

# All that glitters...



If you think that white gold and platinum are the same, or that your gold ring won't be damaged by perspiration, think again.

Turn to Page 3 for the truth about gold, and for useful tips on taking good care of your jewellery.

Visit Classifications 162 and 188 too, to find jewellers and jewellery restorers who can buy, sell and help you maintain your precious metals.



## FOCUS

Classification 162: Goldsmiths/Jewellery

# The golden truth

Written by Adele Ong

## The facts

- ◆ Hardly anyone wears pure gold. 100 per cent gold, or 24K, is so soft that if you wore a pure gold ring, you could dent it by gripping a pen.
- ◆ 22K means 91.6 per cent fine gold content. The remainder is usually copper and silver, thus retaining the natural colour. Traditional goldsmiths here favour this bright yellow gold.
- ◆ 18K (75 per cent gold) is better than 22K for intricate designs (it's hard enough to show off fine workmanship) and watches. Eric Ong, Manager of Bonfield Traders, which custom-makes and restores jewellery and watches, explains: "18K looks better and resists scratches much better than 22K or 20K."
- ◆ White gold is no less valuable than yellow. Like 22K yellow, white gold is pure gold combined with other metals. The difference is in the metals used – palladium or nickel help change the colour.
- ◆ White gold isn't really white. It's greyish. The silvery gleam of white gold jewellery comes from rhodium plating.
- ◆ White gold is not platinum. Gold is gold platinum is another metal, denser, harder and whiter than white gold. A platinum object feels heavier than a gold object of the same size and costs about twice as much as white gold.
- ◆ Combinations of various metals produce red, green, black and purple gold.



## Care for it

- ◆ Heavy perspiration and wear can tarnish and scratch gold – common problems in humid Singapore, where people often wear a necklace or ring 24 hours a day.
- ◆ Tarnished or scratched gold looks dull. To remove light damage at home, scrub with a soft brush in warm water and soap powder. Polish with a polishing cloth from a jeweller. Some of these cloths are chemically treated.
- ◆ "Don't over-polish white gold with chemically-treated cloths," says Mr Ong. "Just clean gently. If you constantly rub hard at your white gold, the rhodium plating may wear off faster, and it will have to be re-plated."

- ◆ Deep scratches must be repaired professionally. A jewellery restorer can use very fine sandpaper for scratches, while deeper damage is filled with gold dust, melted and filed down.
- ◆ Clean gold before dipping it into a chemical cleaner. Dried perspiration and dirt will lie between your jewellery and the cleaner, and it will tarnish again soon. The impurities may even enter the cleaner, making it less effective when you next use it.
- ◆ Household bleach, mercury and fire are bad news. Remove rings before touching bleach or a broken thermometer. Bleach can badly tarnish gold in a way you can't correct at home; mercury amalgamates with gold. A jeweller can renew the item.
- ◆ Wrap gold individually in tissue paper for storage – pieces can be badly scratched against each other or the insides of a box.
- ◆ Remove jewellery before showering, swimming or doing the dishes or laundry. Don't let it fall down the sink!
- ◆ Jewellers can clean jewellery ultrasonically (using high-frequency sound).
- ◆ If you use hot water on gold-and-diamond items, there's a chance the settings could expand, and your diamonds could fall out.

## Things to consider

- ◆ Gold is "beautifully anonymous" (to quote Sidney Sheldon). Gold mined thousands of years ago has been melted down repeatedly, cast and recast worldwide. So the gold you wear could have adorned an ancient queen – in a different form, of course!
- ◆ If you have inherited jewellery or a gold watch whose design you dislike, a service such as the one offered by Bonfield can recast the gold into a design of your choice.
- ◆ Look after precious and semi-precious stones set in gold. Some (like opals) cannot be soaked in hot water while others (like diamonds) can. Some absorb oils; others are impervious. Certain stones cannot be ultrasonically or chemically cleaned. Ask your jeweller for advice.
- ◆ Some people believe storing gold with a piece of chalk keeps the gold bright. I don't know how well this works, but there's little harm in trying!