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January 2016

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JEWELRY SHOWCASE

30 West 47th St, Suite 707,
New York, NY 10036;
T: 888-832-1109; F: 212-257-7056

PUBLISHERS
Zev Oster
Chaim Ehrman

EDITOR
Cynthia Unninayar

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
Dan Scott
Barbara Wheat
Diana Zimmerman
Adrienne Weinfeld-Berg

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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The *Emerald* Edition

Dear Readers,

As we start the New Year, we devote this issue to the beautiful and luxurious *EMERALD*. Discovered more than 4000 years ago, the green gem has captured the imagination and hearts of people ever since. Today, mined in various places around the globe, the gem is a favorite of many of the world's talented jewelry designers. We feature some of these exquisite creations in the *Extraordinary Emeralds* pages in the *On Trend* section of this issue.

In December, we featured a summary of the very *First International Emerald Symposium* that took place in Bogotá, Colombia last October. This issue continues with my report on the visit to several of the nation's most important emerald mines, which some of the symposium attendees and myself were invited to experience after the conference.

This particular mine trip was most interesting and informative and one that really gives new meaning to what's behind the term *mine to market*. Along with details of the mines and the area, my report offers a bit of history about Colombia's turbulent emerald saga and the evolution of emerald mining in that nation.

In keeping with the emerald theme, gemologist and writer, Barbara Wheat, showcases some rare and unique emeralds in the *Gemstone* section with her article that describes *The Amazing Trapiche*.

In the same section, Dr. Pornsawat Wathanakul, director of Bangkok's Gem & Jewelry Institute of Thailand, talks about how emeralds are treated, in my interview with her on *What's in Your Emerald?*

As usual, our highly appreciated marketing section features a very informative and useful article by noted brand architect, Dan Scott. This month he interviews Ryan Kuglar, founder and president of the Los Angeles-based entertainment and innovation group, Ideal Content, the creator of the original *Video Brochure*. This innovative marketing tool has far-reaching possibilities for the jewelry industry and you won't want to miss Dan's article, *The Marketing Jewel of the Moment*.

Dan continues to receive comments from you, our readers, on his articles, and we are delighted that you find them helpful. If there are any topics of special interest in the social media realm, please let him know.

To enter the emerald mines in Colombia, we had to suit up in the appropriate gear. In all the mines, water drains through the mountains and covers the floor of the tunnels, despite the pumps that work to keep the levels down, making high rubber boots clearly imperative. The black powdery slate along the tunnel walls soon turned our gloves black, as well as any clothing that touched them. Since many tunnels were quite narrow with low ceilings, the hard hats and lights were also essential. Shown with me in this photo is Dacques Nini, a gem dealer and jewelry designer from Houston, as we prepare to enter the Manantial mine in Chivor.

Happy New Year!

Cynthia

Cynthia Unninayar
Editor

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Talking GEMS with Philip Zahm

"My initial experience in buying emeralds was in 1978 on my very first trip to Brazil. I had $33,000 cash hidden on my body when I arrived in Rio, not speaking a word of the local language. And, I had no real understanding of the way one even went about buying gems. I only knew that the town of Teofilo Otoni, in the state of Minas Gerais, was where I needed to go."

– PHILIP ZAHM

Since this issue of *Jewelry Showcase* features mainly emeralds, we asked noted gem dealer, gem expert and jewelry designer, Philip Zahm, to talk about some of the emeralds he has encountered during his illustrious career, which includes multiple Cutting Edge, Spectrum, and JCK Jewelers Choice awards.

By Cynthia Unninayar

"I didn't buy very many emeralds on that first trip," Philip Zahm reminisces. "It was a huge learning experience for me on so many levels, and represented a big move into the realm of more expensive gemstones." Previously, he had been working primarily with cabochons, mainly fire agates and opal, but in Brazil he purchased mostly faceted tourmaline, aquamarine and topaz.

Following this trip, Zahm went back to Brazil several times a year and learned the language. "I also learned a lot about Brazilian emeralds and the way they were treated."

In 1981, a rich deposit of emeralds was found in the state of Goiás in Brazil, so Zahm and a friend flew to Goiânia, where they rented a car and drove fifty miles on small gravel roads to a tiny village where people were mining emeralds along the river. "It was quite an experience because no other foreigners were there. It was only the Brazilians. But, in the end, we did not find anything worthwhile."

In 1983, Zahm traveled to Bogotá in search of the famed Colombian emeralds. "In Colombia, emeralds are the only game in town," he adds. For three days, he sat in the office of a Japanese dealer, looking at all the emeralds that came through. "I spent over $30,000 on that trip, but did not return to Colombia for several years." When he finally did return, he had the help of his friend and emerald expert, Ron Ringsrud. "Ron was kind enough to share his connections and experience with me. I even stayed at a little house he owned in a neighborhood adjacent to the emerald buying district in Bogotá. Starting at 9 or 10 every morning, I would walk along the cobblestone streets to the offices and spend the day looking at emeralds. I made two more trips to Colombia over the next few years."

Then, in 1994, he accompanied fellow gem dealer, Lee Collins, to Zambia in search of the green gems. The two men rented a car and journeyed into the bush for several days trying to buy emeralds and aquamarines. "At one compound, we spent the whole day looking through a treasure chest of emeralds in small paper bags, and we made some offers. The next day, we returned, but the man only accepted very few of our offers. Strangely, he did not even counter with a different price. It was unlike any other gem-buying experience I have ever had. Even leaving the country with the small quantity of gems that we managed to purchase was intimidating."

Back in the United States, Zahm continued to sell a mixture of Colombian, Brazilian and Zambian emeralds. "About 15 years ago, I met a jovial young man from Jaipur who sold nothing but emeralds. I looked through his inventory here in California and bought quite a lot because the prices and quality were very good."

A couple of years later, Zahm went to Jaipur to visit the young man whose company bought the rough at auction in Zambia and brought it back to India for cutting and oiling. "I asked him what kind of oil they use and he went to the cupboard and brought out a bottle of Johnson's baby oil. I couldn't believe it! Their cut emeralds were sitting out in a glass bowl filled with oil."

Zahm says he has seen an increase in interest and sales of fine emeralds over the last two years. "Prices have not increased as dramatically as the prices of rubies and sapphires, although it's beginning to happen. In the years to come, I believe that we will see significant increases in the cost of finer quality emeralds. Emerald is such a unique and beautiful gemstone. While other attractive gems such as tsavorite and chrome tourmaline have their own unique tones of green, it is hard to equal the rich color of fine emerald."

Philip Zahm is a member of ICA, AGS and AGTA and a consultant to *The Gem Guide*.

Philip Zahm Designs will be at AGTA this February, booth 202. (PhilipZahm.com)

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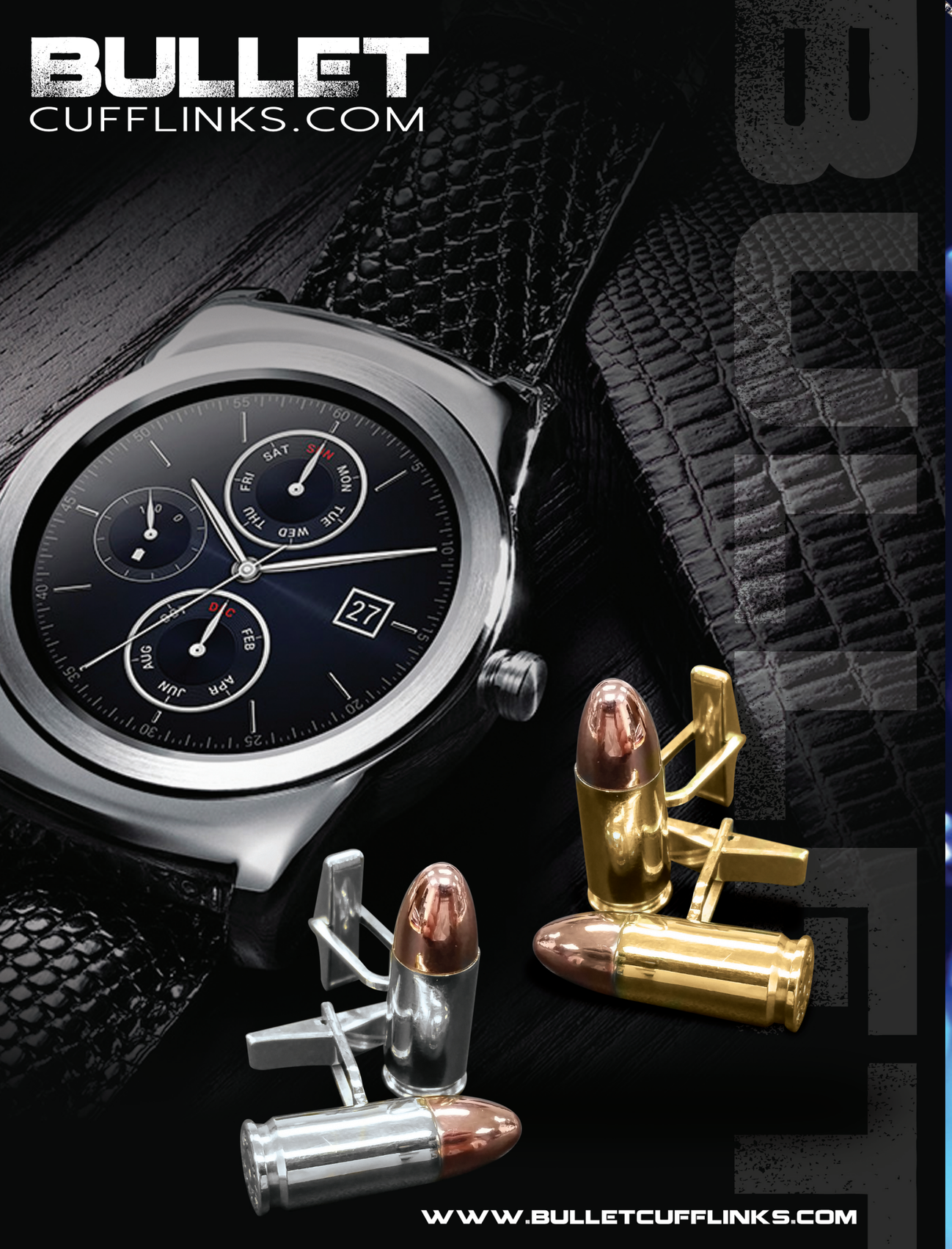

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COLOMBIA'S ELUSIVE EMERALDS

When we see the sparkle of a beautiful gemstone in a piece of jewelry, the thought of where it came from doesn't usually enter our minds. A recent tour of emerald mines in Colombia, however, gives new meaning to the term "mine to market."

By Cynthia Unninayar

A miner holds an emerald inside the famed Muzo mine (photo: MUZO).

Before the day had dawned over Colombia's capital city, I was among 38 intrepid adventurers who set out on a six-hour trip from Bogotá to the small town of Chivor in the eastern part of the province of Boyacá. It was the first stop on our trek to visit some of Colombia's most famous emerald mines.

From Legend to Reality

Many gemstones come steeped in the history of discovery, intrigue and adventure, but few have a past like the Colombian emerald.

The early Indians collected and fashioned emerald crystals as early as 500 A.D. They were worshiped, used in jewelry and had an important role in sacrificial offerings such as the infamous El Dorado ceremony on Lake Guatavita, northeast of Bogotá.

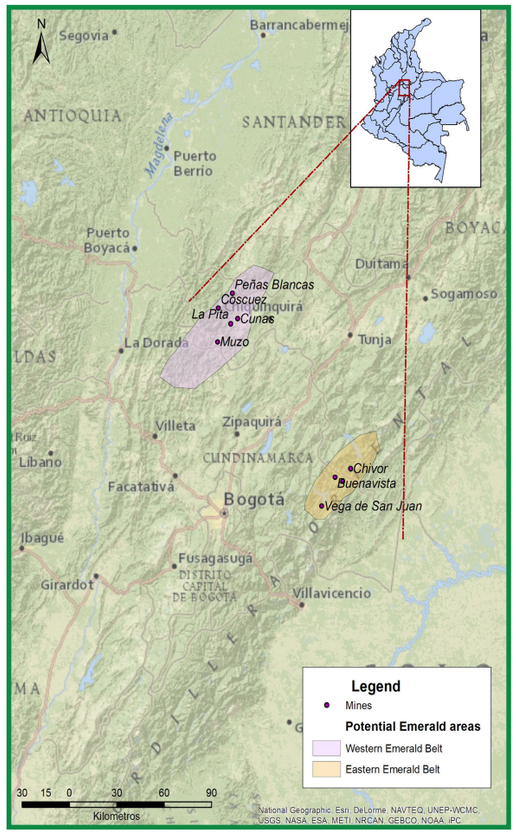
One legend relating to Colombian emeralds tells of Fura and Tena, two humans who were created by the god Ares in order to populate the Earth. Ares specified that they had to remain faithful to each other in order to retain eternal youth. Fura disobeyed, though, and their immortality was taken away. After they died, Ares took pity on them and turned them into two cliffs protected from storms and serpents.

Inside their depths, Fura's tears turned into emeralds. Today, symbolic guardians of Colombia's emerald zone, the Fura and Tena cliffs rise 840m and 500m, respectively, above the Rio Minería valley, some 30km north of the famed Muzo mines, among the largest in the country.

The Fura and Tena cliffs, symbolic guardians of the emerald zone in the western part of the Boyacá Department, are the subject of ancient legends regarding the formation of Colombia's emeralds (photo: Intb).

As time went by, though, Fura's tears were not the only ones shed in Colombia's turbulent emerald saga.

When the Spanish Conquistadores arrived in the early 16th century, they took control of the Muzo area and enslaved the Muzo Indians, forcing them to work in the mines. By the end of the 16th century, both Chivor and Muzo, in what is now the Boyacá Department, were being vigorously worked using Indian slave labor. In 1871, some 61 years after Colombia's independence from Spain in 1810, the new government took over ownership of the mines, granting mining rights to various private companies. More power struggles, lawless disorder and violence followed.



Emerald deposits are mainly found on the eastern ridge of the Andes Mountains that run NE-SW through Colombia. The three main mining areas are Chivor, located in the eastern part of the Boyacá Department, and Muzo and Cosquez in the western part of the province (source: Agencia Nacional de Minería).

The Emerald Wars

In 1946, the mines of Muzo came under the administration of the Banco de la República. In 1968, the state created a mining corporation (Esmeralda de Colombia) to take control. It awarded contracts to private families, but the robberies and violence continued until the army was forced to close the mines in 1973.

In 1976, private consortia entered the scene, with a resulting free-for-all. By the mid-1980s, a leader of the Medellín drug cartel, Rodríguez Gacha, partner of the infamous Pablo Escobar, incited the rivalry between two local groups into an all-out war in his attempt to take over the mines. The ensuing *Green Wars* or *Emerald Wars* claimed thousands of lives, with estimates ranging up to 10,000 or more.

It wasn't until 1991, when a process, brokered by the Catholic Church, established a relative peace dominated by the so-called *Emerald Czar*, Victor Carranza. Working in the mines as a child, Carranza fought his way to the top, and by his mid-20s received one of the area's first official mining licenses. His ascendancy was not, however, a romantic rags-to-riches tale, but an intense story of power, violence and death.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Boyacá was left to its own devices since the Colombian government was busy fighting left-wing rebel groups. Law and order in the region was often maintained by mercenary armies supported by the local barons, such as Carranza.

After the Emerald Wars, Carranza emerged as one of the most powerful players in the Colombian emerald scene. Surviving several assassination attempts, he became both protector and warlord, and, importantly, owner of the large Muzo mine.

Today, times are dramatically different in Colombia, and its emerald story continues with our visits to the various mines.

A Bit of Geology

Most of the emerald deposits are located on the eastern ridge of the Andes Mountains that run northeast-southwest through Colombia. The three main mining areas are Chivor, located in the eastern part of Boyacá Department, and Muzo and Cosquez in the western part of the province.

Colombian emeralds are different from other emeralds in that they are the only ones in the world to be associated with sedimentary rock rather than igneous rock. The tectonic movements that created the Andes Mountains forced the elements of emeralds (beryllium, chromium and vanadium, which give the gem its green color) into liquid and gaseous states that moved into cracks in the surrounding sedimentary material.

They eventually cooled and crystallized in veins with hydrothermal brine that washed out impurities such as iron. Often associated with quartz, pyrite, calcite and other minerals, deposits of this vein-type ore are estimated to have been formed 40 to 65 million years ago.

The sedimentary layers are heavily faulted and folded, and are mostly shales and argillites with some blocks of carbonaceous limestone present near the top of the stratigraphic section. The calcite vein material that may contain emerald crystals is oriented in various directions within the shale and in some instances they may intersect. >>

Chivor

After six hours, we arrive at the small town of Chivor. The weather is comfortably cool, since we are at an elevation of 2300m.

The first Spanish mine can be traced back to the Chivor area in 1537. The green stones the Spaniards removed, however, were stained with the red blood of their Indian slaves, who died by the thousands.

When word got back to Pope Clement X about these atrocities, he convinced King Charles II to close the mine. Around 1675, it was sealed and then overtaken by vegetation. It remained lost for more than 220 years. The only clue to its whereabouts was a Spanish inscription: *The mines of Chivor are situated on the point of a ridge from which the Llanos (the vast grassy plains of eastern Colombia) of the Orinoco can be seen.*

In 1896, using this description as a guide, Pacho Restrepo crisscrossed 130 square kilometers of steep mountain terrain before he finally found the lost mine. And, then, it was by a stroke of luck. A dog had chased a *buruga* (groundhog-like animal) into its burrow and, as one of the men was was digging out the animal, he broke into one of the mine's tunnels. Restrepo's luck did not continue, however. Unable to make the mine pay off, he was forced to sell out.

After leaving the town of Chivor, our 4x4s jostle along a bumpy dirt road for 45 minutes until we reach the Manantial mine. After suiting up in rubber boots, hardhat, headlamp, gloves, black shirt and face mask, we follow our guide down a stairway leading to the main tunnel. Water that drains through the mountains fills the floor, and we slosh through several wet centimeters during the 1.7km walk through the narrow tunnel. Ventilation tubes run along the ceiling, but there are no lights. Divided into three groups, we follow one another single-file in the dark, with only our headlamps lighting the way.

The first 1.5km, we are told, contain no fine emeralds, only the inferior quality *moralla*. The black shale walls of the tunnel are wet and powdery. Merely touching them leaves thick black powder on our gloves. The tunnel follows veins of calcite, some with a yellowish color, that include quartz and pyrite. Several stalactite-like formations hang from the ceiling or from ventilation hoses, made of calcium salts deposited by the dripping water.

After 1.7km, the tunnels diverge and lead to an active face where the veins contain emeralds. Here the miners use picks and chisels to carefully remove the calcite without damaging the green gems. The emeralds from the Chivor area are bluish-green compared to the deep green stones found in Muzo. >>

Left top: Sign as we enter the town of Chivor (photo: Cynthia Unninayar). Center: Inside the Manantial mine, the group walks 1.7km through the narrow tunnel, which follows the calcite veins (photo: Erica Courtney). Bottom: Manantial owner, Uvaldo Montenegro, places an explosive into the shall wall of the tunnel (photo: Anthony Brooke).

Three images from the Manantial mine in Chivor, in the eastern part of Boyacá Department. Left: The tunnel follows the calcite veins (photo: Erica Courtney). Center: Samples of *morralla*, 10-12cm in size (photo: Gary Bowersox). Right: Large specimen (35cm in diameter) of quartz and calcite containing pyrite crystals (photo: Cynthia Unninayar).

The Cunas Mine

The next morning, we leave very early for an 11-hour ride to the western part of Boyacá. After leaving the main road, we spend hours on deeply rutted roads between steep mountains and deep valleys, as the 4x4s crawl along. The scenery is spectacular with high peaks and deep valleys blanketed in lush rainforest. The luxurious landscape is punctuated with various crops such as maize, sugar cane, coffee and cacao.

Our first stop is the Cunas mine in the Maripí district, near Muzo. Owned by Esmeraldas Santorrosa SA, the Cunas mine is one of the largest producers.

Outfitted again in our mine attire, the group descends a long stairway and begins an 800m walk through the tunnel. Large ventilation tubes are overhead, with water dripping from the ceiling, and black powdery shale on the walls. As we trudge through the water, we come to a section with no ventilation.

"Hurry through this area," we are told, to avoid breathing too much of the carbon dioxide buildup. It gives pause for thought about the early miners who did not have the "luxury" of mechanical ventilation.

Finally, we reach a "lift" that takes us down to another level with a tunnel leading to an active face. Here, we are deluged with rushing water, 30cm deep, covering the tunnel floor, making it hard to move. Again, it brings home the danger that miners face if the pumps were to stop working.

Despite the cool water at our feet and dripping on our heads, the mineshaft is like a sauna, with temperatures reaching 40°C and higher. >>

The group gets ready to enter the Cunas mine located in the Maripí district, near Muzo (photo: Cynthia Unninayar).

Erica Courtney walks carefully down the initial long stairway to reach the main tunnel in the Cunas mine (photo: Cynthia Unninayar).

Images from the Cunas mine in Maripí, in the western part of the Boyacá Department. Left: In one of the lower tunnels, more than 30cm of water, draining from the mountain above, rushed at our feet (photo: Ioannis Alexandris). Center: The active face is monitored by a closed circuit camera (photo: Cynthia Unninayar). Right: A miner removes emerald material from the active face (photo: Anthony Brooke).

The active face in the Cunas mine is worked by a small crew under the watchful eye of a closed circuit TV camera and a supervisor. Once the emeralds are removed from the vein, they are placed in a special plastic bag and then locked in a pouch. At the end of the shift, the bag is taken to the surface and locked in a vault.

Back at the Esmeraldas Santorrosa headquarters, we have lunch with the miners and get a quick tour of the facility. Safety and emergency oxygen equipment is housed in one of the rooms. Many of the miners live and eat at the compound, and the entire area is secured by heavily-armed guards. >>

Safety workers with some of the equipment they use in case of emergency in the Cunas mine (photo: Cynthia Unninayar).

Impressive central shaft in the Cunas mine where a "lift" takes miners down hundreds of meters below the surface to other tunnels on different levels (photo: Dacques Nini).

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Left: Sign near the Muzo town advertising a candidate for the local elections. Right: Remnants of mountains that were sliced away in earlier years by miners looking for the elusive emeralds. Today, open pit mining is prohibited (both photos: Cynthia Unninayar). Center: While we spent much time underground, we did enjoy the beautiful scenery and the local fauna, including this lovely butterfly that was captured on film by Erica Courtney.

Muzo

The next morning we head for the famed Muzo mine, elevation 800m, the most technically advanced of the three we visited. A lot of ink has been used writing about the storied past of this mine and its former owner, Victor Carranza.

In a way, the story of Muzo is representative of the changes that are occurring in Colombia. As mentioned earlier, Carranza rose from an impoverished childhood to become the undisputed and powerful Emerald Czar. At one point, he reportedly controlled more than 40 percent of Colombia's emerald production. One of his mines was the 500-year-old Muzo mine, which passed into the control of his company Tecminas in 1977.

As we drove into this area, we saw the remnants of entire mountains that had been sliced away by bulldozers and the miners who sought the elusive green gems in open-pit mines.

In the past, many tons of shale and emerald-bearing material were dumped into the valleys and the Rio Itoco, where thousands of expectant *guaqueros* would search for any stones missed by the miners. To protect the environment, open-pits are no longer allowed and all mining has moved underground.

In 2009, with emerald production falling, Carranza realized the need to modernize his mine. He sold half to a U.S.-based investment company, which formed Minería Texas Colombia (MTC) to exploit the mine.

As Carranza neared death in 2013 from cancer—the one enemy he was not able to defeat—he believed that without his presence and power to protect the interests of his family and the other owners of their share of the mine from outsiders, they would be in danger. So, he sold the remaining 50 percent of Muzo to MTC.

Thanks to MTC's injection of capital and technology, mine production began to modernize. Workers were given fair wages and social benefits. Safety and security measures were strengthened. MTC also began social initiatives to help the local communities, including assistance for schools and a clinic that provides care to some 1200 people.

The company also set up a cutting and grading facility in Bogotá, thus ensuring transparency of its emeralds from mine to market. MTC has big plans for the mine, and is doing a major launch in March at BaselWorld to introduce its new MUZO brand. >>

Guaqueros pick through waste shale in hopes of finding emeralds on the banks of the Rio Itoco, near the Muzo mine (photo: Warren Boyd).

About this same time, the government of Colombia wanted to transform its mining sector, mostly made up of small, non-regulated and non-tax-paying companies. It began a program of certification and let it be known to large foreign players that they were welcome. "Colombia is open for business," declared Dr. Santiago Ángel, president of the Asociación Colombiana de Minería recently. The government's actions have reduced illegal mining, improved living conditions, better environmental safeguards, stable supply, and regular pricing.

In addition to MTC, Gemfields is also entering the Colombian emerald scene with its recent purchase of 70 percent of the productive Cosquez mine as well as mining titles covering 20,000 hectares in the general Muzo and Quípama districts.

The face of MTC is director Charles Burgess, who is the liaison between the mine and the investment group in Texas. But his task is not an easy one. "It is no secret that robbery and theft are common along the supply chain," he stated. "I am not talking about poor miners, but well organized criminals in large-scale operations." He referred to two deadly attacks on tunnels in the Muzo mine complex by well-armed elements, requiring the help of the police and army to quell the situation. The latest attack was in May 2015, when anywhere from 1000 to 3000 people, according to different estimates, stormed the mine for at least two days, until the police finally gained control. Industry watchers speculate that losses were in the millions, with numbers ranging from US$12M to US$42M.

As our caravan of 4x4s enters the Muzo mine area (MTC controls some 46,000 hectares), the armed guards are quite apparent. Rows of curled barbed wire surround the immediate entrances to the mines. Security is taken so seriously that we are not allowed to take our cameras or phones into the mine.

Divided again into three groups, we suit up and follow our guide through long, lit and ventilated tunnels to an impressive large round central shaft called *Clavada* that descends into the Earth some 286m. We take the Clavada "lift" down 140m to another tunnel. The white calcite veins along the black shale walls are much like those in the other two mines. At one point we come to a steep 10m shaft that we climb straight down—with difficulty—on a ladder fashioned from rebar. In the gallery below were many more veins, culminating in a face that seemed to be mined out. >>

Top left: Armed guards greet our caravan of 4x4s as we enter the general Muzo mining area (photo: Cynthia Unninayar).
Top right: Security is taken very seriously around the entrances to the Muzo mine. Fazil Ozen looks at rows of curled barbed wire fencing (photo: Erica Courtney).
Left: MTC has modernized the Muzo mine and instituted many changes since 2006 (photo: MUZO).

After emeralds are recovered from the active face in the Muzo mine, they are placed in a special pouch and taken to the surface (photo: MUZO).

A sample of emeralds in matrix from the famed Muzo mine (photo: Warren Boyd).

Though we entered the Muzo mine from the Puerto Arturo entrance, we left from the Catedral shaft. These two sections, when combined with the Tequendama section, make up several kilometers of tunnels that ostensibly contain the richest emeralds in Muzo.

Upon our return to the surface, we were invited by our hosts to have lunch with the miners. We asked some of the Colombians who accompanied our group on the trip about a construction site we passed along the way. They explained that it is going to be a military base, created to provide protection to Muzo and other mines in the area. This is further confirmation that the government is serious about bringing change to its mining industry and protecting companies that bring not only revenue to its coffers, but a better life for many of its citizens.

The distance back to Bogotá is only around 100km, a half-hour as the crow flies or should I say as the helicopter flies, which seems to be the favored form of transportation for mine owners. For us, however, it took more than five hours, most of it on small rutted dirt roads, shaken to the core. Back in Bogotá, we bid farewell to our friends, all of whom enjoyed learning about Colombia's Elusive Emeralds.

A group photo against the backdrop of Colombia's beautiful scenery. Note the gray mine tailings on some of mountains.

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After Holiday Blues… Actually, Hopefully Green?

Well, the holidays are done….whewwww, and we made it! How in the world did another year go by? Here goes the time to be extra creative to drive traffic into your store again. Unless, you can make up a new holiday season for January. Lol. I know Valentine's Day is around the corner, so that's good news coming

By Michael Roberts, VP Marketing, Midas Chain

Don't forget to make a list and check it twice! Oh, that's right we are done with holiday sayings. Anyway, if you haven't started a database of important dates for your customers, please make that a priority. You really should know the birthday and anniversary date of every single person and family member that walks into your store. That's right, every single person! Not just your customers, but potential customers. You have to entice them with at least a giveaway or some type of discount card towards a future purchase. Maybe you even want to give a percentage off the bill just for this information, with a maximum dollar amount, of course.

The next time someone pays for a repair for $20, imagine you say to them that they can get an extra 5% off just for that info. Of course, you have to adjust the percentages for higher ticket items. Don't you think that paying $1 to know this information would be worth it? Also, make sure you have a checkbox on the card that says they opted in to receive emails. This is really important, because you need something to show in case you are ever asked.

Once you get the information, make sure to use it! How??? You have to get an email and mailing address of course. You really have to make one person responsible to put this into something like an Excel spreadsheet. Then sort it by the month to know when a special date is coming up. I think that you should send this out at least a month before each date is coming. Maybe some type of act-early incentive wouldn't be a bad idea either.

That same spreadsheet should be used to keep track of the items that customers mention that they like, as well. When a relative comes in to buy a gift it's invaluable to be able to say "I know exactly what they want." Please keep an extremely organized system in place for this! A book should be kept open just for writing wish list items. Later on, they should be transferred to that master data sheet as soon as possible.

The most important part of this article is to really know your customers! Also, let me know if you reinvent a new holiday selling season in January!

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Extraordinary Emeralds

By Cynthia Unninayar

Jewels by Jacob

Takat Jewels

Pamela Huizenga

Emeralds have captured the imagination since they were first discovered more than 4000 years ago in Egypt. Today, the beautiful green gems come from around the world, but mainly Africa, Colombia, Afghanistan, Brazil and Russia. Showcased in a variety of creative designs, by the world's finest artists, the gems truly represent very extraordinary emeralds.

Oscar Heyman

USA Studs

Yael Designs

Jack Kelege

Lornie Mueller, Lithos Jewelry

Antonini

65-ct Colombian emerald by Caram

Philip Zahm Designs

Bavna

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Alessio Boschi

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Samuel Sylvio

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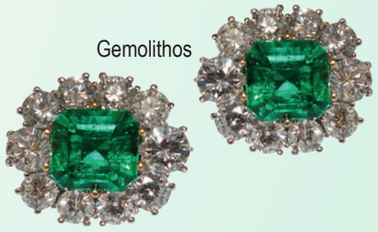

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12.85-ct Colombian emerald by MUZO

Outfit by Monique L'huillier
(Photo: Frazer Harrison for NYFW).

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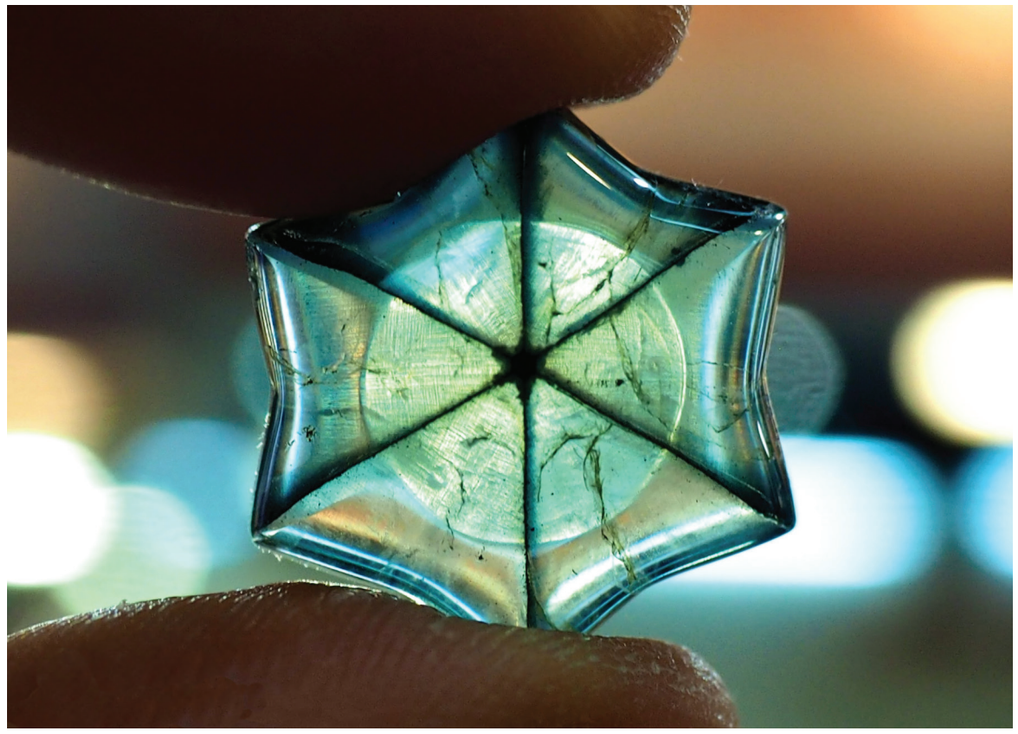
THE AMAZING TRAPICHE

Gemstone enthusiasts understand feeling passionate towards a certain variety of gem—the kind that speaks to them whenever they see it, the kind they can't leave behind no matter the price. But, if they ever do leave it behind, they never forget it, and always regret it. One such category of gemstones is the very unusual *trapiche*.

By Barbara Wheat



It's a gemstone that you don't see very often, but one that is very popular with gem enthusiasts around the world. For those of you who are not familiar with this hexagonal rarity, the word ***trapiche*** comes from the Spanish word for a wheel with six spokes used to crush sugarcane. Pronounced trah-pee-chay, the Spanish wheel has a striking resemblance to the hexagonal pattern found in these remarkable gems.

When it comes to these unusual gems, one of the most knowledgeable experts is Jeffery Bergman, the director of Primagem in Thailand. With more than 40 years of experience in gemstones and jewelry, he understands the kind of passion many people feel towards gems, especially the trapiche variety.

Bergman's name is so connected with these rare and unusual gems that people contact him from all over the world to seek his opinion about them.

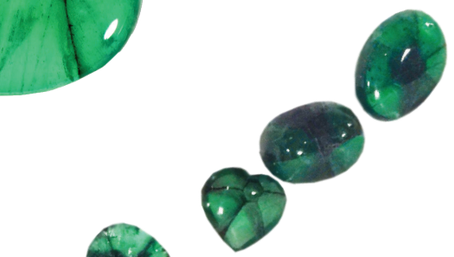
He describes trapiche gems and the fascination with hexagonal patterns as "a study of hexagonal geometry encountered in nature, religion, mysticism, science, culture, architecture, art, and gemstones."

Bergman notes that geometric shapes have always appealed to humankind, with the first encounters most likely coming in the form of honeycombs or snowflakes.

The gem first identified with the trapiche structure was the emerald. "Trapiche patterns in emerald are due to bands of inclusions that radiate from the center of the crystal—the optic axis—toward the prism faces," he explains. "Unlike moving asterism in rubies and sapphires, the fixed 'star' pattern in trapiche emeralds is caused by the simultaneous hexagonal growth of albite, often mixed with graphite."

Matched pair of Colombian trapiche emeralds, total weight 7.30 carats. (Photo: Jeffrey Bergman)

A 6.24-ct cloud-cut trapiche emerald set in gold with diamond accents by Erica Courtney.



Colombian trapiche emeralds by Valencia (Colombia).

Cufflinks with trapiche emeralds set in gold with diamond accents by Pamela Huizenga.

Opposite page: One of a remarkable matched pair of Colombian "starfish" trapiche emeralds, 24-carats total weight. (Photo: Jeffrey Bergman)

He described the variety coming only from the nation of Colombia as having "six spoke-like albite-graphite 'rays' emanating from a hexagonal center with the areas in between filled with emerald."

Bergman also has, without a doubt, the largest private collection of trapiche gemstones in the world, many of which would be welcome additions to many museum collections.

Emerald is not the only gem with a trapiche structure. Ruby, sapphire and tourmalines have also been found with trapiche-like patterns, but quality specimens are very rare. Trapiche patterns in sapphires are due to strong color banding parallel to the hexagonal growth zoning. Other non-inclusion based trapiche gems include garnet, quartz and chalcedony.

Regardless of the type of this extraordinary gem or its color, one thing is very certain. It is truly an amazing trapiche.

What's in Your Emerald?

Emeralds that are not enhanced in any way are extremely rare and can command very high prices. To make these beautiful green stones available to a wider audience, most emeralds are treated in some way. To learn more about emeralds and why and how they are enhanced, *Jewelry Showcase* caught up recently with Dr. Pornsawat Wathanakul in Bangkok, where she is director of the Gem & Jewelry Institute of Thailand (GIT), which includes the prestigious GIT Gem Testing Laboratory, one of seven labs in the world to be members of the Laboratory Manual Harmonisation Committee. As a side note, the GIT team will be at the GIT booth at AGTA, February 2 to 7, 2015.

Interview conducted by Cynthia Unninayar

Q: Could you talk a bit about emeralds and why they are enhanced?

PW: Nearly all emeralds have inclusions, fissures or cracks that occur naturally during their formation. These inclusions are almost always visible to the naked eye. While some people appreciate inclusions as a natural and identifying feature of the gem—and a part of their intrinsic beauty—others prefer a stone with the fewest inclusions and the greatest clarity possible.

Dr. Pornsawat Wathanakul, director of GIT, one of only seven labs in the world that are members of the LMHC.

Q: How are the inclusions, or their effects, eliminated?

PW: Flaws in the stone block light from being transmitted, resulting in less transparency in the stone. If the fissures are open to the surface, they can be filled with materials that have a refractive index close to emerald, thus allowing more light to pass through. This enhances the clarity of the stone by reducing the visibility of the fissures and/or fractures.

Q: What are these filler materials and are they new?

PW: Treatments and processes to improve the appearance of emeralds date back to ancient Greece, where oils were used to fill the cracks. This changed the clarity, which allowed more light to pass through, giving a better quality. Today, the most common substances are colorless to near colorless oils, including essential oils and natural and artificial resins. The clarity enhancement is classified generally as *Minor*, *Moderate* or *Significant*, depending on the extent of the filled fractures.

Q: How are these treatments carried out and are they permanent?

PW: Cedarwood oil is one of the most common substances since only a minute amount is needed, and its refractive index is slightly below that of emerald. Since it is thick, the oil is heated to allow it to penetrate the fissures. This treatment is not permanent and needs to be disclosed to customers so that they can better care for their emerald jewelry. For example, emeralds should not be cleaned with ultrasonic jewelry cleaners and should never be subjected to heat or harsh chemicals and solvents as this may remove the oil treatment. The world of treatments is constantly evolving, however, and some companies have stated that their fillers are more or less permanent.

Q: Is it possible to detect these treatments?

PW: Using a microscope, you can tell if the fractures reach the stone's surface. If they don't, then the stone may not be treated. If they do, then probably there is some sort of oil or other substance inside. The oil and/or other fillers in fissures and fractures would normally show blue-yellow flashes when viewed under a microscope when the emerald is tilted back and forth to reflect the light. Yet, distinguishing between types and extents of treatments requires a lab with experienced gemologists and sophisticated equipment. A testing report from a trusted lab is always advised.

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THE MARKETING JEWEL OF THE MOMENT

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what is the worth of a video brochure?

By Dan Scott, Brand Architect

I continue to be blessed with the opportunity to market with, and through, new technology platforms. Nearly each month a new tech tool for marketing is tested and I am often asked to rate it, or hired to employ it. Most are more entertaining then practical, or are priced out of budget approval.

In fact, it's seldom I find something new and tangible that speaks to the now, with the ability to communicate in a captivating and controlled fashion. Rewind to one year ago—I had lunch with two senior marketing gurus who were discussing the advent of the *video brochure.* Curious, I contacted Ryan Kuglar, founder and president of the Los Angeles-based entertainment and innovation group, Ideal Content, the creator of the *Original Video Brochure.*

While Mr. Kugler has a strong history of distributing film/video productions, and decades of promotional product alignments, his background is not in broadcast or production. Instead, he masterminds how great content is best presented, placed and promoted. Such an example is indeed delivered within the Ideal Content *Video Brochure*.

At first glance, the Video Brochure appears to be a modern direct-mail piece, seemingly housing something special within. This is due to its sleek, yet box-like structure. And, it is sturdy and lightweight in a card-like frame.

Think of the now passé musical birthday cards of the past. Then, update that concept to an extremely sturdy card stock with high definition graphics printed on all slender sides of the card. Next, replace the dated music with stereo sound emitting from crisp video on a well-sized HD flat screen monitor nestled within the unit. The video is triggered by opening the unit and it plays flawlessly.

The viewer is immersed in the brand presentation taking place in the palm of the hand. The Video Brochure allows the user to control all aspects of the volume, stop, rewind and play/re-play features, which may be anywhere from thirty seconds to eight hours in length.

The last element is not so obvious—the video card is not meant to be disposable. It is completely rechargeable, plus the video content may be replaced indefinitely through a USB connection hidden in the piece.

Further advancements include WiFi video uploads to change content when the unit isn't in your possession. Advanced features include a touchscreen, ear bud jack, and frankly any connector you wish because all units are custom made. Battery life exceeds 2.5 hours non-stop and will loop forever if plugged into an A/C outlet.

Ideal for jewelry store night window displays, jewelry in-case presentations, sales trainings, new product offerings, VIP events to corporate reports, annuals and fundraising efforts, the Video Brochure is ready to mail as is, when postage is printed on the unit and it is secured by a wafer seal.

We caught up with Ryan Kugler on this innovative advancement that is now available on the market and had a chance to ask some specific questions for some revealing answers.

Ryan Kugler, president of Ideal Content, maker of the innovative and original Video Brochure.

An example from Luxe Licensing on how the Video Brochure could be used to showcase jewelry as part of a brand's marketing stragegy.

One of Ideal Content's clients that uses the original Video Brochure to enhance its other forms of marketing.

Q: Why did you spend so much time developing motion and sound within a hand-held, rechargeable and reloadable content video brochure?

Ryan Kugler: The concept completely captivated me at first glance. A mixture of old and new technology was neatly presented in an attention-grabbing package held in my hands. Hundreds of video brochures later, 99 percent of the people I presented it to said "Wow." No one expects what they see and hear.

Q: Who is using the video brochure?

RK: We have an ever-growing list of clients from many verticals including real estate, entertainment, automotive, hospitality, technology and investment corporations. We also have had a global watch brand, but no jewelry retailer or designer to date. Of course, PR and ad agencies love this. B2B video brochures are as popular as B2C pieces. There really is no limit as to how you may touch your target customer and guide them towards a call to action.

Q: How do you price out this offering?

RK: Our pricing is very competitive. Our units use all new parts. They do not break or stop working. We custom make the Video Brochure for our clients, so it's all made to order, but doesn't take a long time to produce. Our pricing for the video brochures varies depending on the screen size/unit size with a minimum order of 100 units. We offer many different screen sizes, additional pages, slots for business cards, flash (USB) drives, etc. When it is delivered, the unit is fully charged and loaded with the customer's video that plays the second anyone opens it. Price quotes may be received by emailing info@luxelicensing.com.

Q: History has proven that what is innovative today will become commonplace or replaceable tomorrow. What is the future of the Video Brochure?

RK: We now offer jumping to chapters in video, touchscreen monitors, even higher resolution video than the current excellent playback, ear bud jacks, USB connections, and the ability to change your video content via WiFi, not just by hardwire. The future holds even more surprises.

Dan Scott, Brand Architect, may be contacted at 201.294.3697 or by emailing info@danscott.com.

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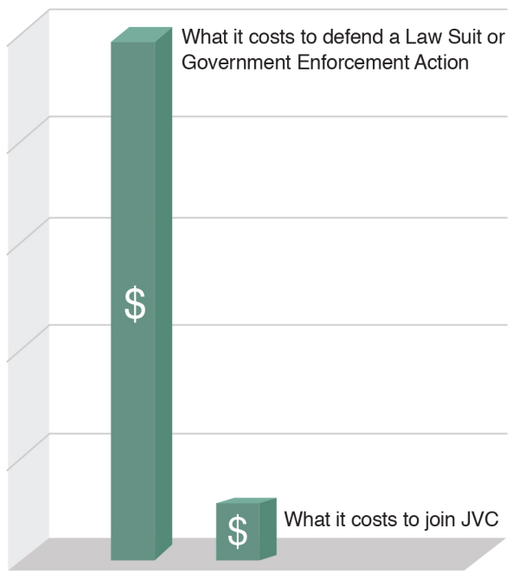

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