



KULSEN & HENNIG

Nature's Brilliant Colours

Newsletter No. 12

10/2012

All about Natural Coloured Diamonds

Diamond Divas - Marilyn Monroe and the *Moon of Baroda*

The *Moon of Baroda*

A pear-shaped, canary yellow Natural Fancy Coloured Diamond weighing 24.04 ct, the *Moon of Baroda*, in a filigree gold setting on a narrow black band, sparkled around the neck of the actress. It would have been difficult to say which sparkled more, the actress or the diamond; it would have been no easier, though, to say which complemented the other better, the diamond the Hollywood star, or the star the *Moon of Baroda*.

The close-up of a laughing Marilyn, seductive and triumphant, emblazoned the coloured magazine covers. We see her, with the narrow black band between her fingers, presenting the *Moon of Baroda* to the camera like a trophy.

A trophy which is, like her, a desirable diva: unique and unattainable. The colours, the shapes, and the photos themselves play with these same qualities.



The famous black and white photographs of Marilyn wearing the *Moon of Baroda* are both understated and elegant. But here in this pose, a promise of closeness and possession is clear. With her head back, her eyes half-closed, and her lips slightly open, Marilyn and her pose show the *Moon of Baroda* off to its best advantage.

The interplay of light and shadows beautifully illuminates the polished stone and the diva's hair. The *Moon of Baroda* was of course only loaned. Meyer Rosenbaum of the Meyer Jewelry Company provided the diamond to advertise the movie and famous song, "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend".

Rosenbaum acquired the precious stone in the 1950s. Like most historic diamonds, the *Moon of Baroda* has often changed, and continues to change, owners. Are diamonds really a young woman's best friend?

Marilyn, Maria Theresa and Marie-Antoinette

Marilyn was not the only temporary owner of this precious and equally famous stone. Other high ranking women preceded her. It is said that the Moon of Baroda at one time belonged to Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria. Although not unchallenged, the reformist heir to the throne led government affairs from 1740 until her death in 1780.

No proof exists, however, that she ever wore the diamond herself. Photography did not exist at the time and the stone is nowhere to be seen in her portraits. Legend has it, though, that she allowed one of her many daughters to wear the diamond.



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The Moon of Baroda

One might speculate that it was the youngest daughter of the Habsburg monarch, Marie-Antoinette, the pretentious wife of Louis XVI. If she ever did wear the diamond, it certainly did not bring her luck: she was guillotined on October 16, 1793.

That event presumably fuelled speculation that she did indeed wear the *Moon of Baroda*. One might shudder pleasantly at the idea of such a beautiful stone once adorning the delicate neck of a decapitated queen.

The Maharaja of Baroda

The *Moon of Baroda* is one of the most famous Natural Fancy Coloured Diamonds. It is believed to be 500 years old and originally from India, more specifically from the former West Indian principality of Baroda. The Gaekwad dynasty ruled Baroda from the 17th century until the late 1940s and they are said to have been the first owners of this famous Natural Fancy Coloured Diamond. One of the Maharajas may have sent the *Moon of Baroda* on tour, though, as it is supposed to have been with the Hapsburgs in the 18th century.

Nevertheless, the actual route taken by the *Moon of Baroda* remains a mystery. In the 19th century, it reappeared in Baroda where it obtained its current cut. One Maharaja wore it on a necklace. Then the stone set off on tour again and in 1926 was seen at an exhibition in Los Angeles.



Maharaja Khande Rao of Baroda

If the *Moon of Baroda* is a faithful ally, as is said and sung of diamonds, its changing owners certainly were not. Only Marilyn Monroe, who was simply lent the diamond, seems to have recognized and estimated its true value in "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend".

Just as her character Lorelei Lee sang in the song, kisses might be nice, but they don't pay the rent or buy food, and youth and beauty fade, after all. Diamonds, on the other hand, never lose their luster. There are many men, but only one *Moon of Baroda*.

Source:
Diamond Divas. Vinciane van Grotenhuis, BAI, 2008