



A Natural Gem

Investors are a canny lot and there are many vehicles this savvy breed uses to diversify and solidify their portfolio. **Tayma Page Allies**, of **TAYMA Fine Jewellery**, explains why gemstones are becoming increasingly popular.

Precious, portable and enduring, gems have been the investment acquisition of choice for thousands of years: a tangible asset to sell when times get tough. According to the International Coloured Gemstone Association, the value of natural gemstones has continued to rise due to an increasing demand from new-money markets such as China, and a shortage of high quality gems.

As with any commodity, the industry mantra "supply and demand" rules. Equally true is the fund manager's caveat that markets may go up or down, but in the world of investments, even if an equity portfolio hits rock bottom – the 1982 Lafitte is corked, and the Picasso turns out to be by Canaletto Wong – investing in some beautiful gems means that a legacy of family heirlooms is secured.

Vashi Dominguez, the founder of Diamond Manufacturers in London's famous Hatton Gardens,

has noted that female purchasers are increasingly choosing coloured gemstone jewellery, whereas men tend to be more conservative and often go for diamonds when they choose gemstones for their partner. As a result, the demand for coloured gemstones has increased three-fold in the last five years. "Women are driving the market", said Mr Dominguez, "even in China."

Earlier in the year, the UK's *Daily Mail* reported that coloured gems are "much rarer than diamonds, and the surge in demand – especially from Asia – has played a significant part in driving up their cost."

The popularity of coloured stones is one of the reasons leading auctioneers, such as Bonham's, include them in most sales alongside diamonds. A single-stone ring by Van Cleef & Arpels featuring a Burmese ruby weighing 13.34 carats sold for £350,500 (US\$530,000) in 2014 to a Hong Kong buyer, breaking price-per-carat records in the UK.

Bold, brilliant colours

Jean Ghika, Head of Jewellery in the UK and Europe at Bonham's, said that as well as being fashionable, coloured stones are also becoming seen as a sound investment.

"There is a new move towards colour. Women are bolder in their choices and looking at alternatives to diamonds when it comes to engagement rings and everyday jewellery. Women are also in constant pursuit of something truly original, and [with] a coloured stone, where every example is different, they are able to have something unique," she said.


Indeed, big stones are currently making big news: who doesn't want a slice of the world record-breaking rare "Blue Moon" and pink diamond pie, recently bought by Hong Kong's own Joseph Lau. Buyers are increasingly aware that coloured gemstones have proven to be sound investments. A diamond that was US\$200,000 a carat while ago could now be worth US\$2 million a carat. However, unless you're part of a syndicate or have a spare half a billion, where do you begin?

My advice is to start with rare and unusual gemstones where there is a good probability of a steady market increase. The diamond market is highly sophisticated, saturated even; only top quality, D Flawless Triple X stones over five carats stand a chance of a "look in". Rubies are beyond most investors' budgets, and the traditionally popular Colombian and Brazilian emeralds are facing competition from the new Zambian-sourced supply.

By buying beautiful gems that are easy to fall in love with and that won't break the bank, buyers can delight and indulge themselves or a loved one. We have parents investing in loose gems each year for their daughter or granddaughter's wedding, effectively beginning a legacy collection.

As with any investment, my advice is to buy from a specialist – someone who handles gems daily, who has a finger on the gemstone pulse and who

knows which gems have increased in value over the years. In the same way that responsible oenologist investors buy wines from a reputable and knowledgeable broker with a good track record, the same holds true for gemstones.

It is important to note there is a difference between a collector and an investor. A collector has a passion for unusual gems that may not be of investment quality. An investor must choose top quality and look for the Four C's of: Colour, Cut, Clarity and Carat. A gemstone with a perfect cut will command the highest price as the purchaser also pays for the wastage. It will have a uniform body colour, whichever angle you look at the stone, and, of course, a perfect sparkle! 

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Top Tips for buying legacy gemstones

- Purchase from a reputable source.
- Ask for an independent gemmological certificate. This will not give the gem's value but it does confirm that it is genuine.
- Choose rare, 'collector' gemstones such as:
 - Paraiba Tourmaline
 - Spinel
 - Tavorite Garnet
 - Demantoid Garnet
 - Mandarin Spessartite Garnet
 - Padparadscha Sapphires
 - Imperial Topaz
- And most importantly, wear and enjoy!

Renowned for exquisite and exotic coloured gemstones, **TAYMA Fine Jewellery** was established in 1990 and has pioneered the Hong Kong jewellery market. The jewellery house is recognised as an expert in coloured gemstones, creating one-of-a-kind handmade designs where the gemstone is the star. The brand's signature is mixing cut and cabochon gems in a striking combination of complementary shades and hues. For more information, visit www.taymajewellery.com.

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