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2008 Las Vegas AGA Lab Forum Results in Task Force on Lighting and Color Grading Diamonds

by Antoinette Matlins

The AGA Laboratory Forum was organized in response to the AGA Position Paper pertaining to Color Grading of Fluorescent Diamonds. The Las Vegas meeting had excellent representation and the dialogue was positive and constructive. In addition to members of the AGA Board, the following were present.

- Peter Yantzer, AGS Laboratory
- Tom Tashey, PGI Laboratory
- Don Palmieri, GCAL (Gem Certification and Assurance Laboratory)
- Michael Allchin, Birmingham Assay Office, London
- Lore Kiefert, to report to the Lab Harmonization Committee
- Branko Deljanin, EGL - Canada
- Nick Del Re - EGL - USA
- Doug Garrard - Gem-A, London
- Renata Jasinevicius - University of Arizona, Senior Researcher, Physics Department
- Chuck Bauman, Dazor Lighting, Research Director

In addition, the AGA shared comments received from Tom Moses (GIA), Thomas Hainschwang (Leichtenstein), Jean Pierre Chalain (SSEF), and Wilawan Atichat (Thailand).

As a result of all the input and discussion, it was agreed that there are essential problems which need to be addressed related to lighting in general. Numerous examples were discussed underscoring the fact that the issue is far greater than simply whether or not UV emissions are present. The broader issues of lighting as it pertains to grading diamonds and gemstones must be re-examined.

The discussion was very direct and candid, and concluded with a decision that further investigation into the entire area related to lighting and gemstone grading is essential. It was agreed that there will never be consistency in color-grading without the development of more precise standards and procedural guidelines, plus a means to certify compliance with those standards and procedures. It was also noted that this is an area about which we must be pro-active; one that we need to pursue as soon as possible because of consumer complaints and their potential to explode in the media.

Consensus was reached on the following points.

- The gemological field needs to establish precise illumination standards, comparable to what is found in other scientific fields and industries, for the lighting used in grading diamonds and gemstones.
- The gemological field needs to develop systems to ensure compliance among labs claiming to adhere to established standards.
- Procedural guidelines related to basic procedures such as "distance at which to hold stones from the light source" must be established.

To begin this process, a Task Force on Lighting and Color Grading Diamonds was appointed to gather additional data on the broad area of lighting and its impact on diamond grading. They will explore possible alternatives to what is now done.