

## Rio Tinto Diamonds Launches Design Contest

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**Jennifer Heebner, Senior Editor -- JCK-Jewelers Circular Keystone,  
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Industry press gathered yesterday morning in the Shoreham Hotel New York to learn about the launch of a new champagne diamond design competition sponsored by Rio Tinto Diamonds. The Rio Tinto Diamonds Champagne Diamond Design Competition aims to inspire new jewelry designers to showcase the full color range of colors of champagne diamonds in innovative new designs.



The Argyle Diamond Mine in the remote east Kimberley region of Western Australia is the world's largest producer of champagne diamonds.

The contest is also set to reinforce new champagne diamond marketing initiatives launched a year and a half ago to target independent retailers. [Rio Tinto's Argyle Diamond Mine is a leading supplier of champagne diamonds, and has marketing them since the early 1990's; it also has a proprietary color grading chart for the full range of brown diamonds.] According to Rio Tinto, the U.S. is the largest consumer market for champagne diamond jewelry, and, some \$5 billion of champagne diamond jewelry is sold worldwide.

Rebecca Foerster, manager of the US representative office for Rio Tinto's diamonds sales and marketing, and Rob May, head of the Natural Colored Diamond Association, were on hand to explain the details of the contest. Foerster calls the timing "perfect to invigorate industry." In particular, the competition aims to "discover upcoming talent from emerging designers," Foerster told JCK.



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Jean-Marc Lieberherr, General Manager for the sales and marketing of all diamonds from Rio Tinto's mines, was not present during the press conference, but sent his regards in a prepared statement: "The design contest is a natural extension of our market development for champagne diamonds in the US. The Argyle mine has fuelled the growth of champagne diamond jewelry around the globe and we are now looking to the next generation of new design talent to inspire retailers and consumers alike."

The competition comprises four categories—Champagne Visionary, first place; Champagne Wishes, second place; Champagne Evenings, third place; and Champagne Days, fourth place. Winners will be rewarded with the opportunity to be part of a nationwide public relations and marketing campaign featured in the press and targeted at consumers, fine jewelry retailers and influential members of the jewelry industry. All winning pieces will form part of a nationwide travelling exhibition hosted at leading jewelry retail locations, in time for the holiday season 2009.



A color grading system (C1 to C7) created by Argyle Diamonds grades the darker and rarer cognac diamonds are the most expensive gems within the range, the fairest being a light champagne color.

Those eligible to enter are up-and-coming jewelry designers who are at least 18 years old and are from the United States; they will be tasked with creating a champagne diamond jewelry design that features a range of colors of champagne diamonds. Entries must be submitted by July 1 2009, and will be evaluated by a panel of fashion and jewelry industry experts who will judge the designs on the basis of overall beauty, consumer appeal and the potential to add to the cachet of the champagne diamond category. The judging will take place in New York City on July 14th, 2009.

Designs must feature champagne diamonds ranging in size from 50 per carat to 6 per carat or (.02 –.15pt.); at least 70 percent of the champagne diamonds must be in the Argyle Diamonds color range chart C1 to C4 (i.e. the lighter colors from the champagne diamond color palette) range; and the quality of the champagne diamonds should fall in the range S1 – Pique range. Additionally, colorless diamonds and other shades of champagne diamonds, along with other precious and semi-precious gems, can be used to complement the dominant use of the C1 to C4 color range. The designs must be capable of being manufactured using only white or yellow gold metal. Designers may submit a maximum of three original renderings featuring never-before-seen jewelry designs featuring champagne diamonds.

For full details and an entry form, contact Jamie Ress of Goldstein Communications at (212) 838-0822 or by email, [Jamie@goldsteincom.com](mailto:Jamie@goldsteincom.com).