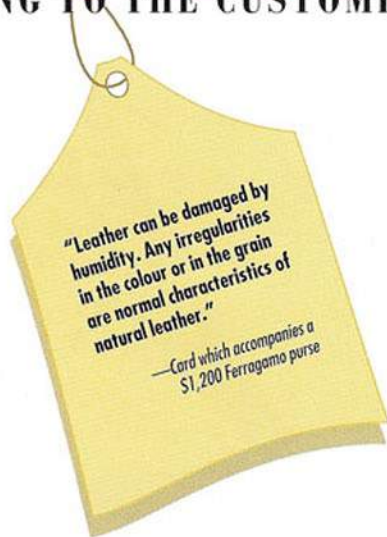


Beauty Mark

SPEAKING TO THE CUSTOMER ABOUT INCLUSIONS IN COLORED GEMSTONES



Color Cues, Part I

"Color Cues" is a new series by colored-gem and marketing expert, Cynthia Marcusson of Cynthia Renée Co. "Color Cues" is intended to provide concise, pertinent and highly usable information in a quick-read format for the busy professional. Whether demystifying technicalities, giving insight on using self-expression and fashion in marketing or providing how-tos in building your clientele of collectors, the topics raised in "Color Cues" will help you build your success with colored-gem marketing. Clip "Color Cues," circulate it among your staff, then save them in a special binder that can serve as your colored-gem reference guide.



CYNTHIA R. MARCUSSON
CYNTHIA RENÉE CO.

Have you noticed consumers automatically accept, even desire, the irregularities in the natural fibers with which they adorn themselves and decorate their homes? Yet these same lovers of things *au naturel* balk when they see an inclusion in a natural gemstone. Historic wisdom says he who hesitates is lost. I don't think consumers' hesitation relates to price; after all, the luxury price of many purses, clothing and wooden antiques seems to add to their appeal. Instead, their caution is a direct function of the comfort and confidence of the sales associate with colored gems and their characteristics. A salesperson who is successful with colored gems is able to explain the charm of inclusions, and even their desirability, with assurance.

The jewelry professional must educate the consumer about which inclusions in colored gems are acceptable and expected. Neglecting this important aspect of colored-gem connoisseurship will set up false expectations that either cannot be fulfilled or will prevent the consumer from enjoying the immense beauty of a tremendous glowing gem that occurs naturally with inclusions.

De Beers has worked hard marketing diamonds with their "Four Cs," one of which is clarity. It is only natural many would erroneously assume that what's good for diamonds is good for colored gems. In

fact, diamonds are much simpler chemically than colored gems, most of which have a long list of chemical ingredients. Because colored gems are more complex chemically, there is a much greater chance for inclusions to be caught up in them during their crystallization process, much like footprints on the path of formation. In colored gems, first we look at the color—its depth, purity and intensity. Then, and only then, do we look at inclusions, the presence of which doesn't necessarily detract from the gem's value to as great an extent as it does with diamonds. What's more important with colored gems is the type and position of the inclusions and whether their presence creates a structural defect that may affect durability.

Once again, let's relate diamonds and colored gems to fibers. Think of cotton: It is a beautiful, pure, yet simple, fiber. Silk, on the other hand, is created through much more complicated harvesting, weaving and dying processes. With that complication comes increased depth, luminosity and hue and greater opportunity for imperfection. And in this jewel of fabrics, imperfection is praised.

The last empress dowager of China had an insatiable appetite for gemstones, which she had carved into sculptures, decorative items, jewelry and even buttons for her clothing. Pink tourmaline from California was one of her favorites, and she desired the intermediate, highly included grades of pink tourmaline. They more readily showed nature's handiwork and, after all, clean gems could be made by man. In today's language, she would have said, "If you want perfect, buy a fake." She wanted gems with soul—real gems, authentic, natural, genuine, with traces of their liquid past.

Often the inclusions that are almost always present in a fine emerald are dressed up with the words, *le jardin* or *el jardin*, French and Spanish for "garden." Before I thought about it, I used to roll

my eyes at this and think it was a manipulative euphemism. But, yes, the word is strangely apt. Those inclusions grew in there. They took thousands and thousands of years to form. The gem holds a "garden" of complicated delights.

One of the most exuberant professionals I know, Michaeline Mason, gets passionate describing inclusions. She

educates her group of devoted customers about when to expect, even seek, inclusions. The way she puts it is that each person is wonderful and unique, and so is a colored gemstone. Physical variances aren't flaws, they can enhance a person's specific beauty. A birthmark, streak of gray hair or Roman nose doesn't dim the beauty of the person but rather makes her

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Above: A collection of colored-gemstone rings designed to celebrate life's light and wonder. Jewelry by Cynthia Renée Co. Photo by John Parrish.

Right: Custom-designed ring featuring a very fine 6.67-carat Colombian emerald in eighteen-karat yellow gold and platinum accented by a glimpse of diamond baguettes. The inclusions in this emerald make it as individual as the woman who wears it. Jewelry by Cynthia Renée Co. Photo by John Parrish.





Bill Bevell
Smith & Bevell Jewelers, Inc.
Beaverton, Oregon

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—Bill Bevell, Smith & Bevell



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"Leather can be damaged by humidity. Any irregularities in the colour or in the grain are normal characteristics of natural leather."

—Card which accompanies a \$1,200 Ferragamo purse

"The slight imperfections are characteristic of this yarn, and in no way are to be considered as defective but add to the luxury of a fine silk garment."

—Tag on an \$850 Donna Karan silk jacket

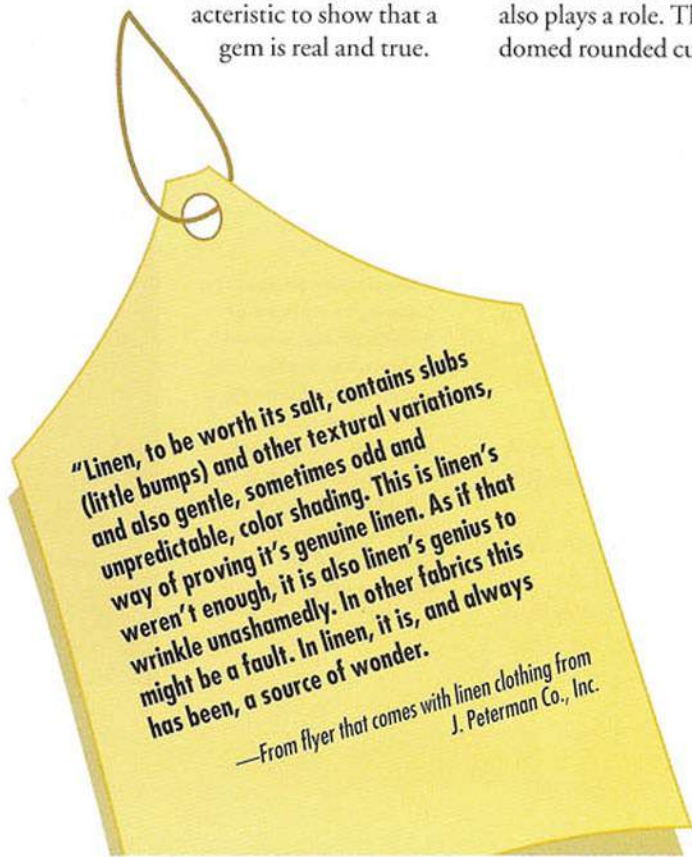
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who she is. Ms. Mason says, "Once I explain this, my customers recognize inclusions as part of the gem's beauty and the uniqueness of the gem. I don't have a problem with it. A lot of this is in the perception of customers. 'Oh, my God,' they say, 'it has a flaw.' I say, 'Yes, isn't that great? It's real.'" Sometimes it is the one identifying characteristic to show that a gem is real and true.

There are different clarity standards for each different gem depending on its chemistry and mode of formation. Some gems, such as emeralds and red tourmalines, are almost always found with inclusions. Others, such as aquamarine and kunzite, are readily available internally clean, so if they have inclusions, they will bring a much lower price. Cut also plays a role. The "cabochon" is the domed rounded cut most often seen in

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"Linen, to be worth its salt, contains slubs (little bumps) and other textural variations, and also gentle, sometimes odd and unpredictable, color shading. This is linen's way of proving it's genuine linen. As if that weren't enough, it is also linen's genius to wrinkle unashamedly. In other fabrics this might be a fault. In linen, it is, and always has been, a source of wonder."

—From flyer that comes with linen clothing from J. Peterman Co., Inc.

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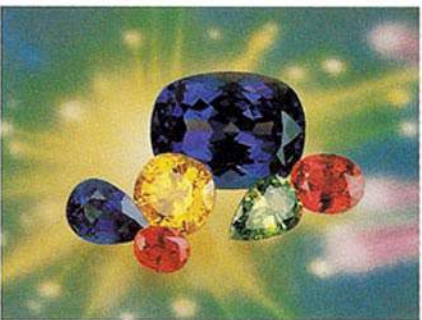


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opal and jade. Since the cabochon doesn't have facets, which tend to call attention to inclusions, more included rough material is generally used in its fashioning. Despite that, many fine gems are cut in this style. Some people prefer them—cabochons are very European, sophisticated and sensuous, a rounded full shape offering a bold dose of color.

Inclusions can also be helpful. They can give clues to a gem's identity, help us determine whether the gem is natural or synthetic and the method, if any, of enhancement. Included materials are often helpful in suggesting a gem's country of origin, a factor that can play a big part in pricing.

Consumers are sometimes unduly concerned that the presence of inclusions makes a gem substandard or a lot less valuable. While it is true that, all things being equal, internally clean (okay, "flawless") colored gems may bring a disproportionately higher price due to their extreme rarity, this perfectly clean gem may not even exist in nature, and, if found, its price may be stratospheric. If such a perfect gem were discovered, its owner may fear wearing it because she may mar the very thing she paid a high price for—perfection.

So, the next time you sit down to scope a colored gem, don't fear seeing inclusions, as you would with diamonds. Instead, welcome them. JQ

Cynthia Marcusson, principal of Cynthia Renée Co., is a wholesaler specializing in fine colored gemstones and creative jewelry as well as a sought-after consultant on the marketing of colored gems. She can be contacted directly at: Cynthia Renée Co., 504 East Alvarado Street, Suite 208, Fallbrook, CA 92028, Tel: 760-728-5150, Fax: 760-728-2636.