

Aurora of Diamonds Colors Alan Bronstein's World

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Aurora of diamonds colors Alan Bronstein's world Isabel Reynolds Daily Yomiuri Staff Writer Yomiuri To the uninitiated, diamond dealers seem to inhabit a parallel, glamorous universe, probably accessible only to oil magnates and Silicon Valley billionaires. But Alan Bronstein, the diamond broker who assembled the Aurora Collection, currently on display as part of "The Nature of Diamonds" exhibition at the National Science Museum, makes it sound more down-to-earth. "It's not a family business, it's not something I dreamed of doing," he said, in an interview during his visit to Tokyo to attend the opening of the exhibition. Brought up in the Bronx in New York City, Bronstein was just an ordinary kid who collected baseball cards and never thought twice about gemstones. He only entered the trade after a chance suggestion from his mother, Jeanette, who worked as a bookkeeper at the Diamond Club, a traders' organization. "When I graduated from college, not having any direction that I wanted to go...it was her suggestion that I should be a diamond broker until I found what it is that I want to do," he said. In fact, he was not even particularly enamored of the job, which involved acting as a freelance go-between in gem transactions, until he was inspired by coming across a colored diamond. He describes that experience as "like seeing a rainbow for the first time." Deciding he wanted to know more about these rare gems, he began approaching dealers for information, but found that nobody seemed to know much. "It was the poor cousin of the diamond world, it was not appreciated, it was not sought-after by a majority of people working in the trade...If somebody had one, they didn't know what to do with it. They sold it very cheaply just to get rid of it," he explained. However, auction houses and a few specialist dealers did provide some information. The concept of the Aurora Collection came together little by little. As Bronstein began to make money, he started to acquire his own small, specimen stones, which he used to train his eye to distinguish the nuances in color that can make a diamond more or less valuable. But as he acquired more and more stones, he also realized that they made a pleasing "suite" or set in themselves, quite apart from their educational value. "It was never the intention from the very beginning to make a world-class diamond collection," he said. Though each of the diamonds is relatively small--between 0.1 and 3 carats--enlarging the set was still an expensive proposition. It was the support of a retired multimillionaire gold-refiner, Harry Rodman, that enabled the collection to grow beyond the scale dictated by Bronstein's pocket. The initial idea was to make a collection for commercial purposes, as a set of diamonds is generally worth more than the sum of its parts. The two men formed a company, whose name was chosen by Rodman, inspired by the colors of the aurora borealis. Aurora is also the name of the Roman goddess of dawn. However, when about 100 stones had been accumulated, Bronstein approached a friend at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and suggested the collection be exhibited there. The long term loan of another diamond collection had just come to an end after the owner died, so the offer was accepted, and is now on indefinite loan to the museum. "It's the best place for it to be. Because if it were sitting in a safe, then nobody would get to see it. And this has been the great pleasure for Harry Rodman and myself to be able to share this with the world, because it's so beautiful," the collector said. He pointed out the fact that different visitors are interested in different aspects of the collection, be it the scientific background, the financial value, or the sheer beauty of the stones. While the museum was preparing to receive the diamonds, Bronstein steadily added to the collection, until it reached its current official count of 260 stones. At first this was easy, as there were so many colors to choose

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