

THE Goldsmith

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DESIGN

Platinum by Prism Design

Coloured Diamonds by Marijan Dundek
Rudell The Jewellers – So What's the Secret?
Prism Design – 30 Years of Success
NEC Spring Fair – The Jewellery Show Preview

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PLATINUM

NATURAL COLOURED DIAMONDS

by Marijan Dundek

Multicoloured Necklace 242.35 carats
Image courtesy of Graff

At a time of major changes in the diamond industry, one of the most significant current trends is the explosion in the popularity of natural coloured diamonds (also known as natural fancy coloured diamonds, or fancies). While they comprise a relatively small segment of the diamond market, the demand for these beautiful and incredibly varied gems has grown so much that for the first time coloured diamonds have overtaken white diamonds in terms of value per carat.

This is all the more remarkable when one considers that until fairly recently coloured diamonds were hardly known outside the exclusive world of high-end jewellers and extremely wealthy collectors. Yet in the last few decades this has all changed, and natural coloured diamonds are now sought and prized the world over.

“Today, competition for rare, high-quality diamonds continues to soar, with many more private buyers from around the world vying to acquire the superb gems.”

The origins of this burgeoning market can be attributed to Laurence Graff, the world's preeminent diamond jeweller, who started in the 1980s to supply the finest coloured diamonds to the Sultan of Brunei, an avid collector of these gems. This marked a turning point in the appreciation and popularity of coloured diamonds among a wider public. The sale in 1987 of the Hancock Red, a 0.95-carat fancy purplish red diamond, at a record auction price of \$926,000 per carat, also gave a big boost to the allure of fancy coloured diamonds in the public's perception.



A selection of rough white and coloured diamonds
Image courtesy of M.Vainer



A selection of rough coloured diamonds
Image courtesy of M.Vainer



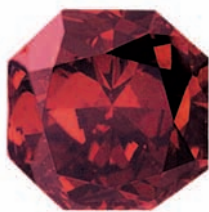
Octahedral shape 202.85ct incut diamond
Image courtesy of M.Vainer

Today, competition for rare, high-quality diamonds continues to soar, with many more private buyers from around the world – and recently most notably from China – vying to acquire the superb gems. They are being bought not only for their incredible rarity and beauty but also because of their appreciating value, and they have come to be seen as a secure form of long-term investment and portable wealth. While all diamonds are relatively rare, coloured diamonds are far scarcer than white ones – for every 10,000 diamonds mined, only one natural coloured diamond will have made its way to the surface of the earth.



**Wittelsbach-Graff
Diamond 31.06ct**

The combination of such rarity with growing demand has driven up prices to stratospheric levels in recent years. In 2008, the stunning 35.56 carat fancy deep grayish blue Wittelsbach diamond was purchased for \$24.3 million (£16.4 million), setting the record for any jewel bought at auction. (The diamond was subsequently altered by the buyer, Mr Graff, to remove flaws and improve its clarity, transforming it into the world's largest internally flawless fancy deepblue diamond, now known as the Wittelsbach-Graff diamond, weighing 31.06 carat.) In 2009, a fancy vivid-pink 5-carat diamond was sold for \$10.8 million, breaking the record for most expensive pink diamond ever sold at auction.



Nature's Rainbow Palette

Natural fancy coloured diamonds are among nature's most beautiful and captivating creations. Like all diamonds, they start off as carbon deep inside the earth and are transformed by the elemental forces of heat and pressure.



But natural coloured diamonds require the presence of additional factors, such as trace elements or radiation, and it is these unique conditions that make them so rare and make each fancy one of a kind. It is the interaction of other elements with carbon atoms during the formation of a diamond that produces colour. For example, the presence of boron will result in a blue colour; the presence of nitrogen creates yellow, orange and brown shades; and the presence of hydrogen will produce violet. Green diamonds result from exposure to radiation, while distortions to the atomic lattice (or 'graining') will result in a pink colour and, rarest of all, a red diamond. Inclusions, which are regarded as flaws in a colourless diamond, can produce distinct tones and brilliant flashes of colour in a fancy coloured diamond.



Over 300 colours have been identified so far and they can occur in endless permutations of hue, intensity and saturation, varying from faint to vivid. Their price is determined by demand, as well as rarity; among the rarest shades are red, blue, green, violet, and pink, while the colours most sought after nowadays are yellow, pink and blue.

One of the most famous examples of coloured diamonds is the 45.52 carat deep-blue Hope Diamond, which came from the mines of Golconda, India, and is now housed in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC. The deepblue Wittelsbach-Graff diamond also originates from Golconda, and has been compared in colour and clarity to the Hope. Nowadays the chief source of blue diamonds are the Cullinan mines of South Africa.



All images on this page courtesy of Graff



The Vainer Briolette 116.60ct
Image courtesy of M.Vainer

Closer to home, M Vainer Ltd is a highly-esteemed and internationally-renowned London gem dealer that specialises in natural coloured diamonds, as well as being one of the few diamond cutters left in the UK. They also have the distinction of having cut the Vainer Briolette, a 116.60 carat fancy light yellow diamond which is the second largest briolette cut diamond in the world.

The Delaire Sunrise

Discovered at an alluvial mine in South Africa the 221.81 carat diamond displayed magnificent beauty even in the rough. Lawrence Graff had never seen a rough diamond of such size, colour and quality to take this form – a perfect octahedral. Although it would increase the risk and difficulty of cutting the diamond he could see the shape the diamond would take had already been defined by nature. It would be transformed into a square emerald cut. He entrusted this task to his Master Cutter Nino Bianco.



The rough diamond at 221.81ct

Highly respected as one of the finest Master Cutters, Nino carefully considered every aspect of the rough diamond, spending months studying in order to plane the precise angles that would release the beautiful golden colour that glowed from within its frosty surface. A task much greater in complexity than a radiant or cushion cut. Nino knew that the angles would have to be exact in order to reflect the colour onto the table of the diamond. An emerald cut diamond has a relatively small number of facets, so if an angle is incorrect by the smallest fraction the colour is lost. Furthermore, obtaining the highest clarity possible was of utmost importance, requiring a pin point examination of inclusions and recalculations where necessary.



The finished diamond – the largest Fancy Vivid Yellow square emerald-cut diamond in the world.

Nino began work, spending many hours perfecting each facet and allowing the stone to cool each time he removed the diamond from the wheel so that he could inspect the natural colour of the stone. With a goal in mind to achieve a stone of greater than 100 carats, Nino acted with careful precision so that he removed only what was absolutely necessary.

Almost one year later the diamond was ready. A beautiful warm golden yellow reflected from every angle, an incredible clarity was displayed throughout, and at 118.08 carats the size was far greater than many had thought possible.

Grading of Coloured Diamonds

When it comes to grading coloured diamonds, very different criteria are used than those for colourless diamonds. Whereas the absence of all colour is a desirable characteristic of white diamonds, it is exactly the opposite with fine coloured diamonds, for which the paramount factor is the quality and intensity of the colour.

The grading system for coloured diamonds developed by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) and used worldwide determines colour through the attributes of hue (the characteristic colour), tone (the colour's relative lightness or darkness) and saturation (the strength or weakness of the colour). The stone's colour is assessed by the grader as one of 27 hues, while the fancy grade (for example 'fancy

light', 'fancy', 'fancy intense' and 'fancy vivid') describes the stone's tone and saturation. Of course when buying a coloured diamond it is critically important to know whether the diamond's colour is natural or the result of a treatment process. Every natural fancy coloured diamond should have a certificate from a reputable gem laboratory verifying its quality and attributes. One of the pioneers in the field of natural coloured diamonds is Antwerp-based Arthur Langerman, who has specialised in these gems for the past 40 years. Today, Mr Langerman and his daughter Natacha own the largest stock of natural coloured diamonds in the world, with an inventory that includes diamonds of all shapes, colours and qualities as well as some of the most beautiful and rare colour diamonds ever found.

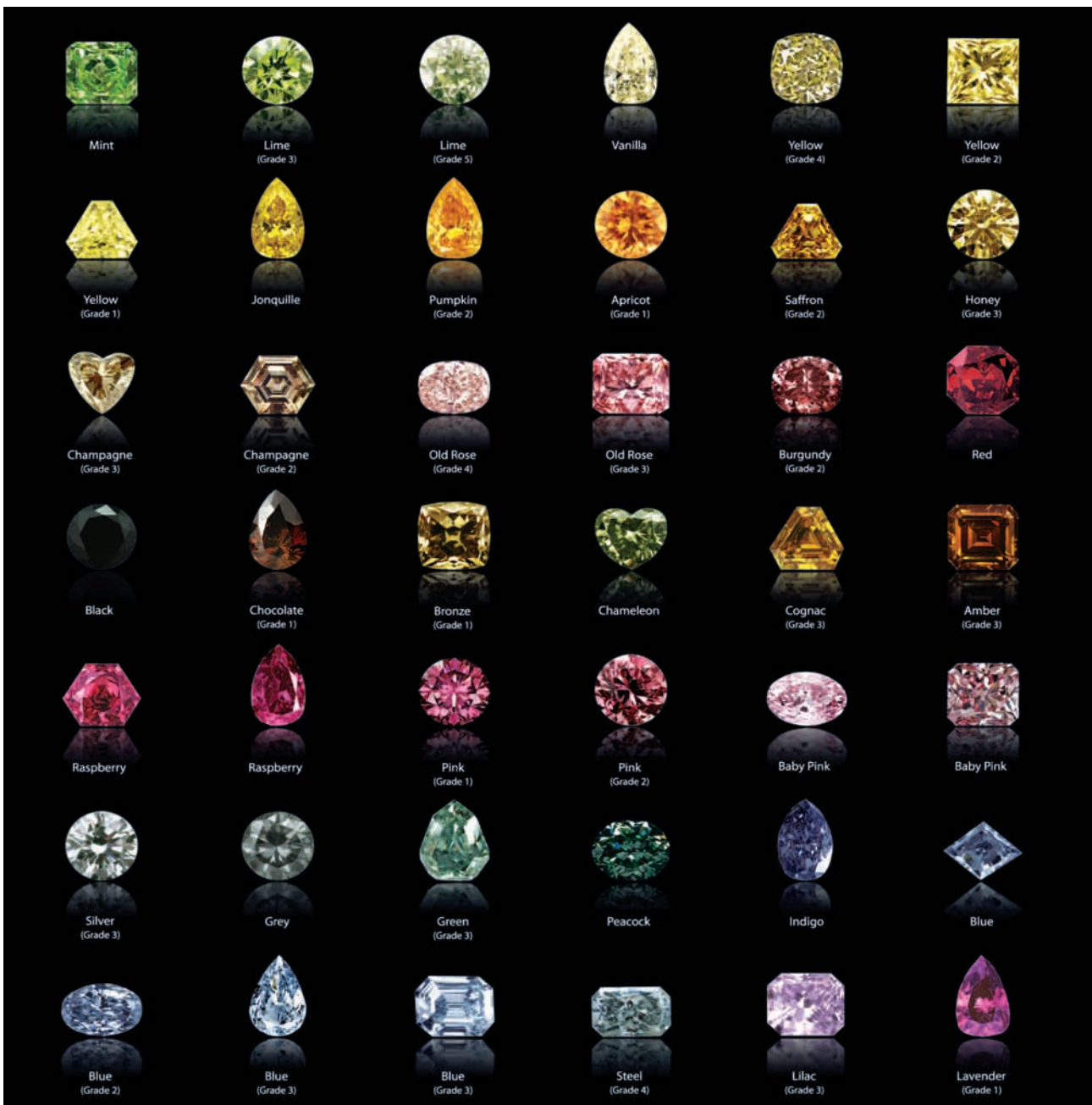


Chart of coloured diamonds courtesy of Langerman Diamonds

“Natural fancy coloured diamonds are among nature’s most beautiful and captivating creations. Like all diamonds, they start off as carbon deep inside the earth...”



Princess Rose 12.82ct
Image courtesy of Graff



Natural fancy Vivid Yellow diamond pendant around 7ct
Image courtesy M.Vainer



Ring set with Intense Purplish Pink diamond around 1ct
Image courtesy of M.Vainer



Pave set diamond rings
Les Adorables Collection by Yves Frey Diamonds



Polished diamond rings
Les Adorables Collection by Yves Frey Diamonds



Pave set diamond rings
Les Mini Adorables Collection by Yves Frey Diamonds