

I have never hated a man enough to give  
his diamonds back.

*Zsa Zsa Gabor (1919 - )*



# CHAPTER 2

## Diamonds





## Antwerp and Diamonds, a Love Story

Antwerp has long been associated with diamonds. By 2007, more than half of the world's consumption of rough, as well as polished and industrial diamonds, is traded in Antwerp, realising an annual turnover of 42 billion US\$.



The diamond sector represents 12% of the Flemish export and is one of the most important ambassadors and economic mainstays of the country.

1800 diamond companies have their headquarters in this heavily guarded zone, with its four diamond bourses. Specialised diamond banks, security and transport firms, brokers, consultants, schools, travel agents and of course hotels and restaurants are all part of this lively society.

We shall probably never know when the first diamonds were discovered, but we do know that, from ancient times until the eighteenth century, diamonds came from India.

In the 14th and 15th century Venice became the most important world trade

centre because of its link and flourishing trade relations with the East. The city even became the most important mercantile republic in the western world. It enjoyed a monopoly of the diamond trade for diamonds on its way to the main cities of southern Germany up to its final destination in Bruges. Lying as it did at the far end of the trade route, Bruges gradually developed into a flourishing diamond-cutting centre and the city's reputation in this field steadily increased within time. Although Bruges maintained its pre-eminent position up to the end of the fourteenth century, within fifty years it began to decline because of the silting of the Zwin. The diamond trade, along with Bruges's many other economic activities, gradually shifted to the city of Antwerp





© Karl Bruninx

since the second half of the 15th century. Antwerp offered newer and better facilities for communications and exchange.

In the sixteenth century Antwerp was an expanding and flourishing city. By this time Antwerp (and Lisbon) became the most important world centre(s) for diamonds and Antwerp specifically already played a determining role in the development of diamond-working techniques. It is significant, for example, that François I did not call on the diamond cutters of Paris but placed his orders with the craftsmen of Antwerp.

Antwerp was at that time the commercial heart of Europe: approximately 40% of the world trade passed through its port. Naturally the diamond business occupied a favoured place. In fact diamond 'manufacturing' (cutting/polishing) and diamond trade used to be a flourishing business in Antwerp until the 17th century. This because fewer diamonds from the Indian mines became available. In 1727 diamonds were already imported from Brazil, but more than 160 of the 180 guild members (of the Guild for Diamond and Rubin Cutters) were unemployed. The liberation of the trade in jewellery and gems in 1754 made the situation even worse for the diamond 'manufacturers' (cutters/polishers). The diamond merchants on the other hand were better off during the 17th and 18th century in Antwerp.

So, although the northern Netherlands (Amsterdam) acquired more grip on the diamond business, Antwerp's decline did not occur overnight and despite internal struggles such as the conflict between the New Guild of Diamond Cutters and the rich merchants, the city's prestige remained apparently intact up to the middle of the seventeenth century. The diamond trade itself continued to flourish. For example, the French king Louis XVI ordered the re-polishing of his crown jewellery in Antwerp in 1787.

During the first half of the 18th century, the Englishman James Dormer (1708-1758) tried to establish a monopoly for the import of Brazilian diamonds but the Portuguese king gave Amsterdam the monopoly. This was one

of the reasons for the decline of Antwerp as diamond trade centre at that time.

From the 19th century onwards, Antwerp could again profile itself as Diamond City and World Diamond Centre. In 1866 the first diamonds were discovered in South Africa. This discovery, followed a few years later by the discovery of the Kimberley deposits and the fabulous Kimberley era as well as the rise of the now-famous De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. resulted in large-scale prospecting and mining activities, which brought Europe massive supplies of rough diamonds. This massive influx of rough stones following the discoveries in South Africa was instrumental in contributing to the city's status of Antwerp as the world's leading diamond centre. Within a few months, this massive influx provided work for thousands of craftsmen, and the swift revival of diamond cutting in Antwerp was further stimulated by an ever-growing demand for gemstones.

The depression of the 1930s hit the diamond trade in Antwerp hard. The cutting shops were sometimes shut down completely for several weeks at a time. The situation remained difficult but things grew worse with the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1939 many Jewish businessmen fled the country and went to the United States, Portugal or England, where more than 500 diamond dealers from Antwerp continued to meet and to do business.

In an attempt to save as much of the existing diamond stocks as possible from the Germans, the 500 dealers in England transferred the diamonds there. In agreement with the British government, an organisation known as the Correspondence Office for the Diamond Industry was set up to register the diamonds and keep them for the duration of the war.

Thanks to this organisation large quantities of diamonds were returned to their owners after the city was liberated and the Antwerp diamond industry got off to a promising start when the war was ended. The Antwerp diamond business thanks its rise after World War II to the Jewish community in Antwerp.



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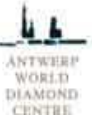
The city knew various Jewish families from the 16th century on, mostly with roots in Portugal. The Jewish community played an important role in the foundation of 'Beurs voor Diamanthatel' (1904), one of the four diamond bourses, and the launch of the 'Kempische' diamond craftsmanship. Today the diamond business is run by people from very different nationalities, of which the Indian community is nowadays the strongest.

The coordinating body and official representative of the diamond sector, is the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC): an official organisation, recognised internationally and acting as host, spokesperson and intermediary for the Belgian diamond community. AWDC is the Belgian diamond sector's official liaison with governments, and actively promotes support for the diamond sector, home and abroad ([www.awdc.be](http://www.awdc.be))



# The Antwerp Diamond Heritage

Diamonds love Antwerp



Antwerp is situated in Belgium, the heart of Europe. The city on the banks of the river Scheldt has always been a centre of commerce and culture.



HRD Awards 2007. A Night at the Opera. © D. B. Woodrow

Today, Antwerp is the major city of Flanders. It is situated at the crossroads of international traffic, at a half hour's drive from Brussels, the Belgian capital and the headquarters of the European Community.

Since 1447, Antwerp has been synonymous with quality diamonds and superior craftsmanship. Thanks to its harbour, Antwerp was a place of unlimited opportunities. The Diamond industry expanded considerably due to strong commercial relations with neighbours.

The **Antwerp World Diamond Centre** was born.

Lodewijck Van Bercken was said to have invented the process of polishing diamonds with diamonds. In his honour, a statue was erected at the Meir. Today, Antwerp still has the best diamond workers in the world.

**Antwerp Cut** is the trade mark for perfectly processed diamonds.

**Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC)** Founded in 1973 as the "**Hoge Raad voor Diamant**" (HRD) or the "**Diamond High Council**", and reformed into a private foundation called **Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC)** in 2007, AWDC is the officially recognised representative

organisation of the Belgian diamond trade and -industry, acting as a spokesman and co-ordinator of all activities in the diamond sector. It is the marketing organization of the Antwerp diamantaires.

Antwerp World Diamond Centre is more than ever committed to maintaining a healthy and prosperous diamond industry. Antwerp exports to over 90 countries, spreading the quality image and the philosophy of the Antwerp diamond sector.

#### **AWDC Marketing Department**

Visitors can appeal to the AWDC Marketing Department for any kind of information:





Trade proposals, promotional material, documentation service, backstage tour...

- **HRD Awards, an international Diamond Jewellery Contest**

Every two years the AWDC organizes the HRD Awards, an international diamond jewellery design competition with the chance for a jewellery designer to win not only a prestigious international award, but to stake his or her place on the global jewellery map. The HRD Awards is widely recognized as the world's leading design contest in creative and innovative diamond jewellery. The contest is open to all designers and to date it has promoted twenty years of creativity and experimentation in contemporary diamond jewellery design. More information on [www.hrdawards.be](http://www.hrdawards.be).

- **Antwerp Facets**

The Antwerp Facets is the Antwerp Trade magazine that keeps you posted on the current Antwerp Diamond market situation and much more. Issued 4 times a year. Antwerp Facets Online is the weekly internet version.

- **Antwerp Diamond Conference, the World Diamond Industry Forum**

The AWDC organizes the Antwerp Diamond Conference, at which world and industry leaders gather to address the issues of the day. In recent years the conference has become a hallmark event for the trade worldwide.

At the same time, it provides a platform for intensive networking among the world's leading professionals in the diamond and jewellery business, right in the heart of Antwerp, the leading diamond centre of the world.

In the past the conference has hosted such speakers as Al Gore, William J. Clinton – 42nd President of the United States, De Beers Chairman Nicky Oppenheimer, Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa and H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia.

More information on [www.antwerpdiamondconference.be](http://www.antwerpdiamondconference.be).

- **Exclusive Diamond Jewellery Exhibitions**

As part of its mission to promote Antwerp as the pre-eminent international diamond centre, the AWDC has over the years organised a series of world-class exhibitions of diamond jewellery. The purpose of these exhibitions is to elevate Antwerp's role in the jewellery business, in addition to the position its holds as a



diamond manufacturing and trading centre. A minimum of two years is required to prepare for such an event. Selection criteria are very strict, so as to ensure spectacular and exclusive diamond jewellery collections.

The first exhibition in the series took place in 1993, and it was one of the highlights during a festive year in which Antwerp was declared the "Cultural Capital of Europe." Called "From the Treasury," it featured a unique collection of historic and contemporary gems, as well as jewels belonging to royal houses. The jewellery was loaned by an impressive list of museums, exclusive jewellery houses, auction houses and private collectors. The royal houses themselves cooperated in the organisation of the event.

"From the Treasury" opened at the Province House of Antwerp in the presence of their royal highnesses, Prince Albert and Princess Paola, today King and Queen of the Belgians.

Following the spectacular success of the first exhibition, the AWDC decided to repeat this initiative on a regular basis. Successful exhibitions were held again in 1997, 2002 and 2008 called "Diamond Divas". Preparations are already underway for the fifth edition, planned for 2012.

- **Antwerp Diamond Pavilions and Trade Missions**

AWDC is more than ever committed in maintaining a healthy and prosperous diamond industry, spreading the quality image of the Antwerp diamond sector. This philosophy is perfectly embodied in the Antwerp Diamond Pavilions.

AWDC communicates the superiority of Antwerp diamonds to the major

consumer markets through the organisation of Antwerp Diamond pavilions at all major diamond and jewellery trade fairs worldwide. Antwerp Diamond Pavilions are organized in Vicenza, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Mumbai, Dubai, Las Vegas, Macau...

- **Diamond Office**

Diamond Office is unique in the world and acts as a customs broker for the import and export of diamonds and handles all the paperwork for this process, a considerable service to the diamond companies. Operated by AWDC and in collaboration with the financial and economic services of the Federal Government, Diamond Office ensures rapid and efficient controls. Your guarantee for conflict free diamonds.

- **International Affairs**

Antwerp (AWDC) has played a leading role in the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification System. This system was formally adopted in 2003 and guards against conflict diamonds entering the legitimate diamond supply chain. Today 71 governments have enshrined into their national law the Kimberley Process Certification System.

Visit us at [www.awdc.be](http://www.awdc.be), your virtual guide to the Antwerp World Diamond Centre.

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## HRD Antwerp: The Blueprint for Quality

There are only a limited number of immediately recognised brand names in the international diamond business. One is “Antwerp” and another, inexorably linked to the former, is “HRD.” They are linked in a company called HRD Antwerp, which serves the diamond industry for more than 30 years.

HRD Antwerp NV operates six divisions: Diamond Lab (which issues one of the world’s most respected diamond certificates), Education, Graduates Club, Precious Stones Lab, Equipment and Research.

HRD Antwerp achieves international prominence in the diamond industry by proving time and time again its ability to anticipate needs and offer solutions. “The goal of HRD Antwerp is to provide high quality services to the industry worldwide, with a strong emphasis on the substantial body of scientific research it carries out independently.” explained Dirk Dullaert, HRD Antwerp’s commercial director.

### Diamond Lab

Demand for diamond grading reports has grown dramatically in recent years, as consumers increasingly demand independent and concrete documentation of their purchases. Based on this growing demand worldwide, HRD Antwerp has opened representative offices in Mumbai, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

It also launched HRD Antwerp Lab Link, a diamond grading and certification pick-up and drop off service in Tel Aviv, Hong Kong, Mumbai and Dubai. HRD Antwerp Lab Link offers a full service for customers who like to receive a HRD Antwerp certificate for their diamonds. The service guarantees that diamonds are picked up by a professional logistic company and sent to Antwerp. Within 15 days, the customer receives back his diamond with an HRD Antwerp diamond certificate. This service is offered at very competitive prices.

HRD Antwerp diamond certificate guarantees that the stone examined is indeed a real diamond, and contains a full and detailed quality description, focussing on the famous 4C’s – Carat (weight), Colour, Clarity and Cut. The report includes a complete quality description of the diamond including shape, weight, clarity grade, fluorescence, colour grade, possibly supplemented with comments.

The HRD Antwerp Diamond Lab is the largest diamond grading organisation worldwide to confirm to the standards of the International Diamond Council, by the World Federation of Diamond Bourses and the International Diamond Manufacturers Association, the industry’s two leading representative bodies. The Diamond Lab was also the first diamond





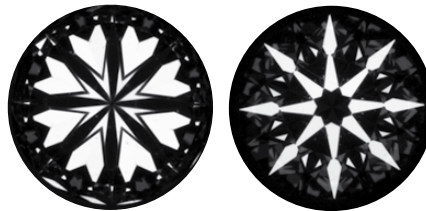


lab ever to receive accreditation by the International Standards Organisation, and currently operates according to the demanding standards of NBN EN ISO/IEC 17025.

Underpinning the work at the lab is the Research Department. Located at a dedicated facility in the nearby town of Lier, the institute has a team of scientists, engineers and laboratory staff carrying out research into diamond properties, as well as applied research to assist the diamond industry and to provide specialized services to the sector.

One of these new services is called 'Hearts and Arrows by HRD Antwerp'.

Hearts and Arrows diamonds (H&A) are round brilliants with special patterns visible under specific lighting conditions. They consist of eight hearts when viewed from the pavilion side and eight arrows when viewed from the crown side. The appearance of the pattern is a strong indicator of a top quality cut. HRD Antwerp ordered a research project to solve several problems linked with grading this pattern. Today companies can ask for such an HRD certificate for a diamond. With objective criteria and digital imaging is determined whether a diamond meets the Hearts & Arrows standard. At the same time, diamond professionals receive accurate and repeatable feedback to assist them in the manufacturing and sales process.



#### Education

For more than two decades, the Educational Department of HRD Antwerp created a strong reputation for developing and conducting diamond grading programmes for students and professionals from Antwerp and overseas. The Educational Department also runs programs for the study of gemstones. In operation since 1982, HRD Antwerp has created courses for people from across the diamond chain, including diamond traders and graders, diamond specialists in other sectors, managers and professional staff in the diamond and jewellery industries, appraisers, gemmologists and jewellery designers.

The institute has created new programs for short training courses, which enable it to provide a broad range of courses lasting from three days to five weeks. The three-day course introduces participants to the 4Cs; while the five-week course is on diamond grading. The gemmology course was split into

two programs, basic and advanced, of three weeks' duration.

HRD Antwerp started recently with classes on the use of diamonds in jewellery design. It teaches the students how to transfer creative ideas to practical concepts.

Leveraging its scientific knowledge, the Educational Department works with the company's research division to keep up date with the latest developments in the diamond industry and adapt courses and classes to meet demand. All the latest technical and technological developments on the diamond market are included in its programs. In addition to its in-demand courses in Antwerp, HRD Antwerp provides courses around the world, thus saving time and expenses for companies who can ill-afford to have employees away from their offices. These courses have taken place in cities as far apart as Cairo, Madrid, Dubai, Beirut, Bari, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

The purpose of a diamond certificate is to offer the customer the highest security possible. HRD Antwerp applies the newest technology that allows somebody to check that his diamond corresponds to its certificate. Today you can ask for a laser inscription that is put on the girdle of the precious stone. This inscription carries the stone number that is mentioned on the certificate.



And if this is not sufficient, you can always check that the certificate is original. For that purpose HRD Antwerp has started an internet service. If you visit the HRD Antwerp website ([www.hrdantwerp.be](http://www.hrdantwerp.be)) and enter the certificate number of your diamond, you will find your electronic certificate as it is stored in the data base from HRD Antwerp. The data of any diamond graded in the HRD Antwerp Diamond Lab will be kept in the computer memory as long as 10 years.'



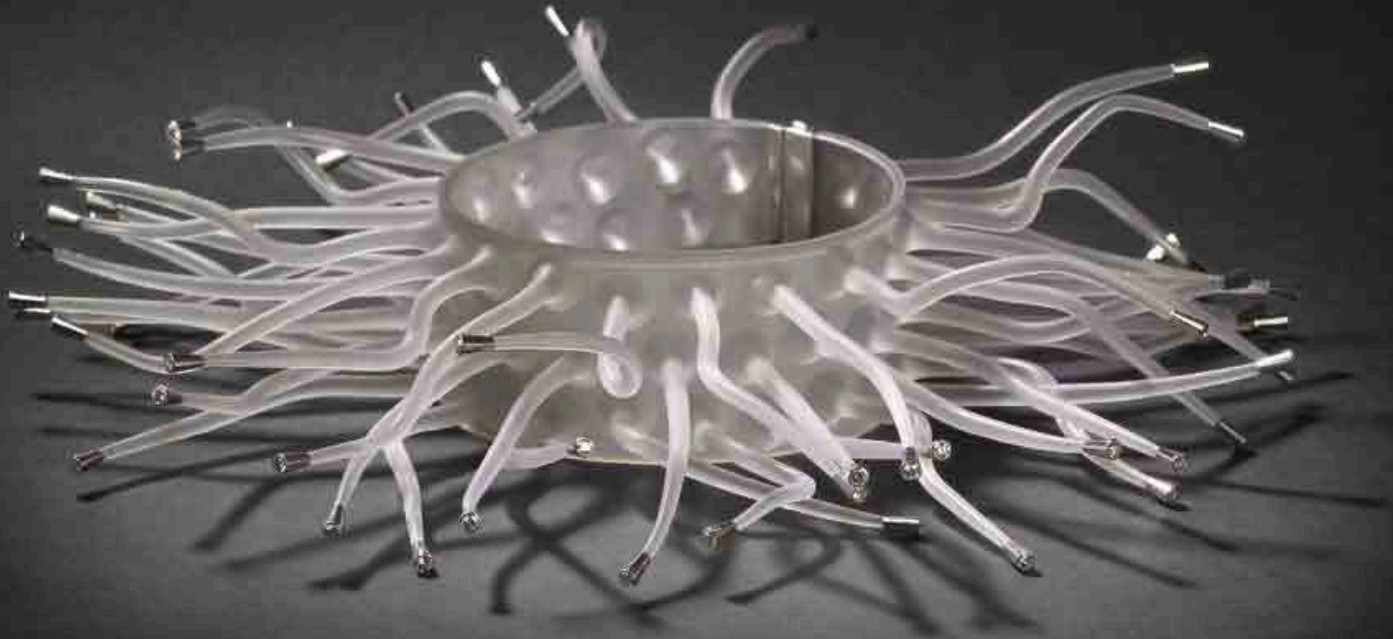
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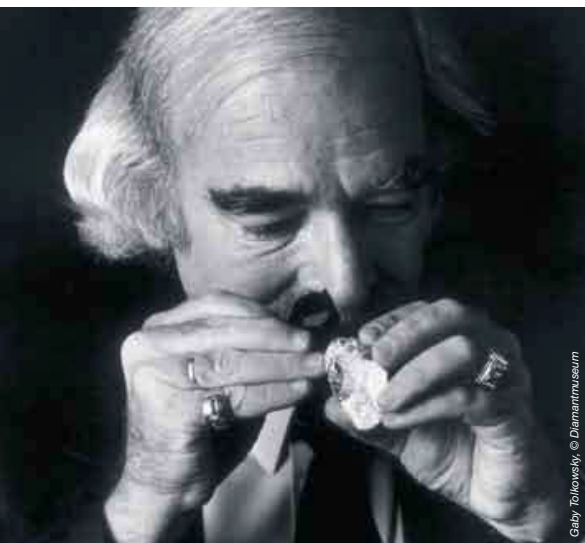
# The Diamond Museum in Antwerp

The Diamond Museum: a BrilliAntwerp Story!



© Diamantmuseum/White Light

Dog Collar 'Hydra', 2003, bruikleen AWDC



Gaby Tolkowsky, © Diamantmuseum

"Cutting a large diamond is hypnotic. You live, sleep and breathe the diamond. It takes over your life."

Diamonds and Antwerp have been so closely linked for centuries that the 'Sinjoren' (those born and bred in Antwerp) dubbed it 't **Steenjtje**' or the Little Stone! Antwerp first acquired name and fame for the Little Stone around 1580, partly thanks to the religious tolerance that prevailed here. However, Antwerp's definitive development as the diamond region only began at the end of the 19th century, with the mining of new diamond fields in South Africa. In the **Diamond Museum**, a Province of Antwerp initiative, one discovers how the global character of the 't **Steenjtje**' and the profound human emotions attached to it, are the leitmotif of **Antwerp's Brilliant Diamond Story**.

It is a **story of ordinary people and extraordinary events** which are condensed in the diamond history of the Province of Antwerp: processing and craftsmanship in the Campine/'**Kempen**', trade and commerce in the metropolis. The Diamond Museum provides insight into this wondrous world of the hardest

and most fascinating stone in the world, which can be transformed into a dazzling diamond jewel, **brilliantly cut by Antwerp craftsmen: a BrilliAntwerp Story!**

Antwerp's diamond cutters are indeed world famous. Like Marcel Tolkowsky (1899-1991), celebrated for his invention of the ideal brilliant diamond cut in an optimal number of facets, in order to achieve maximum brilliance: a technique which is still used today. And master cutter Gaby Tolkowsky who was invited by the diamond concern De Beers to work on the prestigious Centenary and Golden Jubilee diamonds at the end of the 1980s, a process which took him three years. **Antwerp quality and Antwerp cut**, synonymous with world-class workmanship and an enviable end product **are reflected in the museum by "De Eendracht"**, a real diamond cutter's workshop. This workshop is one of the most important items in the museum's collection and part of our industrial archaeological heritage. On **weekdays**,

the **present diamond worker** talks about cleaving, cutting and polishing and interactive visual display units demonstrate the latest techniques: scanning diamonds, determining by means of the computer how to polish the diamond to produce the best shape, etc.

Besides the diamond story, the visitor is drawn to the treasure chambers spread over three floors where he can find **the museum's unique collection of diamond creations:** historic diamond jewels and contemporary diamond jewellery as well as exhibition space!

For more than four centuries the diamond has been the jewel par excellence. From the 17th century onwards it was the jewel worn by kings, queens, and the aristocracy and well-off ladies and gentlemen during nightly activities, balls, operas and theatre performances. Until today film stars, sports heroes, exclusive fashion models on the catwalk and pop artists flaunt exclusive but above all eye-catching diamond jewels. Therefore, **the evolution of the diamond (as a) jewel** is a fascinating story, which is highlighted in the Provincial Diamond Museum in Antwerp. The museum's jewellery acquisition strategy is based on building up **an historic collection of diamond jewels from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until present times**, selected because of their beauty and their art-historical importance. These jewels are not only to be admired for their charisma, they also give evidence of historic bonds between nations and cultures, discoveries of new countries and continents, the influence of religion and royal courts, the historic evolutions and changing traditions and the technological developments in the diamond jeweller's and silversmith's craft. Although there are many museums exposing jewels, the Antwerp Diamond Museum is unique in its approach to the historic and contemporary jewel, because it specialises in turning diamonds into diamond jewel designs. **An excellent example illustrating the display of unique diamond jewel designs is the result of the biennial HRD Jewellery Award Competition**, an organisation by the museum's partner Diamond High Council ([www.hrd.be/](http://www.hrd.be/)) / Antwerp World Diamond Centre ([www.awdc.be/](http://www.awdc.be/)). This biennial exhibition is the outcome of an international competition and has been expanded since 2003 to include young as well as experienced jewellery designers. It is widely considered to be the most important competition worldwide for contemporary diamond jewellery. Traditionally the HRD / AWDC offers the winning jewel to the Diamond Museum for inclusion in its collection, thus ensuring that the best creations remain in Antwerp.

In 2012, the Antwerp Diamond Museum is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary (since 1972) as well as 10 years of accommodation at the Queen Astrid Square. These anniversary highlights give rise to an appropriate tribute to 't *Steenjtje*'. The first step is a **diamond**



Napoleontische parure, bruikleen Kerkfabriek Bazel

**testimony, the Wins Family Legacy**, five generations of mostly Antwerp diamond business activity, illustrating the city's inextricable link between, on one hand, the mainly political and economical history of the Antwerp diamond sector and, on the other hand, its social and cultural context.

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# MeeVIDA Joaillerie, the New International Diamond Jewellery Brand Name

Sold in high-end jewellery shops across Europe and the U.S.A.



MeeVIDA  
JOAILLERIE



Trilogy Sortilège set (earrings, pendant and ring)



The name MeeVIDA, which phonetically means “my life” in Spanish, represents a diamond’s “eternal essence”, says Piyush Gandhi, CEO of Dianish NV the subsidiary of Navin Gems. “MeeVIDA Joaillerie’s diamond jewellery is designed to accompany its wearer throughout her life.” This idea of enduring for eternity is reflected in the quality of MeeVIDA Joaillerie’s creations. “Dianish NV puts the emphasis as much on the quality of its polished diamonds as in the creation and finishing of its jewellery,” says Piyush Gandhi.

One of only 72 Diamond Trading Company Sightholder™ worldwide, Navin Gems has been involved in diamond trading for three generations and supplies its largely European customer-base of retailers and smaller jewellers from its headquarters in Bombay, India.

Precise finishing, excellent quality as well as the innovative design concept of “timeless avant-garde” allowed Dianish Jewels to rapidly establish its name in prestigious jewellery circles. In 2005 and 2006, the collections did particularly well at Baselworld, the leading annual trade show for the watch and jewellery industry held in Basel, Switzerland. Industry experts then prompted the company to redefine the brand’s strategy in terms of product development, distribution and communication.



The result, MeeVIDA Joaillerie, captures the passion and the essence of eternity of high quality diamond jewellery. MeeVIDA Joaillerie’s creations are designed and styled in Paris by top French jewellery designers and then meticulously produced in India using the latest precision technology and hand-craftsmanship. From Antwerp they are exported to luxury jewellery boutiques worldwide. With prices ranging from €500 upwards, the main markets today are France, the UK, Italy, the Benelux countries and Turkey.

### Collections

MeeVIDA Joaillerie’s latest collections include Amandine, designed by French designer Antonio Gomez, Galaxy, Sortilège, Daisy, Devotion, Empreinte, Mosaïque, The Limited Editions of Meevida and Meevida Engagement. Here the designers have modernised MeeVIDA Joaillerie’s classic collection of engagement rings, wedding rings, earrings and pendants in line with the design concept of “timeless avant-garde”. The 2008



collection of engagement and wedding rings, which still make up the core of MeeVIDA Joaillerie's worldwide sales, draws inspiration from the world of love poetry and combines classical elegance with creative innovation.

The Galaxy collection, which uses micropave diamonds set with the aid of a microscope, provides an incredibly luxurious, smooth texture which glitters with a wealth of eye-catching tiny diamonds as the smooth lines of the jewellery designs are accentuated. Returning to the eternal theme of love, the Devotion collection comprises heart-shaped jewellery and includes some striking pieces, notably the chain of hearts. MeeVIDA Joaillerie's Limited Editions collection consists of unique jewellery masterpieces.

All of the jewellery pieces in the collections are made from 18 carat white or yellow gold set with brilliant cut diamonds. In accordance with the Kimberley Process, all diamonds are certified as being from legitimate sources in no way connected to the funding of conflicts.

**Brand store**

As a result of the overwhelming success of the brand, MeeVIDA Joaillerie opened its first brand store in Budapest, Hungary in December 2006. The launch of MeeVIDA Joaillerie's Budapest store brought together more than 300 Hungarian VIPs including Miss Hungary 2006, Szabo Kitti, and the famous Hungarian singer Adrienn Zsedenyi, who is the face of MeeVIDA Joaillerie in Hungary. MeeVIDA Joaillerie has a similar brand store in India and the company has plans to open stores in Antwerp, Prague and Warsaw. A significant aspect of the MeeVIDA Joaillerie

The big micro pave heart is from the Galaxy collection, the double row ring in yellow gold is from the new Mosaïque collection, on top of it the ring with the micropave ball is from the Galaxy collection and the double hearts is from the Devotion collection.

brand is its link with beauty. MeeVIDA Joaillerie is proud to be associated with beauty pageants such as Miss Belgian Beauty and Miss Benelux and these pageants have been an important and eye-catching way of marketing the brand. As Marilyn Monroe famously said, "Diamonds are a girl's best friend". Admiring the glittering diamond jewellery that accentuates the beauty of Miss Belgium 2008 Nele Somers for example, it is easy to see why women have chosen diamonds as a celebration of their glamour and as a form of self-expression throughout the ages.

Looking to the future, MeeVIDA Joaillerie's goal is to be recognised as one of the leading Belgian and European jewellery brand. Combining a wealth of expertise in professional production with a sophisticated marketing approach, which includes providing retailers with complete packages of branded accessories as well as marketing support, MeeVIDA Joaillerie is perfectly positioned to build its brand locally and internationally.



Large heart necklace from "The Limited Editions of Meevida"

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## The Nordic Fire Diamond

Pure beauty – every scintillating Nordic Fire diamond is a small part of the prestigious Nordic Fire brand, recognized and sold around the world



Discerning buyers understand the value of a reputable brand. A brand can speak volumes, guaranteeing quality, craftsmanship, style and professionalism. So it works for jewelry, and so it works for diamonds. When considering a diamond, ask yourself: where does the stone come from? How was the stone selected? Where and by whom was it cut? How do I know the stone is what it is claimed to be? Is it really unique? Enter Nordic Fire...

### **From rough stone...**

A Nordic Fire diamond begins its journey deep inside the Diavik mine in Canada's Northwest Territories. The Diavik mine is known for the impeccable quality of its large, colourless stones. The mark of quality begins right at the source, and so it continues. Thus, the mine is operated by the Rio Tinto Diamond Company, one of the world's most well-regarded



diamond mining companies. And importantly, as a Canadian mine, it is in an issue-free zone.

**...to selection and polishing...**

For over 500 years, Antwerp has been the centre of the world's diamond trade and this is the next step in a Nordic Fire diamond's journey. Rough stones are sent direct to Crisdiam, one of Antwerp's most reputable diamond companies. This Antwerp diamond company has a proud diamond tradition, with a reputation for knowledge, passion and integrity. Founded in 1970, with the original families still at the helm today, this company can trace its polishing activities in Antwerp back to 1898.

Here in Antwerp, the Nordic Fire diamond is selected and subsequently cut and polished by Crisdiam's master craftsmen. In an age where much of the diamond craft has become semi-industrialised in Asia, the

Nordic Fire stone is handled by only the very best professionals in Antwerp. These expert craftsmen continue a centuries-old tradition, working painstakingly to reveal the true beauty of the stone.

**...to the half Maple leaf: the mark of quality**

The finishing touch for any Nordic Fire diamond is to laser-inscribe a half Maple leaf and individual identification number on its girdle. Invisible to the naked eye, this identification number means you can verify its authenticity as a genuine Nordic Fire diamond. For example, you can enter this number into the Nordic Fire website to verify it is a genuine Nordic Fire diamond and access other information about it. Also, every diamond is dual certified: first by our own rigorous quality appraisal and then independently by the Geomological Institute of America.

**This is the Nordic Fire diamond.**

From when the rough stone is plucked from the earth until Nordic Fire's half Maple leaf is inscribed on a polished gem, the Nordic Fire diamond only ever know the highest standards of diamond excellence. It is these standards that instill pure beauty into every Nordic Fire diamond.

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# Pinchasi & Sons

Pinchasi is a second-generation family company that has been operating in the diamond industry in Belgium for 40 years. It is one of the largest diamond cutters in the world, and one of the only ones who still has a working factory in the cosmopolitan, multicultural city of Antwerp.



The diamond cutting process is a fascinating and exacting one. Rough diamonds all have to be cut and polished before being certified by a recognised laboratory. The certification process includes the assessment of the four famous C's - clarity, colour, cut and carat weight.

The HRD, or Antwerp diamond council, is the largest diamond certification laboratory in Europe, and Pinchasi is a large client of this laboratory. Pinchasi's Belgium office

serves as a clearing-house for all the rough diamonds that they buy and trade. The company always carries a large, centralised stock of cut, polished and certified diamonds which are immediately available in Antwerp, and can be shipped within 24 hours to any destination in the world. This swift response time is vitally important in the fast-moving diamond market. It's all done with a small and flexible team of just 12 people in the Antwerp office, who deal with



sales and operations, including the sorting, preparation and certification of the stones.

The company was named after its founder, Mr Pinchasi, and his two sons took over the leadership after his death. The Pinchasi sons have introduced new innovations and developments, including a massive new diamond cutting operation in India, which was opened seven years ago and is ten times as big as the Antwerp factory. The large quantities of medium sized stones

are cut and polished in India, while the bigger, more complex stones are handled in Antwerp. Since the opening of the Indian factory, turnover has doubled. Pinchasi also does business online - orders can be taken, certification can be consulted, and stones can be assessed online via their certification.

The company's market is mainly in Europe and Asia, although sales are also made in Australia and the Americas. 70% of clients are jewellery manufacturers, and the others are wholesalers. The company has enjoyed a 30-year relationship with many of its customers. Quality is the benchmark when dealing with a high value commodity like diamonds. Diamond cutting is a specialised profession that requires years of experience, and mistakes simply cannot be made. If quality is not upheld in all processes, then a poor cut can ruin a promising stone, or certification can become difficult to obtain. At Pinchasi, standards are adhered to rigidly, both in Antwerp and in the operation in India. The company's service excellence also gives it a valuable edge in the industry. Finally, maximum efficiency is the key to Pinchasi's success, giving it a 2-3% price differential in this fiercely competitive market.

It is surprising that, in an industry where valuable stones worth millions of dollars are traded every day, most business is done on a simple handshake, without any contracts or insurance. For this reason, trust is key, and only companies who nurture relationships with their clients and operate

with the highest standards of integrity, quality, service, advice and deal making, will survive. Pinchasi is an outstanding example of such a company. Although the salespeople do regular business with their long-established clientele, they will usually meet them only once a year, either in Antwerp or at the trade fair which takes place annually in Basel, Switzerland - the largest expo in the world for the diamond and jewellery industry.

Pinchasi believes that Antwerp will remain the diamond centre of the world, despite competition from low-cost operations in other countries. Antwerp is a city well adapted to the multicultural world of diamond dealing where many different nationalities rub shoulders with each other. The diamond area is centralised and accessible, and security is excellent. Most significantly, Antwerp has a history of diamond cutting and dealing that stretches back hundreds of years. When all is said and done, diamonds are a people business, and this diamond culture cannot be easily replicated elsewhere.

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Diamonds

## L&A Jewellery Dazzles the World

Creating the intricate and striking designs which make up the L&A collections requires a blend of superior technology and delicate handiwork.

**L & A**  
Diamond & Gold Jewellery





When the twins Louis and August (L&A) Van Camp founded their internationally renowned jewellery business L&A Jewellers in Antwerp's diamond district in 1967, they set a standard for dazzling, innovative and premium quality jewellery which has endured for more than 40 years.

L&A Jewellers, the last remaining family-run jewellery business in Antwerp that still does all stages of the production process in-house, has a well-deserved reputation for striking luxury jewellery. The Van Camp family has a lasting passion for jewellery design manufacture. And the business continues to be run by the founders' eleven children. Myriam Van Camp is L&A's general manager while her sister Hilde is the company's chief designer.

L&A's position within the heart of Antwerp's diamond district, the centre of the global diamond industry, provides the means and the daily inspiration for their successful business. Antwerp's diamond district is home to almost 400 jewellery workshops, boasts 12,000 expert diamond cutters and

polishers and that accounts for over 50% of the world diamond trade. It is here that jewellery retailers come to source their diamonds. In such a highly competitive environment, jewellery firms continually challenge each other to remain at the cutting edge of the latest and most effective design and manufacturing technology.

The latest jewellery design software with 3-D modelling enables L&A's designers to create intricate and complex pieces with astonishing accuracy and in a remarkably short space of time. In the current collections, Scented Garden and The Full Circle, the work is extremely fine and complex, necessitating state-of-the-art machine-work combined with personal craftsmanship. While the emphasis is on the production of the latest collections, L&A's designers are able to create one-off pieces at individual request. Customers are encouraged to provide their own sketches or pictures which Hilde and her design team can then translate into inspirational designs.

L&A's latest collections are particularly striking. The Scented Garden, a range of exquisite flower designs, takes its inspiration from the extraordinary and delicate beauty of the floral kingdom while The Full Circle consists of a series of strikingly original and attractive circular designs. All designs are made with 18 carat gold or 95% platinum, which provides a luxurious, high-quality product. Myriam Van Camp says that they would rather use more gold than credited in order to ensure a premium product.

The company's commitment to superior quality has resulted in international recognition and accolades. L&A is the only Belgian Made jewellery company to have a regular stand at the most prestigious professional diamond fair on the global calendar, the Basel World

Fair in Switzerland. They are also one of only a handful of jewellery design companies that have a Swiss carat certification stamp of approval upfront, a certification required for jewellery exports to Switzerland.

L&A designed one of the Queen of Morocco's jewel necklaces for the royal wedding in 2002. Another honour was being selected in 1986 for the design and manufacture of the music industry's prestigious "Diamond Award," this was the first time in history that something of value was given using real diamonds.

Diamonds are forever, as the saying goes. Elegant, regal and yet humble, these symbols of beauty, purity and strength are timeless, produced in the earth's core billions of years ago and prized for their almost magical qualities. As timeless as diamonds are, the designs that accentuate their beauty are more influenced by the ebbs and flows of the world fashion scene.

Thus while L&A's core product has traditionally been the diamond engagement ring, the Van Camps are keen to further enhance their brand by collaborating with international design collections and showcasing their products to discerning jewellery customers worldwide.

L&A already has a strong international presence, exporting 50% of their creations around the world, particularly to luxury jewellery stores in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In order to further enhance this reputation and to remain constantly innovative, the Van Camps are looking to take advantage of exciting international design trends. The time is right to showcase the best of Belgian jewellery to the world and to attract more publicity in the upper end of the international jewellery market.



Seven days ring

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## Verbruggen Diamonds & Pearls

Since 1792, the Verbruggen family has been based in Antwerp, Belgium. They are respected wholesalers and retailers of diamonds, who have since added a second area of expertise to their specialist operation - pearls.



Diamonds and pearls. Two of the most beautiful, sought-after and mysterious substances known to mankind, they are both produced by forces of nature, but in vastly different ways. Diamonds have survived an incredible journey to become the glittering stones we recognise today, a journey that started millions of years ago, deep within the earth, when carbon-bearing materials were subjected to immense pressure and high temperature. These forces formed their transparent, crystalline structure which is renowned for its extreme hardness - a diamond is the hardest natural material known to mankind. Cutting and polishing these stones are a fine art that requires high levels of skill.

Today, 70% of diamonds around the world come from Antwerp. In a city with a long and noble tradition as the diamond centre of the world, Verbruggen is one of the longest-standing businesses. The family has gained an impressive reputation among their customers and their peers, building and nurturing relationships that in many cases have lasted for decades.

In the 1960s, Verbruggen added a second area of expertise to its business - pearls. This has proved to be so successful that, today, the company is known as



“the pearls dealer” - an accolade which, in diamond-focused Antwerp, is rare.

A pearl is a miracle of nature. Natural pearls are formed when a piece of grit or other irritating object gets inside the shell of a pearl oyster. The oyster deals with this irritation by surrounding the object with layers of beautiful, iridescent nacre. Natural pearls are exceedingly rare, and in order to obtain them, pearl divers must gather and open many hundreds of oysters in the hope of finding just one.

Cultured pearls are made on pearl farms, with the help of human intervention. A small bead, usually made from a mussel shell, is placed inside the oyster during a delicate operation. The oyster is then returned to the water for six months or more, where it coats this nucleus with shimmering nacreous layers. The value of the resulting pearl is determined by a combination of its lustre, colour, size, flawlessness and symmetry. Generally, the larger the pearl, the more valuable it is, and pearls that are large and perfectly round are rare and highly valued. Colour also plays an important part. White and black are the most popular colours for pearls, but they can have a variety of shades, from pink to blue, from champagne to purple. Matching pearls according to their colour and shape is an

intricate art, and it can take years to source the pearls for a perfectly matched necklace.

Verbruggen imports pearls directly from their source in countries like Australia, Tahiti, China and Japan. The Verbruggen family design their own jewellery creations, and manufacture almost all of these themselves in their Antwerp workshop. While the collections are classics in their own right, they are inspired by modern jewellery trends. New creations are constantly being produced, on average 50 to 100 pieces a week. Some of these are crafted for retailers, who enjoy long-standing relationships with Verbruggen and return time and time again for the exceptional value, quality and first class service that this company is famous for. Verbruggen also sells directly to consumer clients, and produces pieces for its own collections.



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Diamonds

# Les Bijoux de Marie-France

Wear jewellery with elegance



"I love mixing different materials" says Marie-France.

Marie-France has been working in the family jewellery business for the past 20 years, contributing with her very personal touch in updating, transforming and innovating the jewellery line.

In 2002, she decided to create her own line: "Marie-France's jewellery". The artist transforms gold into pieces of jewellery that a lady can wear during the day with her casual clothes or at night with an evening dress. She offers every woman a pleasure to wear whenever and wherever she wants.

**The true love of precious materials**  
The workshop is hidden in an old house





in the centre of Brussels. Here, talented craftsmen shine the precious metal, again and again, and shape it under the direction of the designer Marie-France.

Marie-France's collection of jewellery offers the woman of today full elegance and originality. Gold is worked to become as soft as silk, pearls of all colours wind around the body with elegance, and the result is a modern but not too eccentric design.

The design is not only a piece of accessory but a part of the woman's look.

#### Marie-France's collection

Only 18 carats gold is used and is polished, beaten, shaped, heated to create different colours and unusual aspects. The colour of gold becomes yellow, pink, pearly or

grey. The collection includes earrings, bracelets, rings and pendants.

The pendants are hanging from leather chains that give them a modern and contemporary look with lighter effect, therefore easier to wear.

This new collection is booming with its beauty and femininity. "Les Ecailles", "Les Constellations", "Les Torsadés", "Les Caviars"

#### A real success

Marie-France's collection was presented during the "Journées d'Élégance et Prestige" and at several exhibitions in Brussels, New York, London, Milan, Madrid and Paris and received a real success.

In addition to her infallible made-to-measure technique, Marie-France knows that a woman

wants more than just a set of precious jewels and therefore makes her creations truly unique.

Marie-France takes part in many artistic activities but her concerns are not only to introduce her creations. She also has humanitarian goals, such as the ULB exhibition gathering several artists for the ASBL of Jean-Claude Heuson and for the Institut Bordet's Breast Cancer Research Department.

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