A collector’s eye view – Alan Bronstein talks about the Aurora Pyramid of Hope

By Philippa Richardson

As a Visit Planner it’s always a joy to mention The Vault, one of the smallest but also one of the most interesting places in the Museum. As you walk through the Minerals gallery, your eye might be caught by something gleaming from within The Vault at the far end. This could very well be a sparkling diamond from the Aurora Pyramid of Hope. An outstanding collection of 296 naturally coloured diamonds, with a combined weight of 267 carats, it has been on display since 2005. Visitors can experience the collection bathed in UV light, further demonstrating the diamonds’ mysterious beauty and intrigue.

For more than 25 years it has been the mission of Aurora Gems to seek out these beautiful stones. Alan Bronstein, the company’s co-founder, and one of the world’s most experienced advisors on naturally coloured diamonds, very kindly granted me an interview so I could find out more about the collection and the motivation for his work.

In the Pyramid of Hope, the light catches the diamonds beautifully. Was there significance in choosing a pyramid design? I think it lends itself to wonder and mystery...

A pyramid has an inspirational effect on the mind. Whether it was conditioned into our DNA, pyramids have always been associated with enlightenment, rebirth and the connection between the earthly and the spiritual. I believe there is subconscious and subliminal energy affecting us when we feel the power of a pyramid – something like the awakening of a sixth sense – but you have to believe in it to experience it. For me, it is a really powerful, universal energy. Pyramids inspire upward.

On the aesthetics subject, does it concern you that people have and wear diamonds purely for this reason – as a materialistic statement?

I believe that diamonds are made to be worn. If you look at a diamond purely from a materialistic perspective you have lost 99 per cent of its value. Diamonds exist as materialistic objects to be placed into beautiful jewellery and as such are often used in engagement rings or tokens of love. But if it were not for love, there would be no materialistic value to diamonds. No matter how big, how rare, how beautiful, their value is driven by love – and love alone.

I read an article by Sharon Begley and she suggested you might be more interested in a science write-up on diamonds than a ring on a bride’s finger? Do you think that’s true?

I think the Pyramid of Hope offers an opportunity for information to be extracted to advance our knowledge of diamonds. I am not a scientist but a lover of beauty and nature. I believe that one of the most important aspects of diamonds is their symbolism of love. Other than this, to me, a diamond has no value. The size and colour has nothing to do with the love it projects. The beauty is the intention behind it. I much prefer the romance to the science.

You once said you would like to invite people to experience a rare view of nature’s masterpieces. Aside from their rarity, what makes diamonds masterpieces for you?

Anything made by nature is, in its own way, a masterpiece. When the universe was formed, it created everything we know to exist. Among the infinite mixing of the elements, one of the rarest to occur is the carbon atomic structure we call diamond. It is amazing to consider that coal is the exact same material, carbon, but in a different atomic form. To get the colour in diamonds it took some of the other building blocks of the universe to get involved. Like flowers frozen in eternal time, these stones come in all sorts of colours, shades and hues.

Interestingly, the science behind diamonds is relatively new – the study of gems is only 75 years old. When I talk to scientists I know they are looking for patterns and molecular answers within the formations and structures. Scientists make you consider the stones differently. I like to believe that within the depths of diamonds, we may find other answers or even more questions amid the atomic anomalies. In this world of earthly creations there are many masterpieces, large and small, that we are privileged to experience. They can be beautiful or ugly, depending on your viewpoint and taste, but the joy of seeing something you have never experienced before is like seeing a masterpiece for the first time.

I have heard it said you would like to find a coloured diamond that was close to ‘traffic light red’. I wondered if you were any closer to achieving this goal or, if not, whether you are still hopeful?

I’d like to believe that such a specimen must exist. It’s just that I have not yet seen it. There are beautiful variations of red diamonds showing purplish-red and brownish-red hues, but what has been described as ‘red’ for a diamond is for me, still generally a disappointment. It is the most enigmatic colour for diamonds, thus it becomes almost the Holy Grail for collectors.

I would like to thank Alan for making the time for this interview; for giving us his collector’s insight and for inspiring many of us here at the Museum with this beautiful collection.