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# Sparkling Koi Diamond, the ultimate embodiment of Japanese legend and tradition

By Phil Butler

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Sitting in a vault in Antwerp, the 32+ carat Koi Diamond is one of the world's most unique large gems. Big and beautiful as it is, the miraculous stories surrounding this fabulous diamond are at least as marvelous as the transformative koi fish it resembles. And now the people who have brought the Koi Diamond to life, are as

determined as the ancient people of Niigata, who bred the first colored koi fish.

Discovered in the Congo a little over a decade ago, the Koi Diamond's journey into being is, as they say, the stuff of legend and fairy tales.

When the owners of the Koi Diamond, Rawstone Business Holding, asked the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) to evaluate and grade their magnificent find, the world's most renowned gem experts were literally set aback. Even the society's most experienced experts had no benchmark for grading a diamond so unique. The pear shaped gem is not only cut to resemble the koi fish of Japanese legend: the color and included character of the stone make it even more aptly named.

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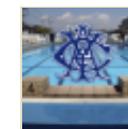
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When this fancy diamond was first discovered it weighed over 60 carats, but its multiplicity of flaws and strange color gradation really relegated it to be carved into bits and pieces of so-called industrial diamond material. However, a chance in a billion akin to that fabled koi fish surviving a harsh winter to save the local families of Niigata occurred just at the right moment. The artistic eye of a gem cutter caught a glimmer of something special inside that chunk of colored carbon – and the koi fish “trapped” inside was set free, and transformed into a Koi Diamond. And this is just the beginning of the diamond’s story.

Unable to classify the gem, GIA’s Thomas Moses called in a long time friend and colleague, Eddy Elzas, the “King of Colored Diamonds” (see photo below). Elzas himself, is, by his own recollecting “living in a fairytale existence”, as he told me over the phone the other day. Why a “fairytale”, you ask? A self-professed “Super-Jew”, Elzas was born of miraculous circumstance, not unlike the diamond we speak of. Fatherless, Eddy’s mother gave birth to him beneath a boxcar in Nazi occupied France in 1942. The 71 year old recounts his upbringing and education without a hint of melancholy, but when he turns to discussing fancy, colored diamonds?

Well, Eddy adores fancy diamonds, maybe that’s why he owns the world’s largest, most famous, and most valuable collection of them. The Rainbow Collection is Elzas’ pride and joy (outside his family that is), but when I asked about the Koi Diamond, the childlike wonder and lust for beautiful crystalline things rang true in his voice. Six continents and 20,000 flight hours to evaluate the world’s most fabulous gems professionally, and Elzas got giddy over maybe the world’s most unique diamond ever.

By now you should have visually pieced together the symbiosis going on with the Koi Diamond. In essence, the same way the koi fish has a symbiotic relationship in between the cosmos, the fates, the animal kingdom, and the legacy of human beings, so too that cool bit of rock locked away in Antwerp seems to affect everyone and everything it touches. Or maybe the story is the other way around?



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