

# Smithsonian To Display Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond

Will explore stone's possible link to Indian mine



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Wittelsbach-Graff diamond

**T**he 31.06-carat Wittelsbach-Graff diamond will join the 45.52-carat Hope diamond at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and will be on display from January 28 through August 1, the museum announced.

This will be the first time that the rare deep-blue Wittelsbach-Graff

diamond has been available to the public in more than 50 years. It will be presented in the National Gem Collection in the Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals, where the renowned Hope diamond is on permanent view.

The Wittelsbach-Graff diamond has long been rumoured to have originated from the same diamond mine in India



Hope diamond

Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution



Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

as the Hope diamond. Smithsonian scientists will explore this mystery while the diamond is in their care, the museum said.

“The Wittelsbach-Graff diamond is an object of intrigue and legend, certainly one of the great gemstones of the world,” said Jeffrey Post, curator of the National Gem Collection. “We are thrilled to present this icon of history—and gemmology—to the public for the first time since it was displayed at the Brussels World’s Fair in 1958.”

The Wittelsbach-Graff diamond has an illustrious history, dating back to 1664 when it was given by Philip IV of Spain to his daughter, the Infanta Margarita Teresa, upon her engagement to Emperor Leopold I of Austria. In 1722, the diamond passed to the Wittelsbachs, members of the ruling House of Bavaria. It was here that the diamond derived its name. After World War I, Bavaria became a republic and the crown jewels of the House of Wittelsbach were eventually sold at Christie’s in 1931 by auction.

In an incident that has never fully been explained, the Wittelsbach-Graff diamond disappeared before 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 correctly identified in 1962 by Joseph Komkommer, a Belgian gem expert.

In December 2008, the 35.56-carat stone was acquired by Laurence Graff, at auction in London. Graff’s expertise in gemmology enabled him to see the potential in re-polishing the stone, bringing to it more life and colour while at the same time making it internally flawless. The process brought the stone to its current weight of 31.06 carats. Throughout the very delicate process of re-polishing this famous stone, great care and attention was taken to retain its original features. Since then, it has achieved the top certification of internally flawless, type IIb (the rarest), deep-blue. According to the Gemological Institute of America, the diamond “... is the largest Flawless or Internally flawless, Fancy Deep Blue, Natural Color we have graded to date...”

“To have two of the world’s most historical stones—the

Wittelsbach-Graff and the Hope diamond—displayed together, is a testament to the stones’ history and importance,” said Graff, chairman of Graff Diamonds International Ltd. “I believe the diamond’s appearance at the Smithsonian will represent another significant chapter in its remarkable history.”

As a rare blue diamond from the 17th century, the Wittelsbach-Graff diamond’s properties suggest a possible link to the same mines in India that produced the 45.52-carat Hope diamond, which is recognized as the most near-perfect example of a blue diamond in existence.

“During the Wittelsbach-Graff diamond’s residence at the museum, special tests will be conducted by our research team in the Smithsonian’s state-of-the-art laboratories to determine whether these two gemstones share a provenance,” said Post. “Whether or not the Hope diamond and the Wittelsbach-Graff diamonds are related, the most important thing for our visitors is that they will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view the two most extraordinary blue diamonds in the world.”