

Subject: News Release: GIA Museum Unveils a 472 Carat Emerald Crystal

Date: Monday, March 16, 2009 11:04 AM

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GIA Museum Unveils a 472 Carat Emerald Crystal

CARLSBAD, Calif. – March 16, 2009 – The Gemological Institute of America (GIA) announced today that its Museum will debut a recently discovered 472 carat (ct.) emerald crystal from the Muzo region mines in Colombia.

The “El Itoco” crystal is a name from Muzo Indian lore, according to Ron Ringsrud, the emerald dealer who loaned it to the GIA Museum on behalf of its owner Hernando Sanchez, emerald mine shareholder and Colombian emerald exporter.

“This is the first time any of the Colombian mine owners have displayed such a significant emerald at any museum worldwide,” Ringsrud said. “This is by far the largest gem-quality crystal to have come out of this historical mining area in a long time.”

A gem-quality emerald crystal of this size is extremely rare. The four-inch hexagonal crystal possesses a color equivalent to the finest emeralds, according to Terri Ottaway, GIA Museum curator. “To have the El Itoco in our Museum for our students and the public to view is an extraordinary honor. Pieces of this size and quality are the stuff of legends. It generates what Colombian miners call ‘green fever’ in the imagination,” she said.

The Institute was chosen among some of the nation’s most renowned museums to display this coveted piece, according to Ottaway. The El Itoco is displayed in a case that includes three other emerald crystals and an emerald and diamond necklace and earrings suite designed by Jean Schlumberger for Tiffany & Co., circa 1960.

The El Itoco emerald crystal is on exhibit in the GIA Museum until early Fall 2009.

GIA Museum exhibit viewings are free and available to the public through scheduled tours. Visitors must sign up for a tour by contacting guestservicesmailbox@gia.edu or calling (800) 421-7250, ext. 4116. Outside of the U.S., interested visitors can call (760) 603-4116 or visit www.gia.edu <<http://www.gia.edu>> for more information.



A spectacular 472 ct. emerald crystal "El Itoco" recently discovered at the La Pita Mine in Colombia, is shown next to an 11 ct. crystal – a more typical size for Colombia, and a 1 ct. diamond. The emerald and diamond necklace was designed by Jean Schlumberger for Tiffany & Co., circa 1960. The three large Colombian emeralds in the center range between 6.65 and 7.41 ct.

El Itoco is courtesy of Hernando Sanchez of Perfect Emerald Ltd., Bogotá, Colombia. The 11 ct. crystal is courtesy of Bill Larson of Palagems.com and the necklace is courtesy of a private collector. Photo by Robert Weldon © GIA 2009.

About GIA:

An independent nonprofit organization, the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) is recognized as the world's foremost authority in gemology. Established in 1931, GIA has translated its expert knowledge into the most respected gemological education available. Early in the 1950s, GIA invented the famous Four Cs of Color, Cut, Clarity and Carat Weight. In 1953, the Institute created the International Diamond Grading System™ which, today, is recognized by virtually every professional jeweler in the world.

Through research, education, gemological laboratory services, and instrument development, the Institute is dedicated to ensuring the public trust in gems and jewelry by upholding the highest standards of integrity, academics, science, and professionalism. GIA can be found on the web at www.gia.edu <<http://www.gia.edu/>> . Media queries contact: Laura Simanton, (760) 603-4112 or Jessica Sachariason, (760) 603-4197.

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