

Lab-Grown Ban Splits Opinion on Facebook



RAPAPORT... An influential online community for jewelers has banned sales of lab-grown diamonds, prompting fierce debate on social media.

Jewelers Helping Jewelers (JHJ), a Facebook group with more than 16,000 members, decreed Wednesday that no synthetics may be sold on the page, arguing they damage the natural-diamond industry. Group founder and administrator Aleah Arundale will remove offending posts, and will not allow lab-grown sellers to join JHJ, she told *Rapaport News*.

“I think it’s peer pressure: Jewelers think everyone else is making money on [synthetics], and they feel they will miss out if they don’t sell them,” Arundale said.

The post banning lab-grown received far more “likes” than it did negative reactions. Participants in a subsequent poll of retailers on the JHJ group had voted by about 600 to 70 in favor of the view that lab-grown are “bad for our industry” at press time Thursday. But there was an avalanche of criticism in the comments, with some arguing the blanket rejection of synthetics risked jewelers being left behind as consumer demand changes.

“[Lab-grown’s] whole premise is that natural diamonds are

bad,” Arundale wrote in response to one of the critics. “That’s why they can’t be on JHJ.” Sticking to mined stones will pay off in the long run, she argued.

The reaction on Lab Grown Diamonds, a Facebook group with about 1,500 members, was more negative, with one describing JHJ’s actions as a “mess.” Another claimed millennials didn’t believe natural diamonds were rare, and said the only lab-grown diamond he had sold was to a customer with budget concerns, questioning whether a move by a group such as JHJ could have any impact on the wider market.

The discussions coincide with a vote of RapNet members on whether to provide listing and pricing services for synthetic diamonds. Voting, which takes place online, ends Friday, with the results due to be announced at the Rapaport Breakfast at JCK Las Vegas on Sunday.

Image: Aleah Arundale. (Aleah Arundale)