

What's New in the Mineral World?



Report #65
November 15, 2022

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Record
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After a busy autumnal time of attending the Denver and Munich shows, then taking a short excursion to Freiberg, Germany (this to be described as a “postscript” to the Munich Report in our forthcoming January-February issue of the *Mineralogical Record*), I am comfortably back home at last, back to normal routines, and back, certainly, to snooping around on the Internet in search of “what’s new in minerals online.” Some results of the snooping are shared below, with only a small bit of overlap with what you’ll find in the Jan-Feb Denver and Munich reports. And, by the way, here’s wishing everyone a happy holiday season...could there be, in what follows below, a holiday gift, or at least a hot pre-holiday tip, for someone on *your* list with a taste for fine minerals?

What’s New on the Web

Lately in the print reports from the big shows there have been niblets of news concerning the specimens, currently on the market, showing deep green, sometimes gemmy, cuboctahedral crystals of **fluorite** on metallic black sulfides, from a locality in Peru that has proved difficult to pin down. At first (to review the confusion) these specimens were said to have come from the Huanzala mine in Bolognesi Province, Ancash Department; then the locality was corrected to “Cerro de Pasco,” Pasco Province, Pasco Department; and then, at the 2022 Munich Show, Jaroslav Hyřšl, from his own extensive experience of hunting for minerals in Peru, specified that the precise locality is the Milpo mine, *near* the city and important mining center of Cerro de Pasco. What’s more, the metallic black matrix that hosts the fluorite crystals has been found to be mostly **geocronite** ($\text{Pb}_{14}(\text{Sb,As})_6\text{S}_{23}$), this very rare sulfosalt appearing as fairly sharp crystals to 2 cm admixed with sphalerite, galena, pyrite and probably jordanite, the dimorph of geocronite. The green fluorite crystals vary in size, sharpness and depth of color, but really the big news here is the geocronite, since the crystals from this

occurrence are second in size and quality only to those from the long-inactive Pollone mine in Tuscany. And now Jordi Fabre, in a “Post-Munich 2022” update on his *Fabre Minerals* website (fabreminerals.com), offers four fine examples of Milpo mine geocronite/fluorite, obtained in Munich from Jaroslav Hyršl. There are two thumbnails costing 360 and 480 Euros (the Euro being almost the same as the dollar these days), and there are two miniatures, one measuring 4.4-cm (1400 Euros), and one measuring 6.2-cm (2200 Euros). All are slightly rounded matrix plates covered by blankets of lustrous metallic black crystals of geocronite, the blankets in turn showing spottings of pale green fluorite crystals. This material, being contemporary, may well continue to surface for a while (or not); so far I have seen it online only with Jordi.



Geocronite with fluorite, 6.2 cm, from the Milpo mine, near Cerro de Pasco, Pasco Province, Pasco Department, Peru. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Another Spanish dealership mentioned before in this space, *Mch Minerals* (mchminerals.com), has four excellent, bargain-priced miniatures of **blue hemimorphite** from the M’Fouati mine, Bouenza Department, Republic of Congo—a currently “hot” producing locality which is described in detail by Wendell Wilson and Demetrius Pohl in the July-August 2018 *Mineralogical Record*. Good specimens of cerussite, diopside, wulfenite and green to blue hemimorphite are now available with several dealerships (especially *Spirifer Minerals*, whose teams go down there when they can to collect

firsthand), but the four pieces on offer with *Mch* are unusually fine, with thick, lively-looking, sky-blue botryoidal formations of hemimorphite over dark matrix, the surfaces of the botryoids sparkling with microcrystals of cerussite. The 3.7-cm specimen shown here costs 90 Euros (i.e. within a penny or two of \$90 right now).



Hemimorphite, 3.7 cm, from the M’Fouati mine, Bouenza Department, Republic of Congo. Mch Minerals specimen and photo.

The same November 10 update on the *Mch Minerals* website has two pages offering old-time specimens, mostly one-of-a-kind, some of which come from an earlier home in the venerable collection of the Freiberg Mining Academy. Also in this update are three fine, indeed flamboyantly beautiful, miniatures of “**snowflake**” cerussite from the Nakhlak mine near Anarak, Esfahan (or Isfahan) Province, Iran. No, this occurrence isn’t “new”—Iranian cerussite snowflakes have been around since the 1970s, and have been

offered generously at intervals since about 2000—but the four specimens on the *Mch* website are a cut above almost all others I’ve seen, with fractal-looking arrangements of snowy white cerussite crystals in clean, lustrous groups, and no damage serious enough to show up on the photos. The 3.8-cm specimen shown here costs 290 Euros.



Cerussite, 3.8 cm, from the Nakhlak mine, Anarak, Esfahan, Iran. Mch Minerals specimen and photo.

Jack Crowley, proprietor of *The Crystal Mine*, posted an October 6 update on his website (crystal-mine.com) whereon we find several fair to superb thumbnail-size specimens of **vanadinite** from the Puzzler mine, Castle Dome Mountains, Yuma County, Arizona, priced at *five dollars each*. Sharp, lustrous, short-hexagonal crystals of vanadinite are clustered densely on matrix; the vanadinite is red-brown to orange, with a greenish overtone which is typical for and diagnostic of the locality. Extraction of ore in

the small Pb-Ag mines of the Castle Dome district, begun in the 1860s, ceased finally in the 1980s, and during that decade and the following one Arizona collectors dug plenty of specimens of the distinctive greenish vanadinite of the Puzzler mine. (See the article on the Castle Dome District by Anna Domitrovic, Wendell Wilson and Mark Hay in the September-October 1998 issue, which includes photos of such vanadinite specimens found in the Puzzler mine by field collectors Mark Hay and Dick Morris. While you're at it, go back to the January-February 2020 issue and read about collecting at the Puzzler mine in the article by Wendell and Mark on "George Godas: Fifty years of field collecting in Arizona.") These vanadinite specimens have only rarely been seen on the market during the past 20 years. Nowadays, we may safely say, \$5 is a pretty good price to pay for a first-rate thumbnail of the material.



Vanadinite, 2 cm, from the Puzzler mine, Castle Dome Mountains, Yuma County, Arizona. The Crystal Mine specimen; Jack Crowley photo.

Two pages later in the same update of *The Crystal Mine*, Jack shows us a single **vanadinite** specimen, measuring 7 cm and priced at \$200, from the Keban mine, Keban, Elâziğ vilayet, East Anatolia, Turkey. Never heard of the place? Well, obscure localities for common minerals are always fun to learn about. Jack writes that his “Keban” vanadinite specimen “probably dates to the 1930s when the mine was active,” and Mindat, sure enough, pegs Keban as a lead-zinc deposit where mining began in the 1930s. Jack’s piece displays sharp, tabular to equant, well individualized, orange to red-brown vanadinite crystals scattered on a brown coating of descloizite microcrystals over limestone matrix.



Vanadinite, 7 cm, from the Keban mine, Keban, Elazig Province, Turkey. The Crystal Mine specimen; Jack Crowley photo.

Before leaving *The Crystal Mine* I'll offer you a special treat of an image from the third page of an October 17 update on that website: a splendid, entirely fresh-looking, 3 × 3-cm cluster of **realgar** crystals from the Shimen mine, Shimen, Changde Prefecture, Hunan Province, China. Realgar from the Shimen mine probably is, at its best, the *world's* best for the species: it was during the 1990s that this Chinese realgar had its splashy day on the market, but really fine specimens are rarely seen at present. (Check out Wendell Wilson's article on the Shimen mine in the January-February 2007 issue.) I have no data on how quickly or easily the once bright, fresh realgar crystals wilt, at least around their edges, to powders of yellow pararealgar, but I know that it has been a while since I've seen the likes of this scarlet starlet of a small miniature, for which Jack Crowley asks \$175.



Realgar, 3 cm, from the Shimen mine, Jiepaiyu, Hunan Province, China. The Crystal Mine specimen; Jack Crowley photo.

On Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* website (irocks.com), an extensive August 24 update offers 11 colorful cabinet-size specimens of **aurichalcite** from the Uludağ tungsten mine, Bursa Province, Turkey, priced \$400 to \$6,000. These show sky-blue spherical aggregates, to 1 cm, of tiny acicular crystals of aurichalcite in shallow vugs in earthy pale brown goethite...chalk up another obscure locality, this one a true case of "what's new," in Turkey (specifically, in the northwestern part of the country, not far south of Istanbul).



Aurichalcite, 6.5 cm, from the Uludag mine, Bursa Ptovince, Turkey. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.

The same update on *The Arkenstone* website displays five beautiful miniature to cabinet-size specimens of **wendwilsonite** from the Aghbar mine, Bou Azzer district, Ouarzazate, Morocco. Lustrous, vividly magenta-colored crystals fill and overflow vugs in white dolomite: testing has verified these crystals as wendwilsonite, not the identical-looking, commoner roselite or roselite-beta. Moreover, Rob obtained the specimens from the collection of the well-known personage after whom the species was named: *Mineralogical Record* Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Wendell Wilson (who had his specimens identified and analyzed at the University of Arizona).



Wendwilsonite, 8.9 cm, from the Aghbar mine, Bou Azzer district, Ouarzazate, Morocco. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.

Further surfing in the ever-evolving *Arkenstone* website reveals that Rob has instituted a new element of the site, called “Thumbnail Corner.” Here—as of a November 9 update—are three discrete galleries, one simply called “Killer Thumbnails,” the others devoted to thumbnails let go from the Kyle Kevorkian and Shields Flynn collections respectively. All three of these thumbnail miscellanies contain superlative things, many

of them beautiful and/or rare and unusual; as almost randomly chosen examples I show you, below, two Kevorkian and two Flynn specimens...

The **fairfieldite** from the Foote mine, Kings Mountain, North Carolina, priced at \$450, is a highly desirable collector's item, the more so if you know that the Foote mine is the world's only source of really fine specimens of this rare Ca-Mn-Fe phosphate.



Fairfieldite, 1.9 cm, from the Foote mine, Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, North Carolina. Ex Kyle Kevorkian collection. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.

And the Bull Creek, Texas **celestine**, at \$1,500, is surely as pretty as anything from this long-known occurrence can get. Both of these fine thumbnails came to Rob from Kyle Kevorkian.



**Celestine, 2.7 cm, from Bull Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas.
Ex Kyle Kevorkian collection. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.**

Among the thumbnails formerly owned by Shields Flynn and now in Rob's "Thumbnail Corner," the **pyrargyrite** from the San Genaro mine, Castrovirreyna District, Huancavelica, Peru is a wondrous piece of gemmy red beauty; its price is \$2,800.



**Pyrargyrite, 3 cm, from the San Genaro mine, Castrovirreyna District, Huancavelica, Peru.
Ex Shields Flynn collection. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.**

And the **hessite** from the old classic locality in Romania (the world's *only* good source of macro-crystallized hessite) shows a very sharp, if typically a bit tortured-looking, metallic gray-black hessite crystal rising from white quartz matrix—price also \$2,800. I for one will keep visiting “Thumbnail Corner” often, if not to buy one of these premium thumbnails, at least to admire them all, and maybe to learn a thing or two in the process.



**Hessite, 2.4 cm, from Botesti, Zlatna, Alba, Romania.
Ex Shields Flynn collection. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.**

In these reports I have occasionally pointed you to the website of Martin Gröll's and Robert Kunze's *Via Mineralia* (viamineralia.com), which often has surprised me with news and examples of really *new* mineral finds. So here we go again: in an early November update, Martin and Robert present 12 miniature to cabinet-size specimens of **celestine** from "Badghis, Afghanistan," showing vividly blue, partially gemmy celestine crystals to 4 cm in cavities in what's apparently limestone, with cavity linings and surficial crusts of little pointy yellow-white crystals of aragonite.



Celestine on Aragonite, 7.2 cm, from Badakhshan, Afghanistan. Via Mineralia specimen and photo.

That "Badghis" locality designation puzzled me until further surfing revealed that the Italian dealership called *Webmineralshop* (webmineralshop.com) also had some celestine specimens from the same occurrence, and that the Italians call it "Badaghshan, Afghanistan." I conclude that what's meant in both cases is "Badakhshan," the name of the far-northeastern province of Afghanistan, which is also home to the ancient and famous Sar-e-Sang "lapis" (lazurite) mines. The relevant text on the *Via Mineralia* site announces that the intense blue color of the celestine crystals is a result of "a 17 times higher amount of cobalt" than is the usual case for celestine from other places. Indeed, the best of these crystals as seen on the *Via Mineralia* site are a lovely medium-blue to

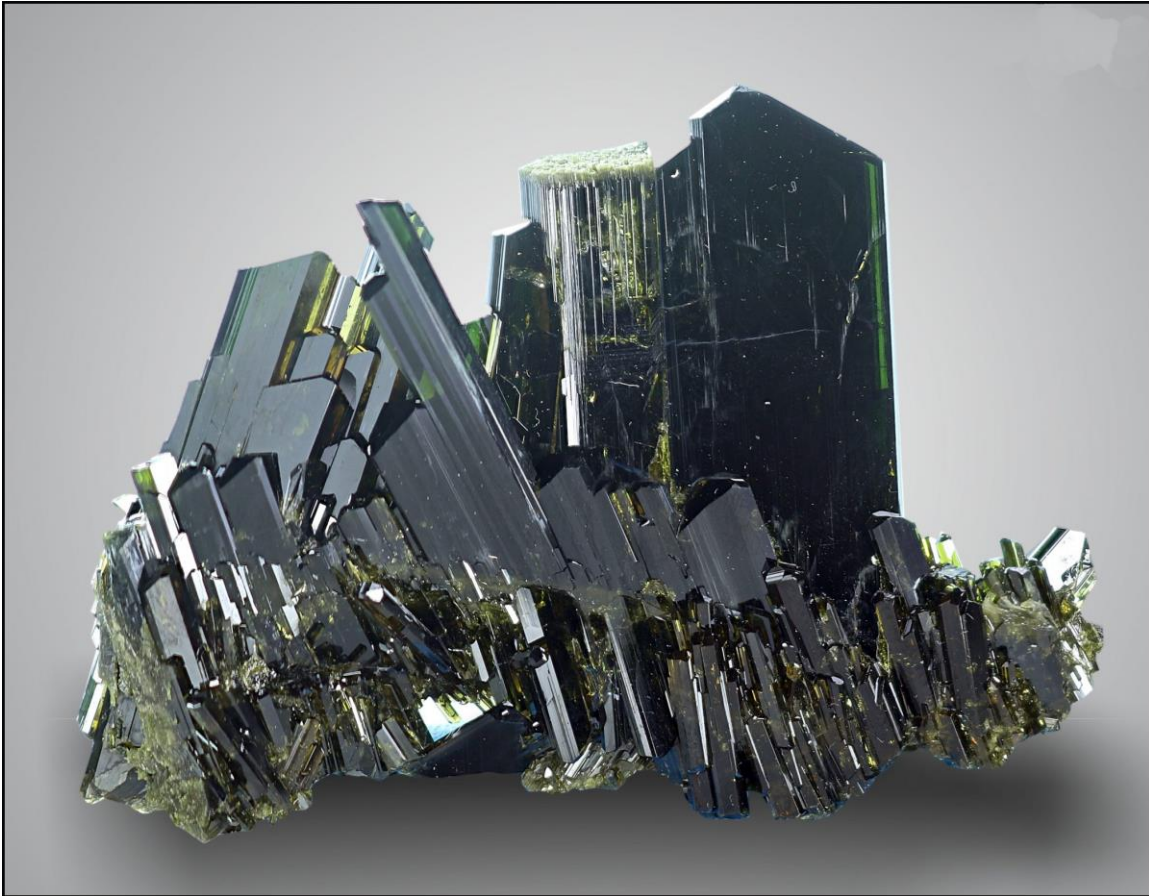
deep blue; the crystals in the *Webmineralshop* examples tend to be paler, but then the specimens on that site bear much lower prices too. The photo above shows a *Via Mineralia* specimen, with a sharp blue celestine crystal rising from cavity-lining aragonite; the lovely piece is priced at 2,800 Euros.

Ghulam Mustafa's *Fine Art Minerals* website (fineartminerals.com) and his Facebook page are always worth checking out, especially if, at the big shows, you've had your appetites whetted by Mustafa's sprawling displays of gem-crystal species from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Right now on the site, and marked as "new," is a gorgeous 5-cm specimen of the rare, much-coveted **pink topaz** from the Ghundu mine, Katlang Valley, Mardan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, showing two sharp, well terminated, gemmy pink topaz crystals rising in parallel from a mottled black/white (schorl/quartz?) matrix—\$3800.



Topaz, 5 cm, from the Ghundo mine, Katlang Valley, Mardan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Fine Art Minerals specimen and photo.

The mountains of Pakistan also harbor some fine Alpine cleft-type sites which can turn out specimens matching or excelling older examples of microcline, titanite, hematite, axinite etc. from the European Alps. Another piece marked as “new” on the *Fine Art Minerals* website is a 7-cm **epidote** from Alchuri, Shigar Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan (very much resembling specimens from the famous Untersulzbachtal locality in Austria), for which Mustafa asks what I’d say is a bargain price (in view of the specimen’s high quality and sleek beauty) of \$850.



Epidote, 7 cm, from Alchuri, Shigar Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Fine Art Minerals specimen and photo.

Some excellent oldtime **copper**, **calcite** and **copper in calcite** specimens from the Michigan Copper Country are to be seen on a September 12 update of the website of Ibrahim Jameel’s *Khyber Minerals* (khyberminerals.com). The mines represented by this little specimen stash are the Pewabic mine (incorporated at some point into the Quincy mine), the Quincy itself, the White Pine, and the Point Prospect. The copper specimens vary widely in style, and range in size from around 5 cm up to a 39.4-cm crystal group from the White Pine mine (\$3800). Shown here is perhaps the best of the larger specimens (bar the behemoth just mentioned): a 10.8-cm cluster of sharp copper crystals

with a just-right (in my opinion) coppery-brownish patina, from the Pewabic mine, costing \$5200.



Copper, 10.8 cm, from the Pewabic mine, Pewabic, Houghton County, Michigan. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

And here is the prettiest of Ibrahim’s Michigan calcite specimens, a fine miniature with a single colorless, translucent calcite crystal enthroned on copper but not infused by it (\$585).



Calcite on Copper, 5.1 cm, from the Quincy mine, Houghton County, Michigan. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

The same *Khyber Minerals* update finishes off with two miniatures of something else “old” but much more modest (and modestly priced), of likely interest to fans of classic pseudomorph specimens: **Chamosite** (a phyllosilicate of the Chlorite Group) completely replacing former crystals of almandine, from the Michigamme mine, Marquette Iron Range, Iron County, Michigan. The equant pseudocrystals are a dull dark green, although they have remained fairly sharp; for the 3.4-cm example shown here, Ibrahim asks \$125.



Chamosite pseudomorph after Almandine, 3.4 cm, from the Michigamme mine, Marquette Iron Range, Iron County, Michigan. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

Do you enjoy ogling your way through page after page of splendid photos of miscellaneous one-of-a-kind, nearly always beautiful, specimens of cabinet to large-cabinet (“museum”) size? Well, as I’ve said before in this space, a good place to go for that purpose is Jim Brown’s *Hummingbird Minerals* website (hummingbirdminerals.com)—and here are three examples of what you can find in the *Hummingbird* updates dated July 25 and September 14. The July posting includes a winning 8-cm specimen showing lustrous yellow-green crystals of **andradite** thickly piled on matrix, from Cerro de la Concordia, Piedra Parada, Tatatila Municipality, Veracruz, Mexico. For a short time in the mid-1980s, this locality “at the center of the ‘Las Vigas’ amethyst-digging region” (to quote from *Moore’s Compendium of Mineral Discoveries*) gave up andradite specimens just like this one, but it seems that no fresh supplies emerged during later years (or none, at least, that made it onto the international market). This lovely *Hummingbird* one-of-a-kind is priced at \$650.



Andradite, 8 cm, from Cerro de la Concordia, Piedra Parada, Tatatila Municipality, Veracruz, Mexico. Hummingbird Minerals specimen and photo.

In his September 14 update, Jim Brown has a 10-cm **calcite** specimen from the classic occurrence of St. Andreasberg, Harz Mountains, Lower Saxony, Germany. Calcite from St. Andreasberg comes in numerous attractive styles (see our special issue on the locality, with its many calcite photos: July-August 2017), and specimens in *any* style are extremely hard to come by these days, the last of the St. Andreasberg mines having closed in 1910. Jim Brown's piece, from the former Kay Robertson collection, shows sharp, lustrous, partially transparent, gray-white "poker chip" calcite crystals in parallel stacks: an imposing antique which measures 10 cm and costs \$600.



Calcite, 10 cm, from St. Andreasberg, Harz Mountains, Lower Saxony, Germany. Ex Kay Robertson collection. Hummingbird Minerals specimen and photo.

The third *Hummingbird Minerals* piece I've selected to show you is a breath of contemporaneity: an 8.1-cm matrix with butterscotch-colored **wulfenite** crystals all over it (and no perceptibly broken crystals anywhere on it), from the La Morita mine, Ascención Municipality, Sierra Mojina district, Chihuahua, Mexico. This locality, whose development as a specimen source is just now getting under way, is clearly, already, among the world's best for wulfenite, and Jim Brown's specimen is near the top of the scale as we've come to know it so far; its price is \$1,200.



**Wulfenite, 8.1 cm, from the La Morita mine, Ascención Municipality, Chihuahua, Mexico.
Hummingbird Minerals specimen and photo.**

I don't think I've ever featured Jürgen Margraf's *Margraf Minerals* website (margrafminerals.com) in earlier online reports, but it's about time, as Jürgen offers galleries including "Tourmalines Worldwide," "Alpine Minerals," "Classic Minerals from England," "Erongo Fluorites," "Brazilian Minerals," "Minerals from South Africa," "Dalnegorsk" and several others, each promising much ogling pleasure. Two of the typical pleasant surprises one may find in these galleries are shown below: from the "England" gallery, a very aesthetic (for the species) old specimen of **galena** from the Smallcleugh mine, Cumbria (price 120 Euros).



Galena, 4.5 cm, from the Smallcleugh mine, Nenthead, Alston Moor district, Cumbria, England. Margraf Minerals specimen and photo.



Olmiite, 5 cm, from the N'Chwaning II mine, Kuruman, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. Margraf Minerals specimen and photo.

And from the "South Africa" gallery, here is a gorgeous miniature of **olmiite** from the N'Chwaning II mine (980 Euros).

Right now the *Margraf Minerals* website has only one gallery which offers multiple specimens of the same species from the same specific occurrence: although dated March 2015, the gallery is still rich in nice-looking and (oddly) still-unsold **fluorite** specimens from the Comissinone mine, Zogno, Bergamo, Lombardy, Italy. There are 10 of these in all, in sizes from 4 to 11 cm and priced in the low three figures. The Comissinone fluorite mine was active only from 1971 to 1981, but discoveries of specimens in the inactive workings took place and are taking place intermittently (I've been told) up to the present. Better known and more widely marketed in Europe than in the U.S.A., "Zogno" fluorite comes in fine, colorless to medium-purple to very dark purple crystals (a small minority are green, yellow and color-zoned), in specimens to very large sizes, either as loose crystal groups or as matrix pieces with fluorite crystals clustered on white limestone matrix. The specimens now displayed on the *Margraf Minerals* site are all of the same vivaciously pretty sort: loose, incomplete, etched but highly lustrous, transparent crystals and small crystal groups that range between entirely colorless and palest purple. The example shown here—still unsold—costs 230 Euros.



Fluorite, 5.5 cm, from the Camissinone mine, Zogno, Lombardy, Italy. Margraf Minerals specimen and photo.

It has become my custom or habit to end each report by putting before you a single showstopping specimen—just for the fun, enlightenment, wonder and secret covetousness of it all. On his September 22 “International Minerals” update, Anton Watzl of *Anton Watzl Minerals* (awminerals.com) features a 10.1-cm crystal of **elbaite** from the great pocket find of April 1978 in the Jonas mine, Itatiaia district, Conselheiro Pena, Minas Gerais, Brazil. (This find is perhaps the mineral world’s most dramatic during all of the 20th century; one of the best of several written accounts of the 2 × 2.5-meter pocket and its fabulous contents is Wendell Wilson’s article in the May-June 2012 *Mineralogical Record*.) Like all of the famous Jonas mine elbaite crystals, Anton’s is gemmy, intensely red (the term “cranberry red” was popular for a while), well terminated, and tastefully accented by small attached bits of lepidolite and “cleavelandite” albite. Anton vouches for the crystal’s being undamaged and (remarkably) unrepaired, and he reminds us that it was the poster specimen for the 2018 Denver Show. Interested? The price of the specimen is 35,000 Euros...ah, but you can ogle it here and I won’t charge you a *pfennig*.



Elbaite, 10.1 cm, from the Jonas mine, Itatiaia district, Conselheiro Pena, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Anton Watzl Minerals specimen and photo.

Once more: a happy holiday season to all.

Tom Moore