

Tips for Handling Glass-Filled Rubies

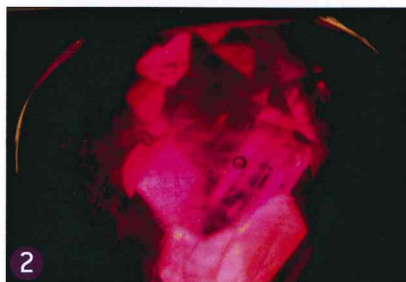
by Arthur Anton Skuratowicz

Most natural and heat-treated rubies tolerate the heat from bench operations. Generally, as long as rubies are allowed to cool before pickling and are not subjected to abrupt temperature changes (which are the enemy of all stones), they fare well at the bench. Most rubies tolerate



cleaners, solvents, and pickle, and they have no major issues with ultrasonic or steam cleaners.

Glass-filled rubies, on the other hand, aren't so bench-friendly. Most glass-filled rubies on the market were probably too included or fragile to be faceted in the first place. Although they may appear legitimate to the naked eye (1), they are heavily fracture-filled with a highly unstable material that does not hold up to even the most common jewelry practices. Arthur Anton Skuratowicz of The Jewelry Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, offers general guidelines for identifying glass-filled rubies, as well as tips to prevent damaging them at the bench.



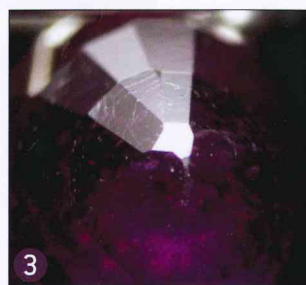
WATCH FOR HOGWASH

Perhaps most disconcerting is that many glass-filled rubies are being offered for sale with no mention of treatment—and at very good prices. If you suspect the price is too good to be

true, it probably is. Using a loupe or microscope, look for the following identifying characteristics of glass-filled rubies: gas bubbles (2), wispy veil-like inclusions, repeated parallel parting, and blue color flash. Glass-filled rubies will also have inconsistent surfaces, which may include luster differences on the surface, dissolved surface spots or facet junctions, and a large amount of surface-reaching fractures.

HOLD THE PICKLE

Several routine jewelers' tasks can cause irreversible damage to glass-



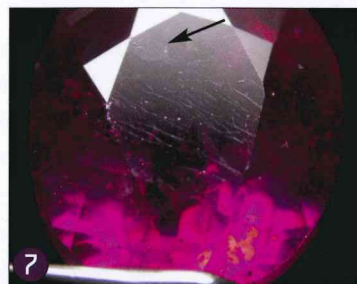
filled rubies. Because the filler appears to include borax, it easily dissolves in a pickle pot, leaving a crisscross network of exposed fractures. Higher temperatures, a stronger concentration of acid, and longer soaking times will accelerate the damage, as is evident in these photos, which show the ruby before immersion in the pickle pot (3), after a one-minute soak (4), after five minutes (5), and after 15 minutes (6).



JUST SAY NO TO POLISHING

Abrasives and polishing can wear away the filler on the surface of a glass-filled ruby. If surface-reaching fractures are present (7), polishing will undercut them, making them more visible and removing facet junctions (8).

It should be clear from these photos that glass-filled rubies are highly fragile. If you get so lucky as to have one come across your bench, proceed with caution.



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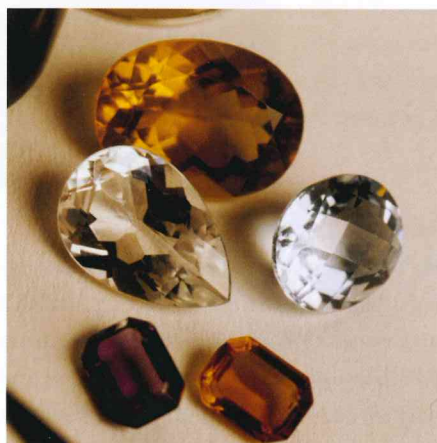
We do this through the home study appraisal course, quarterly newsletter, and discounts on books and equipment, as well as by serving as a sounding board for questions concerning our profession. The appraisal course also teaches sections of the government-sponsored Uniform Standard of Appraisal Practice as it relates to the appraisal of personal property. In addition, we hold two conferences each year with

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