

Your Jade Expert: MASON-KAY

NATIONAL PAWNBROKER MAGAZINE VISITED WITH JEFF Mason, G.G., President of MASON-KAY Fine Jade Jewelry, to find out more about identifying, valuing, and selling jade:

National Pawnbroker (NP): Tell us a little about your company, Jeff. **Jeff Mason (JM):** MASON-KAY has been in the wholesale jade business since 1976. Our family has owned and operated the business and has achieved a reputation for the finest quality jade jewelry and superior customer service.

We buy and sell natural, jadeite jade. We also test jade for authenticity and quality; repair jadeite pieces; and give purchase and wholesale value determinations.

The pawnbroking industry is a great partner for MASON-KAY. We are always looking to buy beautiful jadeite jade.

NP: You specified “jadeite” in your previous answer. Is there more than one type of jade?

JM: Jade actually refers to two chemically different stones: jadeite and nephrite. Although different, they share many common characteristics.

Nephrite, the traditional form of jade, has been used for over 5000 years by many different cultures throughout the world. It was originally used for tools, indicating the strength of the stone. The Chinese raised the craft of jade carving to an art form.

Jadeite is the rarest and most valuable form of jade. It is also known as Burmese Jade, after its source, Burma. It was discovered in the mid-late 18th century and has only been used widely since the mid-19th century.

Today's fine jewelry market uses jadeite jade, almost exclusively. Nephrite is generally only valued for its antiquity, carving excellence, and other historical considerations rather than its intrinsic material value.

NP: What is the best color?

JM: Other considerations aside, the hierarchy of color value would be green, lavender, colorless (referred to as ice or icy jadeite), red, yellow, black, white, and gray. This is by no means an absolute scale.

NP: Tell me about treated jadeite?

JM: There is a lot of treated jadeite in today's market. It isn't seen as much with nephrite because it isn't very valuable to begin with.

Although dyeing of jadeite has been around for decades, in the late 1970s to early 1980s, a new process for treating jadeite was created: polymer impregnation.

Jadeite is dyed to improve/change the color. One example is blue jade. There is no such thing as natural, blue, jade.

Polymer impregnation is used on low-quality jadeite that would, in most cases, have previously been left behind because



it contained fractures and/or iron spots. This method involves acid treating the stone, which bleaches out the impurities, then impregnating it with a form of plastic which conceals the fractures.

NP: How can you determine if jade is treated?

JM: A gemologist can test for dye with standard gemological equipment, but they may not always feel comfortable doing so because most don't frequently deal with jade. They will often send it to MASON-KAY for review.

Infrared spectroscopy is the only test for the detection of polymer in jadeite. Currently, MASON-KAY is the only commercial jadeite jewelry company to use infrared spectroscopy on site to test for polymer impregnation.

Although not definitive, other indications include how the stone is cut and the price/value ratio.

Better gem material is cut to the best use of the rough to eliminate waste. A piece that is cut to an exact caliber or has a flat bottom would be suspicious.

A beautifully colored and carved bangle bracelet for \$100 is a giveaway that it is probably treated.

Go to MasonKay.com/services for testing and valuation pricing.

NP: How is jadeite valued?

JM: All other things being equal, pieces are valued on:

- Color. Hue and intensity of the color. Green is always more valuable.
- Translucence. Although never transparent, jadeite can range from opaque to very translucent. Better pieces will even exhibit a lovely 'glow'.
- Texture. Refers to even distribution of color and translucency. With rare exception, the more even, the better.

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NP: What materials are often mistaken for jadeite?

JM: Jadeite is probably the most mis-identified of all important gemstones. There are many minerals that have a passing resemblance to jadeite and nephrite.

Common jadeite fakes include serpentine (also bowenite), carnelian, aventurine quartz, glass, grossularite, idocrase, soapstone and the most common, dyed green quartz. This is not a complete list.

Bear in mind that materials known as new jade, Honan jade, Korean jade, metajade and Sinkiang jade are almost never actually jade. The term jade is synonymous with “precious” in Chinese and thus “Korean jade” may be no more made from jade than a “golden sunset” from gold.

It is important to consult an expert before you make a determination about the authenticity or value of any jade piece.

NP: What is the process for valuing or selling a jadeite piece?

JM: First of all, don’t hesitate to pick up the phone and call MASON-KAY with questions. You can also go to our website, MasonKay.com, and go to the “Sell Your Jade” page. We make it easy for you to send us pictures with the submission form. We are a trusted leader in the jewelry industry and take that responsibility seriously.

One of the big benefits of working with MASON-KAY to appraise your jade is that we are a potential buyer.

NP: What are recent trends in price?

MK: Whereas most gemstones today are sold and evaluated in terms of their carat weight, jade is sold by the piece. In its finer qualities, it can be among the most expensive stones in the world today.

Interestingly enough, Western countries don’t dictate pricing. Pricing is determined primarily in Asia by countries such as China.

Their improving economy over the past 5-10 years has increased the price, but mostly on higher end goods. There has been a slight slowdown in price growth in the last year.

NP: What are the most common mistakes in buying jadeite?

JM: Most jadeite out there is treated. Buyers have to be very careful. The most common mistake is buying jadeite that is treated, or may not be jade at all.

Just contact us. We’re happy to help!

