

Unusual Gemstones

Winds of Change in Jewelry Design?

For many years, most high-end jewelry brands based their creations on the big four—ruby, sapphire, emerald and diamond. The promotion of these gems has been so strong that customers have been conditioned to desire only them. Yet, attitudes are changing, even if a bit quietly. Today, brands—and also independent designers—are slowly freeing themselves from the big four to offer unusual materials to attract customers who are looking for more originality in their jewels and perhaps less investment.

Marie Chabrol reports...

Let's start by asking: What is an unusual gemstone? Probably the best answer is that they are gems quite often valued by connoisseurs and collectors, but are generally not used in jewelry.

This definition might also include antique pieces such as seen in the creations of French jeweler, Auclert, who uses antique gems such as Hellenistic cameos. Its gold and diamond ring featuring an impressive 10th to 15th-century agate game piece from the Middle East is another example of what can be produced with interesting and rare archeological finds.

Should we also include the "ornamental" stones? Yes, definitely. Sometimes referred to as "hardstones," these rocks are endowed with some fascinating and attractive qualities. Without forgetting the more traditionally used malachite, lapis lazuli or turquoise, we are discovering such uncommon gems as variscite, hemimorphite, sugilite, charoite, sphene and K2 marble (azurite in granite), among a variety of others. And, there are many more materials that are perfectly suited for jewelry that they offer a wide range of original possibilities to customers.



Yellow gold necklace with diamonds and amazonite by Sandrine Huet. (Photo: Sandrine Huet)



Yellow gold ring featuring turquoise in matrix by Amelie Viaene. (Photo: Amelie Viaene)



Yellow gold pendant set with diamonds and diopside, signed by Andrew Grima, 1973. (Photo: Bonhams)



Gold ring featuring jasper, sapphires and spinels by Stanislav Drokin. (Photo: Stanislav Drokin)



Gold "Storm" ring in the "Supernature" collection by Solange Agazuri-Partridge features a 33.19-ct rough diamond. (Photo: Solange Agazuri-Partridge)



Canary tourmaline from Zambia. (Photo: Nomad's)



New "Supernature" collection by Solange Agazuri-Partridge. The "Storm" necklace includes gold, diamond and rough labradorite. (Photo: Solange Agazuri-Partridge)



Brooch featuring a 11.78-ct Burmese sphene, 1.52-ctw Mexican water opal, 0.58-ctw tsavorite and 1.28-ctw 3.14-ctw Mexican fire opal by Paula Crevoshay. (Photo: Paula Crevoshay)



White gold, diamond and emerald ring featuring a 2.76-ct kornepine from Tanzania. (Photo: Nirav Modi)



"Yachting Day" white gold ring featuring an 18.03-ct colorless sapphire with diamond and sapphire accents. (Photo: Chanel Joaillerie)



White gold ring set with a no-heat natural-color black sapphire within a rim of silver-platinum (an alloy of silver and platinum) by Maison Auclert. (Photo: Maison Auclert)