

Bleu Royal diamond rakes in nearly \$44 mn at Geneva auction

November 7 2023



The Bleu Royal sold for nearly \$2.5 million per carat.

An exceptionally rare blue diamond went under the hammer in Geneva Tuesday, selling for more than \$40 million, making it one of the most expensive diamonds ever sold at auction, Christie's said.

Weighing 17.61 carats, the Bleu Royal is the largest internally flawless fancy vivid blue gem ever to appear for sale in [auction](#) history.

It is the star lot in a series of luxury sales in Geneva this month, which also feature items from movie history including pearls worn by Audrey Hepburn and Marlon Brando's self-engraved watch.

The Bleu Royal had been expected to fetch between \$35 million and \$50 million in Christie's Magnificent Jewels auction.

After an intense seven-minute bidding round between three potential buyers, it was snapped up by an anonymous private collector for 39.505 million Swiss francs (\$43.8 million), including tax and fees.

"We are extremely pleased," Max Fawcett, Christie's head of jewelry in Geneva, told AFP shortly after the final hammer came down.

The gem, he pointed out, had sold for nearly \$2.5 million per carat, making it "the most expensive jewelry lot sold in all of 2023" by any auction house worldwide.

And historically, "it is in the top-10 most expensive lots ever sold in terms of jewelry," he said.

The pear-shaped diamond, set on a ring, has been in a private collection for decades, and Tuesday's sale marked the first time it went to auction.

'Top of its class'

Before Tuesday's sale, Christie's international head of jewelry Rahul Kadakia highlighted the gem's extraordinary color.

He pointed out to AFP that many modern colored [diamonds](#) had a

modified cut to enhance the color.

In the Bleu Royal's case, "the rough material itself was so rich that they were able to cut it into a classic brilliant faceting style," he said.



Fancy vivid blue diamonds weighing more than 10 carats are exceptionally rare.

"It checks all the boxes—really top of its class," he added.

Fancy vivid blue diamonds weighing more than 10 carats are exceptionally rare. Since Christie's was founded in 1766, only three such stones have appeared for sale—all in the last 13 years.

One of them was the Oppenheimer Blue, which fetched \$57.5 million at a 2016 auction, and is the only diamond Christie's has ever sold for more than Tuesday's Bleu Royal.

Competing auction house Sotheby's meanwhile sold the De Beers Cullinan Blue last year, for just over \$57 million.

A separate online jewels sale, which runs until November 16, features the pearl necklace worn by Hepburn in the 1953 film "Roman Holiday".

Hepburn, who played a princess in the romantic comedy, picked it out from a selection offered by the Austro-Hungarian jeweler Furst, and returned it afterwards with a signed photograph.

It is being sold by a European collector and has a starting price of 18,000 Swiss francs (\$20,000).

'Apocalypse Now' watch

In Christie's separate Passion for Time watches sale on Monday, the timepiece worn by Brando in the 1979 Vietnam War movie "Apocalypse Now" meanwhile went under the hammer for just over \$5 million.

The circa 1972 Rolex GMT-Master is hand-engraved "M. Brando" on the back by the Oscar-winning US actor himself.

"The engraving is still sharp, so we can imagine that this watch has been worn, but not too much," Eli Fayon, junior watches specialist at Christie's Geneva, told AFP before the sale.

Brando gifted it to his adopted daughter Petra in 1995, who then gave it to her husband in 2003 on their wedding night. It was sold at auction in 2019 for \$1.95 million.

On Wednesday, Sotheby's is also due to host a Magnificent Jewels sale in Geneva, with several stunning gems set to go under the hammer, along with an important collection of imperial and royal jewels.

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