



# the allure of pearls

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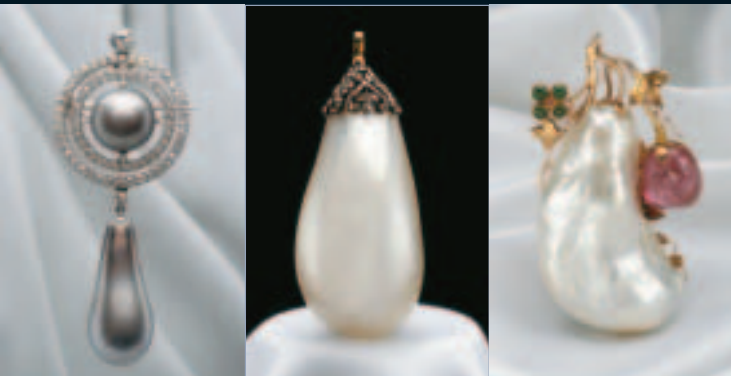
KINGS, QUEENS, MAHARAJAHS, IMPERIAL MAJESTIES, THE RICH AND THE FAMOUS – FINE PEARLS HAVE MARKED THEIR STATUS FOR CENTURIES. *THE ALLURE OF PEARLS* IS A RARE COLLECTION OF SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS PEARLS – EACH WITH ITS OWN HISTORY, PARTICULAR BEAUTY AND SCIENCE – DISPLAYED AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION IN WASHINGTON.

*Allure* – sponsored by Paspaley and supported by Iridesse and the Gemological Institute of America – came about after Paspaley Executive Chairman Nicholas Paspaley suggested the Smithsonian exhibit the world's finest and most famous pearls – in line with its earlier, highly successful display of some of the world's best-known diamonds.

*The Allure of Pearls* appeared alongside the US National Gem Collection, the most visited gem collection in the world, which has as its centrepiece the *Hope Diamond*. Owner Harry Winston donated this world famous gem to the Smithsonian – and

funded the construction of the gallery that bears his name. The gem collection is possibly the second most viewed attraction in the world – surpassed only by the *Mona Lisa*. Gem collector Lord Henry Hope's name is perpetuated in the diamond and one of the pearls featured in *Allure* – the *Hope Pearl* – both of which he owned in the mid 1800s.

The Smithsonian appears to have adopted a 'less is more' approach for *The Allure of Pearls*, assembling a rare grouping of pearls each with its own history, beauty, and science.



There were only a dozen separate pieces on show, but what pieces! They confirmed the mystique that surrounds pearls ... among them *La Peregrina* discovered in the Gulf of Panama in the 16th century and owned during different stages of history by Spanish and British royalty and the Bonapartes and now by Elizabeth Taylor ... the 600 carat *Pearl of Asia* with a 400 year history of ownership by royalty in the Middle and Far East who considered it to be one of the world's most valuable gems ... and the *Pearl of Kuwait*, set in the 19th century with an intricate bell cap design that would have allowed it to hang from a multi-strand necklace.

Main image: *La Peregrina* (meaning "pilgrim") is one of the most celebrated and historical pearls in the world. Current owner Elizabeth Taylor had the pear-shaped natural pearl reset with pearls, diamonds and rubies.  
 Above (L-R): *Drexel Pearl*; *Pearl of Kuwait*; *Pearl of Asia*.



*The Hope Pearl and the Hope Diamond.*



The amazing Pearl of Asia, one of the largest natural pearls in the world.



Paspaley supplied the Smithsonian with a selection of pearls, including two drop-shaped gems, superb, rare natural pearls discovered by divers of the pearling fleet off the 80 Mile Beach. Significantly, the *Paspaley Pearl*, the most significant pearl the company has ever produced, was the only cultured pearl in the entire display.

The Smithsonian is now establishing a permanent display of South Sea pearls from Paspaley within the National Gem collection, recognition of the gem status that the world's finest pearls enjoy. Paspaley has donated a magnificent collection of pearls to the value of approximately US\$500,000. 🐚



Main image: The Paspaley Pearl, one of the largest cultured pearls ever created is also one of the finest. It has extraordinary lustre, near perfect spherical shape and a soft pink overtone. Paspaley Drop Shape Pearls – it's extremely rare to find one natural pearl so well proportioned and symmetrical. To find two is simply extraordinary.

Above (L-R): Black Beauty; Conch Pearls; Queen Mary Brooch.