

choice and the reliance on the platinum family to help prove its worth may do more to harm it in the minds of designers, retailers and consumers.

As Ruth Donaldson of the Platinum Guild International puts it: "You can't market palladium without using the word platinum."

While the availability of the 500 standard of palladium gives retailers and consumers an extra option, it equates to even more education for shop staff and consumers. However, Dunn feels it's about acceptance. "I don't have a problem with 500 standard palladium, especially when you see 14ct, 9ct and 8ct gold across Europe, but I don't think the market is ready for 500 palladium until it understands palladium as a whole," he says.

Dunn goes on to say that more needs to be done to market palladium to the consumer. "We've never had any official marketing material, leaflets or guides to give customers, only the knowledge we can pass on from training," he comments.

In reply to such views Johnson Matthey marketing executive Jyoti Trivedi says a lot has been done to promote the metal since the passing of the hallmark. "Since 2009 we've been helping to answer questions about palladium, whether focused on the technical details or simply explaining how to work with and sell palladium," she explains.

Trivedi says that Johnson Matthey took the opportunity to reach out to retailers and industry members by hosting its own stand at last year's International Jewellery London (IJL). "At IJL we introduced free point-of-sale material to the industry and we had experts on hand to talk about palladium and answer questions that retailers and designers had", she says.

This free point-of-sale material offered by Johnson Matthey might have been previously missed by retailers such as Dunn, but it extends the message that palladium is something fresh and new. Featuring a couple with surfboards and the tagline "The expression of who you are", it's a play on the unique selling point of palladium as a contemporary metal. Furthermore,

Johnson Matthey has also produced sales guides for retailers and informative wallet-sized Z-cards for consumers to take away either before or after a palladium purchase. Point-of-sale material for retailers includes perspex display blocks and counter cards, all of which are supplied by Johnson Matthey free of charge.

This year, however, Johnson Matthey has unveiled an exciting new campaign for palladium – a radio advert voiced by Richard Armitage, better known as Lucas North in the hit BBC series *Spooks*. With a particularly alluring voice, Armitage has been chosen for his appeal to both male and female audiences. The advert will be available for palladium retailers who want to be regarded as palladium specialists in their town or city, and will boost retailer presence while capturing consumers' attention.

Dunn is also on the lookout for that something extra, noting the amount of research shoppers now do online. "Even if John Greed doesn't go down the route of offering leaflets, there needs to be more education online that's basic and tailored to consumers," he says. "Customers come to us knowing about diamonds, gold and platinum because they've read up online before visiting the store. They should be able to do the same for palladium."

Of course the positives for stocking the metal outweigh any doubts retailers and designers might have. Palladium is giving consumers more choice and it's offering designers something new to get their hands on beyond silver, gold and platinum. The public can take time to warm to most jewellery products and, despite its mid-range price point, palladium is no different. What retailers and designers mustn't forget is that precious metal will always be regarded as a luxury item, not a necessity. It is up to the retailers to use what information they have available to ensure palladium gets the best reception and response as possible. After all, as Basherova concludes: "There's a whole new wave of metals but palladium is the most interesting of them all." ♦



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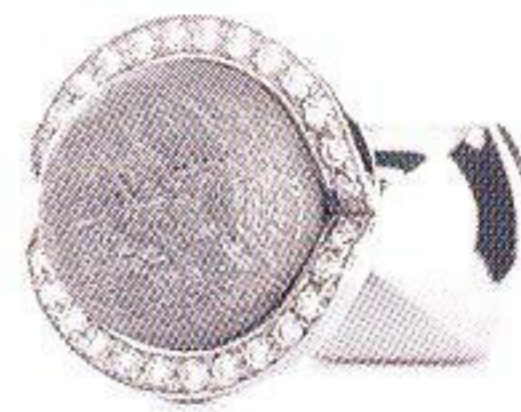
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5



1
Gent's palladium wedding ring by Charles Green.

2
Diamond-set palladium wedding band by Gemex.

3
Diamond-set palladium eternity ring by Gemex.

4
Celestial cufflinks by Andrew Geoghegan.

5
Fighting Fish palladium brooch by Stephen Webster.