

20 Cutters Collaborated to Make This Gemstone Baby Mobile



Shelly Sergent, curator of Somewhere in the Rainbow, wanted to create a gemstone mobile for her granddaughter. The idea transformed into a project involving 20 gem cutters.

Phoenix—It started out as a project to create something special for a grandchild and soon became something larger.

Shelly Sergent, curator of the Somewhere in the Rainbow gem and jewelry collection, told National Jeweler the idea of a baby mobile comprised of colored gemstones came to her in early 2018 when her daughter, Bri, was four months pregnant with her granddaughter, Jenova.

“It literally woke me up at about 2:30 in the morning, and

I said, 'You know what? I've never seen a gemstone mobile. What a great legacy gift for me to leave my granddaughter.'"

To kick things off, Sergent sent a private Facebook message to several gemstone cutters asking them to participate.



Baby Jenova Grace sees her gemstone mobile for the first time.

The next thing she knew, cutters she hadn't even asked were reaching out, asking to be a part of the project.

Sergent gave the group a budget, but ultimately let each cutter decide the material they wanted to use, and let them go to work creating one-of-a-kind pieces.

A total 20 cutters were involved in the project: Victor Tuzlukov, John Dyer, John Bradshaw, John Burleyson,

Jeff Hapeman, Craig Oliveira, Nolan Sponsler, Dalan Hargrave, Alina Drobovich, Laura Phillis, Tom Munsteiner, Nick Alexander, Darryl Alexander, Ryan Anderson, Derek Katzenbach, Jeffrey Hunt, Kell Hymer, Wild & Petsch, Austin Burleyson and Bridges Tsavorite.

"It's very rare to see so many artists collaborate for one piece, so I thought it would be a fun opportunity to be part of something special," Katzenbach said.

Overall, the group used seven different types of material: quartz, olivine (peridot), danburite, spinel, tsavorite garnet, pearls and beryl (aquamarine).

Though each cutter wasn't aware of what the others were doing, five alone ended up using ametrine (a quartz).

Katzenbach was one of them. He said he chose the stone because it's one of his favorite gems to cut, due to its mix of colors and how they look in fantasy- or ultra unique-cut gemstones.

Another was Hargrave, who took the opportunity to carve his ametrine into a 54-carat piece depicting the Rose Window in St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, with the citrine oriented so it gives the effect of sunlight shining through (pictured below, at left).

"Although this project was a mobile for a baby, the longer-term purpose of passing these gemstones on to Shelly's grandchild gave me an opportunity to create a

gemstone with a significant meaning," he said.

It features an inscription that means: "The Lord is with you."



Nolan Sponsler, meanwhile, created a 65-carat amethyst with an elephant carving, perfectly matching the animal theme of baby Jenova's nursery—though he didn't know it at the time.

And it was cutter Darryl Alexander, who also created a piece for the mobile, who found a way to hang each gem.

He bezel-set each in sterling silver; some are finished in gold plating depending on the color of the stone.

Each bezel has a stationary jump ring on top, which Alexander tied off with fishing wire, to make the stones look as if they were floating and give them movement.

He also created the wooden box to hold the mobile's music player housed at the top—which plays "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

The mobile ended up featuring about 30 floating gems.

"As far as anyone knows, we can't find a larger collaboration of gemstone cutters in one project," Sergeant said, insofar as the identity of each specific cutter is known.

Most of the gems had been cut by late December 2018—just a couple weeks after Jenova was born—so it was during the Christmas holiday that Sergeant showed her daughter the stones.

"She just lost it," Sergeant said.

Bri and Jenova saw the final piece in June 2019, and there was another tearful reaction.

There is another another touching, unexpected aspect to the project—as the cut gemstones started rolling in, to Sergeant's surprise, none came with invoices.

Some of the cutters wrote notes or cards for the baby, but none took money for the pieces.

"I thought to myself, I've got this money that's just sitting here. I can't keep it; that's not the right thing to do. I have to do something with it."

So, she circled back to the group of cutters and let them decide where the money would go.

The idea they came up with benefitted both one of their own as well as a generation of new cutters: donating the money to Hargrave to go toward the lapidary arts classes he offers in Texas.

Hargrave used the funds as a sort of scholarship, offering discounts to several students who were having trouble coming up with the funds for classes.

"To many of these younger students, it can make a substantial difference to receive the training we offer," he said. "To date we've offered discounted tuition to at least a dozen students, many of whom had some kind of hardship, and they were elated to receive assistance.

"Education is the key to preserving and advancing the lapidary arts, and we were blessed to be the recipient of Shelly's generous contribution."

The project has been named "Grace," after Jenova's middle name.

Sergent and her family aren't keeping the mobile to themselves. It will make its debut in Tucson next month, on display at Somewhere in the Rainbow's AGTA GemFair Booth 1950 all week.

"I think it really lends itself to the story of how connected

our industry really is," she said.

"We've really become, I think, an industry where collaborations are much more common and much more welcomed, and on this level, it goes on to verify for people that it's OK to work together. Look what happens when people come together."