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GEM TRADING BEHIND THE CURTAIN

YELLOW AGENDA

"They call me mellow yellow, that's right slick"

– Donovan 1966

Janna Semenova, 2021, Yellow Citrines on Grey, Multicolour.com

For over 20 years, Pantone's Color of the Year has influenced product development and purchasing decisions in multiple industries, including fashion, design, packaging and graphics. According to Pantone, their annual selections require thoughtful consideration and trend analysis. This year's 2021 colors of the year are yellow and grey.

More specifically, PANTONE 17-5104 (Ultimate Gray) and PANTONE 13-0647 (Illuminating). In Pantone speak "Practical and rock-solid but at the same time warming and optimistic." "The union of PANTONE 17-5104 Ultimate Gray + PANTONE 13-0647 Illuminating is one of strength and positivity."

In the vernacular, perhaps the colors of bananas and wet cement, but the Pantone names sound much better. How these colors work together and why they were selected is difficult to understand for most of us.

Yellow is the brightest color of the visible spectrum, and it the most noticeable of all colors by the human eye. It is a primary color in most models of color space. It is a color associated with sunshine and joy. Children tend to like this color, and it is used to market products to them. It is also used as a color for school buses, street signs, and taxi cabs since it is so bright and noticeable.

The color yellow exudes brightness, light, vitality, energy, optimism and a willingness to grow and outshine. The sun, the stars and the moon are perhaps the objects most often associated with yellow.

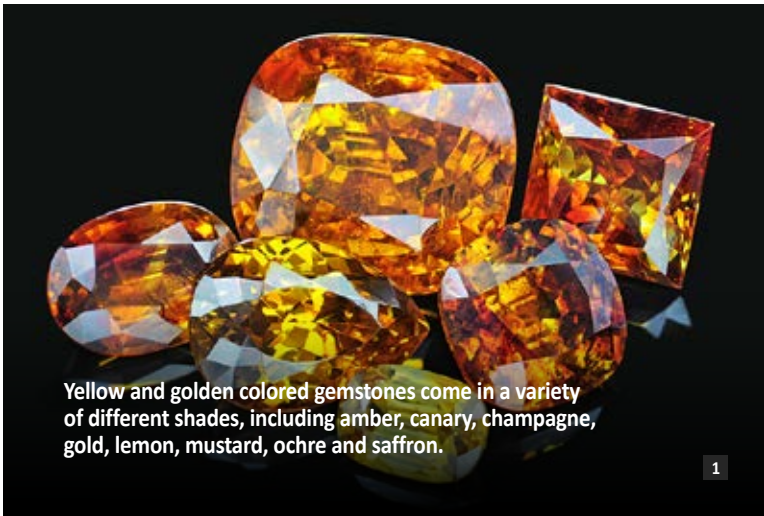
Its saturation can be bright and intense, which is why it can often invoke such strong feelings. The psychological effects of yellow may vary, but generally, yellow is seen as a bright and cheerful color. Designers may use it not only to draw attention but also to evoke a sense of happiness.

Yet, yellow is not a favorite color in any survey. Worldwide, blue is the top choice for color and is usually selected as the favorite color for most people.

Depending on the survey, black, green, purple, and red are next on the list. Yellow, gold, and brown are further down and usually rank only 7th or 8th.

For jewelry, yellow is already prevalent if we think about the base metals. The primary metals are yellow gold, white gold, platinum and silver. Yellow gold works well with diamonds and intense colors, but with yellow stones, neither the gold nor the stones will stand out.

For gemstones, vivid yellow is atypical. Compared to the intensity of the sun and the stars or even to sunflowers' colors, these hues hardly exist in gems. Although we do come across the colors of lemons, bananas, mangoes and canaries in our work, the shades are rarely vivid.



Yellow and golden colored gemstones come in a variety of different shades, including amber, canary, champagne, gold, lemon, mustard, ochre and saffron.

5.52-carat Brazilian opal "Tangerine Dream" cocktail ring is set with 50 yellow sapphires in sterling silver setting. David Wein

Gray is the other Pantone color, and it is neutral like black or white. We need only look at the popularity of black and white dresses or gray suits to see how convenient neutral colors are to use and combine with other colors. Gray is possibly even more popular than yellow. Psychologists suggest that people who drive gray cars don't want to stand out and instead prefer something more subtle. It's true for clothing as well, and many prefer gray for its anonymity.

With its subtle neutrality, gray is almost the opposite of yellow. Although jewelry is supposed to attract, gray spinels are a current fad and among the best sellers in recent years. Some trends are hard to understand.

Most of the gemstones we consider yellow are only yellow to a degree and rarely very saturated. Only a few diamonds, along with some zircons, sphalerites, and heliodors, reach high degrees of color intensity. Beyond those, we're left with treated stones and synthetics or simulants.

Bold yellow is elusive, and most yellow stones will contain components of brown or gray. Moreover, very light-yellow tones may appear to be off-color white stones rather than yellow.

The Canary designation for diamonds refers to pure yellow stones with a strong and intense yellow shade – a canary color. While colorless diamonds are composed of pure carbon, the cause of yellow is related to traces of nitrogen. The quantity of nitrogen determines the yellow's intensity, and a diamond with a higher percentage of nitrogen will show a stronger yellow color.

Yet all yellowish diamonds are not canary-colored, and a yellowish hue usually detracts from a gem's value. However, if the yellow intensity becomes strong enough, the color is termed as fancy or canary-colored, and these stones are rare and valuable. While they are worth much more than white diamonds, they are still inexpensive compared to red, blue, or pink gems.

The most famous yellow diamond is "The Incomparable." This brownish-yellow stone weighs 407.49 carats. It is the third-largest faceted diamond in the world and well placed on the most valuable jewels list.

For yellow stones, secondary hues like green, orange, and brown are also typical. Brown is defined as yellow with very low color saturation in the Munsell designations that GIA uses. The popular "golden" colors have slight orange hues and are described as orangey-yellow, yellowish-orange, or just orange.

Innovative marketers have been aggressive and highly successful with adjectives like chocolate or cognac, attracting interest in brownish tones. These colors are near the bottom of every color preference list, yet people want to own them with these enticing names.

Still, canary diamonds are too expensive for most, and the only possibility of providing durable, intensely colored natural yellow gemstones in any quantity is with beryllium treated sapphires. These stones are that ideal shade of lemon yellow, yet labs and gemologists have denounced them for their treatment, so they are still hard to sell despite their great looks, and durability.

Nowadays, consumers look for natural unheated stones. For sapphires, the unheated yellows are usually pale. The best colors come from the beryllium treated Tanzanian stones. Consumers want great color without treatment, but it is almost never a possibility. Some untreated yellow sapphires are found in Sri Lanka and East Africa, but their colors are rarely intense compared to the heated versions.

Other sapphires are of a golden hue, and the Thais refer to these as "Whiskey" colored. This color is associated with the presence of iron and these stones have also been heated. We find these colors in the same area where blue, green and various star sapphires were initially found at the famous Bang Kacha area in the Chanthaburi district. At present, Thai yellow sapphires of Bang Kacha are still available, but the quantity is much depleted, and most of the mines have closed in recent years.

Zircon is known for its distinctive beauty and occurrence in a broad range of colors. It can be blue, green, colorless, brown, red, orange or yellow. Because of its high refractive index, zircon can be exceptionally brilliant, and yellow zircons are among the brightest yellow stones. Sri Lankan zircons are mostly yellow or green, while the African zircons uncovered so far are usually brownish or reddish-brown. The most important and dramatic transformations of zircons are reserved for the reddish-brown crystals from Vietnam and Cambodia, which turn blue upon heating at relatively low temperatures. Zircons from other localities have not been heated with much success so far.

Heliodor is a kind of Beryl that crystallizes in six-sided prisms belonging to the hexagonal system. It is a golden yellow stone that was first discovered at Erongo in Western Namibia in 1910. Heliodor is the most brilliant of all the beryls, and it was given the name heliodor, from the Greek words helios and Doron, meaning gift from the sun. Mineralogists and gemologists use the name heliodor to describe beryl specimens with a yellow, greenish-yellow, or golden-yellow color.

The optical properties of sphalerite make it one of the most colorful, brilliant, and dispersive of all-natural gemstones. Its refractive index is high, and its dispersion is nearly four times higher than diamond. Despite its low hardness, sphalerite is a favorite among lapidaries and collectors and well cut stones can show phenomenal brilliance. It is most often brown or orangey, but vivid yellow stones are found occasionally.

Although sphalerite has been mined at several localities, the Alina mine in northern Spain's Cantabrian Mountains was the most important locality for it. Mining has ceased for many years now.

For yellow, most of the other gemstone colors are subdued.

"Yellow is not an in-between color, you're either all in or you're not"
– *Mobolaji Dawod*

Featuring a cushion-shaped Fancy Vivid Yellow diamond, this ring set not one, but two world records: a world auction record for a yellow diamond, and a world auction record for a jewel by Graff.

With a total weight of 100.09 carats, this piece sold for $163,331 per carat according to Sotheby's calculations.

Janna Semenova, 2015, Silver Cocktail Rings, DavidWein.com

The chrysoberyl family is best known for the more valuable alexandrite and cat's eye varieties, but faceted yellow chrysoberyl is a beautiful gem in its own right. Apart from the high hardness, it takes a good polish and has a good luster.

For such a hard and durable material, chrysoberyl is relatively obscure, and the undervalued prices don't seem to reflect its' utility as a gemstone. In the 1900's, yellow-green chrysoberyl was referred to as "chrysolite" and used extensively during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. After that, the stones seemed to disappear for a while. It's all somewhat confusing because the same name knew peridot. Nowadays, the most important locality for chrysoberyl is from the alluvial deposits in Tunduru, Tanzania.

Garnets are not known as traditionally yellow stones. Still, we see shades of yellow and orange in spessartites and some grossularites along with Mali garnets which are a mixture of andradite and grossularite. The colors of spessartite may be vivid, but they are more orangey than yellow. Grossularite and Mali garnets are occasionally yellowish but rarely very bright.

The name citrine refers to any quartz crystal or cluster that is yellow or orange. Most citrines on the market have been heat treated. Specimens of low grade inexpensive amethyst or smoky quartz are often cooked at high temperatures to produce the more profitable orange, yellow citrine. Citrines with colors produced by heating tend to have much more of an orange or reddish caste than those found in nature. Much of the natural citrine may have started out as amethyst, but the heat from nearby magmatic bodies may have caused the change to citrine. In the case of citrine, the dark orangey stones are the most valuable.

Citrine is one of the most affordable gemstones, thanks to its durability and availability. Named from the French name for lemon "citron", many Citrines are of that color. In ancient times, citrine was carried as a protection against snake venom and evil thoughts.

Unfortunately, citrine is often confused with the more expensive orange-yellow topaz and is at times sold as topaz by unscrupulous dealers. This practice has soured some potential Citrine buyers who see it as a fake topaz and not as a legitimate gemstone.

Danburite is ordinarily colorless to very light pink, but some deposits may produce stones that can be shades of yellow or brown. With a hardness of 7, danburite is quite hard and suitable for any jewelry. Most danburite is colorless, but some beautiful lemon-yellow stones were unearthed in Tanzania's Dodoma area a few years ago.

Perhaps even more lustrous than gemstones are the South Sea pearls cultured throughout the South Pacific in coastlines along Australia, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Cook Islands and Polynesia. These waters are the native habitat of large oysters known as the gold lipped or silver lipped oysters (Pinctada maxima), which can be nucleated with beads larger than any other saltwater oysters.

When the yellowish hues become dark enough to be considered golden, their valuations can equal or even surpass similarly sized pinkish-white pearls. Gold pearls have enjoyed resurgent popularity, and their higher prices reflect that status. The presence of overtones and iridescence is always desirable in pearls, regardless of origin.

Some of the yet to be mentioned gemstones that occur in yellow shades include chondrodite, clinohumite, scheelite, moonstone, sillimanite, labradorite, and danburite, tanzanite, tourmaline, scapolite, sphene, lemon quartz, opal, amber, yellow topaz and jade.

Yellow gemstones are rarely very bright and maybe not the thing for bling. Still, with a flair for creativity and a palette of hues and bold accents, the subdued colors are perfect for impressionist designs or autumnal themes where yellow is a critical part of the inspiration.

THE PERFECT YELLOW

Sometimes, you need a little yellow to break up neutrals or to complement other distinctive tones. Yellow-colored gemstones come in various shades, including amber, canary, champagne, gold, lemon, mustard, ochre, and saffron. These are some of our favorite yellow gemstones for jewelry design.

THE MOST EXPENSIVE

DIAMOND

The unique color of yellow diamonds comes from the presence of nitrogen in their composition. The nitrogen molecules are a part of an interaction that absorbs blue light and reflects yellow. The most desirable and valuable yellow diamonds are those with a pure, intense yellow color, often referred to as Canary Diamonds. The name Canary Diamond comes from the shade of yellow that resembles the bird.

THE MOST UNDERRATED

CHRYSOBERYL

The name chrysoberyl is derived from the Greek words chrysos and berullos, meaning “golden” and “gem crystal.” Chrysoberyl is relatively unknown in its own right due to the confusion between chrysoberyl and beryl. The alexandrite variety is much more widely recognized. For such a hard and durable material, yellow chrysoberyl is relatively obscure, and the low prices don’t seem to reflect its utility as a gemstone.

THE MOST PROMINENT

SAPPHIRE

It is well known in the trade that the most beautiful yellow sapphires are beryllium treated to achieve their saturated canary colors. Natural unheated yellow sapphires are usually a more pastel tone, so the differentiation is evident in most cases. While not as prized as blue, yellow sapphires are still significant in certain circles. The stone also has special significance in Hindu or Vedic astrology. Known as Pushparagam and Pukhraj, it is said that an unheated yellow sapphire promotes spiritual knowledge and brings money and wealth.

THE MOST REMARKABLE

DANBURITE

Danburite is ordinarily colorless to very light pink, but some deposits, like the one near Dodoma in Tanzania, may produce stones that can be shades of yellow or brown. The luster of danburite is closer to diamonds than white sapphires. Because of its extreme clarity and high refractive index, well-cut danburites are remarkably bright and occasionally used as diamond alternatives.

RELICS & RARITIES

Gold sheen sapphires are remarkable for the golden bronze sheen that shimmers across their chocolate body color. Some of the stones display asterism, although it's rarely well defined.

Dealers reported the discovery of this material from Kenya near the Somalian border in 2009, but our stones are from the Umba Valley deposits, and we bought them years before that. These stones are notable for what appear to be ilmenite inclusions crystallizing in patterns following the host corundum's hexagonal growth lines.

Untreated Gold Sheen Sapphires, Tanzania, Vanutsaporn Treemok, 2021, Multicolour.com

PROSPECTOR'S CORNER

Found among the gem-bearing lithologies of the Karur District, Tamil Nadu in South India, this enormous 12 kg aquamarine specimen measuring 45x12x11cm would be ideal for a museum, a collection, or as the ultimate paperweight. Aquamarine is a greenish-blue to blue variety of beryl. Unlike emerald, which is usually flawed or heavily included, aquamarine can form in stunning flawless crystals, creating some of the most beautiful mineral masterpieces.

The region's rich history began to unravel when archaeologists unearthed ancient gemstone jewelry over 2000 years old. Karur is also known to produce sapphires, rubies, moonstones, amethysts, and agates but is best known for the fine beryl found there. Many of the gems are still contained in the granitic ore from which they crystalized, and miners need to chip them out to extract them carefully.

Aquamarine Crystal, Vanutsaporn Treemok, 2021, Multicolour.com

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