

JEWELRY CONNOISSEUR

WINTER 2003

At Home
with
Prince
Dimitri



Carolyn
Murphy:
Winston's
New Face

Precious
Time:
Jeweled
Watches



USA \$3.95
Canada \$4.95

Tourmaline

By Cynthia Renée

Gustavus III of Sweden chose an incredible 250-carat “ruby” as a gift to Catherine the Great on a state visit to Russia in 1777. Europeans settling in Brazil brought back large forest-green gems called Brazilian emeralds. As the science of gemology evolved, it turned out that both stones were tourmaline, a gem that comes in more colors than any other gemstone.

With centuries of being misidentified behind it, tourmaline doesn't have any long-standing lore or traditions. It was not known to the Western world until Dutch traders brought home gems from Sri Lanka in 1703. During the eighteenth century, tourmaline was called the gem of the Muses — the guiding spirits of the arts and creativity. It is now one of the birthstones for October.

Tourmaline's bouquet of colors is said to symbolize in lasting form the essence of flowers, animals — such as butterflies and tropical fish — and the human soul in the transient body. Tourmaline's beauty is easy to behold, but its chemistry is complex. Many countries around the world have produced fine tourma-

line, most having their own distinctive shade or hue. Some stones are even multicolored or cat's-eye.

There are varietal names for tourmaline, which frequently cause more confusion than clarity. Rubellite is a term frequently applied to red or pink tourmaline, while indicolite refers to blue tourmaline. The definitions of these terms are not uniformly applied, so it's best to call a tourmaline by its color, not its varietal name. There is actually a “watermelon tourmaline,” which is fashioned by cutting the crystal into slices. The resulting slices have concentric bands of color, often a green rind and a pink center, just like the fruit



K. Brunini



Susan Sadler

that inspired the name.

Brazil is the world's major producer of tourmaline. Its very limited Paraiba deposit of neon blue-green tourmaline was snapped up at prices above \$10,000 per carat. You'll have to get in line to own one, though, as the deposit is no more. In 2000 there was also a short-lived find of true red tourmaline from Nigeria.

Because of their chemistry, blue or green and red or pink tourmaline are faceted differently and have different clarity characteristics. Blue-green gems are mostly in the rectangular emerald cut, while red pinks are usually in every shape but emerald cut.

This isn't a whim; it involves the way light moves through the gemstone. For both gems, purity and intensity of color are important to consider. Blue greens are readily available eye-clean. Red-pink tourmalines almost always have inclusions. The last Empress Dowager of China was quite greedy for highly included pink tourmaline, as she felt they showed nature's handiwork and clean gems could be manufactured by man.

Inspired by an artist's palette of colors, many designers consider tourmaline their favorite gem. Tourmaline's beauty combined with its availability in sizes of one to 15 carats allows many choices to create inspired jewelry designs. With a hardness of 7.5, tourmaline is resistant to scratches, though rings should be protected during sports, housework or gardening. ♦

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