

Figuratively Speaking

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HISTORICAL FIGURES FOUNDATION

Catherine the Great in Coronation Regalia Featured in “Diamonds Are Forever” Exhibit



Wearing the Imperial Russian crown jewels, Catherine II is positioned next to full size replicas of two of the world's largest diamonds. The Great Mogul and the Orlov diamonds are shown "suspended" on special settings created by George Stuart. Photo by Mary Harrsch.

No doubt, Catherine II was the Queen of Diamonds. Her largest prize was the Orlov diamond, named after her ex-lover Gregory Orlov. He spent all of his wealth on the huge stone, and then presented it to Catherine in hopes of rekindling of their love affair.

The Queen accepted the diamond, named it the “Orlov,” and had it mounted in the imperial scepter. Orlov was less successful. He had to settle for the queen’s gift of a marble palace, and an empty bed.

Most popularly it is speculated that the Orlov Diamond is the Great Mogul diamond because of its similar bluish tinge and rose cut. More likely, it was stolen and then cut into smaller gems to disguise its origin.

For the exhibit, Scott Sucher designed and created a quarter-life-size Orlov replica, which George Stuart carefully mounted in Catherine’s scepter.

Little-known Stories of Famous Diamonds

George Stuart’s entertaining monolog sheds light on the human drama surrounding the world-famous diamonds.

2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
July 13, 2014

\$10 MVC members; \$15 general public
RSVP: 805.653.0323 x7

MUSEUM OF VENTURA COUNTY
100 E Main Street, Ventura

Exhibits

New Historical Figure of Shah Jahan Headlines the stunning “Diamonds Are Forever” Exhibit

The must-see new exhibit at the Museum of Ventura County tells the stories of the world’s historically significant diamonds and their famous owners over the last few centuries.

These tales began in the late 17th Century, when Europeans found many ways to extract diamonds from India, the major source at the time. Indeed, along with thousands of lesser stones, most of the historic diamonds came from the then-productive mines in the Golconda region.

Perhaps the best known was the Tavernier diamond, which was bought by Louis XIV and cut into the French Blue. During the French revolution, the French was stolen from the treasury, only to resurface as the recut Hope diamond.

In his new Historical Figure, George Stuart modeled the Fifth Mogul emperor, during whose reign many diamonds departed India. Shah Jahan depleted the imperial treasury paying for construction of the famous Taj Mahal.

The *Diamonds are Forever* exhibit tells and illustrates the story of the Hope, as well as many other famous diamonds. Please visit MVC soon and tell your friends about this very special exhibit.



Shah Jahan is best known for building the Taj Mahal as a mausoleum and tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, who died after bearing him fourteen children.

George Stuart’s newest Historical Figure, Shah Jahan played an important role in diamond history, here holding the great Table diamond.

Foundation Members Sponsor New Emperor’s Clothing

Our special thanks to Foundation supporters who donated more than \$1,000 to assure that Shah Jahan was properly attired for his important debut in the *Diamonds are Forever* exhibit as Stuart’s newest Historical Figure. The clothing fund paid for much of the bling shown at right, in addition to the exquisite fabrics.

We are also indebted to Scott Sucher for designing and cutting the quarter life size Table diamond in the hat pin (left). Our thanks to David Harding for precisely machining some of the complicated parts Mr. Stuart transformed into the beautiful sword (right). Finally a hats-off to Mr. Stuart for researching and implementing the complicated hat pin and turban designs.



Exhibits

Opening reception is a first look at a fabulous exhibit and a close-up of **Scott Sucher's Diamonds Collection**



Sucher and Stuart first meet after a year of remote collaboration that produced the Golden Fleece badge, the Shah Jahan Figure, a dozen 1/4 scale diamonds and a new, full size replica of the Orlov diamond.



George Stuart introduces Karen and Scott (left) to Foundation board member Khalid Alawar, wife Sheryl and MVC Curator Ariane Karakalos, who produced the splendid Diamonds are Forever exhibit.



Long time Figures supporter Eleanor Rasnow (center) learns more about Scott's replica diamonds.



Curator Ariane Karakalos (left) welcomed Dona Dirlam, special guest from GIA—Gemological Institute of America.



Sucher explains diamond cutting history to Eric Howes, who collaborated on the exhibit design.

Diamonds & Gems Go Hands-On for Kids!



For Sunday of Opening Weekend, MVC Education Director Wendy VanHorn arranged a terrific program of gem-related activities especially for youngsters.

Leading off was Karen Sucher (left), who explained the secrets of husband Scott's exquisite replica diamonds. This occasion was the first time California kids of all ages could actually touch the precious stones. "Hands-on works!," says Karen who knows of at least one curious youngster who went on to earn her doctorate in geology. Go Karen!

Visitors who wanted to literally dig into collecting and working gem stones, were welcomed by the Ventura Gem and Mineral Society. The team displayed dozens of interesting samples, and even demonstrated cutting and polishing techniques.

Getting started in this hobby is easy, and Society members nurture beginners. Warning it is usually addictive, and for most a life long adventure. For more information about the hobby and Society, visit www.vgms.org, email info@vgms.org or contact Diane Cook at 805-647-8517. Photos by Leroy Becker.

Early Works

Where in the World is Winston?



*Archived slides show Winston Churchill Historical Figure before being shipped to New York and an unknown future. Anyone know where he might be?
Photo source unknown*

Of all the commissions Mr. Stuart has taken, perhaps the most recognizable is the Historical Figure of a 20th Century Churchill. Winston was not the first Churchill, as Stuart had previously captured Lord John and Lady Sarah Churchill who played important parts in English history during the reign of Queen Anne. Nevertheless, taking on a very famous contemporary can be problematical. The good news is there was an abundance of graphics from which Mr. Stuart could draw to create a good likeness. However, the countless photographs and endless movie footage have seared images of Winston Churchill into the memories of recent generations.

Unlike computers, humans have imperfect memories, so everyone has their own vision of what Winston looked like. Many who would readily accept an abstract painting of Churchill **might demand that Stuart's realist art adhere to their own memories!**

As we all know, Stuart took such risks with Stalin, Lenin, Hitler, Mao, Victoria, Lincoln and many other highly photographed Figures post-1850.



Duke and Duchess of Marlboro from whom Winston Churchill descended, Stuart worked only from contemporary paintings and sketches.