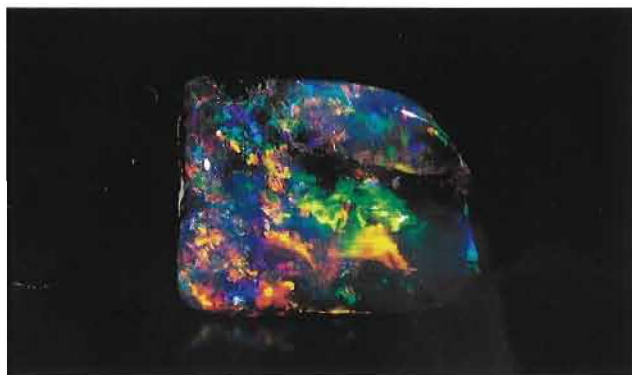


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OPAL HORIZON LAUNCHES GLOBALLY QUANTIFIABLE OPAL GRADING SYSTEM

Brisbane (Australia) based Opal Horizon Ltd. (OHZ), employing some of the foremost opal authorities in the world, presented a new comprehensive gem quality opal grading system at the GIA Symposium in Carlsbad (USA). For both the trade and the consumer a clear understanding of a gemstone's quality is a critical step in establishing its value. The Opal Horizon system proposes grading and evaluation standards that explain, define and measure the degrees of quality in precious opals. This new basis of evaluation provides a comparative frame of reference through easily understood classifications and grades using established nomenclature. This comprehensive and universal system for precious opal aims at promoting confidence and transparency.

The new Opal Horizon grading system only applies to natural precious opal and is based on the evaluation of three quantifiable grading criteria.



Fine gem opal

The 3 quantifiable Cs

The three quantifiable criteria defined by Opal Horizon are Category, Colour and Cut.

Category

This describes the opal as one of three types each defined by the presence and degree of host rock in the opal.

Colour

The criteria applied to colour assigns points according to the opal face, body tone, play of colour, brightness, pattern, directionality and special attributes.



Exceptional gem opal

Cut

The quality of the cut is determined by the opal's finish and polish, ease of setting, symmetry/balance and exclusion of defects.

Each of the 3 Cs is graded individually on a 100 points maximum scale. The three scores are then added and result in a final comprehensive quality score. This final score provides the accurate, comprehensive and credible grading of each opal and enables the opal to then be valued at current market prices for that grade.

The launch of the new grading system by Opal Horizon marks the first step in a comprehensive global marketing and communications strategy by Opal Horizon for precious opal.

"The company has developed an international marketing strategy aimed at reframing trade and consumer attitudes to and appreciation of precious opal," said Tarquin de la Force, Head of International Marketing at OHZ. "Precious opal is one of the most beautiful, charismatic and mesmerising gemstones in the world and we seek to restore it to its rightful place at the top end of the international jewellery market. Precious opal has been prized since the ancient Greeks and more than ever today it reflects the individuality, style and self-expression of today's jewellery consumer seeking something special and unique."

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The 5 quality grades

The 3C quality assessment is used to classify the opal into one of the five following grades ranging from 'exceptional gem opal' to 'promotional opal'.

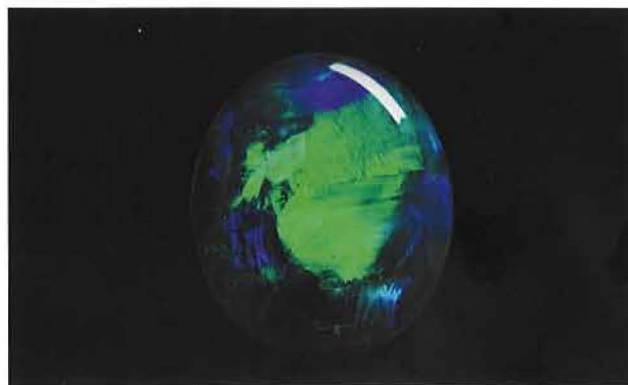
Quality classification	Total quality grade
Exceptional gem opal: Gemstone of exceptional quality and very high visual impact. Very bright, full spectral play of colour.	285 - 300
Fine gem opal: Gemstone of high quality and high visual appeal. Bright to very bright, full spectral play of colour.	240 - 284
Gem opal: Gemstone of very good quality and good visual appeal. Bright, variable colour range.	180 - 239
Commercial opal: Gemstone of moderate quality and visual appeal. Subdued to bright, variable colour range.	90 - 179
Promotional opal: Low quality and appeal. Subdued, variable colour range and distribution.	< 90



Dave Horton, Managing Director, Opal Horizon Ltd. comments: "This major innovation will provide the market with defined parameters for establishing grade quality, giving jewellers and opal owners worldwide a solid foundation for determining market value. This grading system allows for certification of quality,

which means that buyers can have absolute confidence in the integrity of the opal they purchase when sourced from OHZ or any dealers who subscribe to the OHZ grading system".

As OHZ continues its worldwide marketing campaign, OHZ is planning to headquarter its sales and marketing operation in North America. All gem opals sold through OHZ will be evaluated using its new grading system, and accompanied by a report that describes the stone and provides a definitive quality grade.



Gem opal

The wholesale pricing structure will be guided by the new quality grading system. OHZ will make available for purchase internationally not only the precious opal from its own mines, but also will seek to centralise the distribution of opals through cooperative partnership arrangements and by purchasing from other opal suppliers. It is estimated that 95% of precious opal is produced in Australia, and OHZ expects it (along with its partner producers and suppliers) will account for a significant percentage of global sales of this gemstone.

www.opalhorizon.com ■