



# Promoting the passion

The theme *The Circle of Life* is the inspiration for designers taking part in this year's PlatAfrica Jewellery Design Competition.

The circle has no beginning, no end and is fundamental to everything. Entrants are urged to explore its possibilities, ensuring their designs are manufactured pieces and are inspired by the theme. Designs must be original and may not be entered in any other jewellery competition. The finished pieces must be innovative, functional and easy to wear. Deadline for finished pieces is 18 August 2006.

The competition, now in its seventh year, is jointly promoted by Anglo Platinum, Johnson Matthey and Metal Concentrators.

More than 80% of the metal used in the design must be platinum and, if required, will be supplied by Metal Concentrators. Professionals are requested to manufacture their own pieces at their expense but, at its discretion, Anglo Platinum may elect to assist. This year, ring designs are excluded.

Michael Joseph, Anglo Platinum's manager, jewellery development, explained the competition's objectives: "It is part of the local development strategy aimed at raising awareness, understanding, design and marketing opportunities of this unique metal. The ultimate aim is to promote innovation in South African design, creating exposure to both local and international marketing opportunities."

Competence and technical manufacture are other considerations and in this regard a number of retail training sessions have been held to transfer knowledge.

Anglo Platinum's plans for the future include bringing in international experts to encourage local manufacturers to experiment with new alloys and processes.

The drive in the use of CAD, rapid prototyping and casting has increased dramatically, reports Joseph. This ensures that South Africans can compete internationally in terms of quality and pricing. Anglo Platinum plans to play a dominant role in beneficiation in South Africa by building capacity through the development of skills.

Supporting a design competition is viewed as ensuring stimulation, development of design and of manufacturing expertise. Initial assessments indicate that the number of retail jewellers stocking platinum jewellery increased significantly last year.

## Worldwide promotion

Platinum has been promoted for three decades by the Platinum Guild International (PGI) which has established offices in all major centres.

Many jewellery trends have come and gone but its research indicates that platinum's appeal has remained eternal.

In attendance at the PGI'S exhibit at Baselworld 2006 was CEO, James Courage. "The PGI, which is the marketing arm of the worldwide platinum jewellery industry, will continue its work by promoting promising and talented designers and manufacturers and by showing their stunning creations across the globe," he said.

As an example, on view at the stand at Basel was a masterpiece created by Hong Kong designer Chu Wa On which showcased platinum at its best. Named "Jiang", which means river, his unique neckpiece, which was inspired by water, consists of 1 500 droplets of platinum.

The dazzling necklace, which cascades from the front to the back, includes onyx and diamonds and was created and polished entirely by hand. It used 450 grams of platinum and took 1 000 hours to complete. Its market value is estimated at US\$ 250 000 and it attracted much admiration at Basel.

## Timeless trends

Worldwide platinum trends for 2006 are set to complement fashion's return to elegance with the resurgence of the styles of the 40's and sharp new tailoring with a strong focus on femininity. This is in marked contrast to the somewhat bohemian tastes of recent years.

Credit: "Jiang" necklace by Chu Wa On

## PLATINUM

While colour remains a favourite, a strong black-and-white look is emerging. Jewellery for 2006 complements this new look and will favour platinum jewellery, which has a timeless look.

Emerging trends from the world of fashion in Italy, for example, saw the launch of a Total White collection of platinum jewellery, which with its naturally white look, combined well with white stones such as white coral, rock crystal and pearls.

German consumers are opting for style and glamor. Multiple long luminous necklaces with decorative pendants, voluminous or stacked rings and the still current favourite chandelier earrings are favourite adornments. The platinum solitaire is back in vogue as an engagement ring.

UK buyers have opted for classic platinum jewellery by legendary designers such as Cartier and Tiffany. Equally suited to elaborate antique jewellery settings with multiple coloured stones as favoured by these historic designers, these designs in platinum have been updated with new collections featuring unusual diamond cuts. Circular and oval brooches are back; wedding bands of platinum are designed to match engagement rings.

The US market indicates that consumers like contemporary styling with a simpler sleek look with either highly polished or matte surfaces. This is highly suited to platinum. American men have taken to the metal

for wedding rings, cufflinks, pendants, bracelets and especially watches.

"Bridal jewellery is still the foundation of our business in the West," summarised Courage. "It is also becoming an important market in China. Its booming economy has seen jewellery purchases at the top of the list for affluent urban consumers."

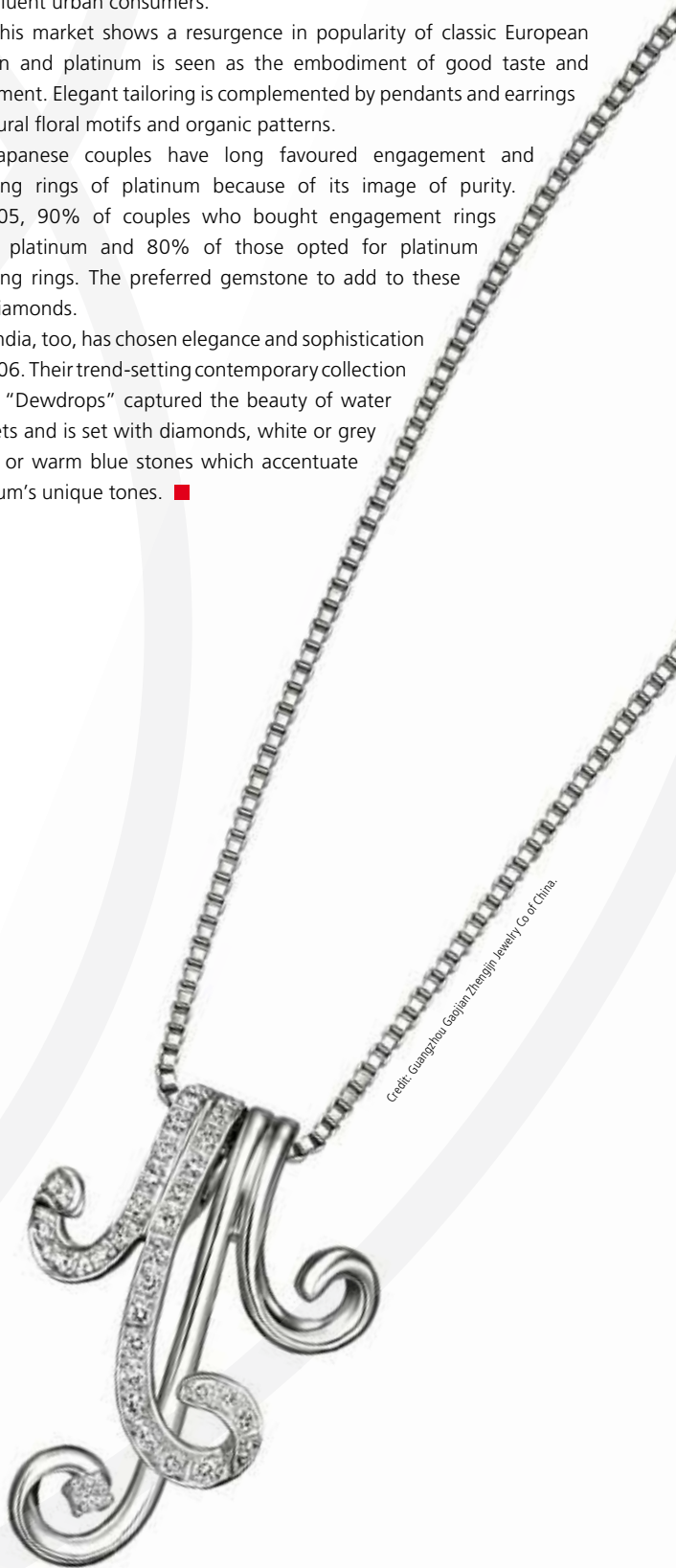
This market shows a resurgence in popularity of classic European fashion and platinum is seen as the embodiment of good taste and refinement. Elegant tailoring is complemented by pendants and earrings in natural floral motifs and organic patterns.

Japanese couples have long favoured engagement and wedding rings of platinum because of its image of purity. In 2005, 90% of couples who bought engagement rings chose platinum and 80% of those opted for platinum wedding rings. The preferred gemstone to add to these was diamonds.

India, too, has chosen elegance and sophistication for 2006. Their trend-setting contemporary collection called "Dewdrops" captured the beauty of water droplets and is set with diamonds, white or grey pearls or warm blue stones which accentuate platinum's unique tones. ■



Credit: Tokatzaan of Italy



Credit: Guangzhou Gaoguan Zhongjin Jewelry Co of China