

10/04

October 2004

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Signs of Spring

Zaffiro enlivens granulation's color palette

BY TINA WOJTKIELO Most people equate granulation with rich, butterscotch colored 22k yellow gold...until they see the work of Jack and Elizabeth Gualtieri of Zaffiro in Portland, Oregon. "La Primavera," a 22k rose gold pendant with platinum and rose gold granulation, is just one example of Zaffiro's non-traditional granulation color palette. And with breaking tradition comes technical challenges.

"Because of its high copper content, rose gold is prone to orange peel if overheated, so all torch work must be done carefully," says Jack Gualtieri. The platinum granulation on the piece further complicates matters. "Since platinum has a higher melting temperature than rose gold, all the platinum granules must be fused first." Once the platinum work is done, the individual components of the pendant are cleaned, and the rose gold granulation is applied.

The Gualtieris chose the rose gold to enhance the colors of the gemstones in the piece. "The rose gold is the perfect complement to the pastels and vibrant pinks," says Gualtieri. "And the platinum granulation just pops on the warm backdrop."

This is apparent in the linear element of the piece, which features flush-set sapphires between platinum granules. Setting stones in such close proximity to granulation can be tricky, says Gualtieri, as it's easy to damage a granule if your setting tool slips.

Just as carefully as the stones are set and the granules are fused, the design is scrutinized to ensure that each component flows seamlessly into the next. "We incorporated platinum balls at each transition point," says Gualtieri. "These little details enhance the granulation. Together, they make the entire piece flow." ♦

The pendant comprises six elements (from top to bottom): The bail, the V-shaped component, the tulip-shaped upper plate, the 2.87 carat tourmaline plate, the linear element with purple sapphires, and the 1.01 carat pink sapphire bezel.

Balls of platinum sandwich the linear component between the two bezel-set stones. They likewise tie the piece together at the jump ring between the tourmaline and the upper plate, and between the upper plate and the bail.



To give the pendant depth, the Gualtieris fashioned rose gold galleries beneath the two larger plates of the piece. Platinum balls serve as aesthetic connectors between the galleries and the plates.

