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Gemstone Forecaster

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Dissecting Portions of the Beesley Report

by Robert Genis

OK Lab nerds, this one's for you! Every once in a while, we snag a Beesley Report—those gold-standard deep dives into the world of high-end gems. As longtime readers know, Cap Beesley left AGL 16 years ago but never stopped championing the gem trade. He still cooks up innovative tools to empower everyday collectors buying their dream rocks. He crafts these Beesley Reports sporadically for standout stones, blending hardcore science with consumer advocacy. We recently got our hands on one for a stunning 4.34-carat Classic Burma Ruby, and its 15 pages are packed with insights that demand a closer look. Here are excerpts (In quotations) from three pivotal sections, worth unpacking for anyone serious about rubies.

"Pigeon Blood Fantasy

In the dark ages of the diamond trade, the term "Blue White and Perfect" was the mantra or stock selling phrase of shady dealers and retailers throughout the country. It was designed to deceive unsuspecting diamond buyers into believing they were buying something of greater value than they actually were. Eventually, a diamond grading protocol was developed to provide meaningful references in order to establish a more consistent quality classification system.

Unlike the diamond scenario, the term that emerged among the elite of the early Burmese gem traders in ruby was "Pigeon Blood". In the beginning, this terminology was used by competent dealers to describe a popular red body color that was available in the marketplace. A current parallel to this color reference, would be the high quality color range used in the trade to describe color in diamonds.

However, in today's marketplace the term 'Pigeon Blood' has been diluted to describe a broad range of colors that reflects little relevance to its original usage. In fact, it has been obscured to the point that it has degenerated into a meaningless marketing term used by laboratories and dealers to mislead uninformed gemstone buyers with the illusion of quality and value.

In the final analysis, ill defined color quality terms that are currently in widespread use in the colored stone trade are relatively useless without meaningful definitions and standards that define the acceptable color limits of each term."

Beesley's takedown here hits hard: "Pigeon Blood" started as a precise nod to the vivid, fluorescent reds from classic Burmese sources, but it's devolved into hype that pads dealer margins. Some often used labs have tried to reclaim it with standards—think vivid red hues with medium-to-strong UV

fluorescence for true “pigeon blood” calls. Yet, as Beesley warns, without ironclad limits, it’s smoke and mirrors. I see this daily in reader queries about “pigeon blood” buys gone wrong. Remember that Tucson booth I mentioned? Hundreds of African rubies, all certed as pigeon blood with just a whisper of red— one even a sneaky pink sapphire. Only maybe one stone truly earned the label. Who’s paying? The collector, shelling out premium prices for mid-tier color. It’s not just sloppy; it’s a betrayal of trust in an industry built on rarity.

Shwedagon Pagoda
Yangon, Burma
Photo Courtesy: C.R. Beesley

“Understanding Enhancements
Interpreting the Technology of the Heat Treatment Process
Caveat Emptor: Buyer Beware

The defining details of enhancements or alteration methods that have been applied to a gemstone to improve, mask, modify or alter apparent quality is critical information to a gemstone acquisition decision. For example, high temperature heating of a ruby or sapphire to alter its body color is commonplace in the gem market. Unfortunately, the issue of certainty, once again, enters the laboratory declaration process. Many labs will use vague or ambiguous phrases to avoid making a definitive decision. Although it is not always possible to clearly address the question of heating with a definitive comment that indicates “Heat Enhancement: None,” laboratories consistently hedge their determination, regardless of the facts, with a more typical reference that suggests there is “No Evidence of Heat”. These nuances of lab interpretation are important to the issue of value and the purchasing decision. It is only possible to make a fully informed choice by implementing a full disclosure policy as an integral part of the purchasing equation. Lingering or unresolved questions need to be integrated into the buying price and potential acquisition decision.

Clarity Enhancement: A Critical Issue In The Value Equation

Clarity enhancement is also vitally important to the gem buying process. “Oiling” and “Polymer” clarity enhancements are not exclusive to natural emeralds, but are commonplace in sapphires and widely applied to Burma rubies with surface reaching feathers, fissures or fractures. Without exception, all laboratory documents that service the consumer population should contain a clarity enhancement statement which indicates the presence, amount and type of enhancement that has been applied to a gem under examination. This is true for all enhancement procedures. Similarly, the absence of any clarity enhancement in any ruby, sapphire or emerald should be noted on every gem report with a clear and unambiguous statement indicating, “Clarity Enhancement: None.”
Without exception, when the gem material has been altered, the lab report should indicate the type and amount of clarity enhancement agent present in the material along with a stability comment. It is imperative that the laboratory report be specific in describing the impact of the enhancement process used to alter the gem’s appearance since it relates in a significant way to market value.

The Relative Rarity and Importance of the Classification
"Classic Burma" & "Clarity Enhancement None"

The overwhelming majority of Burma (Myanmar) Rubies are subjected to a clarity enhancement procedure in Burma with very few exceptions. Unfortunately, many gemological laboratories have failed to effectively address this issue with a consumer protection model as a critical objective relative to the verbiage they used to describe these enhancement issues.

The examination procedure employed by Analytics in the documentation process is to submit the gem in question to a rigorous testing procedure that requires the material to be immersed for 48 hours in Laboratory Grade Acetone before a "None" Classification can be assigned to the material under examination. The gem is subsequently dried under specific conditions to eliminate any potential acetone residue from any open 'feathers' or inclusions that reach the surface of the material. Historically, under the prior management of American Gemological Laboratories, the corresponding image included in the final report contained sufficient detail to deter subsequent attempts by the submitter to re-enhance the material after it was returned to the client. It is "Extremely Rare" to receive the coveted classification of "*Clarity Enhancement: None*" on a gem report.

Currently, commercial gem labs have resorted to using ill defined phrases like "No Gemological Evidence of Enhancement present" or other non-definitive phrases to address enhancement issues. Similarly, gem labs frequently take a parallel approach to "country of origin" determinations using cautionary qualifiers, even when a determination of origin is unambiguous. For example, the use of the term "Classic" when applicable, has been replaced with a generic comment that may read "It is the opinion of the laboratory that the origin of this material will be classified as … " These nonspecific descriptions have become the phrases of choice by many national and international gem laboratories for addressing various treatment and origin issues.

Confidence classifications are determined by the identifiable information that can be extracted from the gem during a careful analysis of multiple factors.

Complicating the disclosure issue, the term "Minor" is the latest descriptor to emerge as the designation of choice in many gem lab reports to characterize the amount of enhancement agent in a gem. Based on observations and experience, it has become obvious that the term "Minor" frequently covers a broad range of filler amounts that tend to benefit gem dealers at the expense of consumer understanding and protection. It has also become apparent that various gem labs have different interpretations of what the term "Minor" actually means relative to the level of enhancement agent that has been utilized to improve a gem's clarity. Unfortunately, there is an international lack of consistency regarding the terminology applied to these critical value related documentation issues."

Beesley's acetone-soak protocol for "Clarity Enhancement: None" is a game-changer—far beyond the wishy-washy "no evidence" lines from most labs. Everyone nods along to emerald treatments (99% oiled or worse), but rubies, sapphires, spinels, and those trendy Mozambique Paraíbas? They're fracture-filled too, turning "dogs" into diamonds-in-the-rough. We've spotted it endlessly: labs missing polymer fillers because dealers game the system, cherry-picking reports. Heat's one thing—stable and common—but undisclosed clarity boosts? That's where value evaporates. Demand "None" or negotiate hard on "Minor" (which, let's be real, spans everything from trace to transformative). Full disclosure isn't optional; it's your shield.

4.34 Cushion Classic Burma Ruby
3.5/75 Vivid Pinkish Red Color
Photo Courtesy: The Beesley Report

"The Important Visual Impact of Long Wave Fluorescence on Classic Burma Ruby

A significant element that affects the visual red body color of Burma Ruby versus certain other geographic ruby locations is the presence of significant amounts of Chromium (Cr) embedded in their chemical structure. The impact of these small chemical variations can have a dramatic effect on the visual appearance of these gems in changing lighting environments, especially in daylight.

For example, unlike Burma Ruby, "Siam" or "Thai" Rubies have increased amounts of Iron (Fe) in their total chemistry. That chemical difference results in the reduction of the visual redness of "Thai" Ruby especially when viewed in daylight. In stark contrast to "Thai" material, the redness of Burma Ruby is stimulated whenever the material is viewed in daylight or any lighting environment that emits increased amounts of red stimulating wavelengths.

In the case of the 4.34 carat ruby, which is the subject of this report, there is an additional factor that augments the visual redness and appearance of the ruby. In the standard laboratory analysis process each ruby submitted for testing is compared to a reference set of fluorescent samples. This examination is conducted with both long and short wave ultraviolet radiation. Each fluorescent standard represents the average fluorescence of ruby samples encountered from around the world. This fluorescent variant is also a standard part of the analytical process for determining the country of origin of a ruby.

In this case, the 4.34 carat ruby when analyzed in this testing environment exhibited a reaction that significantly exceeds the typical "red level" of our Burma fluorescent test sample. The consequence of the enhanced red component is that the ruby produces higher levels of visual redness when the viewer observes the gem in changing lighting environments, especially daylight.

The "redness" factor also has an impact on the color grading of this material in a very positive way. Among other considerations, this red fluorescence induced enhancement component is one of the reasons why Burma rubies are highly valued by dealers and gemstone collectors from around the world. In this particular case, the redness is enhanced beyond the normal expected limits for a Burma Ruby and this observation has been integrated into the color grade applied to this Burma Ruby in the final report."

Burma rubies' chromium punch delivers that signature UV glow, cranking up the red in daylight—Thai stones just can't compete, thanks to iron dulling the vibe. But this 4.34-carat beast? It blasts past "strong" into supercharged territory, a fluorescence outlier that juices the color grade. I've never spotted this level of detail on a standard report—it's like Beesley bottled the stone's secret sauce. Imagine three lookalike rubies under the same light: zero glow, average, or this fireworks show. You'd grab the supernova every time. It's why collectors chase these; that live-wire redness isn't just pretty—it's premium.

Final Summary

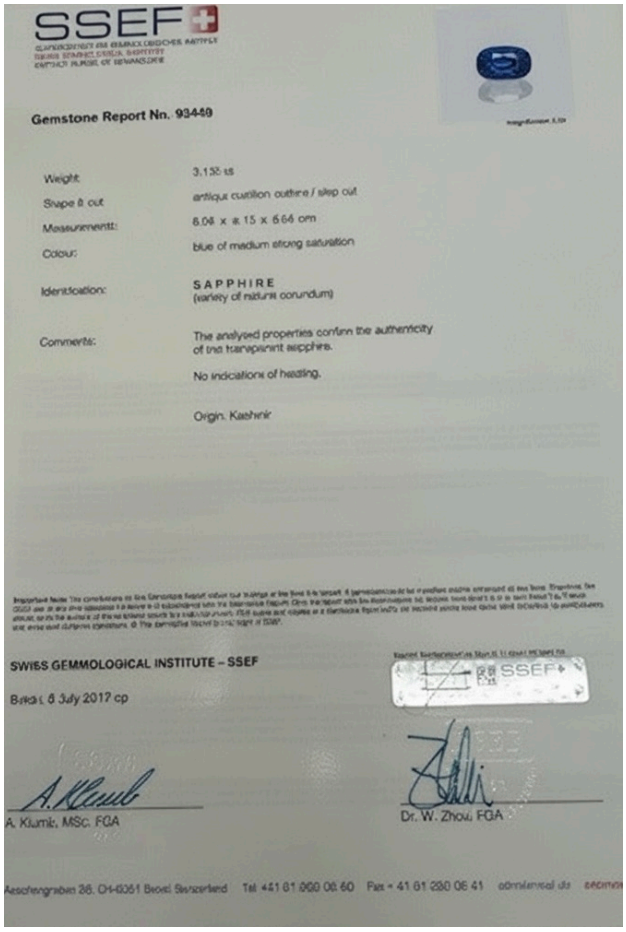
Chasing a fresh Beesley Report might be a unicorn hunt these days, but dissecting Cap's archives reminds us why he's the industry's North Star. From busting Canadian scams in the '80s to pushing transparency at global conclaves, his life's work screams consumer first—labs second. Too many modern reports read like dealer brochures: vague on enhancements, flowery on color, silent on risks. Auction houses know better—they hyped AGL back when it meant something—and yet they peddle this fluff to billionaires. Backlash? Inevitable. These clients have the war chests for class-actions that could torch reputations.

We've looped back to square one: the huckster era of mislabeled gems, post-diamond standardization. Labs once democratized data—origin calls, treatment flags, even linear scales like AGL's numerical system. But as new players popped up, consensus crumbled; now it's dealer-friendly ambiguity all the way down. How do you drop six figures on a ruby without that intel? Our 1980 mantra holds: Hunt a Beesley if you can. Otherwise, lock in an AGL Prestige full-grading—it's the last bastion for smart, safe investing in blue-chips like this 4.34-carat wonder. Stay vigilant, collectors. The rocks won't save themselves.

SSEF Certificate? Enough to buy a Kashmir?

A client of the firm was offered a 3.13 Kashmir sapphire for six figures with an SSEF document. All he knew was the stone was Kashmir and not heated. Is this enough information to make an informed purchase on an important stone?

This client demanded a full Prestige Gem Report from AGL to get more details. The AGL revelations both elevated (and tempered) the decision. The Kashmir no heat was confirmed, as well as no clarity enhancement. He also learned the stone is top color/tone (3/75). The stone is quite deep as is obvious from the ACCU-Vu image. Although this depth makes the stone look visually smaller, it does have high brilliancy. The cutting and finish are very good-good. When you get to the clarity, the Heavily Included one (HI1) grade is concerning and rarely seen in Kashmir Sapphires. The main problem, despite the way it looks visually, is this clarity could result in durability issues. This stone must be treated with the utmost care, similar to a Heavily Included emerald. This is a perfect example of how some certs are woefully lacking in important details. The client was smart enough to get a full grading report to help him make a more informed decision on the stone's value. Smart buyers demand it; the rest settle for “good enough.” Which camp are you in?



SSEF

Gemstone Report Nr. 93449

Weight: 3.13 ct

Shape & cut: antique cushion outline / step cut

Measurements: 8.08 x 6.15 x 5.64 mm

Colour: blue of medium strong saturation

Identification: SAPPHIRE (variety of natural corundum)

Comments: The analysed properties confirm the authenticity of the transparent sapphire.

No indications of heating.

Origin: Kashmir

SWISS GEMMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE – SSEF

Basel, 6 July 2017 cp

A. Klumb, MSc. FGA

Dr. W. Zhou, FGA

Aeschengraben 26, CH-4051 Basel, Switzerland Tel +41 61 260 06 60 Fax +41 61 260 06 41

The Prestige Gemstone Report™

American Gemological Laboratories™

AGL

Imaging

Images do not accurately portray size or color.

Accu-Vu™ Imaging:

Comments:

Identification

Document No: 1149676 Validation Date: 8 August 2025

Identification

Mineral Type: Natural Corundum Transparency: Transparent

Variety: Sapphire Color Description: Blue

Carat Weight: 3.13 cts Shape: Cushion

Measurements: 8.95 x 6.18 x 6.08 mm Cutting Style: Mixed Cut

Comments:

Origin

Provenance: Kashmir

Comments: Based on available gemological information, it is the opinion of the Laboratory that the origin of this material would be classified as Kashmir.

Enhancement

Standard: No gemological evidence of heat Additional: None

Comments: Non-heated sapphires are scarce. Sapphires are commonly heated to modify their color and appearance.

Enhancement Stability Index™

Degree of Clarity Enhancement & Relative Rarity™

General Report Comments:

Monruedee Chaipaksa, Senior Gemologist

Christopher P. Smith, President

American Gemological Laboratories

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Grading

Color Grade: 3 / 75

Color / Rating Range: 3 / 70 - 75

Color Zoning: Faint 2

Light Source: Duro-Test: Vita Lite

Bichroic Effect: Faint 2

Clarity Grade: HI 1

Cutting Grade: Very Good (3-4)

Depth %: 98.3%

Brilliancy Range: 80 - 85%

Brilliancy Average: 80%

Finish Grade: Very Good to Good (4-5)

TQIR

Total Quality Index Rating: Very Good

Comments:

Burma News

Military airstrike on gem mining town kills at least 21 in Myanmar
Associated Press
By Grant Peck
Aug 16, 2025

Only bad news for the people of Mogok and Burmese gem production. ED

An airstrike by Myanmar's military on the town of Mogok, the center of the Southeast Asian country's lucrative gem-mining industry, has killed at least 21 people including a pregnant woman, an armed opposition group, local residents and Myanmar's online media said Saturday.

The incident was the latest in a series of frequent and deadly military airstrikes, often causing civilian casualties, that have intensified in a bid to reclaim territory from resistance groups amid the ongoing civil war that erupted after the army seized power in February 2021.

The attack occurred Thursday at 8:30 p.m. in Shwegu ward in Mogok township, about 115 kilometers (70 miles) northeast of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, said Lway Yay Oo, a spokesperson for the the Ta'ang National Liberation Army. The TNLA is one of the powerful ethnic militias fighting against the army near the Chinese border. "About 21 civilians were killed. Seven others were injured. Homes and Buddhist monastery buildings were also damaged," Lway Yay Oo said.Mogok, the ruby-mining center in the upper Mandalay region, was seized in July 2024 by the TNLA, a member of an alliance of ethnic militias that seized a large swath of territory in northeastern Myanmar in an offensive that began in late 2023.

The group's statement released Friday night on its Telegram social media channel said 16 women were among the victims killed in the airstrike that appeared to target a Buddhist monastery in Mogok's Shwegu ward. It said 15 houses were also damaged when a jet fighter dropped a bomb.

Two Mogok residents told The Associated Press on Saturday that the death toll had risen to nearly 30, though the exact casualties could not be independently confirmed. The residents, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were afraid of being arrested by the military, said the death toll was high because one of the bombed houses had been hosting visitors to the pregnant woman.

Independent online media, including Myanmar Now and Democratic Voice of Burma, released pictures and videos said to be of debris in the aftermath of the airstrike. The military did not comment on the incident in Mogok. In the past, the army has said it only attacks legitimate targets of war, accusing the resistance forces of being terrorists.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. After peaceful demonstrations were put down with lethal force, many opponents of military rule took up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict.

The military government has stepped up airstrikes against the armed pro-democracy People's Defense Force and ethnic militias that have been fighting for greater autonomy for decades. The resistance forces have no defense against air attacks.

The TNLA's statement said that another 17 people including two Buddhist monks had been killed and 20 others were injured in the first two weeks of August by airstrikes in areas controlled by the group.

About 16 people, mostly truck drivers, were killed in airstrikes last Monday on a convoy of trucks that were parked on the road due to heavy fighting near the town of Sagaing in central Myanmar, according to independent Myanmar media reports.

Opponents and independent analysts estimate the army now controls less than half the country while maintaining a tenacious grip on much of central Myanmar, including the capital, Naypyidaw. It has accelerated counter-offensives ahead of the election it has promised to hold at the end of this year in order to retake areas controlled by opposition forces.

Critics say the elections won't be democratic because there is no free media and most leaders of Suu Kyi's party have been arrested. The plan is widely seen as an attempt to legitimize and maintain the military's rule. Several opposition groups have said they would seek to derail the election.

More Burma News

Myanmar Is Shaping Up To Be The Next Front Of The Sino-US New Cold War

by Andrew Korybko
Substack,
Aug 25, 2025

Burma turns out to be a magical place. Not only do they have some of the world's finest gems, they also have rare earth minerals. Look for China and the US to tussle over this new development. ED

Reuters reported that the US' Myanmar policy might shift towards more diplomatic engagement with either the ruling junta or the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in an attempt to obtain access to the enormous rare earth mineral reserves in the second's eponymous state. At present, the US is suspected of clandestinely supporting some of the armed anti-junta groups, but the KIA isn't thought to have benefited due to their isolated position along Myanmar's mountainous border with China and India.

This geography poses a challenge to the redirection of these resources from China to India for example regardless of Kachin State's final political status, whether autonomous within a (con)federated Myanmar or independent, but that's assuming that China doesn't intervene. Reuters cited an expert on Kachin State who said that "If they want to transport the rare earths from these mines, which are all on the Chinese border, to India, there's only one road. And the Chinese would certainly step in and stop it."

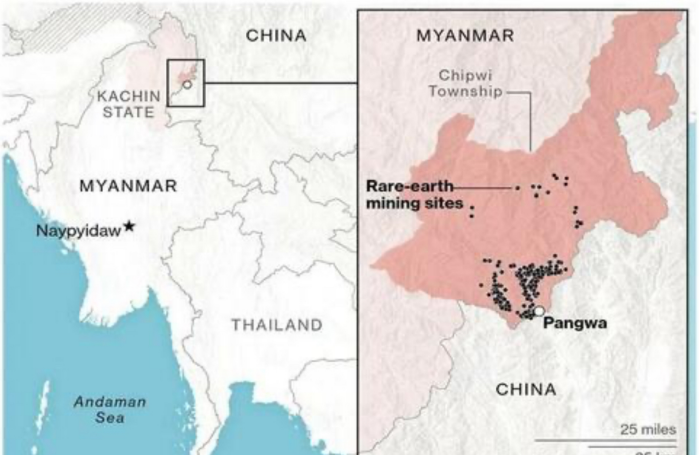
The reports late last year about the joint security firm that China and Myanmar were planning at the time were analyzed here and concluded that the risks associated with even a PMC-led intervention in support of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) make this scenario unlikely. For as important as CMEC is for helping China reduce its logistical dependence on the easily blockaded Strait of Malacca, Kachin's rare earth minerals are even more important, so its calculations could change.

Nevertheless, China is known for advancing its national interests through hybrid economic-diplomatic means, not military force. It's therefore much more probable that it might soon ramp up these efforts with either the junta, the KIA, or both to preempt any forthcoming US diplomatic campaign. The first scenario would aim to restore the military's control over Kachin's rare earth reserves, the second would work towards Kachin's de facto independence, while the third would seek that state's autonomy.

In the order that they were mentioned: the military is on the backfoot in Kachin despite over four years of Chinese support so it's unlikely that any new approach by China will reverse this trend; China's decades of engagement with eastern Shan State's de facto independent United Wa State Army (including over rare earths) could serve as a precedent for something similar with the KIA; while seeking Kachin's autonomy in a Chinese-mediated political settlement would be the best-case scenario for Beijing.

In any case, it's unimaginable that China will let the US poach Kachin's rare earth reserves without making any attempt to preempt this powerplay, so the Sino-US rivalry in Myanmar is expected to intensify. Kachin is at the center of this struggle, which his nowadays driven by access to that region's rare earths even though it used to be about CMEC, with Myanmar's political future (centralized, decentralized, devolved, or partitioned) only being a means to the aforementioned end.

China has the edge over the US due to geography (including the nearness of its rare earth processing facilities), its existing ties with both the junta and the KIA, and the allure that any new approach (possibly linked to CMEC) could have for facilitating a pragmatic deal between them. That said, the US might at the very least try to provoke an armed Chinese intervention of some sort to embroil it in a quagmire even if the odds of this scenario are low, all as part of their escalating New Cold War rivalry over Myanmar.



Kachin State in northern Burma, courtesy of Bloomberg

Why It's a Buyer's Market for Diamonds...
Rapaport
by Rich Goyal Sikri
May 27, 2025

Diamond dealers are considering diversifying into colored stones. Caveat Emptor. ED

"Colored gemstones, in contrast, have not taken the price tumble that diamonds have. Industry insiders explain that more than 80% of diamonds come from institutional sources, while barely half of colored gems can be traced to a formal mine; most are from informal, unregulated sources. The border closures and travel bans of the global pandemic further disconnected these already fragmented gem supply lines, making goods harder to come by in the market. When demand for precious stones skyrocketed in 2020 to '21 and diamond producers increased their output to meet it, gem manufacturers could not do the same, as colored-stone deposits are rarer in nature. This caused gemstone prices to rise further. Even before the pandemic, demand and prices for colored gemstones had been steadily rising. The discovery of new deposits in Africa and the establishment of large-scale mining operations by players like Gemfields have played a vital role in the jewelry sector's turn toward color. Marco Hadjibay points to the investment market as a reason consumers are choosing gems over diamonds. "Consider an individual who might have bought a D-flawless, 10-carat diamond at $200,000 a carat," says the creative director of US-based Bayco Jewels. "Today, if they want to sell their diamond, they're going to get $65,000 to $70,000 a carat for it. That's a big hit on a major investment. On the other hand, when you look at rubies, sapphires, emeralds, blue diamonds or pink diamonds, their prices have only followed an upward trajectory, never reducing over the last 100 years. Modern buyers are taking note and reacting accordingly." But the gaps in people's knowledge have consequences. Many new buyers from the diamond industry are basing their gemstone purchases on lab reports instead of in-person evaluation. This is driving prices up for gems that a seasoned colored-stone specialist might have assigned a lower value. New gem buyers also need to consider treatments, which play a major role in determining a stone's price and value appreciation."

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