

Touchplate

The Gold and Silversmiths Guild of Australia was formed in 1968 by a dedicated group of Melbourne-based goldsmiths.

The key aim of the Guild was to initiate a precious metal marking scheme in Australia for all goldsmiths and silversmiths who practised their craft with high ethical standards. The GSGA consulted with the Goldsmiths Hall in London and adopted the same date letter marking scheme as the British but initiated our own unique Australian mark – the image of the kangaroo head in profile – to indicate the country of origin and manufacture.

The Guild maintains and records the Makers Marks of its Fellow and Full members on its silver Touchplates for Australian historical posterity. We follow the fine tradition of Goldsmith Hall in London who have kept records such as these for almost 750 years.

- 01. Full member's mark
- 02. Fellow member's mark
- 03. Touchplate
- 04. A work by Chris Sherwin showing Makers Mark, Metal Purity, Guild Fellow and Date Marks applied to 750 Gold Sea Horse Brooch.



The Gold & Silversmiths Guild of Australia

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The Guild holds and maintains silver Touchplates on behalf of all makers of precious metal articles in Australia and they have already provided invaluable service to historians, jewellery valuers and members of the public who have contacted the Guild attempting to identify the work of a particular maker. On several occasions in the past few years, our Touchplate records have assisted the police in identifying stolen goods and helped return them to their rightful owners, articles that otherwise would never have been reclaimed.

What are silver Touchplates and why are they important?

The plates are each approximately 8cm wide, 24cm long and 2mm thick. The plates are hand engraved with the sequential number of each member on joining the Guild and their name. Alongside each member's entry are punched the Makers Marks used by that member in the manufacture of their precious metal work.

The plates are important as they provide three dimensional and scientifically testable evidence of the authenticity of a Guild member's marked work. The plates cannot be destroyed in a 'simple fire' or suffer the normal threat of degradation as is the case with paper and digital documents. They will be held in perpetuity by the Guild and serve as a reference base into the future.

Many of Australia's respected goldsmiths and silversmiths have had their marks punched onto the plates and by doing so have guaranteed themselves a place in history.

Gold and silversmiths occupy a small, special niche in the fabric of our wider community. In acknowledging the vast and powerful history of First Nations people, as gold and silversmiths we also have to acknowledge the Gold Rush of the 1850's that vastly changed late Australian history and created the very niche that we work in.

If you are an artisan working in precious metals, the Guild and the silver Touchplates and marking scheme you see in this article are open to you. Become a member and become part of our historic tapestry.



OCTOBER 2022



November's Two Birthstones



Citrine & Topaz

WRITTEN BY
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People born in November have a choice of two beautiful gemstones – Citrine and Topaz. Appreciated for its lovely yellow and yellow-orange tones, Citrine has, over the ages, often been mistaken for Topaz, which occurs in tones from colourless to yellow to orange to bright pink.

Sunny citrine



Citrine has been used in jewellery and adornment for millennia. The early Egyptians wore the gem as talismans, while the ancient Greeks and Romans carved it with iconic images. The yellow gem was a widespread element in Victorian jewellery and its popularity continues today. Its name is thought to come from the Latin word *citrina*, meaning yellow.

It is a variation of quartz (silicon dioxide) with the formula SiO_2 . Unlike pure quartz, which is colourless, citrine comes in a range of yellow to orange tones, which are due to trace impurities of iron in the crystal structure.

"Natural, untreated citrine is relatively rare," says Sally Patel of QLD-based True Blue Opals & Gems. "The most desirable colours are saturated golden hues with orange fleckles, while the reddish tones are called Madras citrine." Patel adds that citrine is also a favourite of gem carvers, whose works are collected as gem art.

Citrine is popular in a wide variety of jewellery designs. In the fine jewellery category, Parisian jeweller Lorenz Baumer uses the yellow-orange gem in some of his intricate nature-inspired pieces. Tiffany has used citrine in several of its iconic creations.

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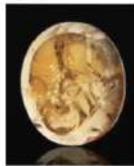
Most of the gems on the market today are formed by heating amethyst and smoky quartz, a process that converts their colours into the desired limony and golden honey tones. Yet, in some deposits, amethyst has been partially or entirely changed to yellow citrine because of natural heating. Interestingly, amethyst and citrine are sometimes found together in the same crystal, which is called *ametrine*.

The sunny gem is found in a variety of countries around the world, but the main sources are in South America.

"It's a steady seller," remarks Grant Hamid of Melbourne-based Hamid Bros, "and is generally produced in calibrated sizes in small rounds, ovals, emerald cuts, pear shape up to larger individual pieces."

For prices, he states that they "have remained relatively constant due to new deposits of amethyst from Africa entering the market," explaining that buyers can purchase a large gem for a relatively inexpensive price compared to other yellow gems.

01



02





Enticing topaz

As with citrine, the legends of topaz date back centuries. The Romans believed it would bring good luck and protect the wearer from harm. In the Middle Ages, it was thought to cure a cold and ward off bad luck, while having calming energies. A hard fluorine aluminium silicate (Al₂SiO₅[F,OH]₂), its name comes from Old French (Topaze), Latin (Topazius) or Greek (Topázios).

A relatively common gemstone, topaz is found in many countries, with Brazil one of the largest suppliers. In its natural state, topaz is colourless, but it takes on different tones due to trace element impurities. The rare red, pink and violet shades occur when chromium replaces aluminium in the crystal structure. The yellow, brown and blue hues are created by imperfections at the atomic level.

"Since the gem in its natural state is usually colourless, the industry heats topaz to obtain the fashionable yellow-orange colours while using a different treatment to obtain the popular blue tones," explains Patel, adding that this makes the gem available to a wider range of customers. Today, blue is the most widespread colour.

Because natural blue is so rare, gemmologists developed techniques in the late 1940s to convert the colourless crystals to different shades of blue by subjecting the gem to radiation. Although topaz is not the only gem to be irradiated to change its colour, controversy erupted some years ago because the process makes the gem slightly radioactive.

Out of concern for consumer safety, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and other similar bodies worldwide require the stones to be set aside for a few months after irradiation to allow the radioactivity



to decay. Distributors of the irradiated stones are licensed by the NRC, and they must conduct tests to ensure that the radioactivity is below potential risk levels before the stones go to market.

The treatment produces several shades of blue topaz and today, Hamid notes, "blue topaz is quite plentiful in Sky, Swiss and London Blue tones."

Brazilian designer Cris Porto appreciates blue topaz for its various hues. "Topaz offers a variety of colour choices and can be used either alone or in combination with other gemstones," she states. Her recent Candy Collection features several pastel gemstones in custom cuts, including blue topaz, sapphires and quartz. "For both pastel and vivid blues, topaz works perfectly."

Another aficionado of blue topaz is Japan-based designer Ankit Malpani, who is also known for his custom cuts. He relates that blue is the favoured topaz colour of his clients, not only for its beauty but also for its accessible prices. His choice of whether to use light or dark hues or a combination is determined by the design.

Although heated topaz is widely available, several jewellers prefer it in its natural state. Among them is Helen Semras-Herman of Arizona-based Gem Art Center. "I have used natural white/blue topaz crystals from Brazil for my gem art and natural champagne colour topaz from Russia for jewellery. I love the natural zoning in these crystals."

A natural but rare form of the gemstone is imperial topaz, which was discovered

in the Ural Mountains in Russia in the 17th century and named after the royal family. In the 18th century, this same type was discovered near the Brazilian town of Ouro Preto, which is now the major source of the gem. Miners continued using the name imperial topaz for this material.

"While 'imperial' topaz originally referred to pink topaz from Russia, the trade term today is more closely associated with reddish-orange to sherry-coloured material found in Brazil," explains Edward Boehm, CEO of Tennessee-based gem supplier, Renaissance. "The rarer colours of pink, purple and red are typically referred to using their hues to differentiate them from other imperial topaz of mixed colours and may be classified as 'precious' topaz."

Constantin Wild, owner of his eponymous German brand, has been dealing in Brazilian imperial topaz since the 1990s. "Imperial topaz is beautiful with magical colours, good hardness, and is brilliantly sparkling. It is a connoisseur's gemstone." Because of its rarity and limited production, Wild confides that prices are high and will continue to rise. He notes that the most popular cuts are the classics such as oval, cushion and pear shapes, which "have timeless style regardless of fashion trends."

Whether the warm yellow and golden tones of citrine or the cooler blue colours of topaz, or even the very rare hues of imperial topaz, there is a place for them all, as they are the perfect birthstones for November.



JEWELLERY WORLD MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2020

01. A Roman carved citrine cameo with a thistle motif, Brazilian Paros circa 1st century BCE. It sold at Christie's in April 2022 for US\$76,600. (Photo: Christie's)
02. Victorian lacy necklace featuring four oval brownish-yellow citrines (7.78 ctw), seed pearls and tiny gold beads, hand-crafted in 18K gold circa 1910. (Photo: Lang Antiques)
03. Contemporary citrine carved by Walter Ferreira Lopes, offered by True Blue Opals & Gems. (Photo: Walter Ferreira Lopes)
04. Citrine was used in a variety of cocktail collections including the Bid on a Rock brooch, featuring citrine, sapphires and diamonds by Jean Schlumberger for Tiffany, which sold at Christie's in 2021 for nearly US\$32,000. (Photo: Christie's)
05. The whimsical Scarecrow Autumnal Brooch by Lorenz Baumer features a 9.21-ct citrine accented by white, yellow and chocolate diamonds, pink and orange sapphires, set in gold, enamel and amethyst.
06. Three shades of citrine, 8.68-ct (left), 3.53-ct (middle), 10.44-ct (right) from Hamid Bros. (Photo: Hamid Bros.)
07. Examples of three hues of blue topaz: 4.34-ct Sky Blue (left), 4.23-ct Swiss
08. Blue (middle), 10.05-ct London Blue (right) from Hamid Bros. (Photo: Hamid Bros.)
09. Candy Bracelet featuring a pale shade of blue topaz combined with various colours of quartz (citrine, pink, prasiolite, amethyst) with sapphires and aquamarine accents by Cris Porto. (Photo: Cris Porto)
10. Blue topaz and diamond pendant in 18K gold by Ankit Malpani. (Photo: Ankit Malpani)
11. Alessio Bossi's uses 75.91cts of natural white topaz as the top of his statement-making Meeting Artistic ring, which features diamonds, Paraíba tourmaline, moonstones, iolite (sardonyx) and garnet (set in 18K gold). (Photo: Alessio Bossi)
12. In the 'Natural Crystals' collection is this untreated 281.50-ct Russian champagne topaz crystal with sterling silver wire wrap by Helen Semras-Herman. (Photo: Gem Art Center)
13. A brilliant rare 4.82-ct oval Brazilian imperial topaz from Constantin Wild. (Photo: Constantin Wild)
14. A very rare 27.62-ct oval vivid pink topaz from Brazil from Renaissance. (Photo: Robert Weisler)



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