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Nonprofit Highlights Mining Issues Via Jewelry Auction

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Pili Restrepo's "Bodyguard" ring, made in 14-karat gold with 0.10 carats of tapered baguette diamonds, is one of the pieces being auctioned online to raise money for Pure Earth.

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New York--One nonprofit is pairing with a number of jewelry designers to do good.

Pure Earth, which works to identify and clean up the poorest communities around the world where high concentrations of toxins have had devastating effects, collaborated with the designers to raise awareness about the connection between mercury and gold.

According to the nonprofit, artisanal and small-scale gold mining is the leading cause of mercury pollution in the world, making up more than 30 percent of global emissions.

However, there are methods Pure Earth is developing to help artisanal gold miners work more safely.

"In artisanal mining communities from Africa to Asia to Latin America, we see children holding mercury in their bare hands, miners burning mercury amalgams near their homes or by the sides of busy streets. We see the evidence of mercury use in a myriad of health problems, from uncontrollable shaking to extreme birth defects," said Richard Fuller, president of Pure Earth.

"The good news is that in our test of alternative methods, miners have achieved up to a 50 percent increase in gold yield using mercury-free techniques. Because different methods work in different locations, we are exploring multiple solutions."

Pure Earth partnered with more than 20 jewelry designers for the auction who, in turn, created pieces using mercury-free gold donated by precious metal refiner and manufacturer Hoover and Strong.

The metal comes from the Aurelsa mine in Peru and is Fairmined certified, meaning the mine received the assurance label developed by the Alliance for Responsible Mining that certifies gold from empowered responsible artisanal and small-scale mining organizations.

The **Pure Earth Pure Gold auction** went live on April 1 and is running through April 12.

Money raised from the auction will help fund Pure Earth's continuing work preventing mercury poisoning across the world.

Pure Earth consulted the Jewelry Committee of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and Ethical Metalsmiths to connect with designers interested in raising awareness about the global mercury problem. Those participating include Melissa Joy Manning, Mociun, Wwake, Bario Neal, Judi Powers and Stephen Dweck.

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