

JEWELRY

IAC debuts 11th annual International Gold and Diamond Conference

July 13, 2021



Cupped hands holding impact gold, a full traceable gold artisanally mined in Peru by PX Impact, which created a sustainable, transparent supply chain that meets global standards for responsible practices through guaranteeing. Image credit: B.P. De Silva

By STAFF REPORTS

For complimentary registration to attend "New Realities, Future Promise," [please click here](#)

Initiatives in Art and Culture's 11th annual international conference on gold and diamonds, titled "New Realities, Future Promise," will be held digitally from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT Tuesday through Thursday, July 13-15.

[Registration is complimentary.](#)

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For this year's conference, IAC's focus is on the twin imperatives of this time. Government, civil society, communities and the industry must preserve the magic, romance and emotional power that gold, diamonds and jewelry represent for the consumer, while at the same time doing the hard work required to meet the imperatives of responsible sourcing and practice, environmental and social awareness all of which underpin the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

"The challenges of 2020 resulted in the development by IAC of a robust digital initiative, and this year's conference marries the digital approach of 2020-21 with the breadth and depth that has characterized our annual in-person event," said Lisa Koenigsberg, New York-based president of [Initiatives in Art and Culture](#), in a statement.

"We are honored to welcome an extraordinary roster of speakers who will, in various formats, address the mandates of our time and the demands of the future," she said.

"Additionally, we are excited to present IAC's Fourth Annual Award for Leadership in Responsible Practice in Jewelry, to Cristina Villegas, Director, Mine to Market, Pact and Robert Weldon, Director, Richard T. Liddicoat Gemological Library at GIA. At the same time, we salute two-time World Diamond Council President, Edward Asscher, for Extraordinary Contributions to the Diamond and Jewelry Industries."

Key themes or issues that will be explored:

- Language, legislation and regulation

- Transparency: diamond origin and the consumer
- What constitutes "ethical" or "responsible" jewelry?
- The power of storytelling to shape culture, the marketplace and consumer behavior
- How diamond cut impacts consumer behavior and thus value
- How society calculates the value of natural resources
- The socioeconomic impact of diamonds
- Redefining high jewelry in an age of conscious luxury
- Sources, mining and recycling of gold
- Best practice in diamond and gold production

Ms. Koenigsberg will open the virtual conference.

A highlight of the opening day is the panel, "Global Expectations: Language, Legislation, Regulation, and Transformation," moderated by gem and jewelry consultant Katherine Andrews. Panelists will consider the critical role that language plays in legislation and regulation, as well as the intent that they will result in global transformation.

Those in conversation include George Cajati, Foreign Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs' Office of Threat Finance Countermeasures; Tiffany Stevens, CEO of the Jewelers Vigilance Committee; Mark Hanna, chief marketing officer of Richline; and Iris Van der Veken, executive director of the Responsible Jewellery Council.

Transformation of another kind the mine to market journey of a diamond, with a spotlight on the importance of traceability and sustainability also garners significant attention.

"Transparency: Diamond Origin and the Consumer" features Anisa Costa, chief sustainability officer of Tiffany & Co.; Eira Thomas, CEO of Lucara; Cathryn Ramirez, GG executive director for alumni development and continuing education at the GIA; David Block, CEO of Sarine Group; Allison Charalambous, head of responsible sourcing and sustainability for Brilliant Earth; Stephen D'Esposito, CEO of DDI at RESOLVE; and Rob Bates, news director of JCK, who is the panel moderator.

Of equal import is a deep dive into gold, also a store of value for millennia. The session, "Where does your gold come from, and Why does it matter?" explores the complexities of the sourcing and transformation of gold.

The discussion, moderated by Ms. Koenigsberg, will be between Angel Camacho, a criminal analyst who has more than 10 years of experience working transnational organized crime matters; Luis E Fernandez, executive director and CINCIA and research associate professor of biology, Wake Forest University; Shamiso Mtisi, environmental lawyer and head of research at the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association; and Jen Peyser, senior mediator and director for the Ethical Resource Program at RESOLV; and Joanne Lebert executive director of IMPACT.

The power of storytelling will kick off on Day 2, with "Romancing the Stone," moderated by Dave Bindra, vice president of B&B Gems.

Mr. Bindra will be speaking with Roger and Ginger Dery, principals of Roger Dery Gem Design; Prince Dimitri, jeweler and author of "Once Upon a Diamond: A Family Tradition of Royal Jewels"; and Paul Schneider, owner of TWIST.

Further celebrating the narrative, conference attendees will then plunge into the book, "Bejeweled: The World of Ethical Jewelry" (Rizzoli, 2019), and be immersed in conversation with two designers profiled, Ana Katerina and Alice Cicolini, with author Kyle Roderick and Ms. Koenigsberg.

A panel titled "Mining: Responsible Sourcing and Best Practice" introduces consideration of responsible practice in mining.

Discussing the import of geographic and social contexts for "best practice," panelists will explore positive outcomes that benefit mining communities, among them greater equity in profit-sharing and positive social and environmental aftermaths.

Guided by moderator Jennifer-Lynn Archuleta, consulting editor for gems and jewelry for Gem-A; Aimee Boulanger, executive director for the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA); Nick Cotts, vice president of mining at Newmont; Cristina Villegas, director of Mine to Market at Pact; Feriel Zerouki, senior vice president of corporate affairs at De Beers Group; and Robert Weldon, director of the Richard T. Liddicoat Gemological Library at the GIA will discuss their organizations' initiatives with artisanal miners, as well as overall industry best practice.

To close the session, Cristina Villegas and Mr. Weldon will be presented with the Initiatives in Art and Culture Award for Leadership in Responsible Practice in Jewelry.

This award is presented annually to a recipient who is a member of the jewelry industry, or part of a jewelry-focused organization, who has made a transformational contribution to ethical sourcing and responsible practices in the worldwide gem and jewelry trade.

"Initiatives in Art and Culture (IAC) has been committed to issues of responsible practice for over decade, and since the inception of IAC's important prize, each year it has been presented to galvanizing figures," Ms. Villegas said in a statement.

"I am deeply humbled to receive such an award, and to be sharing it with as inspirational a figure as Robert Weldon," she said. "My own reformist journey has only just begun, and there is still so much to do. At the same time, receiving such an award proves how quickly one can make meaningful change.

"There are so many wonderful changemakers already in this sector, and with the right combination of know-how and some grit, sector-changing programs can happen before our eyes."



"I mined your gems" - miner Miriam. Image credit: Mines to Markets Pact

The final day of IAC's conference explores diamonds, a bedrock upon which the industry is currently.

Day 3 features a panel on the importance of the diamond cut and how consumer behavior is impacted by it.

"The Heart of the Matter" features Al Gilbertson, project manager for cut research at the GIA; Edward Asscher, president of the World Diamond Council; and Eve Goldberg, principal of William Goldberg, and is moderated by British jewelry historian Jack Ogden, whose most recent publication is "Diamonds: An Early History of the King of Gems."

"Total Clarity: The Socioeconomic Impact of Diamonds" is a discussion of the ways the industry has sought to address social impact and community benefit, featuring panelists Sheila Khama, policy adviser on the mineral, oil and gas industries at the World Bank and prior to that, corporate secretary at Anglo-American in Botswana and then CEO, DeBeers, Botswana; Pat Dambe, vice president for market outreach at De Beers Group Global Sightholder

Sales; Catherine Sarr, jewelry designer and founder at Almasika Fine Jewellery; and Eira Thomas, CEO of Lucara Diamond. These luminaries will consider how the industry can be fit for the future.

The virtual conference will conclude with the presentation of the first Initiatives in Art and Culture Award for Extraordinary Contributions to the Diamond and Jewelry Industries to Mr. Asscher. This award is intended to recognize and honor extraordinary ongoing engagement and dedication to the realization of positive change.

"Making changes to the diamond world is never the result of one individual," Mr. Asscher said in a statement. "It is always teamwork.

"The World Diamond Council has worked as a team with various partners since 2000, and I have always been involved," he said. "But the team contributing to change also includes the Kimberley Process Task Force, the Responsible Jewellery Council, the CIBJO, the IDMA, and the WFDB.

"So, although I very much appreciate receiving IAC's important award, I want to share it with my colleagues in the WDC, the RJC and the CIBJO, the IDMA, and the WFDB."

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