

ST. MARIE-AUX-MINES-2023 “SPECIAL EXHIBITION” REPORT

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In 2023, the *Mineral & Gem Prestige* exhibition took “passion” to the next level. Mineralogy is a science. Collecting minerals is a hobby for enthusiasts. This passion appears in different ways for different people. Some collect just one object, one crystal system or one shape, one location, whereas others favor the multitude of colors that are so inherent to crystals. Many others solely collect microcrystals that can only be seen through a microscope. Some even collect items that they love as these items hold a special place in their heart. There are so many ways of collecting minerals...

Men and women have been collecting minerals for almost three centuries. What defines these people? This passion affects everyone: from workers to CEOs of large companies. As well as affecting every industry, this passion also affects every generation. It is even considered to be a passion that passes down from generation to generation. The children and grandchildren of collectors can’t often escape this craze. Everybody has their own way of showing or displaying their minerals. This is blatantly obvious when walking through different shows: boxes, cabinets, warm or cold lights; each person has their own technique to showcase their favorite stones. Collectors were invited to present their vision of their mineral collection whether it be precious or modest. They revealed their well-hidden secrets. The broadness of the exhibits made an understanding possible, why mineral collecting is such an extraordinary hobby, one that is so full of possibilities. The Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris

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Abbreviations

MnhnL – National Natural History Museum, Luxembourg (Natur Musée = Musée national d’histoire naturelle Luxembourg)
MNHN/Paris – Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle, National Museum of Natural History in Paris.
Strasbourg University/EOST – Ecole et Observatoire des Sciences de la Terre of the Strasbourg University.



2. Bust of Yermak (Ermak Timofeevich, 1525 or 1540–1585), the first conqueror of Siberia. Bust around 30 cm, carved in pure **graphite** from Botogol, East Sayan, Siberia, Russia. Masterpiece in possession of the MNHN/Paris.
3. Dog (10 cm) (b), elaborately carved in pure **graphite** from Botogol. MNHN/Paris.
4. Very thin bowl of **nephrite**. Around 20 cm. MNHN/Paris.



(MNHN), the Natur Musée in Luxembourg (MnhnL) and the Strasbourg University Museum/ EOST also proved that many of their excellent specimens in their collections were the result of passionate collectors and curators. It really has to be appreciated, that such institutions participate in such special exhibitions. Within a few days ten thousands of visitors see the wealth of such museums, which is also a perfect advertisement. The exhibition was, as in the previous years, curated by Alain Martaud and his team. And when entering the so called “EXPOSITION PRESTIGE” sometimes the visitors were greeted by miners in their old mining habits (Figure 1). Directly at the entrance the MNHN of Paris presented a nice overview about the life and the discoveries of Jean-Pierre Alibert (Russian name Ivan Petrovich), a French merchant, who

discovered and mined the graphite deposit at Mount Botogol, Sayan Mountains, Buryatiya, Russia and who discovered there also some greenish rocks, which were a kind of jade, nephrite (see *Mineralogical Almanac*, Vol. 25, issue 1, 2020, page 44), found for the first time outside China. The MNHN presented many beautiful items, made of graphite and jade, from their collections (which are usually not shown in the public exhibition). An eyecatcher was the bust of Yermak (Ermak Timofeevich, 1525 or 1540–1585), the first conqueror of Siberia, completely carved from graphite (Figure 2). It was shown for the first time at the great World Exhibition in London 1862, before it was presented to the museum in Paris. The other two show cases contained jewelry, medals, decorations, objects of art (Figure 3), and of course pencils, the most