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The Heartless Stone: A Journey through the World of Diamonds, Deceit and Desire

By Tom Zoellner, 294 pp., publ. by St. Martin's Press, New York, 2006. US\$24.95

The mystique and value of diamonds is a double-edged sword, inspiring the passions that help fuel an industry with \$65 billion in worldwide sales while engendering a great number of myths and not-so-noble emotions. Like several other mainstream books about diamonds, *The Heartless Stone* offers a pastiche of history, myth, assumption, fact, and misinformation into an engagingly written stew. The book describes diamond mining in Canada, Brazil, Angola, and Russia; provides an overview of "The Cartel" (the De Beers Diamond Trading Company); and examines diamond cutting in India as well as consumer markets of the U.S. and Japan. Unfortunately, much of this information is inaccurate.

Typical of how information is presented in this book is the first chapter, in which the author juxtaposes his own ill-fated engagement and the diamond that sealed it with the history of the Central African Republic (CAR). He recounts the sociopolitical troubles of the CAR from its French colonial past through the reign of Emperor Bokassa in the 1970s and '80s, in the process maintaining that the republic is part of the "conflict diamonds" trade. Zoellner's choice of the CAR as an example is odd, given that the country, while governed badly, has not experienced widespread conflict or civil war. Nor has it ever been named by the United Nations, Kimberley Process, or any

nongovernmental organization as a source of conflict diamonds—its economy, for the most part, is sustained by foreign aid.

Even more problematic is his statement that conflict diamonds comprise 14% of the stones in the market. In reality, at the peak of the Angolan and Sierra Leone civil wars, conflict diamonds represented between 4% and 5% of all diamonds in the market. *Illicitly traded* diamonds, those smuggled or under declared to avoid taxes, made up an estimated 14% before the 2003 Kimberley Process forced accountability.

In the chapter on the U.S. diamond market, titled "The Big Nothing," the author states that the markup on diamond engagement rings and other diamond jewelry "is nothing short of outrageous," adding that the term *keystone* was developed "several years ago" as a euphemism to disguise this fact. Of course, *keystone* has been in use for many decades, and retail jewelry profit margins are in fact in line with those of similar consumer products such as apparel and sporting goods. Mall jewelers, Zoellner says, "have the power to foist some of the worst deals onto the consumer thanks to their mammoth volumes," failing to note that those same jewelers typically pay 5–6% assessments on gross sales as part of their mall lease agreements. Zoellner does discuss the impact of the Internet but fails to note how deeply it has cut into the margins on diamond solitaires.

The chapter on India, "The Stone Mills," asserts on page 213 that children constitute 10% of the workforce in the country's diamond industry, citing a 1997 statement from the

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions—which at the time represented the Belgian diamond workers' unions in bargaining for benefits in the face of Indian competition. Four pages later, however, Zoellner credits the same source for a statement that "20% of India's [diamond] workers were underage." In reality, an independent survey of India's diamond labor force conducted by Ferguson Associates in 2003 found that less than 3% of India's diamond workers were under 15 years old, and many of these were apprentices of family-run businesses. The author also fails to point out that the great majority of India's diamond workers earn wages well above the national average, and that in recent years Surat has made a dramatic transformation from one of the most poverty-stricken cities in India to a center of budding prosperity (as a recent visit by this reviewer attests).

Old myths long established as apocryphal, such as the "Belgian" (Asscher was Dutch) who cleaved the Cullinan diamond fainting after he struck the first blow (there is no evidence this occurred), are presented as fact. At the same time, newer myths, such as De Beers crushing the attempt to develop the Crater of Diamonds deposit in Arkansas into a viable mine, are given new life. On the latter, Zoellner spends pages

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discussing the alleged potential of the "kimberlite" (actually lamproite) deposits at Murfreesboro despite extensive bulk sampling performed in the late 1990s by the state of Arkansas (which he dismisses as a few "core samples") that clearly established the deposit as uneconomic (about 1.1 ct/100 tonne at \$12.30/ct; see D. P. Dunne, "Diamond economics of the Prairie Creek lamproite, Murfreesboro, AR, USA," *Ore Geology Reviews*, Vol. 22, No. 3-4, 2003, pp. 251-262).

No one disputes that conflict diamonds remain an issue today: Even at less than 1% they are too numerous. And certainly not every diamond worker in India finds prosperity and not every consumer in the U.S. gets a great deal on a diamond. But these facts must be considered against the whole picture, which was not offered here. The tragedy of this book is that, like his literary predecessors Edward Jay Epstein, Matthew Hart, and Janine Roberts, Zoellner possesses the skill and drive to produce a work that could have lasting value, but instead chose to perpetuate misinformation.

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Making the Most of Your Flex-shaft

By Karen Christians, 96 pp., illus., publ. by MJSA/AJM Press and the Ganoksin Project, Providence, RI, 2006. US\$34.95

As Karen Christians states in her new book, one of the first power tools a new jeweler should purchase is a flex-shaft. This lightweight device's electric motor powers a flexible shaft that drives an assortment of rotational tools such as burrs and drills, or oscillating tools such as hammers. *Making the Most of Your Flex-shaft* is a clearly written, easy-to-understand guide to this important jewelry manufacturing tool.

Christians takes the time to carefully show how the electric motor of the flex-shaft works, right down to internal views and schematics. Explaining torque vs. rpm or the relationship between volts and ohms can be difficult, but she succeeds in using analogies to make it easy for the reader to understand the inner workings of the machine. She also gives a brief history lesson on the inventors of the flex-shaft and chuck key (the tool used to tighten and loosen attachments on the handpiece).

Christians then explains why different models of the flex-shaft may fit different uses more or less effectively. Using this book as a guide, jewelers looking to purchase a flex-shaft will be able to choose a unit whose motor size will best suit their needs.

Of course, the flex-shaft itself is only half the equation, the other being the tool that is attached to it. There are innumerable varieties of tools that can be used for operations such as cutting, grinding, texturing, and polishing, and each can be made from a range of different materials. Depending on the type of metal being worked or the speed being used, the right tool may be made from high-speed steel, from carbide, or from another material. Christians uses a handy chart to categorize the different operations a user may need to perform, and recommends the specific tool or variety of tools that is best for each. This can be of tremendous value to a beginner and can prevent the purchase of costly tools that will never be used. The category of polishing tools itself is so large that it has its own chart to explain all the different varieties a jeweler may need.

In addition to the basics of the flex-shaft and its uses, there is some very helpful information on various add-on tools that are available, such as tools to assist in the stone setting process, wax carving jigs, and drill press attachments. This information on items that are clamped on or attached to the hand pieces is of value to the intermediate-level jeweler as well, and shows the flexibility of this tool platform.

Possibly the most important section of the book covers the maintenance that these fairly simple machines require. The flex-shaft is a relatively expensive purchase for a beginning jeweler, and good maintenance will greatly extend its operating life. Christians is very specific on the required lubrication and cleaning, and even the changing of the motor brushes, to ensure optimal performance.

Finally, a few choice tips and tricks on using the flex-shaft in unusual ways that even a seasoned jeweler may find useful are added near the end of the book.

Overall, this is a very useful and easy-to-understand text covering the operation and maintenance of one of the most frequently used tools in the jeweler's arsenal. I would recommend it for beginning- to intermediate-level jewelers.

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Charming: The Magic of Charm Jewelry

*By Deborah Alun-Jones and John Ayton, 112 pp., illus., publ. by Thames & Hudson Inc., New York, 2005. US\$19.95**

Judging from the attention they have received in the fashion media, charm bracelets have once again become *de rigueur* for the stylish woman. Yet for as long as there has been personal adornment, charms have been worn. Because charm jewelry often commemorates important events in the wearer's life or represents personal beliefs, charms tend to have high sentimental value.

This book offers a lovely look at charms, their history, and the reasons they are worn. Heavily illustrated with photographs of wonderful charms and women wearing charm jewelry, it is broken into six chapters: Magical Talismans, Spiritual Devotion, Just for Luck, Love Tokens,

Style and Sensibility, and Milestones and Celebrations. Especially engaging are the brief anecdotes describing pieces worn by famous people, such as the charm bracelet of crosses given to the Duchess of Windsor by the Duke of Windsor.

As a collector of charms, I greatly enjoyed this book. Attractive and interesting, it held my attention until the very end. It's the perfect addition to the library of anyone who appreciates charm jewelry.

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Bedazzled: 5,000 Years of Jewelry

*By Sabine Albersmeier for The Walters Art Museum, 64 pp., illus., publ. by D. Giles Ltd., London, 2005. US\$9.95**

Each summer, travelers descend on European towns in search of the small museums that guidebooks call "little gems." This slim volume captures the glint of a stateside gem, The Walters Art Museum of Baltimore, a city better known for crab cakes than classicism.

Assistant curator of ancient art Sabine Albersmeier presents 50 key items from the Walters' collection dating from the 2nd millennium BC to the early 20th century. These works were once part of the private collection of Henry Walters, son of railroad magnate and art collector William T. Walters. At his death in 1931, the younger Walters bequeathed to the city and citizens of Baltimore an entire jewelry collection culled from World's Fairs, expositions, and antiquarians around the globe.

Highlights include two lavish gemstone-encrusted gold bracelets dating to the first century BC, which exemplify ancient Greek embellishments of inlay, cloisonné, and beading. Spain's 6th century Visigoth past is dramatized by two gemstone and glass *fibulae*, the ornamental pins used to fasten medieval garments.

Elaborate crucifixes and rings from the Renaissance are well represented by clean photography and color details.

The collection's later works include a stunning piece Walters acquired from René Lalique at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition—a *plique-à-jour* enamel, glass, gold, and blue sapphire pansy brooch. Another floral masterpiece, a gold-stemmed Tiffany corsage ornament with Montana sapphires and demantoid garnets, won the grand prize at the famed 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*. The Walters' treasures are complemented by loans from the Zucker family ring collection, which include an interlocking ruby-and-diamond gimmel ring from 1631.

A whirlwind summary of Western jewelry traditions and a compact glossary expand the 7" x 7" (about 18 x 18 cm) catalogue's accessibility to audiences beyond devotees of antiquity, history, and jewelry making.

Albersmeier is organizing curator for the traveling exhibit, which is scheduled to visit Nashville's Frist Center for the Visual Arts from September 2006 to January 2007 and the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, from February to May 2007.

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Modernist Jewelry, 1930–1960: The Wearable Art Movement

By Marbeth Schon, 227 pp., illus., publ. by Schiffer Publishing Ltd., Atglen, PA, 2004. US\$69.95

Modernist jewelry came at a crossroads of "isms"—Constructivism, Primitivism, Modernism, Surrealism, Cubism, Expressionism, Dadaism—each contributing to the overall artistic sensibilities. The pioneering modernist designers developed their voices at a time when the art movement was prevalent, giving rise to a panoply of seemingly divergent aesthetics.

This book examines the work of 175 of the most important American modernist jewelry artists.

As with nearly every jewelry movement, some of the resulting works may appear crude or elemental. Indeed, one common theme during the modernist period was a lack of embellishment, as artists preferred the materials left in their original state as much as possible. Gemstones, wood, and other natural materials were roughly tumbled and cut into bold shapes. Often the metal was allowed to show the "imperfections" of hammering, texturing, and natural patination, while the necessary functional parts of jewelry—findings, pins, etc.—were integrated into the overall design.

Many of the biographical sketches in *Modernist Jewelry* give a true sense of the artists' struggles and creativity, though others are much briefer, in some cases because little information exists. For instance, the two gorgeous photos of Madeline Turner's earrings and enamel work are accompanied by a mere two-sentence bio. For the modernist Arthur King, there are his maker's marks and photos of a ring and a cuff bracelet, yet no biography.

This book is especially interesting when the iconic jewelry of the artist appears with the bio. The maker's marks are not shown as line drawings but as crisp images of the actual stampings, though only 73 hallmarks are presented. Also of benefit are photos of the artists that visually connect the creator with the final product. "Prices"—or values, if you will—are used sparingly and appropriately as a range to reflect such variables as condition, rarity, and geography.

Between 1930 and 1960, these modernist designers, jewelers, and metalsmiths laid the groundwork for the next two decades of metal work and wearable art jewelry, giving artistic sustenance to the generations of respected artists who have followed.

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