most intense and most radiant green that can possibly be imagined: emerald green. Inclusions are tolerated. In top quality, fine emeralds are even more valuable than diamonds.

One of the world's largest is the so-called 'Mogul Emerald'. It dates from 1695, weighs 217.80 carats, and is some 10cm tall. One side of it is inscribed with prayer texts, and engraved on the other there are magnificent floral ornaments. This legendary emerald was auctioned by Christie's of London to an unidentified buyer for 2.2m US Dollars on September 28th 2001.

Emeralds have been held in high esteem since ancient times. For that reason, some of the most famous emeralds are to be seen in museums and collections. The New York Museum of Natural History, for example, has an exhibit in which a cup made of pure emerald which belonged to the Emperor Jehangir is shown next to the 'Patricia', one of the largest Colombian emerald crystals, which weighs 632 carats. The collection of the Bank of Bogota includes five valuable emerald crystals with weights of between 220 and 1796 carats, and splendid emeralds also form part of the Iranian National Treasury, adorning, for example, the diadem of the former Empress Farah. The Turkish sultans also loved emeralds. In Istanbul's Topkapi Palace there are exhibits with items of jewellery, writing-implements and daggers, each lavishly adorned with emeralds and other gems.

Colombia continues to be at the top of the list in terms of the countries in which fine emeralds are found. It has about 150 known deposits, though not all of these are currently being exploited. The best known names are Muzo and Chivor, where emeralds were mined by the Incas in pre-Columbian times. In economic terms, the most important mine is at Coscuez, where some 60 faces are being worked. According to estimates, approximately three quarters of Colombia's emerald production now comes from the Coscuez Mine. Colombian emeralds differ from emeralds from other deposits in that they have an especially fine, shining emerald green unimpaired by any kind of bluish tint. The colour may vary slightly from find to find. This fascinatingly beautiful colour is so highly esteemed in the international emerald trade that even obvious inclusions are regarded as acceptable. But Colombia has yet more to offer: now and then the Colombian emerald mines throw up rarities such as Trapiche emeralds with their six rays emanating from the centre which resemble the spokes of a millwheel.



Even if many of the best emeralds are undisputedly of Colombian origin, the 'birthplace' of a stone is never an absolute guarantee of its immaculate quality. Fine emeralds are also found in other countries, such as Zambia, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Russia. Zambia, Zimbabwe and Brazil in particular have a good reputation for fine emeralds in the international trade. Excellent emerald crystals in a beautiful, deep emerald green and with good transparency come from Zambia. Their colour is mostly darker than that of Colombian emeralds and often has a fine, slightly bluish undertone. Emeralds which are mostly smaller, but very fine, in a vivacious, intense green come from Zimbabwe's famous Sandawana Mine, and they often have a delicate yellowish-green nuance. And the famous emerald mines of Colombia currently face competition from right next door: Brazil's gemstone mine Nova Era also produces emeralds in beautiful green tones, and if they are less attractive than those of their famous neighbour it is only by a small margin. Brazil also supplies rare emerald cat's eyes and extremely rare emeralds with a six-spoked star. Thanks to the finds in Africa and Brazil, there are more emeralds on the market now than there used to be - to the delight of emerald enthusiasts - .

Unfortunately, because the emerald is not only one of the most beautiful gemstones, but also one of the most valuable, there are innumerable synthetics and imitations. So how can you protect yourself from these 'fakes'? Well, the best way is to buy from a specialist in whom you have confidence. Large emeralds in particular should only be purchased with a report from a reputable gemmological institute. Such an institute will be able, thanks to the most modern examination techniques, to differentiate reliably between natural and synthetic emeralds, and will inform you as to whether the stone has undergone any treatment of the kind a purchaser has the right to know about.

And one more piece of advice on the purchase of an emerald: whilst diamonds generously scintillate their fire in sizes below 1 carat, you should go for larger dimensions when acquiring a coloured gemstone. True, there are some lovely pieces of jewellery with small coloured gems to set decorative accents, but emeralds, like other coloured gemstones, do not really begin to show that beautiful glow below a certain size. How large 'your' emerald ends up will depend on your personal taste, and on your budget. Really large specimens of top quality are rare. This means that the price of a top-quality emerald may be higher than that of a diamond of the same weight. The fascination exuded by a fine emerald is simply unique.

Agate: banded beauty

Agate is a type of chalcedony quartz that forms by filling a cavity in a rock. When extracted, the layers that have formed resemble that of tree rings. Varieties of **agate** are formed by the differences in shape and color of these bands. The varieties in color can be anywhere in the color spectrum, with blue and green specimens showing up from time to time, albeit rare.



Agate, while physically identical to quartz, is also chemically identical to jasper, petrified wood and tiger's eye. Petrified (agatized) wood is actually agate that has replaced the organic matter of the tree slowly over a long span of time. The structure of the tree remains, but the tree itself is a fossil. Agate is also commonly found in geodes. There are many diverse types of agate found all over the world. In North America the majority of agate produced comes from the western states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and California. Lace agate has been found in southern California, Mexico and Texas, and is translucent blue and white. Some moss agate is found Yellowstone National Park and the Yellowstone River of Montana, and can be anywhere from white to green agate with green to brown to red with black inclusions that resemble moss or landscapes dotted with trees.

For centuries, agate has been used as a valuable talisman that was said to quench thirst, protect from fevers and make the wearer agreeable. Eye amulets are used to cure skin disease and ward off the "evil eye". White forms of agate were used to cure bouts of insomnia. Moss agate has been worn to help the health of one's eyes and mouth. Agate is also used to make mortars and pestles as well as the fulcrum for balances. Shooting marbles were commonly made of agate as well.

Agate can be chemically and/or heat treated to almost any color. Many of the color banded agates on the market have been altered in some way or another.



Black Jet agate is a fossilized coal that has been polished. Found in Colorado, New Mexico and Utah.



Blue Lace Agate is a translucent light blue agate that has a milky white lace or wavy pattern throughout it. It is said to bring calmness to those who wear it.



Botswana Agate is named for the country from where it is mined in Africa. It comes in a variety of pinks, grays and lavenders, banded with fine lines of tan, mahogany, pink and white.



Crazy Lace Agate is composed of twisting and turning bands of various colors.



Moss Agate is a colorless and translucent form of chalcedony that has small inclusions of green moss-like patterns throughout. Found in India, China, Russia and Colorado. Moss Agate and Tree Agate are very similar.

Amber: the Jurassic gem

Dinosaurs have been more popular than ever since their starring role in the film Jurassic Park. A more surprising result of the film's popularity has been a worldwide surge in demand for amber jewellery. Although amber's use in adornment is probably as old as mankind itself, in recent times it has had a limited market. Of course, that was before millions of people saw dinosaur DNA extracted from a mosquito trapped in amber in the film.



Millions of people learned from the film that amber, which is fossilised pine tree resin, is ancient and valuable, like an antique from history.

Demand is especially strong for amber with insects inside it. "Amber is like a time capsule made and placed in the earth by nature herself," said David Federman, author of the Consumer Guide to Colored Gemstones. "It has helped paleontologists reconstruct life on earth in its primal phases. More than 1,000 extinct species of insects have been identified in amber."

The two main sources of amber on the market today are the Baltic states and the Dominican Republic.

Amber from the former is older, and thus preferred on the market, but that obtained from the latter is more likely to have insect inclusions. Amber prices can range from \$20 to \$40,000 or more.

Fortunately for new amber enthusiasts, amber from the Baltic states is more widely available on the market than it was in previous years thanks to the liberalisation of the economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The largest mine in the Baltic region is in Russia, west of Kaliningrad. Baltic amber is found in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Russia, and occasionally washed up on the shores of the Baltic Sea as far away as Denmark, Norway, and England. Other amber sources include Myanmar (formerly Burma), Lebanon, Sicily, Mexico, Romania, Germany, and Canada.

The desire for amber is nothing new. Amber artefacts dating back to the Stone Age have been found in what is now Germany and Denmark.

Made by the sun

"Stone Age man imbued amber with supernatural properties and used it to wear and to worship," says Mr Federman. "Amber took on great value and significance to, among others, the Assyrians, Egyptians, Etruscans, Phoenicians and Greeks. It never completely went out of vogue since the Stone Age. Between 1895 and 1900, one million kilograms of Baltic amber were produced for jewelry."



There are many myths surrounding the origin of amber. Ovid wrote that when Phaethon, a son of Helios, the sun, convinced his father to allow him to drive the chariot of the sun through the heavens for a day, he erred too close to the earth, scorching it. To save the earth, Zeus struck Phaethon with a thunderbolt and he died, plunging out of the sky. His mother and sister turned into trees in their grief but still mourned him. Their tears, dried by the sun, are amber.

The Greeks called amber 'elektron', sun-made, perhaps because of this story, or perhaps because it becomes electrically charged when rubbed with a cloth and can attract small particles. Homer mentions amber jewellery - earrings and a necklace of amber beads - as a princely gift in the Odyssey.

Another ancient writer, Nicias, said that amber was the juice or essence of the setting sun congealed in

the sea and cast up on the shore.

The Romans sent armies to conquer and control amber-producing areas. The Emperor Nero was a great connoisseur of amber. During his time, according to the Roman historian Pliny, the price of an amber figurine, no matter how small, exceeded the price of a healthy slave.

The ancient Germans burned amber as incense, so they called it 'bernstein', or 'burn stone'. Clear colourless amber was considered the best material for rosary beads in the Middle Ages on account of its smooth silky feel. Certain orders of knights controlled the trade, and unauthorised possession of raw amber was illegal in most of Europe by the year 1400.

What secrets might amber hold?

So could a mosquito trapped in amber really contain dinosaur DNA? Most amber just isn't old enough, having had some 25 to 50 million birthdays at the most. The dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous Period. The Jurassic period was 144 million years ago. But in 1994, Dr Raul Cano of California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, a molecular biologist, reported in the British journal 'Nature' that he and his colleagues had extracted DNA from a weevil that was trapped in amber 120 to 135 million years ago, when dinosaurs did indeed roam the earth.

The amber, which was from the Lower Cretaceous period, was mined in the mountains of Lebanon south of Beirut by Aftim Acra, who has a collection of amber pieces containing 700 insects, including termites, moths, caterpillars, spiders, pseudoscorpions, and midges, which do, after all, suck their host's blood.

Amethyst



Its colour is as unique as it is seductive, though in fact this gemstone of all gemstones is said to protect its wearer against seduction. The amethyst is extravagance in violet. For many thousands of years, the most striking representative of the quartz family has been a jewel coveted by princes both ecclesiastical and secular. Moses described it as a symbol of the Spirit of God in the official robes of the High Priest of the Jews, and the Russian Empress Catherine the Great sent thousands of miners into the Urals to look for it. In popular belief, the amethyst offers protection against drunkenness - for the Greek words 'amethystos' mean 'not intoxicated' in translation. A more apt stone for the month of February, particularly if there is to be plenty going on in the way of carnival celebrations, could thus hardly be wished for.

A large number of further miraculous powers are attributed to the amethyst in all sorts of cultures. It was said to protect crops against tempests and locusts, bring good fortune in war and in the hunt, drive out evil spirits and inspire the intellect. A little study of the works of Pliny will reveal that this gemstone, if worn round the neck on a cord made from dog's hair, affords protection against snakebite. Later, Hieronymus even reported that eagles placed an amethyst in their nest in order to protect their young from the selfsame danger. Apart from these powers, gemstone therapists say that the amethyst has a sobering and cleansing effect. Amethyst has also been said to quell excessive stomach acid and, according to Hildegard von Bingen, served to combat insect bites and beautify the skin. But the amethyst not only had a firm niche in medicine; it was also esteemed as a stone of friendship. And since it was thought to put the wearer in a chaste frame of mind and symbolise trust and piety, the amethyst came to occupy a very prominent position in the ornaments of the Catholic clergy over the centuries. It was the stone of bishops and cardinals; we find it in prelates' crosses and in the so-called Papal Ring (Italian, 15th century) in the Jewellery Museum in Pforzheim.

However, the most beautiful of all crystal quartzes also posed one or two riddles for the scientists, and indeed they still haven't been completely solved to this day. The amethyst has its hardness (7), its moderate refraction and its weight in common with the other quartzes, but the crystal structure is different, and it is most unconventional. The construction is stratified, as a result of which areas and lamellae of varying colour intensity often come about. This explains why there are relatively few large cut amethysts of an evenly distributed dark colour, in spite of its having been found so abundantly in all parts of the world. It is only in the last few years that scientists have been fairly certain of having found the real cause of the colour. It is now attributed to certain iron constituents in connection with natural radioactive radiation.

One thing that has been known for a long time, on the other hand, is the fact that the amethyst changes its colour on being heated. Smoky stones are transformed at temperatures of as little as 250 degrees to a shining yellow to brownish-red, whilst clear ones, i.e. those with a high degree of transparency, become yellow or colourless at 400 degrees. Now and then Nature gives us a surprise by having created bicoloured stones, like the ones recently found in Bolivia in the form of causticised crystal nuggets. This variety is known as ametrine, for in its formation certain energy states of iron introduce violet areas to the yellow citrine. At best, flat jewellery with a three-spoked star can be cut from it. However, the highlight for esoterics is that the energy fields can in fact be made visible in polarised light. The Henn Brothers of Idar-Oberstein even supply the photos to go with it.

Some amethysts pale almost to colourlessness in daylight. The reason for this has not yet been discovered, but it is possible to re-colour them by means of radium radiation. The fact that these stones can lose their colour makes it obvious that amethyst jewellery should not be worn while sunbathing, in a solarium or in a discotheque with black light. Sudden changes of temperature can also be harmful to the stone.



The deposits with the greatest economic significance are in various states in southern Brazil and in neighbouring Uruguay. The third major export country is Madagascar. However, this gemstone is spread all over the world. Good specimens were found in Aztec graves, though the deposits from which they were extracted are no longer known today. On the Canadian side of Lake Superior in North America, there is a place named Amethyst Harbor. The violet quartz is found there in ample quantities, though rarely in gemstone quality. The fame of Idar-Oberstein, the German gemstone centre, is based on domestic amethyst finds. In earlier times, raw material was delivered there from the Zillertal Alps. When these nearby deposits ceased to yield, the old cutters' tradition was able to be preserved thanks to supplies organised by German emigrés in South America. Russian amethysts, which were mainly mined in winter in the Urals, were once famous for their particularly beautiful colour, which shone magnificently even in artificial light. In Tibet there were amethyst rosaries, for there the gemstone was dedicated to Buddha and was said to promote clarity of mind. In Sri Lanka, stones which have rolled down on their own are found in debris.

However, the amethyst is more likely to turn up in spaces lining agate almonds and druses in igneous rocks. What was presumed to be the largest-ever cavity was discovered in 1900 in Rio Grande do Sul. The almond measured ten by five by three metres (33 by 16 by 10 ft.) and weighed an estimated eight tonnes. The dark violet amethysts, some as large as a man's fist, may have weighed some 700 cwt. altogether. There is a piece weighing 200 kilogrammes, taken from this Brazilian treasure, in the Washington Museum. In recent times, a find in the USA has been making headlines. In July 1993, a three-metre druse was found in Maine, which contained well over 1000 kilogrammes of cuttable amethyst, some of it in crystals 19 cm in length.

The South American deposits in particular, which were not discovered until the nineteenth century, brought down the price of the violet gemstone. The amethyst bracelet of Queen Charlotte of England, which was so famous at the beginning of the 18th century, its value being estimated at 2000 pounds sterling at that time, was apparently worth only 100 pounds 200 years later. However, the price has a

close relationship with the quality, and the quality varies immensely. Most of the material from Brazil is light-coloured, a tender purple. In Madagascar, it is generally red or violet hues which are found. Uruguay supplies the most beautiful and the deepest colour, but it is mostly blemished. Thus immaculate stones of the finest violet still fetch carat prices of well over a hundred euros. Mounted with diamond braid trimming, as has been the custom for some 100 years, enchanting pieces of jewellery are thus created. No wonder that people find it worth going to the trouble of producing imitations and synthetics.

In ancient times, amethyst was already being engraved and cut into sculptured forms, witness the bust of Trajan which Napoleon captured in Berlin. Amethyst quartz, banded with whitish layers, is particularly good to work with, though it is only ever either translucent or opaque or somewhere in between. In earlier times, people liked to drink wine from amethyst cups, which brings us back to the stone's protective function against alcoholism. According to the ancient Greek saga, Diana turned a nymph whom Bacchus loved into an amethyst; hence the term Bacchus stone. Anyone wishing to protect a drunkard from delirium mixed some pulverised amethyst into the person's drink.

Aquamarine



From the light blue of the sky to the deep blue of the sea, aquamarines shine over an extraordinarily beautiful range of mainly light blue colours. Aquamarine is a fascinatingly beautiful gemstone. Women the world over love it for its fine blue shades which can complement almost any skin or eye colour, and creative gemstone designers are inspired by it as they are by hardly any other gem, which enables them to create new artistic cuts again and again.

Its light blue arouses feelings of sympathy, trust, harmony and friendship. Good feelings. Feelings which are based on mutuality and which prove their worth in lasting relationships. The blue of aquamarine is a divine, eternal colour, because it is the colour of the sky. However, aquamarine blue is also the colour of water with its life-giving force. And aquamarine really does seem to have captured the lucid blue of the oceans. No wonder, when you consider that according to the saga it originated in the treasure chest of fabulous mermaids, and has, since ancient times, been regarded as the sailors' lucky stone. Its name is derived from the Latin 'aqua' (water) and 'mare' (sea). It is said that its strengths are developed to their best advantage when it is placed in water which is bathed in sunlight. However, it is surely better still to wear aquamarine, since according to the old traditions this promises a happy marriage and is said to bring the woman who wears it joy and wealth into the bargain. An ideal gem, not only for loving and married couples.

A gemstone with many good qualities

Aquamarine is one of our most popular and best-known gemstones, and distinguishes itself by many good qualities. It is almost as popular as the classics: ruby, sapphire and emerald. In fact it is related to the emerald, both belonging to the beryl family. The colour of aquamarine, however, is usually more even than that of the emerald. Much more often than its famous green cousin, aquamarine is almost entirely free of inclusions. Aquamarine has good hardness (7.5 to 8 on the Mohs scale) and a wonderful shine. That hardness makes it very tough and protects it to a large extent from scratches. Iron is the substance which gives aquamarine its colour, a colour which ranges from an almost indiscernible pale blue to a strong sea-blue. The more intense the colour of an aquamarine, the more value is put on it. Some aquamarines have a light, greenish shimmer; that too is a typical feature. However, it is a pure, clear blue that continues to epitomise the aquamarine, because it brings out so well the immaculate transparency and magnificent shine of this gemstone.



'Santa Maria' sets pulses racing

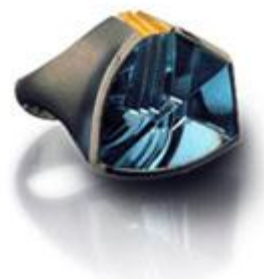


The bright blue of this noble beryl is making more and more friends. The various colour nuances of aquamarine have melodious names: the rare, intense blue aquamarines from the Santa Maria de Itabira mine in Brazil, which make every gemstone lover's heart beat faster, are called 'Santa Maria'. Similar nuances come from a few gemstone mines in Africa, particularly Mozambique. To help distinguish them from the Brazilian ones, these aquamarines have been given the name 'Santa Maria Africana'. The 'Espírito Santo' colour of aquamarines from the Brazilian state of that name is of a blue that is not quite so intense. Yet other qualities are embodied in the stones from Fortaleza and Marambaia. One beautiful aquamarine colour was named after the Brazilian beauty queen of 1954, and has the name 'Martha Rocha'.

It can be seen from the names of aquamarine colours just how important Brazil is among the countries where aquamarine is found. Most of the raw crystals for the world market come from the gemstone mines of that large South American country. Every now and then, large aquamarine crystals of immaculate transparency are also found with a magnificent colour, a combination which is very unusual in gemstones. And very occasionally, sensationally large aquamarine crystals come to light in Brazil, such as the crystal of 110.5 Kg found in 1910 in Marambaia/Minas Gerais, or for example the 'Dom Pedro', weighing 26 Kg and cut in Idar-Oberstein in 1992 by the gemstone designer Bernd Munsteiner, the largest aquamarine ever to have been cut. However, aquamarines are also found in other countries, for example Nigeria, Zambia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Favourite stone of modern designers

There is hardly any other gemstone in modern jewellery design which is refined in such a variety of ways as aquamarine. Whether it is fashioned as a clear, transparent gem in the classical step cut, or creatively cut in a more modern design, it is always fascinatingly beautiful. Uncut too, or with many inclusions which can be brought into play by the designer in the way in which the stone is cut, it can be refined to produce the most beautiful creations. Designers call it their favourite gemstone. Again and again they take the world by surprise with a new, modern artistic cut, and when they are breaking new ground, aquamarine is a gem that they particularly like to work with. Without doubt, these creative designer cuts have contributed to the great popularity of this gem. The lucid colour of aquamarine makes it easy to see inclusions. For this reason, aquamarine should always be of the greatest possible transparency. On the other hand, particularly charming effects can sometimes be achieved in the way the gemstone is cut by bringing the inclusions into play. The light colour of aquamarine leaves the gemstone designer free to bring out the brilliance of the gem with fine grooves, notches, curves and edges. In this way, each aquamarine becomes a unique specimen, whose magical attraction no woman can resist.



Aventurine



A form of Macrocrystalline quartz (meaning the crystals are recognizable with the naked eye), it is found in Brazil, India, China and Japan. Most Aventurine is reddish brown to yellow with shimmering metallic particles called mica throughout the stone. If there are any red or brown particles in Aventurine, it is caused by hematite platelets. Some specimens of true green have also been found naturally, but most green, blue and red gems on the market have been dyed. Aventurine is said to bring peace and promote positive attitude, confidence and tranquility.



Green Aventurine - This is the most desirable color of Aventurine. It is said to strengthen the blood and muscle.



Red Aventurine - This type of aventurine is sometimes called the “whisper stone” because it is supposed to increase the energy level of the third chakra. It is also used to help feminine reproductive health and childbirth.



Blue Aventurine - A dyed specimen that is said to remove toxins from the body, rid one of negative emotions, increase creativity and intellect.

Onyx: black magic

In jewellery design as in fashion, colours look crisper against a background of black, and black and white always looks right. In fine jewellery, the black backdrop is often supplied by onyx, a black chalcedony quartz with a fine texture. Some onyx also displays white bands or ribbons against a black background. If the layers are even, this type of onyx can be carved into cameos.

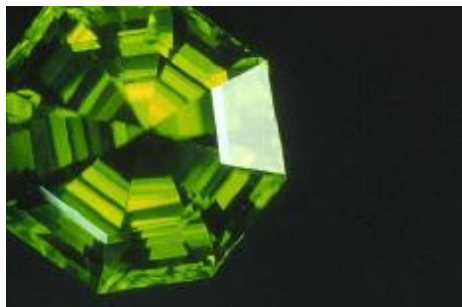


Onyx was very popular with the ancient Greeks and Romans. The name comes from the Greek word 'onyx', which means nail or claw. The story is that one day the frisky Cupid cut the divine fingernails of Venus with an arrowhead while she was sleeping. He left the clippings scattered on the sand and the fates turned them into stone so that no part of the heavenly body would ever perish. True, black isn't normally the colour one associates with fingernails. (Did Venus wear Vamp, perhaps?) But in Greek times, almost all the colours of chalcedony from fingernail white to dark brown and black were called onyx. Later, the Romans narrowed the term to refer to black and dark brown colours only.

Onyx which is reddish brown and white is known as sardonyx. Sardonyx was highly valued in Rome, especially for seals, because it was said never to stick to the wax. The Roman general Publius Cornelius Scipio was known for wearing it a good deal.

Black onyx shines especially well when used as a backdrop for colour play. Its fine texture also makes it ideal for carving, making it a favoured material for today's lapidaries. In the pin by designer Susan Helmich above, a carved piece of onyx with threads of white provides a stunning backdrop for a flash of colour. Onyx was often used as the perfect foil for carved rock crystal or the 'drop dead red' of rubies in art deco designs. It is also popular in marcasite jewellery. So if you would like to add a little black magic to your jewellery design, why not consider onyx?

Peridot



The vivid green of the peridot, with just a slight hint of gold, is the ideal gemstone colour to go with that light summer wardrobe. No wonder – since the peridot is the gemstone of the summer month of August.

The peridot is a very old gemstone, and one which has become very popular again today. It is so ancient that it can be found in Egyptian jewellery from the early 2nd millennium B.C.. The stones used at that time came from a deposit on a small volcanic island in the Red Sea, some 45 miles off the Egyptian coast at Aswan, which was not rediscovered until about 1900 and has, meanwhile, been exhausted for quite some time. Having said that, the peridot is also a thoroughly modern gemstone, for it was not until a few years ago that peridot deposits were located in the Kashmir region; and the stones from those deposits, being of an incomparably beautiful colour and transparency, have succeeded in giving a good polish to the image of this beautiful gemstone, which had paled somewhat over the millennia.

The ancient Romans too were fond of this gemstone and esteemed its radiant green shine, which does not change even in artificial light. For that reason they nicknamed it the 'emerald of the evening'. Peridot is also found in Europe in medieval churches, where it adorns many a treasure, for example one of the shrines in Cologne Cathedral. During the baroque period, the rich green gemstone once again enjoyed a brief heyday, and then it somehow faded into oblivion.

Spectacular 'Kashmir peridots'

But suddenly, in the middle of the 1990s, the peridot was the big sensation at gemstone fairs all round the world. The reason? In Pakistan, up on an inhospitable pass at some 4000 metres (13,120 ft.), a sensationally rich deposit of the finest peridots had been found. In tough climatic conditions which permitted the gemstones to be mined only during the summer months, the unusually large, fine crystals and fragments were brought down into the valley. These stones were finer than anything that had ever been seen before. And the deposits were so rich that the demand for peridots can, for the present, easily be satisfied. In order to emphasise the special quality of the peridots from Pakistan, these stones are offered as 'Kashmir peridots', following the famous Kashmir sapphires. Creative gemstone cutters have succeeded in cutting some fascinatingly beautiful one-off stones of more than 100 carats from some of the large, fine, clear crystals with their magnificent rich green!



How green? It all depends on the iron

This gemstone has no fewer than three names: 'peridot', 'chrysolite', from the Greek 'gold stone', and 'olivine', for the peridot is the gemstone form of the mineral olivine. In the gemstone trade it is called 'peridot', derived from the Greek word 'peridona', which means something like 'to give richness'.

The peridot is one of the few gemstones which come in one colour only. The rich, green colour with the slight tinge of gold is caused by very fine traces of iron. From a chemical point of view, peridot is an iron magnesium silicate. The intensity of the colour depends on the amount of iron actually present. The colour itself can vary over all shades of yellowish green and olive, and even to a brownish green. Peridot is not particularly hard - only 6.5 to 7 on the Mohs scale - but it is easy to look after and fairly robust. Peridot cat's eyes and star peridot are particularly rare and precious.

The most beautiful stones come from the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, the peridot as a gemstone also exists in Myanmar, China, the USA, Africa and Australia. Stones from East Burma, now known as Myanmar, have a vivid light green and fine inclusions with a silky shine to them. Peridot from Arizona, where it is popularly used in native American jewellery, often has somewhat yellowish or gold-brown nuances.

Uncomplicated, but not for the cutter



The peridot is cut in accordance with its crystal shape, mostly faceted or in classical table cuts, or round, antique, as an octahedron or oval. Smaller crystals are cut into standardised series stones, larger ones into imaginative one-offs. Cabochons are made if the material contains more inclusions, for the domed cut brings out the fine silky shine of the inclusions to their best.

The cutters know full well that this gemstone is anything but easy to work with. The raw crystals can be very tricky and may crack easily. There is often a good deal of tension on the inside of the crystal. But once the cutter has succeeded in removing the coarser inclusions, the peridot is a precious stone with good wearing qualities which does not call for any special care.

An ideal summer stone

The peridot adds a wonderful variant to the colour spectrum of green gemstones. Increasingly, it is processed not only to one-offs, but also for use in series jewellery. And since the world of fashion is just in the process of rediscovering its love for the colour green, the popularity of this rich green gemstone is also very much on the up.

Thanks to the rich finds in Pakistan and Afghanistan, there is enough raw material on the market, so the 'right stone' can now be found to cater for each individual taste and each pocket. Large, transparent stones of an intense colour are, however, rare and correspondingly expensive. The peridot is a gemstone that you should definitely get to know better. Its fine pistachio to olive green is the perfect complement to a fresh, light summer wardrobe.

Citrine



Let's suppose that someone has bought a moped, yet his friends and acquaintances keep talking about his 'wonderful racing machine'. He surely feels confused, or feels that they are taking the mickey out of him. A moped was exactly what he wanted for short trips in good weather, but even the salesman said that he was now in possession of a 'real flyer'.

That's roughly how things go with the citrine, the stone for the month of November. Many people have come to know and love this stone under the name gold topaz, or Madeira or Spanish topaz, although in actual fact it has very little in common with the higher-quality gemstone topaz - except for a few nuances of colour. Thus the history of the citrine is closely interwoven with that of the topaz, and coincides with it completely when it comes to the interpretation of alleged miraculous powers. However, the citrine is a member of the large quartz family, a family which, with its multitude of colours and very various structures, offers gemstone lovers almost everything their hearts desire in terms of adornment and decoration, from absolutely clear rock crystal to black onyx. And it does so at prices which are by no means unaffordable.

The name is derived from the colour - the yellow of the lemon - , although the most sought-after stones have a clear, radiant yellowish to brownish red. Like all crystal quartzes, the citrine has a hardness of 7 on the Mohs scale and is thus, to a large extent, insensitive to scratches. It won't immediately take offence at being knocked about either, since its cleavage properties are non-existent. Even if their refractive index is relatively low, the yellow stones have just that mellow, warm tone that seems to have captured the last glow of autumn. Like golden Rhine wine or sparkling Madeira, heavy and sweet, citrine jewellery shimmers and brings a hint of sunshine to those dull November days. There are not many yellow gemstones in the world of jewels. A diamond or a sapphire may be yellow - those will be expensive -, or sometimes a tourmaline or chrysoberyl, though these tend toward green somewhat, a golden beryl or even a pure topaz, which we will mention again later on. However, the citrine fulfils everyone's colour wishes, from lemon yellow to reddish brown.

Rare though it is, yellow does in fact occur in quartz in Nature, if seldom, when there are traces of iron in the silicon dioxide. Historically, it has been found in Spain, on the Scottish island of Arran, in France, Hungary and in several mines overseas. Perhaps the citrine wouldn't have been talked about any more at all if, in the middle of the 18th century, it had not been for the discovery that amethysts and smoky quartzes can also be rendered yellow by so-called burning. This heat treatment at temperatures of between 470 and 560 degrees has to be carried out very carefully and requires a great deal of experience. However, in the course of 200 years, its application has become so much a matter of course that most of the stones available in the trade today are in fact burnt amethysts or smoky quartzes. Only a trained specialist can recognise the signs of heat treatment at all, burnt stones having subtle stripes

whilst the yellow of natural ones is cloudy. In Europe, the boom on these yellow to reddish crystal quartzes didn't begin until, in the 1930s, expatriate agate cutters from Idar-Oberstein sent large quantities of citrine back home, along with amethyst and agate, from Brazil and Uruguay. Thus the golden-yellow quartzes made a contribution to Idar-Oberstein's becoming - and remaining - one of the world's great gemstone centres. Just as they had been used to doing with agate and other kinds of quartz, the cutters faceted the citrine using large, rotating sandstones over decades. The raw stone was actually held in the cutter's hand during this process. If you give that a little thought, it will occur to you just how skilled the cutters from the Hunsrück really were.

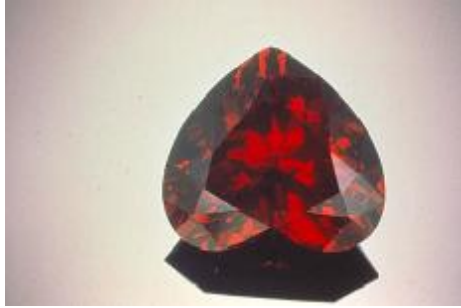
The supply of Europe with sufficient raw material came just at the right moment for the nascent upheaval in social conditions. As the bourgeoisie grew in strength, the demand for jewellery across a broader spectrum of social strata also grew, and the citrine found a permanent niche for itself. Since until then it was really only the topaz which was known and used as a gold-coloured gemstone, the yellow and brown crystal quartzes quickly became very popular among the ladies, being known as gold topaz or smoky topaz, or by the double-barrelled names that proclaimed their origin. However, they were also found in step and table cuts as cuff-links and rings in the evening wardrobe of fine gentlemen. At the beginning, perhaps, the notion "it's all on the surface" may have played a part. But there was no other stone to which the wrong name clung as doggedly as the citrine. Even now, jewellery enthusiasts with no specialist knowledge may be astounded when you tell them that their 'gold topaz' is a citrine, in other words not a topaz at all, but quartz.



So what is it that constitutes the difference between the real topaz and the citrine? A fluorine aluminium silicate in chemical terms, the topaz is considerably harder and heavier than quartz, and it has a higher refractive index, which endows it with more fire when the colour is good. It does have one weakness: its good cleavage qualities, which must be taken into account when it is being worked on. It can be found in all the colours of the rainbow and has been known to Man for at least 2000 years. It has not been proved beyond doubt whether the name comes from Sanskrit or Greek, though the Greek name 'topazos' means 'green gemstone'. The Romans dedicated the topaz to Jupiter. The colour in which the topaz is most commonly found is yellow, and that is the colour in which it occurs in one of the major German gemstone rocks, the Schneckenstein (a topaz-bearing rock said to resemble a snail) in Saxony. In the 18th century, it was mined there during a period of over 60 years. However, most of the crystals were hardly a centimetre in diameter. You had to go to Siberia or Brazil to find crystals as large as your fist. Having said that, anyone who is interested can convince himself of the beauty of cut specimens in the topaz set in Dresden's Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault). The enormous and magnificent topaz from the Portuguese crown, the Braganza, was for a long time thought to be a diamond.

In mysticism, the topaz is attributed with a cooling, styptic and appetising effect. It is said to dispel sadness, anger and nocturnal fears, to warn its wearer of poisons and protect him or her from sudden death. It is reputed to make men handsome and intelligent and sterile women fertile and happy. However, it is probably better not to rely too much on its magical powers, since it was also claimed that you could immerse your hand in boiling water after a topaz had been thrown into it and retract it again unharmed! In the Empire style, the topaz was still widespread, but then the more reasonably priced citrine took over from it and even usurped its name. Since then, the topaz has been a rather exotic figure in the jewellery trade, and has been given the additional predicate 'pure' to make it clear that the topaz, not the quartz topaz, is meant. And it is still waiting for its comeback to this day.

Garnet



Aren't garnets those wonderful deep-red gemstones you often find in antique jewellery? Well yes, to a certain extent, a deep, warm red indeed being the colour most frequently found in garnets. Sadly, however, far too few people are aware that the world of the garnets is far more colourful than that. Spectacular finds, especially in Africa, have enhanced the traditional image of the garnet with a surprising number of hues - even if red does continue to be its principal colour. Thanks to their rich colour spectrum, garnets today can quite happily keep pace with changes of style and the colour trends of fashion. And thanks to the new finds, there is a reliable supply of them too. So in fact this gemstone group in particular is one which gives new impetus to the world of jewellery today.

By the term 'garnet', the specialist understands a group of more than ten different gemstones of similar chemical composition. It is true to say that red is the colour most often encountered, but the garnet also exists in various shades of green, a tender to intense yellow, a fiery orange and some fine earth-coloured nuances. The only colour it cannot offer is blue. Garnets are much sought-after and much worked gemstones - the more so because today it is not only the classical gemstone colours red and green which are so highly esteemed, but also the fine hues in between. Furthermore, the world of the garnets is also rich in rarities such as star garnets and stones whose colour changes depending on whether they are seen in daylight or artificial light.



And what else is there that distinguishes this gemstone group from the others? Well, first of all there is its good hardness of 7 to 7.5 on the Mohs scale. With a few minor exceptions it applies to all the members of the garnet group, and it is the reason for the excellent wearing qualities of these gemstones. Garnets are relatively insensitive and uncomplicated to work with. The only thing they really don't like is being knocked about or subjected to improper heat treatment. A further plus is their high refractive index, the cause of the garnet's great brilliance. The shape of the raw crystals is also interesting. Garnet means something like 'the grainy one', coming from the Latin 'granum', for grain. This makes reference not only to the typical roundish shape of the crystals, but also to the colour of the red garnet, which often puts one in mind of the seeds of a ripe pomegranate. In the Middle Ages, the red garnet was also called the 'carbuncle stone'. And even today, fantasy names like Arizona ruby, Arizona spinel, Montana ruby or New Mexico ruby are still rife in the trade.

The warm red of the garnet illuminated Noah's Ark

Garnets have been known to Man for thousands of years. Noah, it is said, used a garnet lantern to help him steer his ark through the dark night. Garnets are also found in jewellery from early Egyptian, Greek and Roman times. Many an early explorer and traveller liked to carry a garnet with him, for the garnet was popular as a talisman and protective stone, as it was believed to light up the night and protect its bearer from evil and disaster. Today, science has taught us that the garnet's proverbial luminosity comes from its high refractive index.

Not only do garnets have many colours; they also have many names: almandine, andradite, demantoid, grossularite, hessonite, pyrope, rhodolite, tsavorith, spessartine, and uvarovite, to quote but a few. But let us restrict ourselves to the most important and begin with the red garnets. First, there is the fiery red pyrope. Its spirited red, often with a slight brownish nuance, was a gemstone colour much in demand in the 18th and 19th centuries. Garnets from a find in the north-eastern part of the former kingdom of Bohemia - small stones of a wonderful hue - were world-famous at that time. In Europe, they were worked into jewellery a good deal, especially in the Victorian period. That genuine Bohemian garnet jewellery was traditionally set with a large number of small stones, which were close to one another like the seeds of a pomegranate, with their red sparkle. And today too, garnets are still found in former Czechoslovakia and set close together according to the old tradition, the attractiveness of classical garnet jewellery thus consisting mainly in the beauty of the gemstones.

The larger central stones of the typical 'rosettes' are also mostly of garnet, though they belong to a different category. For the 'almandines', named after Alabanda, an ancient city, have a chemical composition that differs somewhat from that of the pyrope. And why, one might ask, are they used as central stones? That's quite simple: because Nature has created the pyrope almost exclusively in small sizes, whilst allowing the almandine to grow in rather larger crystals.



A further garnet variety, also red, is the rhodolite. a mixed crystal of almandine and pyrope. This popular garnet is of a magnificent velvety red with a fine violet or raspberry-red undertone. Originally found in the USA, it now comes mainly from the gemstone mines in East Africa, India and Sri Lanka.

The colourful world of the garnets

The specialist world was amazed a few years ago by the fantastic find of a type of garnet which had been very scarce until then. At the Kunene River, on the border between Namibia and Angola, a deposit of radiant orange to red 'spessartites' was discovered. The spessartite was originally named after the site of a find made in Germany. Spessartites had led a quiet, shadowy existence as stones for gemstone lovers and collectors until that momentous discovery in Namibia. There were hardly any used in jewellery because they were so very rare. But this new find changed the gemstone world. Since then, its wealth has increased by the addition of this unusually fine, intensely radiant orange-red gemstone. Under the trade name 'mandarine-garnet', this wonderfully orange noble garnet became world-famous in no time at all. Unfortunately, the mine in the quiet hills of Namibia was only able to be exploited for a few years. The search for gemstones in the remote bush country began to involve too much effort and became too

expensive. So fears grew that this highly precious gemstone, which had shot into the firmament of the gemmological world like a rocket, might only become available in rare individual cases from the stocks of a few cutting-centres. That is, until another deposit of the orange treasures was discovered, this time in Nigeria. Their colour and brilliance are so similar to those of the mandarin garnets from Namibia that only an experienced specialist can discern the subtle differences.

Now for the green garnets. Green garnets?! Is there really such a thing? Indeed there is! In fact, several green varieties are known. First there is 'grossularite', created by Nature in many fine tones of yellow, green and brown and esteemed for its many fine interim hues and earth colours. Here too, there was a spectacular find: in the final year of the 20th century, extensive grossularite deposits were discovered in Mali. These Mali garnets captivate us with their great brilliance. Even the brown, which is otherwise not terribly popular, seems vivid and natural, and goes particularly well with ethnologically inspired trends.

Probably the best known green garnet is the tsavorite or tsavolite, which also belongs to the grossularite group. Tiffany's in New York gave this name to the previous emerald-green stone which was discovered in 1967 by a British geologist, Campbell R. Bridges, in the north-east of Tanzania - after the place where the discovery was made, near the Tsavo National Park with its wealth of game. The green of the tsavorite runs from vivid and light to deep and velvety and, like all garnets, it has particularly good brilliance.



The star of green garnets is the rare demantoid, a gemstone for connoisseurs and gemstone lovers. Its brilliance is positively tremendous, even greater than that of the diamond. Russia's star jeweller Carl Fabergé loved the brilliant green garnet from the Urals more than anything else, and used it in his creations. Meanwhile, the demantoid is no longer quite as scarce in the gemstone trade, thanks to some new finds in Namibia. Demantoids from Namibia are of good colour and brilliance, but they lack one tiny feature: the so-called 'horse-tail inclusions'. These fine, bushy inclusions are the unmistakable, typical feature by which a Russian demantoid is recognised.

Gemstones for every fashion trend

Anyone who loves what is pure and natural and the warm, sun-bathed colours of late summer will be fired with enthusiasm by the colour spectrum of the garnet. Today, garnets mostly come from African countries, but also from India, Russia and Central and South America. The skilled hands of cutters the world over work them into many classical shapes, but also increasingly into modern, imaginative designer cuts. Garnets remain convincing with their natural, unadulterated beauty, the variety of their colours and their tremendous brilliance. Anyone acquiring garnet jewellery can be assured that the joy he or she derives from this beautiful gemstone gift from Nature will be long-lasting and undimmed.

Tourmaline

Tourmalines are gems with an incomparable variety of colours. The reason, according to an old Egyptian legend, is that the tourmaline, on its long journey up from the centre of the Earth, passed over a rainbow. In doing so, it assumed all the colours of the rainbow. And that is why it is still referred to as the 'gemstone of the rainbow' today.

The name tourmaline comes from the Singhalese words 'tura mali'. In translation, this means something like 'stone with mixed colours', referring to the colour spectrum of this gemstone, which outdoes that of all other precious stones. There are tourmalines from red to green and from blue to yellow. They often have two or more colours. There are tourmalines which change their colour when the light changes from daylight to artificial light, and some show the light effect of a cat's eye. No two tourmalines are exactly alike. This gemstone has an endless number of faces, and for that reason it suits all moods. No wonder that magical powers have been attributed to it since ancient times. In particular, it is the gemstone of love and of friendship, and is said to render them firm and long-lasting.



Colours, names and nicknames

In order to understand this variety of colour, you will have to brush up your knowledge of gemmology a little: tourmalines are mixed crystals of aluminium boron silicate with a complex and changing composition. The mineral group is a fairly complex one. Even slight changes in the composition cause completely different colours. Crystals of only a single colour are fairly rare; indeed the same crystal will often display various colours and various nuances of those colours. And the trademark of this gemstone is not only its great wealth of colour, but also its marked dichroism. Depending on the angle from which you look at it, the colour may be different or more or less intense. It is always at its most intense when viewed looking toward the main axis, a fact to which the cutter must pay great attention when lining up the cut. This gemstone has excellent wearing qualities and is easy to look after, for all tourmalines have a good hardness of 7 to 7.5 on the Mohs scale. So the tourmaline is an interesting gemstone in many ways.



In the trade, the individual colour variants have their own names. For example, a tourmaline of an intense red is known as a 'rubellite', but only if it continues to display the same fine ruby red in artificial light as it did in daylight. If the colour changes when the light source does, the stone is called a pink or shocking pink tourmaline. In the language of the gemmologists, blue tourmalines are known as 'indigolites', yellowish-brown to dark brown ones as 'dravites' and black ones as 'schorl'. The last mentioned, mostly used for engravings and in esotericism, is said to have special powers with which people can be protected from harmful radiation.

One particularly popular variety is the green Tourmaline, known as a 'verdelite' in the trade. However, if its fine emerald-like green is caused by tiny traces of chrome, it is referred to as a 'chrome tourmaline'.

The absolute highlight among the tourmalines is the 'Paraiba tourmaline', a gemstone of an intense blue to blue-green which was not discovered until 1987 in a mine in the Brazilian state of Paraiba. In good qualities, these gemstones are much sought-after treasures today. Since tourmalines from Malawi with a vivid yellow colour, known as 'canary tourmalines', came into the trade, the colour yellow, which was previously very scarce indeed, has been very well represented in the endless spectrum of colours boasted by the 'gemstone of the rainbow'.

Yet the tourmaline has even more names: stones with two colours are known as bicoloured tourmalines, and those with more than two as multicoloured tourmalines. Slices showing a cross-section of the tourmaline crystal are also very popular because they display, in a very small area, the whole of the



incomparable colour variety of this gemstone. If the centre of the slice is red and the area around it green, the stone is given the nickname 'water melon'. On the other hand, if the crystal is almost colourless and black at the ends only, it is called a 'Mohrenkopf', (resembling a certain kind of cake popular in Germany).

Tourmalines are found almost all over the world. There are major deposits in Brazil, Sri Lanka and South and south-west Africa. Other finds have been made in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Tourmalines are also found in the USA, mainly in California and Maine. Although there are plenty of gemstone deposits which contain tourmalines, good qualities and fine colours are not often discovered among them. For this reason, the price spectrum of the tourmaline is almost as broad as that of its colour.

The 'aschentrekker'

It is not only designers who love the tourmaline on account of its inspiring variety of colour. Scientists too are interested in it because of its astonishing physical qualities, for tourmalines can become electrically charged when they are heated and then allowed to cool. Then, they have a positive charge at one end and a negative one at the other. This is known as 'pyro-electricity', derived from the Greek word 'pyr', meaning fire. The gemstone also becomes charged under pressure, the polarity subsequently changing when the pressure is taken off. When the charge changes the tourmaline begins to oscillate, similar to a rock crystal but much more pronouncedly. The Dutch, who were the first to bring the tourmaline to Europe, were familiar with this effect a long time before it was able to be provided with a scientific explanation. They used a heated tourmaline to draw up the ash from their meerscham pipes, and called the gemstone with the amazing powers an 'aschentrekker'.



In the fascinating world of gemstones, the tourmaline is very special. Its high availability and its glorious, incomparable colour spectrum make it one of our most popular gemstones - and apart from that, almost every tourmaline is unique.

Lapis lazuli

Lapis lazuli is a gemstone of the kind that might have come straight out of the Arabian Nights: a deep blue with golden inclusions of pyrites which shimmer like little stars.

This opaque, deep blue gemstone has a grand past. It was among the first gemstones to be worn as jewellery and worked on. At excavations in the ancient centres of culture around the Mediterranean, archaeologists have again and again found among the grave furnishings decorative chains and figures made of lapis lazuli – clear indications that the deep blue stone was already popular thousands of years ago among the people of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome. It is said that the legendary city of Ur on the Euphrates plied a keen lapis lazuli trade as long ago as the fourth millennium B.C., the material coming to the land of the two great rivers from the famous deposits in Afghanistan. In other cultures, lapis lazuli was regarded as a holy stone. Particularly in the Middle East, it was thought to have magical powers. Countless signet rings, scarabs and figures were wrought from the blue stone which Alexander the Great brought to Europe. There, the colour was referred to as 'ultramarine', which means something like 'from beyond the sea'.



The most expensive blue of all time

The euphonious name is composed from 'lapis', the Latin word for stone, and 'azula', which comes from the Arabic and means blue. All right, so it's a blue gemstone - but what an incredible blue! The worth of this stone to the world of art is immeasurable, for the ultramarine of the Old Masters is nothing other than genuine lapis lazuli. Ground up into a powder and stirred up together with binding-agents, the marble-like gemstone can be used to manufacture radiant blue watercolours, tempera or oil-paints. Before the year 1834, when it became possible to produce this colour synthetically, the only ultramarine available was that valuable substance made from genuine lapis lazuli that shines out at us from many works of art today. Many pictures of the Madonna, for example, were created using this paint. But in those days, ultramarine blue was not only precious and so intense that its radiance outshone all other colours; it was also very expensive. But unlike all other blue pigments, which tend to pale in the light, it has lost none of its radiance to this very day. Nowadays, the blue pigment obtained from lapis lazuli is mainly used in restoration work and by collectors of historical paints.

The stone of friendship and truth

Lapis lazuli is regarded by many people around the world as the stone of friendship and truth. The blue stone is said to encourage harmony in relationships and help its wearer to be authentic and give his or her opinion openly.

Lapis lazuli is an opaque rock that mainly consists of diopside and lazurite. It came into being millions of years ago during the metamorphosis of lime to marble. Uncut, lapis lazuli is matt and of a deep, dark blue colour, often with golden inclusions and whitish marble veins. The small inclusions with their golden shimmer, which give the stone the magic of a starry sky, are not of gold as people used to think, but of

pyrites. Their cause is iron. The blue colour comes from the sulphur content of the lazurite and may range from pure ultramarine to a lighter blue. At between 5 and 6 on the Mohs scale, this stone is among the less hard gemstones.

When the cutter turns up his nose ...

Many a cutter 'turns up his nose' when cutting lapis lazuli, for as soon as the stone comes into contact with the cutting-disc it gives off a typical smell. An experienced cutter can even tell from the odour how intense the colour is. When polishing this stone, he must handle it gently on account of its modest hardness and not subject it to much pressure. But there is no need for the wearer to worry: a lapis lazuli that has grown matt from having been worn too much can easily be repolished at any time. Lapis lazuli is often sealed with colourless wax or synthetic resin. As long as these substances are not mixed with any colouring agent, this sealing process simply has the effect of improving the stone's wearing qualities. Having said that, the stone should always be protected from acidic substances, and it should not be exposed to too much sunlight.

As they did more than 5000 years ago, the best raw stones still come from the steep Hindu Kush in the north-east of Afghanistan. The lumps of blue rock, extracted from the inhospitable mountains by blasting, are brought down into the valley in the summer months by mules. Nature also created deposits in Russia, to the west of Lake Baikal, and in the Chilean Andes, where the blue rock often has white or grey lime running through it. In smaller amounts, lapis lazuli is also found in Italy, Mongolia, the USA and Canada, Myanmar and Pakistan, but in really good qualities it is rare all over. That is why the prices of jewellery with lapis lazuli vary very widely, from luxurious to quite inexpensive. The prices of this gemstone are largely dependent on the beauty and intensity of the colour. The most popular is an intense, deep blue. Women with a pale complexion, however, often prefer the lighter shades of blue. Finely distributed crystals of pyrites which shimmer in gold and look like sequins will increase the value of the gemstone, whilst a restless, rough or blotchy grain will reduce it.

Lapis lazuli is a versatile and popular gemstone which has shown extraordinary stability in the turbulent tides of fashion. No wonder, since it has fascinated both men and women for thousands of years with its fabulous colour and those golden points of light formed by pyrites.

Quartz: common chameleon



If you gaze deep into a crystal ball, you will see a versatile gemstone, one of the most popular gems on earth. Beautiful quartz, the 'rock crystal' used in ancient times to make crystal balls and bowls, is today more often seen set in gold jewellery. Despite the popularity of quartz gems like amethyst, citrine, ametrine, rose quartz, onyx, agates, chrysoprase, rutilated quartz and other varieties, many people in the jewellery industry take quartz for granted because of its affordable price.

Throughout history, quartz has been the common chameleon of gemstones, standing in for more expensive gemstones ranging from diamond to jade. But the incredible variety of quartz is now beginning to be appreciated in its own right.



Purple to violet amethyst and yellow to orange citrine are jewellery staples that continue to increase in popularity. Ametrine combines the appeal of both amethyst and citrine, purple and yellow in one gemstone. Different colours and types of chalcedony, from agate to chrysoprase, have grown in popularity with the growing appreciation for carved gemstones and artistic cutting and carving. And unusual specialities like drusy quartz, with its surface covered by tiny sparkling crystals, and rutilated quartz, which has a landscape of shining gold needles inside it, are adding variety and nature's artistry to unusual one-of-a-kind jewellery.



Rose quartz

The pale pink colour of quartz, which can range from transparent to translucent, is known as rose quartz. The colour is a very pale and delicate powder pink. Transparent rose quartz is very rare, and usually so pale that it does not show very much colour at all except in large sizes.

Translucent rose quartz is much more readily available, being used for beads, cabochons, carvings, and architectural purposes.

Smoky quartz

Smoky quartz is a brown transparent quartz that is sometimes used for unusual faceted cuts. The commercial market is limited, because there is a rather limited demand for brown gemstones. This variety was sometimes known as smoky topaz in the past, though the term is incorrect and misleading.

Tiger's eye

Tiger's eye quartz contains brown iron which produces its golden yellow colour. Cabochon cut stones of this variety show the chatoyancy (small ray of light on the surface) that resembles the feline eye of a tiger. The most important deposit is in South Africa, though tiger's eye is also found in Western Australia, Burma (Myanmar), India and California.



Rock crystal



The transparent, colourless variety of quartz is still known as rock crystal. Long ago, people believed that rock crystal was a compact form of ice: in fact 'crystallos' means 'ice'. The best rock crystal has the clarity and shimmer of water. Although colourless quartz is relatively common, large flawless specimens are not, which is why crystal balls these days are made of glass, not quartz. Rock crystal has often been used in jewellery, particularly carved pieces. Many stunning art deco jewellery designs featured the black and white quartz combination of rock crystal and onyx. Colourless quartz crystals have also become popular in jewellery due to the popularity of legends about their powers. Many people believe that wearing quartz crystals benefits their health and spiritual well-being.

Rutilated quartz and tourmalinated quartz

While most varieties of transparent quartz are valued most when they show no inclusions, some are valued chiefly because of them! The most popular of these is known as rutilated quartz. Rutilated quartz is transparent rock crystal with golden needles of rutile arrayed in patterns inside it. Each pattern is different and some are breathtakingly beautiful. The inclusions are sometimes called Venus hair. Less well known is a variety called tourmalinated quartz which, instead of golden rutile, has black or dark green tourmaline crystals.

Chalcedonies

Quartz that is formed not of one single crystal but a number of finely grained microcrystals is known as chalcedony. The variety of chalcedonies is even greater than that of transparent quartz, including cryptocrystalline quartz with patterns as well as a wide range of solid colours. Agates are banded. Bloodstone has red spots on a green background. Moss agate has a plant-like pattern. Jasper sometimes looks like a landscape painting. Another staple of the jewellery industry is black onyx, chalcedony quartz which owes its even black colour to an ancient dyeing process that is still used today. Carnelian, another chalcedony valued in the ancient world, has a vivid brownish orange colour and clear translucency that makes it popular for signet rings and seals. Chrysoprase, a bright, apple-green, translucent chalcedony, is the most valued. It was a particular favourite of Frederick The Great of Prussia. It can be seen today decorating many buildings in beautiful Prague, including the Chapel of St Wenceslas. Today, chrysoprase is found mostly in Australia. Unlike most other green stones, which owe their colour to chromium or vanadium, chrysoprase derives its colour from nickel. Its bright even colour and texture lend themselves well to beads, cabochons, and carvings.



Jade



The myth of jade

Jade – a gemstone of unique symbolic energy, and unique in the myths that surround it. With its beauty and wide-ranging expressiveness, jade has held a special attraction for mankind for thousands of years.

This gem, with its discreet yet rather greasy lustre, which comes in many fine nuances of green, but also in shades of white, grey, black, yellow, and orange and in delicate violet tones, has been known to Man for some 7000 years. In prehistoric times, however, it was esteemed rather more for its toughness, which made it an ideal material for weapons and tools. Yet as early as 3000 B.C. jade was known in China as 'yu', the 'royal gem'. In the long history of the art and culture of the enormous Chinese empire, jade has always had a very special significance, roughly comparable with that of gold and diamonds in the West. Jade was used not only for the finest objects and cult figures, but also in grave furnishings for high-ranking members of the imperial family. Today, too, this gem is regarded as a symbol of the good, the beautiful and the precious. It embodies the Confucian virtues of wisdom, justice, compassion, modesty and courage, yet it also symbolises the female-erotic. A visit to the jade market, be it in Hong Kong or Rangoon, or at one of the Hong Kong jade auctions organised by Christie's, can give some idea of the significance this gem has for the people of Asia.

However, as long ago as the pre-Columbian period, the Mayas, Aztecs and Olmecs of Central America also honoured and esteemed jade more highly than gold. New Zealand's Maoris began carving weapons and cult instruments from native jade in early times, a tradition which has continued to the present day. In ancient Egypt, jade was admired as the stone of love, inner peace, harmony and balance. In other regions and cultures too, jade was regarded as a lucky or protective stone; yet it had nowhere near the significance that it had in Asia, which was presumably due to the fact that people knew relatively little about this fascinating gem. Fortunately however, in recent times, people's understanding of this gem, which fascinates not only the connoisseurs by its perfect interplay of hardness and toughness with an enchanting range of colours and fine lustre, has improved; and their esteem for it has been on the increase all over the world.

What is jade?

'Jade', or yu, as it is called in China, is strictly speaking a generic term for two different gems, nephrite and jadeite. The name is derived from the Spanish 'piedra de ijada', loin-stone, jade having been recognised by the Amerindians



as a remedy for kidney ailments. Because of its beneficial effect on the kidneys, the stone was also known as 'lapis nephriticus'. That, indeed, is where the term 'nephrite' came from.

Jadeite and nephrite are both regarded in China as 'zhen yu', 'genuine jade'. It was not until the beginning of the 19th century that mineralogists and gemmologists started to differentiate between them, since they bear a considerable resemblance to each other in terms of their appearance, their hardness and the properties they exhibit when being processed. Both are tough, since they consist of dense, close-grained, matted aggregates, but they differ from one another in their chemical composition and colours. Nephrite ranges mainly from mid to dark green or grey-green, but it can also be white, yellowish or reddish. Rarer, and somewhat tougher, jadeite displays hues which include green, but also white or pink, and reds, blacks, browns and violets. In both minerals, the way the colour is distributed varies a great deal. Only in the very finest jade is the colour evenly distributed. Both nephrite and jadeite often have veins, blemishes and streaks running through them, though these may not always be regarded as flaws. On the contrary, some of these patterns are considered particularly valuable.

Jade: from raw material to finished product

Jadeite is rarer than nephrite and is therefore regarded as more precious. Nephrite deposits have been found in China, New Zealand, Russia, Guatemala and the Swiss Alps. Dark green jade, so-called Canada jade, is also found in Western Canada. Jadeite is found in China, Russia and Guatemala, but the best stones come from Burma, now known as Myanmar. There, at the annual 'Gems, Jade and Pearls Emporium', blocks of jade in all sizes are auctioned. When purchasing the raw materials, the dealers need to be fairly lucky, since the nodules, blocks and fragments are sold either whole or after having been cut into slices, and there is only a very small window, the result of some initial grinding. So the buyer cannot see exactly what is hidden on the inside: valuable green jade, or an almost worthless, speckled or streaky material. It is not until the cutting process begins that the real quality is revealed.

In the jade-cutting centres of Canton, Beijing and Hong Kong, the raw material is processed with carborundum and diamond powder. Since jade is, as a rule, not transparent, but has a fine lustre, the cabochon is the form best suited to it. Thin slivers, which can be worn as pendants, and jade bracelets are popular too. Round, cylindrical and flat shapes can be combined to make attractive necklaces. Traditionally, jade is processed into slender figures, filigree images or thin-walled vessels. This is sometimes erroneously referred to as jade carving. Unwanted material is in fact removed during the cutting process, and the stone is subsequently polished. Here once again we see the subtle difference between nephrite and jadeite: whilst polished nephrite has a surface with a resinous lustre, the glassy lustre of jadeite after polishing seems to shine almost like that of a mirror.

What distinguishes good jade?



For collectors as well as jewellery lovers, jade is a fascinating gemstone. In Asia, above all, it is collected as an antique. Besides the quality of the gem and its processing, religion and faith also play an important role. In the West, many people prefer to collect jade in the form of snuff-boxes, cigarette holders, small bowls or rings. Since each collector has his or her own taste and his or her own likings with regard to

colour, style and shape, it is no easy matter giving definite advice on the purchase of jade objects.

However, jade is, at the same time, a wonderful gem, not only in its traditional guise, but also in more modern designs. Especially in recent years, creative jewellery and gemstone producers have come up with some wonderful, up-to-date jewellery design, thus sprucing up the image of jade, which had had rather a traditional character for quite some time.

In general, the value of jade is determined according to its colour and the intensity of that colour, the vivacity and texture, and its clarity and transparency. Likings for particular colours vary very considerably from region to region and culture to culture. In green jade alone, the connoisseurs differentiate between seven main qualities, from the intense, even green of imperial jade, via apple green and spinach green, all the way to the lighter and to more heavily speckled shades of green. These special nuances often overlap and can hardly be recognised by the untrained eye. In the USA and Europe, emerald green, spinach green and apple green are regarded as particularly valuable. In the Far East, on the other hand, pure white or a fine yellow with a delicate pink undertone is highly esteemed. In the world of jewellery, the fine violet nuances of lavender jade are very popular. It is however the rare, emerald green of imperial jade, which shines through at the edges, a colour of incredible depth, which fetches the highest prices. Unfortunately, since not only good and natural jade is offered for sale, but often fake or poor-quality products or stones which have been coloured or otherwise treated, it is advisable to buy good jade only from reputable dealers and jewellers, whether the purchase is being made for a collection or as an individual piece of jewellery.

Symbolic energy and beauty, the traditional and the modern are combined in jade in a particularly harmonious way. And in gemstone therapy it is said that jade 'stimulates creativity and mental agility on the one hand, while also having a balancing and harmonising effect.' So this beautiful gemstone brings us joy, vivacity and happiness all at the same time – and what, in our times, could we possibly need more?

Moonstone

The moonstone is characterised by an enchanting play of light. Indeed it owes its name to that mysterious shimmer which always looks different when the stone is moved and is known in the trade as 'adularescence'. In earlier times, people believed they could recognise in it the crescent and waning phases of the moon.



Moonstones from Sri Lanka, the classical country of origin of the moonstone, shimmer in pale blue on an almost transparent background. Specimens from India feature a nebulous interplay of light and shadow on a background of beige-brown, green, orange or brown. These discreet colours, in connection with the fine shimmer, make the moonstone an ideal gemstone for jewellery with a sensual, feminine aura. This gemstone was very popular once before, about a hundred years ago at the time of Art Nouveau. It adorns a noticeably large number of the jewellery creations of the French master goldsmith René Lalique and his contemporaries, mainly to be found in museums and collections today.

This gemstone is surrounded by a good deal of mystique and magic. In many cultures, for example in India, it is regarded as a holy, magical gemstone. In India, moonstones are also regarded as 'dream stones' which bring the wearer beautiful visions at night. In Arabic countries, women often wear moonstones sewn out of sight into their garments, for in their cultures the moonstone is a symbol of fertility.

The moonstone symbolises our being in its entirety. With its soft shimmer, it strengthens our emotional and subconscious aspects. The associations connected with that make it a "lovers' stone", evoking tender feelings and safeguarding the true joys of love. It is also said that wearing a moonstone strengthens our intuition and our capacity to understand.

What are moonstones and where do they come from?

This enchanting gemstone belongs to the large mineral group of the feldspars, of which almost two thirds of all the rocks on Earth consist. The moonstone is actually the feldspar variety known as 'adularia', a potassium aluminosilicate of gemstone quality, which is also found in the European Alps near the Adula Group – hence the name 'adularia'. Another synonym for moonstone is 'selenite', from the Greek 'selene' ('moon').

In their uncut state moonstones are rather unprepossessing and afford little idea of what it is that actually constitutes their charm: that mysterious shimmer of light. For that shimmer is not really shown to advantage until the art of the cutter has been brought to bear. Classical moonstones are always cut as cabochons, the most important thing being the correct height of the stone. The cutter must also align the axes of the crystal precisely into the zenith of the stone, for that is the only way in which he will bring about the desired light effect.

Traditionally, the classical moonstones, almost transparent and with their bluish shimmer, come from Sri

Lanka. However, they are also found in the USA, Brazil, Australia, Myanmar and Madagascar. Since bluish moonstones of good quality have been becoming more and more of a rarity in recent years, prices have risen sharply.

For a few years, there have also been some green, brown and orange specimens on the market, as well as some with a smoky colour and some the colour of champagne, and some black and some reddish ones, mainly originating from India. Some have a cat's eye effect or a four-spoked star as well as the typical undulating shimmer of light. These stones are not only cut as cabochons, but also as artistic cameos or engraved with the faces of children, the moon or grotesques. But they too have the shimmer of light typical of the moonstone, as do the beads which are cut from suitable raw material for gemstone necklaces.

Where does this strange shimmer of light come from?

The shimmer of light of the moonstone is something very special in the fascinating world of gemstones. Specialists refer to the phenomenon as 'adularisation'. The cause of it is the lamellar inner construction of the gemstone. Incident light rays are refracted and scattered in the stone. In this way, a unique light effect comes about, and it is this which makes the moonstone so distinctive and so desirable.



However, this beautiful gemstone does have one weak point, and that is its relatively low hardness of only 6 on the Mohs scale. For that reason, moonstones should be handled with care, for they are sensitive. Having said that, minor flaws such as may occur when the stone has been worn for some time are quite easy to remedy. A jeweller can have a moonstone which has grown matt repolished, after which it will shimmer again just as it did on the very first day.

Three-dimensional colour and seductive aura

When purchasing moonstone jewellery you will come across the most astonishing price differences. The more intense in colour, the larger and the more transparent, the more highly valued the moonstone. Really fine blue specimens display an incredible 'three-dimensional' depth of colour which the observer does not really come to recognise until the stone is moved about in a playful way. Specimens of that kind are highly esteemed on account of their rarity and their prices are correspondingly high. The colourful Indian moonstones, on the other hand, are not only very much in fashion. They are also, as a rule, somewhat more reasonably priced than classical blue moonstones. This means that today, anyone can select the moonstone to suit his or her taste and pocket.

Moonstones are treasures of Nature with a sensual and seductive aura. Not only do they like to be looked at and admired a lot; they also thrive on being worn and moved about a good deal, for only then can the soft shimmer of light which makes this gemstone so desirable really come into its own.

Turquoise

The turquoise is ancient, yet again and again it finds itself back in fashion. Its shining sky blue is one of the most popular trend colours in the world of jewellery and fashion.



In many cultures of the Old and New Worlds, this gemstone has been esteemed for thousands of years as a holy stone, a bringer of good fortune or a talisman. It really does have the right to be called a 'gemstone of the peoples'. The oldest evidence for this claim was found in Egypt, where grave furnishings with turquoise inlay were discovered, dating from approximately 3000 B.C.. In the ancient Persian kingdom, the sky-blue gemstones were earlier worn round the neck or wrist as protection against unnatural death. If they changed colour, the wearer was thought to have reason to fear the approach of doom. Meanwhile, it has been discovered that the turquoise certainly can change colour, but that this is not necessarily a sign of impending danger. The change can be caused by the light, or by a chemical reaction brought about by cosmetics, dust or the acidity of the skin.

Turquoise affords protection and joie de vivre

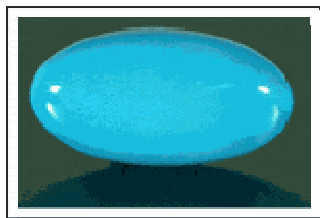
In earlier times, turquoises were even responsible for the material wellbeing of the wearer. The Persian scholar Al-Qazwini, for example, wrote: 'The hand that wears a turquoise and seals with it will never see poverty.' Turquoises were often worn on the turban, and often surrounded with pearls, in order to protect their wearer against the 'evil eye'. As talismans, they adorned daggers, sabres and the bridles of horses. It was not until the time of the crusades that they came to Europe. Indeed it is from that period that the name 'turquoise' originates, meaning 'Turkish'.

In South, Central and North America too, the turquoise has always occupied a very special position among gemstones. The Aztecs in Mexico, for example, used to decorate their ceremonial masks with this stone which was holy according to their beliefs. The Indians of North America, who still produce a good deal of traditional silver jewellery with turquoises today, believe that the sky-blue gemstone opens up a direct connection between the sky and the sea.

At all times and over the world, turquoises have been worn as natural protection against the powers of darkness. If in earlier times they preserved horse and rider from unexpected falls, they are regarded today as the protective stone of pilots, air crews and other occupational groups who are exposed to an especially high degree of risk.

In modern gemstone therapy, those suffering from depression are recommended to wear a turquoise or a chain with turquoise beads. The turquoise' cheerful colour is said to endow reticent personalities with more confidence. It is also often given as a gift, a stone of friendship, for the turquoise is said to be responsible for faithfulness and constancy in relationships.

The blue comes from copper, the green from iron



Turquoise is a copper aluminium phosphate with a hardness of 6, i.e. considerably softer than quartz. In Nature, it occurs in the whole range of hues from sky blue to grey-green, and it is mostly found in places where there is a high concentration of copper in the soil. However, turquoise is only really turquoise in the very best quality; mostly, the colour is paler, or bluish-green or greenish. The blue colour is created by copper, the green by bivalent iron and a certain amount of chrome. Often, the material has veins or blotches running through it, which are brown, light grey or black depending on where it was found. These lively, more or less regular patterns are known as 'turquoise matrix'. The crystals are microscopically small and can hardly ever be recognised with the naked eye. As a rule, turquoise occurs as a filling in veins or crevices, or in the form of nuggets. The most well known deposits are in the USA, Mexico, Israel, Iran, Afghanistan and China. The most beautiful turquoises, in a splendid light blue, come from deposits in the north of Iran.

Turquoise is rarely faceted. Usually, it is cut into cabochons or beads, or into some more imaginative shape.

Wax makes turquoise more resistant

Being relatively soft, turquoises are sensitive. As the colour may pale when the stone has been worn for a long time, even high-quality stones today are treated with wax and subsequently hardened. This treatment makes the sensitive gemstone more resistant. In the trade, there are a large number of reasonably priced turquoises sealed with synthetic resin. They have a fresh colour and good durability. However, many of them are dipped in a colouring medium before being subjected to durability treatment - a process that must, according to the rules of the ICA, be drawn to the attention of the prospective purchaser. And there is also such a thing as a 'reconstructed turquoise', which is made from pulverised turquoise.

Because of their sensitivity, turquoises are almost always subjected to treatment of one kind or another, though this may take any of a number of different forms. For this reason, turquoises which have a good natural colour and are simply hardened with colourless wax or synthetic resin have a much higher value than stones whose colour has been 'improved'. So it is more advisable to purchase valuable turquoise jewellery at a jeweller's.

Heaven on Earth

The best quality turquoises are of a pure, radiant sky blue, a colour which is highly esteemed with or without its fine, regular matrix. The more strongly the colour tends toward green and the more blotchy and more irregular the matrix, the lower the estimate of the stone's quality.

Turquoise should be protected from cosmetics, heat and bright light. It is not a gemstone to take with you when you go sunbathing. It is best to give it a clean from time to time with a soft cloth.

The colour of the turquoise makes us feel happy and cheerful, for in it the light blue of the sky and the stimulating green of the sea are combined. Indeed it is such an inimitable colour that we have coined a term specifically for it in our languages: turquoise. Anyone choosing a turquoise is sure to enjoy a piece of Heaven ... on Earth.

Corals



Corals are a decorative material with a very special fascination - the perfect embodiment of Man's longing for summer, sun and far-off oceans.

As to the origin of the name, the etymologists are not, however, of one opinion. Some say that it comes from the Greek 'korallion', which denotes the hard, calcareous skeleton of the coral animals, or from 'kura-halos', for 'mermaid', as the fine branches of the coral sometimes look like small figures. Others think it more likely that the word is derived from the Hebrew 'goral', (a small stone used in the drawing of lots), for coral branches used to be used in oracles in Palestine, Asia Minor and around the Mediterranean.

Corals live at depths of between three and 300 metres in the waters around Japan, Taiwan and in the Malaysian Archipelago, in the Red Sea, in the Bay of Biscay and around the Canary Islands, as well as in north-east Australia and the Midway Islands. In the Mediterranean, there are coral banks in the Tyrrhenian Sea, off the coast of Sardinia, off Tunisia and Algeria, former Yugoslavia and Turkey.

When we hear the word coral we first think of the coral reefs in the Southern Ocean or off Australia, of the reefs, banks and atolls which are among the most beautiful miracles of Nature. However, it is not these protected coral species of which we are talking here. In jewellery, it is corals such as 'corallium rubrum' and 'corallium japonicum' that are used.

Like the pearls, these are also organic jewellery materials. It certainly is an interesting fact that both of these are products of the water, chemically closely related with each other. Both consist of more than 90 per cent calcium carbonate. And it really is a miraculous thing that Nature has created both the scarlet coral and the pearl from the same, unprepossessing raw material.

What are corals?

Corals are the product of tiny living beings which settled in enormous colonies in the depths of warm seas long before our time. The polyps, surrounded by a fleshy skin, excrete a carbonic substance from which the corals grow like trees and branches. These can attain a height of sixteen inches (40 cm), though the actual branches seldom exceed one and a half inches (4 cm). At the forks, they are somewhat thicker. It is from these parts that the precious raw material for jewellery items, large coral beads or carvings is obtained.



Traditionally, the fragile little coral trees were brought up from the depths with trawl nets. However, since first-class corals have now become rather rare, divers are now deployed, in a less destructive process which involves their going down and harvesting the sensitive coral branches. After that, the branches are cleaned, sorted and processed by means of saws, knives, files or drills. Coral is not usually ground or cut on a wheel.

Unprocessed, coral is matt. It is not until it has been polished that it takes on that beautiful shine. It is often porous, full of holes or cracked, and in these cases it is of lesser quality. Coral of that kind is sometimes filled with coloured wax to improve its appearance. High-quality coral is of an even colour and free of cracks, blotches, striations and holes. Since genuine untreated coral is rare, it does fetch good prices. For that reason, anyone being offered what appears to be high-quality coral cheaply would do well to view the matter with a certain degree of scepticism. The best thing to do is to purchase one's high-quality coral jewellery from a reputable merchant.

The colourful, sensitive world of corals

Corals do not necessarily have to be red, even if red is thought of as their typical colour. Corals grow in Nature in a wide range of colours from red to white and from blue and brown to black. The most popular are the red hues such as pale pink or salmon, all the way out to a deep dark red. Black corals and gold corals are very much in fashion, whilst the blue ones are extremely rare. The white of the angel skin coral, suffused with pink, is regarded as particularly precious. Other well known colours are the rich red Japanese Moro coral, the pale pink 'Boke' and the red 'Sardegna'.

On the one hand corals are not particularly sensitive, but with a hardness of only 3.5 they are much softer than any other gemstone material. Their beauty can easily be impaired by the wrong treatment, for example cosmetics, hot water or bright light. Coral jewellery should be kept in a safe place and from time to time cleaned with a soft, damp towel. If the surface of the coral does get scratched, the jeweller can have it repolished.

Attractive lightweights: root and foam corals

Root or foam corals are lighter and more reasonably priced than precious coral. Root corals are actually a coral species all their own - i.e. not roots, but a special kind of coral growth. They are sometimes confused with the foam coral. The latter are those parts of the Japanese Momo coral which remain fixed in the sand or mud and form the transition from the foot of the coral to the main part of the growth. It has been in the trade for a long time. It is heavier than the root coral and somewhat more expensive. Both kinds find their way into the trade in large quantities from China and Japan. On account of their size and their relatively low weight, they are popular wherever colour and volume are in demand at low prices.

Coral on bare skin – irresistible!

Coral has been used for decorative purposes and esteemed as a protective stone since time immemorial. Even today, red corals are still worn as a talisman to protect the wearer against evil spirits in many cultures. Modern gemstone therapists too highly esteem its positive effects. Coral, it is said, relieves tension and fear and promotes positive forms of social life.

The ancient faith in the protective and invigorating force of coral is perpetuated in the custom of putting a necklace of red corals round the neck of a small child. Young girls too are often given a fine coral necklace as their first piece of jewellery. Yet coral is more than that: in some wonderful way coral reflects the complexion of its wearer, developing a positively irresistible effect on her bare skin. Coral is one of the most attractive decorative materials imaginable. Again and again, it inspires international designers to fantastic creations.

Bloodstone: the martyr's gem



Bloodstone, green jasper dotted with bright red spots of iron oxide, was treasured in ancient times and served for a long time as the birthstone for March. This attractive chalcedony quartz is also known as heliotrope because in ancient times polished stones were described as reflecting the sun: perhaps the appearance of the gem reminded the ancients of the red setting sun, mirrored in the ocean.

Medieval Christians often used bloodstone to carve scenes of the crucifixion and martyrs, for which reason it was also dubbed the martyr's stone. According to the legend about the origin of bloodstone, it was first formed when drops of Christ's blood fell and stained some jasper at the foot of the cross. A beautiful example of carved bloodstone with the seal of the German Emperor Rudolf II can be seen at the Louvre in Paris.

Even today, finely pulverised bloodstone is used as a medicine and aphrodisiac in India. Perhaps that explains why it is now rather difficult to find fine specimens of bloodstone on the market. Bloodstone is mined in India, Australia, and the United States.



Jasper: landscape in stone

Jasper is an ornamental rock composed mostly of chalcedony, microcrystalline quartz, in association with other minerals, which give it colourful bands and patterns. Jasper was a favourite gem in the ancient world; its name can be traced back in Hebrew, Assyrian, Persian, Greek and Latin.



Jasper is often named according to its pattern: landscape jasper, the most popular, offers a small panorama in stone. Ribbon jasper, picture jasper, and orbicular jasper are the names of other varieties. Jasper is found in many countries. It is sometimes used to create bowls and other objects and to adorn buildings, such as the Saint Wenceslas Chapel in Prague.



Pearls: very cultured



Pearls are organic gems, created when an oyster covers a foreign object with beautiful layers of nacre. Long ago, pearls were important financial assets, comparable in price to real estate, as thousands of oysters had to be searched for just one pearl. They were rare because they were created only by chance.

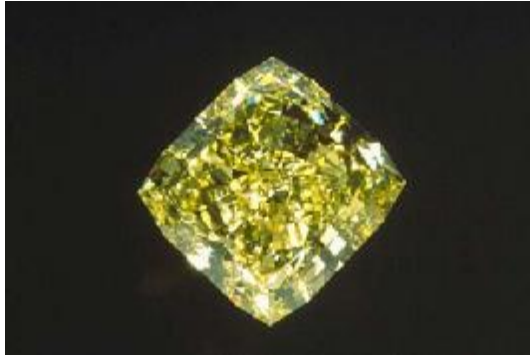
Today pearls are cultured by Man. Shell beads are placed inside an oyster and the oyster is returned to the water. When the pearls are later harvested, the oyster has covered the bead with layers of nacre. Most cultured pearls are produced in Japan. In the warmer waters of the South Pacific, larger oysters produce South Sea cultured pearls and Tahitian black cultured pearls, which are larger in size. Freshwater pearls are cultured in mussels, mostly in China.



The quality of pearls is judged by the orient, which is the soft iridescence caused by the refraction of light by the layers of nacre, and lustre, the reflectivity and shine of the surface. Fine pearls do not have any flaws or spots in the nacre: it has an even, smooth texture. Other factors which affect value are the regularity of the shape, size, and colour: rose tints are the most favoured.

Cultured and natural pearls can be distinguished from imitation ones by a very simple test. Take the pearl and rub it (gently!) against the edge of a tooth. Cultured and natural pearls will feel slightly rough, like fine sandpaper, because of the texture of natural nacre. Imitations will feel as smooth as glass because the surface is moulded or painted on a smooth bead.

Diamond: not necessarily colourless



It really is not our job here at the International Colored Gemstone Association to tell you all about diamonds. However, diamond is the modern birthstone for April, so we would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about fancy coloured diamonds, which are more to our taste than the colourless type: they're rarer, more valuable, and a great deal more colourful (although the colours do tend to be a little on the pale side).



Fancy coloured diamonds are not a mass-market product such as those which are advertised everywhere and sold by numbers. They have more personality than that. Fancy coloured diamonds are almost as much fun as coloured gemstones! Like coloured gemstones, each one is different. They come in fabulously expensive pale pinks and blues, pale to bright yellows, oranges, greens, and all those brown colours that are now given names like cognac and champagne. So, buy a diamond instead of a coloured gemstone if you must, but at least consider a fancy coloured one which will give your jewellery more character, more individuality and more colour!