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NATURE REFERENCE

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Gems and Gemstones

Timeless Natural Beauty of the Mineral World

Gems are objects of wealth, icons of beauty, and emblems of the very best of everything. Given as tokens of love and affection, they also come in a kaleidoscopic array of hues and can be either mineral or organic. Gems can command a person's gaze in the way they play with light and express rich color. And they can evoke feelings of passion, greed, mystery, and warmth.

For millennia, gems have played an important role in human culture: they have significant value, both financially and within folklore and mythology. But just what *are* gems, exactly? This lavishly illustrated volume—the most ambitious publication of its kind—provides a general introduction to gems and natural gemstones, conveying their timeless beauty and exploring similarities among different species and varieties. *Gems and Gemstones* features nearly three hundred color images of the cut gems, precious and semiprecious stones, gem-quality mineral specimens, and fine jewelry to be unveiled in the new Grainger Hall of Gems at the Field Museum in Chicago this October. The book and exhibition's overarching theme will be the relationship between finished gems and their natural origin: while beautiful as faceted and polished pieces of jewelry, gems are often just as lovely—or even more so—as gemstones in their natural state. For example, an aquamarine or emerald as originally found in a mine with its natural crystal faces can be as stunning as any cut and polished gem prepared for a ring, bracelet, or charm.



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Mindful of both ancient and modern times, *Gems and Gemstones* also includes fun-filled facts and anecdotes that broaden the historical portrait of each specimen. When Harry Winston, for instance, donated the Hope Diamond to the Smithsonian in 1958, he sent it through the U.S. mail wrapped in plain brown paper. And for anyone who has ever marveled at the innovations of top jewelry designers, *Gems and Gemstones* features a dazzling array of polished stones, gold objects, and creations from around the world. Diamonds, sapphires, rubies, amethysts, pearls, topaz, amber—every major gem gets its due in this invaluable reference.

Lance Grande is senior vice president and head of collections and research at the Field Museum. He is a curator in the geology department and a general content specialist for the Field's new Grainger Hall of Gems exhibit. He is also a member of the Committee on Evolutionary Biology at the University of Chicago and is adjunct professor of biology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. **Allison Augustyn**, a funding specialist at the Field Museum, was previously an exhibition developer there, where she prepared such exhibits as the Ancient Americas, George Washington Carver, and the Grainger Hall of Gems.

