

A sparkling conversation with Nathalie Rodwell

Nathalie Rodwell has been at Bonhams Queen Street only since last year, but she already had five years experience in a jewellery department with another major auction house in London before coming to Edinburgh.



She was headhunted for her position but confessed that a big part of deciding to move was so that she and her fiancé, Adam, can pursue some of their outdoor hobbies more easily.

Nathalie's own engagement ring is, as you might expect, quite fabulous and she and Adam will tie the knot later this year. I asked if perhaps Adam was under a bit of pressure where the ring was concerned. Nathalie laughed : "Our friends always asked how would ever be able to choose a ring for me, but he picked the exact ring I showed him three years previously when we had only been dating a few months. He then hid it from me until the right moment. Edinburgh is just so lovely and we are getting married here later in the year."

The route to becoming the jewellery specialist at Bonhams has

not been a short one however. Nathalie studied History of Art at the University of St Andrews, perhaps another reason why she wanted to come back north of the border.

She said : "I then studied History of Photography as a postgraduate and then a job came up at Sotheby's in London working as a receptionist in Jewellery. I got this job which was a great opportunity, and then I progressed from receptionist to department PA, to someone who helps catalogue all the lots for an auction. Then followed a lot of hard work and late nights. I studied for a gemology degree at night school in Hatton Garden in London. That took just over two years and I am pretty glad that the studying phase of my life is over."

Now that she has the degree however Nathalie is a real specialist. She said : "In theory you should be able to give me any stone and I should be able to tell you what it is by doing a series of different tests. For example I look at how light travels through a stone which might tell me what kind of stone it is. I learned all about the chemical composition and properties of all kinds of stones from diamonds to coloured stones."

What makes a diamond worth more?

Nathalie explained : "Well a few years ago white diamonds were at a premium. There is a colour chart for diamonds grading them from E and F which are the whitest diamonds up to M. A diamond is pure carbon and those rated M plus have nitrogen in them. Those at that end of the chart look a bit more yellow. The canary yellow or fancy vivid colours are worth an extra premium. They can be worth a lot more, especially if the clarity is very good and if they are very pure inside.

"If you have a blue diamond what's colouring it is not nitrogen, it is boron gas. So all of these stones are coloured by different elements."

Nathalie may be an expert but she does have the luxury of checking the gems further by having them tested in a lab in London and getting certification. For bigger more expensive items they always have to be tested and certified before any sale.

We made a fun video with Nathalie last November when she put on some of the rings included in the Bonhams Jewellery Sale ahead of Christmas.

You can watch it here :

Don't miss out The jewellery sale is at [@bonhams1793](#) Edinburgh tomorrow at 11 One of these rings will be sold to raise money for [@SaveUKNews](#) pic.twitter.com/7VcIcFd34p

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [November 27, 2017](#)

Nathalie also works in London at the fine jewel sales at Bonhams London three times a year. She admits there are perhaps not the same big pieces offered for sale up in Edinburgh, but not always. She continued: “Sometimes somebody just walks in here with a nice tiara or something that you are not expecting to see.”

Although she is firmly of the belief that jewellery should be worn rather than kept in the safe, when trying things on she is always very careful indeed. She said : “Diamonds can break. People don't think they do but they can shatter into pieces.”



But it is not all about diamonds and other gems. Nathalie can value any piece of jewellery whether it is gold or silver or indeed costume jewellery. She pleads for people to bring their inheritances to her for help in sorting them out. She continues : “Don’t be shy about bringing anything in. If you inherit something from your grandmother then please bring it in for us to look at. Some costume jewellery if it is signed pieces for example, we can recommend where you might take those to if you want to sell them on. We don’t tend to sell big job lots of gold but gold is quite highly priced at the moment. For 18 carat gold it is over £20 per gram at the moment, so if you have gold to scrap it is a good time to do it.

“But I would urge people to bring in anything they have because I might be able to tell them more about the pieces. The owner will know something about it or the original owner’s history and we can hopefully put the jigsaw together and tell you something more about it.

“I enjoy hearing how people inherited the piece or bought it. Sometimes people have photos of their relative wearing the item and that brings it all to life. People can get quite sentimental about jewellery but sometimes they have more

important things to do like the extension to their house. So if you are not wearing it then come and have it valued! Insuring is expensive and of course banks will no longer take it in safety deposit boxes, so if you are not wearing it then auction could be a good route to free up the value.”



With the newly engaged Harry and Meghan Markle in town recently we asked Nathalie what she thinks of Ms Markle’s engagement ring. She said : “It’s wonderful to see Harry selecting a cushion-shaped diamond as the central stone. This is a more traditional cut of diamond to a round brilliant-cut and in my opinion, this cut of diamond displays a great deal of personality.

“Estimated to weigh between three to four carats, it’s very hard to guess how much this ring made by Cleave and Company, the Court Jewellers and Medallists to Her Majesty The Queen, would be worth – its provenance of course adds an extra layer of value.”



Although there is not a typical day at the office for Nathalie she is quite organised and sticks to a routine as far as possible.

On Wednesdays she is available at the Queen Street office for

valuation purposes either by appointment or just by walking in.

After checking my emails I am the cataloguer and so I get the jewellery out and write all the words needed in the catalogue online and in print to describe each piece. I also have to assess the condition of the jewellery and that is uploaded on to our records.

With two photographers we have a small team with a great view across the Forth!

“I do valuations elsewhere too across Scotland, depending on which sales are coming up. We can also value just for insurance purposes.”

My life is now a much healthier one. I have a real work/social life balance as I worked much longer hours in London. I can walk to work and if I really wanted to I could go home for lunch.

“We love sailing, skiing and fishing and so having all that on the doorstep is so different from living down south. I am from the Yorkshire Dales I feel that is a real benefit. It is much better for your mental health! It has been a great move for us both.”

At Bonhams in the next couple of months :

The Whisky Sale 7 March 2018

The Scottish Sale 25 and 26 April 2018

The Jewellery Sale 23 May 2018