

Mineral Shows of 2016: Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, France, June

“Mineral & Gem”: the Friendly Atmosphere of the Vosges Mountains

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1. The entrance to the town of the Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines.

**Photo: Michael B. Leybov
if not mentioned otherwise**

2. Julien Lebocey and Roger De Ascenção Guedes at the booth of *Le Règne Minéral* magazine (France).

3. The locals in ancient miners dressing.

4. Peter Lyckberg (collector, Sweden) and Mike Rumsey (curator of the Natural History Museum of London, UK) with latest issue of “*Mineralogical Almanac*” devoted to the Saranovskoe deposit.

The 53rd edition of the mineral show, now called “*Mineral & Gem*,” was held as usual in Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines (France) near the end of June (23–26). Sainte-Marie is a small, quiet town in the heart of the Vosges Mountains (Fig. 1). In the 16th century it was a major center of mining (mainly silver) which has left in the region dozen of abandoned mines and empty galleries. The show is considered to be the 3rd most important in the world, after Tucson and Munich. Mining in the region was later replaced by the textile industry, but it too has almost disappeared after World War II.

This rich past is however remembered by two events, which during each summer attract in one week between 20,000 and 30,000 visitors, 5 to 6 times the size of the local population: the *Gem & Mineral* show at the beginning of the summer and, at the end, a textile patchwork festival (Carrefour Européen du Patchwork), considered to be the first of its kind in Europe and, possibly, in the world.

The position of Sainte-Marie within the “big three” might be in danger because of the recent opening of a mammoth (but problematic) show in China (Changsa, Hunan). But the Chinese market, which has a great potential in a country which has provided many fine specimens in the past, is still in its infancy. Let see what it will become in future years. Sainte-Marie this year had slightly less than 1000 exhibitors, against about 1200 in Munich. It expected more than 30,000 visitors, as in former years. But on Friday, the only day I attended the show, the attendance was not especially high. It was easy to stroll in the alleys and to enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the show, even to park your car in official parking areas (always a problem in Sainte-Marie) if you came sufficiently early. This was possibly due to announced bad weather, with the usual Friday storm which indeed poured very heavily at noon, flooding the last remnants of our “tarte flambée” in the terrasse of our restaurant for lunch. But this relatively limited attendance might also indicate a stable number of visitors against a regularly growing number of dealers, a remark that we heard from several regular attendees. Possibly a threat for future shows in these days of the Internet!



'Mineral & Gem' Show-2016 in Sainte-Marie-Aux-Mines, France

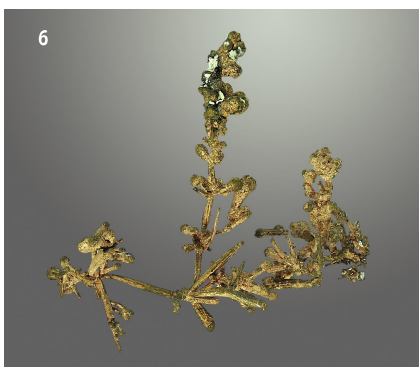
5. Display devoted to the Chessy mine at the Prestige Exposition "*The Origins: Minerals and Wines*" (curator Alain Martaud).

6–8. Specimens from the Prestige Exposition "*The Origins: Minerals and Wines*" (curator Alain Martaud).

6. **Copper**. Kolwezi, Katanga, Congo. Specimen: Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle du Luxembourg.

7. **Hematite**. Oro Preto, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Specimen: Musée Minéralogique de Mines ParisTech.

8. **Gold on Malachite**. Musonoi, Katanga, Congo. Specimen: Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle du Luxembourg.



I have attended "*Sainte-Marie*" almost every year for thirty years but, for some reason, I missed the three last shows. Thus, I had a good opportunity to compare the present situation, with an organization committee headed by Mr. Claude Abel, mayor of Sainte-Marie, with that at the time of Michel Schwab, the main organizer of the show until 2012, and the man who has given to Sainte-Marie its international stature. I must recognize that the new organization shows signs of improvements: more space, larger and better indicated alleys, and less difficult to park and circulate in the town and in the show. A very good point is the clear separation of the different sectors, minerals, gems or "pseudo-science" (e.g. "lithotherapy", feng-shui or other esoteric beliefs dating back to the Middle-Ages) in distinct, well-delineated areas, within walking distance or connected by an amusing "petit train". The visitor can then concentrate on his own field of interest, for me clearly (and only) minerals.

Sainte-Marie had been behind its big brothers for years in several issues, which give to any show another dimension than purely a commercial one: special exhibitions, conferences and workshops, and connections between professionals and the passionate amateurs who constitute the bulk of mineral collectors. Having invested heavily for secure showcases on the Tucson model, Sainte-Marie 2016 attempted bravely to fill this gap, with no less than 6 exhibitions: *Minerals and Wine*, *Meteorites*, *Microminerals*, *Alpine Minerals*, plus a Fashion Gem Defilee. Conferences, some of them related to the themes of the exhibitions, were presented by qualified people, museum curators or professional mineralogists and geologists. A number of workshops were especially dedicated to the younger public. For the first time in Sainte-Marie (the tradition has existed many years in Tucson and Munich) mineralogy museum curator had an official meeting, this year under the direction of Penny Williamson, the president of the Society of Mineral Museum Professionals (SMMP).

The exhibitions were interesting and professional. The "Prestige" exhibition: "*Origins: the Minerals and the Wines*" (curator A. Martaud), notably presented a number of outstanding minerals on loan from prominent French museums and others from Luxembourg, many of them exhibited for the first time outside their home place. I find it truly remarkable that curators take the risk to display their fragile treasures for only few days, this year luckily without any problem (as far as I know!).

Most visitors were certainly attracted by the Disney-style Prestige exhibition, but I found myself more interested in the smaller, more specialized exhibitions: the regional exhibition on wines and soils ("terroir") in Elsass, with a good presentation of the complicated regio-

9. At the meeting of the Society of Mineral Museum Professionals (SMMP).

Standing (left to right):

Dr. Nicolas Meisser, Musée cantonal de Géologie, Lausanne (Switzerland);
Dr. Cristiano Ferraris, National Museum of Natural History in Paris (France);
Dr. Alan Hart, CEO Gem-A (London, UK);
Dr. Alessandro Guastoni, Museum of Mineralogy University of Padova (Italy);
Michael Rumsey, Natural History Museum (London, UK); Penny Williamson, University of Wollongong, Australia;
Dr. Luis Rodriguez Terente, Museum of Geology University of Oviedo (Spain);
Dr. Élonse Gaillou, Museum MINES ParisTech (Paris, France);
Dr. Raquel Alonso-Perez, Mineralogical and Geological Museum of Harvard, USA;
Farida Maouche, Museum MINES ParisTech (Paris, France);

sitting: Dr. Jean-Claude Boulliard, Collection de Minéraux de Jussieu (UPMC) (Paris, France);

Dr. Gian-Carlo Parodi, National Museum of Natural History in Paris (France);
Dr. Federico Pezzotta, Museo Di Storia Naturale (Milan, Italy);
Dr. Dmitri Belakovskii, Fersman Mineralogical Museum (Moscow, Russia).



nal geology (unfortunately somewhat hidden in a side park of the show), and especially, "Crystal Hunters' Treasures" (Trésors de cristalliers) exhibited on the first floor of the "Piscine" (Swimming pool) (Fig. 10, 11). Two big showcases contained text-book examples of alpine quartz crystals, with striking illustrations of the different "habitus" and the growth mechanisms of crystals in geodes, topics regularly discussed by B. Kantor in our Almanac. One showcase was entirely occupied by new finds from the "Mine de Mésage," (Saint Pierre de Mésage, Isère), not far from the famous place La Mure. Abandoned since the 1920's, this mine has been bought by one of the "strahlers" (Grégoire de Bodinat) who, after mammoth work intends to open it to the public. Other "strahlers" in the Piscine, most of them from Chamonix (Mont-Blanc), had spectacular Alpine samples, at their right price (not cheap!), including gold from La Gardette near Bourg d'Oisans. Funny because any entry into this famous mine has been supposedly strictly forbidden for many years!

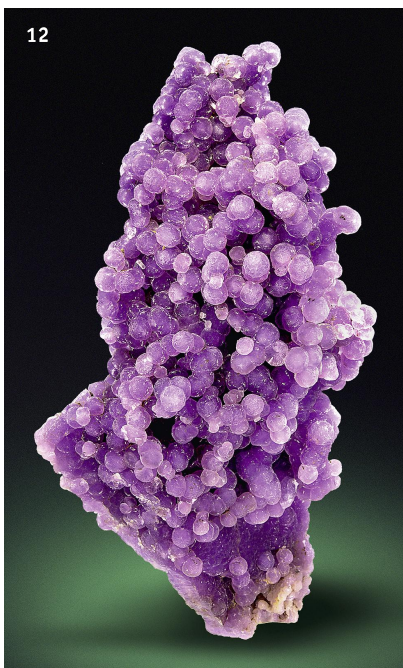
But despite the interest of all exhibitions, there is however an important issue for which Sainte-Marie lies still behind its big brothers, no book or guide which would give the visitor a permanent record of these short-lived events. The catalogue of the show contains no more than a list of exhibitors, plus a few lines about the presentation for each event. Nothing like the big books that you find at Tucson, or especially Munich, which remain basic references for years.

10–11. "Crystal Hunters' Treasures" .

10. **Siderite, quartz, calcite**. Mine de Message, St-Pierre-de-Message, Isère, France. Collection: Grégoire de Bodinat.

11. **Quartz** (rock crystal), gwindel, Mine de Message, St-Pierre-de-Message, Isère, France. Private collection.





12. **Chalcedony**. 14 cm tall. Indonesia, Jawa island. Specimen: Rudolf Watzl, Austria. Photo: A. Watzl.

13. **Chrysocolla with gypsum and quartz**, 6 x 8 cm. Lily mine, Pisco, Ica, Peru. Specimen: Frédéric Escaut, *Escaut Minerals*, France.

14. **Apatite**. 7 cm. Lavra do Sapo. Goiaberra. Minas Gerais. Brazil. Specimen: Frédéric Escaut, France. Photo: Joaquim Callen.

15. **Diopside on calcite with cerussite**. 18 x 17 cm. Tsumeb Mine, Otjikoto region, Namibia. Specimen: *Crystal Classics*.

Besides the exhibitions, the heart of the show is the thousands of minerals, rocks and fossils presented in the different booths, ranging from rough stones or mining waste to the most beautiful (and expensive!) pieces. There are so many specimens and dealers that it is impossible to visit or to mention all here, my excuses for all those – including a number of good friends – which will not find their names in this report. All together, I had the feeling that there were few real novelties, except perhaps the coloured (blue, red, violet) chalcedony from Indonesia, shown e.g. by Rudolf Watzl (Austria) in his splendid display located in the Theater (Fig. 12). Other specimens with a different, less attractive light-blue color could be seen by Michel Cabrol (*Merveilles de la Terre*), who had also splendid baryte crystals on calcite from Jebel Ouichane, Nador Province, Morocco. But this chalcedony had already been shown in Tucson.

Many samples by most dealers came from the resale of old collections, a trend which grows year after year. The first generation of real collectors started after World War II; they are now either in the heaven of minerals or too old to be active any more. Reselling their treasures seems to be a major, if not the major activity among the most established dealers. These traditionally gather in the “prestige” area of the Theater, indeed full of spectacular beauties. But the real mineral collector knows that big is not always the most beautiful (if always the most pricy!), and that the best pieces must combine beauty and mineralogical interest. These indeed can be found in some booths in the Theater, e.g. by Ian Brice (Crystal Classics, UK), a “valeur sure” in all big shows, very nicely crystallized rose quartz from Brazil, diopside on calcite from Namibia (Fig. 15). In the same area, Frédéric Escaut (Escaut minerals, France) had besides classical pyrite from Peru a nice small geode mantled by quartz-chrysocolla stalactites and a large transparent gypsum crystal at the center (Pisco, Peru) (Fig. 13), as well as some of the nicest apatite crystals I have ever seen, long (7 cm), transparent and arborescent crystals from lavra do Sapo, Minas Gerais Brazil (Fig. 14). Interestingly, some of the best specimens, at least those which caught my attention, were not to be found in the Theater, but scattered all over the show. One of the charms of Sainte-Marie is to stroll within the alleys, jumping from a mess of stones to the most elaborate and spectacular display. Exactly as in nature you find suddenly a perfect crystal in the midst of an ocean of junk and broken fragments. Some dealers prefer this contrast, they refuse to enter into some kind of ghetto for the rich dealers. This seems notably to be the case for some Alpine strahlers, who refuse to join the club at the Piscine. Being among average people does not mean that you pay less attention to the quality of the display. I must say that I found in this respect a marked evolution, compared to the situation few





16. **Fluorite**, 7 x 8 cm. Nagar, Gilgit, Pakistan. Find of 2016. Specimen: Zeb Gul, Germany.



17. Scepter **quartz** (var. amethyst). 7 x 2 cm. Zimbabwe. Find of 2016. Specimen: Rock On, South Africa.



18. Green **garnet**, 1.5 x 1.5. Swat district, Malakand region, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Find of 2016. Specimen: Mustafa Ghulam, Pakistan.

19. **Beryl**, 4 x 2 cm. Deo Darrah, Khash and Kura Wa Munjan District, Badakshan Province, Afghanistan. Find of 2016. Specimen: Mustafa Ghulam, Pakistan.



years ago. Successive shows have educated, not only the public, but the dealers themselves. They have come to understand that throwing all specimens on a table is not enough, that a good selection and presentation is a must. The internet has decreased the size of the world, miners in the most remote valleys of Nepal or Pakistan are perfectly informed nowadays of the prices that their samples reach in our markets. Economists would say that the market has reached some kind of a steady state, and prices remain stable at a level that I would qualify as reasonable (except for the top specimens!). A new generation of dealers is coming from countries where minerals for collectors are produced today, e.g. India and Pakistan, and to a lesser extent Morocco. I could possibly have added China, but I did not find any interesting Chinese booth this year in Sainte-Marie. As an illustration I would like to mention two young dealers who had a series of interesting specimens, all found in 2016 and very nicely presented. First Zeb Gul (Germany), green fluorite octahedrons from Gilgit, Pakistan (Fig. 16), and from Afghanistan, green garnet and (presumably) acicular aragonite in geodes, as well as well-terminated, isolated green tourmaline crystals about 10 cm long. The friendly, ever smiling Mustafa Ghulam (*Fine Art Minerals*, Pakistan, but registered in Ireland) had an impressive series of showcases full of beauties also recently found in Afghanistan and Pakistan: deep blue, perfectly crystallized apatite from the Dara-i-Pzech pegmatite field, a curious beryl on feldspar from the Badakshan province (both in Afghanistan) (crystallized in a series of successive curved layers, probably recording successive micro-openings of the cavity) (Fig. 19), and very nice groups of gem-quality green garnet found near the Khyber Pass, the strategic link between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Fig. 18). Truly remarkable that, despite all the political problems in this region, nice minerals still continue to be found and reach western markets!

Just in front of Mustafa's booth a new face caught my attention: Adriaan Bornman (*Rock On*, South Africa), for the first time in Sainte-Marie with a good choice of minerals from South Africa and Zimbabwe. Adriaan had interesting examples of double-scepter quartz from Zimbabwe, yellowish (citrine) for the first scepter, strongly amethyst for the second. (Fig. 17). This rarely seen succession indicates a complicated heating history (citrine quartz is heated amethyst), certainly recorded by fluid inclusions in the quartz. The top crystal resembles closely to that of Bramberg (considered by some to be the equivalent of amethysts from Brazil and Uruguay-Rio Grande do Sul before continental drift opened the Atlantic Ocean). But, according to Adriaan, the poorly known geological conditions seem to be quite different. In any case, a good potential subject for a MSc or PhD student!

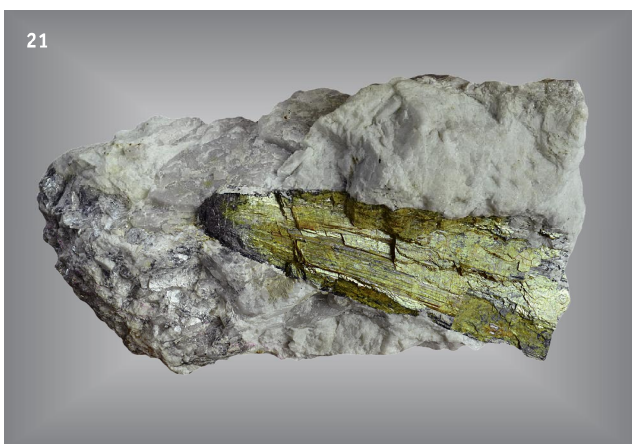


20. **Elbaite** with **quartz** (morion) and **albite** (cleavelandite). 34 x 20 x 13 cm.

Vostochnaya Vein, Voron'ya Gora, Butorinskoe pegmatite field, Borschovochnyi Range, Transbaikial Region, Siberia, Russia. Specimen: *Russian Minerals Company*.

21. **Thoreaulite** blocky crystal. 12 x 4 cm. Ognevka Ta deposit, Kalbinsky Range, East Kazakhstan. Private collection.

22. Fossil **belemnite** with **pyrite** in coal shales. 8.5 x 4 cm. Djeganas river, Karachaevo-Cherkesiya, Russia. Specimen: *Axinite-PM Company*.



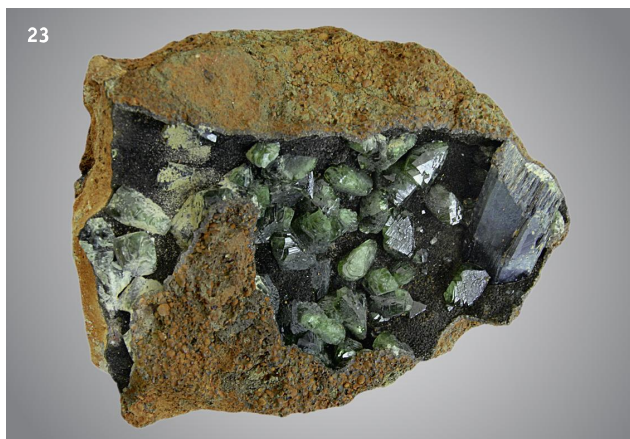
The example above shows that “common” minerals can also be interesting, if you know how to look at their details. I found another example in large calcite crystals presented by another representative of the new generation of oriental dealers, Sami Makki (*Matrix India*), from Pune (Poona), the famous place in the Deccan traps. Sami had a very good choice of classical Indian minerals, e.g. cavansite, different varieties of zeolites and apophyllite, including the flat terminated, deep green apophyllite crystals recently found in Moni Akhada. But most interesting were large, transparent and partly red calcite crystals, a vermillion red quite different from the usual colour given by iron oxides (hematite) (Fig. 24). This red resembles closely the famous “pigeon-blood” shade (the French say “gorge de pigeon,” pigeon throat) so much praised by the Chinese (and other Far East) people for rubies or for the pyrophyllite stone that they use for engraving seals. The origin of the colour is not known precisely, but at looking in detail inside the crystals, it appears to be caused by minute solid inclusions dispersed in the crystal or occurring along successive growth planes. Like in the manganese fields in the Kalahari desert (but these calcites are much bigger), I see a good possibility that this colour is due to inclusions of mercury minerals (cinnabar). According to Sami, the proof has to be done (I offered my help!), but some Chinese people have already made up their mind, there are ready to pay high prices for this sort of specimen. (Last sentence is not indisputable. For my opinion there is no mercury in the Deccan traps — *Editor Note*).

I will terminate this report by mentioning a few examples of more classical, well-established dealers who year after year constitute the solid backbone of the show: Good old Jordi Fabre (*Fabre Minerals*), for me the best mineralogist of all, who had as usual an outstanding choice of minerals from Southern Europe, notably Spain and Portugal, e.g. bright-yellow autunite, a number of crystals ending in more greenish meta-autunite recently found in the granite province of central Portugal (Viseu) (Fig. 25).

Alain Carion (*Carion Minerals*, Paris), the top meteorite collector in France had, as usual, very fine meteorite samples and Jorge Dascal (*Patagonia minerals*) the best samples from Argentina: volcanic hematite/magnetite skeletal crystals, and elegant black-red agate geodes.

The well known dealer from Australia, Robert Sielecki (*Ausrox/Crystal Universe*) was in Sainte-Marie for the first time, to demonstrate that Australia has something other than stromatolites, BIF's or opals. He had notably some rare minerals from the Ranger uranium mine, NT Australia, including the very rare Mg-bearing U phos-





23. **Ludlamite** crystals on matrix, 9.5 x 13 cm. Cacehoro mine, Amazonas, Brazil. Specimen: Jean Jacques Abello, Cailloux.



24. Red **calcite**. 9 x 6 cm. Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India. Find of 2016. Specimen: *Matrix India*.

25. **Meta-autunite** with **Autunite**, 5 x 3.5 cm. Senhora da Assuncao Ferreira de Aves, Satao, Viseu District, Portugal. Find of 2016. Specimen: Jordi Fabre, Spain.

26. **Saleeite**, 7.5 x 5 cm. Ranger Mine, Jabaru, NT Australia. Specimen: *Ausrox*, Australia.

phate saleeite (*Fig. 26*). It was good to compare to the more common autunite from Jordi (both have the same flashing yellow colour), but reserved for experienced collectors who know how to handle radioactivity. (Incidentally, this could be a good exercise in these days of potential hazards!).

Many other names deserve to be mentioned, concerning e.g. specimens from Morocco or Madagascar, but it is impossible to cite them all. I searched for minerals from Russia, which has been repeatedly among the best in the show in past years. Not many dealers this year, but at least one (Victor Ponomarenko, *Axinite PM Inc.*) with a very interesting sample, a sphere of pyrite in black coal shale found in the Djeganas River, Caucasus, Russia (*Fig. 22*). A rostrum of belemnite is inlaid in the sphere, suggesting that the decomposition of belemnite tissues has been instrumental for the crystallization of the pyrite. A nice example of bio-mineralogy, to be shown to students of this rapidly developing field of research.

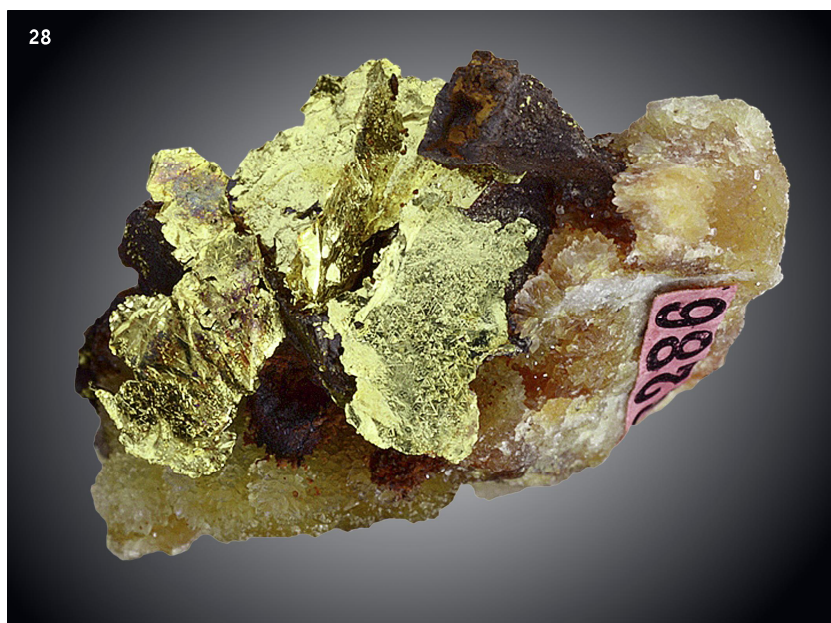
In fact, the best Russian samples were not to be found with Russian dealers, but by a "figure" of the show, Wolfgang Wendel (*Wendel Minerals*) from Germany. His outstanding display in the ordinary mineral zone, equaling in quality and spectacle the best ones in the Theater, had a number of very good specimens from classical Russian localities, many of them described in recent issues or monographs in the Almanac: sperrylite from Norilsk, fluorite on calcite from Dalnegorsk (*Fig. 27*), gold from the Bereyzovskoye deposit, Central Urals (*Fig. 29*). It seems that the supply of new specimen from these localities has markedly decreased in recent years, the best pieces are to be found in the reserves of prominent dealers or in the resale of former collections. Another piece of much historical interest was



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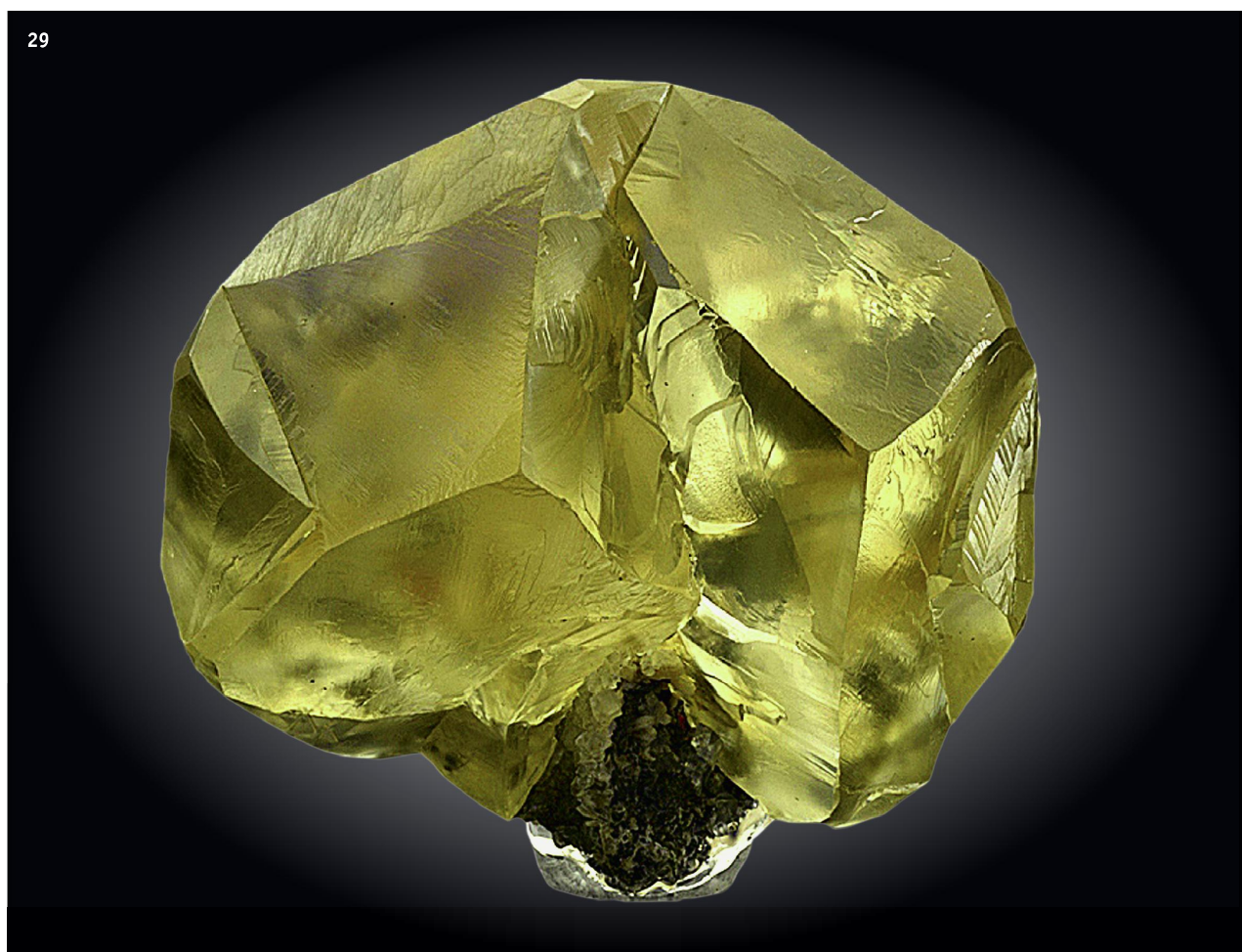
28. **Gold** on matrix. 3.8 cm. Berezovskoye deposit (?), Central Urals, Russia.
Photo: Michael Leybov.



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27. **Fluorite** with sphalerite. 16 cm tall.
Second Sovetskii Mine, Dalnegorsk,
Prymorsky Kray, Russia.
Photo: Joaquim Callen.

29. **Calcite**. 9 x 7 cm.
Sokolovskoye Iron Mine, Kustanai Province,
Kazakhstan. Photo: Michael Leybov.





30. Mariella Rossi, Adriaan Bornman and Oy-Ling Talula Booth from Rock On, South Africa (left to right).

31. Sammi Makki (Matrix India).

32. Famous international dealers (right to left): Wolfgang Wendel (Germany), Dylan Stolzowicz (USA), Mike Bergman (USA), Nick Stolzowicz (USA).

33. Mustafa Ghulam and Jacques Touret.

34. Cathie Cordival, general manager of "Mineral & Gem" International Show in Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines.

35. Dr. Guanghua Liu (AAA Mineral International, China), organizer of the Beijing Show (November 2016).

a superb set of crystals of native bismuth (wismut), many of them showing nice figures of ongoing crystallization and/or partial melting (gediegen wismut). Coming from the Erzgebirge Schlema (Bad Schlema) mine, this sample reminds me of the SAG/SDAG Wismut Company (Chemnitz), with many thousands workers the largest producer of uranium in the former East Germany (DDR) at the time of the Cold War.

To conclude, I would say that the Sainte-Marie Show has preserved most of its interest, its very special atmosphere of being entirely in a former old mining city and with the strong involvement of the entire population. It is certainly worth the visit, but there are signs which could indicate a less brilliant future. The ever increasing number of dealers is not matched by an equal number of clients. There is still some feeling among many people that natural stones are worth nothing, as you can collect them freely. The number of serious collectors does not seem to increase substantially year after year, much to the contrary. As one of the best dealer told me, *"the peak is behind us"*. On the other hand, the region of Sainte-Marie has much to offer, and I feel confident that many people from many countries will still plan to travel to the Vosges at the beginning of the summer. They should not only spend a few hectic days in crowded alleys, but also enjoy the many sites worth visiting in the Vosges. Not only the old mines around Sainte-Marie, in practice only open to the public during the show, but the places in the Southern Vosges, e.g. the copper mine of the Ducs de Lorraine at Le Thillot, about 50 km away, or the geology center Terrae Genesis at Saint Amé near Remiremont, the place where the granite industry started in France in the 19th century. Also, the art treasures from Strasbourg and Colmar are not far away, and not to forget culinary delights: anyone has not tasted a slice of Munster cheese while sipping a glass or two of Riesling wine does not know the ultimate art of living the French way.

Author thanks Dr. John White for improving English style of the article.