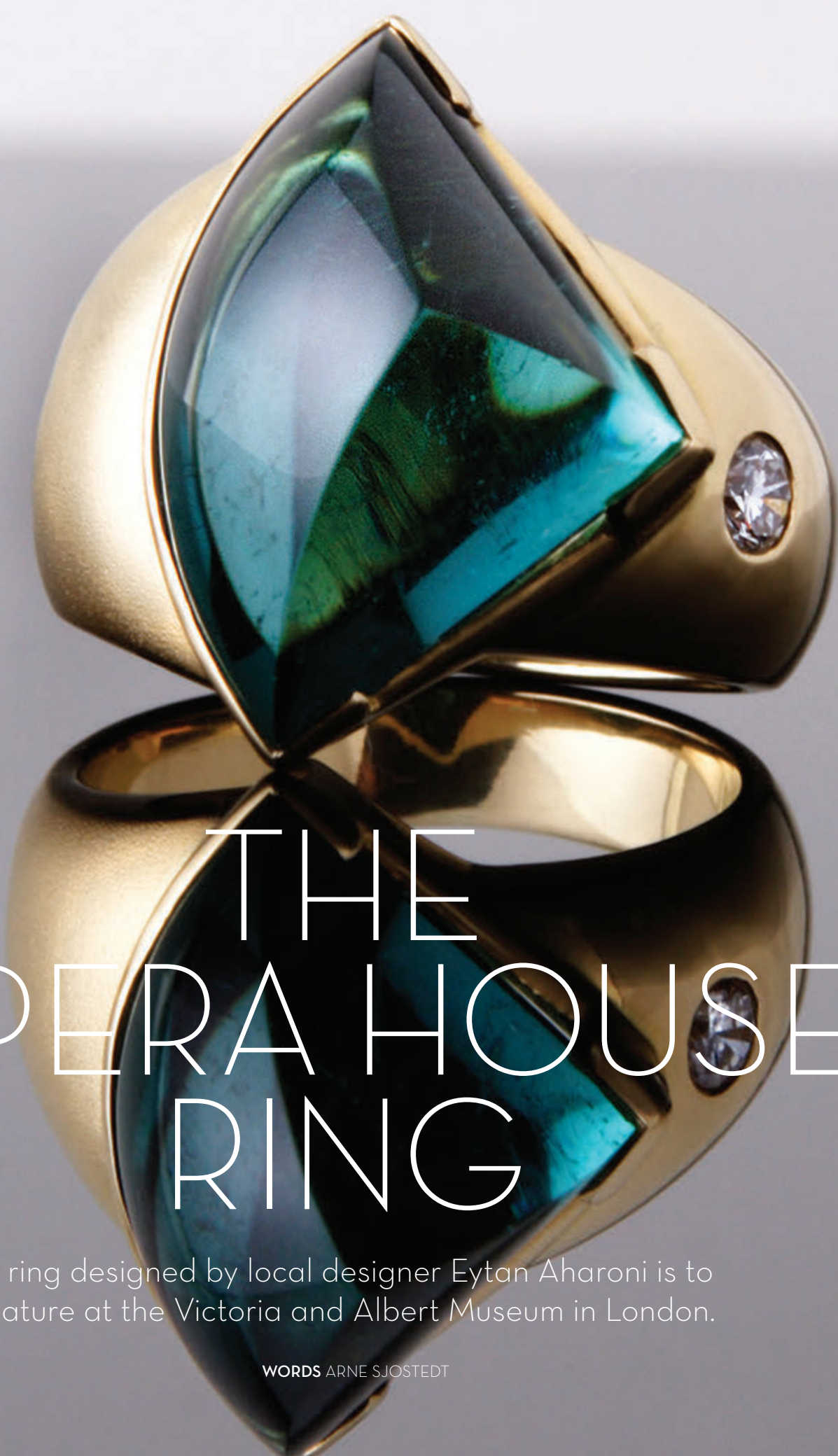




THE OPERA HOUSE RING

A ring designed by local designer Eytan Aharoni is to feature at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

WORDS ARNE SJOSTEDT

Her risky and challenging design. The controversial way her architect resigned from the project, and of course the way she now stands like a beacon to the world over as a familiar icon of Australian identity. All are stitches in the rich tapestry of that Grand Dame, the Sydney Opera House.

Of course the story doesn't end there. The thousands of people who have visited, the millions of memories and private thoughts of those who awe inspired took their first walk up the House's celebrated steps. All can be traced back to an inspired designer, and the city that gave the landmark her name.

Intimate stories and worldwide respect are not all Jorn Utzon's Sydney Opera House has prompted. Recognised by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (V&A), bespoke jewellery maker Eytan Aharoni and his wife Nurit are testament to the far-reaching impact the Opera House has had.

They began their journey from an apartment in Haifa, Israel. Today, Eytan and Nurit are forging their future from a humble studio here in Canberra City. And like their own special flagship, the Opera House sits proudly on their web site, reflected in a ring that good luck and hard work put before them, and inspired design brought to life.

So inspired in fact that the V&A, one of the world's largest and most prestigious art and design museums, has requested permission to use an image of their 'Sydney Opera House Ring' in an education program for students of architecture and design, as an example of how great architecture has inspired designers across the globe.

"The V&A is the next link in the whole story of the ring," says Nurit as she talks of

the impression Utzon's work has had on the couple.

Set with a brilliant cut diamond and ocean like blue-green Indigolite Tourmaline, both were stirred when they uncovered the unique central stone on a jewel finding visit to Namibia. They designed the ring together, and the result is a stunning example of symmetry and design, embodied in bold 18 carat gold. The symmetry has been carried into the image to be used by the museum. It reflects the ring, eventually purchased by a young Canberra couple, just as the sails of the Opera House are reflected in the waters surrounding it.

Named after Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, with collections that span over 3000 years, Eytan remembers visiting the V&A as a student. Today, he is happy, to say the least, his craftsmanship has been recognised by such a respected institution.

"On top of this, we are excited to be part of the Sydney Opera House, if only in a tiny way," he adds. "Everywhere we have gone, whenever people think of Australia, the Sydney Opera House comes quickly to mind. Not only in our thoughts but for most of the people who talk about this country, I think."

The ring also touches the very personal story of Utzon's life. With the architect's passing late last year, and the tragic way he hadn't returned to Australia to see his vision through to completion – both Eytan and Nurit wanted to offer their respects to Utzon, and the immeasurable gift he has given Australia and the World.

After the ring was made, the couple wrote thanking Utzon for the inspiration the Opera House had given them. They received a hand written reply from his grandson, Kirsten. On his death, the couple wrote a second time to

express their condolences – and were again honoured with a reply, this time from Utzon's son Jan.

And perhaps now, as suggested in a poem sent in their last letter, there is a special touch of completion for the architect – if but from the heavens, looking down at his marvellous work.

*And even if things were not,
And reality and dream,
Did not touch,
If destiny thus desired,
Let us find comfort in a gaze from above.*

*Even parallel lines that have not met,
In a temporary world
Meet nevertheless,
out there,
In the infinity.*

Professor Herzl Aharoni

Though this is not just a story about Utzon. Nor is it only a story about the Sydney Opera house and a ring that it inspired. It is about why we have institutions like the V&A in the world in the first place. Places that hand down our cultural inheritance, and inspire future generations to feel that intangible something.

And with the Sydney Opera House Ring recognised for its design as much as for its inspirational history, there is a sense of journey here too, and fitting celebration of the Australian icon that has become a symbol of grace, beauty and design excellence.

Find Aharoni Jewellery at 88-96 Bunda Street Canberra City. Tel (02) 6262 5053.

For more information on the intriguing connection between Aharoni Jewellery and the Sydney Opera House visit the jeweller's blog at: www.aharoni-jewellery.com/blog.



Eytan and Nurit Aharoni