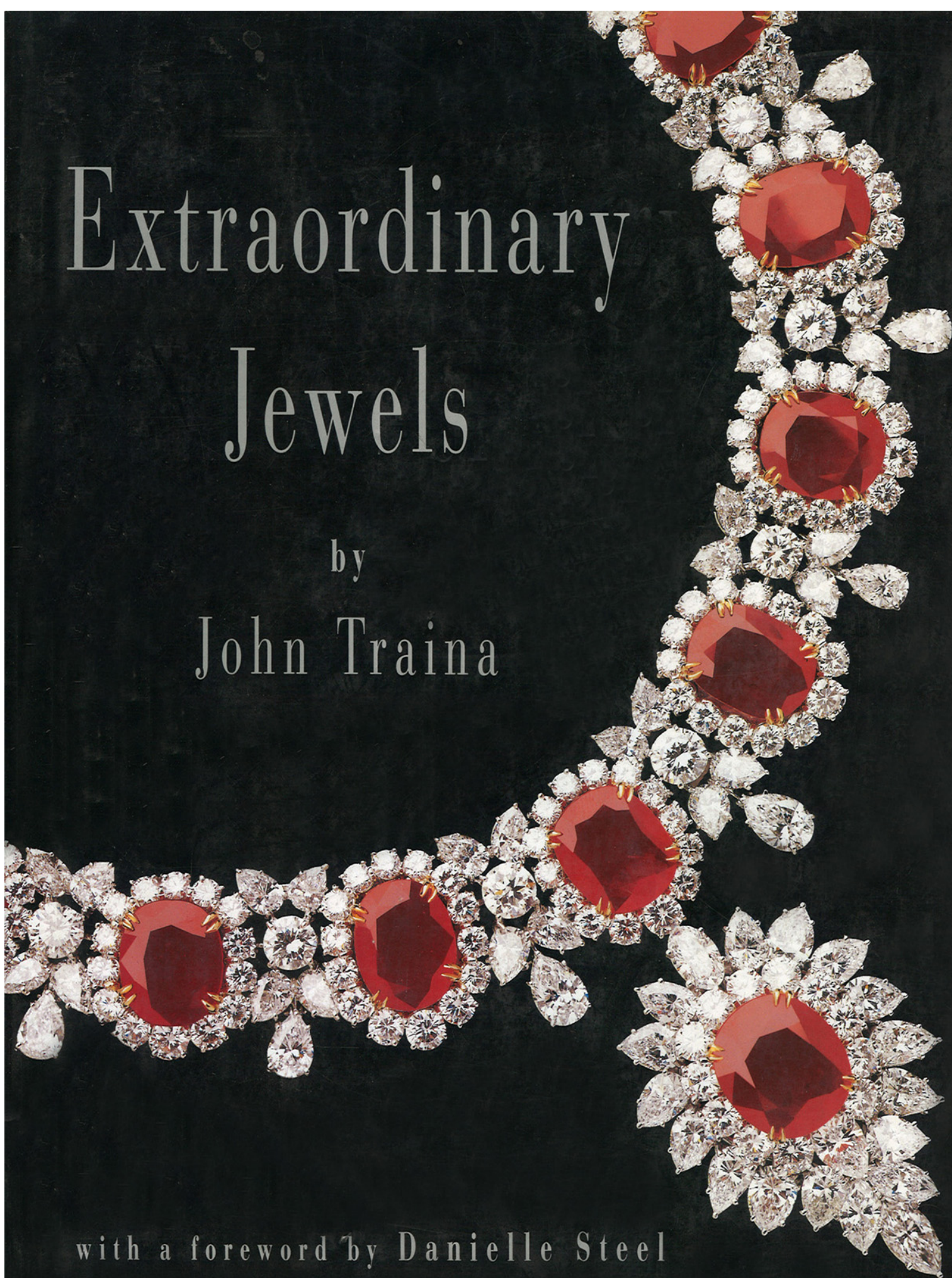
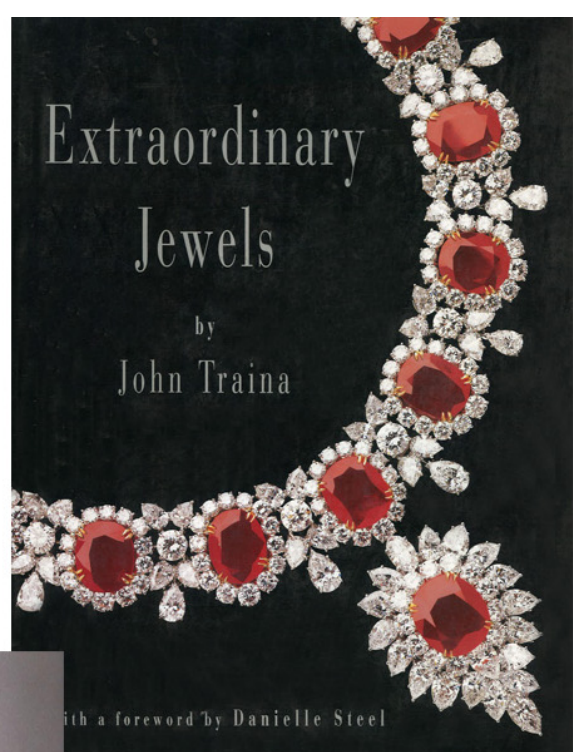


# Extraordinary Jewels

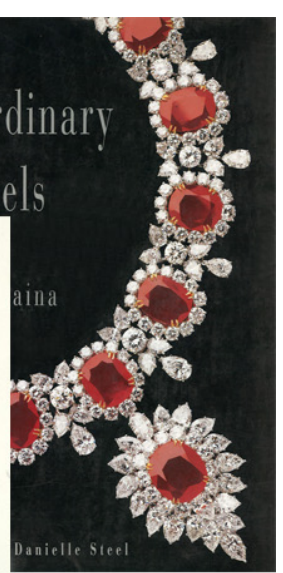
by  
John Traina

with a foreword by Danielle Steel





ABOVE, emerald-and-sapphire paisley earrings/brooches with detachable drops, containing 35.24 carats of sapphires and 23.72 carats of emeralds. (Private collection, Switzerland)  
Christopher Walling/New York



## CHRISTOPHER WALLING

Romancing the pearl is what New York jeweler Christopher Walling does best. Walling calls the pearl “the only gem that seems alive, a chameleon whose soft glow interacts with and highlights the best features of its wearer and other gems.” Since 1980 his trademark design has been the pearl “kiss,” which is an X-shaped cultured baroque pearl that he treats in many splendorous ways: set in high gold bezels, or collars; paired with large colored stones; trellised with exquisite strands of pavé emeralds.

When Walling first espoused the pearl, he used lustrous freshwater specimens from Japan’s Lake Biwa. But as pollution adversely affected the quality and availability of this source, he turned to large South Seas salt-water pearls from Tahiti and Australia. This locale yields both the shimmering white and the iridescent black pearls that Walling also uses to great effect.

In the late 1980s the scarcity of high-quality pearls led Walling to focus increasingly on diamonds and colored stones and to explore new forms. The famous “X” jewel became available in pavé diamonds; and a collection utilizing pink diamonds from Australia’s Argyle mines yielded naturalistic floral jewels.

In the 1990s Walling introduced double paisley earrings made entirely of emeralds and sapphires that, in both form and color, are his tribute to India’s famed blue-green esthetic. Such purity of solid color first impressed European jewelers around 1900, when the maharajahs brought the contents of their jewel chests to Paris and London for resetting.

Attracted both to archaeology and jewelry design since childhood, Walling cites many historical influences on his work, from Elizabethan and Renaissance baroque-pearl jewels to eighteenth-century *objets de vertu* in Dresden’s famed Green Vaults. He also cites Suzanne Belperron, whom he considers his mentor and whom he calls “the best designer of the twentieth century.” (See “Belperron.”)

Walling, a new force in pearl design and in the jewelry world, signs his work “C. WALLING.”

