What's New in the Mineral World?

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The first item described below is something of which John Veevaert scooped up all available specimens in Munich *before* I got to the show hall on the first set-up day. Consequently the new find of beautiful azurite from the Congo is not in the Munich report which you'll see in print in the January-February 2013 issue; rather, you're seeing it HERE and NOW, leading off with a blue flash…

Azurite, 4.2 cm, from near Kimbwe, Kinsevere district, Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Trinity Minerals specimen; John Veevaert photo.

Despite the tremendous copper wealth of the southern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the *big* Congo, formerly Zaire), really good specimens of **azurite** from that country are almost unknown. But in August/September 2012, in a small group of hand-dug tunnels in shale country rock, no one of the tunnels being more than 15 meters long, some superb floater groups of azurite crystals were found, and John Veevaert of *Trinity Minerals Company* (trinityminerals.com) acquired them in Munich through the Belgian collector Valére Berlage. The diggings are near the village of Kimbwe, Kinsevere district, in the Katanga province of the DRC. The ten miniature-size specimens that John acquired, 3.7 to 6.2 cm, are roughly spherical floater clusters of blocky azurite crystals; the specimens have very high luster and flamboyant blue color, and only two show small bruises. None of the azurite clusters have matrix, and the only visible associated species is malachite, in tiny green spots and smears on one or two of the pieces. These are noble-looking azurite specimens, somewhat resembling some old ones from Chessy, France, and priced by John between $125 and $1,250.

Another of John Veevaert's prizes at Munich was a handful of specimens of the very rare, chemically very complex, mildly radioactive (thorium-bearing) silicate **streenstrupine-(Ce)**. The specimens were traded to John by Norwegian rare-species collector Knut Eldjarn, who dug them himself at the only decent worldwide locality for crystallized streenstrupine, namely the Ilimaussaq alkaline complex, southern Greenland—actually from a collecting site called Tasseq Slopes, in an outcrop of Ilimaussaq-complex rocks in a coastal fjord. The steenstrupine-(Ce) crystals are dull to submetallic black, thick-tabular and face-rich, and they reach 2 cm; in John's specimens they are set nicely on white matrix of massive sodalite with minor greenish aegirine patches and crude crystals. You'll seldom find macrospecimens of such a rare species so well crystallized as the seven streepstrupine-(Ce) thumbnails and miniatures on the *Trinity Minerals* site.

Steenstrupine-(Ce), 2.4 cm, from Tasseq Slopes, Ilimaussaq, Greenland. Trinity Minerals specimen; John Veevaert photo.

Helvite, 3.2 cm, from the Huanggang mine, Inner Mongolia, China. Trinity Minerals specimen; John Veevaert photo.

For dessert, as it were, at the home-on-the-web of *Trinity Minerals*, I show here one of the several elegant little specimens of **helvite** from the Huanggang mine, Inner Mongolia, China, which John Veevaert has put up on one of his "Munich Show" pages. Certainly he's not the only dealer who offers examples from this major contemporary occurrence, but his small miniatures, like this one, look very spruce, and are among the best helvites (or helvite/genthelvites) from Huanggang I've yet seen anywhere. The loose, complete, compound tetrahedron in the picture is priced at $300.

Mike Walter of upstate New York is the proprietor of the *Geologic Desires* dealership (geologicdesires.com), and a long-experienced and expert field collector. In his September 2012 update, Mike has some very pretty **quartz, calcite and quartz/calcite** specimens from Lowville, Lewis County, New York—an occurrence, 95 miles or so north of the Herkimer-diamond-collecting areas, which has lately become known (to me, at least) via some specimens which Stephanie and Robert Snyder of *Stonetrust* brought to the 2011 Denver Show (see that report in January-February 2012). Mike's take on the locality runs as follows:

> This township has been a recent (past two years) producer of some of the finest quartz specimens from New York State…The specific location of the occurrence has been kept secret by the field collectors but will eventually reach the general public…Not only have fine Herkimer diamond-like quartz specimens been found [but] exceptional calcites, dolomites and other mineral species have come from this [mid-Ordovician] deposit. Oddities including parallel growth, scepters (both in the quartz and calcite), phantoms, interesting inclusions, regrowths, skeletal crystals, and others are present. There are even calcite twins…

The mostly miniature-size Lowville specimens Mike is now offering on his site are, as I say, very nice to look at. The quartz specimen shown here features hydrocarbon-included quartz crystals flanked by yellow-orange calcite crystals; Mike's price for the piece is $1,500.

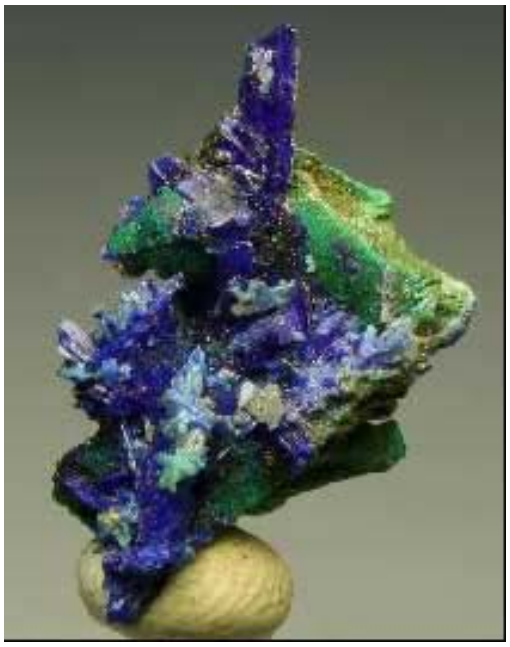
Quartz, 5.2 cm, from Lowville, Lewis County, New York. Geologic Desires specimen; Mike Walter photo.

Calcite, 9 cm, from Lowville, Lewis County, New York. Geologic Desires specimen; Mike Walter photo.

Wittichenite, 1.1 cm, from the Cattle Grid pit, Mt. Gunson mine, Pernatty Lagoon, South Australia. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

I noted them from the 2012 Denver Show (see January-February 2013), and next year we will be running a pertinent article, but the five thumbnail-size specimens of **wittichenite** from the Cattle Grid pit, Mt. Gunson mine, Pernatty Lagoon, South Australia which Rob Lavinsky of *The Arkenstone* has are worth special notice here—especially as Rob has now posted the specimens on his site's September 27 update (irocks.com). Wittichenite (Cu_3BiS_3) was named for the old mining town of Wittichen, in Germany's Black Forest, but specimens from this type locality or any other locality save the one in Australia are microcrystals at best. When a very small number of sharp, bright wittichenite crystals to more than 2 cm were found in the Cattle Grid pit in 1981 they were thought by everyone to be chalcocite crystals—and very good chalcocite crystals at that. No more have been unearthed since then, making Rob's five examples outrageous rarities: four of the crystals measure around 1.5 cm and one measures 2.4 cm (and already sold). For the rare-species collector and/or the advanced thumbnailer, this find *has* to be of major interest.

Christos Spiromitros of *Greek Rocks* (greekrocks.com) has often been mentioned in these reports, as he often has brand-new mineral finds from Greece in his stocks. In an October 20, 2012 posting it's **linarite** from the King Arthur mine in Thrace, of which Chris learned "just a few days" earlier, when he was contacted by the collector who had dug the specimens. Christos now has two cabinet-size matrix specimens and three thumbnails of the material, all showing lustrous, electric-blue, prismatic linarite crystals to more than 1 cm as isolated singles and in tight, narrow sprays which rise from vugs in brown limonite, associated with massive cerussite, brochantite, malachite and allophane. The linarite crystals are slightly raggedy-looking but nevertheless they have wonderful color and pleasing matrix contexts, and 1 cm is *big* for any linarite crystal. Now, Chris, we want *more*.



Linarite, 1.8 cm, from the King Arthur mine, Thrace, Greece. Greek Rocks specimen and photo.

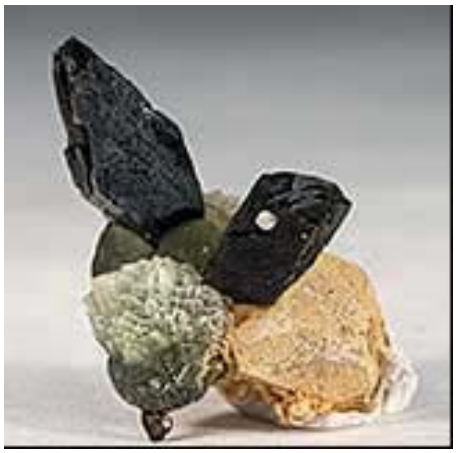
Jordi Fabre (fabreminerals.com) has a September posting including a handful of beautiful miniatures of hot pink **cobalt-rich calcite** from the Oumlil mine, Bou Azzer, Morocco: crystal clusters on and off matrix from 4.5 to 7.1 cm. Jordi had some of these at the Munich Show too, and Tomasz Praszkier of *Spirifer Minerals* (spiriferminerals.com) could rustle you up a few if you asked—I mention the material here because it represents a fairly new find (this past summer) at Bou Azzer, and because you would have a hard time bettering the specimens shown on Jordi's site.

Cobalt-rich calcite, 5.4 cm, from the Oumlil mine, Bou Azzer, Morocco. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Fluorite, 13 cm, from Errachidia Province, Morocco. Webmineralshop specimen and photo

Another note from Morocco: the Italian *Webmineralshop* dealership has some good-looking cabinet-size specimens from a recent find of **fluorite** somewhere in Errachidia Province. In the pieces offered on the *Webmineralshop* site (webmineralshop.com), transparent pale purple and pale yellow, cubic fluorite crystals cover matrix plates; the luster of the fluorite is only "medium" but the color and composition of nearly all of the specimens offered is A-1.

Ed Rosenzweig of *Edwards Minerals* (edwardsminerals.com) has an August 30, 2012 posting in which he offers four exquisite small specimens (three thumbnails, one miniature) of **babingtonite** from the Roncari quarry, East Granby, Hartford County, Connecticut. Yes, I've noted earlier offerings of this classic material by other dealers—because I *like* it—but I must say that it's hard to imagine Roncari babingtonites that are better than Ed's new ones, in which very sharp black babingtonite crystals to 1.4 cm perch smartly on lime-green prehnite spheres. During the 1960s the late Ron Bentley used to work the Roncari quarry extensively for specimens (it produced world-class datolite during that time), but it's more likely that Ed's specimens come from a second period of active work from *ca.* 2000 to 2003.



Babingtonite on prehnite, 2.7 cm, from the Roncari quarry, East Granby, Hartford County, Connecticut. Edwards Minerals specimen and photo.

In the "Europe" issue back in 1977 the *Mineralogical Record* published an article by Symes and Embrey on the Torr Works (or Merehead) quarry, in the Mendip Hills of Somerset, England. The little limestone quarry, worked for road ballast since the 1950s, is known mineralogically for its suite of rare oxychloride species (e.g. mendipite, chloroxiphite, diaboleite, blixite), as well as crednerite ($CuMnO_2$), all found as somewhat crude crystals in manganese oxide veins exposed in the quarry; there were also fair-quality specimens of cerussite, and the quarry is one of the world's best localities for hydrocerussite, a rare alteration product of cerussite. Significant Torr Works quarry specimens seen in museums were mostly found during the 1970s, but Chris Stefano has just come into 32 specimens "from a recent discovery" in the quarry, and many of these are being offered in a November 8 posting on his website (stefanmineralstore.com). The specimens range in size from 1.6 to 6.8 cm; many show two or more of the rare species, generally as subhedral, bladed crystals embedded in massive white cerussite. Cerussite itself is available as loose, thumbnail-size short-prismatic crystals and V-twins and as larger reticulated groups, and hydrocerussite appears as thin, opaque white blades in parallel growth over and mixed with cerussite, and as druses of small, glassy crystals. These are not beautiful specimens but they represent a rare find from a "classic" locality generally thought to have been exhausted—check them out.

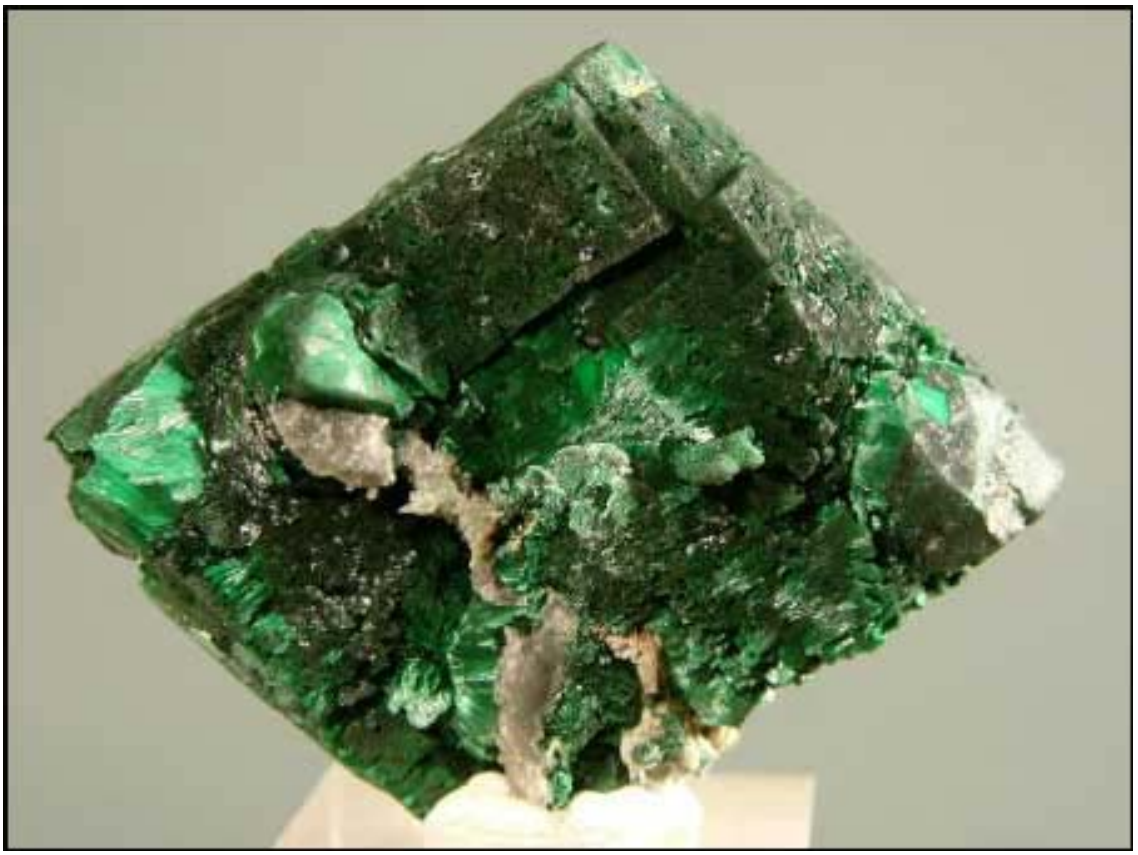
Chloroxiphite in mendipite with diaboleite and crednerite, 2 cm, from the Torr Works (Merehead) quarry, Mendip Hills, Somerset, England. Christopher J. Stefano Fine Minerals specimen and photo.

Hydrocerussite, 4 cm, from the Torr Works (Merehead) quarry, Mendip Hills, Somerset, England. Christopher J. Stefano Fine Minerals specimen and photo.

Augelite on quartz, 4 cm, from Tamboras, Mundo Nuevo, La Libertad, Peru. Your Mineral Collection specimen and photo.

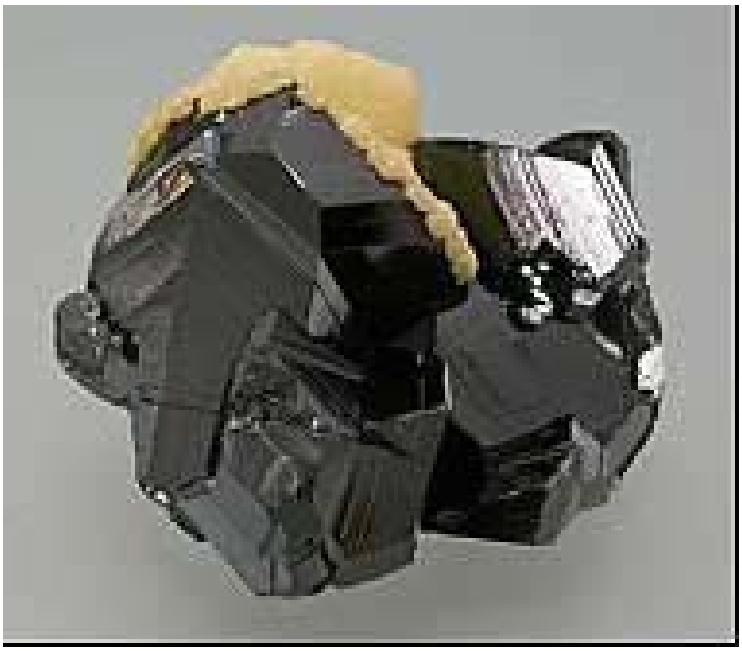
At the 2012 Munich Show, Spanish dealer Luis Burillo had some miniatures of **green augelite** from Tamboras, Mundo Nuevo, La Libertad, Peru—an occurrence which first became known a few years ago but which has been quiescent lately. It is probably the world's best occurrence of augelite, as the sharp, wedge-shaped, translucent to transparent, pale green crystals reach much larger sizes than do the similar ones from the Rapid Creek/Big Fish phosphate locality in the Yukon Territory. The specimens boast augelite crystals resting in lawns of sparkling, thin-prismatic, colorless quartz crystals,

some of which are Japan-law twinned, over matrix. If you didn't get to Munich (or even if you did), you can find a few excellent miniature-size examples of Peruvian augelite on the website of Giuseppe Siccardi's *Your Mineral Collection* (yourmineralcollection.com); if they are from the same find as Luis Burillo's pieces, they emerged in September 2012.



Malachite pseudomorph after azurite, 4 cm, from Tsumeb, Namibia. IC Minerals specimen; Isaias Casanova photo.

Isaias Casanova of *IC Minerals* (icminerals.com) fancies Tsumeb minerals, and his newest posting features three pages of his recent acquisitions of specimens from that great locality, most of them having come from the John Schneider, Carl Acosta and Claude Yoder collections, and from the Immelman collection "out of Europe," Isaias says. Most are thumbnails and miniatures, and most, too, are highly aesthetic—for example, shown here is a beautiful, diamond-shaped, loose pseudocrystal of **malachite after azurite**, 4 cm across, from the Acosta collection. Isaias also offers very good specimens of Tsumeb azurite, calcite, cerussite, cuprite, smithsonite, wulfenite and copper-rich adamite.



Sphalerite, 4 cm, from Trepča, Kosovo. North Star Minerals specimen and photo.

Ross Lillie of *North Star Minerals* (northstarminerals.com) specializes in the minerals of Illinois, Romania and Bulgaria, but his posting of November 11 announces that "a huge new lot of Trepča material" will soon be arriving at Ross's Michigan headquarters. This is exciting, since the Stari Trg mine at Trepča, Kosovo (formerly Serbia; before that, Yugoslavia) has been dormant since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s; but, as was heralded in our article on Trepča in the July-August 2007 issue, mining for polymetallic ores is resuming, and this means (we hope) that goodly supplies of fine Trepča sphalerite, arsenopyrite, galena, pyrrhotite, quartz, rhodochrosite—perhaps even vivianite and ludlamite!—might once again become available. Thus it's wise to keep checking the *North Star Minerals* site. My personal favorites among typical Trepča material are the groups of blocky, lustrous, multiply twinned, jet-black **sphalerite** crystals, often adorned by sparkling white belts of drusy calcite and/or quartz—consider the handsome miniature shown here, which was mined, Ross says, at some time in the 2000s.

Finally (in the main listing), Kevin Ward of *Exceptional Minerals* (exceptionalminerals.com) has an October 22 update in which four "rooms" are stocked with one-of-a-kinders that Kevin picked up at the Denver Show, with a promise that more recent acquisitions will soon fill more rooms. As the man says, all of these specimens are *exceptional*; they are mostly of large-miniature to cabinet size and from classic occurrences old and new, with an emphasis on silver minerals. Not for the first time, I mention the *Exceptional Minerals* site simply because the specimens, and the photos of them, are so very fine: it's a wonderful "shopping" site if you're on the affluent side, and otherwise it's a fun browse for all comers. Two examples from Kevin's new "Denver" rooms are shown here: a stately old Freiberg **wire silver** specimen and a wonderful **elbaite** from an uncommon locality in Pakistan:

Silver, 7.5 cm, from Freiberg, Sachsen, Germany. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Elbaite, 6 cm (center spray is 4 cm tall), from the Kara Valley, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Jumbo Painite

A link on Bill Larson's *Pala Minerals* site (palaminerals.com) led me to an unusual, erudite, fascinating site called *The Corunduminium* (corunduminium.com), whereon William Heierman, without trying to sell anything, holds forth on corundum specimens, corundum gemstock, corundum news flashes and corundum lore. Will, you may recall, was one of the collectors whose collection (in his case, all corundum specimens) was featured in the Texas Collections supplement. The only mini-article on the site which is *not* exclusively about corundum is about **painite** (which occurs *with* corundum), and here I learned much, and so I'll conclude the present report by sharing with you some very interesting information concerning painite:

Here's what I knew beforehand: Painite, a Ca-Zr-B-Al oxide, was discovered in Burma (now called Myanmar) in the early 1950s, and for many years thereafter only two small painite crystals were known to exist. But during the mid-2000s, fair numbers of loose, prismatic painite crystals to more than 3 cm were discovered in the contact-metasomatic "dirty" limestones and marbles prevalent in and around the famous Mogok Gem Tract. Some of the smaller, gemmier crystals were snapped up by cutters, but a few dozen specimen crystals survived to be marketed. More emerged in the later 2000s, such that recently it has ceased to be quite a surprise to notice painite crystals in the stocks of a few dealers. Painite is deep raspberry-red to brown, and the faceted stones resemble alexandrite in lamplight. The larger crystals are somewhat crude, rough-surfaced hexagonal prisms with tiny red grains of spinel and/or ruby corundum clinging to their sides. The type locality for the species, and source of the some of the specimens of the mid-2000s, is a small ruby mine near the village of Ohngaing, but painite crystals were also found at other nearby sites. A German dealer who travels in Burma marketed good loose painite crystals from a place he denoted as Hinthar Hill, Wetloo quarter, Kyauk Pyat That, west of Mogok; further, what is sometimes called a "painite deposit" at Thurien-taung, in the western part of the Gem Tract, was seeing declining production as of April 2006 (according to notes by Hlaing, 2006, and Fritz and Laurs, 2007, in *Gems & Gemology*).

And here is what I learned from Will Heierman on the *Corunduminium* site: Buddhist monks at the Kyauk Pya Thart monastery (cf. "Kyauk Pyat That," above) had accumulated a stash of about 200 painite specimens, and, in the fullness of time, this stash came into Mr. Heierman's possession. The painite formed in a skarn between ruby-bearing calcite and leucogranite on the edge of the "Wet Loo ruby mine," just outside the Mogok Gem Tract. Some specimens in the suite are called "half-breeds" because they show strong alteration to ruby corundum; indeed, some may be full corundum pseudomorphs after painite. And here is the major news: some of the specimens are fist-size and consist almost entirely of painite and painite/corundum crystals in parallel-growth aggregates, or of single painite crystals—the 900-carat, ruby-encrusted painite crystal shown in the picture here measures about 10 cm! As mentioned, Mr. Heierman says nothing about when, or even whether, he may sell the specimens which he obtained from the monks, but let us wisely remember that they do exist. Oh yes, Mr. Heierman adds that "the deposit has been effectively mined out, so the extraordinary quality of the four specimens [pictured on his site] may never be challenged."

Dark, striated painite studded with purplish red ruby corundum, about 10 cm, from the Wet Loo ruby mine west of Mogok, Mandalay Division, Myanmar (Burma). William Heierman (Corunduminium) specimen and photo.

If life's happenstances are affecting *you* in any distressing ways, remember that the Holidays are almost upon us, and, not long after them, the 2013 Tucson Show. Anyone now reading this is cordially invited to come to the show and stop by the Mineralogical Record booth for a chat about minerals, or whatever. All of us on the staff enjoy talking with other mineral people, especially subscribers.

