

Museum Finds Fakes in Gem Collection



RAPAPORT... The National Museum in Prague has discovered a number of fake stones, including diamonds, sapphires and rubies, it said last week.

The stones were found during an audit of the gem collection while the museum was undergoing renovations. The Czech museum is remodeling in honor of the country's 100th anniversary, and will reopen in October, deputy director Michal Stehlik said in an interview with Radio Praha.

"When you have a collection of 20 million artifacts, then a certain fraction of that may prove to be problematic. These things happen," he said.

The review revealed a 5-carat "diamond," acquired in the 1960s, was actually glass cut to resemble a diamond. In addition, a 19-carat sapphire, for which the museum paid CZK 200,000 in the 1970s, thinking it was natural, turned out to be synthetic. A genuine sapphire of that size would be worth tens of millions of crowns today, the museum noted. Currently, there are about 21 crowns to the dollar. Further examination showed that half the ruby collection was also synthetic.

The museum is taking steps to figure out whether the fake stones were part of a scam, or a lack of expertise among former employees. The time lapse since the stones were acquired, as well as the fact that the employee in charge of the collection at the time has since died, will make tracing this information more difficult, it added.

The museum is conducting a full audit of its artifacts — including musical instruments, precious metals and artwork — due to conclude in 2020.

Stehlik might then organize an exhibition of fakes found at various museums around the world, he added.

Image: [Carmelo Bayarcal](#)