

Designing with Platinum and Gemstones

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As a jewelry designer like other creative artists, whether it's clothing designers or architects we all work with different materials organizing space, form and function. Clothing designers work with fabric and thread, architects with concrete and steel, jewelry designers with gemstones and precious metal. The noblest metal of all platinum.

Platinum is my metal of choice for several reasons that I will discuss in this paper.

As a jewelry designer recognized for his work in platinum, platinum puts me into a select group of top designers. It gives added perceived value to one's work and it allows greater compensation for your designs due to the higher value of your finished product. Platinum allows designers more freedom to design very delicate jewelry with greater strength and durability.

As a jewelry designer I like working with platinum because I know my work will be enjoyed long after I am gone because platinum is a much more durable metal and does not show wear like gold and silver. I enjoy working with platinum because my designs are on the

contemporary side with strong lines and crisp corners. With platinum, most of the finish is done by hand with as many as six different paper grids with the final step being a light polish. With gold jewelry, less steps are required before polish and more finishing is done on the polishing wheel with the results of softer lines and less detail.

I like designing with platinum because the color of the metal is bright white versus white gold which is a yellow metal with the addition of silver and nickel. Platinum complements higher color diamonds and cooler color gemstones whereas white gold is better suited to off color diamonds and warmer colored gemstones.

I like the feel of platinum, the greater density of the metal gives the customer a greater perceived value of my work and appeals to another sense, the sense of feel and touch.

The added strength of platinum allows me the freedom to design in greater detail without the additional metal necessary with white gold. When working with platinum it is very important to work out as many details as possible before you start your project. The less changes and additional steps required to execute your design will result in a better finished piece that comes closer to your original design.

When designing with platinum, there are no shortcuts. You must be patient with the metal and take your time on the finishing. When you try to take shortcuts, your finish usually suffers and you may have to go back and rework the piece with the possible results of exposing porosity and losing detail.

Some of my designs have had intricate engraved details. The malleability of platinum allows the en-

graver to cut fine detail and clean lines opposed to working with white gold which is much harder and more resistant to hand engraving.

Many of my design awards have been in colored gemstones which is ideal for working in platinum. Many gemstones, unlike diamonds, cannot take extreme pressure or hammering that is necessary in some types of settings, like bezel settings. Platinum with its soft malleable characteristics allows the setter to use less pressure and have better control over his tools.

Because platinum absorbs shock so well, it is an ideal metal for setting emeralds, opals, and other delicate gemstones.

Planning out your project is very important when working with platinum. My steps in designing with platinum is to start out with a detailed drawing. I list all of the materials necessary for the project. I then review each step of the design with my jeweler and setter. I discuss the possibilities of fabricating or casting the design. Is the thickness of the walls sufficient for diamond setting? Will the size of the diamonds I select work with the design? Should we prefinish the parts before assembly? Will the design allow the surface treatment I select? All these details will help the jeweler execute your design with little or no alterations or compromises and your piece will come out as you planned.

If I had to give three rules to live by while working with platinum,

1. Be as detailed as possible.
2. Do not take shortcuts.
3. Use the best tools and keep your workspace as clean as possible.

In closing, if you have never designed in platinum, I would encourage you experiment with this metal

Platinum Manufacturing Process
Platinum Day Symposium Volume IX N7

and allow your imagination to explore the possibilities. The more you work with this metal, you will realize it is not more difficult than working with gold, but is different

and requires patience and planning. The benefits of working with platinum far outweighs the additional time and steps necessary to com-

plete your design. The end results speak for themselves.

