

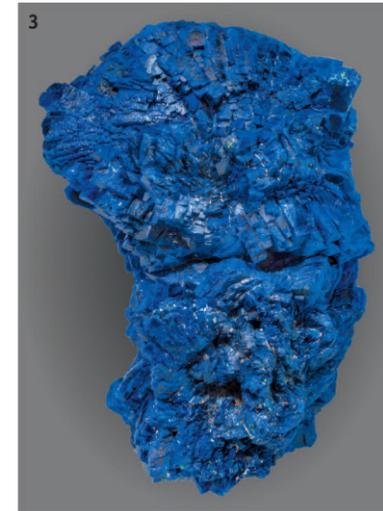
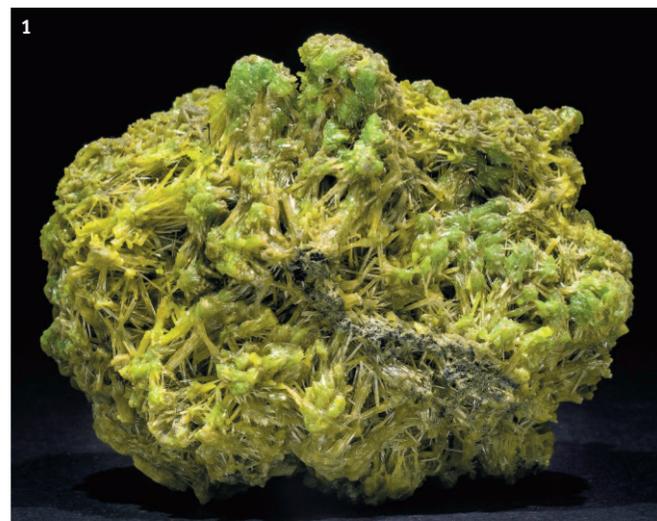
Photo: fabreminerals.com
if other not mentioned.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been storming in the world since early 2020. It touched all aspects of human activity. It does not make sense to mention all of these troubles brought to the humans on our planet. Obviously, the mineralogical community also suffered. In particular, all main international mineral shows have been cancelled because of a quarantine. Mineral people – dealers, collectors, professional mineralogists, museum researchers, geologists, and mineral amateurs – have lost a very important part of their lives. They have lost their ability to directly intercommunicate. Twenty-thirty years ago, the gap could not be filled. Now we have previously unimaginable communication means based on information technologies, especially the Internet. During this last year the world made a great step forward through using such technologies practically in all aspects of human activity, ranging from economy to science, culture, education, etc.

Of course, the mineralogical community took part in this grandiose process. Below we publish two stories about how these outstanding projects emerged, thanks to the quarantine. We believe that they have a long life ahead because of their significance and possibilities extend beyond the limits of the reason that created them. The success of these projects is likely to be followed by many energetic and talented people. Spanish mineralogists Carles Manresa Pla and Carles Curto Milà tell about virtual Mineral Shows by Jordi Fabre. *Mineral Talks LIVE Project* is presented by Raquel Alonso-Perez, Curator of the Mineralogical and Geological Museum at Harvard University, Eloïse Gaillou, President of the Society of Mineral Museum Professionals (SMMP), and Bryan Swoboda, President of *BlueCap Productions*.

1. Radiating aggregates of acicular **pyromorphite** crystals. 7.5 x 6.8 x 5.3 cm. El Horcajo Mines, Almodyvar del Campo, Comarca Campo de Calatrava, prov. Ciudad Real, Castilla-La Mancha, Spain. Find of about 1910.

2. Group of **fluorapatite** crystals on **quartz**. 14.5 x 10.7 x 7.8 cm. Panasqueira Mines, Covilhã, Castelo Branco, Portugal. *Minor fluorescence long & short UV.*
Photo: Joaquim Callén.



3. Nodule of **azurite** crystals, with an unusual habit for the deposit. 9.5 x 6.7 x 5.5 cm. Chessy-les-Mines (type locality), Les Bois d'Oingt, Villefranche-sur-Saône, Rhône, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France.

4. **Grandidierite** crystal. 1.1 x 1 x 0.8 cm. Tranomaro Commune, Tranomaro-Maromby area, Amboasary District, Anosy Region, Madagascar.



Online shows vs in-person shows?

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The pandemic caused by the SARS-Covid-2 virus in 2020 caused a turnaround in contemporary history. A upheaval that, to a greater or lesser degree, affects everyone and that will force us to take countermeasures in the short and medium term. The restrictions on travel, the closure of borders, hotel limitations, and contagion prevention measures, seem certain to continue to a greater or lesser degree at least through all of 2021.

Mineral shows, because of their essential “meeting point” nature, have not remained immune to the effects of the pandemic. Forced by the situation, the two major shows in Europe, Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines and Mineralientage München, have both been canceled, in addition to the closure of hundreds of other minor events. Tucson 2021 can be added to the list and, although we still have hope, we do not know what the immediate future will bring. But collections and collectors continue to exist, in the same way that, although slowed down, the commercial activities of suppliers has continued, largely thanks to online commerce.

In that case, if the three vertices of the collector-dealer-mineral triangle are still active and, given the difficulties in organizing in-person shows, why not do them online?

Some simple tracking allows one to detect a few first attempts on the internet. Thus, in 2020, the first year of the pandemic, and at the beginning of 2021, Fabre Minerals, a veteran of online sales (since 1996), decided to organize sales sessions coinciding with the three major shows (Munich, Sainte-Marie and Tucson) and with the Expominer show in Barcelona (Spain).

Although these first attempts do not exactly correspond to the basic idea of a collective face-to-face meeting of merchants, collectors and scientists, the idea of presenting new and different offers each day of the show (Virtual Tucson, ten days, Jan. 25–Feb. 5) appears to have been successful. We do not know the results of another modest recent internet attempt, in February 2021, by a group of suppliers in Spain and there is an announcement of an online show for the end of May (Pandemic Mineral/Mineral Fair), also collective. They are attempts, in any case, to be taken into account and which raise some key questions. Will mineral shows, in the immediate future, be through the internet? In any case, it is likely that shows will find some kind of functional format on line and that, when they come they do it to stay, in the same way that we can assume that, if the situation normalizes, both types of shows, in-person and online, will end up coexisting.

Of course there are significant technical and logistical limitations. Organizing a broad enough common platform, for example, or achieving a better view of the specimens through 3D images, for example, or getting direct feedback between the seller and the buyer that is part of the essence of traditional shows, added to the fact that, although we could be labeled “romantics”, of preferring direct sensory contact, to hold the specimen in front of your eyes and weigh it in the palm of your hand. Nevertheless these do not seem to be insurmountable difficulties.

So let's talk about the Fabre Minerals show. What model does it propose? And does this model really fit into the classic concept of a “mineral show”? How does it contribute differently from just a traditional website?

Fabre Minerals virtual shows provide a facet that may seem minor to some in principle but which helps to create the atmosphere, namely the inclusion of borders of images from previous editions, even historical ones, which help to recover the memory of friendships and encounters; of well-deserved breaks around a table, of conversations about the world of



Mineral Talks Live

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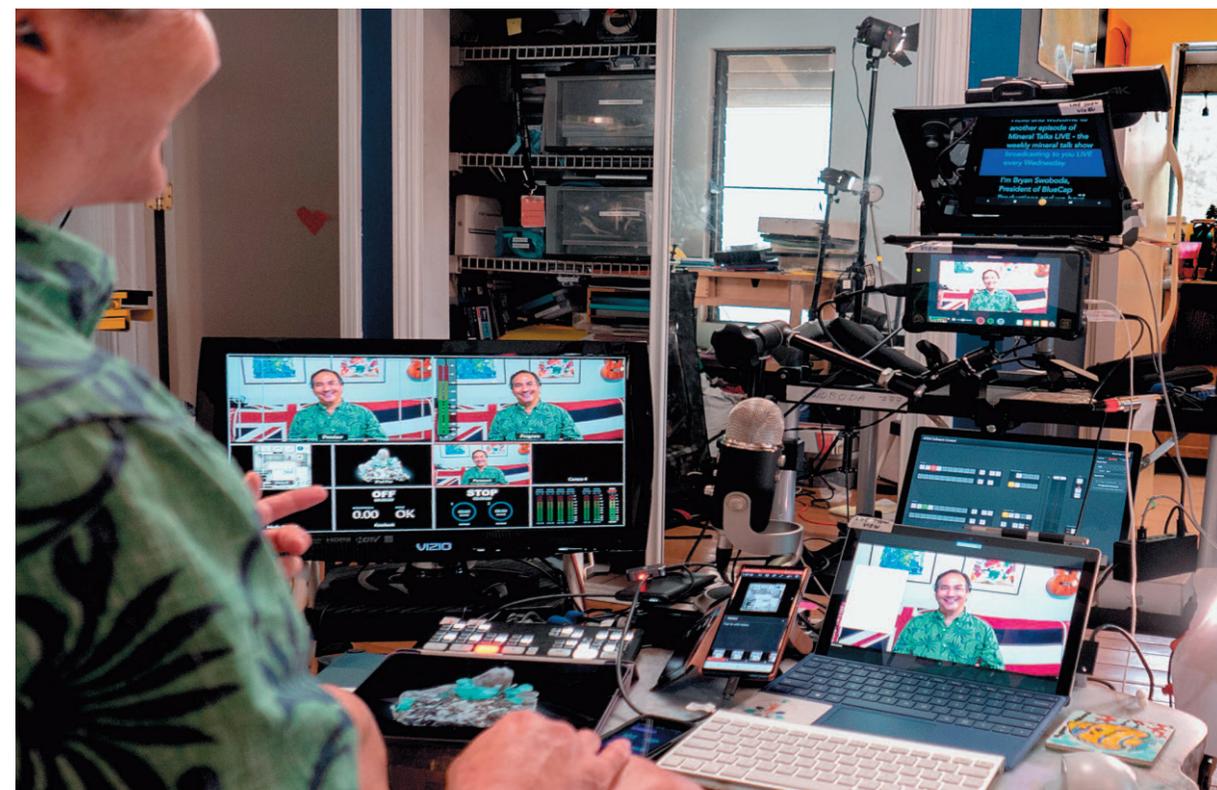
They say that, “*great minds think alike*”. So when you take three minds, two of which are indeed great with the third being, as he describes himself, merely clever, and give them all the same purpose, then you have the chance for creating something absolutely brilliant. Such is the case with the new, weekly mineral webinar, Mineral Talks LIVE.

Mineral Talks LIVE is the brainchild of Dr. Raquel Alonso-Perez, the Curatrix of the Mineralogical & Geological Museum at Harvard University, Dr. Eloïse Gaillou, the current President of the Society of Mineral Museum Professionals (SMMP), and Bryan Swoboda, President of *BlueCap Productions*. “*Raquel and Eloïse are clearly the two great minds here, I’m merely the clever monkey who sits in front of the camera*”, insists Swoboda.

As Swoboda tells it, Mineral Talks LIVE started as an idea in May of 2020 – two months into the world-wide shutdown due to the coronavirus. Alonso-Perez and Gaillou called Swoboda one day with an idea – to create a mineral talk show to give the mineral world something to do during the lockdown, to give them something to look forward to every week and to give them a new way to re-connect. If people couldn’t go out and visit the mineral world, then they wanted to bring the mineral world to the people.

At first, Swoboda wasn’t convinced, citing the poor video quality of LIVE shows as the reason for not wanting to do it. However, after a little insistent convincing by Alonso-Perez and Gaillou, Swoboda soon realized that for this COVID audience, new and dynamic content was more important than picture quality. Within 24-hours of that fateful phone call, all three partners were 100% in and willing to try out this new idea.

1. Raquel Alonso-Perez,
Curator of the Mineralogical & Geological
Museum at Harvard University.
2. Eloïse Gaillou,
President of the
Society of Mineral Museum Professionals.
3. Bryan Swoboda,
President of *BlueCap Productions*.



4. The *Mineral Talks LIVE* control panel is perhaps more complex than the space-ship control panel, but Bryan is doing the job with confidence.

On June 3, 2020, Mineral Talks LIVE launched its first show with Swoboda (based in Honolulu, Hawaii) doing an interview with Gaillou at her museum (Gaillou is also the Curatrix of the MINES ParisTech also known as the Paris School of Mines based in Paris, France) while Alonso-Perez handled all the technical aspects of running the show (based in Boston, Massachusetts). For their first show they were already showing the world that international borders were meaningless when it came to utilizing technology – much like international borders being meaningless when we all gather at mineral shows.

The response they received was overwhelmingly positive and, by the end of the show, they knew that they had tapped into something very special and very powerful.

“*We’ve heard it said, over and over, that part of what makes the mineral world a fantastic world is not only the minerals, but also the personal connection and the stories you can share*”, says Swoboda. “*We knew we couldn’t just show mineral after mineral – you could see that on FaceBook. In order to make a show that would be really special and different, we needed to let our audience get to know the people we were talking to. Learn a little about their jobs. About what they do for the community. About how they got started in collecting. The kind of things you’d talk about if you were having dinner with that person*”.

“*There are so many great and interesting people in the mineral world*”, adds Alonso-Perez, “*and the only way you really get to know them is by talking to them. That’s part of what makes my job so enjoyable. The interactions I have with so many different people in the mineral community. A museum becomes truly successful through its interaction with the public. So, in the end, after the minerals, it’s all about relationships*”.

“*You never know, maybe some of the information you learn about a person on this show is something that can start a great, new friendship that can last for years. I’m excited to know*