

BOOK NOTICE

CAROLINE SMART*

***Gold Laundering:
The Dirty Secrets of the Gold Trade — And How to Clean Up***

Mark Pieth

2019

Salis

299 pages

Soft cover

For centuries, humankind has been fascinated by the glitz and glamour of gold. With its multiple uses, ranging from components in mobile phones to medicine, gold remains one of the oldest and most sought after commodities. Regrettably, much like diamonds, this precious metal is mired in conflict. Gold gives rise to significant challenges in various sectors, from mining through industrial applications to retailing. *Gold Laundering* by Mark Pieth provides us with edifying insights into both the glittering world of the gold industry and the horrific problems caused by the gold trade.

The title, *Gold Laundering: The Dirty Secrets of the Gold Trade – And how to Clean up*, immediately evokes curiosity about the gold industry. For the reader, the title sets the tone and poses questions such as what is gold laundering, who has dirty secrets and what is the solution? In this attractive paperback, consisting of 299 pages, the author takes the reader on a journey into the past, present and future of gold. Interlaced with the text is a proportionate selection of illustrative materials such as photographs, sketches and documents. This selection includes

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photographs of gold artefacts, underground mines, the effects of illegal mining, and the process of gold mining and refining. There is also a set of revealing correspondence between the author and Rolex. The selection not only supplements the written text but also allows the reader a glimpse into the world of gold beyond the written text.

The book consists of nine chapters which are titled “Two Sides of the Coin” (Chapter 1), “The History of Gold” (Chapter 2), “The Supply Chain” (Chapter 3), “Problem Gold” (Chapter 4), “Creating a Responsible Supply Chain” (Chapter 5), “What Works and What Doesn’t” (Chapter 6), “Switzerland, the World Centre of Gold Refining” (Chapter 7), “The Way Forward for the Gold Industry” (Chapter 8) and “The Wider Picture” (Chapter 9). These chapters incorporate extensive discussions of a range of topics such as the evolution, glamour, standard, and size of the gold trade; the meaning and extent of laundering; and issues pertaining to regulation, severe environmental destruction, human trafficking, land grabbing, stolen assets, exploitation and accountability. In what appears to be the preface, the author explains briefly why he was compelled to write this book. The text is followed by 54 pages of correspondence and of primary and secondary bibliographical sources. It ends with a four-page combined index of names and topics. The nine chapters offer a detailed interrogation of the global gold market, its hidden abuses, and the role which Switzerland (a major power in the financial sector and commodity market) plays in gold laundering. The author proposes clear and coherent solutions to the problems facing the present and future of the gold industry, and offers rational recommendations for the protection of human rights in the sector.

Gold Laundering provides a thoughtful analysis of the legal issues confronting the international community in the fight against economic crime. In 2018, the then President of Colombia warned against the dangers of the gold industry that threaten both national and international communities and heralded “dirty gold [as] the new drug”.¹ In the absence of binding regulations and comprehensive due diligence measures in the supply chain, Pieth considers that illegalities likely will persist, if not increase.

1 Chapter 4, page 113.

This book is an exciting and insightful engagement with the “new frontier” of gold laundering. It is a welcome and indispensable contribution to the global fight against economic crime in general and money laundering in particular. The book will appeal to readers who are interested in civil rights, organisational responsibility and ongoing efforts to eradicate money laundering and its accompanying human rights violations.