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Jewelry & Gems: The Buying Guide, 7th Edition

Antoinette Matlins & A. C. Bonanno

GemStone Press, 2009, Seventh Edition, 306 pages (paperback); 16 pages Color photographs, 16 pages Black & White photographs and/or illustrations, 15 charts and tables; Hardcover \$24.99 Paperback \$19.99

As the subtitle states *Jewelry and Gems: The Buying Guide* was written for the novice consumer wanting to know how to buy diamonds, pearls, colored gemstones, gold and jewelry with confidence and knowledge. The book contains short, easy-to-understand, well-organized chapters. About a third of the book is devoted to diamonds providing simple straightforward explanations of diamond cuts vs. shape, clarity, color, and weight. The book includes an excellent explanation of fluorescence and how it affects the value of diamonds. The chapter on how to spot fraud and avoid misrepresentation provides valuable information on weight misrepresentation, color alteration and misgrading, flaw concealment and misgrading, the alteration and counterfeiting of certificates, and diamond imposters. Only one page is devoted to fancy-color diamonds. Also, although the consumer is frequently advised to obtain a diamond grading report from a respected laboratory, there is no discussion of how to read or analyze such a report or certificate. In both of these instances, the reader is referred to the book *Diamonds: The Antoinette Matlins Buying Guide* for more information. The second third of the book is devoted to colored gemstones beginning with a discussion of the four Cs. The authors maintain that “Generally speaking, the finer and rarer the color, the less impact cutting, clarity, and carat weight have on the value of the gem. On the other hand, the more common the color, the more impact these other factors have.” This philosophy is emphasized in the four Cs discussion. Colored gemstone certificates as well as treatments (heating, diffusion, and fracture filling) and synthetics are briefly covered. The chapter on fraud and misrepresentation in colored gems is excellent including the comprehensive chart of descriptive names and misnomers. More excellent charts include:

- Most popular gemstone alternatives by color
- The effect of treatments on gemstone value
- Gemstones not routinely treated.

The longest chapter in the book summarizes popular colored gemstones from alexandrite to zultanite in a few paragraphs each. A picture of each gemstone tied to its description would have been helpful, especially for the novice consumer. My biggest disappointment was the all too brief chapter on pearls (12 pages). Topics covered are the six factors affecting pearl quality and value and the major types of pearls. However, the reader is referred to *The Pearl Book: The Definitive Buying Guide—How to Select, Buy, Care for & Enjoy Pearls* by Antoinette Matlins for more information. The jewelry portion of the book is also brief including short chapters on metals (gold, platinum, palladium, titanium, stainless steel, and tungsten but not silver), choosing a setting for rings, and antique and period jewelry summarizing the collectible jewelry periods from Georgian to Retro.

Both the diamond and colored gemstone sections have sample retail price guides compiled from *The GemGuide*, Gemworld International, Inc. and adjusted to retail. It is pointed out that the guides are to aid in understanding the importance of quality differences in diamonds and gemstones and the relative effects of the four Cs. The best parts of the book are the last sections containing important advice before and after you buy.

First, specific questions to ask when buying a diamond and when buying a colored gemstone are given and explained. Special tips for diamonds and colored gemstones are outlined. Next, what information to get written on the bill of sale is discussed. Finally, the consumer is urged to have those facts verified by a qualified gemologist-appraiser. Tips on selecting a reputable jeweler and gemologist consultant are given. The consumer is cautioned with warnings and tips about gemstone investments, E-commerce, and online auctions. Lists of useful and reliable online sites and recognized laboratories are provided. The final chapter of the book provides advice on how to choose a reliable appraiser and insurer.

Conclusion

Overall, the book provides to the novice consumer valuable, easy-to-understand information for buying diamonds and colored gemstones. The sections on pearls, gold, and jewelry are much too brief and not as helpful. The black and white photographs and illustrations are an integral part of the text. However, the beautiful color photographs are not. The book is worth its price for both the consumer and the appraiser for its information on fraud and misrepresentations, its charts and lists, and its advice before and after you buy.

Reviewed by Maureen Long, GG