

TEXAS

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Jeweler

HOT STUFF!

What Tucson Had to
Feature This Year

THE GOLD Survival Guide

Answers for De Beers'
**SETTLEMENT
QUESTIONS**



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HOT STUFF!

BY DIANA JARRETT, GG



2008 AGTA Spectrum Awards 2nd Place - Classical: Robert Wander, Robert Wander for Winc Creations, Honolulu, HI. 18K yellow gold brooch featuring a lizard of multi-colored Sapphires (4.86 ctw.), Garnets (6.01 ctw.) and chocolate Diamonds (.11 ctw.) atop a red Coral branch.

GEM LOVERS THE WORLD OVER CIRCLE THEIR

calendars for several days or even weeks each February—every year. Mineral collectors, gemstone dealers and buyers converge upon the desert town of Tucson for weeks of frenetic trading at the world's largest gem bazaar. And with the star treatment given to “single name” celebrities—the 40 some-odd major gem shows are called simply TUCSON for those in the know.

Now that the dust has settled and the shows are packed and gone, what will this year's fair have revealed to us about the hottest trends at Tucson? Veteran attendees and seasoned exhibitors alike jump in with their forecasting skills about the must-have stones and styles to look for in the months ahead.

Those with a yen for the ne plus ultra found the luxury show Centurion 2008, preceding the AGTA GemFair™, to be the place for ogling opulent eye candy.

Red rose and pink gold are still in high demand. And a sophisticated combination of vintage styles reinterpreted for the modern woman in larger proportions was done up in red gold and other precious metals. A striking example of that concept came from Caressa Jewelry who went a step further by pairing vintage inspired red gold with gems in companion colors, such as pale pink morganite or champagne diamonds for a more feminine look.

Topnotch bridal goods manufacturer Martin Flyer brought their distinctive diamond ring collection to Tucson's Centurion. Select pieces from their brand artfully married pink gold and pink diamonds and platinum with dazzling results. The response to their definitive brand was evidenced by the action buzzing around their booth the entire time.



Tucson regulars noticed a greater focus on diamonds this time, both loose and in mounted goods. So, it was particularly helpful that respected gemstone author Renée Newman released her revised edition of the *Diamond Handbook, A Practical Guide to Diamond Evaluation* in time for the shows. Her section on colored diamonds is essential to professionals and consumers alike in fielding the myriad of subtle characteristics that contribute to a diamond's value.

Iconoclastic, even to the discerning buyer whose task was to find the unexpected at Centurion, the Charriol® line of high karat gold, diamonds and PVD cable in black,

coppery red, and white. This innovative combining of precious metals and gemstones with an industrial motif is sleek and sophisticated, but not trendy. Expect to see other designers draw inspiration from the evocative way Charriol® rethinks common forms.

A recurring theme among exhibitors was the trend to "Mix it Up." From the toniest couture collections in the designer salons, to the boisterous activity on the GJX floor and beyond, manufacturers showed a fondness for mixing colored gemstones with wild abandon. Previously, one could find pleasant combos of complementary or contrasting gemstone colors situated on a beautiful piece of jewelry.

Top Left Multi-gem Clownfish brooch is an Ocean Jewel of rubies, and white and black diamonds. This bejeweled Clownfish boasts an articulating 'lucky' fin and swims amongst the green and pink tourmaline anemones. Photo courtesy of Mario Basta.

Bottom Left Platinum and 14K Pink Gold with .85ct natural pink and .35cts. white beaded diamonds. Photo courtesy of Martin Flyer.

Right 18kt yellow gold and diamond with Tanzanite forevers. Photo courtesy of Erica Courtney, Inc.



But what were deliriously snapped up this year were opulent jewels in a riot of colors—five, six or more on the same piece. And not only that, but pearls, faceted colored stones, opaque cabochons were all artfully arranged on one dramatic brooch or bunched up on chunky colorful bracelets.

“Mixing it up” with panache was Ricardo Basta, creator of extravagant jewels with a twist. Basta is first and foremost an artist for whom jewelry is a fanciful outlet to showcase his sculpting expertise. So, many of his deluxe brooches have a dimensional effect that thrills the spectator. Basta’s vibrant gemstone combinations and other unexpected materials elevate the craft of bench jeweler to a pinnacle. His styling is definitely for the cognoscenti.

Award winning Robert Wander, another Tucson favorite, is expert at combining many colors into a single luxurious jewel. No doubt this Honolulu resident draws inspiration from nature in creating these no-holds-barred breathtaking pieces. Wander’s innovative use of colored stones, often in their original rough shape has earned him a loyal following at Tucson.

And could the push to go “green” affect

our jewelry choices? While the concept of seeking ways to live more harmoniously with nature is constantly adding devotees, might there be a subliminal effect driving the choices that jewelry collectors make as well? The trend to utilize gemstone rough—the uncut crystal straight from the earth, without human intervention in polishing—is collecting momentum among consumers.

The leading model of “uncut” gemstone in distinguished jewelry was seen at avant-garde designer Todd Reed’s booth. No neophyte to this haunting style, Reed has been handcrafting original designs featuring rough gemstones for over 18 years. His clients are collectors with a keen sense of the aesthetic and a proclivity for the world of fine art.

Other artisans vigorously embraced the organic look as well. Couture jeweler Mia Katrin travels everywhere in search of gemstones worthy of her stylish brand. Katrin forecasts, “The world is going green—both in metals and gems. In diamonds, colored diamonds, especially those in earth tones, and uncut diamonds fit in with the natural, organic look. Jewelry

Far Left Bottlenose butterfly fish 18K yellow gold with tsavorite garnets, rubies, diamonds, yellow sapphires and one cabochon sapphire, and black diamonds; worn as brooch with coral bed, or fish pendant without the coral. Retail \$37,000. Photo courtesy of Ricardo Basta.

Bottom Center 2008 AGTA spectrum Awards Honorable Mention & Best Use of Color Evening Wear. Jennifer Rabe Morin 18kt white and yellow gold ring with mauve Agate cabochon accented with Amethyst and Diamond.

Top Center 18kt yellow gold necklace featuring 9.5cts natural raw diamond cubes and 8.27cts rose cut diamonds \$20,000. All pieces are original hand fabricated designs from Todd Reed Studio. Photo courtesy of Todd Reed, Inc.

Right 18kt yellow gold and diamond with Tanzanite briolette earrings. Photo courtesy of Erica Courtney, Inc.



with a cause—where part of the proceeds are donated to charity, and ‘ethical’ jewelry—with an awareness of legitimate sources and means of production, including ‘green’ manufacturing, is in the forefront.”

Industry spokesperson and author, Antoinette Matlins, provides another insider take on the attraction to the “natural theme” permeating Tucson. She said, “Interestingly, there are two simultaneous ‘trends’; First, a greater demand for ‘natural’ meaning untreated gemstones of fine quality, reaching higher costs-per-carat. And secondly, an increase in the types and applications of treatments to colored gemstones, resulting in lower cost-per-carat.” Matlins sees a shift on the consumer end as well. “An increasing number of affluent consumers are becoming aware of these two categories of colored gemstones; treated and untreated. Demand for untreated gems has been increasing, while supply has not. This was

evident in Tucson because it was harder to find really beautiful natural gems, and when you did, prices were very strong. I expect this trend to continue, and to see prices get even stronger.”

Shopping lists in hand, most buyers generally knew what they needed to buy. But some of the fun lies in not knowing what would turn up. That surprise element is always in force at Tucson, where new players emerge seasonally, and the old-timers vie to keep their place in the sun. That means there’ll always be something one hasn’t thought of. The wise buyer tucks a little extra money away for just such a discovery.

Finding the unusual happened at the booth of Tucson mainstay, Dr. Laurent Sikirdgi of Gem France. One of his unique items was a gold and diamond accent ring featuring a rare oval brilliant cut andesine gemstone. “It was greenish-yellow, turning red under another light—The only one I had.”

Another chance encounter was with Erica Courtney’s Drop Dead Gorgeous™ line, proving that having great taste in jewelry and having fun with it need not be at odds. The one-source-only tanzanite is routinely interpreted in predictable jewelry forms by manufacturers who stress its finite supply. But Courtney’s latest collection at Tucson proved how effectively one can master a capricious style when designing with this choice gem.

Fashionistas and retailers have plenty to choose from in pursuing the hottest trends found at Tucson this year. Whether ones taste runs to the profusely colorful combinations exhibited in festive jewelry,

Top Left Color changes: yellowish-green andesine, diamond and yellow gold ring changes to red under different lighting. Photo courtesy of Sikirdji GemFrance.

Bottom Left 18K white and yellow gold necklace featuring purple Tourmaline, pink Tourmaline, a yellow Tourmaline, and two green Tourmalines. Tsavorite Garnets, multi-colored Sapphires, and brown and white diamonds accent this award winning necklace, part of the Crystal Candy Collection™. All Photos Courtesy of Robert Wander for Winc Creations, Honolulu.

Right Lariat style neckwear in 18-22kt yellow gold with pearls and briolette cut sapphires and aquamarine. Photo Courtesy of Mia Katrin.

or opting for the organic look, designers brought something for everyone. Are your clientele adamant about collecting natural gemstones? Expect to pay for that privilege. But, not to worry. Sophisticated, permanent, and nearly undetectable treatments provide the natural look your customers call for at more appealing prices. There’s one thing we can count on at Tucson; we’ll always experience change—and have a fun ride along the way.