

HONG KONG JEWELLERY & GEM FAIR

September 13-17, 2016, Asia World-Expo;
September 15-19, 2016, Hong Kong
Convention & Exhibition Centre
3,600 exhibitors; 58,000 visitors



From left: Necklace in white gold with diamonds and emeralds, from Sutra Jewels; Earrings in gold with diamonds pearls and amethysts, from Mario Buzzanca

The Hong Kong Jewellery & Gem Fair marked its 34th edition with an ever-international roster of exhibitors and visitors from 55 countries and regions. Newcomers hailed from Nigeria, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis (in the West Indies), the Slovak Republic, Vanuatu and Portugal, the last of which was represented by its inaugural dedicated group pavilion. While 2015 had witnessed the first participants from Myanmar, the 2016 show saw their industry's interest recognised by a pavilion, one among 24 across the two venues.

TWILIGHT'S CAST

Despite global economic uncertainties, in part reflected in the slightly lower total of exhibitors this year, demand for coloured gemstones in Asia, particularly China, remains steady. From exemplary single specimens to larger collections of affordable stones, the show proved that 2017 is prime for tanzanite in a variety of cuts.

Australian opal in the deep blue depths that make Lightning Ridge's black treasures so prized was popular with jewellers from all over the world, not just China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. But there were two constellations presiding over the blue notes: Imposing sapphire and joyful Paraiba tourmaline.

Markus Paul Wild, CEO of Paul Wild OHG, an exhibitor with magical groupings of free-form and cabochon Paraiba tourmaline, said: "Paraiba tourmaline was one of the most inquired gemstones at the show. We showed single stones and sets like necklaces and bracelets in classical and

fancy cutting."

DeGem's The Dream Carriage pendant, from its The Fairy Tale collection, held a rich blue, marquise-shaped spinel aloft a sparkling carriage of diamonds and pastel sapphires, beckoning as a portal to another world of immense riches.

Yet among such femininity, there were invitations to male admirers of coloured gemstones to consider sapphire and other blue gemstone rings too. Architecturally inspired settings in gold and non-traditional metals such as titanium, black gold, steel and ceramic, were seen to balance attention-seeker or lavish blues with a serious edge.

HEAVY METAL MARCH

A more unexpected presence at the fair belonged to hard-wearing pieces for rebels, although returns of punk had already been shown on the European runways and in fashion showrooms during the lead up to the Hong Kong event. Examples included Sonia Rykiel's oversized gold dangling safety pin earrings, Prada's constraining collar weighed down with multiple large keys and Hermès' silver collection with pins and new version of its *Chaine d'Ancre* necklace featuring the punk symbol. Shock value, however, is less important than the rock-influenced, Bohemian insouciance of a romantic revolutionary. Other items adding weight to wrist and nape included locks and gnarled links, with blackened metals favoured. Moscow-based GL Jewelry makes quirky pieces that are popular with Russian music industry figures. Its "Live to ride, ride to live" bracelet evoked a bicycle chain at first look, when it actually references traditional Tibetan drums that have a basis on a wheel and are whirled during prayer.

BATHED IN SPLENDOUR

Pavé is a simple and subtle way to bring shine to daily jewellery and most mid-category brands seemed to have a pavé range. Traditionally and most commonly presented with white diamonds, more colourful applications are now being used. Russia's Mousson is featuring a kaleidoscopic variant on miniature sculptures like its Eden collection's white gold multi-hued fish earrings, their bodies dappled with tiny diamonds, coloured sapphires and tsavorites. The same design comes in a moodier, though no less memorable, sapphire-only

From left: Earrings in gold with diamonds and Tahitian pearls, from Yoko London; La Petite Fleur earrings in gold and diamonds, from Monarque Jewelry; Octopus brooch in gold with a Baroque pearl, diamond, sapphires and green tourmaline, from Mousson Atelier



version in white and yellow gold.

PEARL GAMES

Pearls were reinvented for a younger wearer. Set in audaciously inventive concepts, some of them were paired with coloured gemstones to bring effervescence; others adorned intriguing metal structures in daring balancing acts. Both Yoko London and Mario Buzzanca continue to involve the viewer in their pearl play. But traditionalist pearl lovers might have been most challenged by Vicky Lew's earrings that place freshwater pearls with Swarovski zirconia in a variety of colours, supported by a setting in anodised aluminium and sterling silver.

LESSONS IN RED

While blue gemstones dominated, interest in rubies was catered to by industry leaders' educational platforms. The Hong Kong Jewellery & Gem Fair's Asia World-Expo site was the location for the launch of the Gemfields Masterclass — Ruby Edition, a training module for retailers, gemstone connoisseurs and consumers. The course



involved experts and trade partners, across levels for every knowledge group: Basic, fundamental and advanced. Attendees had the privilege of learning with the most comprehensive master set of rubies to date.

METALS' MIGHT

Gold and silver were both in buoyant form at the fair, supporting the findings of recent data from the Chinese government that showed an improvement in the Chinese market. Figures for China's gold imports from Hong Kong saw an achievement of around US\$687 million in the first six months of 2016, up 550 percent from the same period in 2015; and the World Silver Survey 2016 (by the Silver Institute and Thomson Reuters) revealed that Asia accounted for 67 percent of global silver production in 2015. In creative collections on display, there were frequent appearances of gold and diamonds together, with diamonds used for floral patterns in a fluid and poetic way. *Melissa Pearce*