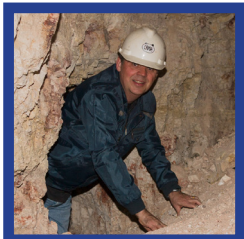


# Gemmology Today

Issue Three / 2024  
Quarterly Publication



Karma  
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# FEATURE interview

## Meet Geoff Dominy

### This is the 31st issue of *Gemmology Today*. Why did it take so long to interview the founder?

I always felt there were more interesting people to interview and from a personal perspective, I prefer to be more private.

### Who is Geoff Dominy?

I am an author, independent gemmologist, a former jewellery appraiser who appeared on the Canadian Antiques Roadshow for four seasons, and founder of the World Gem Foundation.

I started my gemmological studies in 1985 through the Gemmological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory of Great Britain (now Gem-A) and graduated in 1987, passing the diploma examinations with distinction. Throughout the 1990's, I developed and taught the 'Gemmology' program at Red River Community College and The University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, worked for the Canadian Institute of Gemmology, was President and Founder of the Jewellery Appraisers Association of Canada and was a contributing author for the 5th & 6th Editions of Robert Webster's 'Gems'.

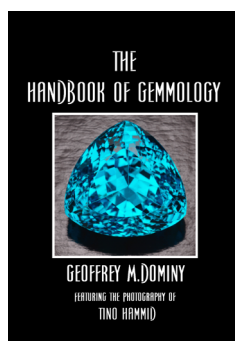
In 2013, I published the first edition of the Handbook of Gemmology in a digital format. In 2015, I started the World Gem Foundation. In 2016, I published the first issue of *Gemmology Today*. In 2019, I brought out a Spanish version of the Handbook of Gemmology

(the first fourteen chapters) and in 2021, I created ColourWise, a hybrid coloured gemstone grading system.

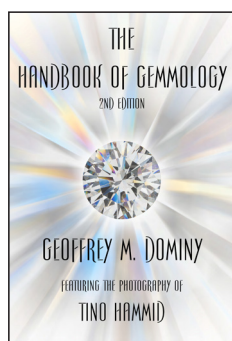
### Tell us about the *Handbook of Gemmology*

My involvement with the 5th and 6th editions of Webster's 'Gems' taught me many things about book publishing. Gemmologically, my heroes were Basil Anderson, Peter Read and Robert Webster so when Peter Read approached me to be a contributing author for the 5th Edition of 'Gems', I was thrilled. However, I have to say that while the new edition included new material, the reluctance of the publishers to spend money (especially on photographs) bothered me. This book was considered the 'Bible' of gemmology and I felt the publishers needed to respect the importance of this publication and the legacy of Robert Webster. When I was approached by Michael O'Donoghue (another person I highly respected) to contribute to the 6th Edition, it again became obvious that the publishers were only focusing on the bottom line and I think the final product suffered because of their 'economic' decisions.

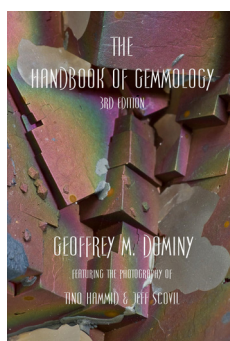
Gemmology is a visual science and it always amazed me that most gemmological books had limited photographs. In a world of vibrant colours, many of them were in black and white. I was also concerned about the unwillingness of book publishers to bring



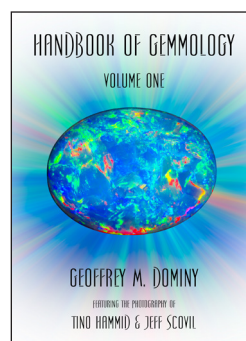
1st Edition  
654 Pages



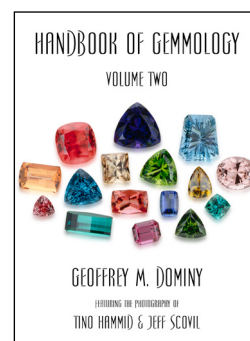
2nd Edition  
860 Pages



3rd Edition  
1056 Pages



4th Edition  
738 / 618 Pages





out new editions. While certain areas of gemmology are quite static, other areas are very fluid and it is not long before a book becomes irrelevant.

I wanted to produce a gemmological book that addressed both concerns. One that was full of incredible photography and would be updated on a regular basis.

Printing books is problematic because in order to lower the unit cost, you need to print more copies but until those copies are sold, it is impossible to bring out a new edition.

I decided to explore the digital world of publishing. To me, it was the future of publishing. With a digital book, you could offer it for a fraction of the cost of a printed version, deliver it electronically and more importantly, since there was no 'inventory', it could be updated on a regular basis.

I started work in 2011 and originally used Peter Read's 'Gemmology' book as a 'model'. I thought it would be around 250 pages. I was wrong! The first issue consisted of 654 pages! I partnered with Tino Hammid, a man who was a pioneer in terms of gemstone photography and in 2013, we released the first edition. The response was amazing. It was truly the 'cadillac' of gemmology books, packed full of incredible photographs and written in a language that was easy to understand. I have always maintained that you cannot take the science out of gemmology but because most people in the trade are not scientifically minded, you have to find ways to deliver the information in an understandable format.

Over the next three years, I brought out new editions, each bigger and better than the previous edition. By the fourth edition, the book had grown to 1,342 pages.

To commemorate the 5th anniversary, I produced a printed version that weighed 7 kilos! It sold out almost immediately and I still have vivid memories of packing them and carrying them down to the post office. I understand why people love printed books but compared to selling a digital copy, the logistics of handling a printed version, made it quite challenging.

Due to time restraints and the launch of the World Gem Foundation, I stopped working on the book, something I came to regret.

I decided in the summer of 2024, to bring out the 5th edition. Much had changed over the seven years and I felt it was important to update the information. To make the digital version more manageable (especially when viewed online), I decided to create three volumes. By changing the font and the font size, I was able to add lots of new information while working with fewer pages. The new edition consists of 1,236 pages.

As I answer these questions, I am looking at printing proposals from various printers in Spain because I would love to offer the book in both formats. Hopefully, a new printed version will be available in late 2024 or early 2025!

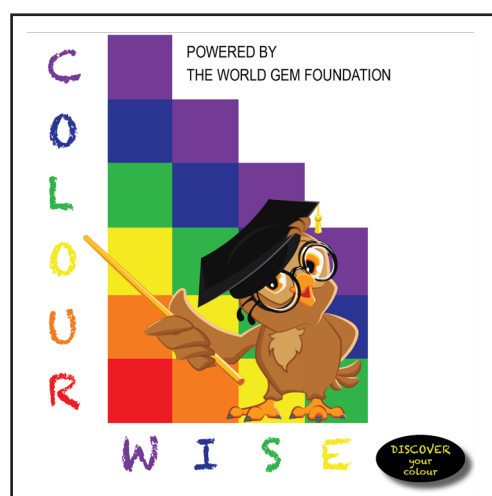
### Tell us about ColourWise

When I founded the World Gem Foundation, I decided to use Gemewizard as the basis for our Coloured Gemstone Grading II class.

When Dr. Laurent Massi and Ludovic Durand opened the French-Swiss Gem Academy in Nice, France, they wanted to translate the Gemewizard course into French. I thought the translations had been completed, however when it came time to offer the course in Montreal, to my horror, I found out that the work had not been finished. Since the proverbial buck stopped with me, I had to accept that I had seriously dropped the ball and I needed to find a solution.

To be honest, I was never truly happy relying on a 3rd party and this experience showed me the pitfalls of being reliant on others. I knew we had to create our own course. One thing led to another and I decided to not only create our own course but also our very own coloured gemstone grading system. As with the Handbook of Gemmology, I felt there were deficiencies with the other grading systems and I was sure I could create a new system that took the best features from the existing systems. I also knew that it needed to be a digital system.

I am very proud of ColourWise. It has proven to be popular in our classes and of all the systems we teach (GemDialogue, The World of Colour and GIA GemSet) it is the most consistent. There are still many things I would like to do to improve and expand the system but the most important thing is that the key components are in place.



### **I know it is a sensitive topic but tell us about Project Africa?**

To be honest, it is not sensitive at all. It is a great tragedy that this initiative has been destroyed by the actions of a very misguided individual. From the beginning, I have been open and honest with everyone, including my former students. Documents, especially bank documents, do not lie. They are all verifiable by the very financial institutions who handled the transactions.

### **So what went wrong?**

A combination of things. Firstly, on April 18th, 2024, my mother who just turned 97 had a second major stroke. This resulted in hospitalization for seven days, the need for 24-hour in-home nursing and the realization that at some point, I would need to get her back to Spain. Secondly, money. The company owed me a lot of money, I was not being paid to teach, Addis Ababa was one of the most expensive cities I have lived in and while the medical costs were less than in Europe or North America, they were still considerable. Haimanot Sisay, although she now insists otherwise, knew that I had taken money to repay some of the debt and to help cover my expenses. As partners, I was entitled to 50% of the revenue generated and was responsible for 50% of the expenses. Since I had loaned the company a huge sum of money and taught 800 hours for free, why would I not be entitled to monies that I had earned and was owed? You cannot live on thin air!

### **You say you were partners, how was that structured?**

In 2023, I made Haimanot Sisay a 50% partner in the World Gem Foundation. There was no cost involved, I simply transferred 50% of the shares into her name. This gave her entitlement to 50% of the profits but also the obligation to cover 50% of the operating costs. Since she became a partner, she has not contributed one penny to these operating costs.

When we set up Project Africa in Ethiopia, we created a company called WGF Project Africa Ethiopia but because under the new investment laws it is very difficult for foreigners to invest in Ethiopia and be a part of an Ethiopian company, we decided to set up the company in her name but created an internal resolution that made the company in Ethiopia, a wholly owned subsidiary of the World Gem Foundation. This meant that we were equal partners, however, now she denies the existence of this resolution (even though she signed it), preferring to call me 'her employee'. Of course there are no payroll records, income tax and social benefit remittances or a salary so this claim is baseless.

### **But why make her a partner in the World Gem Foundation? It sounds like a very generous gesture**

You have to understand that a school is not like other businesses. Typically when an owner retires or dies, the company closes. A school cannot cease to exist. It has to live on. If it closes, what happens to all the students, their hard work and dedication and their credentials? I needed to plan for succession and at the time, she seemed the ideal candidate. Obviously based on her actions, I was wrong!



### **I understand there were problems with your work and residency visas**

In order to get a residency visa and to work in Ethiopia, I had to have a work contract. To satisfy the legal requirements of the Ministry of Skills and Labor, we created a 'dummy' contract on my computer.

After everything fell apart and she 'suspended' me from the very classroom I had personally funded, she cancelled my work permit. This created a 'domino' effect since our

residency visas were tied to the work permit. I had never bothered to pick up the visas but when I knew I would be leaving Ethiopia, I knew I needed to have them to clear immigration. When I went to the immigration office, my mother's visa was there but mine was not. Initially they said it was misfiled but the next day, they referred us to a supervisor who informed me that in order to get my visa back, Haimanot Sisay would need to reinstate it.

Ethiopia is a country mired in red tape. No-one wants to make a decision and take responsibility for their actions. To be honest, I don't blame them because on average, a federal employee makes just over \$ 100 USD a month!

We headed downstairs and to my amazement, the woman who had directed us upstairs motioned us into her office and gave me my visa.

Five days later we were at the airport. I was concerned that the supervisor upstairs would cancel my visa. I had been in constant contact with the Canadian and British Embassies. One lady from the British Embassy actually gave me her personal cell number and told me to call her any time, day or night. We passed through immigration without a problem and boarded the flight to Madrid via Rome. I told the flight crew what had happened in Ethiopia. Haimanot Sisay used to work for Ethiopian Airlines and they were shocked by what had transpired.

I was so happy when we landed in Madrid. I am very thankful that I have residency in Spain.

### **Tell me more about the equipment you funded?**

When I moved to Ethiopia, I took the study stones (coloured gemstones and diamonds) and enough equipment to equip three workstations from the Spanish Gem Academy (a license that I owned) with me. Ironically, this was the very same equipment she used when she studied under me in Mallorca.

In order to avoid paying duties and taxes when I brought the equipment back into Spain, it had to clear Spanish customs first and then Ethiopian customs when it arrived.

When we cancelled the deal with the Ministry of Mines, I purchased enough equipment for three more workstations and we divided the class of twelve into two. While this meant twice the workload, it also meant we could function with only six fully-equipped workstations. The additional equipment was purchased through Kassoy in New York and Krüss in Germany.

The shipment from Kassoy was actually brought into Ethiopia illegally by an Ethiopian Airlines employee. This is a common practice by Ethiopian Airlines flight crew (including pilots) who charge to smuggle goods into the country. Since Ethiopian Airlines is owned by the Ethiopian Government, it is ironic that their employees are ripping off the government. The shipment from Krüss was shipped via DHL to WGF Project Africa Ethiopia at my home address.

### **Who paid for the equipment?**

I paid for everything from my own personal funds. At no time did the World Gem Foundation fund the purchase of this equipment. Funds came from my personal bank accounts in Canada (Royal Bank of Canada) and Spain (CaixaBank). Kassoy and Krüss have both provided proof to my lawyers that I paid for these items even though they were shipped to different people.

Of course, now Ms. Sisay is claiming that she paid for everything. It is ridiculous because the bank and customs documents prove otherwise. To import items into Ethiopia, you have to prove how they were purchased because of strict currency regulations. I can do that, she can't.

### **What about the gem faceting program?**

The initial shipment of ten faceting machines from Sterling in Sri Lanka was paid from my personal bank account in Spain from funds that I had loaned to kick-start the program. Sterling have provided a letter outlining the three payments that were made through Wise.com from my bank account in Spain.

### **What about duties and taxes?**

Customs in Ethiopia are an absolute nightmare. No-one knows what they are doing and it is not uncommon to hear horror stories regarding duties and taxes charged far in excess of the actual value of the goods.

The previous year, we had explored ways of bringing the gemmological equipment into Ethiopia duty free. At that time, after cancelling the agreement with the Ministry of Mines, we were talking to Addis Ababa Science and Technology University (AASTU) and they had suggested they could help with the caveat that if the equipment came into the university, it could not leave. We both agreed that there was no way I was going to buy this equipment and then essentially donate it to the university.

When it came time to import the ten faceting machines, I insisted that I would not bring them into Ethiopia if we had to pay duties and taxes. They were coming into Ethiopia to provide training and future employment and I was bound and determined that we would not be penalized by Ethiopian Customs.

After making some enquiries, she informed me that if she brought them in under her export license, we could avoid paying duty, however, she neglected to inform me that if she did, in the eyes of the FDRE Government, they would be the property of WGF Project Africa Ethiopia. Mind you, since we had signed the resolution making this company a wholly owned subsidiary of the World Gem Foundation it would not have been an issue but now since she denies the existence of this document linking the two companies together, it changes everything. She now claims they belong to her.

### **How could you find yourself locked out of your own classroom?**

I think of all the things that have happened, this action angers me the most. She claimed in a letter dated August 16th, 2024 (nine days after I was locked out) that I had embezzled funds and stolen company equipment. She also claimed that I was her employee. What employee buys all the equipment, teaches for free and loans the company 6 million Birr?

It is interesting to note that in two emails sent to colleagues urging them to nominate me for the Antonio Bonnano award, she wrote:

*'Beyond his publications, Geoffrey's passion translates into action. He established the World Gem Foundation, fully funding a Gemmology facility in Africa. This initiative has already successfully trained and is about to graduate its first class of Ethiopian Gemmologists, empowering 12 individuals with the skills needed to thrive in the global market.'*

*His commitment extends beyond financial resources. Geoffrey generously shares his 40+ years of experience, personally mentoring students. His dedication inspires all around him, including myself.*

Now, according to sources in Ethiopia, she is claiming she fully funded the program and took out a personal loan to fund the faceting machines!

Sadly, from everything that has happened, she chooses to only take the things that justify her actions while ignoring all the facts that prove otherwise.

### **No-one offered to mediate?**

On many occasions, I was urged to mediate with her. I did present a three-step dispute resolution proposal that addressed the gemmological and lapidary equipment, the settling of all financial issues and the future of Project Africa but she rejected it three times.

### **I see from posts on LinkedIn and Facebook that her supporters are now claiming you are a racist.**

She has made a number of tactical errors and this is perhaps her biggest. If you look at the graphic of scholarship recipients, you will see that of the 46 that have officially been awarded scholarships through the World Gem Foundation, 38 are non-white. Secondly, I moved to Africa to teach Africans. Why would I do that if I were racist? My business partner (although she now denies it) was non-white. It just goes to show how misguided she is and how devoid she is of any proper advice and counsel.

### **I also saw claims where her supporters claim you are uneducated.**

When my parents divorced and my mother moved my brother and I to Canada, she had not worked for 22 years. Her main responsibility was being a housewife, which in itself was a gruelling job. I started working at 15 when I was still going to school because both my brother and I had to help my mother with everyday expenses. Unfortunately, I was unable to afford to go to university or college although later I studied through the Gemmological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory of Great Britain (now Gem-A), receiving my FGA in 1987 and passing their examinations with distinction. It was my inability to further my own education after graduating from high school that was the catalyst for starting the two scholarships. I also wanted to honour Tino Hammid after he passed away and my maternal grandmother, Winifred Evelyn Hunn. In all likelihood, none of these students would have received their education if I had gone to university. To date, we have funded 230,000 euros of scholarships!

As for being uneducated, I think my CV answers that question. I wrote the Handbook of Gemmology, developed all the World Gem Foundation courses, have lectured all over the world, taught gemmology and developed ColourWise. It is however interesting that in a country where only 4% passed the national examinations last year, my educational credentials would be questioned.

You will also see from the scholarship recipients that Ms. Sisay (top left hand corner) received two scholarships, the Tino Hammid Memorial Gemmological scholarship to cover the theoretical components of the Career Gemmologist Diploma program (€ 1400) and the W.E. Hunn Memorial Gemmological that provided funding to cover half of the practical components and the examination fees (€ 2500).

### **What's next?**

While it will be a slow process in Ethiopia, I have launched legal action against her in Ethiopia and also in Canada since the notarized WGF Partnership agreement states that *'The Partnership will be governed under the laws of the Province of British Columbia'*.

Recent changes in the judicial system in British Columbia has raised the limit to \$ 35,000 Canadian for the Small Claims Court. This has freed up the Supreme Court of British Columbia to handle the bigger cases. Since the equipment stolen exceeds \$ 50,000 Canadian, it will automatically go to the Supreme Court. I intend to push for criminal charges in both countries.

### **Looking into the future, what does it hold?**

Firstly, I am so happy to be back in Spain. I spent almost two years in Ethiopia and found it to be a unforgiving country. There are so many restrictions. You have to be careful what you say and who you say it to. Buying anything is a struggle and now with the devaluation of the Ethiopian Birr, prices are going to go up. In reality because of the huge disparity between the official and black market rates, they should stay the same but human beings, being human beings, will always find a way to justify their actions, regardless of whether they are justifiable or not.

My first priority is looking after my mother. She now has vascular dementia and needs constant care.

My second priority is to focus on running the World Gem Foundation, marketing the 5th Edition of the Handbook of Gemmology, funding the printed version, and to devote more time to ColourWise.

Finally, to recover either the equipment or the monies owed to me by Ms. Sisay and pay off those who supported this initiative.





## World Gem Foundation Scholarship Recipients



**Haimanot Sisay**  
(Ethiopia)



**Joel Dyer**  
(Finland)



**Sandra Eriksson**  
(Sweden)



**Lemma Beyene**  
(Ethiopia)



**Muhammad Zeeshane**  
(Pakistan)



**Brandon Williams**  
(U.S.A)



**Veronica Mosweu**  
(Botswana)



**Muhammad Asif**  
(Pakistan)



**Asif Rasheed**  
(Pakistan)



**Shakeel Ahmad**  
(Pakistan)



**Khawaja Muhammad Abbas**  
(Pakistan)



**Teklebrhan Teklehaymanot**  
(Ethiopia)



**Tendai Masvire**  
(Zimbabwe)



**Nelson Tellez Cortez**  
(Bolivia)



**Mohamed Mubassir**  
(Sri Lanka)



**Indra Perkasa**  
(Indonesia)



**Clever Sithole**  
(Zimbabwe)



**Alexey Tuev**  
(Russia)



**Juan Pablo Vasquez Heredia**  
(Bolivia)



**Vladimir Gery Alanes Garcia**  
(Bolivia)



**Lisa Clark**  
(U.S.A)



**Guarino Edilberto Condorilaime**  
(Bolivia)



**Abdel Issa**  
(Central African Republic)



**Edmont Pasipamire**  
(South Africa)



**Moffat Gudo**  
(Zimbabwe)



**Mogogi Tirelo**  
(Botswana)



**Rasul Rajabov**  
(Czech Republic)



**Gisselle Jiménez**  
Colombia



**Abuu Peter**  
(Tanzania)



**Anna Kurguzova**  
(Russia)



**Hassan Ibrahim**  
(Uganda)



**Stuart Pool**  
(United Kingdom)



**Rajaa Awn**  
(Saudi Arabia)



**Dibora Melaku**  
(Ethiopia)



**Indika Bandara**  
(Sri Lanka)



**Abel Alemayehu**  
(Ethiopia)



**Befikadu Abera**  
(Ethiopia)



**Dawit Tadege**  
(Ethiopia)



**Henock Zewudie**  
(Ethiopia)



**Kumlachew Tesfaye**  
(Ethiopia)



**Leul Ayele**  
(Ethiopia)



**Mebratu Tadesse**  
(Ethiopia)



**Mikias Sebsibe**  
(Ethiopia)



**Nigist Shiferaw**  
(Ethiopia)



**Peniel Abebe**  
(Ethiopia)



**Tamrat Mekonnen**  
(Ethiopia)

46 Recipients from 19 Countries

### And what about Africa?

I just turned 65 and I can honestly say that my days of trying to make the world a gemmologically better place are over. The world is what it is, for whatever reason and I just have to accept it.

I still believe that we need to be active in Africa because I think it would be wrong to penalize a whole continent because of the actions of one person but it will have to be done in such a way that we never again leave ourselves vulnerable as we did in Ethiopia.

However, unless we partner with trusted organizations who can provide the necessary funding to buy the gemmological equipment and study stones, African students will need to complete the practical requirements of our diploma programs outside of Africa. I know this will make it more challenging for African students in terms of costs and the difficulty in getting travel documentation but that is the reality of life. I simply will not risk taking equipment or stones into Africa.

As for subsidizing education, if people want to take what I believe is the most comprehensive gemmological program in the world, they will have to pay for it. The World Gem Foundation may be a not-for-profit Canadian corporation but we are not a charity. As the saying goes, *'charity begins at home'* and in my case, it will *'stay at home'*!

### And the cover of this issue? Coincidence?

(Laughing) I don't believe that anything in life is a 'coincidence'. I do believe in karma and I also know that nothing good will ever come from ill-intentioned actions. Like a bus, you may have to wait a while but eventually, it will come around the corner! I have already purchased her ticket!







## Find out more about the 5th Edition 'Digital' Handbook of Gemmology

To see a video preview of each volume, click on the video icons

Volume One covers the science of gemmology, including the chemical nature of gemstones, their physical and optical properties, basic crystallography, the absorption of light, the spectroscope, polarized light, the polariscope, pleochroism, the dichroscope, colour filters, specific gravity, luminescence, magnification, thermal conductivity, imitation, assembled and lab-created gemstones, and gemstone treatments and enhancements.

416 Pages



Volume One Preview Video

Volume Two covers the identification of gemstones based on their colour and transparency, advanced gem testing techniques, and the grading of coloured gemstones, opals, jadeite, pearls and diamonds.

430 Pages



Volume Two Preview Video

Volume Three covers the mining of gemstones, coloured gemstone and diamond cutting and a comprehensive look at diamonds, corundum, beryl, chrysoberyl, spinel, zircon, topaz, tourmaline, peridot, quartz, garnet, tanzanite, lapis lazuli, turquoise, opal, jade, and pearls.

390 Pages

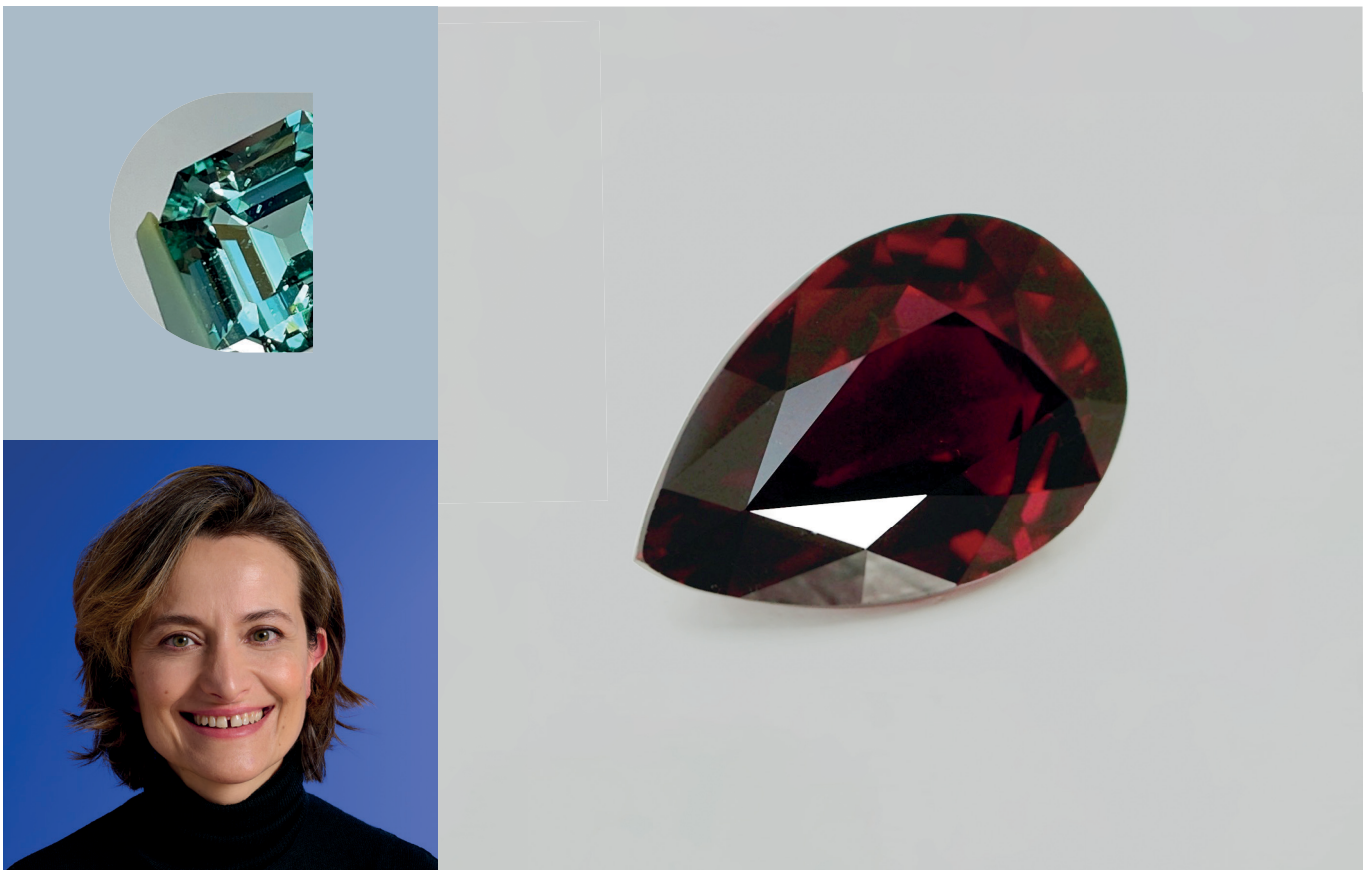


Volume Three Preview Video

Featuring the photography of internationally renowned gemstone/mineral photographers Tino Hammid & Jeff Scovil, Conny Forsberg, John Dyer, David Dyer, Lydia Dyer, Priscilla Dyer, Ozzie Campos, Dmitry Stolyarevich, Arjuna Irsutti and Sergey Pryanechnikov.

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