

Fresh FROM Tucson

Gems&Jewellery contributor Olga González FGA DGA shares some highlights from the Tucson gem shows, including Colombian emeralds and the British businesses enjoying success 'across the pond'.

After the Tucson gem shows, an internal recap begins to process all that was seen, heard and exhibited. Something about this year stands out though... Tucson has served to get the industry's feet wet in an inevitable sea of change before major transformations arrive in Las Vegas in the summer. Associations and businesses are experimenting with new venues and layouts, while shows and designers are getting edgier with their gems, aesthetic and storytelling.

1: Tourmaline on quartz from the Santa Rosa District, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Image courtesy of Wilensky Fine Minerals.



MIXING IT UP

The new Grand Ballroom at the AGTA GemFair got it right. The plush white carpeting and elegant, translucent banners gave the area an upscale feel, differentiating it from the GemHall floor.

Mia Katrin, president of exhibitor, Jewel Couture LLC, said: "We were very pleased with the new location [the Grand Ballroom] for the designers. We thought it was a very elegant and our traffic seemed to be generally quite good. We were on the main floor as people walked through the doors for AGTA GemFair, so it was natural for them to browse in our area before going downstairs to the GemHall with the loose gems."

AGTA and American Gem Society (AGS) Titleholders also partnered for a new after-hours event, 'GLOW'. Held at Charro del Rey downtown, there was a steady stream of revellers from the shows, mostly in their 20s and 30s, networking and dancing accompanied by the luminescence of glow sticks. As always, Gem-A's Big Gem Bash was a who's who of gemmologists.

Tucson's New Mineral Show, which was at the old slaughterhouse on 1102 W. Grant road, was small, but there was a good amount of red beryl on display as well as a new source of fluorescent chalcedony from New Mexico, discovered in December 2018.

Stuart Wilensky, president of Wilensky Fine Minerals said: "We have attended the Tucson mineral shows for 35 years (1).



A different type of green by New York-based Campbellian Collection. These Green Empress earrings feature 3.52 carats of green tourmaline with 0.60 carats of tsavorite garnets, plus 86 diamonds in 18K white and yellow gold.

We have watched it evolve from a market place atmosphere into the 'Art Basel' of minerals. Here in Tucson, one can experience fine minerals as collectibles, investments, and objects of art. The Tucson show ignites an irresistible passion that is literally infectious. It is here that true mineral collectors are born. If the original collectors who started the show 64 years ago could see it now, I think they would be very proud."

EMBRACING LOCAL

Whimsical and fun, jewellery designers embraced where they come from and presented collections that brought pure joy. Sicilian designer Giuliana di Franco presented her Carosello Collection at JCK Tucson, featuring rings inspired by carousels, or merry-go-rounds, that tell a story as the piece is turned, coupled with Sicilian motifs (2). Similarly, the



2: Rings from the Carosello Collection by Giuliana di Franco. As you turn the ring the images tell a story, which is why its name refers to a carousel or merry-go-round.



3: Emerald ring by Jeffrey Bilgore. 5.77 carat Colombian emerald from the Chivor mines, with diamonds, set in platinum.



The Fall Leaves brooch by So Young Park crafted in 18K yellow gold and oxidized silver with white diamonds. The designer exhibited at JCK Tucson.

Sò Napolitano Collection pays homage to pizza and the region of Naples, Italy.

British business, C W Sellors celebrated its 40th anniversary by revealing a partnership with Fabergé and its London ateliers to create limited edition 18K gold, blue john, enamel, and guilloché eggs in time for Easter.

GLORIOUS GREEN

Emeralds are trending, both on the red carpet and at the Tucson gem shows. Jeffrey Bilgore had a particularly incredible 5.77 carat Colombian emerald from the Chivor mines, whose rarity garnered attention from buyers and fellow exhibitors alike (3).

Making a splash at the show were emeralds from the Panjshir Valley, in north-central Afghanistan, which are a stunning green and are responsibly sourced, supporting locals through programs such as 'Partner with a Village' (4). As a company, Panjshir Valley Emeralds has worked with both Oxford and Harvard universities to develop a patented blockchain technology for the Afghani emeralds' mine-to-market process.

On the subject of emeralds, Shekhar Shah of Real Gems Inc. commented: "This year, we found a lot of renewed interest in lower price point emeralds, especially Colombian material. Many designers stopped by and were very excited to see all the Colombian beads that we had on display. Another strong item was emerald slices. What seems to be the trend this year is towards lower price point fancy cut items which creates uniqueness in the designer's jewellery."

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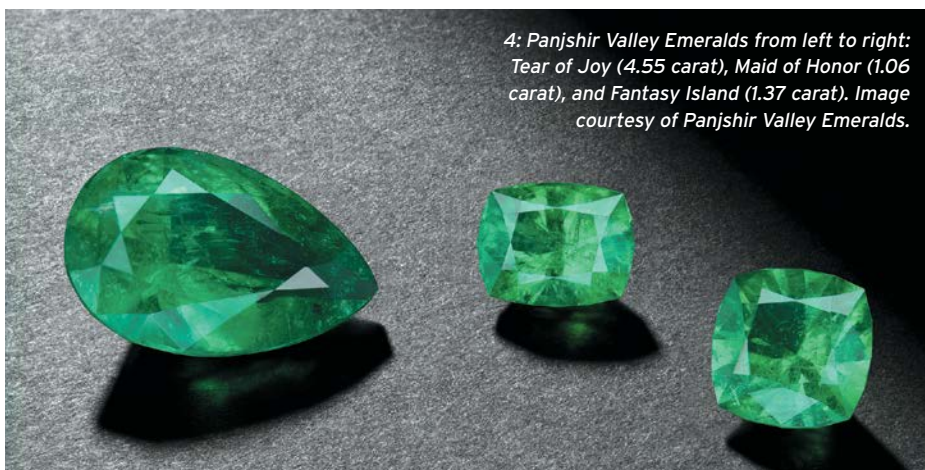
BEING RESPONSIBLE

Overall, sustainability and responsible sourcing were the hot topics across shows. Human rights attorney turned jewellery designer, Christina Malle, said: "I joined the board of Ethical Metalsmiths in 2018 and recently became a Fairmined licensee. These concrete steps assure clients and retailers alike that my commitment goes beyond blank statements. We are all moving towards

transparency and traceability, and it is heartening to be part of the jewellery communities leading the way."

Also at JCK Tucson, Susi Smither, designer and founder of British company, The Rock Hound, had a sustainability focus, with jewellery product distributed in biodegradable boxes. She says, "I am what you would call a conscious consumer. Thinking about the impact purchases have, doing research and then choosing what I buy based on who is in line with my core beliefs. When I was scrabbling around on my first pile of tailings it really struck me there was such disparity between the mine and market. From that moment I vowed to make a change; we have a duty of care to the mining communities who provide us with the resources we take for granted. It took a while to find the right suppliers but I'm happy with the relationships we've made enabling us to bring aesthetics to ethics."

The beauty of the Tucson shows is they offer something for everyone. This year had an overall sense of optimism — people were buying and exhibitors were happy. Risks were being taken ahead of more changes to come. The acceptance of change and enthusiasm surrounding Tucson is a good indicator that the trade is moving in the right direction. Keep an eye out for more good things to come during the summer shows. ■



4: Panjshir Valley Emeralds from left to right: Tear of Joy (4.55 carat), Maid of Honor (1.06 carat), and Fantasy Island (1.37 carat). Image courtesy of Panjshir Valley Emeralds.