

# SPECIAL REPORT

Gemmological Commission



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## Terminology and standards for describing colours of gemstones to be key focus of Gemmological Commission at CIBJO Congress

By Hanco Zwaan, President  
CIBJO Gemmological Commission

During the Gemmological Commission meetings last year in Salvador, Brazil, it became apparent once again that in many areas there is a need for clearer standards. This relates not only to well-defined and non-

deceptive terminology that should be used in the trade, but also to the ways in which the results are obtained by laboratories and how these are noted on gem identification reports.

Standardisation at gemmological laboratories and their communication of specific colours, such as "Pigeon's Blood" for rubies and "Royal Blue" and "Cornflower Blue" for sapphires, was



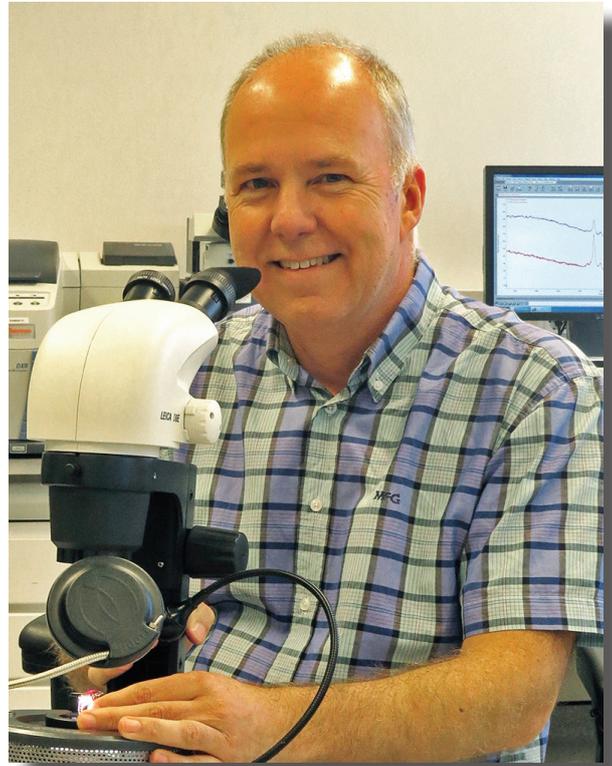
discussed at length. It was explained that to arrive at a particular colour designation, some laboratories use master stones and criteria that might not necessarily match those used by others. Other laboratories and individuals are opposed to the use of these colour terms under any circumstances.

Also presented during the session in Brazil was an online colour communication system that is already being widely used in the trade. It was demonstrated by Menahem Sevdermish.

Recognising that, if certain colour terms are assigned and used, it is essential to find for them common ground and consistent criteria. It was agreed, therefore, the Gemmological Commission would further research the topic of coloured stones colour terminology.

**Lead glass-filled rubies, cleaning fissures in emeralds**

Pornsawat Wathanakul discussed the gemmological properties of lead glass filled rubies, marketed under the name "Organic Ruby," during the Gemmological Commission meetings in Brazil in 2015. Supposedly, these lead glass-filled rubies were subsequently treated by a technique that to a certain extent is able to remove lead from the glass filler near the stone's surface, although from the presentation it was evident that a significant amount of lead still remained in the glass filler



*Hanco Zwaan, President of the CIBJO Gemmological Commission.*

found inside the stone's fissures and cavities.

In the discussion that followed, it was stressed that this product has nothing to do with any organic gem material and that, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States, describing such a stone as a "ruby" without any qualifiers would be insufficient and considered deceptive.



*Claudio Milisenda, Vice President of the CIBJO Gemmological Commission.*



*Pornsawat Wathanakul, Vice President of the CIBJO Gemmological Commission.*



*Is this sapphire heated or not? What description of the colour and/or specific colour term does it deserve? Inconsistencies in coloured gemstone reports will be discussed at the CIBJO Congress. (Photo: Netherlands Gemmological Laboratory).*

The FTC says it also is unfair or deceptive to qualify such materials as “treated,” “laboratory-grown,” “laboratory-created,” “[manufacturer-name]-created,” “synthetic,” “composite,” “manufactured,” or “hybrid.”

Instead, the FTC proposes a two-tier classification for acceptable terms: “Lead-glass-filled corundum” or “lead-glass-filled composite corundum;” and

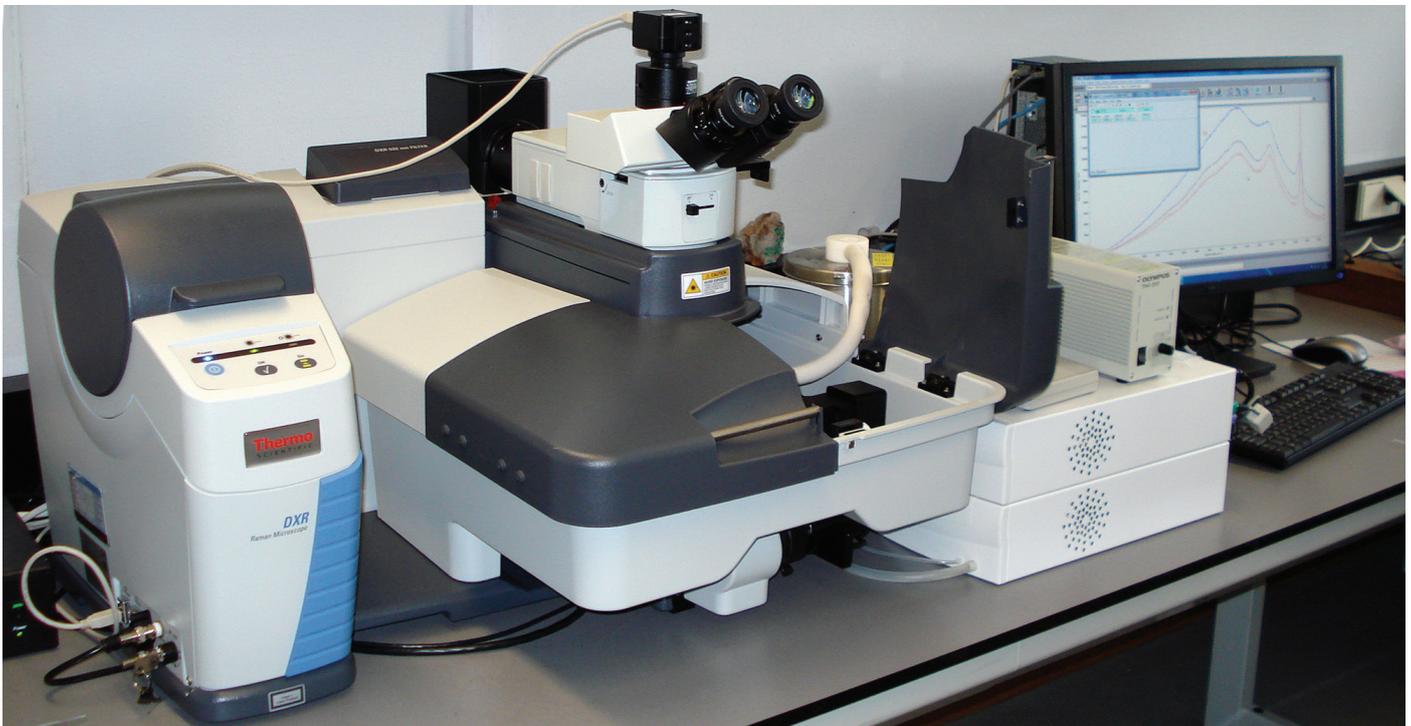
“lead-glass-filled ruby” or “lead-glass-filled composite ruby.”

In June 2016, an industry coalition led by the Jewelers Vigilance Committee proposed that the FTC instead use the terminology “composite corundum” or “manufactured composite corundum,” and “composite ruby” or “manufactured composite ruby” to denote these products. To date the Federal Trade Commission has not responded to the submission.

During the meetings, Claudio Milisenda mentioned that certain labs have observed a trend by which dealers clean emerald fissures and/or fractures in order to have “no indications of clarity enhancement” listed on laboratory reports. Afterwards, they fill them once again. Such cases have come to light when the same stones were returned to the lab with the fissures and/or fractures filled.

The Laboratory Manual Harmonisation Committee (LMHC) has been working on additional comments for stones that have been cleaned in this way, so that the client is made aware that, even though an emerald may have received a comment of “no indications of clarity enhancement,” it may be filled at any time after the date that the report was issued.

There was also a discussion about tanzanites and



*Which test method is needed in which case, to properly identify and characterise gemstones? A test method protocol for laboratories will be on the agenda at the CIBJO Congress in Armenia. A Raman micro-spectrometer is one of the instruments that has proven to be indispensable in gemmological laboratories. (Photo Netherlands Gemmological Laboratory)*

the need to define the exact colour range that the term "tanzanite" pertains to. Does "tanzanite" only refer to the blue to violet colours, or can it be used for all the different colours of zoisite.

In the CIBJO Gemstone Book the use of tanzanite is allowed for all colours, but if the colour is outside the typical blue-to-violet range a colour designation must be added, such as "green tanzanite" or "pink tanzanite."

### **Mitigating inconsistencies in gemstone reports**

At the 2016 CIBJO Congress in Armenia, a special session will be held on the inconsistencies in gemmological coloured gemstone reports. These are known to be present in a few key areas, including statements of "no heat-treatment" versus "heated;" opinions on the country of origin; definitions of colours, like Pigeon Blood Red and Royal Blue; and different standards or a lack of generally accepted standards.

The goal is that the number of inconsistencies in these indicated areas be reduced to the greatest degree possible.

Specific issues will be dealt with during the Gemmological Commission session. We will consider inconsistent laboratory reports from the perspectives of the trade and a number of major labs. We will look at on the magnitude of the problem, exploring what can be done in general to improve consistency. But, because not all the topics can be dealt with at once, the additional special session will concentrate in one particular area, and that is harmonising and standardising specific colour terms, such as Royal Blue and Pigeon Blood Red. Different perspectives will be examined in detail, and we will discuss solutions and future directions.

The programme will be as follows:

- Nilam Alawdeen, President of the CIBJO coloured gemstone commission, will present the issues from a trade point of view, followed by three lectures, explaining the views of different laboratories.
- Dr. Michael S. Krzemnicki, director of the Swiss Gemmological Institute SSEF, will present a

European gemmological laboratory perspective on the problem in general, and an in-depth view on specific colour terms, standards applied and master stones. He also will explain the SSEF/Gübelin agreement on this topic.

- The GIA perspective will be provided by Shane McClure, global director of Colored Stone Services at GIA.
- Pornsawat Wathanakul, director of Gem and Jewelry Institute of Thailand (GIT), will give an Asian lab perspective, including Chinese opinions on the mentioned topics.

The lectures will be followed by a general discussion, which may serve to identify directions of future action. The role and position of LMHC will also be explained and clarified during this discussion.

Laboratories other than the ones already mentioned are invited to participate.

### **Test-method protocol for Blue Book**

The current Gemmological Laboratory Book is exclusively about laboratory management and good practices. However, its latest draft includes the addition of a test-method protocol. This may serve as a first step in the development and adoption of additional standards.

The new draft will be reviewed and discussed at the CIBJO congress in Armenia.

This year the CIBJO congress will be held in Armenia, October 26-28. The Gemmological Commission Steering Committee (GCSC) will hold its pre-congress meeting on Monday, October 24, from 08:30 to 10:45. The Gemmological Commission meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 26, from 17:30 to 18:30. These times are subject to change, and participants are urged to visit the congress website (<http://www.cibjo.org/congress2016/>) to keep up to date.

Both the pre-congress meeting and the congress meeting will be chaired by Hanco Zwaan (Netherlands) President, assisted by two Vice Presidents, Claudio Milisenda (Germany), and Pornsawat Wathanakul (Thailand).

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