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Natural History Museum Opens New London Gem Gallery (Update1)

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Emeralds on display at "The Vault";

Nov. 29 (Bloomberg) -- London's [Natural History Museum](#) opened a new gallery last night with a show of borrowed diamonds and a party attended by actress [Helen Mirren](#).

The museum, which has more than 70 million specimens from microscopic slides to mammoth skeletons, opened the [Vault](#), a new gallery of meteorites and gems, on Cromwell Road. Mirren was one of 14 celebrities brought to the party by Upfront Television Ltd., a star hunter for openings and charity events.

"The Vault is the first permanent gallery we've opened in five years and we wanted to celebrate it with as many people as possible," Chloe Kembery, a spokeswoman for the Natural History Museum, said in a telephone interview.

The show features 296 diamonds loaned by New York dealer [Alan Bronstein](#). His Aurora Collection of diamonds has been displayed twice before at the Natural History Museum and was on long-term loan to New York's American Museum of Natural History.

It illustrates the range of color that nature produces, Bronstein said. Boron creates a blue diamond, nitrogen leads to yellow or orange, radiation produces green and a distortion of the atomic structure results in pink, red or purple.

The Vault opening was the first time the Natural History Museum press office used a star recruiter. Upfront Television's fees range from 1,000 pounds (\$2,061) to 25,000 pounds to supply stars for an event and more typically are 5,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds, said Richard Brecker, a managing director at the company.

`Prestige' Occasion

``If Mirren comes to the museum, it attracts other celebrities, and it also helps attract more of the general public," Brecker said.

Stars come to a museum or charity event ``for the prestige of the occasion," Brecker said as he stood at the door with a list of names and photographs of confirmed guests. For restaurant openings, celebrities would be paid, ``unless it's someone like [Gordon Ramsay](#) who is celebrated in his own right," he said.

Models Jade Parfitt, Catherine Bailey and Jasmine Guinness, an heiress to the Guinness fortune, attended the opening, as did artists Gavin Turk and [Grayson Perry](#), Brecker said.

The museum's natural history collection, the biggest in the world, was assembled over 400 years.