

VIBRANT FUTURE FOR COLOURED GEMS

The gemstone business landscape is constantly changing and with this come new challenges. Buyers are becoming partial to equivalently captivating coloured gems other than the so-called Big Three. Companies meanwhile should take advantage of a more open market by offering top-quality choices.

By Bernardette Sto. Domingo and Olivia Quinquini



Purple sapphires and Paraiba
tourmalines from Constantin
Wild GmbH & Co KG

Despite a relatively challenging business environment in 2017, the gemstone trade is poised to grow in 2019 as buyers continue to diversify their product preferences and major markets recuperate from economic uncertainties.

According to Markus Paul Wild, CEO of Paul Wild OHG, policy changes in China such as hefty import tariff cuts for jewellery items are expected to bode well for the gemstone business.

"We expect a more active market in 2019. The effects of China's decision to slash import taxes on a number of jewellery items will be felt in 2019. The impact will be massive for investment stones," Markus noted.



Morganites from Paul Wild OHG

Rainbow of colours

An interesting development in the trade is a shift in preference from classic green and red gemstones to products with a more vibrant palette, especially among Chinese buyers.

“Coloured gemstones continue to move even in a slow market. What’s been happening in the last two years in China is that buyers are veering away from traditional choices and turning their attention to other coloured gemstones,” revealed Markus.

People are looking for fresh opportunities elsewhere and becoming more receptive to a variety of coloured gems including imperial topaz, aquamarine, tourmaline and all colours of spinel.

“Today I can comfortably sell yellow beryl to China, which is something I wouldn’t dare do five years ago,” the company official said.

Buyers are also interested in different cutting styles such as carvings and cabochons, among others, as opposed to classic faceting.

“Modern consumers are trying different things and being more adventurous with their choices. This is a good development,” he continued.



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- Markus Paul Wild, Paul Wild OHG



Apart from China, demand for coloured gemstones is likewise solid in the “old markets” such as the US and Europe.

The movements, while not dramatic, are steady, remarked Markus. The Middle East is likewise making a comeback.

Germany-based Paul Wild, which celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2017, sells mainly to Europe where it deals with top brands. Its second largest market is Asia. Paul Wild’s extensive product portfolio includes sapphires, Paraiba tourmalines, spinels, tanzanite stones, tsavorites, demantoids and garnets, among other gems.

According to Markus, diversification and creating markets are key to maintaining growth.

An impending challenge however is how to entice a younger generation of buyers to buy gemstones.

“Technology is our competitor. But this is something that brands should think about. It rests in their hands to think of a massive marketing strategy to captivate young buyers and introduce them to the world of coloured gemstones,” stated Markus.



Tsavorite from Paul Wild OHG



Imperial topaz stones from Constantin Wild GmbH & Co KG
(Picture by Simon Martner)

Special stones

With the market seemingly looking for exceptionalism at all costs, gemstone dealers are placing their special gems in the limelight.

Constantin Wild GmbH & Co KG aims to pique market interest in gem-quality stones through its painstakingly curated selection of exclusive and valuable coloured gemstones. Paraiba tourmalines in vibrant hues, purple sapphires and imperial topaz stones are among the gems the German lapidarist is highlighting this year.

The colour range of Paraiba tourmalines runs from an intense sea green to a lush turquoise blue, noted Constantin Wild, managing director of his eponymous company. "This expressive range of colours has its origin in the trace element copper. Its double refraction enhances the bold charisma of the Paraiba tourmaline too," he explained.

According to Constantin, while the gemstone derives its name from the state of Paraiba in Brazil where it was

first discovered, large raw crystals are now seldom found in the first deposit or nearby mines. Relatively large specimens from Brazil thus enjoy high profiles.

Cupreous tourmalines in the typical "Paraiba" colours from Nigeria and Mozambique provide the world with fresh supply of the gemstone, Constantin said. "They too get their beautiful colours from the interplay of copper and manganese; their chemical composition is identical to that of the Paraiba stones. For this reason, no distinction is any longer made in the trade as to whether a Paraiba tourmaline comes from one of the mines in Paraiba or from Nigeria or Mozambique," he continued.

Sapphires, already highly valued in their own right, are also experiencing a demand boost for their purple variety, given the colour's popularity this year. "Each purple sapphire is unique and very much sought after, not only among collectors," said Constantin.

The gemstone cutter and dealer also has a fine collection of imperial topaz, which he has been collecting since the 1980s when he first visited Brazil.

While gem-quality topaz had long been favoured by connoisseurs and collectors, awareness and interest in the coloured stone have grown in recent years, said Constantin. The Brazilian imperial topaz, in particular, has become extremely rare, he added.

Imperial topaz prices depend primarily on their colour – those with the deeper, vivid hues command higher prices. According to Constantin, lighter goods could cost US\$450 to US\$800 per carat while imperial topaz with the deepest colour could easily fetch US\$15,000 to US\$25,000 per carat. The gemstone comes in various shades of orange, peach and pink. The most valuable ones are those with both pink and gold hues, he disclosed.



Pink imperial topaz from Constantin Wild GmbH & Co KG
(Picture by Simon Martner)