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# IN LOVING COLOUR

Coloured gemstones, diamonds a hot option  
for engagement rings



Vancouver-based Poppy Finch offers engagement rings, pictured, with innovative settings and unique stones at a variety of price points. This allows the buyer to purchase a ring that better reflects individual style preferences.

These days, engagement rings come in a rainbow of colours.

From metal tones (rose gold, yellow gold and platinum, to name a few), to centre stones in a veritable buffet of gemstones including rubies, sapphires and emeralds — the world of wedding rings and bands has become much more pigmented than it used to be.

“Traditionally, the diamond was perceived to be the only stone appropriate for engagement,” says Amanda He, founder of the Vancouver-based fine jewelry brand Poppy Finch. “But today, brides want their engagement rings to reflect their styles — for example, vintage, family heirlooms or their favourite-coloured stones.”

He says embracing coloured engagement rings is one small part of a larger cultural (and multi-generational) shift away from the age-old, follow-the-crowd mentality.

“People now value and encourage individualism much more than a decade ago,” she explains. “We want to be who we are, and not be told what we should or shouldn’t be doing.”

The interest in wearing a ring every day that best represents a person’s everyday personal style has prompted brands large and small to offer a wider selection of rings featuring innovative settings, unique stones and options at a variety of price points.

“Personal style and lifestyle is important to today’s modern brides,” says Wendy Eagan, vice-president of Tiffany & Co. Canada. “Coloured gemstones reflect the wearer’s individual personality and style.”

While Tiffany & Co. continues to offer an extensive selection of diamond engagement rings to shoppers — including the iconic six-prong Tiffany Setting, which celebrated its 130th anniversary last year — Eagan says the increased interest in gemstones has allowed the historic American jewelry brand to expose its customers to a whole new area of its history.

“Tiffany’s gemstone heritage remains vibrantly alive with many options to choose from, including tourmalines, exquisite emeralds and sapphires, tanzanite and morganites — two stones that have played a major part of Tiffany’s reputation,” Eagan explains of its range of available rings.

As for diamond devotees, Eagan says they’re also shifting toward colour — with yellow diamonds proving especially popular in Vancouver — and fancy cuts.

Engagement rings now come in a rainbow of coloured stones. Tiffany gemstone and diamond rings in platinum, pictured at top: Emerald-cut emerald (\$47,400), oval tanzanite (\$13,600), cushion-cut spessartite (\$40,700), emerald-cut yellow sapphire (\$33,900) and pear-shaped red spinel (\$38,000). TIFFANY & CO.

"Fancy-shaped diamonds are also a great way to express individuality," Eagan says. Pear, heart and emerald cuts are some of the most common, fancy types.

One major factor shoppers should keep in mind when searching for the perfect gemstone is durability. This is, after all, a piece of jewelry that will ostensibly be worn day in and day out for many years to come.

"My favourite gemstones as alternatives to a colourless diamond are aquamarine, morganite, sapphire, moonstone or white topaz," says Vancouver-based jewelry designer Leah Alexandra. "These are all high on the Mohs hardness scale (a scale created in 1812 by German geologist Friedrich Mohs for testing a material's hardness), so are great options in terms of long-term durability."

As for cuts, Alexandra says emerald and oval are proving popular among gemstone engagement ring shoppers.

Looking to stand further apart from the ring-wearing masses? Alexandra suggests donning a stack of gemstone rings rather than one ring with a single feature stone.

"Each stacking ring might have stones to it that somehow tell the couple's story," she says. "Or, they might add to it later on; for example, stacking their children's birthstones."

In addition to signalling a shift away from a stone that is often referred to as a mother's or grand-



The Open Diamond Ring (\$595), left, and an oval-shaped Blue Sapphire Diamond Ring (\$880) from the Vancouver-based brand Poppy Finch.

mother's stone, another major draw to non-diamond gemstones centres around affordability.

These days, it seems millennials — and other cost-savvy shoppers — aren't interested in splashing out solely on colourless diamonds. They're looking for options.

"Affordability is a factor," Alexandra says of the popularity of gemstones. "When you find a ring that excites you just as much as a diamond ring, and can put that money towards your honeymoon or a down payment on a home, why not?"

"It's a great way to minimize one of the many expenses that come with getting married."

He agrees. She says that these days brides and grooms-to-be are choosing to do away with outdated buying guidelines held by generations past.

"In the past, the traditional rule of thumb was that the groom should spend three months' salary on the engagement ring," she says. "Today, a lot of women do not want

the groom to spend that much on a ring or throw a big wedding. They would rather save that money for travelling or buying a home."

So, just how much more affordable can gemstone rings be? Well, as an example, a Poppy Finch ring featuring a .50-carat blue sapphire with three small diamonds on an 14-karat gold band costs \$880. A comparable 14-karat gold ring with a .50-carat solitaire diamond ring from a jewelry store would cost at least \$1,300 (depending, of course, on several factors such as cut, clarity and colour).

Despite the changing tastes of engagement ring shoppers, one thing remains largely the same, and that is a ring's ability to symbolize commitment and affection between two people.

"A symbol worthy of true love," Eagan summarizes.

And love, after all, has nothing to do with the colour, cut — or cost — of a stone.

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Coloured gemstones such as morganite and tanzanite are proving popular options for engagement rings. The Frida ring in tanzanite and London-Blue Topaz, left, \$140, and the Rainbow Ring, \$120, with tanzanite are set in gold-plated sterling silver by Vancouver-based jewelry designer Leah Alexandra.