

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR THE
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Jeweller



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Fine line

WHO DECIDES IF
JEWELLERY IS FINE?



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AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW
OF THE BIGGEST FAIR



BUSINESS

ADD VALUE WITH BESPOKE GEMS

When customers ask for something special, jewellers who are stumped for an answer may not have considered bespoke gemstones. Gem-cutter Doug Menadue gives Jeff Salton an insight into the opportunities presented by one-of-a-kind gemstones.

For a long time, the commercial market was the only place jewellers could source their gems. Commercial gems were limited to standard designs and shapes, and often the quality of the cut was poor.

In recent years, the emergence of the custom gem-cutter who can tailor a gem to exact requirements has breathed new life into this segment of the industry. Bespoke gem-cutting is providing possibilities to creative jewellery manufacturers who like to think outside the square.

Why choose a bespoke gem? Doug Menadue from Bespoke Gems in Queensland says one of the most compelling reasons is that a custom gem-cutter can provide a finely-cut and polished stone whose design has been carefully selected and optimised to bring out the best in colour and performance.

Menadue has been offering jewellers unique stones since 2004.

As one of a number of specialist gem-cutters servicing the industry, he says this point of difference can be a major attraction to customers who have become disenchanted with everyday stones.

“Jewellers, and their customers, are able to select a gem that is a small work of art – pure colour, brilliance and light. Bespoke gems stand out from the crowd,” Menadue says.

FINE DETAIL

Just as a master jeweller designs and crafts a beautiful ring or pendant with a careful eye to the setting and placement of all elements, so too does the gem-cutter pay attention to fine detail, orientating the rough just right to achieve the best colour, light and proportions.

“A highly-skilled gem-cutter should be able to create a design that complements the stone’s natural shape, disguising any flaws or inclusions while staying true to the customer’s design wishes,” he adds.

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Historically, the big four gems have always dominated: diamonds, sapphires, emeralds and rubies. These are the names that all consumers recognise; however, the availability of this material has dropped in recent years, forcing prices upwards.

What will emerge is a trend to use smaller stones in an effort to keep costs low as sources dry up and good quality gemstones become much harder and more expensive to find.

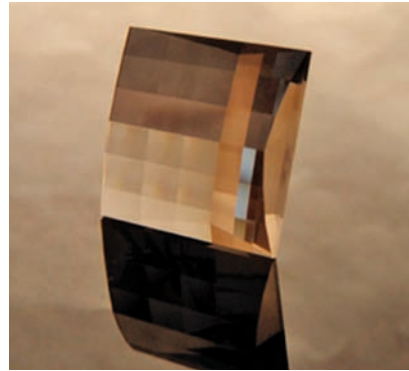
Also, the problem of synthetics and “enhanced” gems grows all the time.

According to gem-cutters like Menadue, the majority of commercial sapphire has been enhanced or treated in some manner, whether it be heating to remove inclusions and improve the colour and clarity of a sapphire or adding Beryllium treatments to obtain desired and consistent colours.

There is also glass-filling, aimed at turning a poor specimen that might originally have been useful for goldfish tank ballast into something that can now be cut and set into jewellery.



DOUG MENADUE FROM BESPOKE GEMS WITH A COLLECTION OF ROUGH STONES PRIOR TO BECOMING SOME OF HIS UNIQUE CREATIONS (SEE RIGHT)



SMOKEY QUARTZ, MOCK CHECK SQUARE, 8.5-CT, 12MM, FROM O'BRIENS CREEK, QUEENSLAND



MANDARIN SPESSARTITE GARNET, MINI MINT, 1-CT, 5MM, FROM TANZANIA



RUBELLITE TOURMALINE, ACORN, 8.7-CT, 10MM, FROM NIGERIA



MAN-MADE BIRON EMERALD, EMERALD CUT, 3.8-CT, 7MM

"Glass-filled rubies are a huge problem and sometimes it seems glass-filled stones are more coloured glass than actual stone.

"Any natural, untreated gemstone is a relatively rare beast that should demand a premium over any equivalently/enhanced' or treated stone," says Menadue.

But what will the addition of a bespoke gem do for a jewellery item? It will bring an added quality to the piece itself.

Before, choices were limited to commercially-cut ovals, rounds, squares and so on, but now the door has been opened to provide customers with "designer" or "boutique" gems, even though most stones remain oval, round or square.

INCREDIBLE ARRAY

These gems are available in an incredible array of colours, designs and patterns, no longer boring but exciting, optimised to the correct angles for the type of material to bring out their very best qualities.

Competent gem-cutters can offer designs ranging from classics like the Asscher cut

through to the very modern and dynamic.

The relatively low cost of a bespoke gem is another pleasant surprise. At first, jewellers may argue that they do not need to pay several hundred dollars when a dealer sells the "same" stone for just \$10.

"Well, why pay \$50 for a bottle of wine when you can get one for \$5? We all know the answer to that question," Menadue says.

How many poor quality, commercially-made gold settings are being sold and how do they compare with the handmade, beautifully-crafted piece that manufacturing jewellers produce?

Bespoke, hand-cut gemstones are large and vibrant, selected from a rich spectrum of colour, tones and hues that offer endless possibilities to jewellers looking to tap into seasonal changes in the marketplace in exciting ways, making use of colour and design.

The quality of a gemstone should complement the quality of a jeweller's own work. When gemstones are used as

BESPOKE, HAND-CUT GEMSTONES OFFER ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES TO JEWELLERS LOOKING TO TAP INTO SEASONAL CHANGES IN THE MARKETPLACE IN EXCITING WAYS

centrepieces in an item, a hand-cut gem can be the difference between a nice piece and a stunner.

A highly-skilled gem-cutter can provide the stones that fussy or adventurous customers demand. For instance, they can deliver a stone that meets the customer's desire for a particular colour, a shade of purple for example, and can provide it in a particular shape and size.

Obtaining well-matched pairs or suites of gems can be a personalised service from a gem-cutter that in today's highly competitive market and can give a jeweller an edge.

AVOIDING THE MUNDANE

Jewellers who have acquired and even accumulated rough gemstones in their travels may lack the inspiration to maximise the potential of their gems. Discussing possibilities with a trusted gem-cutter can deliver the impetus for a one-of-a-kind masterpiece.

Jewellers keen to avoid the mundane should seek the services of a qualified bespoke gem-cutter who shares a common desire to think outside the square. ✱



www.bespoke-gems.com