
What's New in the Mineral World?



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I last put together one of these online reports in July 2017, and faithful readers—if there are any such—might be thinking that that is *too long* a silence. To make it up to you I'm including more observations and more snazzy specimen pictures in *this* report than in any other I've done to date, and I am including some interesting items I've seen on some sites I have never mentioned before. Yes, indeed, the online mineral market continues to flourish, and even if by some evil fate you can't make it to the upcoming Tucson Show, you can do lots of compensatory web-browsing and shopping as long as your hard drive holds out. May this report keep your mineral-receptors well stimulated.

On the Web

Among the big websites which have run quite a lot of updates since my July report is that of Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* (www.irocks.com). Rob's multi-page "Mixed Worldwide Minerals" update of September 6 is still worth a careful perusal, as many specimens on it, including prominently some old Cornwall classics, remain unsold. But, much as I love Cornwall classics, *the one* specimen on this update I've chosen to show you is an Arkansas **quartz**. It came in March 2017 from a pocket in the McEarl Ridge mine near Jessieville, also called the James Zigras mine, because that worthy collector out of Paramus, New Jersey has been working during the past few years to extract quartz specimens, many of which have turned out to be peers of the now legendary "McEarl" specimens from the mid-1980s. Like many experienced collectors, I'm slow to get worked up about simple "rock crystal" specimens from Arkansas, but this piece, consisting of a single 14.7-cm quartz prism with some smaller, iron-stained crystals around its base, is quite amazing (price: \$12,000). Those who came to last year's Tucson Show might recall that there was a whole showcase full of these Zigras/McEarl showboat

specimens in the Convention Center, and, if memory serves right, Rob's single example is right up there with the best from that case.



**Quartz, 14.7 cm, from the Zigras (McEarl Ridge) mine, Jessierville, Arkansas.
*The Arkenstone specimen and photo.***

The Arkenstone also has a November 16 update featuring specimens from two new occurrences of Chinese **fluorite**. First, from a find which Rob Lavinsky dates to late 2016 or early 2017, there are six small-cabinet and cabinet-size specimens, with individual fluorite crystals to 7 cm. The crystals are pale green cuboctahedrons, transparent within but with frosted, finely stepped surfaces; purple-blue core zones are visible in many of

the crystals. The specimens are attributed to a mine named, aptly enough, the Green Fluorite mine, Manaoshan Mountain, Suxian district, Chenzhou Prefecture, Hunan Province. And I will direct your attention as well to a recent update on the site of *The Collector's Edge* (collectorsedge.com), offering a selection of what's clearly the same material, but the locality they give is just the Dongpo Ore Field (likewise in Suxian-Chenzhou-Hunan). In some specimens from both of these lots the fluorite crystals are perched on drusy white quartz, and pink, saddle-shaped dolomite crystals adorn that matrix.



Fluorite, 11.6 cm, from the Green Fluorite mine, Manaoshan Mountain, Suxian district, Chenzhou Prefecture, Hunan, China. *The Arkenstone* specimen and photo.

Also in the November 16 *Arkenstone* update there are 14 very beautiful miniature to small-cabinet specimens of dark blue-purple **fluorite** (which, Rob says, some call “tanzanite fluorite” because of the color) attributed to a summer 2017 find at Quan Zhou city, Yong Chun County, Fujian Province. Gemmy, lushly blue-purple cubic and cuboctahedral crystals to 2 cm repose on matrix, and I will say that the pictures reminded me strongly of the fluorites on which I reported from the 2015 Denver Show, attributed

then by Safaa Yu, their handler, to a discovery in summer 2015 in the “Dongpo mine,” Chenzhou, Hunan: see the photo on page 84 of the January-February 2016 issue. Since, as it happens, I now own the specimen shown in the photo, I could study it upclose, and I’ve decided that the color is subtly different from—more purple than—the “tanzanite” color of the newer fluorites; thus I conclude that this *isn’t* just one more case of Chinese-locality confusion or obfuscation. Anyway, look at the “Dongpo” picture from 2015 and the “Yong Chun” picture from 2017 (below), and you’ll see why I recommend that, if you turn on to beauty in fluorite, you should pick up a specimen of *either* kind when you can.



Fluorite, 4.3 cm, from Quan Zhou City, Yong Chun County, Fujian, China. *The Arkenstone* specimen and photo.

A dealership called *Mineral Species* (mineralspecies.com) has an idiosyncratic site, devoted mostly to very rare species, run by Dr. Marcus Origlieri of Tucson. Marcus sends out regular updates in which he furnishes plenty of technical and historical information on rarities/oddities which he acquires mostly from old collections, and it’s about time I acknowledged him in this space, and gave you a sense of his typical offerings. A December 5 *Mineral Species* selection is devoted wholly to thumbnail-size **Tsumeb specimens**, with, for example, excellent adamite, chalcocite and copper for under \$100, up to much rarer Tsumeb items like scorodite, biehlite and söhngeite for up to \$1000 (for

the söhngeite). Here are just three specimens from the December lot, and to save you the trouble of looking up biehlite (in your new 2018 *Fleischer's Glossary*) I will record that its unusual formula is $(\text{Sb,As})_2\text{MoO}_6$:



**Adamite, 3 cm, from the Tsumeb mine, Tsumeb, Namibia.
*Mineral Species specimen and photo.***



**Chalcocite, 3 cm, from the Tsumeb mine, Tsumeb, Namibia.
*Mineral Species specimen and photo.***



Biehlite, 2.5 cm, from the Tsumeb mine, Tsumeb, Namibia. *Mineral Species* specimen and photo.

Another site which so far has gone unmentioned in these reports is that of *Earthquest Minerals* (earthquestminerals.com), which now has a “new **malachite** page” with 11 fine miniatures of that species from the Mashamba West mine in Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo—these were picked up by Jake and Dana Harper, the dealership’s proprietors, at the 2017 Denver Show. In some of the specimens, little aggregates of deep green malachite microcrystals are seen on chrysocolla vug linings in massive dark (cuprite?) ore; other, more striking specimens consist of pure malachite in botryoidal masses with glossy, polished surfaces. The 8.1-cm example of the latter type which is pictured below would run you just \$75.



Malachite (polished), 8.1 cm, from the Mashamba West mine, Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Earthquest Minerals* specimen and photo.

Mike Keim's *Marin Mineral Company* has a busy website (marinmineral.com) which, like Rob Lavinsky's, has gotten several updates ahead of me since July, but of course the site is worth checking out at any time. A December 6 posting called "African Gem Crystals" offers attractive tanzanites, scapolites, zircons and "moonstones," but most intriguing are three loose, partially gemmy, deep green specimens of "chrome tourmaline" from Voi, near Tsavo National Park in Kenya. The smallest specimen, measuring 1.8 cm long, is a single well-terminated prism while the other two are pairs of prisms attached end-to-end; all three are already marked "sold." A dim memory sent me at first to Bancroft's *Gem & Crystal Treasures* (1984), and therein to the "Lualenyi mine, Voi, Kenya" chapter, only to be reminded that the green gem yielded by *that* occurrence is grossular-variety-tsavorite, with vanadium as its chromophore, and that the crystals, being garnets, are not prismatic. It's too bad that Mike Keim is unable as yet to assign a specific tourmaline-species identity to his "chrome tourmaline"—maybe the right designation is "Cr-rich elbaite," but that's just my guess. Does anyone know of determinative work that has been done on these lovely green crystals?



"Chrome Tourmaline," 3.9 cm, from Voi, near Tsavo National Park, Kenya. *Marin Mineral Company* specimen and photo.

Also notable on the *Marin* website is a November 26 "Mixed Minerals" page which leads off with nine thumbnail and miniature-size specimens which indeed *are* **grossular variety tsavorite**, as elongated groups of pale lime-green, lustrous, partially gemmy tsavorite crystals, themselves elongated and attached near their ends, such that all of these specimens have a "stretched" look about them. Tiny pyrite crystals and sharp coffee-brown twins of titanite are attached to some of these groups, and there's one thumbnail which is a loose, sharp, twinned crystal of titanite with attached small crystals of tsavorite and speckles of pyrite. This material hails from somewhere in the Merelani Hills, Manyara, Tanzania, and only two of the nine specimens are marked "sold" as of the first week of January 2018.



Grossular, variety tsavorite, 3 cm, from the Merelani Hills, Manyara, Tanzania. *Marin Mineral Company* specimen and photo.



Titanite with grossular (variety tsavorite) and pyrite, 2.5 cm, from the Merelani Hills, Manyara, Tanzania. *Marin Mineral Company* specimen and photo.

At some time in the past I noted in this space that the dealership called *Italian Minerals* (italianminerals.com) had latched onto some thumbnail crystals of the very rare sulfosalt geocronite from the Pollone mine in Tuscany, and I'll note now that some of these exotic crystals are still available (and still priced in the hundreds of Euros). But the major subspecialty of *Italian Minerals* seems to be minerals from Elba—Napoleon's island—and especially **elbaite**, named of course for Elba, its type locality. But really top-quality Elba elbaite more than a centimeter or so in length, and on matrix, remain very rare, even on this voluminous site. Some months ago I saw *this* small-miniature matrix specimen on the site and am quite surprised to see it still there, still unsold. The prismatic elbaite crystal, standing straight up from the matrix, measures 2.2 cm and is perfectly terminated, transparent, and zoned in pale colors. See for yourself:



Elbaite, 4 cm, from San Piero, Elba, Tuscany, Italy. *Italian Minerals* specimen and photo.

On January 7, just as I was finishing this report, what should arrive in my in-box but Jeff Fast's note that he'd just put "a BUNCH of new specimens" on his *Mineral Movies* (mineralmovies.com) website—where, if you want to see a specimen from all sides, you can push "Go" to make its image revolve. Jeff's 33-page update includes a few of the thumbnail wittichenite crystals from Australia which I have mentioned before in this space (see the article in March-April 2013); a generous number of the lovely scepter amethyst groups from southern India which I have also mentioned before; flamboyantly colorful polished slabs of agate from everywhere; excellent Mexican minerals, especially from the Milpillas mine and from Guanajuato...and, in the early pages, a few beautiful large-miniature and cabinet-size specimens of **spessartine**. These are matrix plates covered densely with lustrous, wine-red spessartine crystals, with associated vesuvianite, diopside and calcite, from a "new find" somewhere in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. The specimens are very flashy on a large view, and Jeff's close-up photos show little transparent brown, wheel-like crystals of vesuvianite and pretty lime-green crystals of diopside nestled among the spessartine dodecahedrons. For the specimen shown here Jeff asks \$375.



Spessartine, 8.5 cm, from Laghman Province, Afghanistan. *Mineral Movies* specimen; Jeff Fast photo.

Blake Barnett of *Barnett Fine Minerals* (barnettfineminerals.com) has a November 28 update which offers, among many other things, about 20 attractive specimens of **calcite** which Shawn Maddox collected in 2012 from a locality—not further specified—in Williamson County, Texas. These are loose floral clusters and stalactiform arrangements of translucent, steep-scalenohedral calcite crystals, bright orange-yellow and brightly fluorescent yellow-green.



Calcite, 6.7 cm, from Williamson County, Texas. *Barnett Fine Minerals* specimen and photo.

Another new kind of **calcite** on the *Barnett Fine Minerals* site is represented by 17 miniatures from a pocket opened in July 2017 in the Borieva mine, Madan orefield, Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria. Yellow to amber-colored calcite occurs as stepped-surfaced scalenohedral crystals composed of hundreds of small flattened rhombohedrons, and the compound crystals in turn rest on groups of sharp, prismatic quartz crystals tinted green by chlorite inclusions. These are handsome specimens, quite unlike the opaque latte-colored calcite, or the pink manganese-rich calcite, which we are accustomed to seeing from the metal mines of southern Bulgaria.



Calcite on chloritoid quartz, 5 cm, from the Borieva mine, Madan orefield, Smolyan Oblast, Bulgaria. *Barnett Fine Minerals* specimen and photo.

Last year John Veevaert made the scene at the Tokyo mineral show and, just as he does at every mineral show, did a creative job of hunting up interesting minerals old and new to sell (after photographing them expertly) on his *Trinity Minerals* website (trinityminerals.com). Among these Tokyo acquisitions is a small number of specimens of a beautiful pale blue **barite** from what John was told is a “new find” in the Villabona mine, Villabona, Oviedo Province (Asturias region), northern Spain. The lustrous, typically tabular and diamond-shaped barite crystals form fan-shaped and jumbled aggregates with sharp white dolomite crystals on a yellow fluorite substrate, such specimens ranging in size from 4 to 8 cm. The splendid miniature shown here is shown also on John’s December 21 update, and \$100 will buy it.



Barite, 4.3 cm, from the Villabona mine, Villabona, Oviedo Province (Asturias), Spain. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

While visiting *Trinity Minerals*, check out, as well, the specimens of **pyroxmangite** which John also brought back from Tokyo: classic old-timers from the Taguchi mine, Chubu Region, Honshu, Japan. As of the first week of January 2018, just two of these were left for sale on the site, a good thumbnail and a 4.1-cm piece which John says is one of the finest pyroxmangites he has ever seen, with tabular raspberry-red, mirror-faced crystals lining a cavity in metallic black ore. Must keep up with the classics...according to Mindat the Taguchi manganese mine is “long abandoned.”



Pyroxmangite, 4.1 cm, from the Taguchi mine, Chubu Region, Honshu, Japan. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

John Veevaert also has an October 12 “New Specimens” page with many old classics he picked up in Europe last spring; most of them are from European localities but a fair number are from Franklin, New Jersey and Broken Hill, Australia. For example, here (next page) is a large, gorgeous **rhodochrosite** from Cavnic, Maramures, Romania; and below it is one of John’s three specimens of **native lead** from the NBHC mine, Broken Hill. The latter is still available (for \$350), and I find it surprising to see, as I’d thought that significant specimens of native lead were known only from the Långban and (nearby) Harstigen mines in Värmland, Sweden. I guess I’d been thinking of *well crystallized* native lead: no crystal faces are recognizable (except charitably) on this Australian specimen, but, on the other hand, the piece is interesting for its size and for its spotty surficial alteration to white hydrocerussite.



Rhodochrosite, 8.7 cm, from Cavnic, Maramures, Romania. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.



Lead, 4.3 cm, from the NBHC mine, Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

Mineral One (mineral-one.com) is an Italian dealership (with prices in Euros) which seems to have some very good sources for new and attractive mineral finds from Iran. The current upsurge of Iranian minerals on the international market had its harbinger in the 1970s, when distinctive specimens of snowflake-white reticulated **cerussite** from the Nakhlak mine, Anarak, Esfahan Province, first appeared; then there was a lull, and then in the very early 2000s some German prospectors came to Western shows with abundant further supplies of Nakhlak cerussite. In 2012-2013 there were still more of these loose, delicate, labyrinthine cerussites, and now, in a July 2017 “Special Iran” update, *Mineral One* is offering about 25 of some of the finest I have yet seen, with Euro prices hovering in the mid-three figures.



Cerussite, 6 cm, from the Nakhlak mine, Anarak, Esfahan Province, Iran. *Mineral One* specimen and photo.

Then there are the generally small but reliably spectacular specimens of red-orange **wulfenite** from the Chah Kharboze (or “Shah Kharbuzeh” or “Tchah-Kharboze”) mine, Anarak district, Esfahan Province, Iran. Active ore mining at Chah Kharboze ceased in the late 1960s, and some European collectors brought out some specimens in the 1970s, but these madly bright and colorful wulfenites, like the Nakhlak cerussites, mostly had to wait until the early 2000s to appear in any numbers on Western markets. The brilliantly lustrous tabular crystals, of a red-orange hue as vivid as almost any from Arizona’s Red Cloud mine, almost never exceed 2 cm, but clusters of them, both loose and on matrix, can grab at the browser’s sight from some distance away. John Veevaert’s aforementioned *Trinity Minerals* site has a few fine Chah Kharboze wulfenites, but about 15 thumbnails and small miniatures of equal dazzlement are on that July “Special Iran” update of *Mineral One*.



Wulfenite, 2.2 cm, from the Chah Kharboze mine, Anarak district, Esfahan Province, Iran. *Mineral One* specimen and photo.

A much more recent Iranian contribution—discovered first in December 2016—is the very well crystallized **analcime** from a volcanic field on Kahwan Mountain, Moaleman County, Semnan Province, north-central Iran. Some of the sharp, lustrous, trapezohedral analcime crystals from this occurrence are pure white while others have mild red staining from iron oxide inclusions. I noted from the 2017 Tucson Show that one dealer had a handful of these specimens (see that report in May-June 2017), and now a dozen fine miniatures may be ogled on the *Mineral One* website. And finally I'll note that the same website offers a few of the bright green andradite (variety demantoid) specimens from Belqeys Mountain, West Azerbaijan Province, as well as a few of the dark, spiky willemite pseudomorph after descloizite specimens from the Chah Milleh mine—both of which items have seeped onto the general market during the past few years.



Analcime, 3 cm, from Kahwan Mountain, Moaleman County, Semman Province, Iran. *Mineral One* specimen and photo.

One new occurrence which you'll see noted in my report on the 2017 Munich Show (to be published in our March-April 2018 issue) is that of the rare manganese oxide-hydroxide **groutite**, in fairly attractive specimens taken recently from the Zavalye graphite field, Haivoron, Kirovohrad, Ukraine. The groutite forms black, highly lustrous, lenticular aggregates of microcrystals, and the little lenticules are jumbled lightly together, like handfuls of shiny black coins, on matrix and in loose clusters. A few miniatures of this material are currently seen on the website of Tomasz Praszki's *Spirifer Minerals* (spiriferminerals.com).



Groutite, 4.2 cm, from the Zavalye graphite field, Haivoron, Kirovohrad, Ukraine. *Spirifer Minerals* specimen and photo.

Another new find of an unlikely manganese oxide-type species hails from the Haiti mine near Cartagena, Murcia, Spain, and specimens from it are offered in a December 2017 update on Jordi Fabre's *Fabre Minerals* (fabreminerals.com) site. In October 2017, some diggers in the remains of this old, obscure little mine came out with highly presentable specimens of **pyrolusite**: rounded plates consisting entirely of tightly interlocked, tabular aggregates of zillions of bright black little crystals. Jordi offers several miniature to small-cabinet specimens (all, however, marked "reserved").



Pyrolusite, 6.4 cm, from the Haiti mine, Cabezo de San Ginés, Cartagena, Murcia, Spain. *Fabre Minerals* specimen and photo.

The website of *Crystal Treasure* (crystal-treasure.com) is one that I cited a couple of times many, many online reports ago, and now will cite again for its ongoing offerings of unusual small specimens, mostly from Myanmar (Burma). The site's specialty is loose, mostly thumbnail-size, single crystals and little groups, especially if the crystals are gemmy (and it might as well be noted that faceted gemstones cut from such crystals are sold on the site as well). On the most recent "New Arrivals" page on the site we find, for example, a remarkably sharp, complete floater crystal of **serendibite** almost 1 cm long; and a colorless, *transparent*, blocky crystal of **orthoclase** from the Sakangyi area, west of the famous town of Mogok, Burma (Myanmar). These two specimens are pictured below, but the site has many more such peculiar items to offer, and a thorough browse here could take up most of an afternoon if you are a thumbnail, gem-crystal or rare-species collector.



Serendibite, 9.1 mm, from Ohngaing village near Mogok, Mandalay Division, Myanmar. *Crystal Treasure* specimen and photo.



Orthoclase, 1.9 cm, Sakangyi area west of Mogok, Mandalay Division, Myanmar. *Crystal Treasure* specimen and photo.

Between October and December 2017, Kevin Ward of *Exceptional Minerals* (exceptionalminerals.com) posted five pages of “Denver Show updates,” with numerous one-of-a-kind specimens, nearly all qualifying as “killers.” Interestingly, these new

acquisitions of Kevin’s include some pieces from the former collection of Kay Robertson such as this fine miniature of **wire silver** with associated acanthite, calcite and siderite crystals, from the Freiberg District:



Silver, 4.4 cm, from the Freiberg district, Sachsen, Germany.
Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Other classics on the *Exceptional Minerals* website include several superb rhodochrosites from the Sweet Home mine and—I couldn’t resist showing this one—a **cuprite on copper** from Bisbee distinguished by small sprigs of dendritic silver on its back side (and not visible in the photo below). A comprehensive online list of Bisbee mine workings, however, does not mention the “Old B mine,” given by Kevin as the

source of this impressive specimen. We'll have to ask Dick Graeme about that one (Dick is a walking encyclopedia of Bisbee—See his various articles on that famous locality.)



Cuprite, 4.7 cm, from the Old B mine, Bisbee, Cochise County, Arizona.
Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Breathlessly I conclude the survey in the high Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan. In Peter Lyckberg's big article in our September-October 2017 issue you've seen the pictures of wondrous **spodumene variety kunzite** crystals from Paprok, Kamdesh district, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, and no doubt you've seen a few of these highly prized items "live" as well, since they have been showing up sporadically on the market during the past few years. But it's still significant news when a good new pocket gives up its riches, and sure enough, the "new specimens" update which Ray McDougall has posted on the *McDougall Minerals* site (mcdougallminerals.com) offers 13 gemmy crystals, ranging in size from 2.2 to 7.4 cm long, from a 2017 pocket which, Ray writes, "produced color-zoned (lilac/pink-pale green-colorless) crystals, along with some specimens that were purely lilac/pink and some that had no such hues at all." The biggest and priciest crystal from this pocket which is shown on the website (and is shown below) costs a modest \$300, and the thumbnail-size crystals cost only \$30 and \$40.



Spodumene, 7.4 cm, from Paprok, Kamdesh district, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan. *McDougall Minerals* specimen and photo.

Happy New Year to all, and will I see *you*—yes I’m talking to *you*—in a couple of weeks at the Tucson Show? Feel free to accost me for a chat if you’re there...

Tom Moore