

Treatment Tales

or

The murky world of gemstone "Enhancement" disclosure

"Today, when buyers are informed, they receive a sugar-coated version of the truth."

R. W. Hughes, in Ruby and Sapphire

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST TREATMENT DISCLOSURE¹

<i>Against Disclosure (sugar-coated "truths")</i>	<i>For Disclosure (what's unstated, by analogy)</i>
Some treatments merely duplicate nature.	Synthetic gems duplicate nature. Does this mean that we can now sell synthetic gems as natural?
Heat treatment merely acts upon the potential already existing within the stone.	Any human being has the potential to be a genius. Few live up to it.
The stone could have changed in the ground if it remained buried just a little longer.	I could also be the king of England, but I'm not. If someone believes that a gem could have changed color in the ground, bury it and see just how long it takes.
The colors produced are permanent and will not fade with time.	The colors of synthetic gems are also permanent. Does this mean we can now sell synthetic gems as natural?
Heat treatment is traditional and has been done for centuries.	Murder is also traditional, having occurred for millennia. Should we condone it on this "historical" basis?
Heat-treated gems are often impossible to separate from totally natural gems; therefore heat treatment need not be disclosed to the buyer.	Almost all synthetic quartz is indistinguishable from natural quartz, using the current methods. Is it now okay to sell synthetic quartz as natural? Because we cannot tell the difference today, does it mean that we will never be able to tell the difference? In the 19 th century, humans could not fly; today it is easy.
The customer already knows that everything is treated.	If that's the case, then it shouldn't hurt to tell the customer again.
All gems are treated; cutting and polishing is treatment.	Whether a gem is cut is not typically disputed; it is clearly disclosed to the buyer.
Heat treatment adds nothing to the stones; therefore such treatments are acceptable.	If nothing is added or changed, it is obvious that nothing would change. Heat is added, among other things. But the important point is not <i>how</i> a gem is altered, but <i>who</i> is doing it. If altered by humans, then it is, by definition, no longer natural.
Heat occurs in nature, therefore heated gems are natural.	Irradiation occurs in nature; can you imagine what would happen if you sold an irradiated blue diamond as natural?

¹ Adapted with very minor changes from Hughes, R. W., 1997, Ruby and Sapphire. RWH Publishing, Boulder, Colorado, 511 p.