

Leonardo DiCaprio's Carbon-Neutral Lab-Grown Diamond Brand Opens Flagship LA Store

Vrai, the sustainable, conflict-free lab-grown diamond company backed by Academy Award-winning actor and environmentalist Leonardo DiCaprio, has its first U.S. Location. The Diamond Foundry-owned brand opened its flagship store on the iconic Melrose Place in the West Hollywood neighborhood of Los Angeles.

The shop is designed to feel like an art gallery, according to Vrai's chief executive officer Mona Akhavi. "It's for customers to take it all in, understand the meaning, origins, how it's made," Akhavi said. "I want this to be a place where people can learn about the brand, learn about our diamonds, our certification. We're the first producer to be certified neutral, and how and why that matters."

DiCaprio became an investor in the company and serves as an advisor after starring in the 2006 Edward Zwick thriller, *Blood Diamond*. The film takes place in diamond-rich Sierra Leone where child labor and human trafficking are common byproducts of the environmentally destructive industry.

DiCaprio has been an outspoken advocate for environmental, human, and animal rights issues.

A growing number of diamond sellers are moving toward lab-grown diamonds and working with suppliers in conflict-free regions in order to guarantee ethical mining practices.

Vrai only sells the lab-made diamonds from its parent company. It also uses recycled gold and compostable packaging.

The name VRAI means 'true' in French, and we believe in true sustainability and transparency on where our diamonds and metals come from, and with our entire supply chain process," Akhavi told Barron's last month. "We are breaking boundaries in sustainable luxury and impacting the standards in the jewelry industry by providing an option without compromise for consumers," Akhavi says.

"Within tradition jewelry, the diamond can exchange 15 hands, from the miner to the distributor, to the buyer, to the wholesaler until it gets to the designer," Akhavi said. "And unfortunately, every time it's marked up. And that markup is not going to go back to the community or environment it came from. It's actually passed on to the consumer."

Diamond Foundry is located in the Extremadura province of Cáceres in Spain, a region chosen for its solar power potential. "The availability of solar energy is very high in Extremadura and we want our smelting to be powered by renewable energies," Roscheisen told *El País*.

The company says the lab diamonds are made with no conflicts funded, no land displaced, no wildlife displaced, no animals harmed, no ground water polluted, and no local communities displaced.

"This is the first time that this quality of diamond is produced at mining scale," Martin Roscheisen, chief executive, told the *Financial Times* last spring.

The new factory is part of the company's efforts to ramp up production—it's aiming to produce five million carats a year before the end of 2022—by comparison, diamond giant De Beers produces about four times that. Diamond Foundry has doubled its production every year since 2016.

"Innovating and iterating quickly is what enables us to push boundaries in sustainable luxury and impact the standards in the jewellery industry," Akhavi told Harper's last month. "We are vertically integrated which means from the moment the diamond starts growing in our zero emission foundry to when it is set in a piece of jewellery and in the hands of a consumer, we control the entire process. This allows us to operate like an agile tech company and respond to changes in the market."

The brand has also partnered with British sustainable fashion brand BOTTLETOP on a bracelet made with a cord that's made from Parley for the Ocean Plastic. It recycles plastic from marine environments 10% of sales from the bracelet go toward two UN sustainability goals: Good Health and Wellbeing and Life Below Water.