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## From lab-grown diamonds to coloured stones, these 2023 trends are redefining engagement jewellery



Amanda Chai

“They aren’t real diamonds” was probably the biggest misconception about lab-grown diamonds in the past. These man-made stones are identical to natural ones in look, chemical composition and structure.

The 4Cs of cut, colour, clarity and carat weight used to evaluate diamonds apply here too.

Singapore jewellery chain Goldheart launched its lab-grown range Star Lab in March 2021, offering diamonds from 0.3- to 3-carat in varying shapes and cuts. Lab-grown pink diamonds, which the brand says it is the first in Singapore to launch, feature in its latest collection.

Ms Amanda Koo, a gemologist certified by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) and founder of home-grown jewellery brand eClarity, uses the analogy of babies to explain the difference to customers.

“If natural diamonds are babies, lab-grown diamonds are IVF (in-vitro fertilisation) babies. They’re both real; it’s just that one is made in a lab,” she says.

“The next thing people ask is if you can tell the difference. So I will ask them – can you tell the difference between a (naturally conceived) baby and an IVF baby?” The 44-year-old mother of three boys, whose brand began in 2005 as a small shop peddling natural diamond rings and wedding bands at Shaw Centre, says her sales of lab-grown diamonds in 2022 surpassed those of natural diamonds.



An off-the-shelf ring from the heritage luxury jewellery houses may have been a status symbol for older generations, but today's customers would rather create one-of-a-kind keepsakes.

Expect to see more unique designs in 2023. As an extension of the trend in 2022, custom rings that look handmade are all the rage at eClarity, says Ms Koo.

She has more than 300 retail-ready design prototypes and over 20,000 loose diamonds for customers to peruse, after which they can add on bespoke details such as lace, embossing or cuts on the sides to make the ring their own – or customise one from scratch. About 70 per cent of customers who buy engagement rings opt for this.



A selection of eClarity engagement rings. ST PHOTO: FELINE LIM

They can also hand-engrave initials themselves, to immortalise their handwriting.

“The last thing people want is for the girlfriend to go back to the office and realise everyone's wearing the same ring, and the only thing you can do is compare size, which becomes very unsophisticated,” says Ms Koo. “The guys want to be seen as putting in effort.”