

ABSOLUTE marbella

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The Archduke Joseph Diamond

A kiss on the hand may be quite continental, but a magnificent perfect 19th century diamond weighing 76.45 carats from the legendary Golconda mines, carries more weight, as Mara Lane reports.

In the diamond industry, size matters. The bigger, the better, the higher the quality, the more expensive. This extraordinary profession, with its own rules and deals sealed on the strength of a handshake, with its own syndicate that dictates the flow of these crystalline forms of carbon worldwide, works on the same principle as a gentleman's club. Dealers know each other, news travels fast, make a wrong move and you'll never be admitted again. Amongst the inordinate amount of diamond dealers the world over, only a few reach the upper echelons, able to find and buy the rarest stones. Alfredo Molina belongs to this elitist group.

Our Man in Arizona...

Ranked alongside Harry Winston in stature, this international jeweler who works out of Phoenix in the dry Sonoran Desert, has been known to fly off at a moments notice to secure the finest gemstones or show off his latest collection to valued clients. His reputation for obtaining the rarest jewels was further strengthened after he bought the world's 12th largest perfect white diamond, the rare Archduke Joseph Diamond. The D-flawless, cushion shaped stone weighs 76.45 carats - before recutting 78.54 carats - and is believed to have been mined in the legendary diamond district of Golconda, India. Valued at \$25 million, it is now for sale. By appointment only, darling.

A Piece of History...

"We are tremendously excited to offer the Archduke Joseph Diamond as part of our collection," says Molina. "There are only 50 diamonds in the world from the Golconda region that weigh more than 20 carats and most of these stones can only be viewed behind enclosed glass museum cases."

Molina explains that the Archduke Joseph Diamond is the finest diamond in the world. It has a translucency and brilliancy that exceeds all other diamonds. The purity of the stone is so magical it looks as though you are looking right through water," he says, adding that the stone is of particular interest to investors because of its beauty and mystique. "The first recorded owner of this spectacular diamond was



Joseph August Victor Clemence Maria, the Archduke of Austria and Palatinate of Hungary. He was also the great-grandson of Emperor Leopold II of the House of Hapsburg,” he says.

Research by Count Johannes von Schoenborn-Wiesentheid points out that “there appears to be quite a bit of speculation as to how the diamond got into the possession of the Archduke Joseph August von Hapsburg (Joseph Francis’ father) and why he sold it. There is no paper trail which shows the diamond’s journey from the Golconda mines in India to the Archduke. However, statements from surviving relatives, substantiated with historical facts and genealogical records, enable us to shed some light on the most important steps of the diamond’s journey.”

Princess Maria Fernanda von Thurn und Taxis, who grew up in Regensburg Castle at the same time as the Archduke and the Duchess, recalls conversations with her aunt about a brooch with a large diamond which had been sold, that was originally handed down from her husband’s grandmother Clementine d’Orleans., the daughter of King Louis Philippe of France, who received it when she married the Archduke, more than likely as a gift from Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. “All major diamonds mined in India were offered first to the British Crown, as rulers of the Raj. These were either purchased or accepted as gifts. It is well known that many of the important stones mined at Golconda ended up either as part of the British crown jewels or were purchased by the British Royal family to be subsequently given or offered to other ruling European families.

“Since the marriage of August to the King of France’s daughter was a very important political and social event, a gift of this value would have been a smart diplomatic move, given the political rivalry between Britain and France. In addition, Prince Albert and August Saxe-Coburg were first cousins, which would imply a close relationship and therefore the necessity for an impressive wedding members have confirmed that Joseph had a large diamond which was sold during the Thirties,” states Count Johannes von Schoenborn-Wiesenthal.

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Also writing about the history of this incredible diamond, Lord Balfour of Inchyrye, a leading expert in the field, stated that before the sale, “Minutes taken on June 1933, record that the diamond, then the property of Archduke Joseph, was at the time deposited with the Hungarian General Credit Bank in Hungary. Three years later the Archduke Joseph Diamond was sold to a European banker who kept it in a safe deposit box.” Records dating from 1933 show that the diamond was deposited in the vault of the Hungarian General Credit Bank and that the stone was later sold to an undisclosed buyer in 1936. “Miraculously, the diamond escaped the notice of the Nazis during World War II and has been in the possession of private collectors ever since.

Of course, a rare jeweler such as this should be shown off, placed lovingly around the neck of a beautiful woman who will add to its allure. Alfredo Molina and his talented craftsmen designed a 74 carat diamond necklace that his enormous stone fits tightly into. The full necklace with the Archduke Joseph diamond weighs 150.45 carats and is worth \$27.5 million. Celebrities such as Natalie Cole, Sarah Ferguson and Kim King (the wife of talk show guru, Larry King) have worn the stunning piece and have commented on the powerful energy that it exudes.

Other rare jewels in the Molina collection include a \$13 million Burmese ruby and diamond ring, a cushion-cut sapphire ring valued at just over a million dollars, and a natural fancy vivid yellow diamond radiant cut ring worth \$1.9 million. A dealer once said he could “talk for hours about Golconda stones. But to really know what I am trying to tell you, you must hold one in your hand. Only then will you understand.”

But getting back to the Archduke Joseph Diamond, who in these recessionary times is able to buy such a magnificent piece? High profile billionaires, Middle Eastern potentates, reclusive collectors, rock stars or super models? Alfredo Molina looks at me for a moment before replying. “You’d be surprised!” He says, with a big grin. So who gets to wear this flawless gem? As the song say, let it be me.