



Divine Creations

The world comes to the Club this month as dozens of vendors converge for the International Market, including one specialist jewelry designer with a passion for jade.

by Hilary Wendel



I am distracted from the start of my interview with Samantha Lim. Around her neck hangs an exquisite necklace. I'm hypnotized. Putting me out of my misery, she takes off the piece and hands it to me, informing me that it's one of her own jadeite creations. The amber-colored gemstone feels both warm *and* cold in my palm. As some jadeite enthusiasts claim, it seems to have a "living," organic quality. In fact, the Chinese character for the stone, or *yu* as jade is known in China, implies something precious that has descended from heaven. The character for emperor looks similar, which might explain why as far back as 3000 BC, jade was known in China as the "royal gem."

The design in my hand is typical of Lim's jewelry line, "Heavenly Jade." It combines the ancient art of jade design with modern and elegant innovation. Jadeite, unlike other more sparkly stones, is often valued for its ability to enhance the owner's natural beauty without being ostentatious. With some reluctance I eventually hand the piece back to its rightful owner.

Lim is among 52 vendors who will be selling their wares at this month's two-day International Market at the Club. From jewelry and clothes to seasonal decorations and home furnishings, there will be items from across Asia, Europe and the United States. From a total of ¥17 million raised by the Women's Group for local charities last year, ¥2.7 million came from this annual one-stop global shopping experience.

Chinese Singaporean Lim explains to me that jade is a generic name given to a family of stones that comprises the commonly found nephrite (the kind we are often able to buy cheaply in China) and jadeite, a rarer and more sought-after form. Most jadeite comes from Myanmar as reserves in other countries have been depleted. Jadeite, Lim says, is treasured for its quality and luscious colors, which can range from honey brown to lavender to the archetypal rich green.

Jadeite has a long tradition in Chinese culture and is valued for its mysterious and spiritual properties. Since jadeite reacts chemically with alkaline, wearers with more alkaline skin find that their jade darkens over time—a property that the Chinese believe brings good fortune and adds to the idea of jade being a "living" gem. Lim is quick to tell me that her skin is high in alkaline.

Lim, who is also in charge of the Monthly Programs for the Women's Group, says she has always been fascinated by jadeite, and she is quickly establishing a solid reputation in Japan through her jewelry line. Jadeite, however, is becoming increasingly difficult to find. So much so that a strand of rare jadeite beads sold in auction in Hong Kong went for a cool \$9.3 million. Luckily for visitors to the International Market, Lim's original jadeite designs are available at more affordable prices.



Trying on each piece to make sure that it appeals to her first is an approach that has won Lim many repeat customers. "I develop an intimate relationship with them...

they are usually people that are adventurous and like to have fun," she says. One such loyal customer is Club Member Judy Frohlich. "Just when I decide I have enough, I see her new collection and I must buy it!" she says. "I am so drawn to her designs and to jade—I consider myself a jade connoisseur. I believe in the myth and the legend of jade, and I just feel great wearing it."

Lim devotes much of her time to actually finding the right piece of jadeite for a particular design. "You are dealing with Mother Nature, it's not just a mold you pour like with precious metals," she says. "For me, the hunt is part of the process. It is the nature of the material that makes the design worthwhile. It is so satisfying when that special piece of jadeite is found."

The 36-year-old is modest about her success and surprised when I mention that she was the number one vendor for sales at last year's International Market. When I ask her the secret to her success, she tells me that she makes every effort to "offer pieces that are unique and contemporary but based on traditional designs." Keeping her booth uncluttered at the event, so that each piece stands out like a museum display, is vital, she says.

Be sure to check out Lim's exquisite creations and a host of other items on sale at this shopping extravaganza. □

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International Market
Wednesday, November 8
10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Thursday, November 9
10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Ballroom

Open to the public
(No children under 12 are permitted on the fourth floor during the sale.)

