



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

News

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Media Web site: <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

Media Advisory

WHAT: Press Preview: Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond temporary exhibit

- *With its first public appearance in 50 years, the Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond joins the renowned Hope Diamond, providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view two of the world's most extraordinary blue diamonds.*
- *The Wittelsbach-Graff has long been rumored to have originated from the same crystal as the Hope. Preliminary results from an examination of the two diamonds will be discussed at this news briefing.*

WHEN: Thursday, Jan. 28, 2010

- *Doors will open at 8:00 a.m.*
- *Formal program will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m. Please note that due to security requirements no one will be allowed inside the gallery after 9:00 a.m.*

WHERE: Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History
Harry Winston Gallery
10th Street & Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20013

The Harry Winston Gallery is located on the 2nd floor. Please enter through the Constitution Avenue entrance.

WHO: Dr. Cristián Samper, director, Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History
Dr. Jeffrey Post, curator, National Gem Collection, Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History
Mr. Laurence Graff, chairman, Graff Diamonds International Ltd.

Following remarks, interviews will be available with key experts from the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and Graff Diamonds International Ltd.

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Background

One of the world's most legendary gemstones, the Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond, will be on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History Jan. 29 to Aug. 1, 2010. The six-month engagement marks the first time that the famed diamond has been available to the public in more than 50 years.

A diamond of rare deep-blue color and weighing 31.06 carats, the Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond will be presented with the Hope Diamond in the museum's National Gem Collection in the Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals.

An object of intrigue and legend that dates back to the 17th Century, the Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond was given by Philip IV of Spain to his daughter, the Infanta Margarita Teresa, upon her engagement to Emperor Leopold I of Austria in 1664. The diamond was passed to the Wittelsbachs, members of the ruling house of Bavaria, in 1722, where it received its name. When Bavaria became a republic following World War I, the crown jewels of the House of Wittelsbach were to be sold at Christie's auction in 1931; however, the diamond disappeared prior to the auction and was replaced by a worthless piece of blue, cut glass.

The actual Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond resurfaced in Belgium in 1951 and was eventually displayed—without attribution—at the “World Exhibition” in Brussels in 1958. The diamond was eventually identified in 1962 by Belgian gem expert Joseph Komkommer. London-based jeweler Laurence Graff purchased the diamond in 2008. In late 2009, Graff had the diamond re-cut to restore its original color and clarity. Following the re-cut, the Gemological Institute of America reevaluated the gem, upgrading its color classification to Deep Fancy Blue, the same as that of the 45.52-carat Hope Diamond.

More information about the museum is available at www.mnh.si.edu or by calling (202) 633-1000, TTY (202) 633-5285.

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