Most people know of diamonds as colorless stones that have become iconic as an expression of one’s love for another. But there are other mysterious and beautiful diamonds that exist in every color of the rainbow.

Diamonds of color have existed since diamonds were first discovered in India 3,000 years ago with the deep blue Hope Diamond being the most famous in history. Natural color diamonds have emerged from the shadows in the last 30 years through auctions and museum exhibitions, and now have become the most expensive gems on the planet, due to the scarcity of some colors and strong consumer demand. Incredible light return combined with the presence of highly
Oscar Heyman gold, platinum and fancy colored Diamond bracelet

A three-stone colored diamond ring, by Bulgari, with a fancy vivid blue diamond weighing approximately 2.03 carats, a fancy vivid purplish-pink diamond, weighing approximately 1.51 carats, and a fancy vivid yellow diamond, weighing approximately 1.47 carats. The ring is part of the Christie’s Magnificent Jewels auction to be held May 14 in Geneva. CHRISTIE’S IMAGES LTD. 2014

The fancy deep-blue diamond is set in a ‘Trombino’ ring made by Bulgari. The extremely rare fancy deep-blue diamond weighing 5.30 carats sold at Bonhams Fine Jewellery sale in London’s New Bond Street on April 24, 2013. Image courtesy of BONHAMS LTD.
A nice example of yellow and cognac diamonds from the Italian jewelry designer LoSi.

Saturated color is a big draw for connoisseurs of colored diamonds.

Natural colored diamonds are rare and therefore unique. The most readily available natural colored diamonds on the market are champagnes, cognacs and yellows. Yet even these are rare: for every colored diamond found, there are at least 10,000 colorless ones. Pinks, blues and greens are the hardest to find, and therefore most in demand. Pinks are especially prized. Most of them are mined by Rio Tinto at its Argyle mine in the remote east Kimberley region of Western Australia, and tendered at annual auctions to the highest bidders. Dealers from around the world bid for the gems, and while final prices paid for individual stones remain confidential, Argyle will say that pink diamonds are known to command prices of up to $400,000 per carat – twenty-times the price of equivalent white diamonds, due to rarity and market demand.

Beautifully cut gemstones and the many exquisite jewelry designs that are created are a medium of art that has seldom been described as such till recently. Especially when we look at jewels from the last 100 years that have evolved in the Beaux Arts period, Art Deco and Art Nouveau, we begin to see the integration and use of colored diamonds.

The awareness of colored diamonds continues to reach the public as is represented by works such as the Aurora Butterfly of Peace now on exhibition at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. This novel artwork comprised of unset diamonds was collected and organized over a twelve-year period to be an avant-garde expression of one of nature’s most beloved creatures. It provides one of the few public exhibitions of the spectrum of diamond colors existing in nature. It also has a quality that makes many of the stones exhibit a supernatural glow when exposed to ultraviolet light; a phenomenon that adds to their mystery and captivating allure. While there are 240 movable parts (all the stones sit loose on a pad) with 167 carats of diamonds, the true goal is to look at the whole rather than the sum of the parts. After the butterfly has made its aesthetic impression, one begins to notice the purples and blues and pinks and oranges among the other varieties that must be a new experience for anyone except the highly initiated.

The Aurora Butterfly of Peace is a lesson in nature through art. The collec-
The Hallucination watch by Graff Diamonds, set with more than 110 carats of exceptionally rare fancy colored diamonds. It is valued at $55-million.
The Orange, the largest fancy vivid orange diamond in the world, sold at a recent Christie’s auction for US$35.5-million, a world record for an orange diamond and a world auction record price per carat for any diamond, at US$2.4 million per carat. CHRISTIE’S IMAGES LTD. 2014

Diamonds in Flight

The Orange has been exhibited at the Smithsonian and other museums, and is currently on display in the Hixon Gem Vault at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. It will be on display until June 1, 2014. NHMLA curator Eloïse Gaillou says: “What an art-piece! Honestly, no photo can do it justice. You know how great a single diamond looks. Now, imagine 240 of them, all of different colors. And arranged in a butterfly shape. It is just extraordinary!”

Today, one can see many magnificent colored diamonds in jewelry stores across the world. They have become a selective market for individuals looking for something original and different from the mass market. Their availability is relatively limited compared to their dominant colorless cousins. Some of the most outstanding and classic jewelry illustrates how colored diamonds have been presented as jewels. The variety of styles today is endless.