

Prism

NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN GEM TRADE ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2006

AGTA GemFair Tucson

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE
NATURAL COLORED GEMSTONE EVENT

AGTA GemFair Las Vegas

SPECIAL SHOW DATES AND HIGHLIGHTS
JUNE 2-6, 2006

Fascination Pearls

NATURAL, CULTURED & IMITATION PEARLS

2006 Spectrum Awards Competition

THE HOTTEST AND SEXIEST
TRENDS START HERE

From the President

Dear Fellow AGTA members,

As had happened so often recently in our industry, we are facing quite a few "opportunities." The traditional vertical supply chain from international supplier to AGTA member to US manufacturer has been all mixed up. Essentially all US jewelry manufacturing has moved offshore, and international firms are selling directly in the US. The Internet has enabled many gemstones to be sold directly to consumers, bypassing the traditional supply chain. Most non-AGTA trade shows welcome international exhibitors.

Adding to this are the increasingly challenging treatments perpetrated in Asia, muddying the lines between natural, enhanced, treated, and synthetic. Many industry players do not disclose properly, which hurts all of us.

The way we will separate ourselves is full disclosure and ethical selling. We have to build confidence in our industry and promote our gemstones to consumers. We have to be an inclusive organization,

that works with all parts of the gemstone business. It is just as important to have the inexpensive materials to be sold ethically if we want to maintain the market for fine goods.

In order to strengthen our shows and encourage buyers, I plan to greatly strengthen compliance with both disclosure rules and the Patriot Act. The reason is not to be a nuisance, but to give confidence to the buyers so they can buy safely from AGTA members. Please, everybody, become current with proper disclosure rules and make sure you are in Patriot Act compliance. While most of us may disagree with the Patriot Act, we can use it to our benefit since customers will be confident that buying from us facilitates their compliance.

I hope to include many more players in our tent of full disclosure and ethical selling. I want to get more consumer promotion, so we maintain our luxury status in the market place. It will be challenging.



RICK KREMENTZ,
AGTA PRESIDENT

The good news is that our lab has been doing very well in helping to sort out treatments. We have exceeded our financial targets several times this year, and are striving to be better. We are getting equipment that will make it much easier to measure beryllium in sapphires. ▲

My best to everybody, and hope to see you in Vegas!

Rick Kremetz
President

From the Past President

It seems like such a short time ago that I started the first three-year term of any AGTA President. It has gone very quickly. It went quickly because there was a great deal AGTA was working on, and when one is busy, time goes fast. The interesting part of this is that all of AGTA was busy and active. This is one of the few national organizations where the President, the officers, Board members, general membership, Executive Director and staff are all very involved. It is this commitment at all levels that makes AGTA work and unique in the world of trade organizations. There were differences of opinion, but there were lively, vocal opinions. All the time, everyone tried to see all sides and work together as a team for the improvement of our organization and colored stone industry.

I hope and believe while I was President there was even more involvement than in the past. This

momentum is hard to sustain as any organization grows and ages, but if there is one thing I would ask all members, that is to continue to be involved and let your views be known. This involvement may well be the one very thing that keeps AGTA vital and the wholesale colored gemstone industry alive in the US. We will continue to see greater and greater pressure coming from around the world, but if the AGTA members can continue to think and be creative, we will all have a part to play in the world market.

Each new President and Board has its own unique challenges and goals. The last three years certainly taught me that. I believe AGTA was able to successfully address many of the challenges and we actually accomplished many of the goals I laid out when taking the position. I am certain your new President, Richard Kremetz, will face different challenges, but will be able to effectively address them.



ERIC BRAUNWART,
AGTA PAST PRESIDENT

One of the keys to success in this rapidly changing US wholesale colored gemstone industry will be your continued support and involvement. So, please stay involved and good luck to Rick and AGTA, as he assumes the Presidency for the next three years. ▲

All the best,

Eric Braunwart
Past President

From the Executive Director

I know I can't be the only one who feels like we just got finished with GemFair Tucson, yet JCK show - Las Vegas is already staring us in the face. Coming off one of the most successful GemFair Tucson shows in our Association's history, it is important that we do not lose our momentum. It is no surprise to see that the exhibitors who enjoy success year after year are those who make an extra effort to reach out to their clients or potential clients prior to the show. Now is a perfect time to consider ordering the Tucson GemFair Buyer Company Roster, registered company mailing labels or custom mailing labels. With nearly 5,500 companies available, it is a great way to renew your contact with people you saw at Tucson and encourage them to visit your booth at JCK show - Las Vegas. Call Charles in our Client Services department, and he can help you with your order.

Clearly, colored gemstones and cultured pearls are enjoying a high level of popularity. You can see that in nearly every consumer publication that you pick

up today. Not only are they exhibiting more ads for colored gemstone jewelry but significant editorial coverage is being devoted as well. This renaissance of color in fashion is the greatest opportunity for our industry to add desperately missed profit margins to the bottom line. With nearly every big box store and e-tailer out there touting branded products with deep discounts and/or diamonds direct from the sites at razor thin margins, colored gemstones remain a solid bastion of healthy margins.

While the consumer is clearly motivated, they also have fundamental concerns that need to be addressed when they are trying to make informed buying decisions. For years, our clients have relied upon the AGTA members to provide them with clear and accurate information about their gemstone purchases. We need to renew ourselves to this commitment and make sure that our customers clearly understand that when they buy from a member of the AGTA, they can buy with full confidence.

Now, more than ever, one of the most powerful tools in your arsenal is a



DOUGLAS K. HUCKER,
AGTA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gemstone Report from our Gemological Testing Center. With easily understood and scientifically accurate information, AGTA GTC Gemstone Reports bring added value to the sales presentation and give your customers the confidence they need to purchase with comfort. Remember, AGTA Members receive preferred pricing. Why not check out our services available online today at www.agta-gtc.org and learn how you can add this valuable sales tool to your colored gemstone jewelry presentation. ▲

Douglas Hucker
Executive Director

Membership Benefits

Currently, over 950 companies enjoy membership in the American Gem Trade Association. Membership in the AGTA entitles you to many benefits. The foremost benefit of membership is the greater level of confidence your customer gains knowing that you uphold the highest standards and ethics by belonging to the AGTA. But there is so much more:

- Participation in AGTA tradeshows including the premiere colored gemstone event AGTA GemFair Tucson, MJSA, GemFair Las Vegas and the newly added Hong Kong Show.
- Access to a valuable network of fellow gemstone professionals. The AGTA 2006-2007 Source Directory and Electronic Source Directory makes it easy for gemstone and jewelry professionals to get the information they need to purchase gemstones, jewelry, products, services and jewelry service providers from ethical and reliable suppliers- AGTA Members. Over 20,000 copies are distributed!
- Preferred pricing for services at the AGTA Gemological Testing Center. Research shows that GTC reports will give customers the assurance they need to buy color with confidence. Visit www.agta-gtc.org for more information.
- Discounts on our large variety of marketing materials including the Gemstone Enhancement Brochure, the stock photography program and postcard turnkey programs.
- AGTA Association Health Programs allow members to receive special premium rates and enhanced insurance coverage. Benefits include health insurance, dental, vision, long-term care insurance and life insurance. For a free, no obligation quote, please visit www.associationpros.com
- Savings with Office Depot, to start visit www.odams.net/registrations/assoc_serv.php. ▲

Are you taking full advantage of your benefits? For further information, please contact:

Joshua Garcia / Membership Coordinator / 800-972-1162 / membership@agta.org

AGTA Elects New Board Directors

At the AGTA membership meeting held in Tucson, AZ on Sunday, February 5, 2006, seven members were inducted to the Board of Directors. Elections were held for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and three Director positions. The following officers were elected for Vice President and Secretary, and as well as three Director positions; these new officers will serve three-year terms.

The following officers were elected:



PRESIDENT- RICK KREMENTZ
RKG 1866, LLC



VICE PRESIDENT- OMI NAGPAL
OMI GEMS, INC.



SECRETARY- KAMBIZ SABOURI
GEM 2000, INC.



TREASURER- SAMPAT PODDAR
BYREX GEMS, INC.



DIRECTOR- BETTY SUE KING
KING'S RANSOM



DIRECTOR- GLENN LEHRER
GLENN LEHRER DESIGNS



DIRECTOR- PETER BAZAR
IMPERIAL-DELTAH, INC.

Congratulations to our new Board members! We look forward to a great year to come. The newly elected members of the Board will join the current Officers and Directors who are serving terms: Vice President, Barbara Lawrence; Secretary, Rick Krementz; Director, Michael Avram; Director, Steven Stieglitz; Director, Surinder Mittal; Director, Robert Bentley; Past President, Eric Braunwart. ▲

For additional information about the election and the Board of Directors, visit our website at www.agta.org.

AGTA GemFair Las Vegas:

SPECIAL SHOW DATES & HIGHLIGHTS

June 2-6, 2006, Join Us In The AGTA GemFair Cultured Pearl & Jewelry Pavilion

The AGTA GemFair Cultured Pearl & Jewelry Design Pavilion is the best venue to buy colored gemstones, cultured pearls and the hottest trends in jewelry. No need to gamble on the AGTA Pavilion, this is the best place to experience the best, so come join us and hit the jackpot. Show dates and hours for the AGTA Pavilion are 10:00 am to 6:00 pm Friday, June 2nd and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday, June 3rd through Tuesday, June 6th.

The AGTA GemFair Cultured Pearl & Jewelry Pavilion is located in the Venetian Hotel Grand Ballroom, adjacent to the Sands Expo Convention Center. The AGTA Pavilion will open on Friday, June 2nd and close on Tuesday, June 6th in observance of Shavout. The main JCK show opens and closes a day later.

Since the AGTA Pavilion opens one day before the main JCK Show, the AGTA provides buyers an opportunity to shop early. Cash in on "Gem Day" on Friday, June 2, 2006, and take advantage of the jump-start on buying.


Gem Day also features seminars focusing on color and fashion presented by industry leaders. Hear about the newest trends for the jewelry industry. Look for the jewel next to all AGTA related events and sessions.

AGTA Pavilion Highlights:

- AGTA GTC Portable Lab Facility- The AGTA GTC offers dealers and buyers critical information to make informed purchases. Document your purchases with a colored gemstone report from the industry's premier laboratory.
- Buyers will enjoy complimentary danishes and coffee each morning (June 3rd -6th) from 9:00-11:00 am.
- The AGTA Windows of Color Café will be open all week, including Gem Day, in the AGTA Pavilion and will feature delicious food, including Kosher selections, from the Venetian Resort and Hotel.

For our members that do not exhibit at GemFair Las Vegas, please contact Mary Lou Keen or Patti Grimes for more information at 800-972-1162.

For those who have never attended- mark these dates on your calendar. ▲





GemFair Cultured Pearl & Jewelry Pavilion
At the JCK Show — Las Vegas *Add More Color To Your Life.*

SPECIAL DATES AND TIMES! June 2-6, 2006.

- The AGTA GemFair Cultured Pearl & Jewelry Pavilion opens and closes one day before the main show. Show dates and hours for the AGTA Pavilion are 10am-6pm Friday, June 2nd and 9am-6pm Saturday, June 3rd-Tuesday, June 6th.
- Buyers can enjoy a complimentary danish and coffee each morning (June 3rd-6th) in the AGTA Pavilion from 9am-11am.
- The AGTA Windows of Color Café will be open all week, including Gem Day, and will feature delicious food, including Kosher selections, from the Venetian Resort & Hotel.
- Seminars focusing on color and fashion presented by industry leaders on Thursday, June 1st and Friday, June 2nd.

Registration:
(800) 257-3626
www.agta.org

AGTA GemFair LAS VEGAS

AGTA GemFair LAS VEGAS

Buyers Converge on Tucson for AGTA GemFair

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE NATURAL COLORED GEMSTONE EVENT.

The 24th annual AGTA GemFair Tucson, once again lived up to its reputation as the world's finest industry showcase of natural colored gemstones, cultured pearls and designer jewelry. AGTA GemFair Tucson concluded Monday, February 6th, after six days of intensive business.



GemFair, which showcases the latest in natural colored gemstones and cultured pearls, products and trends, attracted retailers, manufacturers, media, and buyers from around the globe. AGTA's Executive Director, Douglas K. Hucker announced final registration and exhibitor numbers for the 2006 AGTA GemFair Tucson show. At show close, AGTA reported a 6.2 percent increase in attending companies, totaling 6,510 companies representing 10,312 buyers. AGTA GemFair Tucson, with a sold-out floor show, featured over 400 exhibitors.

One major highlight at this year's show was the new AGTA Estate Jewelry Pavilion. The Pavilion offered the perfect venue to find the one-of-a-kind and hard to

find colored gemstone and cultured pearl antique jewelry. Exhibitors offered the highest quality estate jewelry in a wide range of styles and price points.

AGTA GemFair Tucson also featured the *Spectrum of Design* Jewelry Pavilion. Just as the fashion industry looks to the hottest designers to forecast the latest trends in fashion, style-savvy retailers look to AGTA's designers to anticipate "what's next" in colored gemstone jewelry design.

The MJSA Pavilion provided the finest technology, components, and packaging solutions: quality castings, chain, computer software, displays, equipment, findings, machinery, metals, mold & model making supplies, and mountings. *AJM's At the Bench* Live Demonstrations, sponsored by MJSA, *AJM Magazine*, Otto Frei and AGTA, were held near the MJSA Pavilion. Demonstrations were held throughout the week and were conducted by some of the nation's most renowned jewelers and manufacturing experts.

Networking opportunities abounded off the show floor. To kick things off, the AGTA hosted the Annual Coyote Classic Golf Classic on Monday, January 30th benefiting the Special Olympics. Forty-four golfers participated in the event at Dell Urich Golf Course at Randolph Park. The winning foursome included



SPECTRUM SHOWCASE



MICHAEL BEHNAM, RAFI BEHNAM AND SHAWN BEHNAM



DOUGLAS HUCKER AND MAYOR BOB WALKUP

air™ TUCSON

Clay Gideon, Tim Beatty, Brian Barker and George Miranda. On Wednesday, February 1st the AGTA hosted an opening night party. The 2006 AGTA Spectrum Awards winners were honored for their outstanding achievements during the evening's festivities. Nearly 400 people gathered on Saturday, February 4th for the AGTA Dinner Dance celebrating AGTA's 25th Anniversary. Sponsors included Philip Zahm & Associates and The JCK Shows. Guests enjoyed fabulous food, cocktails and live entertainment from the band Sambada. The AGTA honored its founding fathers, members, board members, honorary members, employees and industry partners during the event.

The AGTA GemFair seminar program proved very popular with participants, with packed rooms and hot questions. Attendees had the opportunity to learn from and network with peers and colleagues, ask questions and take home useful and practical information they can put to use immediately. The 32 free seminars included practical bench techniques, effective sales and marketing strategies, financial management in today's economy and industry trends. ▲



OMI NAGPAL, ASHOK SANCHETI, JEFF BILGORE AND ERIC BRAUNWART



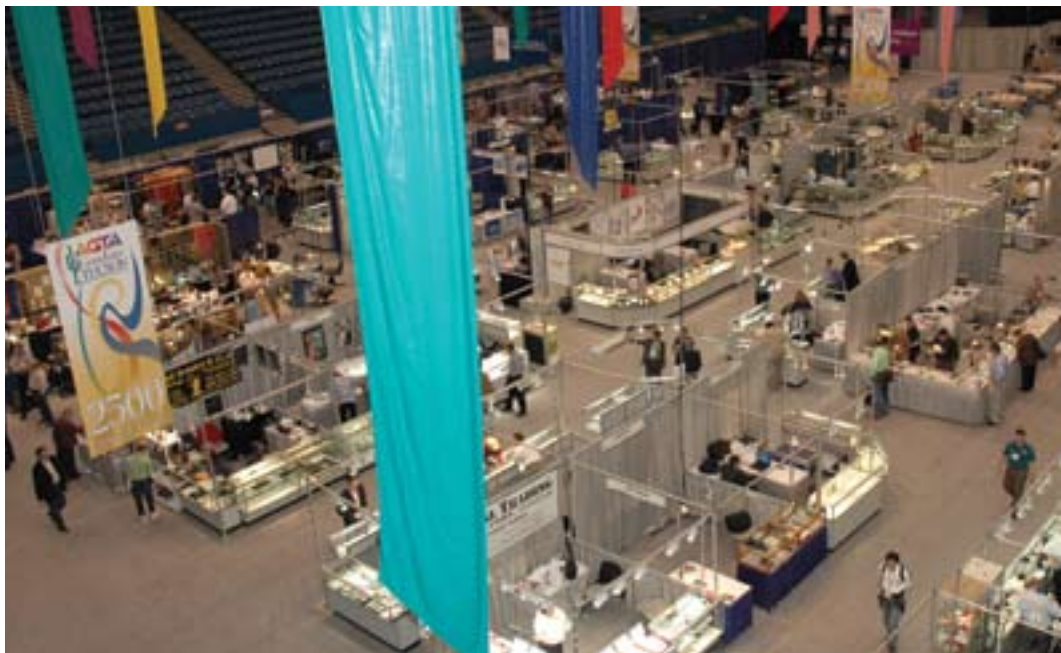
SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR, DOUGLAS HUCKER AND MARY LOU KEEN

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Mary Lou Keen
Trade Show and Membership Manager
3030 LBJ Freeway, Suite 840
Dallas, TX 75234
Tel: 800-972-1162 Fax: 214-742-7334
E-mail: shows@agta.org
Website: www.agta.org

**Mark your calendar
to join us next year
January 31-February
5, 2007 for AGTA
GemFair Tucson at the
Convention Center in
Tucson, Arizona.**

INFORMATION ABOUT
THE SHOW IS AVAILABLE AT
WWW.AGTA.ORG OR BY CALLING
800-879-6259.

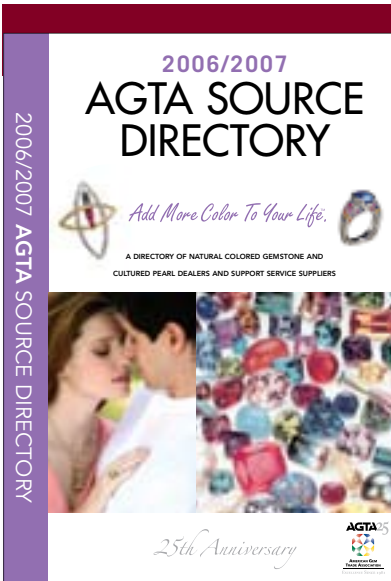


ARENA

2006-2007 Source Directory Released

The AGTA released the 2006-2007 AGTA Source Directory. The Directory makes it easy for gemstone and jewelry professionals to get the information they need to purchase gemstones, jewelry, products and services from ethical and reliable suppliers.

If you are trying to locate natural colored gemstones and cultured pearls, the AGTA Source Directory is the most comprehensive directory you can find. It is available in two formats, printed or electronic.



THE AGTA PRINTED SOURCE DIRECTORY

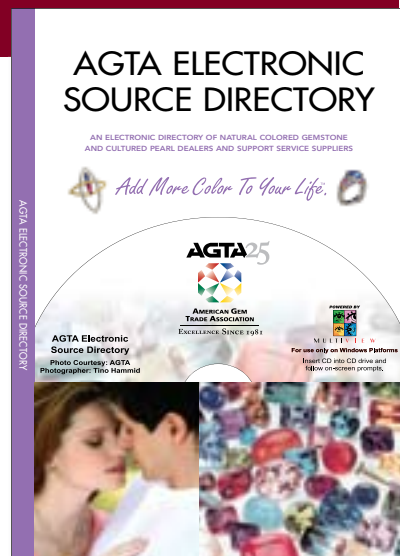
- General information regarding birthstones, anniversary gemstones, gemstones by color, gemstone enhancement information and more.
- An alphabetical listing of our wholesale members (gemstone dealers) containing their address, contact name, phone and fax numbers, email and web addresses.
- A comprehensive alphabetical listing of gemstones and what companies you can purchase them from.
- An alphabetical listing of our affiliate members (designers, manufacturers, retailers, etc.) containing their address, contact name, phone and fax numbers, email and web addresses.
- An alphabetical listing of industry specific products and services and what companies you can purchase them from.
- A listing of all our members sorted alphabetically.

THE AGTA ELECTRONIC SOURCE DIRECTORY

Inside the printed 2006-2007 AGTA Source Directory you will find an easy-to-use CD with everything the print version contains-and more. Load the CD just once onto your office, home and laptop computer. From then on, the little AGTA logo that sits on our desktop is all you will need. Click to...

- Search for an AGTA member by name, firm, or special product/service category.
- Retrieve detailed information about AGTA members, including "hotlinks" to their web pages and email addresses.
- Get member information sorted alphabetically by state and city.
- Update the member listings monthly through your Internet connection. Just click the "update" button.

The source directory is free for anyone in the gemstone or jewelry industry who purchases wholesale for the purpose of resale. To reserve your copy of the 2006-2007 AGTA Source Directory contact us today at 800-972-1162 or info@agta.org. ▲



4th International Gemological Symposium

For only the fourth time in three decades, the Gemological Institute of America is inviting the international gem and jewelry community to come together for an event unlike any other. It's time for the 4th International Gemological Symposium (August 27-29)!

During this important event, scientists, educators, and business leaders will offer their findings and insights on a vast array of topics. This year's show will be held in San Diego hosting an outstanding lineup of speakers and spectacular social events.

As an AGTA Member, you are eligible to receive a discount once ten members sign up to go. The at-the-door registration fee is \$1595, but if ten AGTA members are registered to attend, you pay only \$995! (That's a \$600 savings per person!) **THIS SPECIAL RATE ENDS JUNE 15!** For more information, please contact Joyann Schalk at 800-972-1162 or joyann@agta.org. ▲

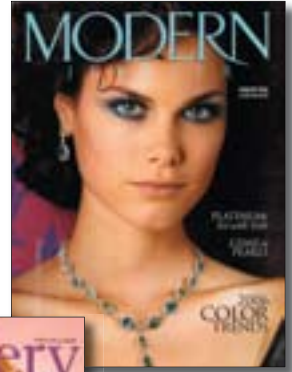
2006

Spectrum Awards Competition: The Hottest and Sexiest Trends Start Here

In October the American Gem Trade Association hosted its 22nd annual Spectrum Awards. Held in Carlsbad, California, at the GIA campus the judges reviewed 456 submissions of incredible jewelry and lapidary designs for the 2006 AGTA Spectrum Awards competition.

The AGTA hosted another unforgettable Editor Event. In the heart of the GIA campus, with grand ocean views, this was the ideal location to display the 2006 AGTA Spectrum Awards. Every piece of jewelry and gemstone was displayed for the fashionistas viewing pleasure. Editors, stylists and the trade press oogled the spectacular pieces. The AGTA would like to thank all of the designers and lapidaries who entered the competition to make the event a huge success. With such beautiful baubles and glamorous gems, next years event will be highly anticipated.

The 2006 AGTA Spectrum Awards were presented during the 2006 AGTA GemFair Tucson, held February 1-6, 2006 at the Tucson Convention Center in Tucson, Arizona. AGTA Spectrum Awards recipients were recognized at the Opening Night Reception and Awards Gala held Wednesday February 1st from 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at the Tucson Convention Center in the Leo Rich Theatre. Guests enjoyed complimentary cocktails, light hors d'oeuvres and entertainment. ▲



LARRY WOODS, DALAN HARGRAVE AND JOHN DYER

2006 AGTA Spectrum Award Winners

SPECTRUM – BEST OF SHOW

Samuel Getz
Samuel Getz Private Jewelers



SPECTRUM – BEST USE OF COLOR

Jack Demerjian
J. Demere Designs



SPECTRUM – FASHION FORWARD HONORS

Men's Division
Avi Raz, A & Z Peals, Inc.

Women's Division
Devta Doolan, Devta Doolan Jewelry



SPECTRUM – BRIDAL WEAR CATEGORY



FIRST PLACE
Robert Peliccia
J. R. Dunn Jewellers



SECOND PLACE
Garo Demirjian
Demirjian Jewelry Design



THIRD PLACE
Brenda J. Warburton
Austin & Warburton



HONORABLE MENTION
Robert Peliccia
J. R. Dunn Jewellers

SPECTRUM – BUSINESS/DAY WEAR CATEGORY



FIRST PLACE
Jack Demirjian
J. Demere Designs



SECOND PLACE
Troels D. Larsen
Jacobus Goldsmiths

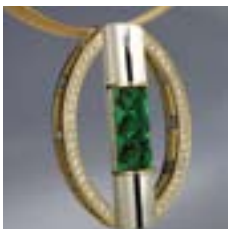


THIRD PLACE
Mark Schneider
Schneider Design Studio



MANUFACTURING HONORS
Khai Le
Charles Koll Jewellers

SPECTRUM – CASUAL WEAR CATEGORY



FIRST PLACE
Darius Brasky
Paul C. Lirio Jewelers



SECOND PLACE
Dalan Hargrave
GemStarz



THIRD PLACE
Jack Demirjian
J. Demere Designs



MANUFACTURING HONORS
Cornelis Hollander
Cornelis Hollander Designs, Inc.

SPECTRUM – EVENING WEAR CATEGORY



FIRST PLACE
Thomas Dailing
Thomas Dailing Designs



FIRST PLACE
Samuel Getz
Samuel Getz Private Jewelers



THIRD PLACE
Frederic Sage
Frederic Sage



MANUFACTURING HONORS
Bayot Heer
Jewels by Design

SPECTRUM – MEN'S WEAR CATEGORY



FIRST PLACE
Mark Schneider
Mark Schneider Design



SECOND PLACE
Gregore Morin
Gregore Joailliers



THIRD PLACE
Garo Demirjian
Demirjian Jewelry Design

2006 AGTA Cutting Edge Award Winners

CUTTING EDGE – BEST OF SHOW

Allen Kleiman
A. Kleiman & Co.



CUTTING EDGE – A1 – OPEN CATEGORY CLASSIC GEMSTONE



FIRST PLACE
Allen Kleiman
A. Kleiman & Co.



SECOND PLACE
Joseph Ambalu
Amba Gem Corp.



THIRD PLACE
Joseph Ambalu
Amba Gem Corp.



HONORABLE MENTION
Philip Zahm
Philip Zahm & Associates

CUTTING EDGE – A2 – OPEN CATEGORY ALL OTHER FACETED



FIRST PLACE
Brent Malgarin
ARINI.



SECOND PLACE
John Dyer
Precious Gemstones Co.



THIRD PLACE
Philip Zahm
Philip Zahm & Associates

CUTTING EDGE – A3 – OPEN CATEGORY PHENOMENAL GEMSTONES DIVISION



FIRST PLACE
Allen Kleiman
A. Kleiman & Co.



FIRST PLACE
Allen Kleiman
A. Kleiman & Co.



SECOND PLACE
Joseph Ambalu
Amba Gem Corp.

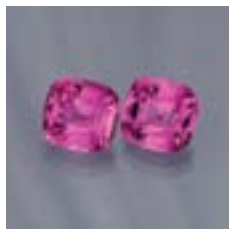
CUTTING EDGE – B – PAIRS & SUITES



FIRST PLACE
Ben Kho
Kho International



SECOND PLACE
Douglas Mays
Wild & Petsch USA



THIRD PLACE
Joseph Ambalu
Amba Gem Corp.



HONORABLE MENTION
Thomas A. Trozzo
Trozzo

CUTTING EDGE – C – FACETING



FIRST PLACE
John Dyer
Precious Gemstones Co.



SECOND PLACE
Ben Kho
Kho International



THIRD PLACE
John Dyer
Precious Gemstones Co.

CUTTING EDGE – D – CARVING



FIRST PLACE
Larry Woods
Jewels From The Woods



SECOND PLACE
Dalan Hargrave
GemStarz



THIRD PLACE
John Dyer
Precious Gemstones Co.

CUTTING EDGE – E – COMBINATION



FIRST PLACE
Larry Woods
Jewels From The Woods



SECOND PLACE
Dalan Hargrave
Dust Devil Mining Co.



THIRD PLACE
Michael M. Dyber
Ledge Art Studio

2007 AGTA Spectrum Awards

The AGTA Spectrum Awards, considered the most respected and prestigious creative award for the design industry, has been honoring artistic excellence for outstanding jewelry design and lapidary art for over two decades.

We encourage all established and aspiring jewelry designers and lapidaries to enter the 2007 AGTA spectrum Awards. Nothing distinguishes your work and brings more recognition to you than honors from this competition. Winning an AGTA spectrum Award will definitely be one of your best accomplishments of the year. Here's why:

RESPECTED.

The AGTA Spectrum Awards competition is viewed by the industry as a mark of outstanding quality and achievement. The AGTA Spectrum Awards are presented by the American Gem Trade Association, the leading natural colored gemstone and cultured pearl association.



RIGOROUS.

The AGTA has the most prestigious panel of judges of all the gemstone and jewelry competitions in the nation. Award winners will be selected by a jury of esteemed industry professionals which includes a designer, manufacturer, retailer, lapidary and an editor. Entries are judged on a solid criterion which includes overall beauty and wearability, innovative design, effective use of materials, quality of gemstones, quality of workmanship, broad-base consumer appeal and potential to generate positive publicity for natural colored gemstones.

REWARDING.

The AGTA Spectrum Awards are regarded as the preeminent achievement of the industry. Winners of the illustrious award receive tremendous exposure including:

- A cocktail reception and editor event will be held in conjunction with the competition giving the nation's top fashion/accessory editors, stylists, producers and costume designers the opportunity to preview the winning collection.
- Award winners are recognized in print for their spectacular and trend-setting designs. Photographs and a detailed description are featured in the January and February issues of every leading trade publication.
- Award-winning pieces are displayed at AGTA GemFair Tucson and AGTA GemFair Las Vegas, giving winners exposure to tens of thousands of potential customers.

This year the AGTA Spectrum Awards, known for spotlighting the best in innovative and cutting-edge design, will broaden its focus to include classical jewelry. The new Classical category emphasizes the traditional. Artists working in time honored techniques and long established aesthetics are invited to compete. The essence of this new category is timeless beauty; that is familiar and yet exceptional. Spectrum Award categories include Classical, Bridal, Day, Men's, Evening Wear, Fashion Forward Honors and Manufacturing Honors.

The AGTA Cutting Edge Awards honor excellence and creativity of the lapidary arts, including natural colored gemstones and cultured pearls, carvings, other gem materials and objects of art in North America. Cutting Edge Awards categories include: Open Category, Pairs & Suites, Faceting, Carving, Combination and Objects of Art.

ELIGIBILITY

The Spectrum Awards competition is open to all individuals living in North America. You do not have to be a member of the AGTA to enter. Any jewelry produced after October 2005, and not previously entered into an AGTA competition may be entered. Entries must be finished pieces; no drawings will be accepted.

DEADLINES

Deadline for entry is September 22, 2006. Judging will occur during the month of October.

Entry forms are available on our website (www.agta.org) or by calling 800-972-1162.

NEW YORK CITY DROP-OFF PROGRAM

Once again the AGTA is offering the New York City Drop-Off Program. Any entrant can hand deliver their AGTA Spectrum Awards or Cutting Edge entries in New York. Competition pieces may be dropped off in person on Thursday, October 12, 2006 between the hours of 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. Deliveries must be made in person at the AGTA laboratory located at 18 East 48th Street, Suite 502, New York, NY 10017. Paperwork and payment must be submitted to the AGTA's Dallas office by September 22, 2006.

For complete AGTA Spectrum Awards information, please refer to our website: www.agta.org. Entry forms are available by emailing spectrum@agta.org, or by calling the AGTA at 800-972-1162/214-742-4367. ▲



2007 Spectrum and Cutting Edge Awards

We encourage you to be a part of the prestigious 2007 Spectrum and Cutting Edge Awards. Imagine your winning designs in Prism, showcased at GemFair or even gracing the covers of the trade magazines. Talk about exposure. For more information on the 2007 Spectrum and Cutting Edge Awards, please contact 800-972-1162 or visit www.agta.org

F A S C I N A T I O N

pearls

NATURAL, CULTURED & IMITATION PEARLS



DR. LORE KIEFERT

One might expect that anyone submitting pearls for laboratory testing would be aware of the differences between the natural and cultured types.

Surprisingly enough, this is not always the case. Many believe the only difference is between pearls formed in shells and those produced artificially. In reality, there are three different types of pearls: natural (formed in shells without human intervention), cultured (formed in shells with human intervention) and imitation (not formed in shells at all). And a fourth type, treated pearls, is becoming ever-more common.

One major reason for this misunderstanding is that natural pearls are rarely found in the trade. Natural pearls nowadays are mostly found in auction houses and with estate jewelers, where they are traded for high prices. Depending on the size, a single natural pearl necklace can easily be worth more than a million dollars (Fig. 1). At the American Gem Trade Association Gemological Testing Center (AGTA GTC), we see as many natural as cultured pearls and must distinguish between them. The following short paper will inform you about the various types of pearls, their imitations, treatments, and the services the AGTA-GTC offers for your peace of mind in purchasing pearls.

WHAT IS A PEARL?

Pearls consist mainly of calcium carbonate and a small amount of organic material. The pearly luster or orient is due to light scattering and interference on sub-microscopic platelets of aragonite (Fig. 2). This nacreous aragonite is also called mother-of-pearl or



FIGURE 1: THIS NATURAL BLACK PEARL NECKLACE WAS SOLD AT A CHRISTIE'S AUCTION IN 1999 FOR 1.4 MILLION DOLLARS. THE DIAMETERS OF THE PEARLS REACH 13 MM. PHOTO: HENRY A. HÄNNI, ©SSEF SWISS GEMMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

nacre and, in a round pearl, is deposited in a concentric array. The aragonite is secreted by a thin skin or mantle epithelium that covers the inside of the shell, or, in the case of the pearl, surrounds the pearl, secreting the aragonite layer in concentric layers (Fig. 3).

NATURAL PEARLS

Formed accidentally by wild shells without the intervention of man, natural pearls are extremely rare compared to the cultured product. They grow in saltwater oysters, as well as freshwater shells. There is only a limited number of shells and oysters that can produce pearls.

Apart from the nacreous pearls produced by shells and oysters, there are also porcellaneous concretions produced by saltwater snails, which lack the pearly luster. The most famous is the pink conch pearl. Even more rare is Southeast Asia's melo pearl.

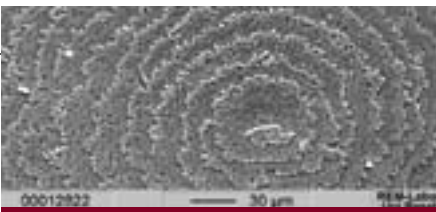


FIGURE 2: SCANNING ELECTRON MICROSCOPY (SEM) REVEALS THE NATURE AND SIZE OF THE ARAGONITE LAYERS THAT FORM A PEARL. VERY OFTEN, ONE CAN OBSERVE A SPIRAL PATTERN ON THE SURFACE OF PEARLS. PHOTO: REM LABOR, UNIVERSITÄT BASEL, SWITZERLAND



FIGURE 3: SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE FORMATION OF A NATURAL PEARL. HENRY A. HANNI, ©SSEF SWISS GEMMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

CULTURED PEARLS

Virtually all pearls on the market today are cultured. Natural pearls can still be found in oysters used for culturing pearls, but are extremely rare. Japan's Kokichi Mikimoto invented the modern culturing technique in the 1890's, using Akoya oysters. The process, which is still used today, involves implanting a small piece of aragonite-producing mantle skin (epithelium) from one oyster into the body of another, together with a round shell bead. The mantle epithelium forms a pearl sack around the bead and starts depositing aragonite platelets onto the bead.

Some call this process bead nucleation. While the bead does not contribute to the production of nacre, it helps the process by adding both shape and larger size to the finished product.

This method is still applied today to produce saltwater pearls with a bead for Akoya, South Sea, Tahiti, and Mexican pearls. On average, the nacre thickness in Akoya and Mexican cultured pearls is from 0.2 to 2 mm; in South Sea or Tahitian cultured pearls it can reach up to 5 mm.

Freshwater cultured pearls generally do not contain a bead. Here, only the mantle epithelium is implanted in the shell and stimulates the pearl growth. Some call this process tissue nucleation. Up to 30 pearls can be simultaneously cultured in a single freshwater oyster.

The first cultured freshwater pearls came from Lake Biwa in Japan and had the shape and size of irregular rice grains. Currently, the majority of freshwater pearls are produced in China, and their quality has improved significantly, both in size and in roundness (Fig. 4).



FIGURE 4: FRESHWATER CULTURED PEARLS BECOME INCREASINGLY BETTER. PHOTO: MIN HTUT, ©AGTA GEMMOLOGICAL TESTING CENTER

Keshi cultured pearls are a byproduct of pearl culturing. Initially, the word Keshi was used to describe small pearls in Akoya oysters, which developed through an injury of the mantle when the bead was inserted. Today, the term is used for all saltwater pearls without beads. In South Sea cultured pearls, the bead can be rejected by the oyster, but the epithelium still produces a pearl. In cases where the pearl sack already exists from a first harvest, but the sack has rejected the bead, an irregular cavity may form in the pearl.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

At this point, many are probably a bit perplexed. Both natural and cultured pearls are formed in the same shells. One grows naturally, the other through human intervention. So who cares just who gets things started? It's all the same after that, isn't it?

If you are a pearl buyer, you should not only care, but understand. Natural pearls are tiny wonders of nature. There are figures around that only one in 10000 shells contain a pearl. And then this pearl is not necessarily round. Or it is only small.

Consider the following. A natural pearl generally consists of 90% or more nacre. The thickness of a single millimeter of nacre is approximately 1000 layers. Since it grows on both sides of a point, a spherical natural pearl of 10 mm size would contain roughly 5000 nacre layers. Since pearl growth averages about 1 mm (500 layers) per year, a 10 mm natural pearl would take roughly ten years to form.

Now imagine that you put a nine-millimeter bead into the oyster for one year. That same 10 mm pearl takes just one year to grow, rather than ten. And the success rate with pearl culturing is almost 100 %, meaning that almost out of every shell used you get a nice spherical cultured pearl. Or, take the freshwater shell, where you can have up to 30 pearls in one shell! They may have a considerable size, they may be round, but they are not rare.

This statement may come as a shock, but it is true: a fine 10-mm natural pearl of round shape is roughly a million times more rare than a cultured pearl of similar quality. Increase the size and that rarity continues to increase.

Distinction between natural and cultured pearls

The most important separation method for natural and cultured pearls is via x-radiography. Similar to a medical x-ray, this method involves tiny differences in transparency when a pearl is exposed to x-rays while



FIGURE 5: X-RADIOGRAPH OF VARIOUS PEARL STRANDS. FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: SOUTH SEA CULTURED PEARLS, NATURAL PEARLS, AKOYA CULTURED PEARLS, FRESHWATER CULTURED PEARLS OF DIFFERENT SIZE AND QUALITY. PHOTO: HENRY A. HANNI, ©SSEF SWISS GEMMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

resting on top of a piece of film. The resulting negative image reveals subtle details within the interior of the pearl. Radiographs of natural pearls often have dark centers and

several concentric rings; bead cultured pearls typically show the bead nucleus in a lighter color than the surrounding nacre.

Freshwater cultured pearls usually show a very fine irregular line in the center. The latter are sometimes difficult to distinguish from natural pearls, especially when drilled. A clue is provided by chemical analysis. Freshwater pearls contain manganese, while in saltwater pearls, manganese is either entirely absent, or present in only trace amounts.

Keshi cultured pearls generally show irregular cavities of various size. In these situations, if there is no additional evidence, distinction from hollow natural pearls is sometimes impossible. Figure 5 shows an x-radiograph of various types of pearls.

PEARL IMITATIONS

Pearls are imitated by various products. Generally, a glass bead is covered with an iridescent material, imitating the luster of a natural pearl. Shell beads are also used as pearl imitations (Fig. 6). These have the same physical and chemical properties as pearls; therefore they are harder to distinguish from natural pearls.

Imitation pearls should always be sold with the “imitation” prefix, and never should simply

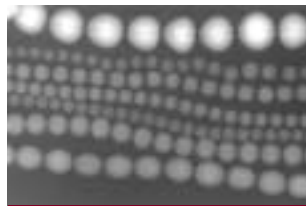


FIGURE 6: THESE IMITATION PEARLS WERE SENT TO THE LABORATORY FOR TESTING. THE BEAD WAS MADE OF MOTHER-OF-PEARL TO IMITATE THE SAME SPECIFIC GRAVITY AS CULTURED PEARLS. PHOTO: MIN HTUT, ©AGTA GEMMOLOGICAL TESTING CENTER



FIGURE 7: AT PASPALEY IN DARWIN, AUSTRALIA, THE PEARLS ARE SLIGHTLY POLISHED USING GROUND NUTSHELL. PHOTO: LORE KIEFERT, ©SSEF SWISS GEMMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE



FIGURE 8: WHEN LOOKING DOWN THE DRILL HOLE OF A DYED PEARL, A COLOR CONCENTRATION WHICH IS MORE INTENSE THAN THE OVERALL COLOR OF THE PEARL INDICATES ARTIFICIAL COLORATION. PHOTO: HENRY A. HANNI, ©SSEF SWISS GEMMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

be called pearls. Generally, imitation pearls are easy to distinguish from both natural and cultured pearls because they do not possess the overlapping platelets of aragonite (visible with the microscope).

PEARL TREATMENTS

Like many gemstones, pearls are also treated to improve their appearance. Some enhancements are considered common trade practice, such as the bleaching of whitish pearls or polishing with a soft material (e.g. ground nutshell; Fig. 7). Others, especially color alteration, have to be declared according to international rules.

Various methods are used to alter color. The oldest and often easiest to detect is dyeing with organic dyes. This can generally be seen by peering down the drill hole with the microscope (Fig. 8).

The use of silver nitrate is a common practice to imitate black pearls, although nowadays it is not widely used. Silver nitrate in bead-nucleated cultured pearls can be detected in the x-ray image, because it is inert to x-rays and leaves a light ring or part-ring between the bead and the nacre. Freshwater nacre can be altered to become black by irradiation. Recently, several processes are being used to produce a better yellow in South Sea cultured pearls, or to obtain a brown color in Tahitian cultured pearls. These color modifications are sometimes hard to verify, even with advanced testing methods.

THE AGTA GTC PEARL IDENTIFICATION REPORT

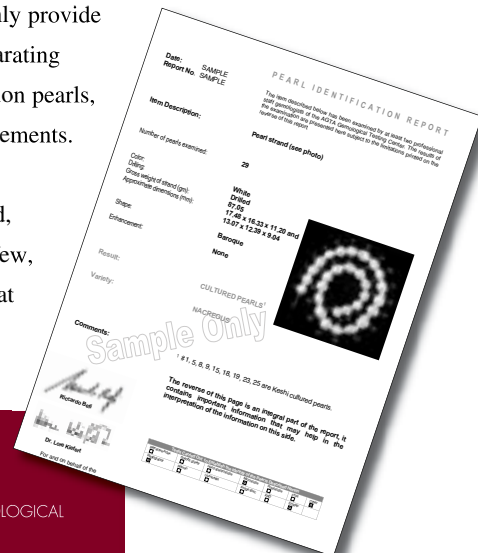
By now it should be clear that pearl testing should not be taken lightly. This is a job for experts.

There is certainly nothing wrong with purchasing any type of pearl, be it natural, cultured, imitation or treated. Each has its place in the market. But when we make an important purchase, we expect to get what we pay for. And thus when we make these purchases, it is wise to seek expert help.

The experts at the AGTA GTC have a wide range of services to offer. We not only provide comprehensive testing, separating natural, cultured and imitation pearls, but we also identify enhancements.

Such testing gives true peace-of-mind (Fig. 9). And, if you're among the lucky few, you might even discover that your grandmother's pearls are natural. ▲

FIGURE 9: AGTA GTC PEARL REPORT FOR A STRAND OF SOUTH SEA CULTURED PEARLS. ©AGTA GEMMOLOGICAL TESTING CENTER



Color Sparkled on the Red Carpet at the 78th Annual Academy Awards

Award winning celebrities dazzled the red carpet at this year's Academy Awards by opting to add colored gemstone jewelry to their lives. From amethyst to turquoise, and modern to vintage, color exploded across the Oscar scene.

Best Supporting Actress nominee Keira Knightley was breathtaking in a Vera Wang eggplant colored dress. Even more breathtaking was her vintage Bulgari necklace. Covered in emeralds, rubies, sapphires and diamonds, the vintage piece from the 1960s completed her ensemble. Knightley was not the only star who uncovered a vintage treasure. Jennifer Anniston and Best Supporting Actress nominee Michelle Williams also flaunted vintage pieces. Jann Carl from Entertainment Tonight selected a stunning necklace to compliment her plum colored gown. Her gold choker necklace featured beautiful pink and green tourmalines. The former bare necks of the red carpet envied the bejeweled necklaces- which will undoubtedly be a trend for the rest of the year.

The chandelier earrings have evolved into stunning drops with a modern and sleek look. Best Actress winner Reese Witherspoon sparkled in her eye-popping chandelier earrings. The soft pink coral briolette and diamond earrings put the finishing touch on her beaded look. Amy Adams, nominated for Best Supporting Actress, was covered from head to toe in Carolina Herrera- literally. Exquisite aquamarine drops dripped from her ears to accent the chocolate-colored attire. Jessica Alba glittered in a flowing and fitted golden Versace dress. Her golden look showcased dazzling earrings featuring intense yellow beryl.

Rings were bold and eye catching this year. Hustle and Flow actress Taraji P. Henson's finger glimmered with a gorgeous turquoise cabochon ring. A winning combination of turquoise jewelry made Ms. Henson a knockout. Kiera Knightley's ensemble also featured a spectacular 17.28 carat emerald cocktail ring.



The Oscar's red carpet, with its long history of ushering in the newest trends in fashion and color, was a wonderful parade of colored gemstone jewelry, which will no doubt influence and spark consumer interest. ▲

For more information on colored gemstones and cultured pearls or to see some of the seasons hottest looks please log on to www.AddMoreColorToYourLife.com.

1. REESE WITHERSPOON 2. KEIRA KNIGHTLEY 3. TARAJI P. HENSON'S 4. AMY ADAMS 5. JESSICA ALBA 6. JANNI CARL



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