COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

A 5-MINUTE GUIDE TO DIAMONDS – SHAPING, CUTTING, AND POLISHING

3 weeks ago • Hollie Bell • Jewellery & Watches • Style • ♥ 0

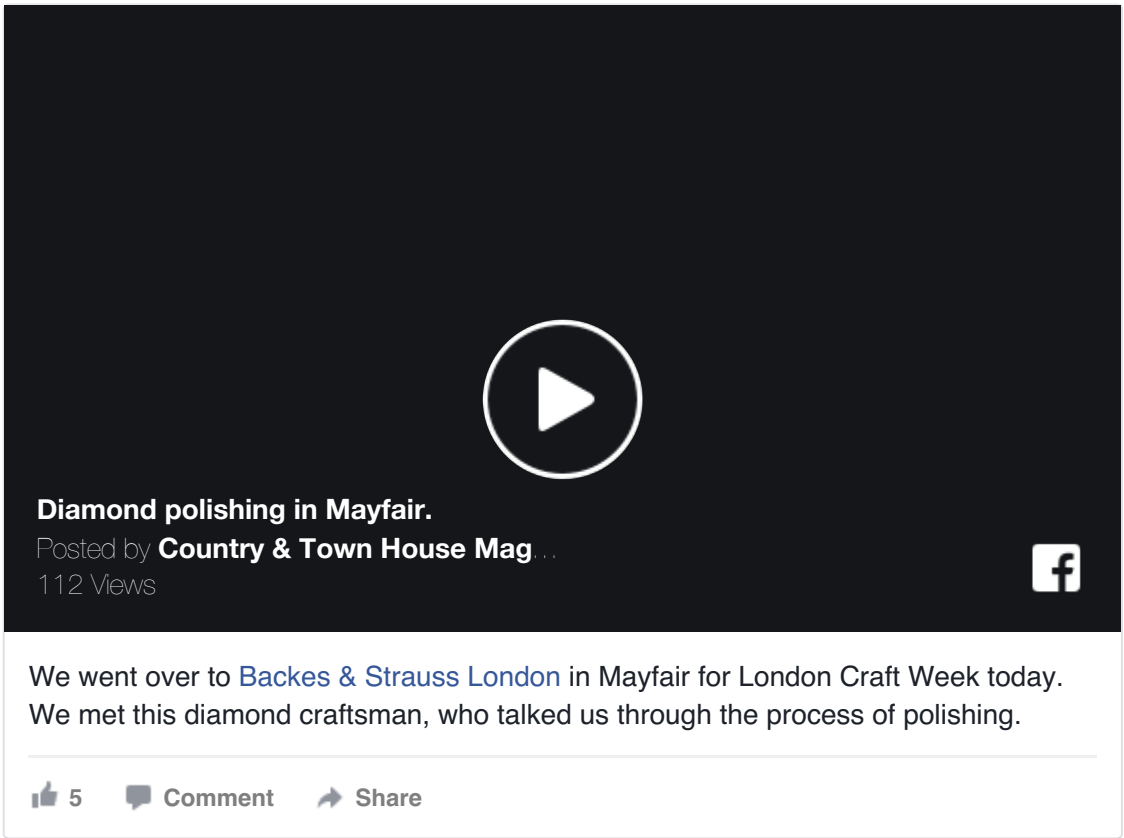
WE WENT TO BACKES & STRAUSS IN MAYFAIR TO LEARN ALL ABOUT HOW

TO SHAPE, CUT AND POLISH DIAMONDS, ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST PRIZED STONES.

— Backes & Strauss Diamonds

London's Backes & Strauss, masters of diamonds since 1789 and Mayfair institution, is allowing members of the public to take a look at the craftsmanship and quality of its craft.

The shop is a heritage brand. With more than 200 years experience, Backes & Strauss knows its stuff, so the chance to gaze, longingly, into the sparkle of diamonds while finding out more about the work that goes into refining them, was an opportunity indeed.



Even the novices among you might be familiar with the four Cs – colour, clarity, carat and cut. These are important, as you might also suppose.

Diamond actually means lack of colour, and a stone's colour is measured alphabetically, from 'colourless' to 'more coloured'. Backes & Strauss only uses diamonds with a colour no lower than F, which means 'very nearly colourless'. The clearer, the better. D is the highest, purest on the scale, and as you transgress to Z, you're met with yellow hues that just won't do at all.

Clarity speaks for itself and flawlessness is desired. Carat is the measurement in which diamonds are weighed. Each carat is divided into 100 points, and has differing values depending on the other Cs.

Cut is all down to the brilliance (reflection of light falling on it) and the fire (splitting of the light). If the diamond is well polished and cut, then it should show hearts and arrows when viewed with a special diamond viewer. The more defined the pattern, the more ideal the stone.

— Backes & Strauss

So, to cutting and polishing. Pieter Bombeke, one of the diamond craftsmen at Backes & Strauss, told us all about the process of cutting, shaping and polishing diamonds. He told us that there are nine stages in cutting diamonds.

As you might imagine, the industry has moved with the times, new technology has made the process faster, cleaner, and more precise. New software allows the diamond craftsman to shape the diamonds before polishing them by hand. The software is linked to a machine which shapes the diamonds according to the preferred cut.

— Backes & Strauss diamond polishing

When the rough diamonds arrive, they have to be cut to get the most of the diamond, often using a laser or mechanical saw. Once the preferred shape is achieved the diamond is polished by eye (and a rather impressive magnifying glass) to help ensure that each facet is as perfect as possible.

Naturally, there's another bit of software for that too, which shows a projection of the diamond compared with the surface, to ensure that each imperfection is smoothed over.

It's a costly enterprise.

To see for yourself, why not pop down at some point this week? There are workshops taking place all week as part of London Craft Week (£15 per person, for 1.5hrs). To see what else is happening click here.

tagged in ACCESSORIES, LITTLE BLACK BOOK, LONDON, VIDEO

SHARE: FACEBOOK - TWITTER - PINTEREST - GOOGLE+