

## AGTA Announces the 2017 AGTA Spectrum Awards™ Judges

DALLAS, TX (June 21, 2017) – The American Gem Trade Association (AGTA) is excited to announce its panel of judges for the 2017 AGTA Spectrum Awards™. This year's judges are:

**Arun Bohra**, Manufacturer, Arunashi  
**Cathy Calhoun**, Retailer, Calhoun Jewelers  
**Sherris Cottier Shank**, Lapidary, Gemscapes  
**Alishan Halebian**, Designer, Alishan  
**Holly Wesche**, Retailer, Wesche Jewelers

“This is a power-packed group of judges,” said Douglas K. Hucker, AGTA CEO. “With years of expertise in color, design, craftsmanship and retail, these judges will absolutely provide us with a stellar collection of winners this year!” The 2017 AGTA Spectrum Awards™ will take place in August.

The AGTA Spectrum Awards™ is the world's premier colored gemstone and cultured Pearl jewelry design competition with categories in Bridal Wear, Business Day Wear, Classical, Evening Wear and Men's Wear. AGTA Spectrum Awards™ also features the Platinum Honors™ sponsored by Platinum Guild International and the Gem DIVA Awards™ sponsored by the Women's Jewelry Association (WJA). The AGTA Cutting Edge Awards™ honor loose colored gemstones in everything from Classic Gemstones to one-of-a-kind Carvings, Pairs and Suites to Objects of Art. The competition is open to U.S. and Canadian designers and cutters.

### Meet the 2017 AGTA Spectrum Awards™ Judges:

#### **Arun Bohra, Arunashi**



A native of Jaipur, India, Arun Bohra was destined to design and make jewelry. He is the eighth generation of a family that has been in the jewelry business since 1841, creating exquisite, elaborately detailed pieces for Indian royalty. Arun draws on the rich heritage of both his family and his culture in creating his own signature line Arunashi.

Arun began his professional career as a gemstone dealer, where he enjoyed the challenge of finding rare, beautiful stones, which laid the foundation for his profound knowledge of the jewelry industry. In 2004, Arun and his Wife, Ashita, combined their names, talents and experience to create their own line of jewelry, Arunashi, a bold innovative line of luxury jewelry. The collection fuses the finest technical achievements with opulence and sophistication. Unexpected mediums, highly articulated metal work, and an infusion of color gloriously expressed in rare gems are the signature elements of Arunashi. Arun is very passionate about design, and approaches jewelry an art, and each Arunashi piece embodies gemstones of exceptional quality and the finest craftsmanship, weaving together art and fantasy, tradition and innovation, drama and subtlety, bringing a fresh voice to an antique craft. All the pieces are one-of-a-kind,

and Arun's work has limited distribution, thru a handful of retailers around the world, each account carefully selected, that share the same passion and philosophy as that of Arunashi.

#### **Cathy Calhoun, Calhoun Jewelers**



Cathy Calhoun found her way into the jewelry business in an unusual way. A friend of hers fell ill, and she temporarily took over his store while he recovered. And the rest is history! With a background in business and finance from Temple University, Calhoun continued her education at the Gemological Institute of America and the American Gem Society. Calhoun Jewelers, formerly Zenker Jewelers, is proud to be the Royersford, Pennsylvania, area's best and largest name in fine jewelry since 1951.

Calhoun brings an unmatched passion and knowledge to Calhoun Jewelers with years of experience with fine jewelry, as well as custom design, estate jewelry and repairs. In addition to serving as a long-time board member, and president of the American Gem Society (2010-2012), she is proud to be the Pennsylvania Jeweler of the Year (2009). She serves on the Board of Directors for the Jewelers Mutual Insurance Company, Jewelers for Children, Diamond Empowerment Fund and Jewelers of America.

Calhoun is the recipient of many industry awards, including the 2014 WJA Award of Excellence (Retail Jeweler), and the inaugural Sallie Morton Award from the American Gem Society, which was given to the nominee whose vision and hard work are instrumental in helping the AGS grow its Guilds. Most recently, Calhoun was honored with the AGS's most prestigious award, the Robert M. Shipley Award, at the 2017 AGS Conclave. The award was in honor of her untiring commitment to the jewelry industry and her dedication to and service to the American Gem Society.

Calhoun has a passion for giving back, and has hosted special events at Calhoun Jewelers benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project. Calhoun has been featured as a jewelry expert on Antiques Road Show, Good Morning America, World News Tonight, Travel Channel, CNN Money and HGTV's "If Walls Could Talk" and "You Live in What."

### Sherris Cottier Shank, Gemscapes



Recognized as one of the world's most talented gemstone artists, Sherris has a unique gift for looking into the heart of each gem to find its hidden beauty and reveal it to the world. Sherris' gem sculptures have been sold at Christies in England and acquired by the The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. She has won nine AGTA Cutting Edge Awards™ as well as an award from The Competition For The Advancement In Gemstone Engraving in Idar Obertsetin, Germany. Her work is regularly featured in books and magazines, and she has spoken multiple times at AGTA, RJO, and AGS.

### Alishan Halebian, Alishan



Alishan Halebian is one of the most original artists creating and pursuing his own vision in jewelry. Being a self-taught goldsmith, his treatment of precious metals is masterly. Using sophisticated techniques, he creates seemingly weightless pieces, capturing metal's beauty in a luxe look with textures set to thrill and inspire.

Alishan's Armenian heritage brings the philosophies of two world cultures, East and West together, which burst into creative expression of style in his distinctive collections. His discerning clientele are attracted to his designs for their notably individual characteristics and emotions, confronting line and form. Contemporary designs, merged with classical art elements bring exquisite style to his jewelry collection, which sell at the finest retail jewelry stores. Alishan's jewelry has been worn on red carpet awards by celebrities and his one of a kind pieces have been exhibited in several museums and art galleries.

### Holly Wesche, Wesche Jewelers



Holly Wesche is the third generation of a jewelry family, and is the owner of Wesche Jewelers. She is a Graduate of the Gemological Institute of America and holds the advanced title of Certified Gemologist which is awarded by the American Gem Society. She is a Past President of the Florida Jewelers Association and was a Jewelers Education Foundation Speaker for several years. She currently serves on the Jewelers of America Board of Directors and is a Vice Chair of the JA Executive Committee.

Wesche Jewelers is Brevard County's largest independent jeweler with a professional staff that includes a Certified Gemologist, a Certified Gemologist Appraiser, two talented jewelry designers, and a master goldsmith. They also have a fully accredited gemological laboratory. In August 2007, Wesche Jewelers was featured as one of "America's Coolest Stores" by INSTORE magazine, a leading jewelry industry trade publication. Wesche Jewelers was one of the national winners of the 2007 Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility. In April 2007, Wesche Jewelers was listed as one of the 50 Most Influential Businesses in Brevard by Space Coast Business magazine.

The deadline for mail-in entries is June 30<sup>th</sup>; the New York Drop-off for Spectrum entries is Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> at the offices of Intercolor USA, 48 W. 48<sup>th</sup> St., Ste. 800, New York. For more information regarding the 2017 AGTA Spectrum Awards™, please contact Megan Whitmire at 800-972-1162 or visit [www.agta.org/awards](http://www.agta.org/awards).

*The American Gem Trade Association is a not-for-profit Association serving the natural colored gemstone and cultured pearl industry since 1981. The AGTA serves the industry as "The Authority in Color" and has it's headquarter office in Dallas, Texas.*

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