

JEWELRY

## Gold Conference April 4-5 focuses on legacy, leadership and luminescence

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*Gold continues to set the standard in jewelry*

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Initiatives in Art and Culture will debut the ninth edition of its International Gold Conference April 4-5 in New York, themed Legacy, Leadership, Luminescence.

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The event boasts speakers from Berkshire Hathaway's Richline Group, U.S. Department of State, JVC, Stephen Webster, IMPACT, Riva Precision Manufacturing, Goldsmiths' Centre, UBS, Catbird, Panjshir Valley Emeralds, Hoover & Strong and Ethical Metalsmiths, among others.

"There are shifting trends such as the increased focus on men's jewelry, the continued emphasis on stacking and layering, and the attention on earrings for example," said Lisa Koenigsberg, founder and president of Initiatives in Art and Culture, New York.

At the same time, there are shifts among countries with regard to the demand for, and significance played by, jewelry within cultures.

Here is the interview with Ms. Koenigsberg in its entirety:

What's the theme of this year's Gold Conference?

Last year our theme was Vortex, and we looked at the associated turbulence and uncertainty. This year the conference is titled "**Gold: Legacy, Leadership, Luminescence.**" Such approaches and solutions are considered building blocks.

We propose that our collective attention to them can assist in ensuring that society's use of gold for ethical sourcing and responsible practice. And hence that gold luxury goods are truly objects embodying the very finest in our aspirations and efforts in every way.

How is it different from last year's focus?

In addition to considering craft, artisanry and responsible practice, this year we also look at notions of community as evidenced by the sessions on Riva Work Space, the Goldsmiths' Center, made and makers in Brooklyn, and the

communities and environments represented in the films to be discussed in the session on the Power of the Moving Image.

We consider culture and objects as both evidence and instruments of social change as evidenced by Glenn Adamson's talk on the hidden wisdom objects, the presentation on Goldsmiths Centre in the U.K., and the discussions of the power of the moving image and on engraving as craft, art and community.

There is also a focus on shaping and creating identity in a saturated marketplace and on leadership and the next generation, or the future of the jewelry business.

Why does gold matter?

In virtually every culture for millennia, gold has been viewed as a precious material and endowed with special attributes. Its power is so great that although we no longer have a gold-backed currency, we nonetheless have what Jeffrey Christian has termed a *de facto* gold standard.

This power is underscored by the metal's beauty and warmth which continue to render us goldstruck, to borrow from Stephen Webster.

How has the market for gold jewelry market evolved in the past year?

There are shifting trends such as the increased focus on men's jewelry, the continued emphasis on stacking and layering, and the attention on earrings for example.

At the same time, there are shifts among countries with regard to the demand for, and significance played by, jewelry within cultures.

Our international who's who of the gold world will shed further light on these topics.

The eternity of a band of Welsh gold contrasted what was perceived as a shift in taste embodied by Meghan Markle's three-stone diamond ring suggests that taste, trends and markets function as a dialectic always finding a center in the extraordinary metal or material that is gold.

What is the state of jewelry in the U.S. and overseas in terms of design and marketing, as well as consumption? Last year, block chain and sustainable, green practices were big topics of discussion. What strides have been made since within the gold jewelry business?

The reality is the movement toward responsible sourcing and ethical practice is both one of terms and practices, and one of constant journey.

One does not become a perfect example of either overnight and, in fact, some would argue that the process is never over: as Mark Hanna would say, we are always striving for "gooder." And Stuart Grice emphasizes that the great should not be the enemy of the good.

In terms of block chain, a major challenge is to allow different "systems" such as Tracer and Trust Chain to connect and work with one another.

With regard to green practices, there have been significant accomplishments Tiffany & Co. recently announcement that it would become the world's first jewelry company to share with its consumers [information about the country of origin of each diamond](#) sold.

Ted Doudak and Riva Precision have pioneered in creating chain out of fair-mined gold.

With regard to the colored stone realm, there is an increased emphasis on sourcing, on recognizing and integrating artisanal mining globally and such efforts regarding artisanal mining with related skills such as lapidary arts.

Nothing springs whole from Zeus' head and that is the case with green practices, but there is an undeniable shift toward and embrace of them, arguably in part propelled by consumer demand.

The centrality such change is embodied in the creation of Initiatives in Art and Culture's Award for Leadership in Responsible Practice in Jewelry, which will be presented this year to Feriel Zerouki, senior vice president of international relations and ethical initiatives for De Beers Group.

You have a catchy subtext for the event: Legacy, Leadership, Luminescence. What was the thinking behind that? What was the logic behind the program?

Gold, like all precious materials, is part of our human patrimony.

Objects crafted of gold in whatever style and for whatever purposes are part of the legacy left by one generation to another, as are the skills needed to craft these works.

Given the eternity and centrality of the material and the often familial nature of jewelry businesses, leadership with regard to teaching, crafting and transitions in enterprise is as key as it is for advancing issues related to human patrimony.

Luminescence is the glory then and now that gold represents and the state to be achieved when sustainability ethical sourcing and responsible practice are implemented and become an ethos permeating all.

How did the speaker list come about? What were you trying to achieve with this array of talent in the room?

Be they makers, miners, retailers, journalists, financiers, regulators or environmentalists, each participant is a member of an international Who's Who in the gold community and each exemplifies the most important attributes essential for engineering change.

Understanding that an answer prompts the next question and engaging in inquiry without fear and with heart.

What should attendees take away from this event?

Among the important takeaways are the need to challenge the balkanization of craft by country and to look across boundaries for greatness and inspiration, the importance of viewing succession is an opportunity for engaged leadership rather than simple acceptance of that which might seem inevitable, to understand that the gold community and for that matter for any community transcends a specific practice or pursuit but rather is constituted of a 360-degree spectrum of skills and perspectives and, lastly, the honor of being surrounded by colleagues so committed to ensuring that the best of today is part of a better tomorrow and having had the opportunity to become part of a community in which each attendee has the opportunity to engage in discourse across conventional industry boundaries.

[Please click here to register for the Gold Conference](#)

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