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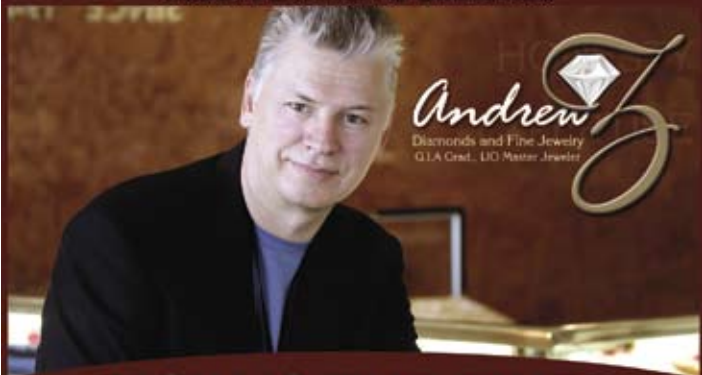
# Phenomenal Gemstones

BY ANDREW Z

Have you ever looked at a star sapphire and wondered how or why the star forms? Maybe you've heard of gemstones that change color in different lighting. You may even have owned a cat's-eye or tiger's-eye gem. These are all examples of what a gemologist refers to as *phenomenal gemstones*.

Phenomenal gems have characteristics that go beyond beautiful color and sparkle. They are vibrant and almost seem alive, like something out of that classic TV show *The Twilight Zone*. Consider a cat's-eye effect. Eerily, the "eye" will follow you as you move around a light source—very alive! In a star sapphire or star ruby, the reflective star is wavy and can shimmer or pulse with movement. This reminds me of an octopus with a couple fewer tentacles—well, sort of. I guess that as a gemologist I can get pretty excited about a good phenomenon.

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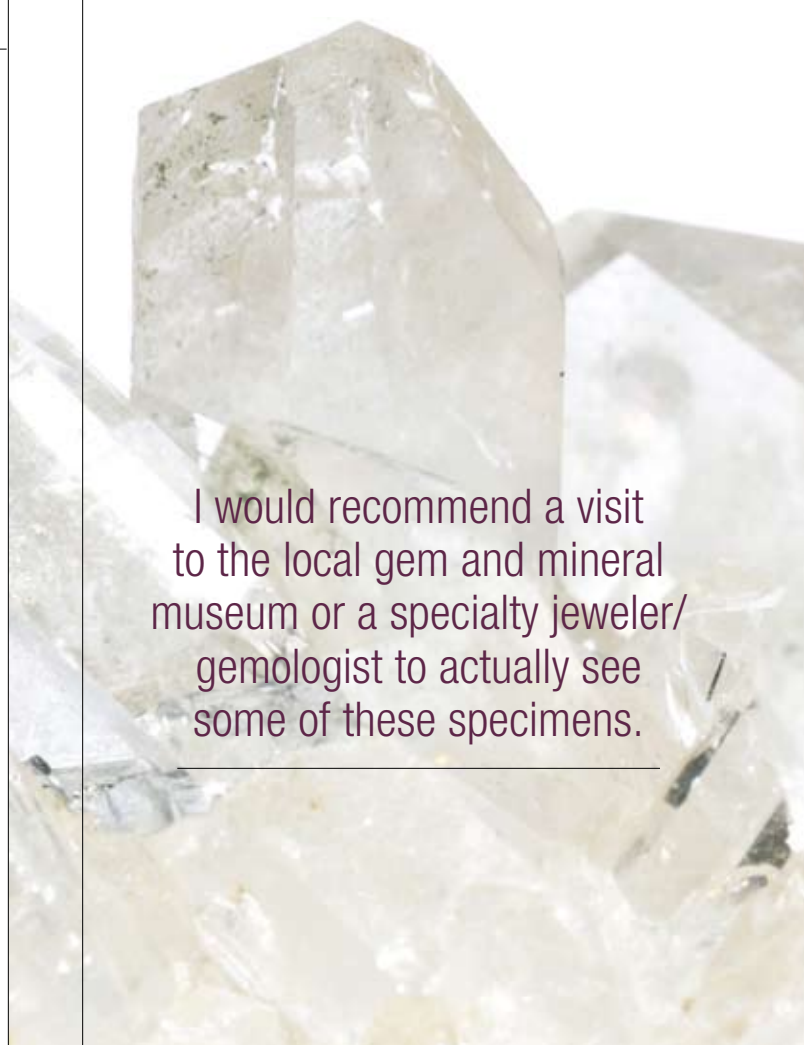
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I would recommend a visit to the local gem and mineral museum or a specialty jeweler/gemologist to actually see some of these specimens.



If this is also your type of excitement and amazement, or if you are just curious, then the following phenomena descriptions will be of interest:

**CHATOYANCY:** The cat's-eye effect is due to reflection of light from very thin, needlelike inclusions. It can be seen in chrysoberyl and certain quartz as well as in other gems.

**ASTERISM:** The star effect can occur in many gems as a four-, six-, or twelve-ray star. Sapphire, garnet, and spinel are some of the more common star gems that have minute needlelike inclusions called *silk* that reflect the stars.

**AVENTURESCENCE:** This is a glittery effect seen in aventurine quartz, fine sunstone, and other gems. The glitter can resemble fine floating flakes.

**PLAY OF COLOR:** This is caused by the interference and diffraction of light and can only be seen in opal and synthetic opal.

**ADULARESCENCE:** The moonstone effect. This is a billowy blue or white light reflection seen in moonstone.

**IRIDESCENCE:** This is a rainbow effect caused by light reflecting off a thin transparent layer, like oil on water. Gemstones such as obsidian, fire agate, and iris agate exhibit this phenomenon.

**LABRADOESCENCE:** This is a blue-green sheen seen in the gemstone labradorite.

If I haven't lost you yet and you're still reading, then I would recommend a visit to the local gem and mineral museum or a specialty jeweler/gemologist to actually see some of these specimens. Talking about phenomenal gems is sort of like talking about good food—it all sounds great, but there's nothing like actual hands-on experience for full appreciation! Maybe you'll want to take it a step further and have a custom-designed piece of phenomenal gemstone jewelry made just for your pleasure. 📧

You've lived a good life, had interesting adventures, made a difference in your community. But what will your grandchildren remember? And what will their children know about you?

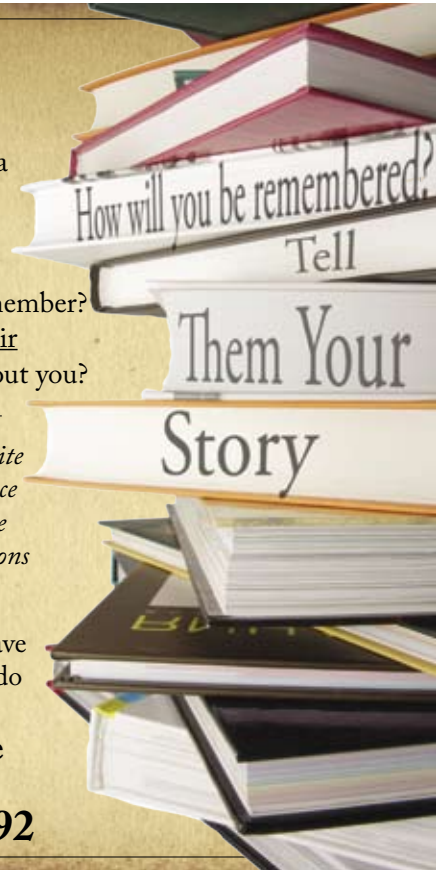
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