

Legendary Yellow Diamonds Dazzle at Bonhams



RAPAPORT... A collection of fancy vivid yellow diamonds once owned by South Africa's mining elite sold last week at a Bonhams auction for well above its expected price.

The diamonds first surfaced in 1940, when R.V. Cullinan — son of the renowned diamond magnate Sir Thomas Cullinan — asked De Beers director Pierre De Villiers to buy him some diamonds on his next visit to Kimberley, Bonhams explained. On the train ride back from the mine, De Villiers showed what he had sourced to Sir Thomas Oppenheimer, the founder of Anglo American, who replied that he had something better. Oppenheimer revealed a set of yellow diamonds, which De Villiers purchased, keeping half and giving the others to Cullinan.

The collection remained in the Cullinan family until Thursday, when it sold as two separate lots at the Bonhams London Fine Jewellery sale for a total of \$773,350 (GBP 577,750).

A brooch set with three step-cut, fancy vivid yellow diamonds respectively weighing 5.29, 3.11 and 2.37 carats fetched \$606,029 (GBP 452,750). An anonymous online buyer won the piece after a “fierce bidding war,” beating the pre-sale estimate of \$268,000 to \$402,000 (GBP 200,000 to GBP 300,000), the auction house said.

The second lot, a pair of round, fancy vivid yellow diamonds weighing 2.08 and 1.93 carats, respectively, sold for \$167,319 (GBP 125,000), compared with an initial estimate

of \$67,000 to \$107,000 (GBP 50,000 to GBP 80,000).

“The fancy vivid yellow diamonds in this collection are exceptionally well-matched in color and boast an enviable provenance,” said Jean Ghika, Bonhams' director of jewelry for the UK and Europe.

Other top performers at the auction included a marquise-cut, 7.73-carat, F-color, VVS1-clarity diamond ring by Harry Winston, which sold for \$316,902 (GBP 236,750), or \$40,996 per carat.

Separately, Bonhams New York sold a Harry Winston diamond necklace, once owned by Zsa Zsa Gabor, for \$1.3 million. The piece, which contains 45 round brilliant-cut diamonds weighing a total of 66 carats, sold to an anonymous online bidder, the auction house said.