

Tourmaline

Breaking the diamond and sapphire monopoly on jewelry

One fine morning in 1876, a young man named George F Kunz stepped into the director's office at Tiffany & Co to try and sell the idea that gemstones could be made from minerals other than diamond and corundum. The following is an excerpt from his description of that encounter.

So one day, buckled in youth, I wrapped a tourmaline in a bit of gem paper, swung on a horse car, and all the way to my destination rehearsed my arguments. Arrived there, I was finally received by the managing head of what was even then the largest jewelry establishment in the world, and showed him my drop of green light. I explained-a very little; the gem itself was its own best argument. Tiffany bought it-the great dealers in precious stones bought their first tourmaline from me. The check which crinkled in my pocket as I walked home in the late afternoon, forgetting there were cars, stargazing, tripping over curbs, meant very little in comparison with the fact that I had interested a foremost jeweler of that time in my revolutionary theory and made the acquaintance of a man who was later to become my close friend.

Within a year George began his illustrious career at Tiffany and went on to become the top gem expert of his day advocating for lesser known colored stones and introducing them to

5.12ct watermelon tourmaline and diamonds in 14KT yellow gold \$1750

Tourmaline, petrified palm wood and dinosaur bone in 14KT rose and 18KT yellow gold \$2200

Watermelon tourmaline slices in silver and 18KT gold \$600

Blue tourmaline and diamond in 18KT yellow and 14KT white gold \$980

the jewelry world. But that first gem that he used to introduce himself to Charles Tiffany was a green tourmaline from Maine!

Tourmaline is a very complex group of minerals officially known as aluminous borosilicates. They come in virtually all colors of the rainbow and occurrences are widespread. Their abundance and wide range of colors combined

with a hardness of 7-7.5 makes them a good choice for all types of jewelry.

The name tourmaline can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In 1703, a packet of stones labeled *turmali* arrived at a Dutch lapidary. *Turmali* was a Sinhalese term used for mixed parcels of unknown gems. Somehow, (according to one story, it was children playing with the stones outside) it was discovered that some stones attracted ashes and straw when heated much like a magnet attracts iron filings. So the stones were given the name *aschentrekkers*. Further investigation revealed that only certain gemstones, but of different colors, possessed this property. That breakthrough, combined with other testing, resulted in recognition of the tourmaline family in 1801.

Tourmaline is strongly pleochroic which means it shows one color when looking at the side of a crystal and a different color when looking down the length of the same crystal. Combine that with the potential change of colors both along the length of the crystal and radially, and facetors need to think carefully before aligning the crystal for cutting.

Gem collectors have given names to many of the color varieties of tourmaline. The terms in use the longest are *rubellite* for red tourmaline, *indicolite* for blue tourmaline, and *watermelon* for gems with both pink and green zones. Other more recent terms are *savannah* for brownish-olive colors, *chrome* for an intense green color caused by chromium and *cuprian* for bright, neon colors caused by copper.

The majority of gem tourmalines are mined from pegmatites. These incredibly gem-rich formations occur when magma laden with rare elements intrudes into existing rock formations. As the magma cools, the last to solidify contains the rare elements and cools at a slower rate resulting in gemmy crystals of tourmaline, topaz, kunzite, aquamarine and other beryls. Thankfully, pegmatites are found all over the globe ensuring a good supply of quality tourmalines!



Winter Bead Sale

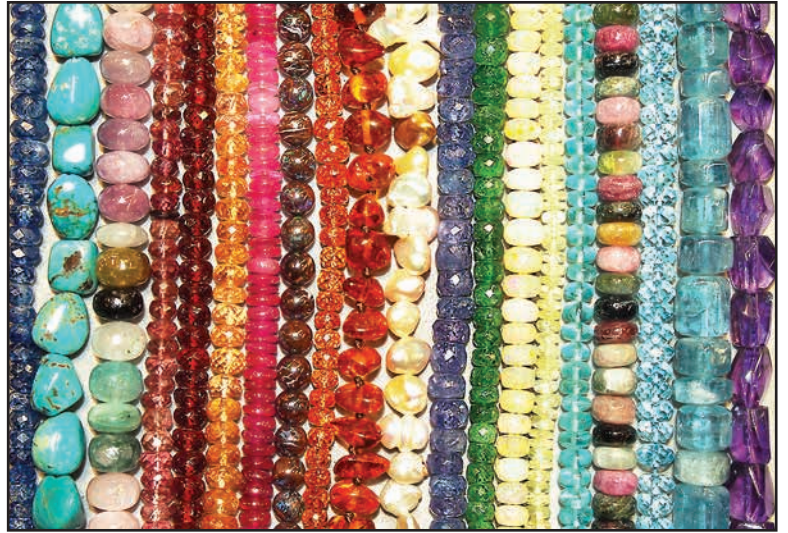
February 18-21

All strands of beads and pearls will be

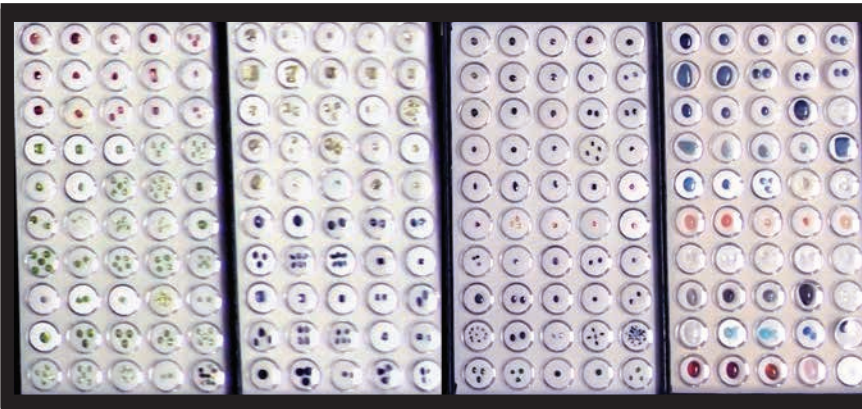
50% OFF

the single strand price
regardless of quantity!

*Buy 5 strands at once, anytime before
the sale and get 40% OFF!*



Loose Gem Auction



We continue to get more gemstones than we can use so are having another silent auction this winter!

Gems (both parcels and singles) will be available for viewing 2/18

Silent auction begins 2/28
Details available during viewing.



Silver Beads

Silver has come down significantly in price over the last two years so this should be a great year to stock up on beads and findings. Come in after February 15 and check out the new stock!

5 or more bags gets 20% OFF,
25 or more bags gets 40% OFF!