



FOR AP FALL FASHION

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ROMANCING THE STONE

Improved diamond inscription technology offers added value for consumers

Advances in micro laser technology, changes in diamond marketing and disclosure issues have created one of the fastest growing trends in the fine jewelry industry: inscription of diamonds.

The technology is now perfected to safely and easily inscribe personal messages, certificate numbers, logos, brand names, line art, and even photographs onto the girdle of a diamond, according to industry experts. Inscriptions, which typically can be seen with a 10 power loupe, can be inscribed on a diamond surface as small as 1/100 of a human hair. Retailers generally charge from \$40 to \$90 for a personal inscription.

“We have solved many of the problems that have affected diamond marking in the past, including unclear inscriptions and the ‘thermal affects’ that have sometimes caused micro chipping,” said David Benderly, president/CEO of PhotoScribe Technologies, the world’s largest manufacturer of diamond laser inscription equipment. Using an exclusive “cold laser technology,” adapted for the diamond industry in 1999, the company guarantees that the laser will not penetrate the diamond and cause chips or fractures. “We estimate that diamond inscription grew 40% worldwide last year,” said Benderly.

Fueling this trend are changes in diamond marketing that have spawned new branded diamonds, such as RAND and Ekati. The RAND Diamond is laser inscribed with unique tracking number, tied to its own “birth certificate,” which guarantees the diamond comes from a legitimate source. Etaki laser inscribes a polar bear on each diamond to reflect its Canadian origin.

“The majority of diamonds are being inscribed with a certificate number and a brand name or logo,” said Mark Gershburg, director of EGL USA, one of the largest international gemological labs, which inscribes several thousand diamonds a month. Advances in diamond treatments, which by law must be disclosed to consumers, have also impacted on the growing volume of inscribed diamonds. “Treated diamonds have to be inscribed,” said Gershburg. “We will not issue a grading report on a treated diamond unless we inscribe it.”

Laser inscription is also useful for security issues, and a few insurance companies even offer a discount on the premium for inscribed diamonds, as they can be more easily traced. “Not only can it help track the diamond in the event of a loss, it's a very romantic gesture when your inscription includes a personal message," says Gary Gordon of Samuel Gordon Jewelers in Oklahoma City.

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