

This year's Tucson gem shows were packed with special events, big announcements, gemstone trends and exceptional jewellery. Here, Olga González FGA DGA, shares some of her insights from the show floor, while Gem-A insiders give their feedback on the event.

When gemmologists from across the world descend on the Tucson shows, it is hard not to be reminded of a high school reunion, where old friends catch-up about what's new in their professional lives.

Unlike a high school reunion, however, Tucson provides an opportunity to discuss more interesting topics like rocks and geological formations, gemstone trends and jewellery designs with those who are equally exhilarated by the subject matter. If only this had been offered as a class at school! Now that the 2018 shows are well and truly behind us, here is the lowdown on what was found on the ground...



1: A 14g Shakiso Ethiopian emerald crystal. Image credit: Mayer & Watt.



2: Medium green cut Shakiso Ethiopian emeralds. Image credit: Mayer & Watt.

THE Rock Stars OF TUCSON

GREEN WITH ENVY

The talk of the town was Ethiopian emerald from the tribal lands of Shakiso — about 18 hours south of Addis Ababa (1 & 2). According to American gem dealers, Mayer & Watt, the deposit was discovered within the last year, and 40% of the emeralds are not oiled. They are also identifiable from other sources and look like they will soon be challenging Columbian emeralds in terms of prestige. This may sound like a grand statement, but it is hardly surprising when viewing their spectacular colour. In fact, all emeralds were enjoying attention in Tucson, with floral carvings and beads really turning heads.

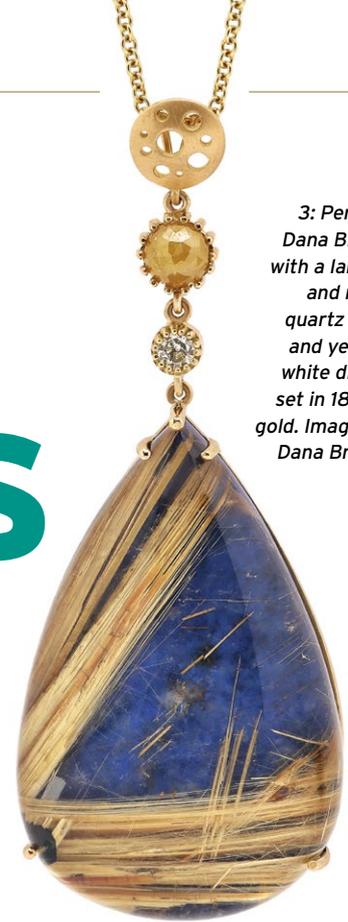
DOUBLE TROUBLE

When walking between the booths, it was clear that designers are embracing the doublet again. Dana Bronfman impressed at JCK Tucson with her stunning lapis lazuli and gold rutile pieces (3). The gold in the quartz makes the pyrite in the lapis pop, bringing out the beauty in both stones.

Bronfman states: "For the new collection I was intrigued to create otherworldly designs using earthy stones, challenging traditional perspectives on high jewellery. I wanted each piece to have a bit of an element of surprise, like a secret between the piece and its owner. You'll see the pieces have a hidden detail; the pendants are backed with 18k gold pierced with my oculus design, as are parts of rings that can only be seen from certain angles."

LUSCIOUS LACQUER

Oh my pearl... these beauties are having a renaissance! "We are selling pearls again,"



3: Pendant by Dana Bronfman with a large lapis and rutilated quartz doublet, and yellow and white diamonds set in 18k yellow gold. Image credit: Dana Bronfman.



4: 14k white gold and Tahitian Keshi pearl cufflinks by ASBA. Image credit: ASBA USA.

says Joshua Israileff, vice president of operations for ASBA USA, a supplier of Tahitian cultured pearls and cultured pearl jewellery (4). "Consumers are enjoying the natural assortment of colours that can come naturally from a pearl. It's a unique and natural product, that's what people want."

Highlights include the Planete ring by French designer jewellery brand, Julie Genet Joaillerie, crafted in 18k white gold and set with indicolite tourmalines and a Tahitian grey pearl (5).

5: Planete ring from the Constellation collection by Julie Genet Joaillerie. Image credit: Julie Genet Joaillerie.



NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

One particular vendor caught my eye for having three materials I hadn't seen from Tanzania before. Ariel Treasures, a fine rock and mineral company based out of Livingston, New Jersey, was selling Kaleidoscope Sunstone, Cherry Tanzurine (a trademarked, natural cherry quartz), and a green quartz with exceptional colour. The latter two are perfect for beads (6).

'Gold Sheen' sapphire was also on my radar at the Tucson shows, as I hadn't seen the material in person since reading about it in the *Journal of Gemmology*. Brenda Smith Jewelry had some particularly stunning examples of untreated and unheated 'Golden Sheen' jewellery that's worth a second, and third, look (7).

Elsewhere, The Clam Shell also brought a new material buyers couldn't get their hands off. It was a petrified wood from



6: Cherry Tanzurine and green quartz beads from Ariel Treasures. Image credit: Olga González.

the island of Garut in Indonesia with blue opal, native copper and chalcedony in the mix. Ten trays of the material were brought to AGTA and sold out in three days (8 & 9).

STACK IT

From a design perspective, companies were embracing the idea of perceived value. Designers experimented with enhancing the beauty of a stone, while keeping the price points lower to attract a variety of customers. Anit Dodhia, founder of Kaali Designs, said: "People are looking for delicate jewellery, and stackables are in demand, even in bridal. Trends continue towards the unique in bridal, including fancy shapes and rose cut stones."

Large brands have jumped on the stackable trend too, with Forevermark launching its first designer collection, Alchemy, alongside Jade Trau (10). Within the range, different diamond cuts have been linked to female characteristic, so marquise, for example, is said to represent 'The Maverick' who is adventurous, independent and spirited. Unsurprisingly, the Alchemy collection is targeted at women buying diamonds for themselves.

I am proud that our industry is continually innovating and discovering new and beautiful materials from around the world. This year's gem shows were exciting and suggest great things for JCK Las Vegas later this year. ■



9: Stones cut from petrified wood logs by The Clam Shell. Image credit: The Clam Shell.



7: Trillion Earrings by Brenda Smith. Hand fabricated in 18k yellow gold with 'Gold Sheen' sapphires and champagne-colour diamond slices. Image credit: Brenda Smith Jewelry.



8: A cross section of petrified wood with native copper, blue opal and chalcedony by The Clam Shell. Image credit: The Clam Shell.



10: Forevermark x Jade Trau Alchemy collection solitaire stackables in 18k rose gold, including Envoy, Vanguard, Maverick and Sophisticate. Image credit: Forevermark.