

Extremely rare sapphire brooches sell for a total of €1.3m at auction

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Two sapphire brooches that had been kept in the sealed vault of an Irish family for almost 40 years were sold for a total of €1.3m at auction yesterday.

The rare Kashmir sapphire brooches went under the hammer at Adams auction house in Dublin.

One brooch sold for €540,000 while the other fetched €550,000.

They had been estimated at up to €300,000 and €250,000, to the surprise of their Irish owner.

Adams director Claire-Laurence Mestrallet said: "It's just what I'm really happy about, because we had one [Kashmir] in May, but this one has an American-Irish provenance.

"The one in May that sold positioned us number six out of 10 of the best price per carat for Kashmir in the last 10 years.

"So it's really positioning Adams as an international auction house, and it has been a great advertising not just for Adams, but also for Ireland and the Irish

market for auctions, and it has definitely also confirmed that we're number one for jewellery here."

In May, Adams sold an extremely rare Kashmir sapphire for €550,000 – the "highest price ever seen" in Ireland for a gem of its kind and almost 70 times its original estimate.

The two sapphires sold yesterday form part of 18 lots from a collection brought to public attention and dating from the gilded age of New York high society and a marriage to a titled family in Ireland.

Ms Mestrallet said at the time that the owner of the brooches decided to bring in the collection, which included diamond, sapphire and emerald rings, gold coins, a diamond choker necklace and a pearl pendant.

"This seems to be my lucky year. I didn't want to take away from the sale of the sapphire ring in May, so the owner of the sapphire brooches did not mind waiting," she added.

In the early 1900s, Benjamin Aymar Sands and his wife Amy Kirby Akin gift-

ed their daughter May Emily Sands (29) jewellery to celebrate her marriage to the Honourable Hugh Melville Howard (25), the youngest son of the 6th Earl of Wicklow and Fanny Catherine Wingfield.

The couple married on September 19, 1908, and after their deaths the jewellery was inherited by their daughter Katharine Frances Howard of Shelton Abbey, Co Wicklow, and Ounavarra House, Co Wexford, who was the godmother of the present owner.

The lineage of the Sands family can be traced back to Captain John Sands, who settled on Long Island in the late 17th century.

Over time, the family became one of the original owners and settlers of the area, now called Sands Point and best known as the location said to have influenced F Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*.



Main, rare Kashmiri sapphire and diamond ring is also up for sale at Adams auction house. Above and below, the sapphire brooches

