

# design YOUR OWN BLING

Colourful designs take centrestage at this year's Singapore International Jewellery Show, where you can also design your own jewellery. GLADYS CHUNG reports

Not only can you view and buy fine jewellery at this year's Singapore International Jewellery Show (SIJS), you can also design your own pieces.

The Jewellery Design and Management International School (JDMIS) has turned its booth into a high-tech design studio and workshop at the annual event, which runs till Sunday at Marina Bay Sands.

Designers will showcase the creative process, from making prototypes and casting wax models to the finishing touches.

You can design your own pieces at the booth for free. Images of the designs will be e-mailed to those who want to turn their virtual creations into real pieces.

Experts from the JDMIS will also give talks on various topics, from jewellery fabrication to tips on choosing pearls.

The Singapore-based Far East Gemological Institute will also be giving lectures on gemstones like rubies and opals.

This year, some 180 exhibitors from 25 countries are taking part.

They include Zydo and RCM Sri from Italy, Hong Kong's Tai Fook, Hans D. Krieger from Germany and Hartfords Jewellery and Gems from Australia.

The show is expected to draw at least 15,000 visitors. It has been extended by a day this year at the exhibitors' request and based on customer feedback.

"The retailers want to get more mileage out of the event as they are hoping to attract tourists and those on their way to the casinos," says Mr Ho Nai Chuen, president of the Singapore Jewellers Association.

The jewellery on show this year, which includes many pieces fashioned from coloured gemstones, is worth more than \$120 million.

One showstopper is a set of three red spinel gemstones from a Malaysian jeweller, DeGem, including a 46-carat stone on a pendant and a 25-carat pair of earrings, which is going for \$5 million.

Another highlight is a 55-carat green tsavorite – a rare green garnet often found in East Africa – also from DeGem, valued at almost \$1.6 million.

One more rock star to look out for is the \$2.18 million, 92-carat sapphire, which is blue-violet in daylight but turns light purple under indoor lighting.

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(Left and below) A set of three red spinel gemstones, including a 46-carat stone on a pendant and a 25-carat pair of earrings, \$5 million, from DeGem

(Above) Nouveau black and green jade necklace with diamonds set on 18K white gold, \$7,978, from Lee Hwa Jewellery

(Left) Tesse gem-encrusted flower ring with diamonds, rubies and sapphires set on 18K rose gold, \$6,000, from TianPo Jewellery

(Left) Ring, colour-change sapphire flanked by tsavorites and diamonds set on 18K white gold, \$80,000, from DeGem

A 92-carat sapphire, which is blue-violet in daylight (left) but turns light purple under indoor lighting (right), \$2.18 million, from DeGem

These showpieces are a nod to the market's demand for coloured stones.

At least 80 per cent of the stalls are ablaze with sparkly gemstones of every colour.

"In the past, consumers come to the shows to look for huge diamonds for investment," says Mr Ho. "These days, they are more concerned with finding colourful gemstones that will set them apart."

The looming debt crisis in Europe, however, could cast a pall over the jewellery industry, he notes.

Consumers might cut back on their spending and take a wait-and-see approach when buying jewellery.

This is where colourful stones which are less popular but more affordable come in.

Gemstones such as spinel and amethyst are just as beautiful and see value for money, says Ms Tanja Sadow, director at the JDMIS.

"There are so many wonderful gems worth acquiring. There are 3,800 mineral species with more than 28 varieties and we discover around 80 new minerals each year," she notes.

"There are many exquisite alternatives to the traditional rubies, emeralds and sapphires that most people associate with fine jewellery."

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