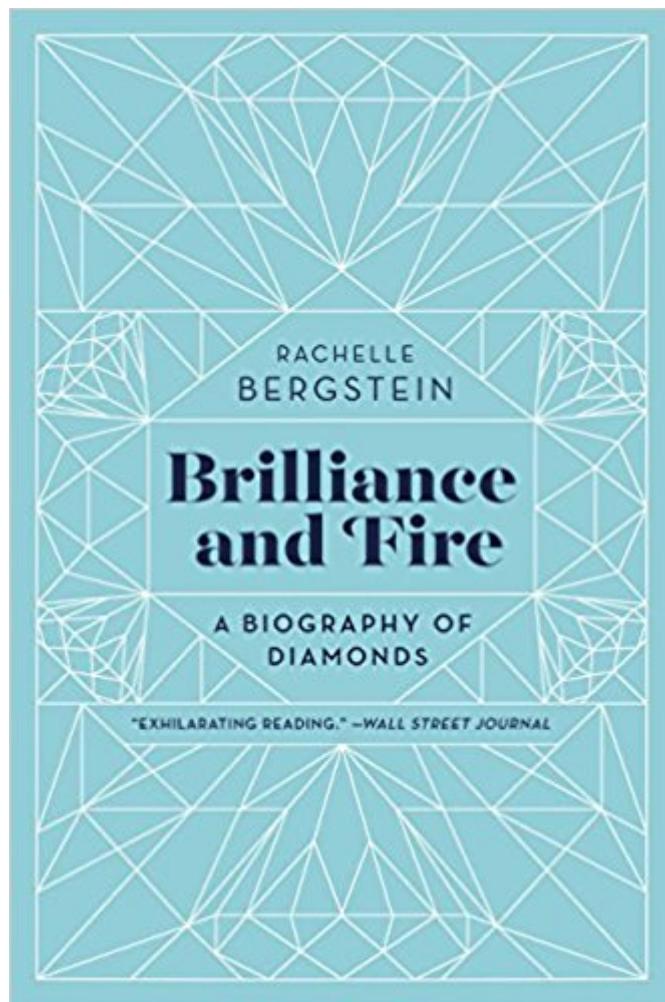


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# Brilliance And Fire: A Biography Of Diamonds



## Synopsis

From the author of *Women from the Ankle Down* comes a lively cultural biography of diamonds, which explores our society's obsession with the world's most brilliant gemstone and the real-world characters who make them shine. "A diamond is forever." Who among us doesn't recognize this phrase and, with it, the fascination that these shiny gemstones hold in our collective imagination as symbols of royalty, stars, and eternal love? But who gave us this catchphrase? Where do these gemstones and their colorful legacies originate? How did they become our culture's symbol of engagement and marriage? Why have they retained their coveted status throughout the centuries? Rachelle Bergstein's cultural biography of the diamond illuminates the enticing, often surprising story of our society's enduring obsession with the hardest gemstone—and the people who have worked tirelessly to ensure its continued allure. From the South African mines where most diamonds have been sourced since the late 1890s to the companies who have fought to monopolize them; from the stars who have dazzled in them to the people behind the scenes who have carefully crafted our understanding of their value. *Brilliance and Fire* offers a glittering history of the world's most coveted gemstone and its greatest champions and most colorful enthusiasts. *Brilliance and Fire* is illustrated with 16 pages of color photographs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Engrossing and delightful... Bergstein's purview is so broad and her writing so accessible that her compelling exploration of fashion, greed, and the dawn of American

consumerism should find a broad readership. (Booklist, starred review) "Across oceans and centuries, citizens and kings, the diamond has reigned as the lion of jewels. The reasons why, and how, sparkle with intimate, historical, authoritative detail all through Bergstein's sweeping tale of the destructive and restorative powers of beauty, and our love affair, even obsession, with this enigmatic rock." (Sam Wasson, author of *Fifth Avenue, 5 A.M.*) "Ms. Bergstein has a great ear for an anecdote and 'Brilliance and Fire,' her cultural biography of diamonds, has an exotic cast of inspired entrepreneurs, brazen chancers and misguided millionairesses. Exhilarating reading." (Ms. Bergstein enjoysably captures the daring.) (The Wall Street Journal) "As prismatic as a brilliant cut diamond." This exhaustively and comprehensively researched book becomes more like a story rather than a lesson in the history of diamonds. (New York Journal of Books) "The love affair between Americans and diamonds has been going on for centuries." From the Hope diamond to blood diamonds. (Apartheid to beneficiation.) (Harry Winston to Hip Hop bling, Brilliance and Fire takes a comprehensive look at the highs and lows of the diamond industry.) (Rapaport) "Fascinating.... informative, well-written, and entertaining." (Kirkus) "A look at how the world became transfixed with a rock whose queenly status is largely a result of monopoly and marketing. The diamond industry probably doesn't want you to know this, but the Sears & Roebuck catalog of 1894 included diamond rings priced from \$4.50 to \$121.50." (Sacramento Bee) "Captivating." Bergstein's account weaves disparate elements, including celebrity gossip, South African apartheid, and global economics, into a highly entertaining product, and her criticism of De Beers is significant, balanced, and diligently researched. (Publishers Weekly) "A captivating look into the world of diamonds that will be of interest to all readers." (Library Journal) "A fleet-footed social history." (New York Times on *Women from the Ankle Down*) "A lively look at the history of stilettos, sneakers and sundry other leather- and rubber-soled objects of swoon." (USA Today on *Women from the Ankle Down*) "If style defines the woman, and shoes a woman's style, then ooh la la, here's the definitive history and guide." (Everything from Chinese bound feet to Ferragamo, from Hollywood favorites to running up one's credit card on the sine qua non of fashion and inventiveness of the people behind Tiffany, Cartier, Bulgari and others as they made a very common gemstone into the most coveted rock in the world.) Ms. Bergstein's cheerful, chatty approach is refreshing. (Mireille Guiliano, author of *French Women Don't Get Fat*, on *Women from the*

Ankle Down)

“A diamond is forever.” Who among us doesn’t recognize this slogan and, with it, the fascination that diamonds hold in our collective imagination as emblems of royalty, glamour, and eternal love? Rachelle Bergstein’s cultural biography illuminates the enticing, often surprising story of our society’s enduring obsession with diamonds—and the people who have worked tirelessly to ensure their continued allure. From the South African mines where most diamonds have been sourced since the late 1890s to the companies that have fought to monopolize them; from the likes of Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, and Kanye West, who have dazzled in them, to the people behind the scenes who have carefully crafted our understanding of their value. Brilliance and Fire offers a glittering history of the world’s most coveted gemstone and its greatest champions and most colorful enthusiasts.

My mom, a jewelry junkie, gave this to me after she ate it up in a few days. As a non-fiction lover, I read a lot of cultural and social histories and this book ranks among the best of the genre. The book is filled with interesting stories about every aspect of diamonds. I was particularly taken with a few chapters. First, if you don’t know about Jakob the Jeweler, the man that made millions selling to the Hip-Hop elite, skip straight to that chapter-- such a crazy story! But the sections of the book that dive deep into De Beers and their history are the best part: I ate up pages about their savvy marketing campaigns, their push to get diamond engagement rings to be the standard symbol of marriage proposals, and the battle they waged against lab-made diamonds. Bergstein has a way of making a book about glorified rocks shine brighter than the diamonds she writes about. Anyway, sorry for the gushing, I read a lot of bad non-fiction. PS - the book has great COLOR photos. Always a plus!

A very interesting book focused on the history of Diamond business. The marketing of diamonds in the United States was very informative.

An excellent historical and cultural overview of the impact of diamonds on American society written with such style that it is difficult to put this book down . For anyone who owns a diamond this book must be put on the top of your reading list ! I look forward to more books from Rachelle Bergstein as I equally enjoyed her first book ' Women from the Ankle Down: The Story of Shoes and How They Define Us.'

Such a great read about diamonds! Very interesting!

Enjoyed it!

This book is so fun! With all of the attention we put on diamonds - from friend's engagement rings to celebrity jewelry - I couldn't believe how much I didn't know. Sure, I saw BLOOD DIAMOND, but now I actually understand the conflict. I know to expect a diamond engagement ring one day, but now I know why. I know stars on instagram will have the best jewelry, but now I see where that started. I recommend this book to any woman who loves a little sparkle, and any man who has or will have to make a brilliant investment in the future. Read so fast - loved it!

Here's a thorough history and analysis of diamonds from the discovery of these flashy rocks to the eminently successful marketing of the stones as an expression of love. There is enough technical detail for those who are interested in it. More importantly, there are plenty of interesting stories of the individuals and companies which took advantage of the gullible, privileged and indulged, including many unethical or shady business dealings. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who would have an interest in these ubiquitous gemstones.

This book is engaging. Pleasant to read. Informational. Accurate. It is a must read for members of the Jewelry Industry, Diamond dealers (for a big picture of your business) and for diamond lovers. Also, historical jewelers. All aspects of the text and information is handled in a profession voice yet, really comfortable to read. I have had an easy time sharing and recommending this book. KUDOS to the author!

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