

Aurora 'butterfly' flutters to San Diego museum

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New York--The Aurora Diamond Butterfly of Peace, a legacy artwork featuring 240 natural fancy-colored diamonds shaped into the form of a butterfly, will be on view at a new gems and minerals exhibition opening this weekend in San Diego.

The piece will serve as one of the signature objects in "All That Glitters: The Splendor and Science of Gems and Minerals," an exhibition opening May 15, 2010, and continuing through April 2012 at the San Diego Natural History Museum.

Created by diamond dealer and artist Alan Bronstein as a symbol of the soul and of positive transformation, the Aurora Diamond Butterfly of Peace features diamonds in hues of yellow, orange, pink, blue, green and violet. The arrangement's 240 stones, paired for color and size, took 12 years to amass due to the rarity of natural fancy-colored diamonds.

"Gems like these were not meant to be imprisoned in a dark vault for the momentary pleasure of a few eyes," Bronstein said in a media release. "The true value of a collection is in sharing it with as many people who are interested in experiencing nature's diversity of expression."

Visitors to the San Diego Natural History Museum will get a chance to do just that at the All That Glitters exhibition, where they will also see a unique assemblage of extraordinary gem specimens and jewelry, including pieces on loan from private collectors and notable institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History, the Gemological Institute of America and the Smithsonian Institution, among others.

The core of the exhibition is a spotlight on gems and minerals of California, from aquamarine and colemanite to spessartite and tourmaline, with learning opportunities aplenty, including a giant periodic table teaching visitors which elements comprise which gems. A special case will spotlight benitoite, the state gemstone of California found nowhere else in the world but in the state's San Benito County.

Organic stones, such as pearls, jet, ivory and coral will also be featured, as will gem carvings, including a Faberge gray chalcedony pig with diamond eyes, a Mauboussin jellyfish opal brooch and a never-before-seen collection of 13

butterfly brooches set with gems such as alexandrite, Mexican fire opal, pearls, topaz, rainbow moonstone, sapphire and more.

Additional jewelry designs set for display include pieces designed by renowned houses such as Cartier, Tiffany and Co. and Van Cleef and Arpels.

A black-tie gala will take place on May 22 in celebration of the exhibition's opening as well as the museum's 135th anniversary.

For more information about All That Glitters, visit the San Diego Natural History Museum's Web site, SDNHM.org.