Smithsonian Receives Gift of Extraordinary Ruby
Rare Gemstone Goes on Public View for First Time on Oct. 16

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History has received one of the world’s largest and finest ruby gemstones. The spectacular 23.1-carat Burmese ruby, set in a platinum ring with diamonds, was donated by businessman and philanthropist Peter Buck in memory of his wife Carmen Lúcia. On Saturday, Oct. 16, the Carmen Lúcia Ruby will go on view in the museum’s National Gem Collection, part of the Janet Annenberg Hooker Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals, and will be on exhibit indefinitely.

“We are proud to bring this remarkable gemstone to the American people through the generosity of Peter Buck,” said Cristián Samper, director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. “It is one of the most significant additions to the National Gem Collection since the Hope Diamond came to the museum in 1958.”

“The Carmen Lúcia Ruby is a breathtakingly beautiful gemstone and a magnificent gift to the American people. It is the largest and finest faceted ruby on public display and will quickly become one of the icons of our National Gem Collection,” said Jeffrey Post, curator of gems at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History.

“My wife, Carmen Lúcia, was an extraordinary woman. I made this gift as a tribute to her life,” said Buck. “She was proud of her U.S. citizenship and dedicated her life to helping others. I hope many people will enjoy the Carmen Lúcia ruby.”

At 23.1 carats, the Carmen Lúcia Ruby is the largest faceted ruby in the museum’s National Gem Collection and one of the finest Burmese rubies known to exist in the world. This natural ruby possesses a combination of outstanding characteristics. This extraordinary gemstone displays a richly saturated homogenous red color combined with an exceptional degree of
transparency. In addition to the pleasant shape, the finely proportioned cut provides many vivid red color reflections. The stone was mined from the fabled Mogok region of Burma in the 1930s.

While sapphire, emerald and diamond gems weighing hundreds of carats exist, high quality Burmese rubies larger than 20 carats are exceedingly rare.

The National Gem Collection is recognized as the most important collection of rare and priceless gemstones on public view in any museum in the world. More than 375,000 individual specimens are on permanent display, including such famous pieces as the Hope Diamond and the Star of Asia Sapphire, plus a research mineral collection used by scientists around the world.

The National Museum of Natural History is located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W. in Washington, D.C. It is the largest and most visited natural history museum in the world, welcoming more than 5.5 million people in the year 2003. The museum is dedicated to the maintenance and preservation of the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. The museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research complex.

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