



PRESS RELEASE

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Museum of Ventura County

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Diamonds Are Forever exhibit

Extended at the Museum of Ventura County through September 28

George Stuart Historical Figures Show off the World's Most Famous Diamonds and the Infamous People Who Wore Them

“Where Are the Diamonds?” many visitors are heard to say in the lobby of the Museum of Ventura County these days. Word-of-mouth has traveled through the region that this exhibit--which features the well-known diamond replicas by Scott Sucher and the stunning Historical Figures of artist-historian George Stuart--is truly unique. The exhibit will now be on view through September 28, 2014 (not closing in August).

Displayed in context for the first time, this exhibit illustrates the stories of the most famous precious gems in the world and their famed owners. The replicas are expertly cut and beautifully lit individually, as well as appearing in the crowns, scepters and cravats of Europe's most famous leaders, such as Queen Elizabeth I, Catherine the Great, Napoleon, Marie Antoinette and Louis the XIV. The juxtaposition of the elaborately-dressed royal figures next to the full scale jewels evokes a sense of excess and egos in some cases and a sense of stewardship and importance from one generation to another. “Replica” hardly does these works justice; moreover, to see the real jewels, one would have to venture to the Louvre, the Smithsonian, and for now, to China to see the original Tiffany diamond on loan there.

The Hope Diamond, perhaps the most famous, will be traced from the mines of India to Paris, London, New York, and finally to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. Along the way, the exotic blue diamond is cut, re-cut, stolen, lost, rediscovered, and resold many times. Legend says it is cursed. Also on view is a replica of the magnificent 128-carat Tiffany Diamond. Unveiled in 1878, the Tiffany Diamond is the finest and most beautiful fancy yellow diamond ever discovered, as well as the only diamond named after Tiffany. In 1961, Audrey Hepburn wore a necklace of diamond ribbons surrounding the yellow diamond in publicity photographs for the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Background Information

Over the centuries many of the world's largest diamonds have taken fascinating journeys from the mines of India, Africa and South America to the coffers of the rich and powerful. For 400

years, these very special gems have been part of the royal treasuries of Europe. Many priceless diamonds, including the Cullinan, Koh-i-Noor, Orlov, and Beau Sancy, have been permanently mounted in the crown jewels of France, England and Russia. Many other exquisite diamonds have been snapped up by aristocrats, merchants and industrialists of Europe and America.

India was producing vast quantities of high quality diamonds long before South America and Africa yielded their first gems to Europeans. Early European explorers and traders knew about the gems, but often had difficulty in procuring the best diamonds, which were controlled by heads of state. When French merchant traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier first visited the mines of India in 1638, the region had already been producing huge quantities of high quality gems. Indeed, many diamonds would become known with names like the Florentine, Sancy, Hope, Orlov, Regent, and Koh-i-Noor.

Each of these diamonds has its own story to tell, as follows:

Tavernier, French Blue, Hope Diamonds (one and the same). Worn by Louis XIV and Louis XV. Fascinating 300-year odyssey from India, through Bourbon France, the biggest heist ever, to recovery in England, and finally to America as the fabulous Hope diamond.

Regent worn by Marie Antoinette. Beginning with theft and murder in India, to a French royal crown, to Napoleon's sword, to Austria, and back to the French Crown jewels.

Beau Sancy worn Marie De Medici. The oldest diamond ever sold at auction in May, 2013 for \$9.4million. An astonishing story from the assassination of her husband Henry IV, pawned in the Netherlands, to England's royals William & Mary, to the House of Prussia.

Mirror of Portugal worn by Queen Elizabeth. Famous owners have "ranged from the tenacious to the hapless, the romantic to the cunning," including Phillip II, Elizabeth I, James I, Charles I.

Orlov in the imperial scepter of Catherine the Great. Some say it was plucked from the "eye" of an Indian deity statue in ancient India. Bought by spurned lover Count Orlov and given to the Russian Empress, who had it mounted in the imperial scepter.

Koh-i-Noor worn by Queen Victoria. The oldest of ancient stones, it was owned by many Indian dynasties, and was appropriated as reparations by a British diplomat, who presented the Koh-i-Noor to Queen Victoria, and remains in the British crown.

About the Diamond Replicator

Over the last twenty years, Scott Sucher has become known as the world's foremost expert on the technology of documenting and replicating famous historical diamonds. His superb private collection of diamond replicas have been displayed worldwide and are described in detail on his website. He has also appeared on the Discovery Channel and National Geographic Channel, and collaborated with museums worldwide on various projects. On Sucher's bucket list is the opportunity to document and reproduce the Shah and Orlov diamonds in the Russian Diamond Fund.

About the Artist and Historian

For more than fifty years George S. Stuart has been capturing the essence of history's most famous and infamous personalities in sculptures he calls Historical Figures. Rarely have art and history been melded so exactly in works of such breathtaking realism. The Figures have been exhibited in many museums, the Clinton Presidential Library and the Smithsonian Institution.

He has created more than four hundred Historical Figures spanning world history from 1500 to 1900. Many subjects of his Figures have owned or even worn famous historical diamonds. Currently Mr. Stuart is the Curator Emeritus of the Museum of Ventura County, where the Fred. B. Smith Gallery is dedicated to exhibition of his work.

For more information about the exhibit or collaborators, email info@galleryhistoricalfigures.com.

The Museum of Ventura County is located at 100 East Main Street in downtown Ventura. Hours are 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is \$5.00 Adults (18 years & older) \$3.00 Seniors (65 and older), Students & AAA members with ID, \$1.00 Children (17-6 years old) Children 5 years old & younger are FREE. Paid events include free admission to the galleries, and the first Sundays of every month are free general admission for the public. For more museum information go to www.venturamuseum.org or call 805-653-0323.