

VISITOR GUIDE

**M
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DAZZLING DESIRE

18/10/2017

14/01/2018

Diamonds and their emotional meaning

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CONTENT

4	ANTWERP AND ITS DIAMOND COMMUNITIES
12	DESIRE FOR SECURITY AND LOVE
34	DESIRE FOR HIGHER THINGS
57	DIAMOND, MERE CARBON
58	DESIRE FOR STATUS
80	DESIRE FOR POWER
98	THE DOWNSIDE OF DESIRE
102	DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE: THE BEAUTY OF MYTHS AND SCIENCE
114	DIAMOND, A SHORT HISTORY (LEXICON)
120	COLOPHON

Diamonds from Sierra Leone

Kanye West

2005



* * *

DAZZLING DESIRE

People have all sorts of desires. For love and security. For meaning. For wealth, status and power... In many cultures, people have chosen to make these desires tangible and visible with objects, often made from precious materials. Diamonds are a dazzling example of this.

Diamonds speak to the imagination. Throughout much of history they have been rare, they are valuable and people find them beautiful. A diamond is really just a bit of compressed carbon, but culturally it symbolises numerous human yearnings.

Diamonds bear witness to love. They are used in sacred objects. They convey wealth and symbolise status and power. And yet the search for diamonds has at times been marred by greed and damaging excess.

Find out about the different meanings that people have attributed to diamonds. About the stories they have made up about them – and still do. And about how they catch sight in them of the dazzle and glitter of desires that may be unattainable.

ANTWERP AND ITS DIAMOND COMMUNITIES

There have been diamonds in Antwerp for at least 570 years. Right from the start, the diamond trade has been international.

1447: the year from which the oldest known Antwerp document about diamonds dates. Other sources from the fifteenth century mention diamond traders and polishers by name. The polishers were mostly Flemish craftsmen, and they founded their guild in 1582.

Diamonds were imported – from India – primarily by Italian and Portuguese merchants. There were also Jews among them. From the sixteenth century, Jewish merchants played a leading role. There are no real religious reasons to explain this trade: diamonds are rarely used for Jewish rituals and objects. But for a group of people who had to flee regularly, the precious, easily transported stones represented a secure form of business.

Nowadays, the Antwerp diamond sector has more than 70 nationalities, including Belgians, Brazilians, Chinese, Lebanese, Angolans, Congolese, Russians, Australians, Norwegians and Kuwaitis... Diamonds bring together different nationalities as well as different religions. Jewish dealers are still prominent, but in recent years Jains have gained an increasingly important role. For this religious community from India, non-violence and purity of soul are essential. The diamond, being quintessentially pure, is an appropriate commodity for them.

I Ordinance against the falsification of stones

Decree Book, 1439-1496
Antwerp
Paper
Antwerp, City Archives

BAN ON IMITATION DIAMONDS

This is the oldest evidence of the diamond trade in Antwerp: a ban issued on 15 September 1447 on dealing in fake stones resembling diamonds,

rubies, emeralds or sapphires. It was issued by the mayor and aldermen, together with Sheriff Jan Vander Brugge.

The sheriff represented the ruler, Philip the Good. This duke of Burgundy resided in Bruges, then an important centre for the import and processing of diamonds.

'Nobody shall, within Antwerp, buy, sell, pledge or trade in false or imitation stones, after such stones have been set in gold, silver or gilded brass, be they imitation diamonds, rubies, pale red rubies, emeralds or sapphires, or other fakes. On penalty of 25 'riders' (gold pieces): one-third for the lord (the duke), one-third for the city and one-third for the informer. The asset itself shall also go to the lord.'

'The Low Countries are the world's ring, with Antwerp as its diamond.'
Carolus Scribani, *Antverpia*, 1610

THE JAINS AND DIAMONDS

The Jains, a religious community from India, believe that each soul is originally indestructible and pure. Like a diamond. It becomes tainted with karmic material by acts, words and thoughts accompanied by violence. A human soul can be purified again by polishing. Like a diamond.

For religious reasons, there are many professions that Jains may not practise because they involve harming or even killing living beings. Traditionally, they work in the banking sector and as jewellers, especially diamond-traders. Their purity makes diamonds a suitable commodity for them to sell.

The Antwerp Jains come from the western state of Gujarat. In Antwerp, they started by trading mainly in rough diamonds, from the 1970s. Since the 1990s, the number of gem-cutting businesses has increased significantly in India, and therefore they have focused on trading cut diamonds here too.

2 *Samavasarana, the preaching hall*

Rajasthan, India, 18th century
Gouache on cotton
Antwerp, MAS

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNITY

Mahavira, a Tirthankara or spiritual teacher, proclaims his non-violent doctrine. Traditionally he is depicted doing so in a hall with three circular walls: the first is made of precious stones, the second of gold and the third of silver.

Mahavira's symbol is the lion. He is seated in the meditation posture under the tree where he attained omniscience, the highest form of consciousness. The listeners represent the Jain community. On the left are monks and laymen; on the right are nuns and laywomen.

3 **Seated Jina**

Western India, 1879
Bronze
Antwerp, MAS

PURE SOULS

The Jains revere 24 spiritual teachers or Tirthankaras. They are also known as Jinas, conquerors. These renounced worldly passions and possessions. Through a life of non-violence, their purified soul attained liberation from the circle of rebirth.

Like all Jinas, this one is depicted in meditation pose, with long earlobes, tight curls and wide-open eyes. The eyes are sometimes inlaid with diamonds.

The defining feature is the Srivatsa, a lozenge- or flower-shaped chest jewel that radiates peacefulness and interconnectedness with all living beings.

4 *Shalibhadra katha* (*The Story of Shalibhadra*)

Rajasthan, India, 1776

Gouache on paper

Antwerp, MAS

FROM MERCHANT TO MONK

In this still popular Jain story, a rich merchant becomes a monk. This manuscript recounts and depicts his exchanging of material wealth for spiritual wealth.

Here, Shalibhadra sells precious shawls set with diamonds to the queen. There are bags of gems in his treasury, and golden coins lie on the floor. We also see Shalibhadra's marriage to 32 brides, a sign of wealth, and his devotion to an image of Mahavira, a spiritual teacher or Tirthankara.

5 Jain diamond traders: their voices



THE JEWS AND DIAMONDS

Jews were already active in Antwerp by the late fifteenth century, especially after their escape from Catholic Spain and Portugal. They continued their activities in the financial sector and the flourishing diamond trade there. After the Fall of Antwerp in 1585, the trade experienced a crisis. Many of the city's inhabitants, including Jews, fled. Amsterdam became the leading diamond centre.

There was a new Jewish migration to Antwerp in the nineteenth century, especially the last quarter of the century with newcomers mainly from Eastern Europe and Russia. Through family and acquaintances, many ended up in the diamond sector, where trust is important. Diamond-

working is also relatively easy to learn.

In around 1900, expertise and low wages attracted the diamond trade back to Antwerp. The Jews were particularly active at the Diamond Bourses or Exchange. They represented a quarter of workers in the diamond-working sector.

Even today, many Antwerp Jews are still active in the diamond trade, although their involvement in diamond manufacturing has virtually ceased due to the sector's overall relocation to cheaper countries.

6 **Jewish diamond traders: their voices**

7 **Vestitus Sacerdotum Hebraeorum** *(The Clothing of Jewish Priests)*

Johannes Braun
Amsterdam, 1680
Paper and leather
Antwerp, Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library

GEMS FROM ISRAEL

This Jewish high priest wears a breastplate known as Aaron's Breastplate, with twelve different gems. Each gem refers to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The third gem in the second row is the jahalom, which actually means diamond in modern Hebrew. It refers to the Zebulon, a prosperous mercantile tribe.

Whether it really is a diamond is a moot point: depending on the translation, some versions of the relevant Biblical texts mention a diamond, while others do not.

8 **Torah scroll**

Origin and date unknown

Wood and parchment

Amsterdam, Jewish Historical Museum (on loan from Joods Maatschappelijk Werk)

The parchment Torah scroll is attached to two wooden sticks, protected with a 'mantle' and decorated with a crown. This symbolises the reverence for and magnificence of the sacred texts of the Torah.

9 **Yad (pointer or reading stick)**

The Netherlands, 1700-1800

Gold, silver and diamond

Amsterdam, Jewish Historical Museum

A *yad* is used when reading the Torah. The Torah scroll itself may not be touched. On its hand, this *yad* has a small diamond on the little-finger ring and on the cuff.

10 **Torah crown**

Vienna, ca. 1825

Gold and silver, set with diamonds, emeralds, rubies, amethysts, and turquoises

London, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum

ORNAMENTAL CROWN WITH DIAMONDS

A rolled up Torah scroll can be decorated with a crown. This little ornamental crown was probably attached to a personal scroll. The Hebrew on the crown band is an abbreviation for the phrase: 'The crown of the Torah, the crown of the Priest, the crown of the King'.

These characters are in diamond. The flower basket and flowers at the top are also set with diamonds. Diamonds are rarely found on Jewish religious objects.

II **Side-panels to *The Adoration of the Shepherds***

Otto van Veen
Antwerp, 1601
Oil on panel
Antwerp, Maagdenhuismuseum

FLAUNTING DIAMONDS

These portraits are of the Portuguese Jew Simon Rodriguez d'Evora (1543-1618) and his wife Anna Lopès Ximenès. Simon Rodriguez d'Evora traded in luxury goods such as sugar and diamonds in Antwerp, she belonged to a wealthy family of diamond traders.

His ruff and cuffs are of expensive Italian lace, and on his left index finger he wears a ring featuring a large table cut diamond. His wife is wearing a chest pendant with table cut diamonds, two rings including one with a diamond, two bracelets with diamonds and pearls...

TOO MANY DIAMONDS

On the back of this left side-panel, the high priest exhorts Mary's father, Joachim, to leave the Temple. The priest wears Aaron's breastplate. This should have twelve different gems, one for each tribe of Israel.

Otto van Veen only depicted nine gems, and instead of one diamond there are five: a large central stone, surrounded by four smaller, shiny black stones, all pyramid-shaped.

DESIRE FOR SECURITY AND LOVE

Many people look for happiness in relationships: with a partner, their family or their friends. To express that desire for love and security, they often exchange objects – or wear them.

These visible signs of friendship, love and loyalty belong to all ages and cultures, but assume varying forms. They can be simple, or they can be costly and precious. Special shapes and materials often reinforce their symbolic meaning: the eternal circular form of a ring or the durability of a diamond.

All these objects are a way of showing people's yearnings for others. Whether they can help to fulfill that desire, remains open to question.

A. The pillow

Berlinde De Bruyckere, 2010
Wax, cotton, wool, wood, iron and epoxy
Brussels, private collection

A human figure doubles up into a pillow, vulnerable and fragile. Despite the strong longing for the other, man sometimes remains alone and powerless in committing to his fellow-man.

12 Engagement ring with 'fede' motif

Seventeenth century
Gold, enamel and diamond
Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh (see also p. 24)

'FLEMISH HEARTS': LOVE FOR ONES MOTHER

'Flemish hearts' were popular jewels in the nineteenth century. If mothers received one gift, it would most likely be on 15 August. This was the date of the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, Jesus' mother.

The silver hearts are usually set with diamond chips. A larger diamond is on display in the centre. The origin of this jewel is unclear, but it presumably relates to the veneration of the immaculate Heart of Mary.

The 'Flemish heart' plays a role in the Antwerp 'Mothers' Festival' as seen in the early twentieth century by the alderman and artist Frans Van Kuyck: children would decorate their mother's chair, recite poems and sing songs. The father would give the mother a heart-shaped family jewel, engraved with the children's names. Van Kuyck probably took over an existing custom.

Thanks to mass production, such a gift was now affordable for the emerging middle class. Similar hearts are also found elsewhere. In France, for example, they were called '*Coeur liégeois*', while in Liège they preferred the name... '*Coeur flamand*'.

13 Portrait photograph of a lady with a 'Flemish heart'

Antwerp, late nineteenth century

Photograph glued to a visiting card, with the inscription 'J. Van Crewel, photographe, 48 rue du Pélican, Anvers' on the reverse

Antwerp, MAS (donated by Wim Strecker)

'Flemish hearts' are seen in late nineteenth-century portrait photographs of elderly ladies in their traditional Sunday best clothing. Portraits of ladies with Flemish hearts are fairly rare.

**14 Portrait photograph of a lady
with a ‘Flemish heart’**

Antwerp, nineteenth century
Photograph glued to a *visiting card*, with an inscription
indicating the photographer: C. De Trez
Merksem, Documentatie- en Studiecentrum voor
Familiegeschiedenis

**15 Portrait photograph of a lady
with a ‘Flemish heart’**

Antwerp, late nineteenth century
Photograph glued to a *visiting card*, with the
inscription ‘F. Bosch, photographe,
22 rue Porte aux Vaches, Anvers’ on the reverse
Antwerp, MAS (donated by Wim Strecker)

**16 Portrait photograph of a lady
with a ‘Flemish heart’**

Portrait photograph of a lady with a ‘Flemish heart’
Antwerp, late nineteenth century
Photograph glued to a *visiting card*
Antwerp, MAS (donated by Wim Strecker)

**17 ‘Flemish hearts’ with
floral crown and love trophy**

Antwerp and Mechelen, first half of nineteenth century
Silver and diamond
Deurne (Antwerp), St Fredegand’s Church

LOVE HEARTS

'Flemish hearts' have two forms of ornate top-piece. Some have a crown of roses or lilies, while others feature a love trophy: a torch with a quiver of arrows, intertwined with a bow and laurels. This symbolises the Greek god of love, Eros, and triumphant love.

The heart itself consists of a diamond surrounded by smaller diamonds or diamond chips. The central stone should symbolise Mother Mary and her virtues, such as purity and wisdom.

18 'Flemish heart' with floral crown

J.R.L. de Backer
Mechelen, 1832-1869
Silver, gold and diamond
Antwerp, MAS

19 'Flemish heart' with chain

Mechelen, ca. 1850
Silver and diamond
Antwerp, St James' Church

LOVE TRANSCENDING DEATH

Skulls, skeletons, hourglasses, worms... These bleak symbols remind us of our mortality. Amongst others, they were used to decorate rings. Such a symbol is known as a memento mori – Latin for ‘Remember your mortality’.

In the seventeenth century in particular, when mortality rates were often high, *memento mori* rings were popular. Such rings were also worn as mourning or commemorative rings. If they mention a name and date of death, we can be sure that this was their purpose.

Gradually, the symbols become less stark: broken columns, extinguished torches, palm branches... In a ring or a medallion, a portrait could also be added, or a lock of hair, as a tangible token of longing for the deceased.

In our time, it is becoming possible for people to have a diamond made from their loved one’s ashes in a mourning jewel. You could hardly get closer to a lost loved one.

20 **Portrait of Margarita Courten (1564-1640)**

Salomon Mesdach
Low Countries, 1625
Oil on panel
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (Jonkheer J. de Witte van
Citters Bequest, The Hague)

This woman wears a diamond ring with a rosette motif on her left hand. Such rings were sometimes used as mourning or *memento mori* rings. When they were opened up, a skull was revealed.

**21. *Memento mori* in the form of
a skull with a coffin**

Sixteenth century

Gold and enamel

Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels

22 *Memento mori*-ring

Europe, late seventeenth century

Diamond, gold and enamel

Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

The ring's bezel shows the face of a young woman on one side and a skull on the other, surmounted with a diamond and richly ornamented with white enamel.

23 Mourning ring with skull

England, late seventeenth century

Gold, silver, enamel and rose cut diamond

London, Victoria and Albert Museum

24 Mourning ring with inscription

England, 1737

Gold, enamel, silver and diamond

London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Bequeathed by
Rosemary Eve Lawrence)

The text, M. ELLIOTT, OB: 6 MAR: 1737 AE 66, gives the name, date of death and age of the deceased.

25 Mourning ring

England, 1765

Gold, enamel, silver, rose cut diamond and amethyst

London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Donated by Dame Joan Evans)

The text, RICH: PETT.DI:23 FER: 1765 AE 76, gives the name, date of death and age of the deceased: Rich(ard) Pett, died 23rd February 1765, aged 76.

26 Rosette-shaped ring

The Netherlands, ca. 1670-1690

Gold, diamond and enamel

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

27 Ring with lock of hair in a glass receptacle

Early nineteenth century

Gold, hair and crystal

Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

28 Mourning ring in the shape of an urn containing hair (of the deceased?)

England, 1755

Gold, diamond, enamel, amethyst and human hair

Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

The inscription, AB OB MAY 19 1755: IF I FORGET THEE, gives the date of death. The white enamel indicates that the deceased was a young or unmarried woman.

29 Mourning pendant with hair

Eighteenth century

Miniature in ivory, plaited hair, enamel and pearls

Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

30 Mourning medallion with tomb and palm branches

Late eighteenth century

Glass, enamel, rhinestone, pearls and silver

Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

31 Mourning jewel with diamond of human ashes

Swiss, 2007

Diamond (ALGORDANZA Memorial Diamond Brilliant, fancy blue) and white gold

Austria, Family Wampl – Algordanza AG (Swiss)

Rough diamonds can also be made from human ashes. These can be cut and made into a mourning jewel. In this way, people can keep their loved ones close to them.

It is possible because the human body consists partly of carbon, the raw material of diamond. And because today we can reproduce in the laboratory the natural conditions under which diamonds are formed, with high pressure and high temperatures.

In 2006, the family of Hilde Mutter (1913 – 1991) decided to have her ashes converted into a memorial diamond. This was made possible by Algordanza in Switzerland. It was the great-grandson, Christoph Wampl, who was allowed to bear the ring with the diamond and thus also the beloved family member.

DIAMOND SENTIMENTS

Diamonds are often used to seal a lasting bond – or at any rate to show the desire for such an everlasting link.

People show their love throughout their lives. First there is the process of falling in love – perhaps even secretly – and the promise of a lifelong commitment. Then there is the confirmation of a lasting bond, the love for the children and the warmth of the family. At the end there is the love that transcends death.

There are countless kinds of love tokens, but rings, pendants and brooches are especially used to display our desire for another person and our love. We ‘carry’ him or her ‘around with us’, or ‘give’ ourselves to our partner.

★ THE FIRST DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING?

In 1477, Maximilian of Austria and Mary of Burgundy became engaged. He gave her a diamond engagement ring – the very first one, supposedly. It is certainly the oldest surviving example. Mary died five years later.

Getting engaged or ‘betrothed’ – promising to spend your life together – is a medieval practice, as is the giving of rings to confirm this promise. There are references dating back to the thirteenth century to diamonds and unbreakable round rings, stronger than death.

32 **Portrait of Mary of Burgundy**

Master of the Legend of Mary Magdalene
ca. 1510
Reproduction of the original: oil on wood
Chantilly, Musée Condé

33 Maximilian of Austria gives Mary of Burgundy the engagement ring (Ghent, 1477)

From: *Excellent Chronicle of Flanders* (folio 311 verso)

Ascribed to Anthonis de Roovere

Bruges, fifteenth century

Watercolour on paper

Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium

PROFOUND LOVE

This magnificent chronicle describes the history of Flanders. It includes the scene of the engagement of Maximilian and Mary, with a watercolour showing the giving of the ring.

‘When the bride beheld the bridegroom, she knelt and he did likewise. Then they clasped one another’s arms, and both of them blanched and turned deathly pale. This was a sign of profound love (...) The bridegroom now kissed his bride and said: “I have ardently desired you”.’

34 Ring of Mary of Burgundy (?)

Burgundy, fifteenth century

Gold and diamonds

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer

Eleven diamonds form a capital M. A crown and the small letters ‘chi’ or ‘cli’ can be seen on the ring. The meaning of this is unclear.

35 **Twentieth-century engagement ring**

Antwerp, ca. 1950, belonged to Josephine Pilate
Platinum and diamond
Private collection

A DIAMOND IS FOREVER...

The diamond's popular emergence as an engagement symbol is quite recent ... and commercial.

In the 1930s, diamond-mining was being vigorously pursued in Africa, and diamonds were becoming less 'special'. A campaign was initiated by diamond company De Beers to boost the sales market. De Beers launched the slogan *A diamond is forever* in 1947, used mass media and enlisted famous celebrities... It paid off: the diamond became the ultimate symbol of love.

★ DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

On 23 July 1645, Balthasar II Moretus, a descendant of Christophe Plantin, married Anna Goos. Balthasar presented Anna with jewels, including numerous diamonds. These were worth as much as a very respectable house.

Anna's curly hair tumbles onto her bare shoulders in a style that was the height of fashion at the time. On her chest she wears a diamond rosette with a bow. The bow symbolises the bond between the couple. In her hair she wears another diamond jewel.

36 **Portrait of Anna Goos, wife of Balthasar II Moretus**

Jacob van Reesbroeck
Antwerp, ca. 1659
Oil on canvas
Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum

37 Inventory of the jewels given by Balthasar II Moretus to Anna Goos

Antwerp, 1645

Reproduction of the original document (ink on paper)

Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum

WEIGHTY DIAMONDS

Balthasar II Moretus lists the jewels in detail and also mentions the jeweller and price. A number include diamonds, such as ‘a small ring with some 23 weighty diamonds bought from the said Abraham Leers at eight guilders a-piece, plus eleven guilders for the gold and the work, making 195 guilders in all.’ The bridal jewels also include ‘a fine large diamond ring’ and a ‘diamond *Bootken* or *Bagghe*’ probably a badge or brooch.

38 Titanic



James Cameron, 1997

20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures and Spyglass Entertainment

39 Large portraits, small jewels



**40 Portrait of a woman,
probably Maria Schuurman**

The Netherlands, ca. 1600

Oil on panel

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

This woman wears diamond rings on both hands: on her right hand, one with a table cut diamond, and on her left a gimmel love ring with ruby and diamond, and a flower-shaped diamond ring.

★ A DIAMOND LOVE VEIN

‘Fede rings’ are love rings with two intertwined hands, symbolising engagement or marriage.

The motif of two clasped right hands dates back to Roman times. It confirmed an agreement, engagement or friendship. The term *‘fede ring’* comes from the Italian *mani in fede*, ‘hands linked in trust’.

Wearing the ring on the ring finger was significant. It was from there that the *vena amoris* or ‘love vein’ was believed to run straight to the heart.

41 **Love ring**

England, late fifteenth century
Gold, diamond and ruby
The Phoebus Foundation

42 **Love ring with clasping hands: fede ring**

Germany, 1560
Diamond and gold
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

43 **Engagement or wedding ring**

Italy or England, mid-eighteenth century
Gold, silver, ruby and diamond
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

This ring suggests two overlapping hearts. They are ‘tied’ with a golden ribbon and a diamond flame.

44 Heart-shaped love ring with diamonds

Early seventeenth century
Gold, enamel and diamond
Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

45 Love ring with case

Western Europe, 1600-1700
Gold, diamond and enamel
Amsterdam, Jewish Historical Museum

The heart, the definitive symbol of love, has featured on objects relating to engagement and marriage since the Middle Ages.

46 Jewellery or wedding chest

Antwerp, late sixteenth century
Wood, leather, metal and cloth
Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

Jewellery chests were also known as ‘wedding chests’ because they were often given at the time of marriage. This example is particularly precious because it is covered with gilt leather.

★ TWO RINGS IN ONE. FOR EVER.

‘Gimmel rings’ are special love rings. They consist of a double hoop: two rings that combine to form one. ‘Gimmel’ comes from the Latin *gemellus*, ‘twin’.

These were especially popular as love and engagement rings in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. At the engagement, the man and woman would each receive one part. When they got married, the two parts were linked.

As well as a diamond, gimmel rings also often feature a red ruby. This combination promises a lasting and passionate marriage.

47 **Gimmel ring**

Germany, early seventeenth century
Diamond, ruby and gold
The Phoebus Foundation

One ring opens up to reveal a baby inside, and the other a skeleton: the beginning and end of life.

48 **Gimmel ring: Martin Luther’s double wedding ring**

Print by Abraham Jacobsz Hulk
The Netherlands, 1761-1817
Ring materials: gold, ruby and diamond
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

On the left is the monogram CVB, for ‘Catharina van Bora’, and on the right MLD, for ‘Martin Luther Doctor’. Round the rings runs the motto: ‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder’.

49 **Engagement or wedding pendant of Gabriel Bethlen and Catherine of Brandenburg**

Hungary or Transylvania, early seventeenth century
Gilt silver, diamond (?), ruby, emerald and enamel
Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

DIAMOND HEART

In this jewel, the diamond-encrusted heart is central. Other love symbols are an anchor, a pair of hands, white doves and love flames. Such pendants were popular with the nobility in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The jewel belongs to the so-called *Bethlen-násfas*, a series of jewels for the marriage of Gabriel (Gábor) Bethlen, prince of Transylvania, to Catherine of Brandenburg. The prince and his bride wore the golden version, while the six pages wore the gilt silver versions.

50 **Parrot pendant**

Late sixteenth century
Gold, enamel, diamond, ruby, emerald and pearls
Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

FOR LIFE

Pairs of parrots mate for life. Parrots therefore symbolise the indestructibility of married life. Such pendants were worn by married women on the chest, the sleeves or even the belt.

This example has an earscoop and a toothpick attached to it.

51 Heart-shaped jewels

Eighteenth and nineteenth century

Gold or silver with ornamental stones, including diamond
(or rhinestone)

Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

52 Commemorative and love medallions

Eighteenth and nineteenth century

Various precious metals, ivory, enamel and precious stones,
some with diamond or rhinestone

Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

Antwerp, Smidt van Gelder Collection

LOCKETS

Locketts like these are ideal for holding mementos of a loved one, or some token of affection. They were very popular in the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century.

They could contain miniature portraits, or a lock of hair of a partner or family member, or... secret symbols that only the loved ones understood.

**TURKMEN: GUARANTEED AND
ARRANGED SECURITY**

The Turkmen led a nomadic existence in Central Asia. Marriage was arranged, so romantic love was not a requirement. Jewellery was an investment: you could carry it around easily, and it maintained its economic value.

For a Turkmen woman, marriage meant first and foremost economic security. For her dowry, she received jewels – a tradition that is still going strong. These remained her property. The number and quality of jewels was important as a way of displaying her family's wealth, status and prestige.

Jewels also showed what stage of life she was in: married, with children, middle-aged... for each stage, new jewellery was added, making it possible to 'place' a woman in the right stage immediately. The fire-gilt silver jewels were usually decorated with glass stones, turquoise and carnelian. This red gem, which was so costly to the Turkmen, symbolised fertility. It was often replaced by the less expensive red glass stones.

Family ties were strong and children were very important: they ensured the survival of tribe and clan.

**53 Tekke woman with a motherhood
jewel (*Tumar*) and a bracelet (*Bilezik*)**

Iolatan, before 1890

Reproduction of the original photograph

Vienna, Museum für Völkerkunde

54 Karakalpak woman in festive costume and with motherhood jewel (*Tumar*)

1930-1940

Reproduction of the original photograph

Saint Petersburg, Russian Museum of Ethnography

55 *Dagdan* (necklace)

Central Asia, Tekke-Turkmen

First half of twentieth century

Fire-gilt silver, turquoise and glass stones or imitation carnelian

Antwerp, MAS

The two stylised eagles' heads have blue turquoise eyes. The necklace protects against the evil eye, and especially against infant mortality.

56 Turkmen bride and groom at their wedding.

Ashgabat, 2001

Reproduction of the original photograph

Staf Daems Collection

The bride is adorned with her dowry jewellery.

57 ***Tumar (chest jewel)***

Central Asia, Tekke-Turkmen
First half of twentieth century
Fire-gilt silver, glass stones (or imitation carnelian) and
cotton
Antwerp, MAS

This jewel has a sheath used as an amulet holder. Women with children wore it as a motherhood jewel. The red of the glass stones and the textile refer to fertility.

58 ***Egme (diadem)***

Central Asia, Tekke-Turkmen
First half of twentieth century
Fire-gilt silver and glass stone or imitation carnelian
Antwerp, MAS

This diadem was worn at the wedding and then until the birth of the first child.

59 ***Bilezik (bracelet, here in two sections)***

Central Asia (probably Northern Afghanistan),
Yomud-Turkmen
First half of twentieth century
Fire-gilt silver and glass stones or imitation carnelian
Antwerp, MAS

60 *Bilezik (bracelet, here in three sections)*

Central Asia, Tekke-Turkmen

First half of twentieth century

Fire-gilt silver and glass stones (or imitation carnelian)

Antwerp, MAS

Silver bracelets symbolised the commitment of husband and wife. Like all Turkmen jewels, they are fire-gilt: a mixture of gold and mercury was applied to the silver. When the jewel was then heated, the mercury evaporates and the gold was left behind.

61 *Asyk (back ornament)*

Central Asia, Yomud-Turkmen

First half of twentieth century

Silver with fire-gilt ornamental plates and carnelian

Antwerp, MAS

This heart-shaped ornamental plate was worn on the back by middle-aged women as an amulet. The shape does not refer to love, as in the West: it is a stylised arrowhead.

DESIRE FOR HIGHER THINGS

People have a desire to attribute meaning to their existence. In many cases, they want to be part of something that surpasses them. Spiritual paths and religions try to make this connection with the transcendental.

In Western Christian culture, material objects are very important for this. Catholic culture is particularly active in its use of objects. These manifest the inconceivable and mediate between humanity and higher things.

Objects of beauty reveal the sacred and bring humans close to God. Pure, durable diamonds increase the power of this spiritual desire and reverence for the divine.

Is it possible to grasp and show the things that transcend us?
Or do objects make the desire for them bearable?

B. Nada (Nothing of the cross) Black-Blue version

Thierry De Cordier

2011-2017

Oil on grounded industrial wall carpet

Courtesy of the Artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

A barely visible cross disappears in a black-blue plane. What remains is mere nothingness: Nada.

62 Children's jewel(?): Holy Spirit pendant

Seventeenth or eighteenth century

Silver, gold, ruby and diamond

Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History (see also p. 35)

CLOSER TO GOD

Religious jewellery is worn in an attempt to give tangible form to the desire for God. Various images and symbols are used: the cross as the definitive symbol of Christianity, but also Jesus' monogram (IHS) or the Holy Spirit as a dove.

Christ's crucifixion was God's sacrifice to save humanity. Reverence for this can be displayed with a jewel. Both members of religious orders and 'ordinary believers' therefore often wear a cross round their neck. Such crosses can be highly elaborate or very plain. Diamonds reinforce the symbolism of the cross: they stand for purity, steadfastness and the power of God.

Believers could also get closer to God by donating jewels to a church before or after their death. Such jewels were used to decorate monstrances, reliquaries and statues, especially of Mary. In this way the donors showed their reverence and devotion, and hoped to gain a place in heaven.

63 **The Jewel Book of duchess Anna of Bavaria**



Hans Mielich
Munich, 1552-1555
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek
Digital presentation of a selection of jewels

This *Kleinodienbuch* is a pictorial inventory of 71 jewels that the duchess owned, including numerous religious jewels like crosses. It offers a sample of sixteenth-century jewellery art.

**64 Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia,
Infanta of Spain (1566-1633)**

Studio of Frans II Pourbus
Southern Netherlands, ca. 1600
Oil on copper
s' Hertogenbosch, Het Noordbrabants Museum (loan of the
Amsterdam Rijksmuseum)

The pious Isabella ruled the Southern Netherlands with her husband Albert (1598-1621). She wears a cross pendant with large table cut diamonds. Her hair jewels are also striking with their pearls, rubies and table cut diamonds.

65 Chest cross

Southern Germany, ca. 1700
Gold and diamond
Regensburg, Fürstliche Schatzkammer Thurn und Taxis /
Munich, Zweigmuseum des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums

PURE DIAMOND

This cross pendant, a masterpiece, consists exclusively of diamonds, held together by gold links. It may have belonged to an abbess at Buchau abbey in Germany, but later became the possession of the renowned royal house of Thurn and Taxis.

**66 Top part of a jewel with the Holy Spirit
in the form of a dove**

Belgium(?), nineteenth century
Silver and rose cut diamonds
Antwerp, St Fredegand's Church

★ FLEMISH CROSSES

Cross pendants were common jewels in Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

The 'Flemish cross' is a typical nineteenth-century regional jewel that matches the style of the 'Flemish hearts'. The crosses are set with diamond chips in distinct droplets. At the top, they are often surmounted with a rosette or foliage. Sometimes the diamonds are rose cut, perhaps in an allusion to the rose, a popular Marian symbol.

67 **Flemish crosses**

Antwerp, nineteenth century

Silver and diamonds

Antwerp, St Fredegand's Church

68 **Flemish cross pendant with ornate top-piece**

Antwerp, 1825-1849

Gold and diamond

Antwerp, MAS

69 **Flemish cross pendant**

Antwerp, ca. 1800

Silver and diamond

Antwerp, MAS

70 Two cross pendants

Antwerp (?), nineteenth century
Gold and diamond
Antwerp, St Andrew's Church

71 Portrait of Carolina Francisca Dumoleijn

Jan Haak
Hulst, 1870
Reproduction of the original (oil on canvas)
Private collection

This modest lady is turned out in her best outfit: on her black frock she wears a Flemish cross set with diamonds.

72 Pendant with IHS monogram

Europe, ca. 1560
Gold, enamel and table cut diamond
London, Victoria and Albert Museum
(Given by Dame Joan Evans)

The letters in the monogram are the first three letters in the name 'Jesus' in Greek: iota (I), èta (H), sigma (S).

73 Sketchbook of Arnold Lulls: IHS pendant

Arnold Lulls
England, ca. 1585-1640
Pencil, pen and ink on parchment, in a calfskin album
London, Victoria and Albert Museum

REGAL OBJECTS

Dutch jeweller Arnold Lulls worked in London for King James I, making jewels for Queen Anne. His sketchbook shows designs reflecting the latest fashion, in which pearls and large rectangular diamonds are central.

On a drawing of a jeweller's lens, Lulls writes: 'Sent to me from Francois Pelgrim of Antwerp.' He thus had commercial contacts with Antwerp.

74 **Portrait of Christina Pijll**

Jacobus Willemsz. Delff II and Michiel Jansz. van Mierevelt
1640
Oil on panel
Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts

The kind of secular jewel that this lady is wearing – made of diamond, but not too ostentatious or precious – was often donated to a church.

75 **Rosette jewel with ornate top-piece**

Spain, early eighteenth century
Gold and diamond
London, Victoria and Albert Museum

Before this secular pendant with rose cut diamonds became part of the V&A collection, it was once given as a gift to Zaragoza Cathedral.

76 Pectoral pendant ‘*en tremblant*’

A. Aelewaters
Antwerp, 1855-1869
Silver, gold and diamond roses
Antwerp, St Andrew’s Church

QUIVERING LOVE MESSAGES

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, flowers were used on brooches as a kind of secret language, conveying messages of love.

These diamond roses are set in such a way that with every movement of the wearer, the flower would have ‘trembled’ and the diamonds glittered. Such jewels often then had a second lease of life, being used in a religious setting.

77 Three brooches

Antwerp(?), late eighteenth/nineteenth century
Gold/gilt silver and diamond
Antwerp, St Andrew’s Church

78 Flower-shaped brooch

Belgium
Gold, diamond and pearl
Antwerp, St Charles Borromeo’s Church

**79 Ensemble of necklace, diadem,
brooch and earrings for Our Lady
of Sorrows**

Antwerp

Diamond and other precious stones

Antwerp, St Charles Borromeo's Church

This jewellery set of Mary is made up of donations of what were originally secular jewels.

**80 Memorial Book of the Brotherhood of
Mary of Assistance and Victory**

Antwerp, 1810-1870

Paper

Antwerp, St Andrew's Church

GENEROUS BELIEVERS

This book reports on all activities of the Brotherhood. Donations from the faithful are also mentioned.

'Item 27: ... a diamond cross donated to the Brotherhood...

Item 44: ... two silver hearts donated (?) to the Brotherhood of Mary of Assistance... also a cockard with a diamond rim and a little cross of the same quality in the year 1817 on 15 August

Item 49: a diamond cross with gold chain... Donated to the Brotherhood... by the wife of D. Schonsetters... January 1815'

THE HOLY OF HOLIES

For Catholics, the dedicated or consecrated host is the core of the faith. This host, which is a piece of bread, is the body of Jesus Christ, the Son of the inconceivable and holy God.

Hosts which have been consecrated are carefully kept. During processions or other celebrations, they are placed in beautiful, richly decorated receptacles of (gilt) silver or gold featuring elaborate metalwork: monstrances. The purpose of this is to display reverence and respect. The word 'monstrance' comes from the Latin for 'to show'.

Around the host, in the heart of the monstrance, an abundance of diamonds has often been used in Antwerp. The brilliance of the monstrance serves one purpose alone: to showing as much reverence as possible for the Blessed Sacrament. It is as if the city of diamonds wanted to make extra use of the beauty and purity of 'its' stone for this purpose.

81 Solar monstrance with the conversion of St Paul

Johannes Petrus Antonius Verschuylen
Antwerp, 1839
Blank and gilt silver, diamond
Antwerp, St Paul's Church

This richly decorated monstrance, a masterpiece, is striking by reason of its size, the group of figures and the magnificent aureole around the *lunula*. Over 500 diamonds adorn the aureole, crown and cross.

82 Tower monstrance

Johannes Petrus Antonius Verschuylen
Antwerp, 1859
Silver and diamond
Antwerp, St George's Church

83 Cylindrical monstrance with St Paul, with lunula (*'little moon'*) alongside

Egide-Joseph Watlé
Belgium, 1869
Gilt silver and diamond
Antwerp, St Paul's Church

A *lunula* is a circular host receptacle. It is placed inside the monstrance. A border of diamonds surrounds this *lunula*.

84 Cylindrical monstrance with ivory angels and 'Flemish hearts', and with diamond monogram of Mary

Aloïs Haan
Antwerp, 1921
Gilt silver, diamond, ivory, pearls and various precious stones
Antwerp, St Paul's Church

As well as the diamonds, the carved ivory is also a striking feature of this monstrance. It is a unique piece.

85 Miniature 'monstrance' in black case

Eighteenth century
Chased silver and pearls
Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History

86 **Solar monstrance**

Johannes Petrus Antonius Verschuylen

Antwerp, 1831-1868

Gilt silver and diamond

Antwerp, St Charles Borromeo's Church

This monstrance is also richly decorated with diamonds: on the bouquet, on the crown-shaped canopy surmounted with a cross and globe, on the two scrolls on which angels kneel, on the *lunula* and elsewhere. When it is moved, the *en tremblant* earrings and brooch glitter even more.

DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD THROUGH MARY

The veneration of Mary is a striking feature of the Catholic Church. As Jesus' mother, she mediates between the faithful and the divine, and is therefore known as 'the mother of all the faithful'. Mary is also Antwerp's patron saint. The Cathedral of Our Lady is dedicated to her.

In 1899, Mary's status as the city's patroness gained an extra dimension. Pope Leo XIII gave permission for the statue of Mary in the Cathedral to be crowned. This is an exceptional honour granted to statues to which worshippers ascribe divine favours. The coronation took place on 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption, and it fell on the 500th anniversary of the Procession of Our Lady. Huge crowds turned out for the occasion.

The crown is one of Mary's attributes, besides her garments and sceptre. It symbolises the reward for her faith and makes her 'Queen of Heaven'. The key is that to the gates of heaven, which Mary opens to the faithful...

87 Processions



In a procession, the sacred is shown to the believers, enabling them to display their faith and veneration. Catholic processions of this kind used to be attended by huge crowds, and sometimes still are.

First come the saints, then the statue of Mary, the ‘Queen of the Saints’, and finally, Jesus Himself as the blessed host in a precious monstrance. Dignitaries and local associations follow the procession.

88 Poster announcing the coronation festivities of Our Lady

Design: Jos Ratinckx; printing: Bellemans Frères
Antwerp, 1899
Paper fastened to canvas
Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

The high point of the festivities in 1899 was the coronation on Tuesday 15 August, when the faithful presented the new Jubilee crown to Mary.

89 Copybook of outgoing correspondence of the Cathedral of Our Lady

Antwerp, 1899
Paper
Beveren, Antwerp-Beveren State Archives, Archive of the Fabric Committee of the Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

The cathedral’s fabric committee expected large numbers for the 500th procession of Mary. Mayor Van Rijswijck was asked to take care of

mounted police and the cleaning of the streets..

27 July 1899:

'Given the extraordinary ceremony with which the procession will be accompanied this year and the simultaneous occurrence of the Van Dijck festivities, it is certain that vast numbers will be in the city on the day. In our view, this would justify the accompanying of the procession by the said police corps, as has happened in extraordinary circumstances before.'

90 **Stake madonna**

Flemish, early 19th century

Painted wood, with iron fastening screws, and cotton undergarment

Antwerp, private collection

STAKE MADONNA

A stake madonna is a construction made of wooden slats around a stick. Only the head and hands of Mary and the Infant Jesus have been shown in detail. This simple, lightweight doll is clothed, often with beautiful robes and jewellery for festive occasions. They are a tribute to Mary. Pins on the head and hands represent the crown and sceptre.

91 *Drawing of the Jubilee Crown of Our Lady,
adorned with Precious Stones by the People of
Antwerp on the occasion of the Coronation of the
Venerable Statue of Our Lady granted in 1899*

Jos Junes
Antwerp, 1898
Paper
Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

This was the winning crown design in the contest organised for the purpose.

92 **Jubilee Crown of Our Lady**

Jos Junes
Antwerp, 1899
Gold, pearls, diamond, ruby, topaz, aquamarine, quartz and
citrine
Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

MARIAN CROWN OF THE PEOPLE OF ANTWERP

In 1898, the Antwerp silversmith Jos Junes won the contest for the creation of the jubilee crown for the statue of Mary. The crown was made of gold and gemstones in 300 jewels, all donated by the faithful of Antwerp. The sum of 30,000 francs was also collected.

The crown with its four sections and rich Marian symbolism sparkled with rubies, topazes and numerous diamonds – a fitting tribute to Antwerp's patron saint and the Diamond City itself.

93 Festive Sceptre of Our Lady

Antwerp, 1924

Silver, diamond and amethyst

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

ROYAL SCEPTRE

Mary's current sceptre was made on the 25th anniversary of the coronation of her statue. A sceptre lent added force to her 'royal' dignity. It was paid for with money collected during the Antwerp Lourdes pilgrimage of 1923.

Again, diamonds enhanced the lustre of the object, on the silver-chased lily stalks and roses and on Mary's monogram which tops the sceptre. At the bottom, two diamond hands flank the diamond castle of Antwerp.

94 Ornamental bib of Our Lady

Antwerp

1851-1900

Lille lace with eight jewels sewn on

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

The diamond brooches and the diamond necklace are probably donations from the faithful. The pearl necklace was donated by Mrs Lieven Gevaert.

95 Cross pendant of Our Lady

Antwerp, ca. 1899

Silver and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

This pectoral cross was hung from the statue of Our Lady on church feast days. Eminent ladies would wear a similar cross to display their Christian faith.

96 Heart of Our Lady

Antwerp, 1901 - 1950

Silver on blue enamelled plastic,
diamond and amethyst

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

This heart, with a crowned diamond Mary monogram, was affixed on church feast days to the metal attachment worn by the statue on such occasions.

97 Grape cluster and key of Our Lady

Antwerp, 1850-1900

Gold and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

Mary is the mother of Jesus. His sacrificial death is symbolised by a cluster of grapes which will be pressed in the wine press.

98 Crown of the Infant Jesus

Antwerp, 1899

Gold, emerald, pearls, ruby and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

Above the globe the Jesus monogram is displayed: IHS. The Latin inscription just above the headband says: 'To Thee, Jesus, be the glory, Thou who wast born of the Virgin'.

99 Sceptre of the Infant Jesus

Antwerp, 1899

Gold, azurite and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

The sceptre, a symbol of power for princes and deities, refers to Christ's future power to make good triumph over evil.

100 Orb of the Infant Jesus

Antwerp, 1828

Gold and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

The orb, a sphere with a cross above it, symbolises the authority of Jesus over the world He saved.

101 Heart of the Infant Jesus

Antwerp, 1890-1910

Enamel and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

The heart shows the IHS monogram, the first three letters in the Greek for 'Jesus', and is set with diamonds. Jesus' sacred heart is a symbol of His mercy and all-encompassing love for mankind.

102 Ornamental bib with pendant of the Infant Jesus

Antwerp, 1841-1860

Malines lace, silver and diamond

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady of Praise

103 Postcard of the statue of Mary in festive outfit for the Feast of the Assumption

Antwerp, Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady
of Praise

Once a year, the patron saint of Antwerp and the cathedral is dressed in her finest outfit. This happens on the feast of Mary, 15 August.

**104 Three procession cushions decorated with
15 ‘Flemish hearts’ and other jewels**

Flemish, ca. 1950

Velvet, gold, silver, diamond and other precious stones

Reet, St Mary Magdalene’s Church

The cushions show a more ‘popular’ form of Marian devotion. They are decorated with donations which have been worked into the embroidered letters: ‘Flemish hearts’, but also pocket watches and necklaces. Hearts and other diamond jewels were often donated for the decoration of statues of Mary.

**105 Document: ‘all my gold jewels and
diamonds... for the decoration of
the statue of Our Lady’**

Antwerp, 1939

Antwerp, St Charles Borromeo’s Church

In 1939, Mayor Camille Huysmans gave permission for the sale of the jewellery donated by Maria Van den Eynden to St Charles Borromeo’s Church in 1920. The proceeds were to be used to decorate the statue of Mary.

**106 Deed of gift: ‘*un coeur en diamant avec
chaine en or*’**

Antwerp, 28 August 1858

Antwerp, St Charles Borromeo’s Church

The municipal council accepts the donation by Maria Thérèse Motthée of a diamond heart with gold chain to St Charles Borromeo’s Church.
Signed: the mayor.

BUDDHISM: THE ABSENCE OF DESIRE

The striving for detachment from material matters – over the course of many lives – characterises the great Indian spiritual movements.

Diamonds and other precious stones have traditionally been an asset of cultural value and a sign of wealth in India. The influence of gemstones on their wearers' energy is also highly appreciated.

Above all, diamond – a hard and pure mineral – has an important symbolic significance in Buddhism because of its properties: it stands for clear insight into pure reality.

The goal of all Indian religions is to liberate oneself from the endless cycle of rebirths full of suffering. For the Buddha, desire is the cause of all suffering. Those who realise that everything is constantly changing and that only 'emptiness' exists cease to rely on material things and achieve enlightenment. Their spirit, free from desire, attains nirvana, emptiness.

107 The paradise of Amitabha

Autonomous Region of Tibet, China, nineteenth century
Scroll painting on canvas (thangka), in brocade border
Antwerp, MAS

BLISS

The intermediate paradise of Sukhavati is a blissful country – or mental state – with brilliant light and full of fine scents, flowers, sweet rivers, trees on which gems grow... People dwell there just before they attain Buddhahood (enlightenment) and nirvana (release).

This western paradise, also known as the 'Pure Land', is ruled by Amitabha, the Buddha of infinite light. He embodies the transformation of desire into deep wisdom and compassion.

108 **Large Vajra**

Autonomous Region of Tibet, China, twentieth century
Bronze
Private collection of Monique Francken

A *vajra* can sometimes be of considerable size in temples, as this example shows.

109 **Vaishravana, also called Jambhala**

Front: statue in copper alloy and turquoise
Back: scroll painting on canvas (*thangka*), in brocade frame
Tibet Autonomous Region, China, eighteenth century
Antwerp, MAS

GOD OF WEALTH AND OPULENCE

Under his left arm, Vaishravana holds a mongoose. When he pushes on the rodent, it spits out jewels. In his right hand he holds a fruit and his right foot rests on a shell and a dish of gems, symbols of fertility and abundance.

Vaishravana rules over the *Yakshas*, nature spirits who guard the treasures of the earth. Gold, silver and gems are hard to gain without their help.

110 **Diamond Sutra**

Handwritten text in Chinese by Zhang Jizhi, Song Dynasty
1253
Ink on paper
Ghent, Ghent University – donation from National Museum
Taiwan to Ghent University

PERFECTION OF INSIGHT

The moral path Buddhists must take to reach higher consciousness is explained in texts and manuals. These teachings of the Buddha are called *sutras*. The *Diamond Sutra* (first century AD) is one of the most famous.

The subject is the 'Perfection of Insight', the most important of the six perfections that a person must achieve to reach Buddhahood. Insight makes it clear that all perceptible phenomena are merely illusions. Only the void or emptiness exists.

III Contemporary Diamond Sutra



2016
Paper

The oldest translation of the Diamond Sutra is in Chinese (868). As Buddhism spread, the work was often translated, right up to today. Feel free to browse this copy.

II2 Vajra and bell

Nepal, twentieth century
Bronze
Private collection of Chris De Lauwer

WISDOM LEADS TO NIRVANA

A *vajra*, Sanskrit for 'diamond', is a ritual sceptre. It is used during meditation in order to come closer to enlightenment. It symbolises cutting through obstacles, especially ignorance.

A vajra is often used together with a hand-bell. The first of these symbolises the path or method, and the second the goal one wishes to achieve: the wisdom that leads to nirvana.

Origin: Kimberley Mine, Northern Cape Province,
South Africa

Brussels, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences

DIAMOND: MERE CARBON

Diamond is one of the many minerals in the earth's crust. Some diamonds are almost as old as the earth itself – many millions of years older than mankind.

Diamond was formed around 4.6 billion to 542 million years ago. It consists of carbon. This is a material that occurs in many compounds in nature – even humans are 23% carbon. In its pure form, however, carbon can also exist as diamond.

To arrive at this crystallised form, the right conditions were needed: millions of years of extremely high temperatures and pressure, at least 150 kilometres below the earth's surface. Volcanic eruptions pushed the diamond up towards that surface. Diamond therefore occurs in a volcanic rock, kimberlite. (However, not all kimberlite contains diamond.)

Diamond is the hardest of all substances in nature. Its transparency and high refractive index cause incoming light to be reflected with brilliance.

DESIRE FOR STATUS

Many people yearn to show where they stand on the economic and social ladder. They want to prove how successful they are. In many cases they do this with outward signs. Those vary depending on the era and the environment.

In Western culture, success is often displayed materialistically. People acquire, own, wear or display objects that radiate prestige. They are often made from precious materials such as diamonds. Men and especially women adorn themselves according to the prevailing fashion.

Royal and noble role models of yesteryear have been replaced with new role models from popular culture and the sports world. The goal remains the same: 'See me', 'Admire me'.

Ostentation is temporary, just like human existence itself. Does a desire for status result in beauty and/or ways to keep up appearances?

C C.B.II

Subodh Gupta

2009

Stainless steel, stainless steel utensils, neon, lightbox,
fibreglass

Unique

Private Collection Switzerland

A medaillon of shining metal reveals itself as a contemporary memento mori. In light of our mortality, vanity and lustre find another meaning.

II4 *Memento mori* ring with skull

European, 17th century

Diamond, gold and enamel

Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

(see also p. 16)

II5 Ornate display cabinet

Antwerp, seventeenth century
Wood inlaid with ivory, ebony and turtle
Antwerp, MAS

STORAGE CABINET AND ORNATE PIECE OF FURNITURE

An art cabinet was used for storing precious objects, curiosities from nature and objet d'art: coins and cameos, fossilized shells, corals, stocks and bonds, gemstones such as diamonds, etc. Luxurious models were also ornate pieces of furniture and status symbols. This cabinet could have been in Rubens' home.

This furniture was often ingenious, with lots of drawers and (hidden) compartments. A central mirror space enabled one to see objects from all sides. Antwerp was the preeminent, international production centre for art cabinets in the 17th century.

What was kept in an ornate display cabinet:

II6 Fossilized sea urchin

Mesozoic
Antwerp, MAS

Naturalia, like this sea urchin, are elementary components of special plants and animals: corals, stones, shells, etc.

II7 Fossilized piece of coral

Antwerp, MAS

118 Piece of raw malachite

Antwerp, MAS

119 Roman coins

The art cabinet was also a way for the owner to demonstrate his knowledge of classical antiquity. Roman coins fell under this category.

MINIATURE MASTERPIECES

Cameos are precious or semiprecious stones or seashells carved in relief. The background is cut away. An intaglio, by contrast, has an imaged carved into the smooth surface of a semiprecious stone or mineral.

The techniques date back to antiquity. They became collector's items during the Renaissance. These items with Greek-Roman motifs date back to the 19th century.

120 Cameos

121 Intaglios

122 Two spoons

Late-16th or 17th century
Silver and cowry (Pacific Ocean)
Antwerp, MAS

Spoons like these were luxury items. They were rarely taken out of the art cabinet, except perhaps for ingesting medicine or eating caviar and fruits de mer.

123 Queen conch

Antwerp, MAS

124 Cypraeidae

Antwerp, MAS

125 ‘Herkimer diamonds’

These are colourless quartz stones whose clarity and facets resemble real diamonds.

**126 The testament of
Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)**

27 May 1640

Paper reproduction of the original testament

Lennik, Gaasbeek Castle (Ad 37)

GOLD CHAINS, PEARLS AND DIAMONDS

Important papers, like this testament, were kept in a cabinet. Rubens made it a few days before his death. The diamonds and other jewels that he acquired before and during the marriage with his second wife, Helena Fourment, were described in detail:

‘...Except for the jewellery given to her before the marriage, namely two gold necklaces with diamonds, a gold necklace in the Indian tradition consisting of thirteen strands, and a Musques necklace decorated with gold, another gold necklace with black and white enamel. Three strands of pearls, a ring with diamonds that was given as payment of a fine, a golden anchor with

diamonds, a gold head chain with diamonds, a pair of earrings with diamonds, a ring set with a large diamond that came from England. ...'

**127 Portrait of Helena Fourment
(1614-1673) with breast pendant**

Peter Paul Rubens
Antwerp, 1630-1640
Oil on canvas
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

RUBENS' WIFE

Helena Fourment, Rubens' second wife, is portrayed with a long, gold chain set with table cut diamonds. It also contains a large rosette brooch with table cut diamonds. In her hair and around her sleeves Helena wears jewellery adorned with diamonds.

Together with her lavish clothing, the jewellery reveals her status and that of her husband. The marriage contract from 1630 between Helena and the painter also refers to 'jewellery and jewels'.

128 Diamond breast pendant

Transylvania or the Low Countries, 1620-1640
Gold, diamond and enamel
Budapest, Hungarian National Museum

SHOWPIECE

This breast ornament strongly resembles the pendant on the portrait of Helena Fourment. It dates from the same period. The style was popular at that time in European jewellery designs. It was a real showpiece due to the many, large, table cut diamonds. A rich painter-diplomat like Rubens used it to demonstrate his status.

This rosette shaped brooch consists of two circles divided into six petals. They are set with diamonds and have a pyramid-shaped diamond in the centre. The pendants contain smaller diamonds.

FLAUNTING WITH DIAMONDS FOR 500 YEARS

For a long time, diamonds were a luxury for the happy few. In time, the stone became attainable for a larger public. The intended effects remain the same: the pleasure of dazzling beauty and proving one's status.

Diamonds were only found in India until the beginning of the 18th century. The expensive stones were usually set in jewellery and the grinding techniques improved constantly. Monarchs and noblemen also displayed diamonds and other valuable objects in beautiful cabinets.

New mines were discovered later, first in Brazil and in time all over the world. As a result, diamonds became attainable for a larger group of citizens. New role models arose, similar to film and pop stars in our era. Fashion distinctions were only superficial.

The reason for wearing diamonds remains the same. Rubens' wife Helena Fourment, Empress Sissi, Marilyn Monroe, Kim Kardashian and Lil Wayne all share the same longing: 'Admire me, I have it made.'

**129 Miniature portrait of a lady
wearing a diamond brooch**

Low Countries or Spain, seventeenth century
Oil painting on copper
Brussels, Royal Museums for Art and History

MINIATURE PORTRAIT

Miniature portraits of ladies, gentlemen or children were meant for private use. They were often given as gifts. Due to their size, they fit in a waistcoat pocket or small handbag.

This wealthy woman's sizeable brooch features a central point cut diamond surrounded by several table cut diamonds.

130 Mary Tudor

Hans Ewouts
Antwerp-London, 1574
Oil on panel
Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts

ROYAL SPLENDOUR

Mary Tudor, daughter of King Henry VIII of England and wife of King Philip II of Spain, is portrayed with this lavish jewellery on several portraits.

A small and a larger rosette on the breast ornament both contain a table cut diamond. The gold girdle is decorated with pearls and table cut diamonds, just like the bracelets on the sleeves. She wears a gold ring with table cut diamonds on both hands; on the right she also wears a ruby.

131 Portrait of a woman

Conrad Faber
sixteenth century
Reproduction of the original (oil on panel)
Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts

SPLENDID JEWELLERY

This high-class, German woman wears impressive jewellery on her expensive black velvet dress: a gold collar with pearls and precious niello (metal marquetry); a heavy gold chain that includes a brooch with diamonds, a ruby and pearls; an even larger gold chain with smaller links and two coins.

She wears no less than 12 gold rings on her fingers; four of them have point cut diamonds.

132 Ring with point cut diamond

Circa 1500
Gold and diamond
Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

An unpolished point diamond was thought to protect the wearer.

133 Ring with point cut diamond

sixteenth century
Gold and diamond
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Point diamonds are unpolished stones that retain their natural pyramidal or octahedron shape. People thought this enabled them to retain their special, protective powers.

134 Sketch book of jewel designs

Thomas Cletcher (II)

1644-1668

Reproduction of the original (aquarelle and ink on paper)

Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

SOLD!

Thomas Cletcher was a jeweller, goldsmith and silversmith from The Hague. In this sketchbook he drew diamonds and pearls, not necessarily for their beauty but for their commercial value. He mentions the carat and market value, whose property they were and who purchased them.

Next to the first diamond it says: 'The first diamond, 33.5 carat, belonged to Marie de Medici and was sold to His Royal Highness in 1644 for 80,000 guilders, which is very cheap.'

135 Pair of earrings

Low Countries, 1680-1700

Diamond set in silver, hessonite garnets in gold

London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Donated by Dame Joan Evans)

136 Portrait of Margareta Riccen

Jan Mytens

The Hague, 1658

Oil on canvas

Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh

Margareta poses with a bow-shaped headpiece set with table cut diamonds. She wears a diamond ring on her left hand.

137 **Wedding fan in Louis XV style**

French or English, 1775-1780

Paper, gold, diamond, glass, mother-of-pearl, wood and textile

Antwerp, Smidt van Gelder Collection

This wedding fan shows portraits of the newlyweds on the outer slats. The pivot contains a diamond.

138 **Chatelaine with pocket watch**

Julien Le Roy

Paris, circa 1750

Gold, diamond, jasper and enamel

Brussels, Royal Museums for Art and History

On this lavishly decorated chain hangs the preeminent 18th-century status symbol: a pocket watch. The key and stamp mounts and the frame around the enamel disks and the timepiece are decorated with rose cut diamonds.

139 *Vorsteliicke Warande der Dieren waer in de zeden-rijcke philosophie, poëtisch, morael, en historiael, vermakelijck en treffelijck wort voorgesteld, 1617 (Royal Garden of the Animals)*

Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679), Marcus Gheeraerts (illustrations)

Amsterdam, 1682

Paper, bound

Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus

THE ROOSTER AND THE DIAMOND

In this book, Joost van den Vondel gives animals human qualities in order to criticise human behaviour. When a rooster is looking for food on a

rubbish heap but finds a diamond, he sighs: what good is such a beautiful jewel to me? What good is ostentation when I am hungry?
In other words: pomp and circumstance are useless if one lacks what's essential.

★ BROOCHES

Brooches were pinned on a jacket or dress. They came in different shapes, such as flowering sprigs or bows. They were very popular in the 19th century.

Sprig brooches with small, brilliant cut diamonds were often mounted *en tremblant* (attached to a trembler) to create movement when worn. This reinforces the brilliance of brilliant cut diamonds.

140 **Bow brooch and sprig brooch**

nineteenth century
Gold, silver and diamond
Antwerp, Smidt van Gelder Collection

The symbolism of bows, union, was very popular in the 19th century. Diamonds reinforce that symbolism: they stand for durability.

141 **Aigrette shaped like a flowering sprig with a bow, studded with diamonds**

nineteenth century
Silver, gold and diamond
Antwerp, Smidt van Gelder Collection

**142 Sprig brooch shaped like a foliage sprig
with an *en tremblant* flower in the centre**

nineteenth century

Silver, gold and diamond

Antwerp, Smidt van Gelder Collection

★ REGIONAL JEWELLERY

Regional jewellery are connected to a region or community. Their style and shape is in keeping with local attire. The materials are less precious: small diamonds and diamond slivers were often used. But the jewellery is very 'valuable' as a status symbol in the local community.

**143 Necklace with flower,
star and rosette motifs**

Belgium, nineteenth century

Silver, diamond and imitation diamond

Antwerp, MAS

This is an assembly of 13 earrings. The rosette consists of four earrings.

144 Three-part pendant and earrings

Belgium, 1832-1869

Gold and diamond (slivers)

Antwerp, MAS

I45 Three-part pendant

Belgium, 1832-1869
Gold, silver and diamond
Antwerp, MAS

This Flemish regional jewel is in ajour style (with open spaces in the worked metal). It has flower motifs and is studded with diamond slivers.

I46 Diamond earrings

nineteenth century
Silver and diamond ('Antwerp' rose cut)
Antwerp, St Fredegand Church

I47 Necklace with five pendants

Cornelius Betrams
1832-1869
Gold, silver, diamond and enamel
Antwerp, Smidt van Gelder Collection

148 **Portrait of Empress Elisabeth (Sissi), with diamond stars in her hair**

Anton Mag. Sever, after the original portrait by Franz Xavier Winterhalter from 1865

2000

Reproduction of the original (oil on canvas)

Vienna, Museen des Mobiliendepots/Imperial Furniture Collection

SISSI

Franz Joseph I of Austria ordered a famous portrait of his wife, Empress Elisabeth (1837-1898), in 1865. He ordered it from the preeminent portraitist of his era. Elisabeth is better known as Sissi.

Sissi wears diamond stars in her beautifully styled hair. She purchased 27 of them from the famous Viennese jeweller Alexander Emmanuel Köchert. Such stars were very popular in 19th-century royal milieus, also as brooches or on a tiara.

149 **Large portraits, small jewels**



150 **Fragment from the movie *Sissi***



1955

Director: Ernst Marischka

Princess Elisabeth of Bavaria marries her cousin, Franz Joseph I of Austria, in 1854. She is 16 and he is 24. The very well-known film deals with their engagement. Romy Schneider plays the part of Sissi who shines wearing her diamond stars.

151 Diamond stars

France (?), 1860
Gold, silver and rose cut diamonds
Antwerp, private collection

152 Star brooch

Cartier Paris, 1889
Gold, silver, round old and rose cut diamonds
Cartier Collection

**153 Portrait of Queen Elisabeth
of Belgium (1876-1965)**

Alban
Belgium, 1920-1930
Reproduction of an original photo
Brussels, Archives of the Royal Palace

DIAMOND TIARA

Elisabeth of Bavaria, niece and namesake of Empress Elisabeth (Sissi) of Austria, became the Queen of Belgium in 1909. That status required suitable jewellery. She purchased diamond jewellery from Cartier, called by Edward VII 'jeweller of kings, king of jewellers'. The Maison Cartier was awarded an official warrant as purveyor to the Royal Household in 1919.

This diamond tiara was created by Cartier. Alban, the photographer, portrayed Elisabeth with it. The very well-known photo was also distributed as a postcard. She posed wearing the latest fashions of the roaring twenties.

**154 Scroll tiara of Elisabeth,
Queen of the Belgians (1876-1965)**

Cartier Paris, 1910

Platinum, one cushion-shaped diamond, round old-cut diamonds

Cartier Collection

ROYAL TIARA

This tiara contains 1282 diamonds. The design evokes acanthus leaves.

The queen wore the tiara as a headband, as fashion required. This family heirloom, of royal origin, is a highlight in the Cartier Collection.

155 Diamond Divas



Zsa Zsa Gábor, actress (1917-2016)

Marilyn Monroe, actress (1926-1962)

Audrey Hepburn, actress (1929-1993)

Elisabeth Taylor, actress (1932-2011)

Madonna, singer (b. 1958)

Victoria Beckham, singer and fashion designer (b. 1974)

Kim Kardashian, TV and society personality (b. 1980)

Katy Perry, singer and actress (b. 1984)

Miley Cyrus, actress and singer (b. 1992)

Gigi Hadid, model and TV personality (b. 1995)

HIPHOP

Diamonds are mined almost everywhere these days, but they continue to stir the imagination. The stone is losing ground in Europe, especially amongst young people who have different tastes and styles than their parents did. North America and Eastern Asia are now the most important markets.

Diamonds, real or fake, are also a status symbol in parts of the rap and hip hop scene and in the martial arts world.

156 **Bling Bling Boys**



Floyd Mayweather, boxer (b. 1977)

Conor McGregor, mixed martial artist (b. 1988)

Cristiano Ronaldo, footballer (b. 1985)

Salman Khan, Indian film actor and producer (b. 1965)

Michael Jackson, singer (1958-2009)

Snoop Dogg, rapper (b. 1971)

Pharrell Williams, singer and musician (b. 1973)

2 Chainz, rapper (b. 1977)

Lil Wayne, rapper (b. 1982)

T-Pain, producer and singer (b. 1985)

157 **‘Diamond’ dental jewellery**

GRILLZ

Grillz and other dental jewellery make the teeth sparkle and shine. Diamond stones – or crystal imitations – are attached to the teeth. Some people, like the rapper Kanye West, have their teeth replaced with diamond encrusted copies.

Grillz are the latest manifestation of the ancient brilliance and status that is connected to diamonds.

158 **Luxury game**

How far do people go in showing off how rich and successful they are? Estimate the value of these diamond items and arrange them from most expensive to least expensive.

159 **Diamond Boots**

A.F. Vandevorst in collaboration with Diarough/
Uni-Design,
AWDC and the Flanders Fashion Institute
Antwerp, 2013
Calfskin and diamond
Antwerp, Diarough NV/Uni-Design

The Antwerp-based designer duo A.F. Vandevorst designed the most expensive boots in the world in 2013. They are bejewelled with 38,883 natural diamonds and 4753 grams of gold. The ankle boots were presented in Hong Kong during the Business of Design Week in December 2013.

The project required 30,000 man hours in all. The craftsmanship is unsurpassed, the luxury is excessive.

POTLATCH, STATUS BY GIVING GIFTS

A special way to acquire prestige is the potlatch, a tradition of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of America. Potlatch means ‘to give away’ or ‘a gift’ in Chinook.

At the potlatch you give away possessions. The more you give, the greater your prestige rises. The members of a community collect and create both precious and simple objects. During the ceremony, which sometimes lasted for days, they gave these items to a neighbouring group.

Initially, the potlatch was modest. The goal was redistribution within a community. With the arrival of the fur trade, the potlatch became grander. Competing chiefs outdid each other and even destroyed valuable gifts. That led to a ban in 1884. The white American rulers erroneously saw it as a wasteful feast. The ban was repealed in 1951.

There are many reasons for a potlatch: a birth, initiation, marriage, funeral, etc. The ultimate goal remains to stand out. Prestigious gifts included crafted serving spoons, beautiful blankets and ornamental coppers.

160 **Potlatch ceremony**

Carl Gunther

Nuxalk (Bella Coola), British Columbia (Canada), 1885

Reproduction of the original photo print

Victoria, Royal BC Museum

The participants are wrapped in Chilkat blankets. Some wear masks with mythical animal representations and cedar bark neck rings. Those status symbols refer to membership in ‘secret’ societies.

161 Nakoaktok chief with copper plate

Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952)
British Columbia (Canada), 1914
Reproduction of the original photo print
Washington, Library of Congress

PRESTIGIOUS COPPER

Hakalahl, a Nakoaktok chief of the Kwakiutl tribe, carries a copper plate called a *Wanistakila*. *Wanistakila* means ‘takes everything out of the house’ - a reference to its value. Shield-shaped coppers with family crest symbols were a particularly prestigious gift at the potlatch. A copper plate could be sold or exchanged for wool Chilkat blankets, up to 9000 of them.

Before the arrival of Europeans, copper was rare and this made it the most important metal on the Pacific Northwest Coast of America.

162 Figure with mask and Chilkat blanket

Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952)
British Columbia (Canada), 1914
Reproduction of the original photo print
Washington, Library of Congress

A female figure poses with a ritual mask and with a precious Chilkat blanket.

163 **Large potlatch ladle**

Tlingit culture

British Columbia (Canada), 1870-1910

Wood

Tervuren, Royal Museum for Central Africa

Banquets with copious amounts of food were offered during a potlatch. The larger the bowls and ladles in which food and drink were served, the greater the prestige. It was a way to show off the giver's wealth.

164 **Chilkat blanket**

Tlingit culture

British Columbia (Canada), 1860

Mountain goat wool, cedar bark and root

Brussels, Royal Museums for Art and History

VALUABLE BLANKETS

Chilkat blankets are valuable woollen blankets. The name refers to the Chilkat tribe, which lived along a river of the same name. It took more than a year to weave a blanket. The blankets were traded or given as gifts and worn during celebrations like the potlatch.

The black-yellow motifs are often abstract and partial representations of animals. In this example it's a bear. The men designed them and women wove them. Weaving these blankets is gaining popularity once again.

165 **Speaker's mask**

Calvin Hunt

Kwakiutl culture

British Columbia (Canada)

1999

Cedar wood, copper, horsehair and acrylic paint

Antwerp, MAS

Some heads of family have the right to wear a 'speaker's mask' when they give away or receive a copper plate. The ritual involved long speeches.

DESIRE FOR POWER

Power, influence, leadership. They go hand in hand with ostentation: striking objects like crowns and sceptres with great symbolic value, ritual ceremonies, etc. That phenomenon appears to be timeless and universal. Rulers hand out symbols and signs to others thereby creating a network of allies.

Precious and rare materials reinforce the aura of those in power. Diamonds were used profusely to this end. People attributed special forces and powers to this hardest material in the world: invincibility, strength, inflexibility.

Power is always temporary. After a while, the objects associated with power become a dazzling reminder of the power that they once symbolised.

D Fallen Dictator

Philip Aguirre y Otegui
Antwerp, 2005
Epoxy
Antwerp, private collection

A fallen statue lies broken on the ground. It is all that's left of a fallen ruler, stripped of any tangible or recognisable signs of power.

166 Miniature badge of the Knight's Cross of the Order of Leopold (civilian)

P. De Greef
1928
Diamond and enamel
Private collection (see also p. 90)

DIAMOND CROWNS: INVINCIBLE POWER?

Regalia, the symbols of kings, come in all sizes and weights. Usually, there is a headpiece such as a crown, a staff or a sceptre, and an orb representing the world.

Above all, it is the crown that symbolises power. Its wearer towers over his or her fellow-humans. The coronation of a new sovereign is therefore an important moment. You instantly know who is the leader from the crown.

Diamonds have since long been used as a symbol of power. The word comes from the Ancient Greek *adamas*, meaning ‘hard, unbreakable, indomitable’. As far back as the fifteenth century, princes wore rings with pointed, uncut diamonds. They were believed to provide protection, and had an aura of power. Diamonds later also became an essential element of the regalia. They became the ‘monarchs’ stones’.

★ RUSSIA: DIAMOND POWER

In 1762, Catherine II deposed her husband, Tsar Peter III. She ordered her court jeweller to dismantle the old jewels from the treasury, and to incorporate their diamonds and gems into her new crown as soon as possible.

‘... Despite my efforts to keep the crown as light as possible, it eventually weighed 2.5 kilos. I fitted the crown... and Catherine said she was happy with it.’

167 **State portrait of Tsarina Catherine II before a mirror**

Vigilius Eriksen

Russia, ca. 1763

Reproduction of the original work (oil on canvas)

Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

Catherine the Great points with determination at her regalia: the imperial crown, sceptre and orb. You can also see them in the mirror, which

doubles the effect.

Her blue sash is that of the most important Russian order: the Order of St Andrew.

168 **The Great Imperial Crown of the Russian Empire**

Original crown (not exhibited):

Jérémie Pauzié, Georg Friedrich Eckart

Saint Petersburg, 1762

Gold, silver, diamonds, pearls and spinel (a ruby-like gem)

1.993 kg

Moscow, Diamond Fund of the Russian Federation

Diamond replica, created to mark the 250th anniversary of the coronation of Tsarina Catherine (exhibited):

Smolensk, 2012

Gold, diamond, pearls and rubellite (red tourmaline)

2.169 kg

Smolensk, KRISTALL Production Corporation

PRECIOUS COPY

This is a replica of the Great Imperial Crown; the real crown may never leave Russia. All Romanov tsars after Catherine wore it. The copy contains more than twice as many diamonds as the original: 11,352.

However, the number of carats is less than half: 1,180.

The laurel and oak leaves in which diamonds are incorporated are symbols of power. The crown is topped with a diamond cross, because the power of God stands above secular power.

169 **Try on the Imperial Crown!**



Does it fit? Do you find it heavy?

**170 The Great Imperial Crown of Russia
on a pedestal with a velvet cushion**

A.A. Parland (1842-1919)

Russia, 1882

Reproduction of the original (gouache on paper)

Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

**★ GREAT-BRITAIN: THE HOLDER OF THE
STONE POSSESSES POWER**

British crowns may not leave the country. With their diamonds and other gems, they are extremely precious, and their value as a symbol of power is great. The crowns are kept in the Tower of London. They are still used – at coronations and at the opening of the parliamentary year – and new rulers adapt them to their taste.

Among the diamonds, two large ones are particularly impressive: the Indian Koh-i-Noor and the South African Cullinan. Both countries were British colonies.

**171 Coronation portrait of Queen Elizabeth II
in the Throne Room in Buckingham Palace**

Photograph taken after her coronation at Westminster Abbey
on 2 June 1953

Cecil Beaton

London, Royal Collection Trust

The new queen wears and carries the regalia: *the Imperial State Crown* with the Cullinan II (at the bottom, in the headband), the *Sovereign's Sceptre with Cross*, including the Cullinan I or Great Star of Africa, and the orb.

172

Imperial State Crown of Great Britain

Original crown (not exhibited):

England, 1937 (most recent modification)

Gold, silver, platinum, diamond (including the Cullinan II), pearls, sapphire, emerald, ruby, velvet and ermine

1.090 kg

London, Royal Collection Trust

Sovereign's Sceptre with the Cross

Original sceptre (not exhibited):

Robert Viner

England, 1661

Gold, diamond (including the Cullinan I: Great Star of Africa), emerald, ruby, sapphire, spinel, amethyst and enamel

1.170 kg

London, Royal Collection Trust

Replicas of the Imperial State Crown of Great Britain and the Sovereign's Sceptre with the cross (exhibited):

Made for De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd., 1972

Silver-plated brass and imitation gems

Antwerp, DIVA – Antwerp Home of Diamonds

173



THE KOH-I-NOOR: *The Jewel in the Crown 1* (India)

The Koh-i-Noor or 'Mountain of Light' is a legendary gem. This Indian diamond is already documented in the early fourteenth century. It is said to have been stolen from the Hindu god Krishna, and found its way into the British Crown Jewels in 1849, following the signing of a peace treaty with the Sikhs. As war booty, in fact.

After being re-cut, it was incorporated into a brooch for Queen Victoria, and then mounted in the Queen Mother's crown. It is the third largest diamond in the crown jewels, after the Cullinan I and II.

THE CULLINAN: *THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN 2* (AFRICA)

On 25 January 1905, one of the largest rough diamonds ever was found in Pretoria, South Africa. It was named after the mine's owner, Thomas Cullinan, and was given as a birthday present to King Edward VII of England from Transvaal, a British colony.

The king had the Cullinan split and cut in Amsterdam, resulting in nine major stones (Cullinan I-IX), 96 small brilliants and a further nine carats of unpolished fragments. These are divided among a number of British crown jewels.

MILITARY AND OTHER ORDERS: NETWORKS OF POWER

Orders are organisations whose elected members have some common purpose such as serving a ruler or defending a country. Such orders have evolved significantly.

Medieval chivalric orders such as the Order of Malta were often both religious and military in character. They defended the Holy Land. Later chivalric orders such as the Order of the Golden Fleece, originated from royal houses. They played a diplomatic and political role in consolidating and extending the ruler's power. Their aristocratic members swore an oath of loyalty to the prince.

Membership of an order was displayed by means of rich clothing and collars, 'the trappings of power'. Later on, these were replaced by jewels on ribbons. The crosses and stars with diamonds and other precious stones were often made by important jewellers and silversmiths. Gradually, the symbols become smaller and less cumbersome. Nowadays, they are worn in the form of an unobtrusive little rosette or ribbon.

Many ancient orders still exist as ceremonial brotherhoods or 'orders of merit' for citizens who have done their country or community some special service.

★ THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

The Order of the Golden Fleece was established in Bruges in 1430 by the Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy. Its purpose was to defend Christianity and strengthen ties with the elite. Members swore an oath of loyalty to the ruler and advised him. Philippe reinforced his power in this way.

The name refers to a golden ram's fleece from Greek mythology – hence the gold pendant on the chain. The order still exists as a means of honouring people for their merits. The Belgian King, Philip, is a member of the Spanish branch of the order.

174 **Portrait of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy**

Rogier van der Weyden

Fifteenth century

Oil on panel

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Philip wears the order's collar with the ram's fleece; in his time it probably did not yet include a diamond. Around his neck, however, he carries a diamond cross, decorated with pearls.

175 **Badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece, worn by the Prince of Thurn and Taxis**

Southern Germany, third quarter of eighteenth century

Gold and diamond

Regensburg, Fürstliche Schatzkammer Thurn und Taxis /
Munich, Zweigmuseum des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums

A DIAMOND RAM

The collar of the Golden Fleece reverts to the Order after the death of a member. The pendant is a private possession. The wearer may therefore personalise it, although the ram must be depicted properly... and without

precious stones.

Since the eighteenth century, royal members of the order have been granted an exception to this last rule. The princes of Thurn and Taxis have taken full advantage of this. This richly decorated version contains two yellow diamonds and more than 200 minor ones, polished in brilliant form. It illustrates the extraordinary rank of the bearer. It is a masterpiece.

176 Design for the badge of the Order of Golden Fleece for Louis XV

France, ca. 1749

Reproduction of the original (watercolour on paper)
Geneva, Herbert Horovitz Collection

THE VANISHED FRENCH ROYAL DIAMOND

In 1739 King Louis XV of France was admitted to the Order of the Golden Fleece. As his badge, he opted for a design featuring the 69-carat French Blue Diamond. A traveller with Antwerp roots, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, had brought this stone back from India. It had been part of the French crown jewels since being purchased by the king.

It was stolen in 1792, and its fate has been shrouded in mystery ever since. Is the famous Hope Diamond in Washington none other than the French Blue?

★ THE ORDER OF LEOPOLD: STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY

The Order of Leopold is one of the three Belgian orders, along with the Order of the Crown and the Order of Leopold II. It is the oldest and highest Belgian decoration, having been introduced by Leopold I in 1832.

A national order has long been a way to reward subjects for their loyalty and dedication, as well as an instrument for gaining power and influence. This is underlined by the motto of the order: Strength through unity.

177 **Bust of King Leopold II**

Nineteenth century
Plaster
Brussels, War Heritage Institute

The young King Leopold II of Belgium wears the insignia of three orders:
- the Order of the Golden Fleece;
- a breast star of the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold (Civilian);
- the breast star of the Grand Cross of the Herzoglich Sachsen-Ernestinischer Hausorden, the order of the Dukes of Saxony.

178 **Portrait of Leopold I, King of the Belgians**

Erin Corr and Gustave Wappers
1834
Copper engraving on paper
Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum

Leopold's costume is covered with the badges of orders, revealing a network of relationships and alliances. Round his neck and on his chest, the king wears insignia from the United Kingdom, Russia, Austria and Germany.

179 **State portrait of the Belgian royal couple, King Philippe and Queen Mathilde**

Marie-Jo Lafontaine, Marina Cox
Belgium, 2013
Reproduction of the original photograph
Brussels, Chancellery of the Prime Minister

STATE PORTRAIT WITH INSIGNIA OF ORDERS

This state portrait was issued after King Philippe's inauguration on 21 July 2013.

Philippe is wearing the breast star of the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold (military) on the left side of his chest and a silk Sash over his right shoulder. The sash ends at the bottom left in a large bow with the military badge of the Order of Leopold.

Since the reign of King Albert II, ladies have worn a narrower Sash.

Queen Mathilde also wears the civilian badge and breast star of the Order of Leopold.

180 **Breast star of the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold (civilian), worn by King Leopold II**

Gustave Wolfers

Belgium, ca. 1880-1909

Silver, gold, diamond (motto: *L'union fait la force* – Strength through unity) and enamel

Brussels, War Heritage Institute

This decoration belongs to the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold (civilian), the highest class of the Order. It is a silver diamonded star with at its centre the motto set with diamonds.

Three miniature breast stars

Private collection

Miniatures of order badges have been worn since the early nineteenth century, for example on evening dress at a gala ball, dinner or trip to the opera,...

**181 Luxury miniature of the Gold Medal of the
Order of the Crown**

Gold and diamond

**182 Luxury miniature of the Knight's Cross of
the Order of Leopold II**

Silver, gold, diamond and enamel

**183 Luxury miniature of the Commander's
Cross of the Order of Leopold (civilian)**

Gold, diamond and enamel

**184 Group portrait of European monarchs at
Windsor at the funeral of
King Edward VII, 1910**

W. & D. Downey

London, 20 May 1910

Reproduction of the original photo

London, Royal Collection Trust

REGAL PORTRAIT

The rulers are festooned with order insignia that show their interconnections, in the twilight of their power.

Standing, from the left: King Haakon VII of Norway, King Ferdinand I of Bulgaria, King Manuel II of Portugal, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, King Gustav V of Sweden and King Albert I of Belgium.

Sitting, from the left: King Alfonso XIII of Spain, King George V of England and King Frederick VIII of Denmark.

185 **Group portrait of heads of government and heads of state, 2017**

Julien Mattia

Brussels, 25 May 2017

Reproduction of the original photo

In May 2017, Belgium hosted a summit at which the NATO headquarters in Brussels were officially inaugurated. The dress code was sober. External signs of power and power networks were lacking.

186 **Commander's Star of the Order of the Legion of Honour (*Légion d'honneur*), France**

1851-1852

Silver set with rhinestone; centre: gold and enamel
Brussels, War Heritage Institute

This is the highest French national distinction.

**187 Breast star of the Grand Cross or
Commander's Cross of the Order of
Saint James of the Sword, Portugal**

Nineteenth century

Silver set with rhinestone; centre: gold and enamel
Brussels, War Heritage Institute

ORDER OF SAINT JAMES OF THE SWORD

This order originated in the Spanish city of León around 1170. Its purpose was to help protect pilgrims against the Moors. St James is therefore represented as *Santiago Matamores*, the Moor-Slayer. Later, the Order was also active in Portugal, where together with the first kings of Portugal it defeated the Moors.

The military order later came under the protection of the Sacred Heart. Nowadays, it is awarded for merit in science (*sciencias*), literature (*letras*) and the arts (*artes*).

**188 Breast star, badge and sash of the Most
Exalted Order of the White Elephant, Siam
(Thailand), worn by King Leopold II**

Thailand, ca. 1869

Diamond and ruby

Brussels, War Heritage Institute

King Mongkut Rama IV chose the white elephant as the symbol of the order he established in 1861. The animal is regarded in Thailand as an auspicious reincarnation of an enlightened soul, and symbolises strength.

**189 Breast star of the Grand Cross or
Commander's Cross of the Military Order
of the Tower and of the Sword, Portugal**

Nineteenth century

Silver set with rhinestone; centre: gold set with diamond and enamel

Brussels, War Heritage Institute

This order is said to have originated in 1459, at the time of the Portuguese conquest of North Africa. It was reinstated in 1808 and still exists today. It is awarded for acts of heroism on behalf of mankind and the republic.

**190 Breast star with diamonds of the Grand
Cross of the Order of Saint Anna, Russia**

Johann Wilhelm Keibel

Saint Petersburg, 1855

Gilt silver, rock crystal, rhinestone and enamel

Brussels, War Heritage Institute

RUSSIAN BREAST STAR, BELGIAN MINISTER

This order from 1735 was founded in memory of Tsarina Anna and in honour of Duchess Anna-Petrovna, daughter of Tsar Paul I of Russia. This star was awarded to Lieutenant-General Baron Félix-Pierre-Emanuel Chazal (1808-1892), Belgian Minister of War. The 'diamonds' are not diamonds, but cheaper rhinestones.

191 Breast star with diamonds of the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Anna, Russia

Russia, first half of nineteenth century
Silver with rhinestone; centre: gold and enamel
Brussels, War Heritage Institute

192 Men's coat by Dries Van Noten, winter 2016/2017

Dries Van Noten
Antwerp, 2016
Wool
Antwerp, Atelier Dries Van Noten

PRECIOUS ROYAL KUBA SYMBOLS

Before diamond-mining began in Africa in the nineteenth century, the local people did not extract diamonds from the ground. Other precious materials were used to display power and status, such as glass beads and cowrie shells. Today, however, diamonds and other precious stones are used as symbolic and prestigious objects.

The kingdom of the Kuba lies in Kasai in Congo and consists of several groups. The Bushoong held power from the seventeenth century, ruled by a sacred king (*nyim*). He led a hierarchical network of chiefs and headmen. By the end of the nineteenth century, the kingdom, with some 150,000 inhabitants, was about the size of Belgium.

The Kuba controlled the trade in local prestige goods such as ivory. Non-African goods were regarded as especially valuable and symbolic materials, such as European glass beads and cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean. As marks of wealth, status and power, they decorated the regalia, costumes and headdresses of the ruling class.

193 Portrait of a Kuba dignitary

Casimir Zagourski
Kuba/Bushoong, Democratic Republic of Congo
ca. 1929-1937
Tervuren, Royal Museum for Central Africa

The headdress is decorated with precious beads, cowrie shells and eagle's feathers.

194 *Nyim Kot a-Mbweeky III* in state costume, surrounded by dignitaries in Musheeng

Democratic Republic of Congo, 1971
Photographer: Eliot Elisofon
Reproduction of the original
Washington, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of African Art

The dominant position of the Kuba ruler (*nyim*) is apparent from his costume, which is richly decorated with cowrie shells and beads, and the headdress with eagle's feathers.

195 Fly whisk

Kuba/Bushoong, Democratic Republic of Congo
late nineteenth/early twentieth century
Ivory, animal hair, leather and iron
Antwerp, MAS

Fly whisks with an ivory handle and animal hairs were used in the same way as sceptres: prestigious status symbols with which the higher elite exhibited its political power.

196 Figurine with beckoning hands

Kuba/Bushoong, Democratic Republic of Congo
mid-seventeenth century
Iron and red pigment
Antwerp, MAS

MAGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Among the Kuba there was a special link between the blacksmith's art and the sacred kingship. Smiths possessed magical knowledge that enabled them to transform metal ore into weapons, tools and statues. This was because they worked with the four elements: water, fire, air and earth.

According to Kuba tradition, this male statue was made by Prince Myeel, a seventeenth-century prince-smith. Only three of these wrought iron artworks are extant worldwide.

197 Conical hat

Kuba/Bushoong, Democratic Republic of Congo
mid-twentieth century
Raffia, bead and cowrie shell
Antwerp, MAS

Kuba leaders displayed their rank and status with their clothing and ornamentation. Certain rules applied, for example to the headdress. Those of highest rank wore eagle's feathers. Dignitaries wore headdresses into which glass beads and cowrie shells were worked.

198 Wooden mask (*ngady a mwaash*)

Kuba/Bushoong, Democratic Republic of Congo
late nineteenth/early twentieth century
Cloth, cowrie shell, wood, raffia, bead, metal and pigment
Antwerp, MAS

ROYAL MASK

At the Kuba court, masked figures performed in a kind of mime. This colourful mask, decorated with cowrie shells, represents Queen Mweel. It is one of the three royal Kuba masks.

Mweel was Woot's sister and wife. They were the mythical royal couple from whom the Bushoong dynasty sprang.

199 Headdress of a chief

Kuba/Bushoong, Democratic Republic of Congo
early twentieth century
Raffia, textile, cowrie shells and corduroy
Antwerp, MAS

THE DOWNSIDE OF DESIRE

Beauty and splendour, that is what we see in diamonds. They symbolise mankind's desire for security and love, for something higher, for status and power. But there is a downside.

The appetite for diamonds can be insatiable. The price that humans and the environment must pay is often high.

The splendour of diamonds and their desirability are in sharp contrast with the difficult circumstances in which they are dug up and the damaged earth that is left behind.

THE FIGHT AGAINST DIAMOND-RELATED PROBLEMS

Serious efforts are being made to minimise the adverse side-effects of diamond-mining. Antwerp, the Diamond city, is playing a leading role in these. With success.

For example, the Kimberley certificate guarantees that a diamond has not contributed to the funding of armed conflicts. Without such a certificate, a diamond cannot enter Belgium and Antwerp. The goal is to keep conflict diamonds, or 'blood diamonds' as they are known, out of international trade. Despite this, diamond-mining remains problematic in some areas.

200 - 204

Diamond matters.
The trail of the diamond, 2004-2005

Kadir van Loohuizen/NOOR

- Diamond mines in Koidu, Sierra Leone
- Diamond found at the River Sewa, Sierra Leone
- Diamond mines at the River Sewa, Sierra Leone
- Gravel-washing in Bakwa Bowa, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Diamond mines in Koidu, Sierra Leone

In his series about diamonds, one of the subjects covered by Dutch photographer Kadir van Loohuizen is the working conditions and environmental impact of mining in Angola, Sierra Leone and other African countries.

205 Brazil diamond mining, 2015

Felipe Dana

Huge open mine pits were left behind in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, after the diamond-mining companies stopped their operations there.

A MIRROR FOR MANKIND

The Antwerp artist Jan Fabre looks critically at Belgium's colonial past in the Congo in these three works. Like Hieronymus Bosch, Fabre holds up a mirror to mankind. What are the consequences of people's greed and their abusive treatment of their fellow-humans?

206 Diamond (*Tribute to Belgian Congo 2010-2013*)

Jan Fabre, 2010
Jewel beetle wing-cases on wood
Private collection of Jos De Troyer

207 Skull with Diamond

Jan Fabre, 2013
Jewel beetle wing-cases, polymer and glass
Antwerp, Galerie Jamar

208 Negro Shitting Diamonds (*Tribute to Hieronymus Bosch in Congo 2011-2013*)

Jan Fabre, 2011
Jewel beetle wing-cases on wood
Sint-Martens-Latem, Linda and Guy Pieters

* * *

Diamonds are forever



Theme of the James Bond movie, 1971

Vocals: Shirley Bassey

Text: Don Black

Music: John Barry

* * *

**DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE:
THE BEAUTY OF MYTHS AND SCIENCE**

People try to understand and explain the world around them. The same is true for diamonds. They have always appealed to our imagination due to their rarity, hardness and brilliance.

The enchantment led to mythical and other stories from early on. Diamonds were given dubious properties and their origin and source assumed fabulous allures.

Modern science has demystified the world over the last few centuries. Myths and stories have been replaced with facts: geological, physical, chemical, etc. They have also been replaced with new speculations.

Yet the enchanting stories and outcomes of rational science remain soaked in beauty and poetry.

A small selection from more than 2000 years of a desire for knowledge.

a. Kubera, surrounded by jars full of money and gems

India

Popular poster, twenty-first century

KUBERA, GUARDIAN OF GEMSTONES

In India they say that the power of various planets is concentrated in gemstones in the earth's surface. The potbellied Hindu god Kubera guards over them. He leads the *Yakshas*, forest spirits that help him. *Nagas*, snakes, guard treasures in rivers and lakes. They live in palaces made from precious metals and gemstones.

All gemstones have positive powers. The diamond is the most precious gemstone. If it is scratched or damaged, that has a negative influence on the wearer.

b. Interpretation of the Metamorphoses or Transformations by Ovid

Karel van Mander
Amsterdam, 1662
Antwerp, Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library

GOAT BLOOD IS HIS GREATEST ENEMY

'A diamond is so hard that it can withstand sword and fire. It can only be affected or split open by goat's blood.' Pliny the Elder (23-79 B.C.), *Naturalis Historia*

These and other ideas by Plinius about diamonds were adopted for centuries, including by Karel van Mander. The thought was: the hard core of diamonds, with its good properties, can only be defiled by a goat, a dirty and lecherous animal.

c. Light & colour



© Antwerp Cut

Dispersion: the splitting or refraction of light by a prism to form a spectrum. *Colour wheel*: a circle with the primary colours placed around it at an equal distance from one another (Newton, Harris, Baumgartner, Grégoire, Sowerby). *Refraction*: the deflection of light rays as they pass from one medium to another.

d. De lapidibus preciosis enchiridion

Marbodius Gallus (Marbodius of Rennes) (1035-1123)
Paris, 1531
Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus

NIGHT SPIRITS

In this Latin gemstone book, the bishop and poet Marbodius of Rennes describes the properties of a series of gemstones. In the chapter about

diamonds – *Adamas* – he specifies that the Indian diamond can only be ‘overcome’ by goat’s blood. The Arabian diamond can be overcome without goat’s blood. Another of Marbodius’ ‘conclusions’ is that diamonds can chase away night spirits, thereby enabling people to sleep calmly.

e. **Kimberlite pipe**

© Matthew Twombly en Ryan Williams, National Geographic Magazine

SCREW PALMS AND KIMBERLITE PIPES

Geologist Stephen Haggerty from the Florida International University discovered that a candelabrum tree often grows in Liberia on the spot where one mines diamonds. Soil research confirms that the plant only grows above kimberlite pipes.

Kimberlite is a volcanic igneous rock which is known to contain diamonds. It’s not a guarantee, but the plant is a good indication that diamonds are present..

THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS

India was the only known diamond deposit until the seventeenth - eighteenth century. A story circulated about the difficulty of reaching them. Over time, different versions of that story appeared.

It commences in the fourth century B.C. with Alexander the Great in the leading role. It’s also in the Arabic tales of 1001 Nights. Other, westernised versions derived from these stories later on.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS

‘Except for my pupil, Alexander (the Great), **no one has reached the Valley of Diamonds**. It is located in the east, along the immense Khorasan border.’

Attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)

f1. Matâli' al-su'âda wa yanâbi' al-siyâda
(*The Ascension of Propitious Stars and the Sources of Sovereignty: The Valley of Diamonds*)

Mehmed ibn Emir Hasan al-Su'ûdî
Istanbul, 1582
Paper
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
département des Manuscrits

*'The Valley of Diamonds is guarded by **poisonous snakes with a lethal gaze**. Birds of prey fly above. One of them has a piece of meat with diamonds sticking to it in his beak.'*

f2. Catalan world atlas

Abraham Cresques
1375
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
département des Manuscrits

This illustrious atlas portrays the known world from the Atlantic Ocean to China. The author was one of the first to use the knowledge that Marco Polo (1254-1324) and other travellers gathered about East Asia. A diamond deposit is mentioned and drawn in the section about the Mediterranean Sea.

*'These men looked for diamonds. But they were not able to reach the mountains where the diamonds are located so they threw down **pieces of meat** with great skill. The stones stick to the pieces of meat. The birds eventually let them fall so the stones can be picked up.'*

**f3. One Thousand and One Nights, Arab tales:
The second voyage of Sindbad the Sailor**

From: Antoine Galland (1646-1715), *Les Mille et Une Nuits*,
contes arabes. Paris, 1865.

Illustration: Gustave Doré

'...brought Sindbad the Sailor to the Valley of Diamonds... so many horrors that no one was able to get through.'

f4. Audio story



*The Arabian nights, or The book of a thousands and one nights:
The story of the second voyage of Sindbad the Sailor*

Edited by Bennett Cerf

Translated by Richard Burton

Londen, Blue Ribbon

g. Crystal

CRYSTAL STRUCTURE OF A DIAMOND

Two properties distinguish a diamond from other crystals: the order of the copies of the bonded crystal nets and a strong isotropy. Compare it with the rotation property of a circle: no matter how you turn a circle, it always looks the same.

h. Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres, Tome IV.
(Encyclopaedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts by a community of scholars)

Paris, 1754

Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert
Paris, between 1751 and 1772
Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus

THE ENCYCLOPÉDIE: ONLY REASON AND SCIENCE

Diamonds are one of the subjects covered by the *Encyclopédie*, the preeminent symbol of the Enlightenment. It describes diamond deposits, their value, weight, hardness, colours, light reflection, etc.

Authors Diderot and d'Alembert dismiss the medicinal properties attributed to diamonds in previous centuries as nonsense. But they sing the diamond's praises. According to them, all man-made materials pale in comparison to a diamond's beauty and refinement.

'In the past, diamonds were given infinite medicinal properties, but it is useless to report them here because they are all false.'

'On a attribué autrefois au diamant une infinité de propriétés pour la Medecine, mais il est inutile de les rapporter ici parce qu'elles sont toutes fausses.'

i. **Ice crystals**



Photos from: Wilson A. Bentley, *Snow Crystals*, 1931

DIAMOND DUST

The temperature in Antarctica often falls below -50°C and ice crystals float through the air in winter. Neither on the North Pole, ice crystals cannot coagulate into snow due to low temperatures. Researchers call this ‘diamond dust’ due to its sparkle and the way the crystals waft up when the wind blows.

The American Wilson A. Bentley was the first to photograph ice crystals. He did this starting in 1885, for 45 winters.

j. **Lucy in the sky with diamonds**

DIAMOND PLANET

Planet BPM 37093 is a crystallised white dwarf star. It is 54 light-years from Earth in the constellation Centaurus. The inside consists of pure carbon, and the pressure and temperature are perfect for crystallising into diamonds.

That’s why the planet is described as ‘a diamond with a diameter of 4000 kilometres’. Its nickname, Lucy, is a tribute to the Beatles song *Lucy in the sky with diamonds*.

Space diamonds

k1. The planet Saturn

Photographed by space probe Cassini, 2016
Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech

k2. Cold Bokkeveld Meteorite

South Africa, 1938
London, Natural History Museum

The atmospheres of Jupiter and Saturn contain methane, the source of carbon. The pressure and temperature conditions are present to turn carbon into diamonds. According to researchers, in the (far) future we will be able to harvest diamonds. That is the theory.

Space diamonds have been known for a long time. The meteorite Cold Bokkeveld was found in South Africa in 1938. It is 4.5 billion years old, approximately the same age as Earth. The diamond dust that was recently found inside the meteorite is even older.

1. Pod and seeds of a carob tree

Antwerp, Mineralogical Museum/ Academie voor
Mineralogie vzw

CARAT

The weight of diamonds and other gemstones are expressed in carats. The word carat comes from the Greek word *kerátion*. It refers to the seed in the pod of the carob tree.

The seeds have rather similar dimensions and a constant weight. In ancient times they were used to weigh gemstones. The value of a 'carat' was fixed at 0.2 gram in 1907. Five seeds represent a five carat diamond. Weight: 1 gram.

m. The Churning of the Ocean

India, Rajasthan, nineteenth century
Miniature on paper
Antwerp, MAS

THE CHURNING OF THE OCEAN

In this Hindu myth, gods and demons fight over an immortality drink. They stir the primeval ocean or ocean of milk with a stick, thereby releasing the coveted nectar of immortality. They use Mount Mandara as a churning pole and Vasuki, king of the Naga serpents, as a churning-rope.

Many other treasures also appear: the moon, Lakshmi (the goddess of riches), a wish fulfilling cow, Kalpavriksha (a tree that yields whatever is desired) and the most dazzling of all jewels - the *kaustubha*. That jewel is shown next to Lord Vishnu, middle near the top. Of all gemstones, the diamond is the most valuable.

**ni. Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier
(1605-1689)**

Nicolas de Largillière
Circa 1700
Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum

**n2. Les six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier ...
en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indes (The six
voyages of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier... to
Turkey, Persia and India)**

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier
Paris, 1676
Antwerp, Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier was the son of an Antwerp engraver and cartographer who had emigrated to France. He undertook several voyages, including to a diamond deposit in India. His travel account was well-received. A quay in Antwerp bears his name.

THE BLUE DIAMOND OF TAVERNIER

In the account of his journeys, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier describes diamonds in detail: the mines, the exploitation method, etc. He also describes beautiful, large stones in the treasuries of Indian monarchs, including the large blue diamond that he sold to Louis XIV in 1668.

On the drawing in the book it is the top stone on the left: stone A.

*'I am the first European to open up those mines, which are **the only place on earth** where one finds diamonds, for the French.'*

o. **Gemmarum et lapidum historia (About gemstones and stones)**

Anselmus Boëtius de Boodt (1550-1632)
Leiden, 1636
Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus

DIAMOND OFFSPRING

De Boodt, a physician from Bruges, worked for the Habsburg emperor Rudolf II in Prague. He owned a sizeable collection of gems and minerals. De Boodt describes 600 of them.

He describes diamonds extensively: the polishing method, their value and 'how diamonds produce offspring in the mine'. Is that a metaphor for the crumbling of rock faces, resulting the release of new diamonds? According to De Boodt, diamonds are the hardest stone of all. You can only tool them with... diamonds. That still holds true today.

p. **Physica or Liber simplicis medicinae
(section: De lapidibus), 1155**

MENTAL ILLNESS, DECEIT AND SHORT-TEMPERS

Medieval ‘stone books’ bundled knowledge about gemstones. They were tied in with the Christian faith. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) also did this. For her, gemstones were gifts from God. They passed their celestial and healing energy on to people. You can use them to rub painful areas of the body. Or you can drink water in which a gemstone has been placed.

A diamond can resist the devil’s power. Under the tongue, it combats mental illnesses, deceit and hotheadedness.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)
Illumination from the Liber Scivias by
Hildegard of Bingen (reproduction)
Rupertsberg Codex, 1151-1179
Wiesbaden, Nassauische Landesbibliothek

Hildegard of Bingen wrote her visions on wax tablets. Her secretary Volmar wrote them on parchment.

q. **Diamond cuts** (*see p. 117*)

1. Point cut
2. Table cut
3. Rose cut
4. Old Brilliant
5. Marquise
6. Pendeloque or pear
7. Princess or cushion
8. Baguette or tapered baguette
9. Tolkowsky brilliant

r. **Diamond: physics and chemistry**

Refraction or reflection of light	$n = 2,4$
Light dispersion or light dispersal	0,044
Hardness on Mohs scale	10
Colour	White - spectrum colours
Luminescence	Blue, green
Heat conduction	$\lambda = 900 - 2.320$
Thermal conductivity	410 W/cm/K
(Electrical) resistivity	$10^{13} \Omega \cdot m$
Density	$\rho (\text{rho}) = 3,51 \text{ kg/dm}^3$
Composition	Carbon
Molecule formula	C
Periodic table of elements	6th element: C
Opacity	transparent to translucent
Crystal structure	cube

DIAMOND
A SHORT HISTORY

I. fourteenth - seventeenth century: diamonds from India – initial processing

Diamonds were imported in Europe via Venice and later Portugal as early as the 14th century. The rare stone was mined almost exclusively in India until the end of the 17th century.

The hardness of diamonds was general knowledge. The Roman Pliny the Elder wrote about it in the 1st century. Due to their hardness, diamonds could not be worked. Therefore they were often used in their natural form.

1. *Point cut:*

diamonds in their natural form, slightly ‘polished’ on the top pyramid of the octahedron (eight faces) that they form. These ‘rougher’ stones were in demand for a long time because they were ascribed protective powers as well as for their hardness, as tools.

Diamond processing started to develop in the course of the 15th century.

Lodewyk van Bercken *would have* discovered how to cut diamonds in Bruges in 1476.

The improvement of the polishing wheel and other tools made it possible to transform lustreless diamonds into a stone that sparkles a bit more.

2. *Table cut:*

a pyramid-shaped rough diamond where the point of the pyramid is cut off. This results in a flat area (a ‘table’).

3. *Rose cut:*

the cut off top part of large stones is ground into regular triangular facets on the flat top. The addition of facets makes rose cut diamonds sparkle more than table cut stones. That effect is also achievable with smaller, irregular stones.

II. The eighteenth century: diamonds from Brazil – increasingly sparkling

The Indian mines were depleted at the end of the seventeenth century and there was a diamond shortage. Existing stones were sometimes re-cut and reused in more modern jewellery. Rose cut diamonds often replaced table cut diamonds. More facets were able to be cut due to evolving grinding techniques. That led to a new shape.

4. Old brilliant (Mazarin cut, Peruzzi cut..):

a shape that originates by combining the rose cut and the table cut. In other words, this is a table cut surrounded by facets. The extra facets result in more sparkle. Especially in abundant candlelight, during the evening parties that arose in mondaine society.

New diamond mines in Brazil provide new stocks at the beginning of the 18th century.

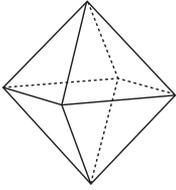
But they are depleted a century later. The new scarcity made diamonds even more expensive, so existing cuttings – diamonds that were already cut – were recycled and re-cut in more modern shapes with even more facets.

The old table cut disappeared, the rose cut remained. Brilliant cuts gained popularity.

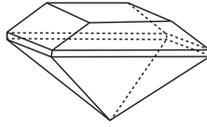
III. nineteenth and twentieth century: diamonds from South Africa and everywhere – the perfect brilliant shape

When new diamond mines were discovered in South Africa in the 1860-ties, supplies increased once again. That was necessary because demand amongst the bourgeoisie – which became rich thanks to the Industrial Revolution – had increased. The brilliant remained the most popular cut.

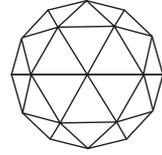
As the 20th century progressed, diamonds became widely available. That was mainly due to the discovery of more and more new deposits. These days diamonds are found worldwide. Demand has increased simultaneously because more people have the means to purchase diamonds. Diamonds remain expensive, but have lost their exclusivity.



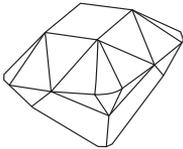
1.



2.



3.



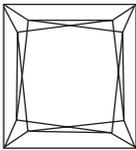
4.



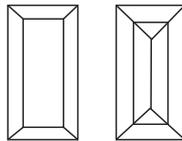
5.



6.



7.



8.



9.

- 1. Point cut
- 2. Table cut
- 3. Rose cut
- 4. Old brilliant
- 5. Marquise

- 6. Pendeloque or pear
- 7. Princess or cushion
- 8. Baguette or tapered baguette
- 9. Tolkowsky-brilliant

Variations of the brilliant were launched in the course of the twentieth century and certain shapes have gained in popularity. The shape one chooses depends on what can be obtained with the least amount of loss from a rough, sometimes irregular stone.

5. *Marquise:*

an oval brilliant with two points (in the shape of an American football or a boat)

6. *Pendeloque or pear:*

a brilliant in the shape of a pear or tear or drop of water

7. *Princess or cushion:*

a brilliant with a square table

8. *Baguette or tapered baguette:*

a brilliant with an oblong table

The brilliant shape reached perfection in 1919: Marcel Tolkowsky of Antwerp was able to calculate the ideal corners and ratios, thereby giving the brilliant its maximum sparkle. Despite the new cuts that are still being developed, with more than 100 facets sometimes, Tolkowsky's model is still the most famous and most sought after diamond cut:

9. *Tolkowsky brilliant:*

a round brilliant with 57 facets. Today it is the standard for almost every diamond unless the stone is very small.

* * *

THE FOUR Cs

The quality of a diamond is determined by four criteria. The four Cs are: clarity, carat, colour and cut. When choosing the type of cut, a diamond cutter will try to keep the carat of the polished stone as high as possible, taking into account the natural impurities or the clarity.

* * *

COLOPHON

Concept and creation

Chief Curator Vera De Boeck

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Lenders

Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Atelier Dries Van Noten, Antwerp

Cathedral - Chapel of Our Lady, Antwerp

City Archives, Antwerp

Collection Cartier

Diarough NV/Uni-design, Antwerp

DIVA – Antwerp Home of Diamonds, Antwerp

Documentatie- en Studiecentrum voor Familiegesciedenis, Merksem

Family Wampl, Austria

Fürstliche Schatzkammer Thurn und Taxis, Regensburg / Zweigmuseum des Bayerischen

Nationalmuseums, Munich

Galerie Jamar, Antwerp

Het Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch

Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library, Antwerp

Hungarian National Museum, Budapest

Jewish Historic Museum, Amsterdam

KRISTALL Production Corporation, Smolensk

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer, Vienna

Linda and Guy Pieters, Sint-Martens-Latem

Maagdenhuismuseum, Antwerp

Mineralogisch Museum / Academie voor Mineralogie vzw, Merksem

Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp

Museum Prinsenhof, Delft

Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels

Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels

Royal Museum for Central Afrika, Tervuren

Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels

Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp
Rubens House, Antwerp
Smidt van Gelder Collection, Antwerp
State Archives Antwerp - Beveren
St Andrew's Church, Antwerp
St Charles Borromeo's Church, Antwerp
St Fredegand's Church, Deurne
St George's Church, Antwerp
St James' Church, Antwerp
St Mary Magdalenes Church, Reet (Rumst)
St Paul's Church, Antwerp
The Phoebus Foundation
Thierry De Cordier and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels
University Library, Ghent
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
War Heritage Institute, Brussels
as well as the various Antwerp, Belgian and international private collections.

Publication

Dazzling Desire, MAS Books Bai

The MAS wishes to thank:

Caroline Bastiaens, Vice Mayor for culture, economy, city maintenance and property management and her staff;
the advisory committee: Guy Deploige, Iris Kockelbergh, Rik Pinxten, Monique Rakhorst, Chris Van Kerckhove, Jan Walgrave and Anne Marie Woerlee;
the interviewees for their testimony, the volunteers and interns from the City of Antwerp.

