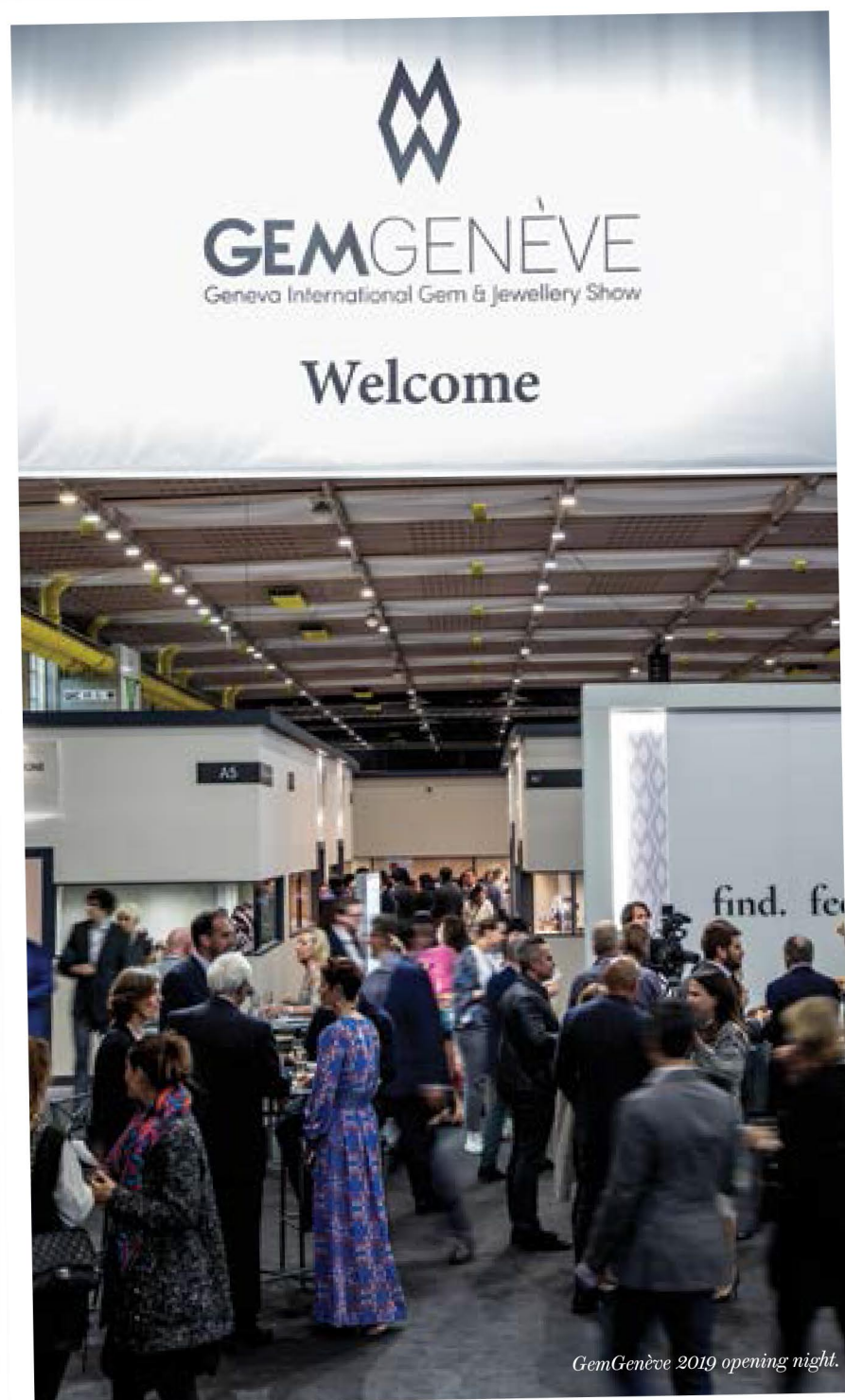


# SWISS BLISS



*GemGenève 2019 opening night.*

An expanded GemGenève features blue diamonds, rare stones and a focus on craftsmanship. By David Brough

Extraordinary gem-set jewelry and a rise in attendance characterized GemGenève as it staged its second edition in May. The fair — which preceded the high-value Geneva jewelry auctions at Christie's and Sotheby's — reported over 60 new exhibitors, and the pieces on show included a blue-diamond ring that once belonged to Hollywood child star Shirley Temple.

With 42% more exhibition space than last year, the Palexpo venue near the Swiss city's airport accommodated 210 GemGenève exhibitors, up from 147 in 2018; most were from the United States and Europe. Newcomers this year included Dehres, Novel Collection, Lotus Arts de Vivre, McTeigue NY 1895, and Palais Royal, organizers said. There was also an 11% jump in visitors compared with last year.

"The ambience is very family-like here at GemGenève," said Ronny Totah, one of the founders, adding that 95% of last year's exhibitors had returned. In the interests of maintaining that friendly atmosphere, the organizers said there were no plans to expand the exhibition space further next year.

Visitor footfall was high from the start as Geneva high society and local politicians rubbed shoulders with connoisseur collectors and press from around the world at an elegant cocktail party the day before the event began.

The show, which prides itself on its blend of intimacy and expertise, has arisen as a competitor to Baselworld — one of the biggest trade fairs in the jewelry sector. In addition to its broad gemstone selection, one of GemGenève's



*Tenzo cocktail ring.*

distinguishing features is that it's organized by industry insiders rather than corporate event organizers, so it can adapt well to exhibitors' requirements.

In keeping with this year's theme of "Find" and "Feel," the layout was a labyrinth rather than parallel lines, creating additional surprises for visiting buyers. Totah compared the setup to the streets of Venice.

## Display of artistry

Standout pieces at GemGenève included the Shirley Temple Blue Bird diamond — a fancy-deep-blue, internally flawless stone of over 9 carats that was on offer at estate dealer Windsor Jewelers. There was also a modern 8.01-carat, sky-blue Cartier diamond ring for sale by jeweler Rajesh Popley that exuded extraordinary energy.

Manufacturer and exporter Veerasak Gems showed an unheated 10-carat, pigeon blood Burmese ruby set in a ring, while jeweler Henn of London revealed one of the world's largest yellow sapphires — a 366.51-carat specimen from Sri Lanka — and an exceptional Paraiba tourmaline from Mozambique weighing 72.95 carats.

The show's Designer Vivarium section presented a variety of cutting-edge designers with complementary styles, curated by jewelry historian and author Vivienne Becker. "I have to see a perfect marriage of design skills and craftsmanship," she said.

Geneva-based Nadia Morgenthaler used "extreme craftsmanship" to create her jewels, which highlight pearls. Pearls also appeared in Hong Kong-based Mr. Lieou's superbly crafted, transformable "high fine jewelry" pieces.

IMAGE: GMAILLOT FOR GEMGENÈVE

Another designer in the showcase was St. Petersburg-based Alexander Tenzo, who has revived the art of gem engraving in his intricate creations under the Tenzo brand. London-based Alexandra Jefford presented chunky, sculptural pieces, while Ming, which has a boutique in London's Notting Hill neighborhood, showcased an array of one-off gem-set items that push the boundaries of design techniques.

## Speaking of jewelry

The heightened value of craftsmanship was a leading talking point among GemGenève speakers. Becker discussed Art Nouveau and jewelry design trends, emphasizing a growing appreciation of the craft in the digital age. "As we are so often tied to our screens, there is increasing demand for personalization at a time of disappearing craftsmanship skills," she told her audience.

Another key theme was a desire to improve the traceability of gemstones, as customers and suppliers increasingly want to know about a gem's journey from mine to finger. A panel that included Gübelin Gem Lab head Daniel Nyfeler addressed the buzz surrounding the potential of blockchain, which can track gems along a secure electronic supply chain.

One concern that arose was the extreme poverty of diggers and miners in many developing countries — a situation that complicates the task of tracing gems, as many workers are illiterate and lack electronic means of communication. As Nyfeler noted, "the blockchain is only as good as the truth of the information put into it." ■



*Rose Bud ring with pink spinel and pink sapphires by Ming.*

## VIEW FROM THE AISLES

Attendees share their impressions of the show

### JEFFERY BERGMAN

BANGKOK-BASED GEM DEALER, BUYER

"I am 'in transition' between Baselworld and GemGenève. There are more dealers here this year. It is a growing show. The timing of GemGenève — the proximity to the Christie's and Sotheby's sales — means I get to see what the auctions are offering. Europe is a treasure trove of estate pieces. Here is where I am more likely to find an exceptional Burmese ruby. You have a great variety of fine old rubies, sapphires and emeralds here. At GemGenève, you will find the biggest collection of them in the world besides Baselworld."

### MING LAMPSON

DESIGNER, MING; FIRST-TIME EXHIBITOR

"I came here very much because of [Designer Vivarium curator] Vivienne Becker. I respect her knowledge. She invited me and said GemGenève was a great show. This was a chance for me to make some continental European connections — to meet more European jewelry connoisseurs."

### ALEXANDRA JEFFORD

DESIGNER, FIRST-TIME EXHIBITOR

"I love the kind of designers associated with this show. The quality of gem dealers is top-level. It feels very intimate and very civilized here, not overwhelming."

### INGO HENN

DESIGNER, HENN OF LONDON; RETURNING EXHIBITOR

"There is an extraordinary selection of exceptional gemstones and diamonds at this show, attracting the top buyers, so we decided to come back and exhibit for a second year. GemGenève is a chance for us to showcase our rarest and most magnificent gemstones and jewelry, and it helps greatly that the Geneva auctions are taking place at around the same time, as they bring in the top buyers."



### Christie’s: Royal colors

An exceptionally rare ruby of 22.86 carats in a ring by Harry Winston was the top-selling lot at the Christie’s sale that took place at the Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues on May 15. Attracting dynamic bidding, the ring, which was the property of a princess, sold for \$7.2 million to an anonymous buyer, well above its \$3 million high estimate.

“Rubies are not easy to find in large sizes,” chief auctioneer Rahul Kadakia said after the sale, which totaled \$62.1 million. “A ruby of almost 23 carats...with royal provenance, Harry Winston — all of that put together, this is the perfect situation for an auction.”

Another strongly performing gem was a cushion modified brilliant-cut, 118.05-carat yellow diamond that achieved \$7.1 million, more than double its pre-sale estimate. Kadakia, who is also Christie’s international head of jewelry, described it as “one very

special diamond — an old cushion stone. There was a personal element in the purchase of the stone. It was purchased by the family of Sam Abram, an important member of the trade who passed away recently. This was a purchase made by his children.”

The stone was named the SIBA Diamond following the sale, in recognition of the family company.

Pearls remained in high demand at the auction, with the top such lot — a sautoir of 110 natural pearls — achieving over \$5.7 million. An international trade buyer snapped it up after a prolonged bidding battle, far exceeding its pre-sale estimate of \$3.5 million.

A combination of exceptional provenance and rarity contributed to the lofty price, according to Kadakia. “This was from a lady from a noble family, who had it for a long time.” The piece was fresh to the market and featured “very large sizes: the central pearls were almost

15 millimeters, natural saltwater pearls with very little graduation,” Kadakia said. “These sizes you don’t see anymore because of pollution in the oceans.”

However, gemologist Peter Reiter, who has tracked the Geneva sales in person for decades, said the result for the sautoir was exceptional and was unlikely to be repeated soon. “If it came back to the market quickly, it would struggle to make this price again.”

Another top performer with noble provenance was the Imperial Emerald of the Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia. The pear-shaped, 75.61-carat Colombian emerald, set in a necklace with diamonds, sold for over \$4.3 million, well above its \$3.5 million high estimate.

“Top-quality color stones are all making the same sort of uptick [in value] if they are of comparable quality,” Kadakia said.

Signed items from high-jewelry brands such as Van Cleef & Arpels, Cartier, Harry Winston and Bulgari notched up extraordinary sales prices as well. One standout was a Van Cleef & Arpels necklace with Burmese rubies and diamonds, which sold for \$2.4 million, four times its \$600,000 high estimate. A matching Van Cleef & Arpels bracelet fetched \$1.6 million, compared with a high estimate of only \$250,000.

The necklace contained “matched rubies in perfectly graduated sizes, old Burma material,” and “was probably created in the 1950s or 1960s, when there was a greater abundance of finer material to put together,” related Kadakia, calling its sale “a perfect auction moment.”

Among diamonds, the Jonker V, a rectangular-cut, D-color diamond ring of 25.27 carats by Harry Winston, sold within estimates at just over \$3 million.

Paris-based contemporary designer JAR saw good results as well: A multi-gem necklace sold for \$471,000, outstripping its \$150,000 estimate.

JAR’s elusive nature contributes to his appeal, commented Kadakia. “Try and buy something from him. Try and go to the [JAR] shop [off Place Vendôme] and ring the bell and see what happens. You can’t get in! That’s the cachet.” ■

## TOP 10 LOTS FROM CHRISTIE'S GENEVA

A rundown of the highest-selling items at the Magnificent Jewels sale

1

243

A cushion-shaped, 22.86-carat Burmese ruby in a ring by Harry Winston.

\$7,198,500



2

233

The SIBA diamond, a cushion brilliant-cut, 118.05-carat fancy yellow of VS2 clarity.

\$7,085,000



3

271

A sautoir consisting of 110 natural pearls.

\$5,723,000



4

269

The Imperial Emerald of Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia: A pear-shaped, 75.61-carat Colombian emerald in a necklace with diamonds.

\$4,335,000



5

270

The Jonker V, a rectangular-cut, 25.27-carat, D-color diamond in a ring by Harry Winston.

\$3,015,000



6

201

A Van Cleef & Arpels necklace with oval and cushion-shaped Burmese rubies, and diamonds.

\$2,415,000



7

244

An emerald and diamond fringe necklace, circa 1810.

\$1,815,000



8

259

An oval brilliant-cut, 71.80-carat, fancy-yellow, VS1 diamond ring.

\$1,635,000



9

202

A bracelet with oval and cushion-shaped Burmese rubies, as well as circular and baguette-cut diamonds. Signed Van Cleef & Arpels.

\$1,575,000

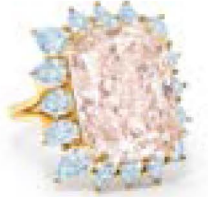


10

234

A cut-cornered rectangular modified brilliant-cut, 20.46-carat, fancy-brown-pink diamond in a ring surrounded by blue diamonds.

\$1,515,000



Multi-gem necklace by JAR.





# NOBLE PURSUITS

Jewels with prominent pedigree and outstanding gemstones soar at the Geneva sales. By David Brough

**E**xtraordinarily rare gemstones and jewelry with provenance — including an Art Deco necklace once owned by an American socialite friend of the Duchess of Windsor — outperformed expectations at Geneva's Magnificent Jewels auctions in May.

The sales likely also received a boost from the GemGenève trade fair, which took place in the Swiss city just beforehand. "The Geneva auctions benefited from the proximity of the second edition of GemGenève, which brought more buyers here," according to local gem dealer Elke Berr.

## Sotheby's: The Art Deco angle

The Sotheby's sale at the Mandarin Oriental on May 14 saw a number of Art Deco pieces sell for outstanding sums, contributing to a total of \$42 million.

One of the top lots was a 1930s emerald-and-diamond necklace that once belonged to Hélène Beaumont, an American socialite and close friend of the Duchess of Windsor. The piece garnered \$3.6 million, in line with its pre-sale estimate and more than double the price it achieved when it first sold at auction in 1994.

"When you think of really great jewelry of the 20th century, Art Deco comes to mind," said chief auctioneer David Bennett, Sotheby's worldwide jewelry chairman. He was also the one who sold the necklace the last time — a difficult period in the auctions market, as it was just after the Gulf War. The necklace, possibly the work of Van Cleef & Arpels, "fits like a glove" around the neck, he continued, calling it a masterpiece.

It wasn't the only Art Deco jewel to make a strong showing, though. A pair

of earrings in that style, with cushion-shaped Colombian emeralds weighing 17.01 and 17.71 carats respectively, sold for \$972,934, and a 1933 Cartier coral and diamond bangle more than doubled its pre-sale estimate at \$148,919.

Art Deco pieces can be worn easily alongside today's fashions, increasing the appeal of the most remarkable specimens from the 1920s and '30s, remarked Daniela Mascetti, Sotheby's chairman of jewelry in Europe.

Provenance played a big part in the sale of a Fabergé diamond tiara for \$434,346, comfortably above estimates. The tiara was created for the last crown princess of Prussia, Duchess Cecilie von Mecklenburg-Schwerin, on the occasion of her June 1905 wedding to Crown Prince Wilhelm — son of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

"It has gone to a collector who has been looking for that kind of tiara — not necessarily Fabergé, but very clean, simple, not ostentatious and with a lot of charm," Mascetti said.



*Fabergé diamond tiara, circa 1903.*

Diamonds accounted for several of the auction's top lots, including the highest seller: a brilliant-cut, 36.57-carat, D-color, type IIa stone in a ring that sold for just over \$5 million, within estimates. Another successful diamond of the same color and type — a step-cut stone weighing 18.86 carats and set in a ring by Harry Winston — fetched nearly \$1.5 million, beating its \$1.2 million high estimate.

In the colored-diamond category, a 1.01-carat, fancy-intense blue on a ring by Tiffany sold for \$853,799, smashing its \$250,000 estimate. In contrast, a 7.56-carat, fancy-purplish-pink diamond ring failed to sell.

Among colored gemstones, rubies scored impressive results. A Bulgari ring featuring a 5.14-carat ruby surrounded by diamonds surpassed estimates when it sold for \$1.7 million.

Meanwhile, a pair of colored-sapphire and diamond ear clips by JAR went for \$186,148, exceeding a pre-sale estimate of \$125,000. ►

## TOP 10 LOTS FROM SOTHEBY'S GENEVA

A look at the biggest sellers of the Magnificent Jewels and Noble Jewels sale

1

443

A ring with a circular-cut, 36.57-carat, D-flawless, type IIa diamond.

**\$5,011,405**



2

448

A Colombian-emerald and diamond necklace, circa 1935.

**\$3,593,900**



3

431

A cushion-shaped, 5.14-carat ruby in a Bulgari ring with marquise- and pear-shaped diamonds.

**\$1,687,743**



4

447

A step-cut, 18.86-carat, D-color, VVS2, type IIa diamond in a ring by Harry Winston with tapered baguette diamond shoulders.

**\$1,449,473**



5

422

A pair of cushion-shaped, L-color diamond earrings weighing 33.25 and 33.88 carats, with cultured-pearl surmounts.

**\$1,389,906**



6

413

A pair of earrings with cushion-shaped Colombian emeralds weighing 17.01 and 17.71 carats, and step-cut and baguette diamonds.

**\$972,934**



7

435

A step-cut, 1.01-carat, fancy-intense-blue, VS1 diamond in a ring by Tiffany & Co.

**\$853,799**



8

371

A necklace with an oval, 74.20-carat sapphire and triangular-shaped diamonds, with maker's mark for Vassort.

**\$710,838**



9

442

A step-cut, 11.55-carat Colombian emerald in a ring with brilliant-cut and baguette diamonds.

**\$687,011**



10

364

A Harry Winston ring with a step-cut, 15.02-carat Colombian emerald between baguette diamond shoulders.

**\$675,097**

