



Images courtesy  
of Sapphex

## FANTASY-CUT GEMSTONES

For those who like to set themselves apart and break with tradition, fantasy cuts offer a fun twist on the usual shapes. GAA federal secretary **KATHERINE KOVACS** reports.

By now, readers of this column would be well aware of the many commonly encountered shapes used in gem cuts such as round, oval, square, marquise, pear, heart etc. Most of these shapes employ the use of either brilliant or step-cut faceting – and commonly a mixture of the two ('mixed cut') – in coloured gems. Fancy or fantasy cuts can be loosely defined as those cuts where the shape is not commonly encountered or where the cutter takes a twist on a traditional shape by using a more unusual cutting technique.

The breadth of fancy-cut shapes is limited only to the imagination of the cutter. Some popular examples include half-moons, hexagons, pentagons, lilies (similar in appearance to a four-leaf clover) kites, and stars. In fantasy cutting, the cutter may decide to work outside any set parameters of shape and create an interesting and unique – symmetrical or asymmetrical – specimen. Either way, fancy or fantasy cuts tend to use more rough material than their step or mixed cut counterparts and many such gems are painstakingly cut by hand, which will result in stones that cost more per carat than stones of similar quality material where a good degree

of weight has been retained from the rough.

The concave cut was first patented in the 1990s by Doug Hoffman. The pavilion facets of the stone are fashioned so that they're curved rather than flat; as a result, more light is distributed throughout the stone, increasing its brilliance. Employing the concave cut is also said to increase the depth of body colour in lighter coloured stones, eliminate windows and help hide inclusions in the stone.

It sounds too good to be true, and to an extent it is. Knowing what radii to make the curves is an art form and, of course, such experience comes with a cost involved – the cost is also affected by the wastage, which is at least 10 per cent more than a traditionally-cut stone. It's a subjective opinion but the concave cut tends to suit lighter coloured, larger stones that are best able to make use of the cut's ability to maximise brilliance.

Because the concave cut gives the appearance of having more facets, it is sometimes confused with the millennium-cut. This appropriately named cut has 1000 facets – 376 on the crown and 624 on the pavilion – and was created in 1999 by Rogerio Graca. Like the concave cut, it is not a "mainstream" gem

cut; it requires precision cutting and expertise, and takes up to 18 times as long to produce as compared to other cuts.

The mirror cut features a very thick girdle and a very large table facet which gives the stone a mirror-like appearance, hence the name.

The barion cut might be best explained as a new, unusual take on a traditional shape. A square emerald cut traditionally has eight sides, a step-cut crown and a pavilion, whereas a barion cut stone of the same shape will also have a step-cut crown, but has a pavilion that more closely resembles that used in a round-brilliant cut. This means that the gem can't have a rounded bottom as it would with a step cut, resulting in less weight and more wastage.

Because of the high wastage involved in their cutting, most fantasy cuts are applied to semi-precious gems such as amethyst, citrine and others from the quartz group, peridot, tourmaline, aquamarine and topaz, amongst others. Precious stones such as ruby, sapphire and emerald are rarely used for fancy shapes and fantasy cutting. Even with the higher cost involved, many jewellers are embracing fancy shapes and fantasy cuts to provide their customers with a truly individual creation ♦