



# A lasting IMPRESSION

Graff Diamonds and the ancient Goldsmiths' Company made history when Graff became the United Kingdom's first jewellery retailer to establish its own in-house state-of-the-art hallmarking facility

WORDS JOANNE GLASBEY

Graff has been at the vanguard of the diamond-jewellery business for over five decades, involved in every phase, from the sourcing of rough stones through cutting and polishing to the final setting. But its position at the pinnacle of the industry doesn't mean it rests on its laurels.

The House continues to set new standards of excellence and innovation, and is dedicated to pushing boundaries and taking a progressive approach to everything it does. So it's not completely surprising it now has another first under its belt: its own assay office. A subsidiary of the Goldsmiths' Company's, it establishes Graff as the only UK jewellery retailer to have an official hallmarking facility.

Production Director Raymond Graff introduced the idea of an in-house operation to attest the quality of the precious metals it uses to create its jewellery and augment the brand – after all, the British hallmark is known to be the strictest in the world. The Goldsmiths' Company has been responsible since 1300 for testing the quality of gold and silver, and was awarded its first royal charter in 1327. It could be deemed the oldest champion of consumer protection.

The acknowledgement that legal strictures were needed to maintain metal purity dates back even further – in 1238, King Henry III commanded that six faithful goldsmiths would be responsible for ensuring standards. Edward I upheld the process and required that completed pieces be

assayed by the Wardens of the Goldsmiths' Guild and marked with a leopard's head, *left*, to denote London as the 'town' of origin. From 1363, makers had to stamp their own distinguishing marks alongside it: at first, a symbol such as a cross or a fish, and, later, the initials of the worker or firm. In 1478, the Goldsmiths' Company compelled makers to take their work to Goldsmiths' Hall to be assayed and marked before being offered for sale. This is the derivation of the word 'hallmark' – and the practice continues to this day.

The UK's compulsory hallmark has three elements: the sponsor's unique mark, indicating the jewellery-maker; the millesimal-fineness mark, denoting the metal's purity; and the assay-office town mark, specifying where the item was hallmarked. The specially created maker's mark for Graff Diamonds is its initials, G and D, and it appears alongside the leopard's head, the metal-fineness stamp and the Common Control mark, signified by a set of scales. This combination is called the Convention Mark – since 1972, the UK has been one of 19 signatories to the International Convention on Hallmarks, ensuring safeguards for cross-border jewellery trade.

Graff is renowned for the peerless quality of its diamonds and gems, and it follows that all materials used in the creation of its jewellery will be of the foremost standard. This includes the gold and platinum used to cradle its stones, the better to showcase their perfection and

beauty. Accordingly, the company uses minimum 950-fineness platinum and 750-fineness gold (which equates to 18 carats).

Graff's purpose-built facility is London's fourth assay-office subsidiary: there is one in the vicinity of Hatton Garden; another, for importers, at Heathrow; and a third at a manufacturer and trade supplier. Located in Graff's Mayfair workshop, it operates independently and has its own entrance and staff. The Goldsmiths' Company provided the means for Graff to apply the highest-quality mark available to its creations, installing state-of-the-art X-ray fluorescence spectrometry apparatus to conduct the testing and a high-tech laser system to cut the marks. This aligns with the direction being taken by the workshop: while every item of Graff jewellery is handmade using centuries-old techniques, the latest innovations in computer-aided design and technological enhancement – including a 3D printer that creates models of designs in liquid resin – are utilised to maximise the unparalleled beauty of the jewels.

It's a real stamp of approval for Graff and the Goldsmiths' Company to have joined forces to establish the first jewellery retailer's on-site assay office – a partnership combining expertise and the exemplary mark of quality, executed in customary cutting-edge style. ♦

10.24 carat emerald cut diamond ring (12.24cts)

DANIEL HERENDI