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WATCHES AND JEWELLERY 2019



WA's famed source of pink diamonds will live on after its closure next year through a spectacular new collection

Eternal flame

Story SARAH-JANE TASKER

The allure of pink diamonds is intensifying as the world's largest mine or the sought-after gem prepares to close and a new "everlasting" collection aims to ensure its legacy lives on. For the first time in the 40-year history of Rio Tinto's Argyle diamond mine, the company released a new opportunity to own its top gems with a second tender run alongside its longstanding annual silent auction.

The inaugural Argyle Pink Everlastings Collection showcased 64 carefully curated sets of pink diamonds in the rarest saturated pink and red hues. The diamonds used were just 2 per cent of an entire year's polished pink production.

Jewellery historian Vivienne Becker said the collection, representing one of the last offerings of its kind from the Argyle mine, will feed the unstoppable demand from designers and jewellers who appreciate the finite rarity of these beautiful gems.



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The Everlastings collection offered a total of 211.21 carats, including 37 lots containing 0.08 to 0.14 carat individually inscribed and certified stones, and 27 melee lots containing diamonds of less than 0.08 carats.

It took two years to collect the product from the mine in WA's Kimberley region to create, collect and curate the new collection, which includes a variety of shapes, covering rounds, ovals and pears. It is expected that less than 100 carats of the equivalent profile of the Everlasting collection will be produced by the mine before it is closed in 2020. Michelle Sherring, account executive at Argyle Pink Diamonds, says the impending event gave the pink diamonds in the Everlasting collection the platform they deserve. "These are incredibly rare," she says.

Rio Tinto's Argyle mine produces more than 90 per cent of the world's supply of rare pink diamonds. The top rare pink, red and violet diamonds are presented for tender each year, and this year the Everlastings collection was up for sale alongside that annual tender in Perth, Singapore, London and New York.

Rohan Milne, of Rohan Jewellers, was stunned by the unexpected Everlastings collection and the potential to create lasting pieces of jewellery. Viewing the boxes of diamonds in the Perth office of Argyle Pink Diamonds, his mind was racing on the possibilities presented by each box on offer. Milne, who was selected by Argyle Diamonds eight years ago to become an Argyle Pink Diamonds Select Atelier, says the different shapes and sizes in each box was a designer's dream. "This is a rarity to have such a spread," he says. "It would take years to collect the stones that are being offered in one box in this collection."

The mine has produced 825 million carats over 40 years and in its final year it is down to the last few teaspoons of top-tier gems.

"This is the world's collection," Milne says as he surveys the Everlasting diamonds. He adds that the tender process Argyle holds for its annual exclusive collection, which will be similar in approach to the Everlastings, offers a key insight each year into where the market values the product. Milne says he expects that this year the market will set the price based on the shortage of supply and the knowledge there are few chances left to buy a diamond straight from the mine.

"There is this degree of knowing the mine is closing and if you want a piece of history, now is the time to put your hand up," he says. ☺

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