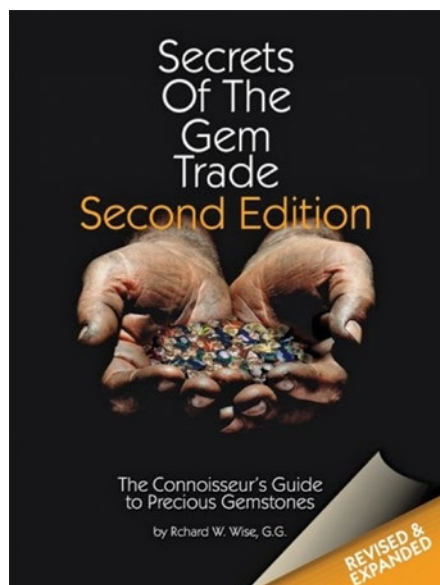


Book reviews



Secrets of the gem trade. The connoisseur's guide to precious gemstones

Second Edition

By Richard W. Wise

Richard Wise's book *Secrets of the gem trade, Second Edition*, is beautifully narrated and illustrated. With the addition of 171 new images, the book now contains 277 vivid and breathtaking images that capture both the heart and mind of the reader. This Second Edition has been completely revised and expanded to 404 pages, with 11 new chapters. Each chapter is dedicated to a particular gemstone, making it an easy to use reference book.

The author, with over 30 years' experience in the gem trade, generously and wholeheartedly shares his vast experience and knowledge of the gem trade and gemmology to encourage the reader to 'think outside the box' when it comes to appreciating the beauty and value of gemstones. He states there is more to a stone's worth than what the current market says. He guides you on assessing the gemstones, what pitfalls to avoid, and encourages you to "Pick the Best!"

The book intertwines the value of a stone from both ancient times to the time we live in today. For example, the humble carnelian which is rarely given any accolades now, was a very important stone in Roman and Grecian times. The author shows that we are connected to our past through gemstones – that they are not merely stones but speak to us of our history, tradition, culture, art, religion and family. It was through reading this book that I was able to possibly unveil a mystery about what stones were used as the eyes of an ancient statue that existed in a town called Tal Tamar in North East Syria close to where my mother was born. The story about the statue, which measured some 40 metres high, was that it had green eyes during the day, but that close to dusk in the changing light, the stones would turn red. The Arabs who lived in this area feared this statue because the colour of its eyes changed, and they called it the "Genie" – a magical being. From reading this book, I deduced that it was possible those large, fist-sized stones could have been Alexandrite, a colour-changing variety of chrysoberyl. My grandfather had seen the statue in the 1920s when he was enlisted in the French Army as a young man aged 17-18 years old, after the French came to Syria in 1916. He saw the Germans take apart the statue piece by piece, placing the two stone eyes in boxes and air freight it back to Germany.

Thank you to the author for this brilliant book and for the extensive work he has done in wanting to share his knowledge. I highly recommend his book to both new and seasoned gemmologists and those who appreciate gemstones. I can tell you there is a whole generation of children who are interested in gemmology. I assist schools with science programs and when I asked them "Who likes gemstones?" to my surprise, and to the surprise of their teachers and parents, they all immediately put their hands up – all 800 of them!

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