

BRILLIANT STORIES

ON GOLD- AND SILVERSMITHING,
JEWELLERY, AND DIAMONDS

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DIVA, A STORY TOLD IN MORE THAN FIFTY-SEVEN FACETS

Antwerp and diamonds have been connected to each other for centuries. DIVA tells their story in its own, particular way. Six themes and fourteen key pieces from DIVA's collection are the common thread in this story. Let DIVA's Wonder Room inspire you with its mix of rare and exotic luxuries. Interior designer Gert Voorjans will allow you to accompany him during his creative process and treat you to a few tips. The DIVA workshop will be focusing on craftsmanship. You will be given a short historical overview showing you the ins and outs of diamond cutting and gold- and silver-smithing in Antwerp. You will get to see behind the scenes of DIVA's conservation-restoration lab and inside the workshops of contemporary creators and artisans. You will also learn more about the many forms diamonds can adopt and discover what makes a brilliant so brilliant. Theme number three will tell you how these glittering little stones spread out all over the world. The biographies of a few diamond traders will take you on a tour through history. We will then sit down with some silver lovers and unwind while they tell us all about their silver tableware. Theme five will tell you what to watch out for when buying a diamond or precious-metal object. Two experts will introduce you to the complex world of acquisition and authenticity. Finally, we will close in style with a look at jewellery fashion and some witty rules of etiquette.

The exhibition 'DIVA. A Brilliant Story' is accompanied by *Brilliant Stories*. DIVA is a museum with a dazzling collection, and has more to offer, too. Read how this all came about in *The making of DIVA*.



Creation & Craftsmanship

Theme 2
ATELIER

Gold- and silversmithing and diamond cutting merge
in a timeless workshop. A look behind the scenes
connects past and present.



CREATION & CRAFTSMANSHIP

A RICH PAST

DIVA and its collection are located at an historic site. In the sixteenth century, the Grote Markt (Great Market Square) and its surrounding streets were the place to find objects made of gold, silver and precious stones. Here, admirers of sparkling luxuries could gape at the display windows of jewellers, goldsmiths and silversmiths. (1)

The trade and its craftsmanship were regulated by specialised 'Nations'. The Nation of Gold- and Silversmiths was established in 1456. This was followed by the establishment of the Nation of Diamond and Ruby Cutters in 1582. Training, working conditions and the intake of new trade members were all subject to stringent conditions. Despite various protective measures, the Nations could not prevent quality of craftsmanship from draining away as a result of political and economic difficulties. Goldsmiths and silversmiths from Antwerp spread out across Europe, which is how the Antwerp style became famous. (2)

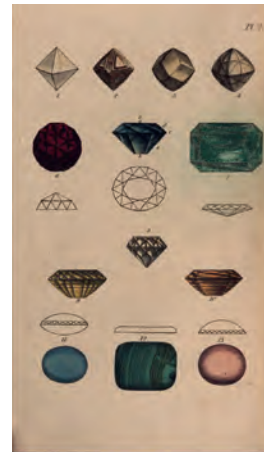
Many diamond cutters immigrated to Amsterdam, where, from 1620, the import of rough diamonds from India increased. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, there were more diamond cutters active in Amsterdam than in Antwerp. The diamond cutters who stayed in Antwerp specialised in small, rose-cut diamonds. (3)



Oath of the Nation with a drawing by Hans Collaert I (1575) in the register Ordonnantien ende Placcaerten aangaande de Goud en Silversmeden Natie binnen Antwerpen, 1524-1731, FelixArchief, City Archive of Antwerp. The Nation of Diamond and Ruby Cutters was based on the Privilege Cartulary of the goldsmiths and silversmiths.

COMEBACK DURING THE CAPE ERA (1870-1873)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Antwerp regained its role as the diamond city. The discovery of diamond fields in South Africa in 1867 marked a period of prosperity for the diamond industry, which referred to it as the Cape Era. At that time, there were a few active diamond entrepreneurs in Antwerp who were wealthy enough to invest in equipment and grinders. In addition to capital, they also had access to rough diamonds, but they did not have properly trained brilliant cutters. Until the Cape Era, diamonds cut in Antwerp had mostly been smaller and rose cut. The diamond entrepreneurs brought highly qualified brilliant cutters from Amsterdam to Antwerp in exchange for high salaries. The diamond cutters from Amsterdam supposedly functioned as 'overseers' who had to train the diamond cutters of Antwerp in brilliant cutting. (4)

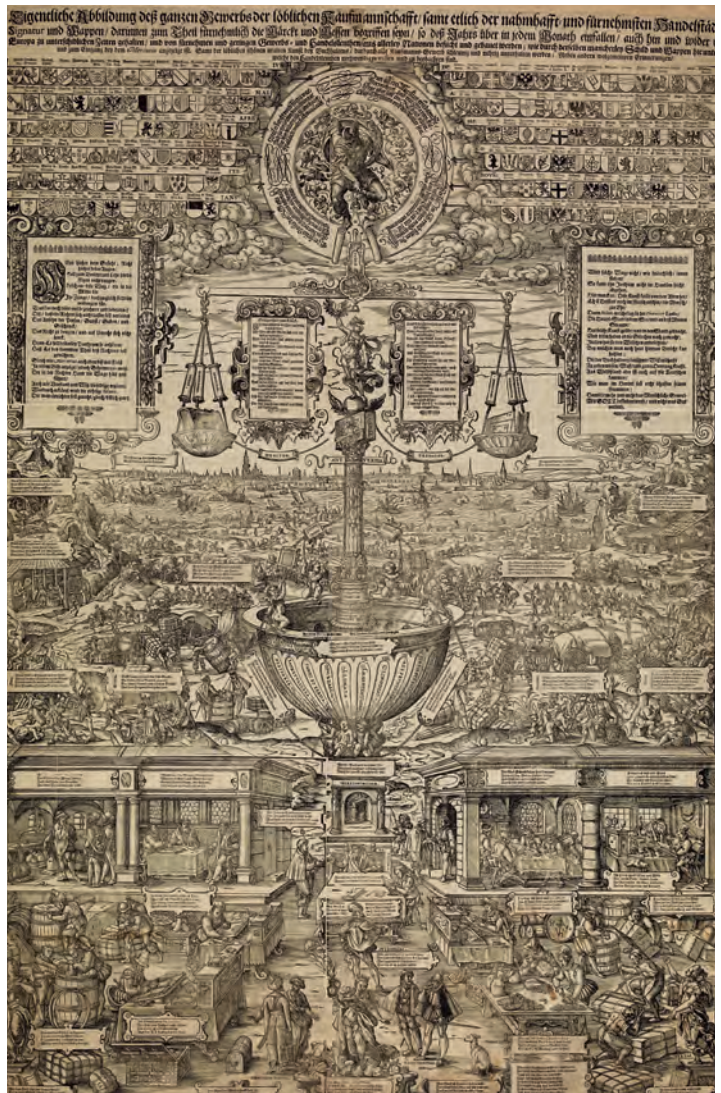


John Mawe, *A Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones*, 1813, European Libraries.

While foreign silver workshops increased production capacity by means of technological innovations, Antwerp jewellers mostly continued to work according to traditional methods. During the nineteenth century, jewellers were still trained in the workshop and received further artistic training at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts or at the National Higher Institute for Fine Arts.



Design sketch for ampullas N° 15 & 16 and plate by Antwerp silversmith Jan Pieter Antoon Verschuylen, 1847-1865, DIVA.



Jost Amman, *Eigentliche Abbildung deß ganzen Gewerbs der löblichen Kaufmannschafft...*, 1585, British Museum. This allegory of the trade exemplifies the activity around Antwerp's Grote Markt in the 16th century.

The First World War shook up the Antwerp diamond industry, which in 1921 began to completely recover from the war. Throughout the 1920s, Antwerp had more than 25,000 diamond cutters, a large portion of whom were located in the rural Campine area of Antwerp. (5)



Diamond cutters at work, 1906, Antwerp City Archive.

DIAMOND DIASPORA AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

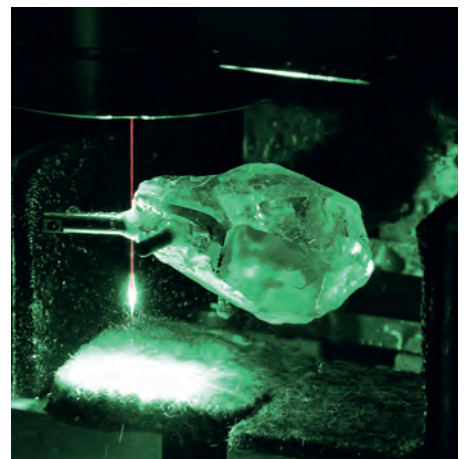
During the Second World War, many Jewish diamond dealers fled to New York, Palestine and Havana, contributing to the development of new diamond centres. Although the diamond industry resumed its activity in Antwerp soon after the war, the diamond diaspora was by now a fact. (6)

Moreover, in the 1940s, India began expanding its cutting of small diamonds of the lowest quality, bypassing the cutters from Campine. Indian dealers attracted diamond cutters from Antwerp to Bombay to teach the modern diamond cutting techniques to local diamond cutters. (7) By the mid-1970s, strong Indian competition, the rise of laser technology, automation of diamond cutting and a more stringent supervising fiscal authority resulted in a drastic decrease of work opportunities in the diamond industry of Antwerp and Campine. (8)

NOWADAYS: 'SPECIALS'

Although the number of Antwerp grinders is today limited, Antwerp is still known as a supplier of top-quality diamonds. Several high-technology grinders in the Antwerp diamond district focus primarily on working with large, very valuable diamonds.

Diamond splitter at work, 1960s, Hans Wins.



Lesotho Promise being laser cut, DIAMCAD.

Cutters, casters, setters and jewellers are still just a stone's throw away from each other in the Antwerp diamond district, near the Central Railway Station. Here customers will find diamond jewellery that testifies to decades of craftsmanship, combined with new technologies, such as 3D printing and laser cutting. (9) In the centre of Antwerp, there is an increase in the number of creative jewellers who have been trained as jewellery designers and silversmiths or goldsmiths at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, Sint Lucas Antwerp or the PXL-MAD School of Arts in Hasselt. They keep the centuries-old craftsmanship alive and contemporary.



Lesotho Promise I, a 76.41-carat pear-shaped diamond,
Photo: Donald Woodrow.

- (1) RIJKS, M., *Catalysts of Knowledge: Artists' and Artisans' Collections in Early Modern Antwerp*, p. 129.
- (2) BAUDOUIN, P. and CLAESSENS-PERE, N., *Zilver uit de Gouden Eeuw van Antwerpen*, pp. 21 & 43.
- (3) HOFMEESTER, K., 'Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing: From India to Europe and Back, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth', in: *Journal of Global History*, Volume 8, no. 01, March 2013, pp. 37-38.
- (4) DECONINCK, Y., *Diamantmigratie naar Antwerpen voor, tijdens en na de Kaapse Tijd. De Antwerpse diamantsector en zijn Amsterdamse migranten (1865-1880)*, unpublished Master's thesis, 2011-2012, University of Antwerp, pp. 27-30.
- (5) LAUREYS, E., *Meesters van het diamant*, p. 115.
- (6) VANDEN DAELEN, V., "Negotiating the Return of the Diamond Sector and its Jews: The Belgian Government during the Second World War and in the Immediate Post-war Period", in: Lánicek, J. and Jordan, J. (eds.), *Governments-in-Exile and the Jews during the Second World War*, p. 236.
- (7) HOFMEESTER, K., *Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing*, p. 46.
- (8) LAUREYS, E., *Meesters van het diamant*, p. 412.
- (9) Jewellers who meet the stringent quality standards carry the Antwerp's Most Brilliant quality label of the city of Antwerp and the Antwerp World Diamond Centre.

KEY PIECE WINDMILL CUP



© DIVA.

Inventory number	S67/51
Date	1603-1604
Artist	Master with Six-pointed Star
Dimensions	Height: 234 mm Diameter: 86 mm
Material	Silver, partly gilded

This silver windmill with engraved adornments and miniature figures is actually an ingenious drinking cup. It was manufactured in 1603-1604 by the Master with Six-pointed Star, an Antwerp silversmith known by that name because of his mark. At that time, windmill cups had long been used as sources of merriment at festive events and drinking games. What made them such fun was that they could not be set down unless they were empty. The player would put the windmill's sails in motion by blowing through a tube, and as long as they were turning, he was allowed to drink. If the cup was not empty by the time the sails stopped turning, the clock's hand indicated the number of extra cups the player had to drink.

Windmill cups were originally used in drinking games, but gradually took on other functions and nuances. In Germany, for instance, they were used as welcome gifts by city and guild coun-

cils, and in the Northern Netherlands they were associated with drinking clubs and (millers') guilds, although they were also used as birth and wedding gifts. Moreover, they adorned the art cabinets of kings and princes.

In the Southern Netherlands, windmill cups were related to the guild system. In the sixteenth century, the Gildekamersstraat, the street where DIVA is now located, was home to several Antwerp archers' guilds. During this period, the initial military function of these guilds became purely ceremonial. They took part in processions and circumambulations, organising parties as well as theatre and shooting competitions. Many of the prizes were items in silver, such as drinking cups, trays, candleholders, cutlery and salt cellars. Windmill cups were sometimes included, more specifically as prizes for the best farce or buffoon act.



© DIVA.
X-ray photography Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

A DAY AT THE DIVA CONSERVATION LAB

The DIVA collection contains thousands of items. About 700 will be included in DIVA's *Brilliant Story* exhibition. Before acquiring its place in a museum gallery, each item is checked by the eagle eye of conservator Kristina Valiulis. She knows what it means to make a collection 'exhibition ready'.

"All the items exhibited in the museum—from our own collection as well as objects on long-term and short-term loan—are conserved and restored, maintaining them in their optimal condition," says Kristina. "Before we begin treating an item, it undergoes a thorough inspection of its condition. Based on the report made from the inspection, we formulate a treatment plan, after which we decide to have the piece treated in-house or not, depending on its condition.

"A good example of how such a treatment takes place is the conservation of a pair of salt cellars and mustard pot by Jan Baptist II Verberckt, made in Antwerp between 1832 and 1838. The mustard pot has already been treated, so it is now the salt cellars' turn. They require a light cleansing because the silver is tarnished. We carry out such treatments in our own lab, in accordance with international norms, which depend on the item, the material, the problem and the damage." We join Kristina for several hours and watch how she cleans the silver.



A pair of salt cellars and a mustard pot,
Jan Baptist II Verberckt, 1832-1838, Antwerp, © DIVA.

Kristina takes the salt cellars from storage. Thanks to the precise location indicated in the collection management system, and labels with inventory numbers on the packaging, it is easy to find the items. To minimise risk of damage, all the items in the collection—big or small—are wrapped before being transported, and every item is carefully protected during storage. The first layer of packaging consists of Tyvek, a type of textile with very small holes, made from polyethylene, allowing the item to breathe. The second layer of packaging is bubble wrap. Then wrapping the entire item with an outer layer of polyethylene foil makes adhesive tape unnecessary. A sticker with the inventory number of the item is adhered to the outer layer.

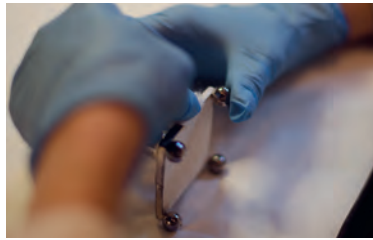


The silver base of the crystal salt cellar is clearly tarnished. Kristina explains why. "A certain degree of sulphur is present in the air, in the form of hydrogen sulphide and sulphur dioxide. When a metal like silver comes into contact with that sulphur gas, the silver begins to turn brown. It can also turn black if it is exposed to sulphur for a longer time, or more intensively. The air management system of the museum creates a suitable climate for these items. The temperature, relative humidity and air quality are controlled in order to keep them in the best possible condition. Sulphur gasses are also extracted from the air. As an additional precaution, several display cabinets have also been equipped with a mini-climate management system with tailor-made monitoring.





"Sometimes we prefer to completely submerge a massive, slightly tarnished silver object in a solution of water with detergent and other products. Quite often this is enough to clean the object," says Kristina. Today, however, her working method with the salt cellars is different and more suitable. "As you can see, the bottom of the salt cellars has been made heavier with plaster of Paris, which is why they cannot be submerged. We begin the treatment by cleaning them with denatured ethanol." Kristina sprinkles some ethanol on a cotton bud and then carefully applies it to the silver. "When an object has been slightly affected by sulphur, ethanol is usually enough for the treatment. However, in the case of the salt cellars, we see that the sulphur has already bonded with the silver, which means that ethanol will not remove the tarnish."



“Because ethanol does not have an effect, I will now use precipitated calcium carbonate, which is chalk with a very small grain size, which is capable of removing the silver with a minimal effect on the silver. The soft chalk is usually used in combination with a little water, ethanol and detergent. We combine them in a petri dish and mix it into a paste. With a cotton bud, I apply the paste to the silver and gently rub it to clean the item.”



Kristina’s second method achieves the desired result. The difference between the cleaned part and the remaining side and legs of the salt cellar is clear. “In the photograph, you can see that I have already cleaned a third of the side with chalk. The rest—the left side and the legs—is not yet cleaned and is noticeably blacker than the right side.” Kristina continues the treatment with the utmost concentration. After cleaning the silver, the crystal is also cleaned.



After an hour, Kristina has finished cleaning one of the two salt cellars. “After removing the tarnish with chalk, I go over it with a brush to remove all remnants of chalk from the item. Often, pieces of chalk stick to the brush, which increases the cleaning effect.” Before repeating the treatment process on the other salt cellar, she places the two items next to each other for comparison. The left salt cellar has been treated, while the right one hasn’t. The difference is clearly noticeable. “You can actually never predict how long it will take to clean an item. Regardless of how much time it takes us, we want to make the visitor’s experience as spectacular as possible,” Kristina concludes.



KEY PIECE DIAMOND BROOCH



© Saint Willibrord Church, Antwerp collection, stored at DIVA.

Inventory number

B503/4, Saint Willibrord Church,
Antwerp collection, stored at DIVA

Date

1640-1660

Dimensions

Height: 34 mm

Material

Diameter: 28 mm

Diamond, silver, gold, enamel

This pendant was gifted to Saint Wilibrord Church in Antwerp in 1677, as an adornment for the crown of the Virgin Mary. The piece connecting it with the gilded silver crown bears the following engraved inscription: *Dese bagge compt van de huysvrouw van meneer Bartholomeus Tollinckx, wordt gegeven met conditie dat nooyt en sal moghen vercocht oft verwisselt worden.* 1677. 8 april, which translates as: This jewel comes from the wife of Mr. Bartholomeus Tollinckx and is given on the condition that it may never be sold or exchanged. 8 April 1677.

Mrs. Tollinckx probably wore this piece of jewellery on the bodice of her dress, attached to the neckline with a bow. Bow forms featured very prominently in jewellery fashion in the Northern and Southern Netherlands around 1650. This piece has hinges at the back, but the lid is missing. The back of the pendant is partly decorated with enamel floral and tulip motifs, and the front is completely set with Amsterdam rose-cut diamonds.

Rose-cut diamonds have a flat base and a dome-shaped top composed of triangular facets. This type of cut gives diamonds a deep sparkle and became fashionable during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Its exact origins remain unclear, however. Roses were first mentioned in the Antwerp city archives in the 1615 inventory of Antwerp diamond trader Gaspar Duarte. Although Amsterdam was gaining prominence in the diamond trade at that time, Antwerp was still important, with more than 400 diamond cutters plying their trade here in 1618.

By the eighteenth century, a distinction had been established: fully faceted, heavier, and therefore more valuable rose-cut diamonds were called *Amsterdam Roses*, while smaller, flatter, rose-cut diamonds were branded *Antwerp Roses*. This is because Antwerp depended on Amsterdam for its diamonds, and while diamond cutters in Antwerp made both types of rose-cut diamonds, the fact that they received mainly smaller stones led them to gradually focus on flat roses with fewer facets. Hence the name *Antwerp Roses*.

PRESENTATION OF THE MUSEUM COLLECTION DIVA. A BRILLIANT STORY

The exhibition was organised by De Museumstichting SON.

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With the support of the city of Antwerp, the province of Antwerp, and Toerisme Vlaanderen.

Director: Jeroen Martens
Curator: Romy Cockx
Audio play and butler concept: Frank Van Laecke
Scenography: Studio Gert Voorjans (Gert Voorjans and Luc Van Laere) and Carla Janssen-Höfelt

DIVA team: Els Crollet, Suzanne De Lange, Carl De Smit, Katerijne Decraene, Zoë Dejager, Tom Iriks, Lieselot Jonckheere, Stephane Keersmaekers, An Labis, Leonie Maerevoet, Arendine Martens, Wim Nys, Rebecca Roskam, Danielle Serre, Leen Thielemans, Kristina Valiulis, Henk Van Genderen, Lieve Van Looveren, Ann Verbecque, Giacomo Visini, Koen Waterschoot

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Audio-visual execution and multimedia: Centre Screen, Create, Mario de Munck
Soundscape: Steven Pregelns

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BRILLIANT STORIES

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Authors: Romy Cockx & Iris De Feijter
With thanks to: Inneke Baatsen, Timothy de Paepe, Tijn Vanneste

Contributors to The making of DIVA: Tom Iriks, Lieselot Jonckheere, An Labis, Jeroen Martens, Wim Nys, Jan Walgrave
Interviewees: Philippe Geenen, Rembrandt Jordan, Sofie Lachaert, Mathieu Maillette de Buy Wenniger, Wim Nys, Steven Pregelns, Mike Rombout, Studio Collect, Frank Van Laecke, Suzanne van Leeuwen, Gert Voorjans
Translation: Xavier De Jonge & Bracha De Man
Editing: Nathalie De Man
Image research: Romy Cockx, Leonie Maerevoet
Graphic design: Studio Louise Mertens
Cover: Studio Louise Mertens

Should you have any comments or questions, please contact our editorial team:
redactiestijl@lannoo.com.

www.divaantwerp.be

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