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Lab-created diamonds and gemstones banned from US jewellery fair

Posted April 12, 2024 | By Samuel Ord

The American Gem Trade Association (AGTA) has announced that its trade shows will not feature lab-created or 'synthetic' diamonds and gemstones beginning next year.

Founded in 1981, the AGTA is based in Texas. Its website lists eight objectives, the first of which is "to represent and further the interests of the natural colored gemstone, pearl, and cultured pearl industries in the United States and Canada."

In a statement, AGTA said that this rule will begin at the GemFair Tucson 2025, with exhibitors not permitted to display loose labcreated or synthetic stones or jewellery featuring these stones.

"Considering how disruptive lab-grown diamonds have been in the market, the AGTA [board of directors] decided to take a stance on man-made gemstones at its fairs to thwart potential confusion," the statement reads.

"It's perfectly acceptable for AGTA dealers to sell synthetic gems if they choose and so long as they are disclosed, but for the sake of clarity and peace of mind, buyers attending AGTA GemFairs can shop knowing that only natural gems will be available for purchase."

The AGTA hosts an annual fair in Tuscon each February, which attracts more than 8,000 buyers and around 300 exhibitors. A second trade show is hosted in Las Vegas in May-June.

President of the AGTA board of directors, Kimberly Collins, said that it was a move designed to prevent confusion between buyers and exhibitors.



"AGTA felt that it needed to be crystal clear to buyers that when they attend an AGTA show, they know that they are only shopping mined natural gems from the earth," she said.

"AGTA dealers pride themselves in sourcing superior gems that are rare, beautiful, and natural."



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KIMBERLY COLLINS, AGTA

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Sign of things to come?

The increasing popularity of lab-created diamonds and gemstones, particularly among younger consumers, has been well-documented in recent years.

Rob Bates, editor of JCK Online, suggests that this change in strategy from the AGTA might indicate that broader industry sentiment is beginning to shift away from lab-created gemstones.

"Both the created and natural diamond sectors are currently struggling. That's in part due to the ongoing [and needless] hostilities between them," he writes.

"It also may have been inevitable: Lab-grown diamonds are simply too similar to naturals to have not made an impact."

He continues: "The past few years were extraordinarily good for synthetic sellers, with manufacturers and retailers raking up incredible profits. Thanks to super-high margins that incentivised jewellers to push them on consumers, some are starting to murmur that the party's over."

Despite these ongoing industry concerns, a recent study in the US found that nearly half of couples married in the past year selected a lab-created diamond for their engagement ring.

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