

ROSECUT DIAMONDS - *History and Description*

Reference to diamonds date back as far as Biblical times. They describe the hardest stone in Hebrew as yahalom and in Sanskrit text translated as “ thunderbolt ” or “ instant illumination ”. The actual word diamond comes to us from the Greek word adamas meaning “ unconquerable ”.

Diamonds are pure crystallized carbon. They are most commonly found in an octahedron shape within a volcanic rock called Kimberlite and are rather dull and unattractive. They are measured in carats with 1 carat weighing approximately .20 grams. The word carat refers to the consistent weight of a carob tree seed. They are the hardest of all minerals receiving the highest rating of 10 on Moh's Scale. For this reason, diamonds can only be cut and faceted by another diamond or diamond dust.

It is not until the 14th c. do we find diamonds first being cut and polished after the discovery of large deposits in India. The first cuts were simply called faceted or point cut containing 3 to 9 facets in an irregular shape. During the 15th c. the table cut was created by simply removing the natural points of the octahedron allowing for 16 facets.

Sometime between the 16th and 17th c. the rosecut shape (derived from its resemblance to a rosebud) was created using the remaining cleavage fragments of a raw diamond. Common throughout Europe, it is most likely of Dutch or French origin. In the 17th c. it was realized that candlelight enhanced the brilliance of a diamond and several faceted rosecut styles began to appear. The standard rosecut or Dutch rosecut most common today has a flat base (no pavillion) with two horizontal rows of 24 triangular facets- 18 facets along the girdle and 6 coming to a point at the top.

As diamond cutting evolved, the rosecut declined in popularity. In 1620, Cardinal Jules Mazarin the Chief Minister of France developed what was to be called the Mazarin cut with 16 facets and a table at the crown(top) and 16 facets below the girdle and a culet(bottom). Building on this idea, in 1720 diamonds were discovered in Brazil and the more advanced triple cut or old mine cut was born. This style contained 32 facets and a table at the crown and 24 facets with a culet at the pavillion. Sometimes an additional 8 facets were added around the culet becoming the Brazillian cut. This design was actually the precursor to the brilliant cuts of today with 56 to 58 facets total in many different patterns.

Rosecuts were common once again in the 19th c. during the Victorian period with the discovery of large deposits in South Africa in 1860. In the 20th c. brilliant cuts have continued to remain the prevalent style with a resurgence of interest in the rosecut style in the early 1990's and its historical and romantic connotations. At least half of rosecuts today date between 70 to 200 years old of which most have been salvaged from old Indian jewelry.

Rosecut diamonds have less “ fire ” than brilliant diamonds as they are most commonly set within a closed, flat bottom bezel surrounding the girdle, as opposed to a traditional Tiffany brilliant diamond setting with prongs allowing for light to enter all sides. Because of their absence of a pavillion, rosecuts lack the ability to refract light once it enters the diamond and are often backed with a foil or reflective metal like platinum. In addition, this causes rosecuts to appear twice as large in face total carats as brilliants, even though their actual carat weight is usually considerably less.

Additional Types of Rosecuts:

Double- base to base(Briolette- elongated double) Brabant or Antwerp- flatter stones w/12 facets
Rose Recoupee- 36 facets for high stones Marquis- elliptical Pendeloque- pear shaped
Indian Cut- imperfect or asymmetrical Cross Rosecut- 3 stacked rows w/24 facets total

Famous Rosecuts: Great Mogul Diamond, 1650, approx. 280 cts. Orlov Diamond, 1775, 199.8 cts.