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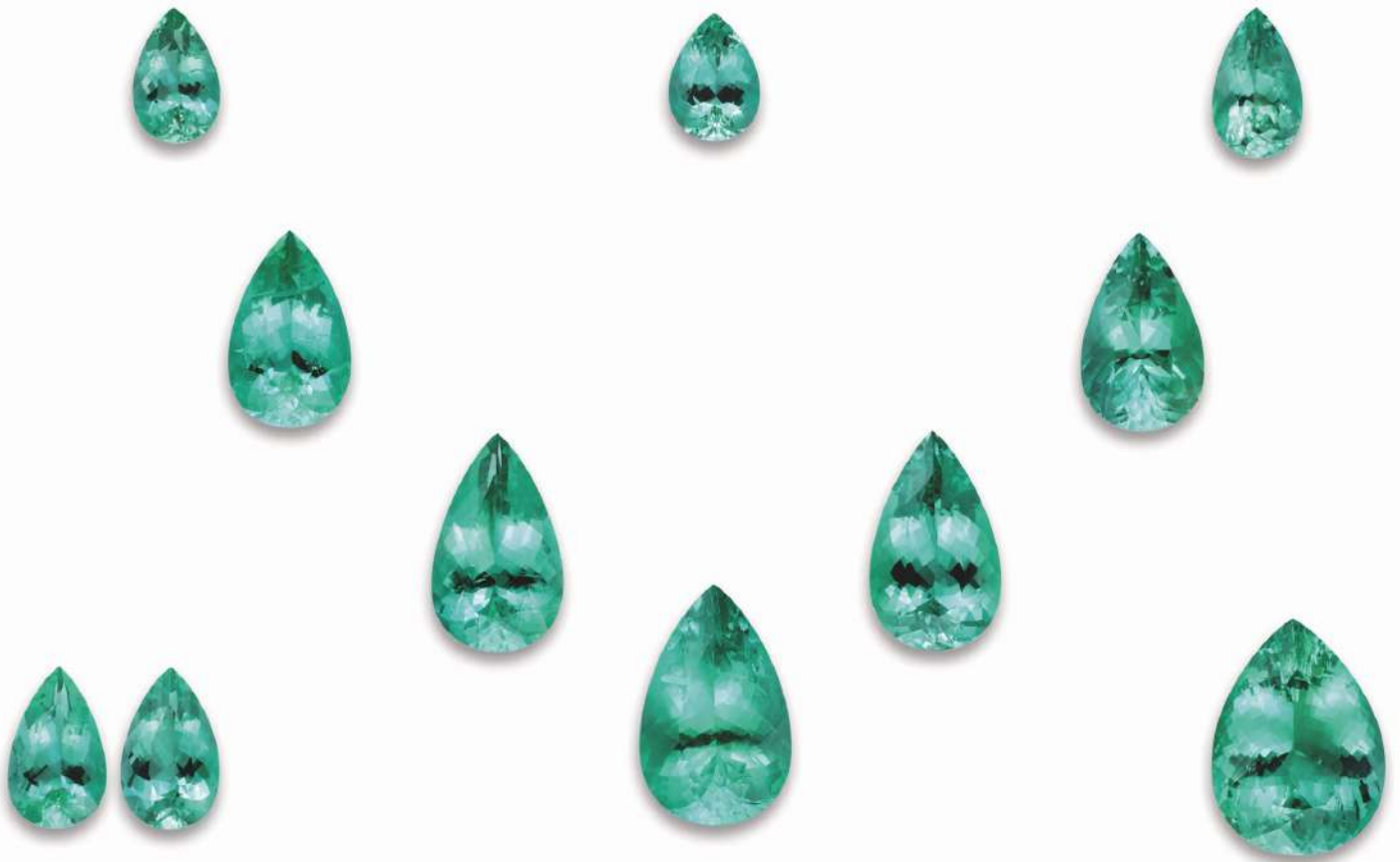
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Donna Jewel x Galdus School

Photo András Barta. Courtesy GemGenève

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The background of the poster is a complex, abstract artwork by Anselm Kiefer. It features a dense, crumpled texture of highly reflective silver foil, which creates a shimmering, metallic effect. Interspersed throughout this silver texture are vertical, irregular splatters of a vibrant blue color, resembling paint or ink. The overall composition is dynamic and layered, with the silver and blue elements creating a sense of depth and movement.

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Mahenge Spinel 3,15 carats

Courtesy Karl Faller. GemGenève

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GEMGENÈVE: JEWELLERY CULTURE FOR ALL!

From 9 to 12 May, amidst the Geneva Luxury Week, the 8th edition of GemGenève welcomes over 180 exhibitors from around the globe at Hall 1 of Palexpo. This spring edition is marked by a strong emphasis on creativity and culture.

Established in 2018 by two Geneva-based gemstone and jewellery dealers, Ronny Totah and Thomas Faerber, GemGenève proudly proclaims its motto: “A fair designed by exhibitors, for exhibitors.” However, it is also aimed at the general public, a rarity in the jewellery world. Unlike exclusive global trade shows such as the Hong Kong fair, which are reserved for professionals, GemGenève caters to both dealers and visitors, from enthusiasts to novices alike. Gemstone traders, diamond dealers, pearl and jewellery merchants, gemmology labs, manufacturers, specialist bookstores, experts, and historians — the event prides itself on its cultural and artistic component that defines its uniqueness. “With GemGenève, we share and impart knowledge, we commit to educating and raising awareness among both connoisseurs and the general public, and we encourage new generations to learn and explore. We are simply transmitting our passion for the world of jewellery and gemstones,” say Ida Faerber and Nadège Totah, who co-founded GemGenève with their fathers. “We place as much importance on gems, jewellery design, and jewellery making as on fostering genuine solidarity within the international community of gemstone dealers, vintage jewellery merchants, designers, and enthusiasts,” adds Thomas Faerber. The formula is successful. In its six years and eight editions, held in spring and autumn, the fair has grown from 147 exhibitors in 2018 to 172 last November. And in May 2023, GemGenève set a new attendance record with a total of 6,487 visits.

A launchpad for contemporary creation

For this 8th edition, 180 exhibitors have signed up. Covering the full spectrum of the jewellery world,

they will showcase everyday wearable pieces as well as ancient gems and exceptional museum-quality items, along with collections from emerging designers. Since its inception, GemGenève has been envisioned as a platform for contemporary creation. “It’s an event where great emphasis is placed on culture, youth, education, and the transmission of knowledge, and above all, our passion for the jewellery trades,” explains Ronny Totah.

Curated by Nadège Totah, the “Designers’ Village” brings together new names in jewellery and rising stars in the field. It offers the public an opportunity to discover some lesser-known but promising designers handpicked by Nadège Totah throughout the year [see p.24]. For the May 2024 edition, she has selected about ten rising stars in the Emerging Talents and New Designers categories. Unlike other fairs, they are given complete creative freedom. Indeed, the co-founder sometimes only discovers at the last minute the creations they have chosen to present. This unconventional freedom is quite rare in an industry where selection committees typically have control over validating exhibitor pieces.

Jeweller William Llewellyn Griffiths, an independent creator who trained in London with a family-owned jewellery house in Hatton Garden, offers astonishing sculptural creations that sometimes incorporate miniature mechanisms and integrates cutting-edge technologies like digitisation or 3D printing into his artistic process. Crafting all his jewellery in his Melbourne workshop, William Llewellyn Griffiths will be showcased for the first time in Europe at the 8th edition of GemGenève.

Returning to the fair, Shavarsh Hakobian is one of the most anticipated emerging talents at this 8th edition. Revealed last November, the Armenian designer had then presented exclusive pieces using atypical materials such as wood, leather, or fabric. “Participating in GemGenève marked a significant milestone in my career as a jeweller,” he explains. “It was the first time I presented my collections outside Armenia. The attention and interest from industry specialists were exhilarating. It felt like a validation of my work, of the relevance of my jewellery within a broader artistic and professional community.”

Emerging talents and the revival of “Made in Italy”

Villa Milano epitomises the resurgence of “Made in Italy”. Established in 1876, this family business asserted itself as a prominent jewellery house by the late 19th century, notably winning a gold medal at the 1889 Paris Exhibition with a detachable silver sculpture. In 2018, sisters Alice and Francesca Villa took over the reins to innovate and redefine the brand. Across the Atlantic,

GemGenève’s awards

During the fair, six awards recognise the most creative projects. The Swiss Gemmological Institute (SSEF Schweizerische Stiftung für Edelstein-Forschung) will allow each winner to benefit from a training internship at their laboratory, with accommodation expenses covered by GemGenève.

The Engagement jewel

Public Award, in collaboration with the Swiss Gemmological Institute.

Photomicrography competition

The jury, formed by Institut de Bijouterie de Saumur, Royal Belgian Gemmological Society, and Marine Bouvier, will award three unprecedented prizes (Technical award, Artistic award, and Public’s favourite award).

The Public award

In collaboration with the Swiss Gemmological Institute.

“What is your totem animal?”

Public award in collaboration with Donna Jewel and the Swiss Gemmological Institute.

Jaqueline Powers is a fresh brand driven by Corina Tahuil and Vince Gerardis in Miami, where jewellery merges with fashion to create wearable art.

First unveiled in Europe in 2023 by GemGenève, Aso Leon represents the new wave of Chinese *haute joaillerie*. Known as the “Prince of titanium”, this designer, who had never left his native country until last year, made a significant impact last November. “Through my jewellery, I wish to convey some Zen philosophy,” he says. “Nowadays, things are done very quickly: I want to invite people to pause, slow down, feel nature, let memories surface. I aim to use my jewellery to explain the magic of nature.”

New designers and artistic crafts

The New Designers category is not lacking in innovation either, with creations like those from A.win Siu, created by Xiao Xintong, featuring pop and colourful jewellery

[see box p.37]; Estelle Lagarde, a trained gouache artist who worked at Van Cleef & Arpels in Paris before launching her own studio in 2018; Diana Zhang, who emerged ten years ago at the legendary Biennale des Antiquaires; Ho Siu Chong, a renowned jeweller and enamel artist trained in Hong Kong; and Diva Jewels, a traditional workshop based in Mumbai led by Rishi Mehta, who has transformed his family business into a genuine creative and production studio where each piece of jewellery is personalised.

Masterpiece

This year, the “The Designers’ Village” also introduces a new concept: “Masterpiece”. A category dedicated to a contemporary work of exceptional significance, both monumental and a masterpiece of artistic crafts. The first to be honoured is Alicia Stanska, who presents a remarkable *haute couture* dress called *Equilibrium of powers*.

“I am sometimes a designer, sometimes a creator. When I design jewellery, I start with gemstones as my starting point, but I also draw inspiration from materials.

— Alice Villa



Dessin d'Andrea Serio

© Andrea Serio, 9eART+
Coutoiserie Festival de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême

Opalescence (still, 2024), Michel Huelin

© Michel Huelin. Courtesy GemGenève





515

C33

C23

GemGenève November 2023

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency



Precision cut 60-baguettes diamonds necklace (2019), OM Global

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

Building bridges between generations and encouraging excellence is one of our priorities; thus, this 8th edition of GemGenève is punctuated by several educational projects developed in collaboration with our partners. — *Mathieu Dekeukelaire*

Adorned with over 110,000 hand-embroidered Swarovski crystals by this master embroiderer formerly of Lesage workshops, the piece took more than three years to complete and launches a long-term conceptual project by this Polish designer, blending design, fashion, art, and technology [see p.62].

Artisanal collaboration and heritage

The crafts and their heritage are integral to GemGenève's DNA. The founders even embedded this in their manifesto: "We connect past, present, and future." For the May edition, a new initiative took shape: throughout the duration of the fair, several artisans will collaborate to design a unique piece of jewellery. Proposed by the craftsmen during the previous edition and enthusiastically received by the organisers [see p.48], a chain maker, gold lace maker, diamond cutter, pearl stringer, enameller, engraver, lapidary, and setter will work together over the five days to reveal the behind-the-scenes creation of a unique piece made for the occasion.

Shining opals

A central event of GemGenève's cultural programme, the "Flames of Opal Essence" exhibition celebrates the opal, a gemstone once overlooked but now resurgent in contemporary design [see p.32]. Fifty pieces of jewellery and artworks have been assembled for this choral exhibition, in collaboration with the Geneva Museum of Art and History, Piaget, Chinese house A.win Siu, Chris Price Opals, Emil Weis Opals, Ernst Färber from Faerber-Collection, Imagem, Kreis Jewellery, Nicolas Torroni, Paul Fisher Inc., contemporary artist Michel Huelin,

Conference programme

Thursday 9 May

3:00 pm: An interview with Lucia Silvestri, Creative Director of Bulgari and Amanda Triossi, jewellery historian [in English].

4:30 pm: Discussion with Olivier Bachet, author of *In the beginning was the line: Cartier Art Deco drawings 1910-1930* [in French].

5:00 pm: Panel discussion "The art and science of gemstone cutting" moderated by Richa Goyal Sikri, journalist and author [in English].

Friday 10 May

11:00 am: Panel discussion "The impact of inclusions in gems from a scientific, educational, artistic, and commercial perspective" featuring Marine Bouvier (gemmologist and photomicrographer), Emmanuel Piat (CEO of Piat), Pierre Lefèvre (Head of the Coloured stones and pearls department at SSEF) and Colin Fonteyn (instructor at the Royal Belgian Gemmological Society) [in French].

2:00 pm: Lecture "A renewed study of the collection of France's Crown Jewels" by Anne Dion Tenenbaum, Chief Curator of the Decorative arts department at the Louvre, followed at **3:00 pm** by a discussion and book signing with the author [in French].

3:30 pm: Lecture "Cabochon, art and craftsmanship" with Gislain Aucremanne (Curator and Heritage director at Bulgaria) and Marie Chabrol (gemmologist and journalist) [in English].

5:00 pm: Panel discussion "Diamond, an industrial product like any other?" featuring Boris Chauviré (researcher and teacher in geology, mineralogy, and gemmology), Chloé Picard (gemmologist), Marie Chabrol (gemmologist and journalist), Astrid Pothion (gemmologist), Michaël Mintrone (Head of the Diamond department at SSEF) and Raj Mehta (Director of Rosy Blue) [in English].

Saturday 11 May

11:00 am: Lecture "Opals through time: a journey from Ancient myths to Modern science" with Laurent Cartier (SEEF), Kathia Pinckernelle and researcher Boris Chauviré [in English].

2:00 pm: Discussion with Geoffray Riondet, author of *Antique French Jewellery 1800-1850* [in English].

2:00 pm: Panel discussion "The challenges of being a jewellery designer: preparing one's career path, industry evolution, market demands" with Katerina Perez (journalist), David Roux-Fouillet (HEAD-Genève), Christopher Lopes (Senior Designer) and Enzo Melchiorre [in French].

4:00 pm: Lecture "Gem secrets from the museums" by Helen Molesworth (Jewellery, the V&A) and Robin Hansen (Minerals and gemstones, Natural History Museum, London), followed at **5:00 pm** by a discussion with them [in English].

5:00 pm: Workshop session "Diamonds and geopolitics, the supply challenges" led by Association Gemmologie et Francophonie [in French].

Sunday 12 May

11:30 am: Panel discussion "Opals: market and trends" with Philippe Scordia, Brice Decque (Imagem), Margaux Allaire (Imagem) and Juerge Schuetz (President of Emil Weis Opals) [in English].

2:00 pm: Discussion with Association Gemmologie et Francophonie [in French].

photographer Brice Decque, videographers Laurent Kariv and Jynx Productions Paris, and Boris Chauviré, an opal specialist with a PhD in mineralogy. A distinguished assembly celebrates what Shakespeare called “the queen of gems”, a favourite of Empress Joséphine and Queen Victoria.

Meeting the craftsmen

From Wednesday 8 to Sunday 12 May, GemGenève also offers the opportunity to discover the excellent crafts in the field of jewellery and meet their finest representatives. The profession of diamond cutting with H&H; chain making with Laurent Jolliet; engraving with Richard Lundin; enameling with Matteo Stauffacher, pearl stringing with Sabine Gyger; marquetry with Rose Saneuil; gemmology with Anne Quedillac, gold embroidery with Sara Bran and stone setting with Mehdi Belharet (do check the GemGenève website for dates and times of their interventions).

I like to think of my jewellery not just as simple adornments, but as tiny portable works of art that allow those who wear them to experience the timeless beauty of these eras and to carry a piece of the past into their everyday lives.

— *William Llewellyn Griffiths*

Fostering the next generation

To pass the baton to the younger generation, GemGenève has developed a comprehensive mentoring axis embodied in several educational projects, carried out throughout the year in collaboration with eight partner schools: HEAD, École Technique de la Vallée de Joux, CPNE Pôle Arts Appliqués, CFP Arts Genève, the Institut de Bijouterie de Saumur, the Royal Belgian Gemmological Society, Galdus School, and Francesco Degni Institute. At each edition, students get a chance to showcase their creations. In 2022, to give students the opportunity to develop their first professional project, GemGenève also launched its inaugural gouache competition, an essential drawing technique for model makers, jewellers, gemmologists, polishers, and setters at each stage of jewellery creation. Described as “admirably acclaimed by the profession” by the organisers, this competition is held annually with the support of the ASMEBI (Association romande des

Métiers de la Bijouterie) and the Eric Horovitz Foundation, which awards a prize. In 2024, students were invited to explore the theme of “Boundary”. Participants will present their work at the upcoming November edition. While students from ETVJ and CPNE Pôle Arts Appliqués have six months to produce refined pieces, CFP Arts Genève apprentices will have the same time to create a 3D printed prototype set with stones.

In May, three innovative projects complement these educational initiatives. The “Engagement Jewel” exhibition, created in partnership with HEAD and the Grand Théâtre de Genève (GTG), reveals student designs inspired by Richard Strauss’s opera *Der Rosenkavalier* (*The Knight of the Rose*), part of GTG’s programming [see p.72]. Together with gemmologist Marine Bouvier, and in collaboration with the Institut de Bijouterie de Saumur and the Royal Belgian Gemmological Society, GemGenève hosts the first exhibition of photomicrography, an obscure discipline at the intersection of science and arts [see p.54]. About twenty projects by students will lead to the first photomicrography competition [see box p.58]. Another contest, another novelty: Laura Inghirami, founder of media outlet Donna Jewel, challenges students with “What is your Totem Animal?”. The bestiary from students of the Galdus School and Francesco Degni Institute will be displayed, with prizes awarded and a feature in the magazine. At GemGenève, young talents can already hear the trumpets of fame sounding.



Blue tourmaline

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

MINERAL



Rough diamonds. Stones from Canada. SRK

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

“STARGAZING”

As a duo, Nadège Totah and Mathieu Dekeukelaire, the maestros of GemGenève, are extremely attentive to their exhibitors, demonstrating that a trade fair can also be a significant cultural event.

Nadège Totah, known as the globe-trotter of GemGenève, travels the world and navigates social networks annually, scouting for tomorrow’s jewellery design talents. With passion and a keen eye, she selects a handful of designers to showcase at the salon’s Designer Village, proving that talent knows no age nor borders. Meanwhile, Mathieu Dekeukelaire, director of GemGenève, exhibits boundless creativity in seasonally reinventing the fair’s cultural programme to highlight the excellence of artistic crafts and foster the next generation of artisans.

What the Designer Village will look like for this 8th edition?

Nadège Totah (NT): For our 8th edition, the Designer Village will welcome five Emerging Talents and five New Designers, including some who have previously participated in GemGenève, like Shavarsh Hakobian, an Armenian designer we introduced last November. He was quite successful, actually. I find his work intriguing because it has a distinctive identity and creative flair. Villa Milano returns as an emerging talent. This Italian designer belongs to an old jewellery house, already established in the United States. Together with her sister, they have decided to modernise their legacy and use their craftsmanship to create their own jewellery line. We also welcome Aso Leon, who represents the new wave of high-end Chinese jewellery. He first attended in May 2023, marking his first trip outside China. After a year of hard work, he returns with a new collection.

Who are the other talents?

NT: Among the new talents, we will also have William Llewellyn Griffiths, who incorporates mechanisms into his jewellery, like mini carousels,

and uses vibrantly coloured stones. His work is incredibly precise and meticulous. Jaqueline Powers is a rather enigmatic new American brand. There’s something about their creations that captures my attention, though I can’t quite explain it just yet. Often, it’s this kind of intuition that guides my selections... And then there are A.win Siu, Estelle Lagarde, Diana Zhang, Diva Jewels, and others!

What does a salon like GemGenève offer all these designers?

NT: Last November, I really realised that some emerging talents we’ve been supporting from the start often question their legitimacy. At other fairs, it sometimes feels like visitors just glance at their display cases, find the jewellery pretty, and that’s it. They then move on. Here, on the other hand, they have the opportunity to explain their creative processes and their stories. And they’ve been thrilled. For six months, they face challenges to prepare for the next edition of GemGenève and to push their creative boundaries further. It’s this recognition that builds their confidence, and I’m very proud of that.

More than just recognition, the creators featured at the Designer Village come to GemGenève seeking validation of their work and acknowledgment of their craftsmanship by a community of professionals. Their participation marks a key milestone in their artistic careers. — *Nadège Totah*

These designers are somewhat like your protégés...

NT: That's why we do this job. We give these creators visibility, and then they grow and strive to push their talents even further. For instance, after his participation in GemGenève last November — Shavarsh Hakobian, who was exhibiting outside Armenia for the first time — wanted to work on a new collection to unveil at the fair in May. I'm really looking forward to discovering it.

What other novelties will the Designer Village feature?

NT: This year, we decided to launch a new section within the Designer Village called Masterpiece, where we will present a piece related to art, jewellery, and craftsmanship, somewhat in the spirit of a masterpiece. For this launch, we will showcase the incredible project of Alicia Stanska, *Equilibrium of powers* [see p.62]. Alicia is a master embroiderer, trained at Lesage house; she created a life-size *haute couture* gown completely embroidered by hand with 110,000 Swarovski crystals! It's a true feat of artistic and technical prowess.

How will the crafts be represented in this edition?

Mathieu Dekeukelaire (MD): The crafts are a kind of thread that runs through the various projects we develop for

3 questions to... Ronny Totah

Ronny Totah is a co-founder of GemGenève and a member of the Board of Directors.

GemGenève is quite different from "traditional" fairs.

What are the key principles that govern it?

Our approach ensures that every visitor can discover all the specialties and wonders that GemGenève has to offer by performing a full 360-degree rotation. This method promotes the exploration of the diversity we provide and piques the visitor's curiosity. By turning around, one should be able to admire the variety presented by the exhibitors: from ancient to contemporary pieces, diamonds, coloured diamonds, fine and precious stones, to engraved stones, to name just a few. However, we do have a dedicated area for young talents in the Designer Village and in the Knowledge Village, which includes all the artistic crafts and schools. We also have a space devoted to literature with the LetuBooks Library and the Gem & Jewel Book Collectors, as well as a specially designed area for our cultural exhibitions. This year, the opal will be featured in an exhibition titled "Flames of Opal Essence" [see p.32].

Since the inception of the fair, you always created new universes for each edition. What will be the theme for Spring 2024?

We are proud and delighted to give each edition a unique and personalised touch that leaves a strong impression on our visitors and exhibitors. This ability is one of the great strengths of our team. The Parisian design agency Autre Idée assists us in our deliberations and proposes a renewed scenography for each edition, regardless of the hall. This spring, the theme of Hall 1 will be marked by travel, dreams, movement, and ascent. The colours will be spring-like with shades of green and sky blue, creating a dynamic and airy atmosphere conducive to discovery and wonder.

What will be the main features of your cultural programme?

For each fair, under the leadership of Mathieu Dekeukelaire, our director, we strive to offer a unique cultural and educational programme that highlights the heritage and expertise of the jewellery industry. This programme takes various forms, such as presentations, conferences, panel discussions, collaborative thematic exhibitions, and much more. It allows us to stay at the forefront of the latest industry trends, deepen our knowledge, or simply dive deeper into this fascinating world we inhabit! Educational projects involving Swiss and international schools are generating increasing enthusiasm among students and the general public, as are the projects dedicated to the artistic crafts.



Julieth Lozano sur GemGenève May 2023

Photo Andrés Barta. Courtesy GemGenève

From the very beginning of GemGenève, we have always acted with heartfelt dedication. Ultimately, there's a reciprocity with the exhibitors we host. That's our greatest success. — *Nadège Totah*

GemGenève, whether this year with the new Masterpiece section or through our regular collaboration with the Grand Théâtre de Genève and schools, as around the engagement jewellery for this edition [see p.72]. A new project around crafts will consist of creating a piece during the fair [see p.48]. It will show how these high-precision trades coordinate around a creation.

constantly develop new projects and go further. We don't do copy-paste from one edition to another, I think everyone will agree. We are in our 6th year and continue to innovate, as with Masterpieces for contemporary design. With crafts, we push the logic of the collective even further. Our exhibition gains more and more in scope and visibility [see p.32]. Often, the constraints of the organisation push us to exceed our limits, to learn from our mistakes and to gain flexibility.

NT: Without necessarily wanting to compare ourselves to others, each edition of GemGenève is unique, in that we change the entire scenography, all the colours, the whole campaign, all the decor each time. I, who visit 5 to 6 fairs a year, often see the same thing over and

GemGenève is proud to have, from its first edition, dedicated a chapter to contemporary creation. Supporting young designers and emerging talents is embedded in the DNA of our fair. — *Mathieu Dekeukelaire*

Did the GemGenève's founders want to integrate this craft and heritage component from the beginning of the fair?

NT: I can confirm that. But I think that at the time we had the idea to create GemGenève with the desire to share this notion of transmission and craftsmanship, none of us could have imagined that the project could be carried and pushed this far, especially thanks to Mathieu. As he does not come from these trades originally, he does not have certain barriers or reflexes that we do. With him, our imagination knows no limits. In short, he makes the impossible possible!

After eight editions, isn't there a risk that a routine might set in?

MD: There's no routine, there's efficiency! The experience of the organisation we have set up allows us, on the contrary, the freedom to

over again, like, for example, in Hong Kong. We are a young, dynamic team that does not rest on its laurels.

Like our designers, we face challenges every day and that's the source of our motivation.

How do you see the evolution of GemGenève in the coming years?

NT: I would say a few more exhibitors... but not too many! Otherwise, the risk would be to lose some of that DNA, that closeness that we share with all the actors of the fair. When I see what we have accomplished in six years, I think the next ten or fifteen years are going to be incredible.

MD: Our ability to adapt allows us to be responsive and to meet the real demands of the exhibitors, based on the market, current events, the calendar, etc. We must always allow ourselves this freedom to best adapt to the needs of the merchants.

What can we wish for you for your 8th edition?

NT: That visitors leave inspired, with stars in their eyes from what they've seen, learned, and discovered.

MD: That vocations are created, that would be the most beautiful reward!

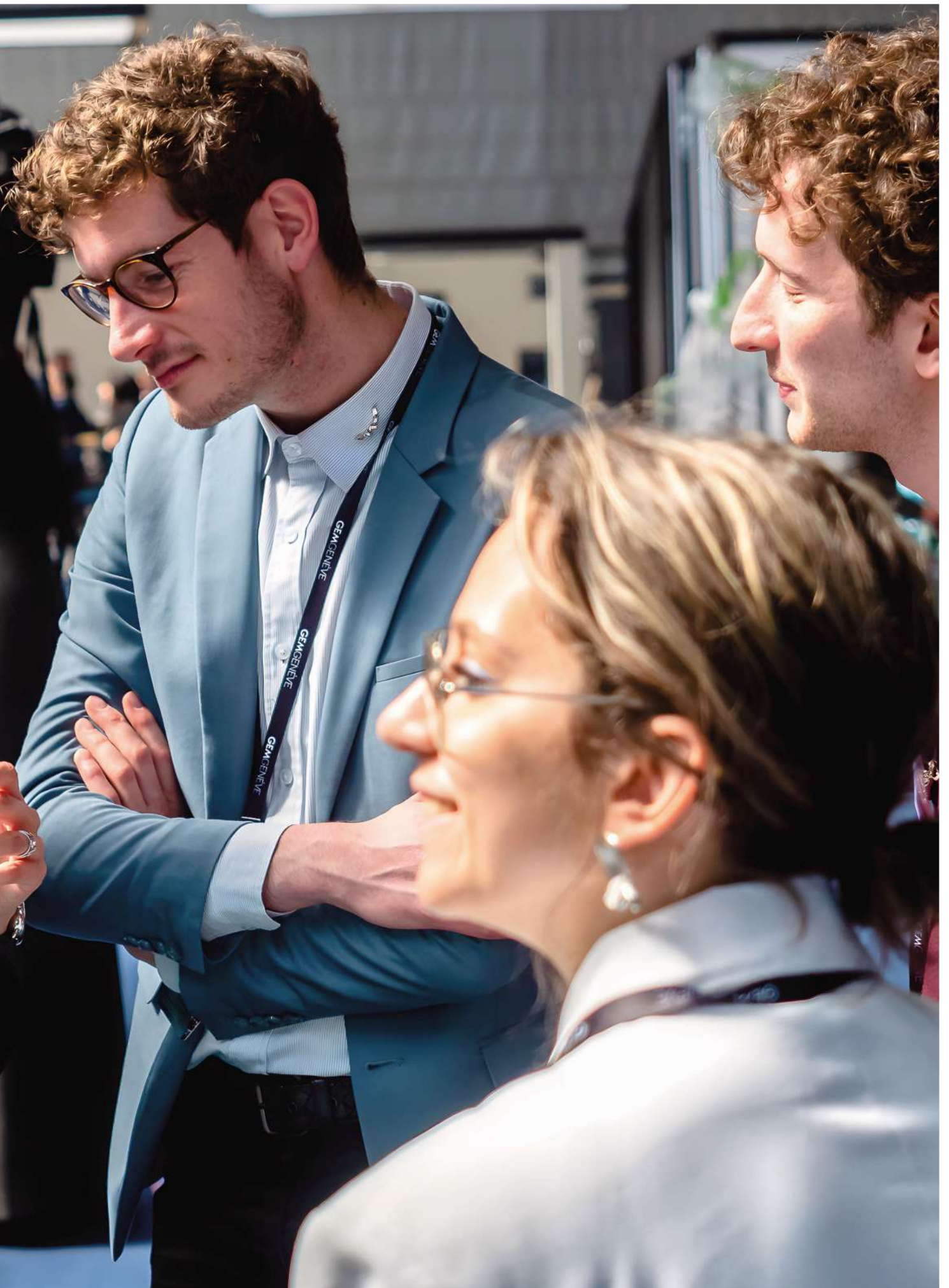
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Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency



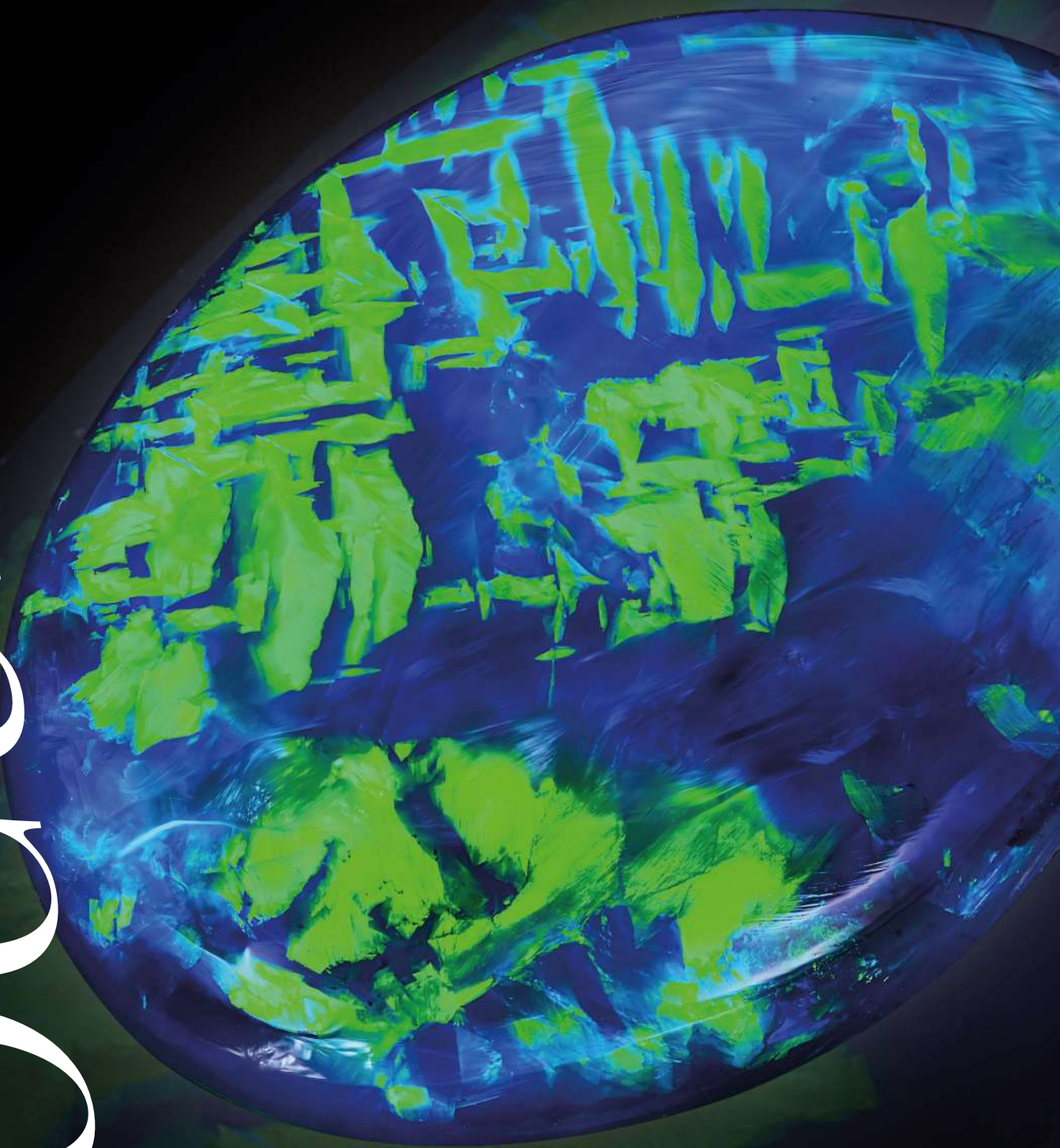


Nadège Totah and Mathieu Dekeukelaire

Photo Andrés Barta. Courtesy GemGenève



FLOODS



Black opal. Stone from Australia. KREIS Jewellery

Courtesy KREIS Jewellery, GemGenève



THE QUEEN OF GEMS

Known since antiquity, the opal is a geological marvel with its unique iridescence. Dubbed “The Queen of Gemstones” by Shakespeare, it was the favoured jewel of Empress Joséphine and Queen Victoria. In its 8th edition, GemGenève highlights it with the exhibition “Flames of Opal Essence.”

Captivating and enigmatic, the opal is surrounded by a mysterious aura. Its name derives from the Sanskrit *upala*, meaning “precious stone”, which was later adapted into Greek as *opallion* and Latin as *opalus*. Found in mythologies worldwide, it is often associated with rainbows and was cherished from ancient times. In Greek mythology, it captured Zeus’s tears after the Titans’ defeat, while it brought good fortune to the patricians of ancient Rome. In Australia, it is revered as a sacred stone in Aboriginal cultures, connecting to the ancestors. Although the oldest known artefacts made from this silica gel date back five centuries BCE, its usage undoubtedly extends much further.

“It appears that the earliest evidence of opal use dates back several millennia before our era (discovered by anthropologist Louis Leakey in Kenya), but there are still some doubts about the precise identification of the material. Being a fragile gem, there are few traces of opal used in ornaments in the past,” explains researcher Boris Chauviré, General Manager of GeoGems. He continues, “as a scientist, the mysteries of its formation and properties fascinated me. Unlike many known gems, opals can form under a significant range of poorly understood conditions. The discovery of opals on Mars has shown that these conditions are not exclusive to Earth. Also, its lack of crystallinity and the presence of water in its structure provide a broader range of properties than crystalline minerals (like emerald or sapphire). In short, beyond the captivating beauty of these stones, it’s their mysteries that have captivated me.”

The poetry of its geological formation

Opals contain an average of 5 to 10 p. 100 water, but this can rise to 30 p. 100. As they age, opals may

lose water (then called “hydrophane”) and crack. Simply soaking them in oil or spermaceti can restore their brilliance and opaline structure. Valuable pieces are sometimes kept in damp cotton wool, especially as opal is fragile, susceptible to impacts, and can be damaged by acids. “Opal forms unlike any other gemstone on Earth, which is why each opal is absolutely unique in shape and colour, whether natural or cut,” shares Tanja Schütz from Emil Weis Opals, a family business of opal experts based in Kirschweiler, Germany, known as the “village of opal”. She adds, “a high-quality opal with a play of colours will flash with ruby red, emerald green, sapphire blue, and heliodor yellow, with the brilliance of the most precious diamonds. Opal combines all the best qualities of the rarest gemstones into one dazzling stone, with a depth and inner life unmatched by any other gem.”

A sentiment echoed by Brice Decque, co-founder of Parisian house Iagem, specialising in the trade of high-quality gemstones, particularly the spectacular Australian black opals:

“Opal displays a unique and characteristic play of colours that sets it apart from all other stones traditionally used in jewellery. These shifting colours, which create patterns and designs, are valued for their uniqueness and complexity, each telling a different story. I believe an opal should be appreciated without a magnifying glass; it should be observed and touched. It approaches the realm of art, leaving conventional beauty standards to other stones. It inspires original designs and has brought a real breath of fresh air into our world of gemstones.”

“Flames of Opal Essence”

Through a selection of around fifty jewellery pieces and artworks, GemGenève dedicates its new exhibition to the opal. Merging the arts of jewellery and contemporary art, “Flames of Opal Essence” — a play on words — is “a sensory, graphic, and enlightening journey revealing all the mysteries of iridescence.”

Besides exquisite stones and historic jewellery, the exhibition offers a deep dive into the microscopic world of opals: under the microscope, their iridescence transforms into spectacular impressionist-like tableaux. Also involving contemporary artists in the exhibition, Mathieu Dekekeulaire, director of GemGenève and curator of the exhibition, has envisioned a setup where photographs by Brice Decque confront a video installation by the Swiss multidisciplinary artist Michel Huelin.

“Flames of Opal Essence” is realised with the support of the Geneva Art and History Museum, Piaget, Iagem, and Boris Chauviré as a scientific contributor, an opal specialist at GeoGems, and holder of a PhD in mineralogy.

“When I began working 27 years ago, my world of jewellery was limited to emeralds, rubies, and sapphires. In 2003, the first time I saw an opal, it was love at first sight. I was amazed by so much life in a stone! I couldn’t take my eyes off it. I never imagined such a thing was possible, and I knew I wasn’t alone. It was a true love at first sight, and it’s still a fantastic love story!” — *Brice Decque*

Royalty’s gem

One of the most famous pieces, part of the French Crown Jewels, was probably the “Trojan Fire”, an intensely coloured fire opal given by Napoleon to Empress Joséphine. A gem with a tumultuous history, it was lost and found numerous times. It was the first opal to be named, testament to Joséphine’s fondness for this stone — her carriage was even named... the Opal. In 1887, the sale of the Crown Jewels scattered these royal jewels, but the Museum of Natural History in Paris, like the Louvre, inherited some of the finest royal gems, including a large opal from Hungary purchased by Louis XVIII and worn by Charles X at his coronation.

Geneva’s Art and History Museum’s opal collection

The Art and History Museum of Geneva also boasts several ancient pieces set with opal in its collections,

some of which will be showcased during the “Flames of Opal Essence” exhibition at GemGenève. Among the most noteworthy pieces, visitors will have the opportunity to admire a medallion bracelet, likely crafted between 1800 and 1850, featuring an opal that conceals a tiny compartment holding a fine lock of a child’s hair.

“In jewellery, the opal used is generally the so-called precious or noble opal, which has a play-of-colour effect that makes it a unique gem,” clarifies researcher Boris Chauviré. “The play of colour consists of areas of shifting coloured reflections depending on the angle of observation. This makes each stone unique, with a spectrum of colour play different from one opal to another.” According to him, while two colourless diamonds of equal quality are interchangeable, no two opals can substitute for one another:

“Moreover, opal is a gem that can display nearly all colours (from the blue opals of Peru to the reds of Mexico), and all levels of transparency, showing an infinite range of possibilities.”

Jewellers’ muse

Exploring the qualities and light plays offered by this sensational stone, delicate and surprising creations emerged throughout the 20th century. From American jeweller Raymond Yard to German artist goldsmith Hermann Jünger and creations by the Italian house Vhernier, opal has been tirelessly crafted and enhanced throughout the century. In the 1970s, Piaget boldly introduced opal into the grand tradition of watchmaking. Imagining sculptural and extravagant jewellery watches, Piaget was the first manufacturer to create dials from ornamental stone, working opal with unparalleled skill. For the “Flames of Opal Essence” exhibition, the



Arte Útil

DR



Bracelet with miniature Girl with coral necklace

Courtesy Geneva Museum of Art and History

“I have a fondness for Boulder opals, which mix patterns of rusty (brown) rock with veins filled by precious opal. The variety is such that choosing a type of opal is complex. One falls in love with a single opal that catches the eye, not necessarily a type. The question of origin is just as subjective as beauty. There are exceptional opals everywhere; it would be a pity to limit oneself!” — *Boris Chauviré*

manufacturer has agreed to present some of the finest pieces from its heritage collection and rare watches.

“Unlike most stones on the market, the price is not a reflection of beauty but of the difficulty in sourcing an identical stone,” analyses Brice Decque from Imagem. “I am drawn to all colours, with a particular attraction to blue. The majority of black opals from Lightning Ridge display blue fire colours; it’s the most common colour. Thus, I am enchanted each time I open my opal box. . . . On the other hand, red is the rarest colour, but I confess it attracts me less. It’s all a matter of taste. . . .” According to this expert, it was the major French brands that initiated the trend of black opal 25 years ago with significant pieces. “It took courage and talent to position this stone at the centre of the finest *Haute Joaillerie* collections,” he says. “Since then, they can be found set in jewellery at most retailers around the world, all with different styles, tastes, and creative worlds adapted to their markets.”

Contemporary renaissance

This diversity will be highlighted at the GemGenève exhibition as well as the creations of contemporary jewellers like several pieces by Geneva jeweller Gilbert Albert. Considered one of the pioneers of contemporary jewellery, Gilbert Albert is one of the few designers who, with boundless talent, has successfully paired this opalescent material with his textured, crinkled, or hammered gold jewellery. Also presenting numerous contemporary jewellery pieces, “Flames of Opal Essence” will feature innovative jewellers such as French designer

Florie Dupont, whose jewellery plays with the concept of “buried treasures”. Other designers such as the highly fashionable Chinese creator A.win Siu [see box], German jeweller Kreis Jewellery, and the house of Emil Weis Opals, a major specialist in Australian opals, will also be highlighted during this exhibition.

Opals: the dance of colour and depth

“As in the past, opals are used to bring a sense of movement and depth even to the simplest of jewellery designs,” notes Tanja Schütz from Weis House. “A ring set with a single clear, flashy opal will look sparkling. Often, we’ve noticed that today’s jewellers use opals to add a touch of traditionalism to their modern designs. Opals are the bridge between the past and the present, a versatile gem that stands the test of time. As beautiful as cut and faceted

opals can be, our favourite stones will always be those that retain their original organic shape. There is no other gem that forms like an opal, and whether set in jewellery or standing alone as a collector’s piece, the dreamlike and fluid nature of their natural shapes is stunning and almost unreal.”

Mirror, Mirror, Who is the fairest?

“Talking about beauty is always challenging, a subjective judgement on a gem that offers such a range of possibilities in terms of colour, transparency, and play of colour,” shares Boris Chauviré. “These are often highlighted against a dark background, making black opals resemble frozen auroras in a night sky. White opals with some transparency display a three-dimensional mix of varied colour plays, with a psychedelic depth effect.”

3 questions to... Awin Siu

Awin Siu is a jewellery designer and founder of the brand A.win Siu.

What attracts you to opals?

I think the opal is the gemstone that displays the most colours at once, offering numerous design possibilities. I am a person full of fantasy. To me, opal is the gemstone closest to the universe. Sometimes, you can see a “nebula” or a “galaxy” in an opal, which is why it captivates me. I particularly love Australian black opal because its darker background makes the other colours pop more vibrantly.

In your opinion, what are the most beautiful varieties of opals?

The main producing areas currently are Australia and Mexico. Australia produces both white and black opal, while Mexico yields clear water opal and fire opal. Ethiopia is also a significant producer of opal.

Which opals have you chosen to present at GemGenève?

For the GemGenève exhibition, I am bringing a lollipop brooch from the *Something Sweet* series, made entirely of aluminium with, of course, an opal as the main stone.

FOCUS

“Anyone familiar with opal will have an opinion on the most beautiful variety, the best origins,” adds Tanja Schütz of Emil Weis Opals. “From our experience, the most beautiful opals come from Australia and Mexico, though these countries produce very different varieties. Mexico produces the finest fire opals, ranging from light sunny yellow to deep cherry red, with or without play of colour. Australia, of course, is perhaps most famous for the black opal from Lightning Ridge. With a dark body colour and an overlying play of colours that can boast every shade of the rainbow, it is the undisputed queen of gems.” For GemGenève, Tanja Schütz will present glowing red Mexican fire opals, freshwater opals, sparkling clear opals, and blazing black opals, and of course the unmatched Yowah Nuts and boulder opals. She continues: “A person with more traditional tastes may prefer the soft glow of a clear opal, while someone with more modern tastes might favour the colourful unpredictability of a boulder opal. Each opal is different, just as each person is, to each their own preference.”

For Brice Decque, there is no doubt: the most beautiful is Australian. “The Queen is the black opal from Lightning Ridge,” he enthuses. “It combines everything I look for in a stone. Colours of extraordinary purity contrast perfectly with their dark base. They are rare and precious, their colours and intensity change depending on the ambient light. I can look at the same stone every day, and it will never be the same.” This passion led him to publish a beautiful book, *Black opal, only from Australia*. It includes spectacular creations by Victoire de Castellane for Dior, who has made opal one of her preferred stones in *haute joaillerie*, as well as an essay on the mining, history, and gemmology of opals, co-authored with Chris Price, an unconventional and brilliant Australian dealer and almost legendary figure in this world of enthusiasts.



Black opal. Stone from Australia. Emil Weiss Opals
Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency







Opal from Lightning Ridge

© Brice Decque. Courtesy Imagem. GemGenève

ANTI ROOM



GemGenève November 2023

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency



VINTAGE IS THE NEW CHIC

The trend towards vintage is unmistakable, and jewellery is no exception. This topic often comes up at GemGenève, primarily because the fascination with antique jewellery shows no signs of waning — quite the opposite, in fact.

Sustainable, responsible, more virtuous, and less costly... Even in the realm of luxury, buying second-hand is becoming increasingly common and socially acceptable. Vintage jewellery thus emerges as an ethical and environmentally friendly choice, avoiding the production of new items that could negatively impact ecosystems or human rights. Over the past few years, eco-consciousness has become a significant driver in the market: sales of vintage luxury goods are expected to increase by 10 to 15% annually until 2030, according to McKinsey. “The appeal of vintage jewellery is growing stronger as it aligns with sustainable development issues,” confirms Laura Inghirami, jewellery influencer and founder of Donna Jewel. “In contemporary jewellery, the use of traditional craftsmanship techniques or historic motifs is quite prevalent, and the appreciation for craftsmanship is ever increasing.”

Storytelling

Acquiring a piece of vintage jewellery is quite different from purchasing a contemporary one, requiring careful consideration. “Buying a vintage or antique piece is never a conventional process,” was mentioned on 3 November during a panel discussion on antique jewellery at GemGenève. “Unlike with contemporary pieces, where our choice might be influenced by current fashion or trends, choosing a piece that has lived one or more lives requires a deep understanding of jewellery as well as specific knowledge and references.”

Above all, purchasing an antique jewel allows one to connect with both personal and grand historical narratives, a significant motivator for enthusiasts. “People are increasingly seeking out pieces with

a distinguished provenance. They want jewellery that tells a story,” observes Nadège Totah, co-founder of GemGenève. “For example, a piece that belonged to nobility or someone famous tends to be particularly successful. Provenance can justify the high prices because you’re buying into a story, a legend. Therefore, it’s a reliable investment for buyers.”

Without necessarily investing in Marie Antoinette’s jewels, another advantage of vintage or antique jewellery — defined as pieces over fifty years old — is their relative accessibility and diversity. Whether it’s retro or Art Deco, everyone can find something appealing among the myriad of styles, signatures, techniques, and eras available. “I feel that there are two distinct periods that are particularly in demand: the 19th century, especially the Romantic period, and 1970s jewellery,” analyses Nadège Totah. “The latter is popular because it can be worn every day. The bigger and more colourful, the more ‘in vogue’ they are. Adored in the 1980s for their penchant for yellow gold and bold jewellery,

the 1940s pieces were overlooked in the 1990s but are now regaining popularity,” notes historian Amanda Triossi. “There’s definitely much more interest in these pieces now than there was ten or twenty years ago.”

A man of his time

The historic American brand Seaman Schepps is a prime example of the 1940s retro designs that have withstood the test of time. Born in 1881 to a Hungarian immigrant family in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, Seaman Schepps opened his first store in Los Angeles in 1904. His growing fame led him to relocate to Madison Avenue in 1934, where

he quickly became recognised as the most innovative American jeweller of his era. He drew inspiration from materials rarely used in jewellery at the time: coral, ivory, shell, and jade, combined with precious gems and metals. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Duchess of Windsor, and the Du Pont, Mellon, and Rockefeller families were among his top clients. “He was born in a vibrant, working-class neighbourhood teeming with immigrants like himself,” recounts Anthony Hopenhajm, current owner of Seaman Schepps, who acquired the company in 1992. “All those sounds and colours likely inspired his taste for the baroque.”

When World War II struck, it severely disrupted the jewellery sector. Cut off from trade routes with gem-producing countries and lacking precious metals, Western jewellers had no choice but to innovate. As often happens, the history of society shapes the history of jewellery. “Seaman Schepps started making jewellery at a time when the world was undergoing major changes, with two wars separated by a major economic crisis,” continues Anthony Hopenhajm. “During World War II, women could no longer import lovely outfits from couturiers in France or Italy. They began to wear wool dresses and suits or garments made from fabrics

When Seaman Schepps started in jewellery, it was a field reserved for the wealthy, who wanted flashy jewels, rubies, and sapphires. He also saw beauty in humble materials. He was a pioneer in that sense. And bold in colours and shapes, which were massive for that era, yet always wearable.

— *Anthony Hopenhajm*

3 questions to... *Anthony Hopenhajm*

Anthony Hopenhajm is the owner and director of Seaman Schepps.

What explains the success of Seaman Schepps?

Seaman Schepps created jewellery at a time when people were ready to embrace a new jewellery tradition, with colourful and baroque stones that brightened up outfits. In the 1930s, he was already featured on the covers of *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. The founder’s daughter was a model too. He was in tune with the times. Even today, his sense of innovation and his colours resonate with us.

How do you carry on this legacy in your current creations?

We always respect the exotic materials he loved by using slightly larger shapes than those typically employed by other jewellery houses. We revisit the style and best designs of Seaman Schepps, for example, the shell earrings, which are an iconic model for the brand. They were created in the 1940s, and we still sell several pairs each day! The same goes for his bracelet, which alternates links of gold, wood, crystal, or lapis. It’s a timeless model.

How, precisely, do you create a timeless design?

I wonder if a model will appeal as much to my mother as to my daughter! When you wear a garment, it’s up to it to adapt to us, not the other way around. The same goes for jewellery. It must be worn naturally and become a part of oneself.

usually reserved for men’s attire — darker, more sombre, often grey. They started to adorn their outfits with large brooches on the shoulder and to wear big, colourful jewellery. It was a way to personalise their appearance and stand out. Another significant point is the emancipation of women at that time. With the war and men on the front lines, women began to work and earn their own living. They became increasingly independent from the financial support of their husbands or fathers: thus, they could start spending their money freely and buy their own jewellery — previously, it was quite unthinkable for a woman to buy jewellery for herself!” Buying vintage jewellery also pays tribute to the tastes and freedom of a whole generation of women finally emancipated.



Anthony Hopenhajm
Courtesy Seaman Schepps



Shell cufflinks

© Seaman Schepps



PROFESSOR

Roots brooch by AGATE

Courtesy GemGenève



AN EPHEMERAL CONSERVATORY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS EXCELLENCE

GemGenève unveils a brand-new initiative dedicated to the crafts: the live creation of a jewel during the exhibition, crafted by top artisans in their respective fields.

Throughout the duration of GemGenève, several artisans will combine their skills to design a unique piece of jewellery that visitors will witness evolving in real-time. The aim? To showcase these rare crafts by revealing to visitors the behind-the-scenes of these sometimes endangered professions. And perhaps, to inspire vocations. “We wanted to show that when crafting a piece of jewellery, everyone is not working in isolation,” explains Mathieu Dekeukelaire, director of GemGenève. “It requires cooperation and coordination among the crafts, taking into account everyone’s constraints and interventions from others. This new project is an opportunity to showcase the incredible craftsmanship of all these master artisans who graciously participate in this adventure.”

Thus, each master artisan present will pool their specific skills to create this piece, offering visitors the opportunity to observe different crafts in action, from the conception of the piece and the chain to diamond cutting, from engraving to enamelling, up to the final stone setting. The jewel will be inspired by the salon’s logo, as well as the landscapes of Val Verzasca in the canton of Tessin, with blue-green hues to highlight Switzerland’s cultural and natural heritage.

It’s a *tour de force* as a large part of the jewellery crafts are gathered for the occasion: marquetry with Rose Saneuil; chain making with Laurent Jolliet; gold lace making with Sara Bran; diamond cutting with H&H; pearl stringing with Sabine Gyger; enamelling with Matteo Stauffacher; engraving with Richard Lundin; gemmology with Anne Quedillac; gem cutting with Atelier Thibault Leclerc, and stone setting with Mehdi Belharet. As a bonus, Ugo Mighali will

present another fine craft, that of cutlery making. During the exhibition, these exceptional artisans showcase their craft and techniques in a dense program of meetings and workshops [see box p.22]. Discover some of these rare crafts present at GemGenève that keep jewellery as a vibrant art form.

The lapidary

Cutting is the cornerstone of jewellery making. These specialists in cutting gemstones and fine stones start with rough stones that they shape on the wheel to create facets that reveal the colour, transparency, and magic of the gems that will adorn the jeweller’s creations. They also play a central role in repairing damaged stones or trading gemstones. In France, a CAP (Professional Aptitude Certificate) in lapidary work with an option in coloured stones, which lasts for two years, can also be pursued through professional training with weekly courses for beginners or advanced learners in simple cutting techniques using a lathe or for repairing damaged stones. The complexity of this essential craft is presented by Thibault Leclerc.



Photo Andrés Barta. Courtesy The Gem Museum, GemGenève

The pearl stringer

It's a delicate lacework. With meticulousness and patience, the pearl stringer calibrates and considers the harmony of the pearls that will compose the set. Regarded as one of the most delicate stages of jewellery making, it is entirely done by hand. Each pearl or gemstone bead needs to be carefully selected and fixed on a silk thread. A knot separates each element to prevent friction that could damage the materials. For over thirty years, Sabine Gyger has been offering pearl stringing without glue, a traditional method that unfortunately is no longer or very rarely used.

The polisher

The finishing touch. The polisher refines the finishing of a precious jewel, smoothing it with emery paper, a silicone wheel, a brush, threads, and various polishing pastes, including pumice and fabric buffs, to make the surface smooth and shiny. Some initial training programs lead to obtaining a CAP in jewellery with an option in polishing in France or within the framework of continuous professional training, such as the CQP (Certificate of Professional Qualification) in Polishing Operator or the CQP Expert in Polishing.

The chain maker

Starting with a precious metal wound around a mandrel and then cut with a saw blade, the chain maker crafts chains of metal rings closed by soldering. They can also be made through lost-wax casting. Besançon was historically the cradle of chain-making activity before the disappearance of businesses that worked on commission. Today, chain manufacturing in bulk is mainly industrial, with the artisanal craft becoming rare, as highlighted by the INMA. By hand, and depending on the type of chains desired, production can take between one and two months. To do this, the chain maker shapes threads of gold, platinum, or silver, coils, or even links, which are then meticulously assembled. The result, a watch bracelet worn daily, can last up

to thirty years. Collaborating with lapidaries and diamond cutters when it comes to setting a chain with gems, chain makers work for wholesalers, jewellery brands, and independent workshops alike. "I like my chains to have a soul; the way they intertwine, their flexibility, and their design must all be unique," says Laurent Jolliet, the last chain maker in Switzerland and the last representative of a dying craft, who will showcase his art.

The diamond cutter

The diamond cutter is an artisan specialised in the cutting of diamonds and only this material. Being the quintessential precious material, diamonds are the hardest natural material and require specific expertise to work with. The craft is learned either through apprenticeship or by entering a company specialised in this field. In France, one can undergo apprenticeship training from 15 to 29 years old, preparing for the CAP (Professional Aptitude Certificate) in Lapidary Work, with an option in diamond cutting. This three-year (possibly two-year) training is offered by several schools, such as the Institut de Bijouterie in Saumur or the HEJ. The diamond cutter must be able to analyse the stone entrusted to them, whether rough or already cut. Their work involves implementing all possible solutions to reveal the brilliance of the material by creating complex facets that allow the material to express its full potential. They may also intervene to recut a stone or to design cuts to adapt stones to technical plans and complex high jewellery pieces. Created by Eric Hamers, a *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* (Best Craftsman of France), and Antoine Haddad, H&H will present this demanding technique at GemGenève.

The engraver

An essentially manual craft, engraving is intimately linked to the field of luxury watchmaking. Engraving involves hollowing out a design on a surface. It encompasses all artistic, artisanal, or industrial techniques that use incision or

carving to produce an image, text, or any other inscription in the material.

The engraver embellishes the pieces entrusted to them using burins and works with almost all metals. The two main techniques used are intaglio engraving (engraving in hollow) and bas-relief (engraving in relief). The profession can also be applied to other fields such as medal and stamping as well as art engraving for printing prints. "I hope to share my passion — a message of love, carried through time and dedicated to visitors. Love letters are handwritten, just like the works I produce," says Richard Lundin, a Swiss master artisan who has worked for major houses such as Patek Philippe, Vacheron Constantin, and Audemars Piguet.

The enameler

The art of *grand feu* enamel involves applying layers of coloured enamel powder on a surface, then heating it in several firings at temperatures of over 800 degrees Celsius to melt it and create a smooth coating with the desired design. This technique is found in high jewellery on watch dials. The presentation of this craft is entrusted to Matteo Stauffacher, an enameler based in Lausanne, who states: "The dangers, risks, suffering, pain, and emotion of creativity are all poured into the soul of everything I do with enamel; that's the beauty of the process. If it were easy, my work would be soulless."

The marqueteur

Multimaterial marquetry is the art of creating exceptional pieces, such as precious boxes, watch dials, and jewellery, using different materials such as sycamore, meshed plane tree, walnut burl, bone, straw, mother-of-pearl, leather, amaranth, zinc, shagreen, parchment, beetle elytra, corian, brass, gold leaf, and eggshells [...] which come together and harmonise with each other. Rose Saneuil, who will showcase her craft, has even devised her own technique, now patented.

PROFESSIONS

The gemologist

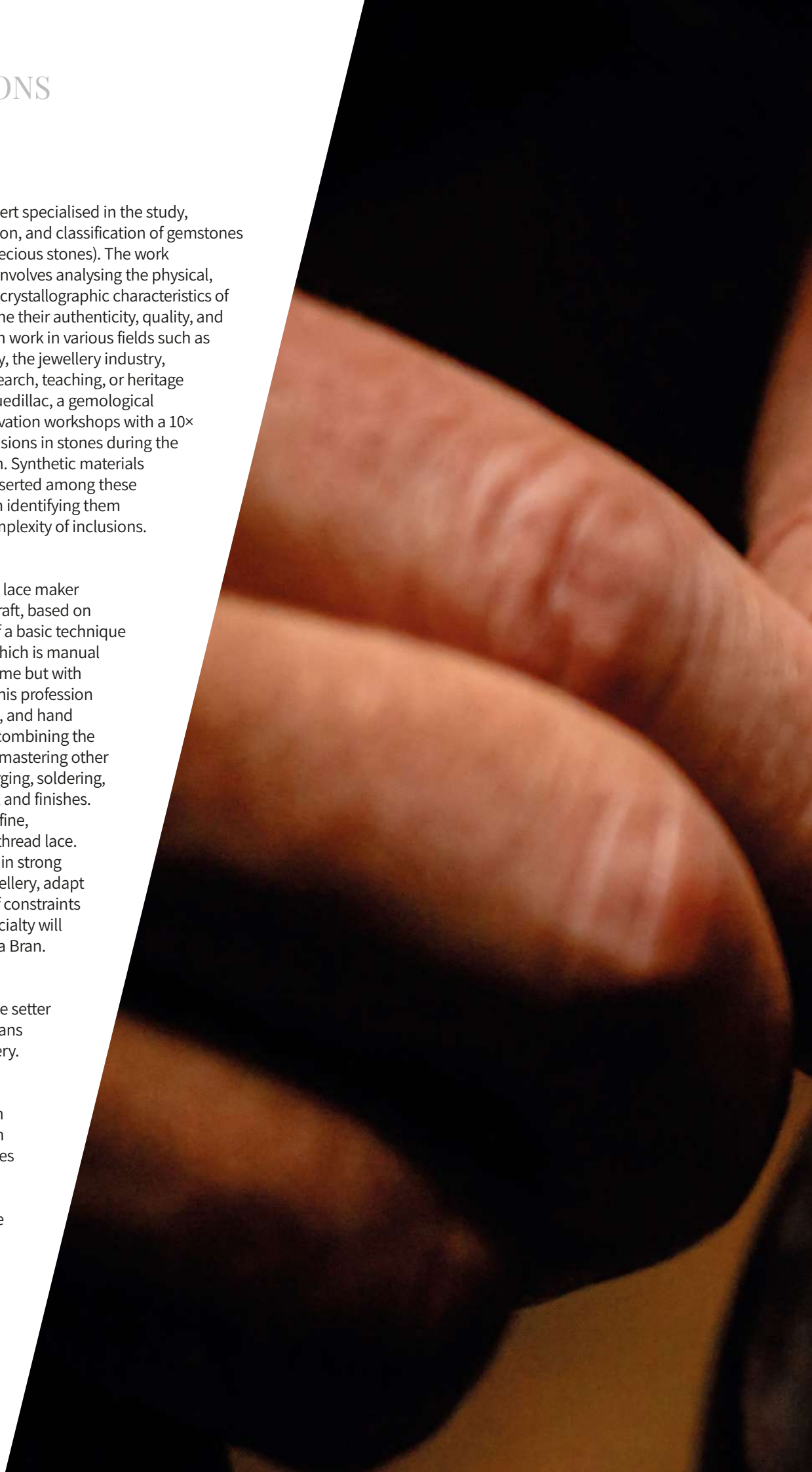
A gemologist is an expert specialised in the study, identification, evaluation, and classification of gemstones (precious and semi-precious stones). The work of a gemologist often involves analysing the physical, optical, chemical, and crystallographic characteristics of gemstones to determine their authenticity, quality, and value. Gemologists can work in various fields such as laboratory gemmology, the jewellery industry, gemstone trading, research, teaching, or heritage conservation. Anne Quedillac, a gemological expert, will lead observation workshops with a 10× loupe to observe inclusions in stones during the GemGenève exhibition. Synthetic materials or imitations will be inserted among these gemstones to have fun identifying them and to explore the complexity of inclusions.

The gold lace maker

The profession of gold lace maker is an innovative new craft, based on the implementation of a basic technique of jewellery making, which is manual piercing with a saw frame but with specific technicality. This profession requires the eye, mind, and hand of a lace maker while combining the expertise of a jeweller mastering other techniques such as forging, soldering, construction, surfaces, and finishes. Gold lace is extremely fine, sometimes finer than thread lace. However, it must remain strong and, in the case of jewellery, adapt to the shape and relief constraints of the object. This specialty will be represented by Sara Bran.

The stone setter

The profession of stone setter has existed since humans started making jewellery. It involves setting the gemstones using techniques that vary in delicacy depending on the shapes of the stones and the complexity of the piece to be set. Synergy between stone setters and jewellers and lapidaries/ diamond cutters are necessary to successfully complete a project.





Engraving

Photo András Barta, Courtesy GemGenève

WIDE ANGLE

Dendritic inclusions in a Mexican opal

© Marine Bouvier

A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF BEAUTIFUL STONES

Venturing into the heart of a gemstone is akin to an interstellar journey. At the intersection of art and science, photomicrography is a discipline both rigorous and poetic, and it's essential for immersing oneself in the magic of precious stones.

Every gemmologist will tell you that discovering gemstones is a thrilling adventure in search of unknown worlds. Inclusions and impurities paint abstract and enchanting pictures, visible only through a microscope. Photomicrography, though often lesser-known, is a crucial technique for the detailed analysis of gems, capturing images on a minuscule scale, typically invisible to the naked eye. "Some stones are extremely photogenic," admits Marine Bouvier, an expert gemmologist and photomicrographer [see box p.58]. "At times, certain inclusions are visible to the naked eye, but others only reveal themselves under a microscope. Yet, every stone might have something hidden."

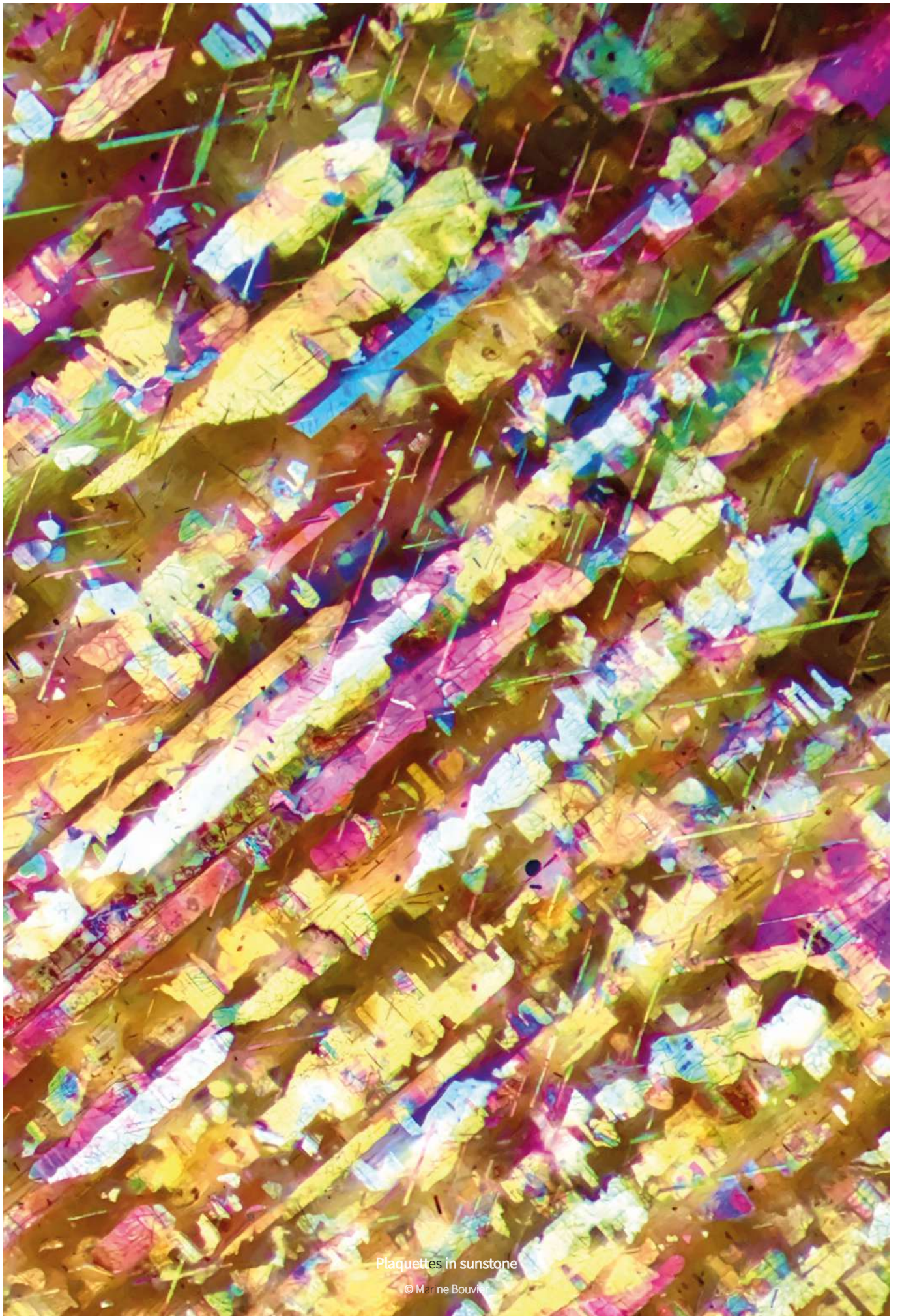
Far from being flaws, some inclusions actually contribute to a gem's uniqueness. "One example comes to mind," she continues. "It's a biphasic inclusion, containing both liquid and gas, known as a 'confetti inclusion' found in the beryl family, which includes emeralds, aquamarines, heliodors, etc. This inclusion is peculiar: when you observe it under a microscope or magnifying glass, you see what looks like a transparent plane. It's as though you're seeing without seeing... It's very intriguing. But when you position the light at an extremely precise angle, it reveals extraordinary colours. It's beautiful. It truly resembles a painter's palette."

Microworlds

This practice of photomicrography, widely used in biology, medicine, materials science, and geology, indeed allows for the observation and study of microscopic details of certain structures. "Gemmology is just a small area of photomicrography overall, but it really allows for a blend of scientific and artistic contexts,"

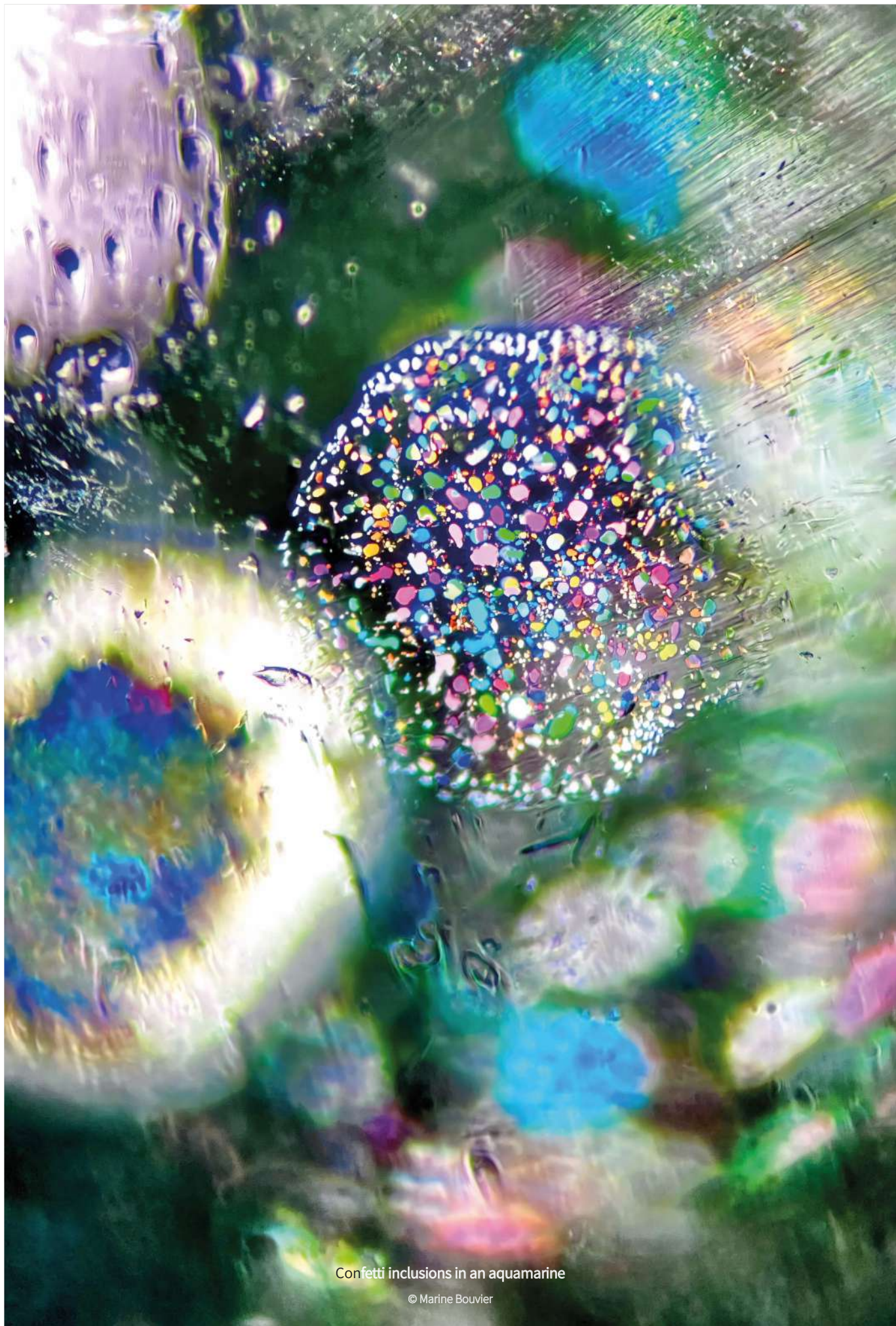
she specifies. The applications are numerous, such as identifying the stone or determining its origin. "Does this inclusion tell us that the stone is natural? Does it indicate that the stone is synthetic and was created in a laboratory? Has the gem been modified by a treatment? These questions are vital when conducting analysis reports or advising a client about a stone. Is it a ruby? Is it an emerald? Depending on whether the stone is natural, synthetic, or treated, it will have a different value to the trader who sells it."

Photomicrography thus enables gemmologists to examine the internal characteristics of precious stones on a microscopic scale, which is crucial for assessing their quality, authenticity, and origin. Its uses range from identifying inclusions to analysing optical phenomena, such as iridescence, adularescence, or asterism, and from identifying synthetics to evaluating purity — photomicrographs can reveal internal defects such as cracks, bubbles, or foreign crystals, which can affect the quality and value of the gem.



Plaquettes in sunstone

© Marine Bouvier



Confetti inclusions in an aquamarine

© Marine Bouvier

Capturing a beautiful photo requires passion and patience. Sometimes, you need to take a great many shots to achieve the perfect image. There's a real technique involved, a genuine exploration and precise positioning of stones and lights. — *Marine Bouvier*

In an article published in spring of last year in the *Gemmes* magazine of the Gemmologie et Francophonie association, this photomicrographer, a graduate of the National Institute of Gemmology and the European Federation of Gemmological Associations, and holder of a university diploma in gemmology from Nantes, revealed the secrets surrounding two amazing samples of aquamarine from her collection — she owns over 1,000 stones. In the first sample, a Brazilian star-cut aquamarine cabochon, it was possible to observe fluid inclusions shaped like colourful 'confetti' as well as more or less filled channels, both displaying incredible interference colours. As for the second sample, a prismatic crystal from Pakistan, biphasic negative crystals and hexagonal growth structures were seen. These phenomena, to date, have not been observed or described in aquamarine before.

Importance to photographic techniques

However, it's crucial not to confuse photomicrography with microphotography, which refers to

miniature images: "Photomicrography necessarily involves using a microscope to photograph a sample under high magnification, whereas microphotography relates to having a photograph in a very small format, like microfilms, for example. It's merely the dimension of the photo that changes. Finally, in photomicrography — often simply referred to as macro photography — we magnify the object just with the camera."

The technique demands patience and mastery, as well as suitable equipment: "What limits a photo? From a purely practical standpoint, it might already be the inclusion itself. Because you can have a very beautiful inclusion in a stone, but if it's surrounded by a cloud of other inclusions, it won't be clearly visible. If the stone is poorly polished, or at least if there are marks on the surface, we won't necessarily have the transparency needed for the photo. The application of light is also crucial. You need a quite powerful light source to do photography under a microscope. Other limitations might relate to the equipment, which is more

costly if you're aiming for higher quality. Obviously, the quality you get with a €200 microscope is not the same as with a €3,000 or €10,000 microscope."

Art of science, Science of art

So, is photomicrography a science or an art? "That's a good question. For me, it leans more towards science. When I began my studies in gemmology, they talked a lot about inclusions, which are found inside stones, because inclusions help identify them, among other things. We discussed it in class, I saw pictures, but it wasn't practical enough for me. Very soon, I bought a small microscope and my first stones, and began looking inside them. Initially, it was just observation, then I started taking photos to include in my courses. The following year, I bought a better microscope and camera to take more artistic photos, spending more time and composing my scenes. That's how science led me to photography. Moreover, I subsequently trained in photography techniques properly, because it's essential if you want to reach a certain level of quality. There are many rules, compositions, lighting considerations, etc. There's a real photographic effort that I have harnessed over the years."

In her online gallery, "Au cœur des gemmes", she unveils the most beautiful photomicrographs of her career, in the style of an artist's portfolio. "And then there's obviously individual sensitivity. We might not necessarily choose the same viewpoint. Photomicrography is all of this: gemmological knowledge, technique, patience, care, creativity, and the passion that one puts into it to make it an art form. Because art is, after all, the expression of emotion above everything else..." An art of science serving the beauty of gems.

1st GemGenève photomicrography contest

Aiming to showcase the beauty of stones in an original way, the exhibition has developed a unique artistic project in collaboration with Marine Bouvier, the Institute of Jewellery of Saumur, and the Royal Belgian Gemmological Society. For its 8th edition, the exhibition thus hosts its first display of photomicrographs featuring twenty projects created by students from the two partner institutions, which will be revealed to the public for the first time and the best of which will be awarded in a brand-new contest. Loving the pedagogical and Cartesian dimension of science, and captivated by the emotion that art evokes, Marine Bouvier had the idea to combine the two. A few years ago, she made her daily observations under the microscope her artistic material. Revealing the forms, textures, and infinite colours of the stones, Marine Bouvier introduces a new way to practice gemmology. For this first contest, the students were initiated by this passionate gemmologist to capture the beauty of the mineral. Invited to choose an original artistic approach, they photographed the heart of a gem under a microscope, revealing all the splendour of the inclusions.



Raw Burmese ruby

© Marine Bouvier



Rutile needles in a Burmese ruby

© Marine Bouvier



PORTRAIT



Equilibrium of powers (2023), Alicja Stanska

Courtesy Alicja Stanska

ALICJA STAŃSKA'S COMPLETE ARTISTRY

Alicja Stanska, a Polish art embroiderer, had the honour of opening the new Masterpiece section at GemGenève with a *haute couture* robe-sculpture embellished with over 110,000 Swarovski crystals. Her creation is not only a feat of artistic and technical brilliance but also of conceptual innovation.

Alicja Stanska is more than an exceptional embroiderer. A true polymath, she embroiders everything, everywhere — even on swimming pools and yachts. Passionate about technology, fashion, design, and architecture, this graduate of Lesage School delved into material science to create decorative and functional materials that can incorporate embroidery nearly anywhere, from furniture to bathtubs. “I started embroidering when I was six,” she recalls. “I was quite a restless child, so my father introduced me to embroidery to calm me down a bit. He never thought it would become my profession! Of course, I stopped during my teenage years. I entered the workforce and quickly realised that being an employee was not for me. So, I returned to embroidery. In fact, it was after seeing a documentary about François Lesage on TV that I was mesmerised. When I entered his atelier, my dream became a reality.”

At Lesage, she specialised in Lunéville embroidery, a technique developed in the 18th century, renowned for its delicacy and precision, often associated with the spirit of French *haute couture*. “I decided to apply this technique to architecture. I have never been interested in fashion design. I only make clothes for myself, not for others. I started with embroidery for home décor like cushions and curtains, but it was too mundane for me. I dreamed of something bigger, like walls, furniture, swimming pools, and sculptures. So, I began to push the boundaries of what embroidery could be. After many years, I met my future husband, the father of my child, and my partner in crime, who is an architect. He asked me what my dream was, and I told him, ‘Tomasz, I want to swim in embroidery!’ He looked at me and said, ‘Let’s do it!’”

Together with her partner, architect Tomasz Tarnowski, she founded a family business that operates like an artisans’ collective, featuring embroiderers, carpenters, varnishers, technologists, and designers. “I am the founder of the Stanska brand. We create handmade French embroidery for art pieces and decorative objects. I believe *haute couture* can exist in interior spaces, in architecture, in sculpture. Thanks to new technologies, we have developed the world’s first material using handmade Lunéville embroidery that can be used in moist environments. It might sound quite mad and people often don’t understand, ‘But how do you put embroidery in a swimming pool?’ From that moment, I realised there were no limits, like putting embroidery on a sculpture.”

Shining with a thousand lights

Alicja Stanska’s crowning achievement is *Equilibrium of powers*. At GemGenève, the new “Masterpiece” section, dedicated to showcasing exquisite craftsmanship and creations, will feature this remarkable *haute couture* gown. This life-sized sculpture is adorned

with over 110,000 hand-embroidered Swarovski crystals. “I’ve always been captivated by crystals, gems, and stones,” she says. “I envisioned a grand sculpture adorned with hundreds of thousands of Swarovski crystals.”

prototyping. And I didn’t want to resort to 3D printing because I am committed to using the same materials as in *haute couture*. The embroidery is thus mounted on silk. But with crystals, it weighs about 50 kilos! I had to be very careful not to destroy the form. I had to redo the top of the sculpture three times. That’s why it took me more than three years to complete the first gown. Now that I have the experience and expertise, I estimate two years for each of the remaining sculptures. In twelve years, I should be finished!”

“Every profession is challenging, but I believe if you have a vision, you should pursue it. Because if you stop, you will never know what could have happened if you had reached it. I’ve faced many challenges with my projects. Many people didn’t understand my ideas. Sometimes, it’s hard to continue when everyone says no. But I knew what I wanted and I persevered because nothing comes without effort. — *Alicja Stańska*

Displayed in a rotating arch reminiscent of a music box, this life-sized jewelled sculpture is actually an installation. At its heart, a connected device is designed to sync with the heartbeat of the person who purchases it. “The heart will be synchronised only with its first owner,” Alicja Stanska specifies. The piece required over three years of work and represents a lifetime project. “What Alicja does is truly remarkable,” enthuses Nadège Totah, co-founder of GemGenève. “There is a whole structure supporting the gown. It rotates on itself. It’s a technical feat. Altogether, the installation weighs more than 500 kg, giving you an idea of the scale of this project — and the challenge for us. She has constructed an entire narrative around this gown, which is the first in a series of seven she will create over several years.”

Seven jewelled gowns on the way

Unveiled at Milan Fashion Week in 2023, this creation is indeed the first in a series of seven jewelled gowns. “This one was certainly the most challenging, due to

Alicja Stanska already has some ideas for the rest of the series, but she does not plan to outline all the themes at once: “Each sculpture has its own muse, its own inspiration. The second will be a tribute to Musashi Miyamoto, the greatest samurai of all time who was unique in his refusal to wear armour. I’ve decided I’ll make one for him, and I don’t know why, but I see it in red. As for the execution, it will depend. I might do it with Swarovski or with precious stones if a company is interested in collaborating.” The third is already formulated in her mind: it will be the Marchesa Casati! A figure from early 20th-century Italian high society, the Marchesa Casati was known for her eccentricity, her love of art and fashion, and especially her extravagant parties, where she appeared in spectacular costumes surrounded by exotic animals. “She was so extravagant... she’ll need this sculpture!” Alicja Stanska jokes about this *avant-garde* icon who was the muse of Boldini and Man Ray.

Alicja Stanska harbours many surprises. In addition to her mastery of art and design, she holds a degree in criminology and occasionally researches violent behaviours and serial killers. Through a foundation she established, she champions the cause of children who are victims of violence through education. Master embroiderer, performance artist, human rights activist — Alicja Stanska indeed has as many facets as her crystals.



Alicja Stanska
Photo Damian Hornet

BOOK



DIAMANTS DE LA COURONNE



BROCHE RELIQUAIRE

EN ROSES

ET BRILLANTS

Cases of the reliquary brooch of Empress Eugénie

© Louvre. Fatou Editions

REDISCOVERING THE CROWN JEWELS

Political, romantic, and enchanting — the French Crown Jewels, displayed in the Apollo Gallery at the Louvre Museum, continue to unveil their secrets. A new publication summarises research on these quintessential treasures of national heritage.

Names like *Le Régent*, *Le Sancy*, and *La Côte-de-Bretagne* echo through French history with tales as adventurous as those from Alexandre Dumas's musketeers, often surpassing imagination. Since 1889, these jewels and the Crown Jewels have been exhibited in the Apollo Gallery at the Louvre. This royal gallery, adorned by France's foremost artists (Le Brun, Girardon, Lagrenée, Delacroix), inspired the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles. Originally designed as a reception hall for Louis XIV, it houses a remarkable decor and showcases the Crown Jewels.

This iconic gallery within the Louvre Palace, which holds the museum's most valuable historical collections, reopened to the public in 2020 after museographic refurbishment work that began in March 2019. The renovation facilitated the creation of three new showcases to present the Crown Jewels together, offering a comprehensive and historical view of the museum's preserved collection. Regular additions to the collection since the 1990s had led the museum to display these jewels and gemstones in two separate locations within the Department of Decorative Arts: the Apollo Gallery and Room 550 on the first floor of the Richelieu wing. However, the Apollo Gallery is the historic site of the first presentation of what remains of the Crown Jewels collection at the Louvre, established in 1532 by Francis I and enriched over successive reigns despite historical upheavals, but sadly almost entirely sold off by the state in 1887.

"15 June 1530 is not mentioned in the 20th-century biographies of Francis I. Yet, it marks the foundation of an institution of the French monarchy that lasted until 1887 and originated the treasure now

displayed at the Louvre Museum in the Apollo Gallery. On that day, King Francis I summoned a notary and royal secretary in Bordeaux and dictated a list of eight 'rings that King Francis I of that name has given and gives to his successors to the Crown of France.' These 'rings' were distinct from the personal jewels acquired, worn, or presented by the sovereign during his reign. They would soon be known as the 'Crown Jewels.'"

— Michèle Bimbenet-Privat
and François Farges
from the book
Les Diamants de la Couronne

The twenty-three jewels now at the Louvre are displayed together in one location, divided into three groups corresponding to the three new showcases installed at the centre of the gallery: jewels from before the Revolution, including *Le Régent* and *Le Sancy* briefly mounted in 1722 on Louis XV's personal coronation crown; jewels from the First Empire, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy; and jewels from the Second Empire, including remnants of Empress Eugénie's grand adornments. Several cases are also on display.

A case for Kings of France's treasures

Since 1861, the gallery has housed Louis XIV's collection of hardstone vases, augmented from 1887 by a historic treasure accumulated over centuries: the Crown Jewels. These works, among the most precious in the Louvre, are presented in showcases designed in the 19th century. The history of the Crown Jewels is a veritable saga filled with dramatic twists. As artefacts with tumultuous fates passed from one sovereign to another, these jewels were reset according to the whims of the rulers. Established by Francis I and enriched under Louis XIV, this once inalienable treasure reached its zenith under Louis XV with the acquisition of *Le Régent*. This diamond, "as large as a Queen Claude plum" according to Saint-Simon, was the largest known white diamond in Europe. Following the Revolution, this state treasure was reconstituted by Napoleon I.

"Throughout the fifty-nine-year reign of Louis XV, we only have partial records regarding the administration of the Crown Jewels. It was not until the king's death on 10 May 1774 that a new inventory was drawn up by Messrs. Lempereur and Leblanc, Parisian jewellers, assisted by Tourteau, keeper of the Crown Jewels, and Aubert, King's regular jeweller. The jewels reserved for the queen played a greater role than in the previous century. Articles VII and VIII, X to XVI, and XXIV list a grand *parure* and various pieces in coloured stones, several diamond or pearl and diamond jewels, and a ruby set. The multicoloured set, valued at 435,000 livres, was made from gemstones taken from one of Louis XIV's habit *parures*. Its rich colouration, still reminiscent of the splendour of the Grand Siècle, suggests it was created early in the reign, around 1724-1725. It may even have been initially intended in 1724 for Infanta Maria Anna of Spain when she was betrothed to Louis XV: she indeed wears very similar jewels

in her portrait painted by Largillière. It is reasonable to attribute to jeweller Claude Dominique Rondé this significant repurposing, benefiting the new queen, of many jewels previously reserved for the king."

—Marc Bascou
from the book
Les Diamants de la Couronne

Since the 1887 sale, when the state disposed of almost the entire Crown Jewels collection, with notable exceptions like *Le Régent*, the Louvre Museum has, whenever possible, acquired these prestigious jewels for its Decorative Arts Department. "The young Republic, eager to eliminate the possibility of a return

An Ornate gallery celebrating Louis XIV

A testament to two centuries of painting and sculpture, the Apollo Gallery is a unique masterpiece comprising 105 artworks (41 paintings, 36 groups of sculptures amounting to 118 sculptures in total, 28 tapestries) embedded in the vault and the wall decor. Conceived by Louis XIV as a reception gallery, a practice becoming common in palaces and noble houses, the Apollo Gallery was completely rebuilt after a fire in 1661. Under the guidance of architect Louis Le Vau and painter Charles Le Brun, a lengthy endeavour began that would continue for two centuries until 1851. Le Brun, king's principal painter, envisioned a painted and sculpted decoration themed around the sun and its celestial journey (earth and water, the continents) and time (the zodiac). The myth of Apollo, the sun god, also evoked by the procession of the Muses, glorified Louis XIV, aka the Sun King. The gallery offers an idyllic vision of the universe under the sign of harmony, with Apollo as its guarantor. For nearly 200 years, from Le Brun to Delacroix, dozens of French artists contributed to the decoration of this exceptional assembly: Le Brun left three large paintings of his own; the stuccos, created from 1663 by sculptor Girardon, the Marsy brothers, and Thomas Regnaudin, form a monumentally impressive and lively set. Left unfinished under Louis XIV, the gallery received canvases painted by academicians in the 18th century and was finally completed between 1849 and 1851. Architect Félix Duban, adhering to the original plan, undertook a complex restoration and commissioned Eugène Delacroix to handle the central ceiling, left vacant since Le Brun: this resulted in the dazzling composition of Apollo defeating the Python serpent.

Les Diamants de la Couronne

On 7 March, at the eighth Drouot Pop-up Bookshop, the 2024 Drouot Prize for Art Book Enthusiasts was awarded to *Les Diamants de la Couronne*, supervised by Anne Dion-Tenenbaum, published by Faton Editions and the Louvre. Richly illustrated, the book revisits the latest research on the Crown Jewels, benefiting from scientific collaboration with numerous institutions, notably the National Museum of Natural History. The study conducted on casts stored in mysterious unnumbered boxes recently allowed for the identification of now-lost jewels and enhanced knowledge about the Crown's precious stones. Following jeweller Germain Bapst, who first chronicled the Crown Jewels in 1889, and Bernard Morel, who in 1988 wrote a seminal work, today's leading specialists offer a renewed understanding in this beautiful collective volume.

Les Diamants de la Couronne

Under the supervision of Anne Dion-Tenenbaum. Faton Editions
French. 2023. 288 pages. €49. www.faton.fr



Côte-de-Bretagne

© Louvre. Fatou Editions

BOOK

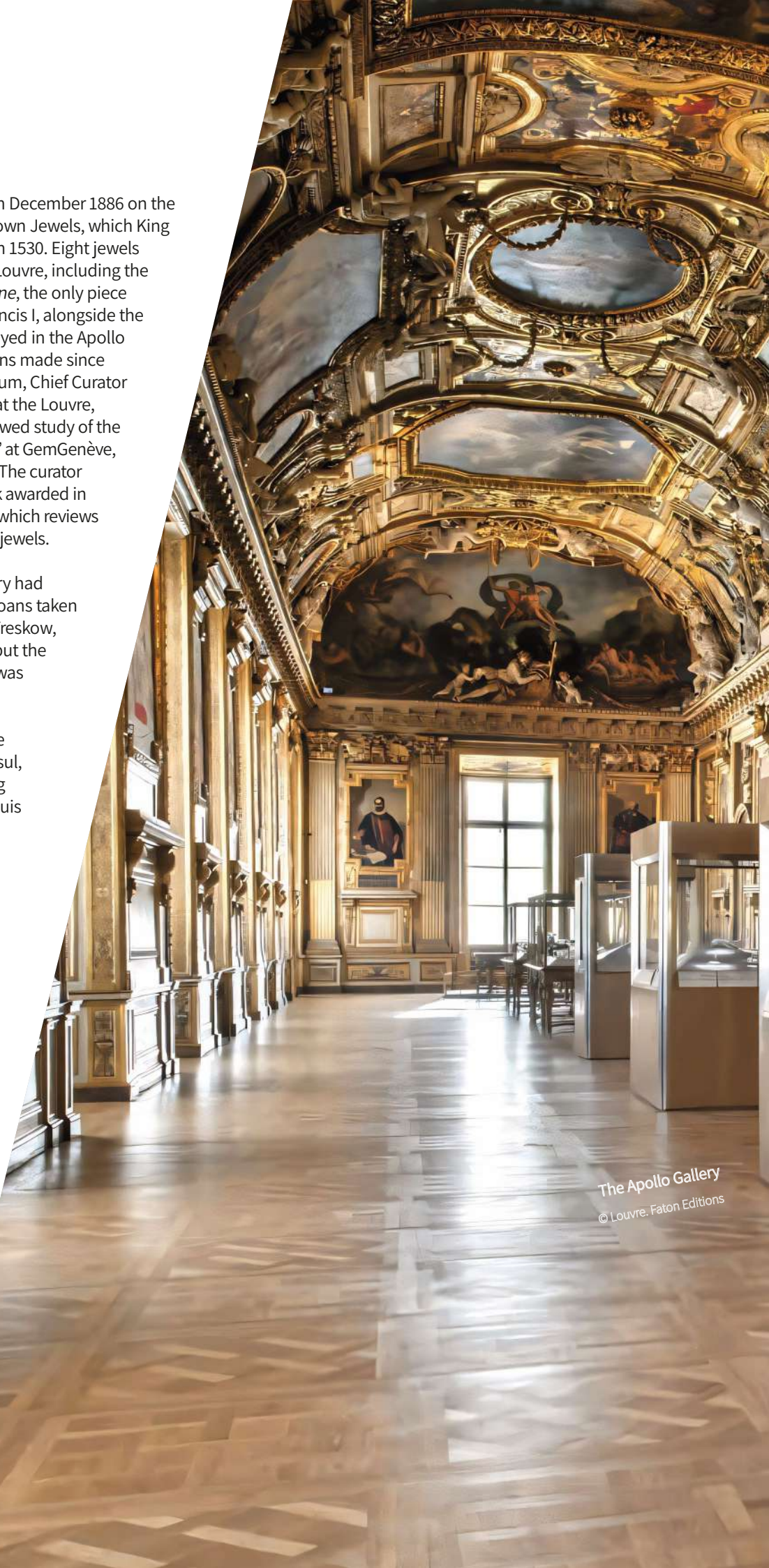
to a monarchical regime, decided in December 1886 on the sale of the collection of France's Crown Jewels, which King Francis I had declared inalienable in 1530. Eight jewels were nonetheless reserved for the Louvre, including the spinel known as *La Côte-de-Bretagne*, the only piece from the selection sanctified by Francis I, alongside the famous *Régent*. They are still displayed in the Apollo Gallery, accompanied by acquisitions made since then," explains Anne Dion-Tenenbaum, Chief Curator of the Decorative Arts Department at the Louvre, who will give a lecture titled "A renewed study of the collection of France's Crown Jewels" at GemGenève, followed by a book signing session. The curator is also co-author of a collective work awarded in March last year by the Drouot Prize, which reviews the latest research on these famous jewels.

"In the autumn of 1798, the Directory had cleared *Le Régent* by repaying the loans taken from Berliner Sigismund Otto von Treskow, a supplier of horses to the armies; but the diamond, barely returned to Paris, was pledged again in the spring of 1799 to another military supplier, Ignace Vanlerberghe, to specifically finance the Italian campaign. The First Consul, although unsuccessful in recovering *Le Sancy* from the heirs of the Marquis d'Iranda, who had received it as a pledge under the Directory, managed in February 1801 to reclaim *Le Régent*, which had facilitated his initial victories, into the French State Treasury. A consular decree mandated its mounting on the handle of a sabre for the First Consul, along with the assortment of diamonds from the Treasury deemed necessary."

— Anne Dion-Tenenbaum,
from the book
Les Diamants de la Couronne

The renewal of the presentation in the Apollo Gallery in 2019 marked the beginning of a fresh study of this collection at the Louvre. Tied to the legend of the kings of France, the Crown Jewels continue to narrate their tales of war and passion.

AMA



The Apollo Gallery
© Louvre. Fatou Editions



NEW

Engagement jewellery, Filip Cizniar

© Filip Cizniar. Photo Alizée Quinche
Courtoisie HEAD. Grand Théâtre de Genève. GemGenève

ENGAGEMENT JEWELLERY 2.0

During the exhibition, students from HEAD, inspired by a Richard Strauss opera, are reimagining engagement jewellery as part of an exhibition and competition in partnership with the Grand Théâtre de Genève. A fusion of talents!

For its 8th edition, GemGenève has launched three new projects dedicated to jewellery school students: the first contest for photomicrography [see p.54], the “What is Your Totem Animal?” contest with Donna Jewel, and the engagement jewellery contest. Organised with HEAD (Geneva School of Art and Design) in partnership with the Grand Théâtre de Genève, this last contest involved about fifteen students setting up their very first exhibition on the theme of *Der Rosenkavalier* (*The Knight of the Rose*), an opera by Richard Strauss performed in late 2023 at the Grand Théâtre de Genève [see box p.74].

Drawing inspiration from this opera, the students spent the year preparing a series of projects on engagement jewellery with their teachers. This masterpiece of lyric theatre, which whimsically portrays a marriage that will never happen, served as a fantastic basis for exploring these symbolic pieces. HEAD challenged them to conceive a piece of jewellery symbolising commitment that could also serve as a real stage object. Whether a ring, necklace, bracelet, or tiara, the piece had to be visible from afar and made exclusively from recycled, repurposed, or unusual materials. Oscillating between ostentation and eccentricity, the young designers created surprisingly inventive pieces that will be showcased in an exhibition and contest. All visitors to the exhibition are invited to vote for their favourite project. The public’s favourite will be unveiled at the award ceremony, presided over by Mathieu Dekeukelaire, director of GemGenève [see box p.16].

“Engagement jewellery is a way to formalise the symbolism of attachment. If we broaden this notion, engagement jewellery also belongs to the

repertoire of coronation ceremonies or oaths,” explains Mathieu Dekeukelaire. “In this opera, Richard Strauss invents a new ceremony with a rose. That’s why we thought it would be interesting for the students to imagine their own engagement jewellery, and perhaps, the ceremony or ritual accompanying it.”

Mutual commitment

It’s worth noting that the Grand Théâtre de Genève feels quite at home at GemGenève. For several editions now, it has collaborated with the exhibition to promote and showcase the arts and crafts of the stage, revealing the behind-the-scenes making of its extraordinary sets and costumes. Thus, in 2023, visitors were able to admire a magnificent emperor’s cloak over ten metres long, created for *La Juive*, an opera by Fromental Halévy, as well as three costumes by fashion designer Mariel Manuel for the opera *The Return of Ulysses*. In line with the theme of this edition, “Journey and movement”, the theatre will unveil some of its finest creations, demonstrating the expertise of its workshops, alongside the competition focused on *The Knight of the Rose*.

“I find this exercise very interesting, intellectually speaking. In previous projects with the students and the Grand Théâtre de Genève, they were asked to imagine, for instance, an allegorical piece on time, for *The Return of Ulysses*. This time, they are being asked to reflect on the meaning of commitment, but also on the context of a ritual in which it will be presented.

— *Mathieu Dekeukelaire*

This initiative extends another commitment: that of GemGenève with art and jewellery schools. Since 2020, GemGenève has highlighted the creativity of HEAD students with support from the Grand Théâtre de Genève. The only school in Switzerland offering a Bachelor's degree in Product Design, Jewellery, and Accessories, the Geneva School of Art and Design has nurtured several now-prominent figures such as jeweller Ambroise Degenève, designer Fanny

iron rings, dates back to ancient Greece and Rome, symbolising fidelity and the dowry. More a symbol of a contract between spouses than a pledge of love, this tradition persisted into the Middle Ages. It wasn't until the 19th century that the ring exchange ceremony took its current form. As Mathieu Dekeukelaire points out, engagement jewellery is not just a romantic promise. The splendour of coronation jewels across all European — and other — royalties bears witness

to this [see p.66]. Each culture has its own engagement jewellery and accompanying ceremonies. The ritual is thus inseparable from the jewellery, symbolically containing the vow. Hence, an infinite number of combinations are possible, as evidenced by the genius of Richard Strauss who reinvented the traditional band into a rose, not presented by the usual suitor, but by a go-between. The rest is for the students to imagine.

“GemGenève is committed to fostering excellence. Supporting young talent also means highlighting the schools that train tomorrow's artisans and creators, as they work towards the future of jewellery.

— *Nadège Totah*

Agnier, who now heads the *Signatures* collections at Van Cleef & Arpels, and creator Emmanuel Tarpin, who showcased his work at GemGenève in 2018. Known as the “nursery of tomorrow's talents”, HEAD has risen among the leading art and design schools in Europe and has unveiled young talent on an international scale.

Stimulating creativity

In terms of shapes, materials, and techniques, the HEAD students did not resort to the simplicity of the traditional engagement ring — a wedding ring by another name. Depending on the culture, it is worn on the left ring finger, as in France, or the right, as in Germany. The ancient Egyptians also wore rings made from materials like hemp or reed — the hieroglyph for “eternity” is indeed a braided ring. However, the Western tradition of wedding bands, simple

The Knight of the Rose

Richard Strauss's sixth opera, *Der Rosenkavalier* (*The Knight of the Rose*), premiered on 26 January 1911, at the Königliches Opernhaus (Royal Opera House) in Dresden. It marks an atypical work that signifies a return to classicism in the repertoire of the great German composer and conductor, already famed for his symphonic poem *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, and his recent operas *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909).

The story unfolds in 18th-century Vienna during the early years of the reign of Maria Theresa of Austria and follows the romantic entanglements and social dilemmas of Count Octavian, Baron Ochs, and the young Sophie. Octavian is sent by Baron Ochs to present a rose to Sophie as a marriage proposal, but Octavian and Sophie fall in love with each other. Complications arise when the Marschallin, who is Octavian's mistress, attempts to protect Sophie from her union with the Baron. The opera explores themes of love, desire, aristocratic society, and the passage of time. Strauss's music is renowned for its orchestral richness and lyricism, and the opera is widely regarded as one of the masterpieces of the 19th-century lyrical repertoire.

In Christoph Waltz's rendition, staged from 13 to 26 December 2023, at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, the interpersonal relationships are addressed in a subtle and ironic manner. The models, hierarchies, and interdependencies are questioned and staged with wit and humour, playing with the elements of this comedy from the past, some situations of which are transposed to today's context.



Engagement jewellery, Danaé Carvajal

© Danaé Carvajal. Courtesy HEAD. Grand Théâtre de Genève. GemGenève

FE-SEM

FE-SEM with integrated Raman
at the DINAMICO Laboratory
Photo Angelo de Simone Troncone
Courtesy CNR-ISMN





Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



“WE TREAT THE CULTURAL OBJECT AS IF IT WERE A PATIENT”

Dr Gabriella Di Carlo, a PhD in Chemistry and researcher at the Institute for the Study of Nanostructured Materials of the Italian National Research Council (CNR-ISMN), leads the CNR-ISMN team in developing innovative and sustainable protective materials as part of the European GREENART project.

After obtaining her PhD in Chemical Sciences from the University of Palermo in 2006, Dr Di Carlo became the lead researcher at CNR-ISMN, Rome 1. Her scientific career began at the University of Palermo, focusing on new materials for removing atmospheric pollutants. In 2010, she moved to Rome, shifting her research to the reuse and enhancement of waste such as polysaccharides, cellulose, and plastics, and their application in the field of cultural heritage. She is involved in numerous national and international projects, either coordinating activities like Plasmare and ECOforCONCRETE or leading the CNR-ISMN research unit in European initiatives such as NANORESTART, InnovaConcrete, APACHE, and GREENART. Launched by the European Union in October 2022, GREENART is an international project bringing together scientists, conservators, and cultural institutions engaged in the conservation-restoration of artworks. Together, they collaborate to develop new, green, and sustainable restoration products such as cleaners, protective varnishes, consolidants, and monitoring technologies.

Furthermore, Dr Di Carlo teaches Chemistry for the restoration and conservation of metals in the Master's program “Science and Technology for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage” at La Sapienza University in Rome. She is a member of the doctoral council for Earth Sciences at the same university and heads the Laboratory of Nanometric and Micrometric Diagnostics for the Knowledge and Conservation of Advanced Materials and Cultural Heritage (Lab DINAMICO) at CNR-ISMN. This lab is part of the ERIHS infrastructure in the Lazio region.

What is your current role within the National Research Council (CNR) and the GREENART project?

CNR is a partner in the GREENART project alongside the Institute for the Study of Nanostructured Materials (CNR-ISMN) and the Institute of Polymers, Composites, and Biomaterials (CNR-IPCB). Our team has been involved in several EU-funded projects, including the NANORESTART project (2015-2018), coordinated by the Center for Colloid and Surface Science (CSGI) in Italy. In this project, alongside CNR-IPCB, we developed new stimulus-responsive materials for corrosion inhibition. This innovative approach focused on the targeted release of protective molecules when needed. Building on this success, the current GREENART project focuses on creating durable protective materials with stimulus-responsive properties, derived from natural waste and renewable resources. Our aim is to produce materials that are not only effective but also more durable and safer than those currently on the market. In GREENART, the CNR team leads the development of eco-friendly

protective coatings for metal objects and other potential targets like ceramics and canvas. The main focus of the CNR-ISMN team is on producing new biopolymer-based coatings to prevent the degradation of artefacts. Our goal is to create long-lasting, safe products that can be applied and removed with non-toxic, water-based solvents, primarily aimed at preventing metal corrosion.

You have plans to develop multifunctional coatings for the long-term protection of cultural assets. Could you tell us more about this?

Indeed. In order to reduce the frequency of conservation interventions on cultural artefacts, we are focusing on creating active and intelligent protective coatings that offer long-term efficacy. Our main challenge is to prevent the degradation processes in metallic objects. The formation of corrosion products can not only alter the surface appearance but also compromise their chemical and physical stability, leading to irreversible damage or even the loss of unique and irreplaceable pieces. Our approach to long-term protection involves targeted actions, similar to how targeted drug delivery works. We treat the cultural object as if it were a patient, intervening selectively and only when necessary, which enhances the effectiveness of the protective materials while reducing the use of active substances. Previously, in the NANORESTART project, we explored the impact of stimulus-responsive protective materials on improving the effectiveness of coatings on bronzes. Currently, within GREENART, we are developing biopolymer-based coatings that include new green additives to enhance the material's stability over time. We are incorporating graphene-related materials supplied by the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH) in Greece or lignocellulosic materials from the University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in Brazil to improve barrier properties. The coating acts as a shield, slowing the diffusion of atmospheric degradation

towards the artefact's surface. We are also exploring the use of new stimulus-responsive nanocontainers to make the materials smarter, more durable, and more effective in the long term compared to past solutions. A thorough understanding of these materials is crucial for fully grasping their functions and enhancing their properties when necessary. Through GREENART, we study these new materials using sophisticated methods, such as small-angle and wide-angle grazing incidence X-ray scattering, in collaboration with CSGI in Italy and NIKKO in Japan.

What is the origin of these materials?

At GREENART, we focus on materials derived from natural waste and renewable sources. This strategy not only allows us to create sustainable products but also reduces waste production, providing both economic and environmental benefits. Our products are based on biopolymers such as chitosan and cellulose derivatives. Chitosan is a biopolymer obtained from crustacean shells, typically produced from the waste of the fishing industry. Besides its non-toxicity and water solubility, this polymer offers excellent transparency, film-forming ability, and ease of disposal. Its applications are increasingly gaining interest in various fields, including food packaging and biomedicine. We are also exploring other biopolymers, with cellulose derivatives being particularly promising due to their aesthetic qualities and the possibility of deriving them from plant waste. In developing additives and corrosion inhibitors, we follow a similar philosophy. We have enhanced our chitosan-based formulations with new additives that provide greater stability to the coatings over time. Additionally, we are studying natural and non-toxic corrosion inhibitors as alternatives to benzotriazole, seeking effective and safe solutions. Our choice of nanocarriers also reflects our commitment to sustainability, drawing inspiration from materials used in the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries. Indeed, chitosan and its composites have generated considerable interest

within the scientific community due to their applications across various fields, particularly in the food packaging industry where these materials have been greatly beneficial. Edible chitosan-based coatings are widely recognised for their ability to extend the shelf life of perishables such as fruits and vegetables. Moreover, the versatility of chitosan has led to its use in other areas such as wound healing and water purification. Given recent trends, it is expected that new uses for these biomaterials will be discovered, potentially extending their application to the preservation of cultural artefacts.

Do these materials work on all types of cultural heritage materials?

At GREENART, we are developing eco-friendly protective coatings primarily for metallic objects composed of copper and silver alloys. During the optimisation phase, we use mock-ups with varying compositions and surface finishes as disposable substrates to validate our new materials. These mock-ups have been selected in collaboration with conservators from institutions such as the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Peggy Guggenheim Museum, the Hungarian National Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, aiming to replicate the compositional and metallurgical characteristics typical of contemporary and archaeological artefacts. After validation, the coatings we have developed could potentially be applied to other substrates. The results obtained so far indicate high transparency, great stability, and ease of application and removal. Validations conducted in our laboratories, which involved very aggressive environments and natural ageing, show promising results.

How are they innovative compared to existing materials?

The main innovation lies in the way of thinking and designing new materials based on intelligent systems. Practically, cultural objects affected by a pathology are treated like patients and are protected with materials that, like a medicine, are capable of providing targeted and effective



CNR-ISMN team: Gabriella Di Carlo, Lidia Baiamonte, Francesca Boccaccini, Elena Messina, Cristina Riccucci, Marianna Pascucci, Aurelio Barbetta, Chiara Fratello

Photo Angelo de Simone Troncone. Courtesy CNR-ISMN





Application of the green protective coating on a bronze bell

Photo Angelo de Simone Troncone. Courtesy CNR-ISMN

ECOLOGY

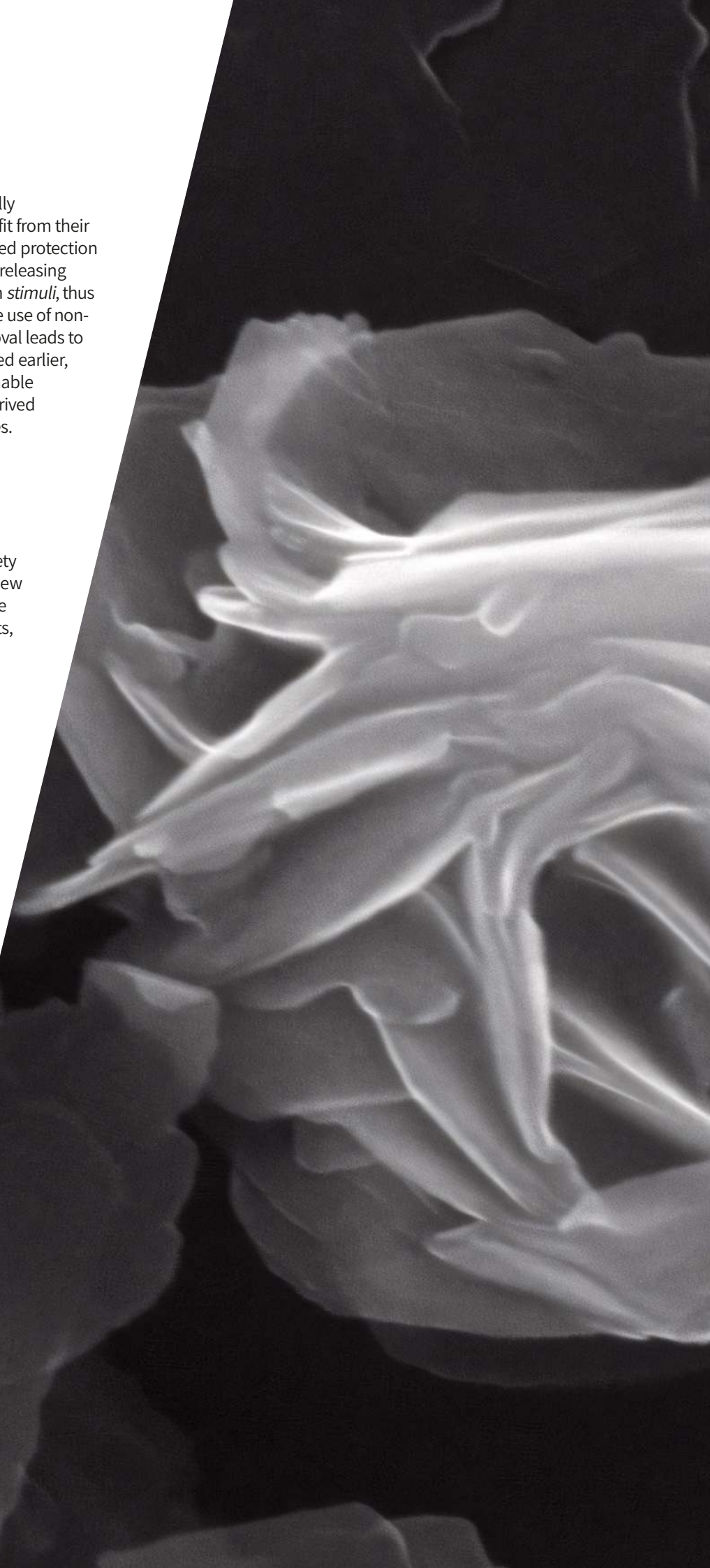
protective action. Compared to commercially available products, the new materials benefit from their multifunctional properties, offering enhanced protection against external agents of degradation and releasing protective agents in response to degradation *stimuli*, thus ensuring long-term efficacy. Additionally, the use of non-toxic solvents for their application and removal leads to safe conservation treatments. As I mentioned earlier, the innovation also lies in the use of sustainable materials, particularly focusing on those derived from natural waste and renewable resources.

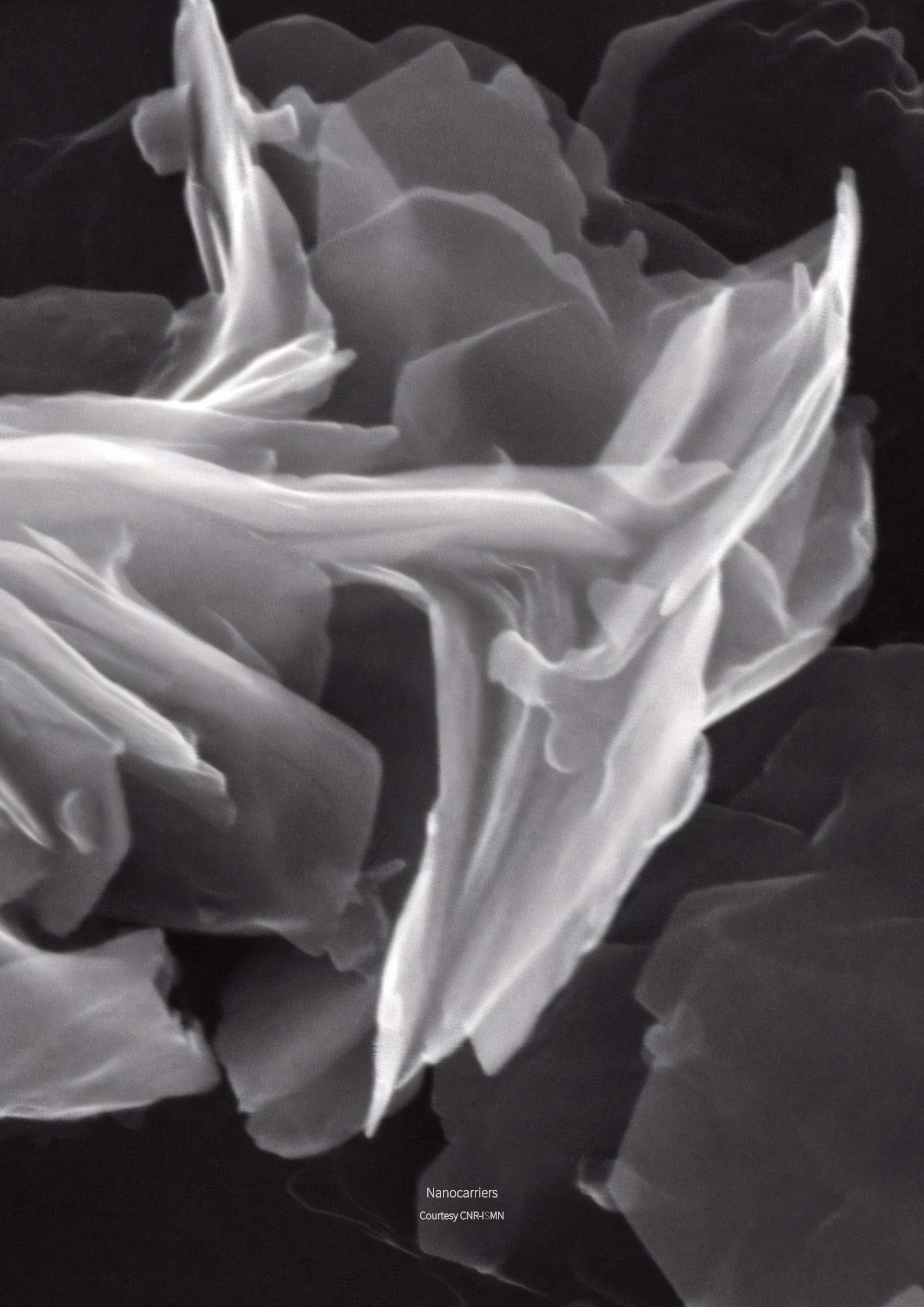
Against which agents of deterioration do they offer protection? How do they work? How are they more environmentally durable?

Within the project, a partner, the University of Venice, is tasked with performing the safety and life cycle durability assessment for all new products. In our quest to develop innovative green materials, we focus on various aspects, including the selection of environmentally friendly reactants, solvents, and preparation methods. We have provided all this information to the University of Venice, which in turn gives us continuous feedback to properly guide the material development process. This is extremely beneficial for quickly eliminating any compound or process that would not be acceptable. There is a dynamic synergy and an exchange of information among the GREENART partners, who possess multidisciplinary expertise, facilitating the achievement of the project's objectives.

How do you work with cultural heritage institutions?

We work with conservators from the GREENART project. They provide essential feedback on primary conservation needs, the limitations of current products, and the specifications necessary for new materials. They also contributed to the identification of the most representative references and mock-ups. Additionally, some conservators participate in validating the new materials, with experiments already underway.





Nanocarriers
Courtesy CNR-ISMN



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