

Response by Ella Gu, member of the curatorial team

For this interview, we began with people's fascination with rubies and then delved into designers' shifts in technology, materials, and topics. In the end, We discussed the significance of preserving jewellery archives. Our roles involved from consumers to creators to custodians, mirroring the career trajectory of our interviewee, Mr. Lee. His rich life experiences inspired and led us to appreciate, analyze, and scrutinize the intricacy of jewellery from various perspectives, uncovering the struggles of desire and power behind this industry, the balance between traditional and innovative techniques, and the breathable space created by these jewellery archives.

Ruby, as one of the most precious gemstones, has always captivated jewellery enthusiasts with its rarity. Mr. Lee also mentioned that with the development of technologies and the availability of basic jewellery industry information, the collectors' desire is not only about jewellery pieces but also possessing near-perfect loose stones as part of their collections. Clearly, for capitalists, these gemstones circulate as commodities, their value justified by their price or the power they confer. For many brands, gemstones' value is not only derived from the labor of mining and designing but also from the narrative that brands impart to them (Boltansky and Esquerre, 2020; Chowdhury, 2022). From my perspective, when we browse through archives and explore the inspiration and workflow of designers, we may see more purity about their passion, creation, and position, representing the most fundamental value they have. As Mr Lee said, one day, jewellery creators might complete their loop after an up-and-down process. Therefore, I believe that the representation of these archives that are preserved in the CSM Museum might create a space beyond binary opposition, allowing viewers to contemplate and reflect at any time.

When we discussed the phenomenon of designers transitioning from traditional metalsmiths to experimenting with new materials and technologies, although Lionel is a savvy jeweler who no longer needs to prioritize material costs, he still praised and admired designers who constantly navigate different materials and techniques. Today, jewellery is not only a wearable decoration but also a medium for experimenting with new materials and a reflection of the attitude of the times. The visual artist David Poston mentioned that for gold jewellery, labor, and design will always constitute a small fraction of the piece's cost, whereas for non-precious jewellery, labor and design are the primary factors in pricing. Therefore, they mostly rely on their outstanding designs to attract the market and achieve success (West, 1998). We appreciate their adventurous spirit and ambition to challenge the clichés of the traditional jewellery industry.

Reference:

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West, J. (1998). *Made to wear : creativity in contemporary jewellery*. London: Lund Humphries, p.24.