

DIKRA GEM



A trend that began some two decades ago shows an increasing preference for free-form gemstones in designer jewelry, although faceted stones continue to dominate the fine jewelry market. Interestingly during this same period, many art jewelers began to use faceted stones as accents, a motif formerly shunned as too commercial. Significant changes in the worldwide cutting or production of precious and semiprecious stones have also occurred. Germany, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, India, Korea, Thailand, Brazil and the western United States once constituted the major suppliers to the gemstone trade; however, with rising labor costs, China has become dominant both in terms of cost and quality. For example, beads of Picasso marble, which derives from Arizona, sold years ago for three hundred sixty dollars per strand when cut in Germany, but when Dikra Gem started buying its own rough and cutting it in China, the price dropped to thirty-six dollars per strand.

The company started in 1990 when Diane Diengott and David Kramer left Lucien Stern, a longtime gem dealer. Now equal partners in their own firm, each has had approximately a decade's worth of gemstone experience. Diengott handles the buying and designing, as well as guiding quality control. With a master of arts in sculpture and graphics, Diengott once worked in the objects reproduction department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A retailing major in college, Kramer conducts the financial aspects of the business and most of the outside sales.

Dikra Gem strives to acquire interesting rough, cut it well and offer the finished stones to the designer market at competitive prices. It markets wholesale to designers, manufacturers, craftspeople, goldsmiths and hobbyists. About a dozen schools are serviced nationwide, as well as a number of manufacturers. There is a solid following among the goldsmiths, and even with handbag manufacturers. The enterprise also specializes in cutting for others, including designers with a volume business. Dikra Gem is recognized for its drops, cabochons and single bevel buff tops, all designed by Diengott. With the competitive stone market in New York City, the firm has a distinct edge by designing and cutting its own stones.

Diengott purchases worldwide, including from her Chinese cutters, and seeks unusual American, Canadian or Mexican material, because unique and good rough is increasingly difficult to acquire. After the rough is bought, it is shipped by boat to China and stored at the factory. The firm's success is based on achieving good yields and maintaining exclusivity of the cuts and materials. Since cuts cannot be copyrighted, good relationships with the cutters are paramount. With highly expensive material, all or half the rough is cut at once, so that the yield can be determined concurrently; if the rough is bad, the Chinese cutters will inform the owners.

Author Robert K. Liu is Coeditor of Ornament.

FACETED PRECIOUS AND SEMIPRECIOUS GEMS, a small part of the inventory carried by Dikra in this category of gemstones. From left to right: faceted oval amethyst of 10/8mm, faceted oval peridot of 10/8mm, two buff top triangular amethyst cabochons of 6mm, faceted champagne citrine trillion of 12mm and faceted citrine trillion of 10mm. Largest stone is 5.5 carats. *Photographs: Robert K. Liu/Ornament.*



TONGUE, RECTANGLE AND OVAL SBBT AND CABOCHONS, clockwise from lower center: Dalmatian stone tongue cabochon of 35/22mm, Chinese writing stone antique rectangle of 37/14mm, leisegang jasper tongue cabochon of 33/20mm, orbicular poppy jasper oval cab of 44/25mm and Brazilian agate antique rectangle of 47/18mm. Dimensions are in millimeters, with height followed by width, sometimes by depth.

DROP, CONE AND BULLET-SHAPED STONES, from left clockwise: frosted hematite perforated drop of 8/7mm, hematite bullet of 21/8mm, black onyx ice cream cone of 22/8mm, black onyx knife-edge drop of 31/7mm and frosted black onyx almond drop of 18/15mm.



VARIOUS FLAT, PLATE-SHAPED STONES, from left to right: striped onyx envelope flap shape of 22/17mm, malachite arch SBBT (single bevel buff tops) of 33/12mm, Chinese turquoise keystone SBBT of 27/24mm and Chinese turquoise antique rectangle of 28/15mm. Both turquoise are grade A and the other stones are available as matched pairs. Some flats are backed with black glass for strength.

Wholesale To The Trade



STONE BEADS, from left to right: slightly flattened Royal savannah jasper barrel bead of 29/21/13mm, thulite bead of similar form, 28/18/9mm, cylindrical and barrel beads of Royal savannah jasper, respectively 21/13mm and 50/13/10mm. Last bead is ruby with zoisite, 40/17/10mm.



TONGUE AND BULLET SHAPED STONES, from left to right: rhyolite or Rainforest jasper tongue of 34/17/5mm, dendritic agate tongue of 26/13/5mm, malachite tongue of 15/10/5mm, turquoise tongue of 15/15/5mm, ilanite opal bullet of 6/11mm and carnelian bullet of 6/7mm. Many shapes are available as matched pairs. Dikra's wholesale prices range from \$0.10 for a cabochon to \$45,000 for a gemstone.