

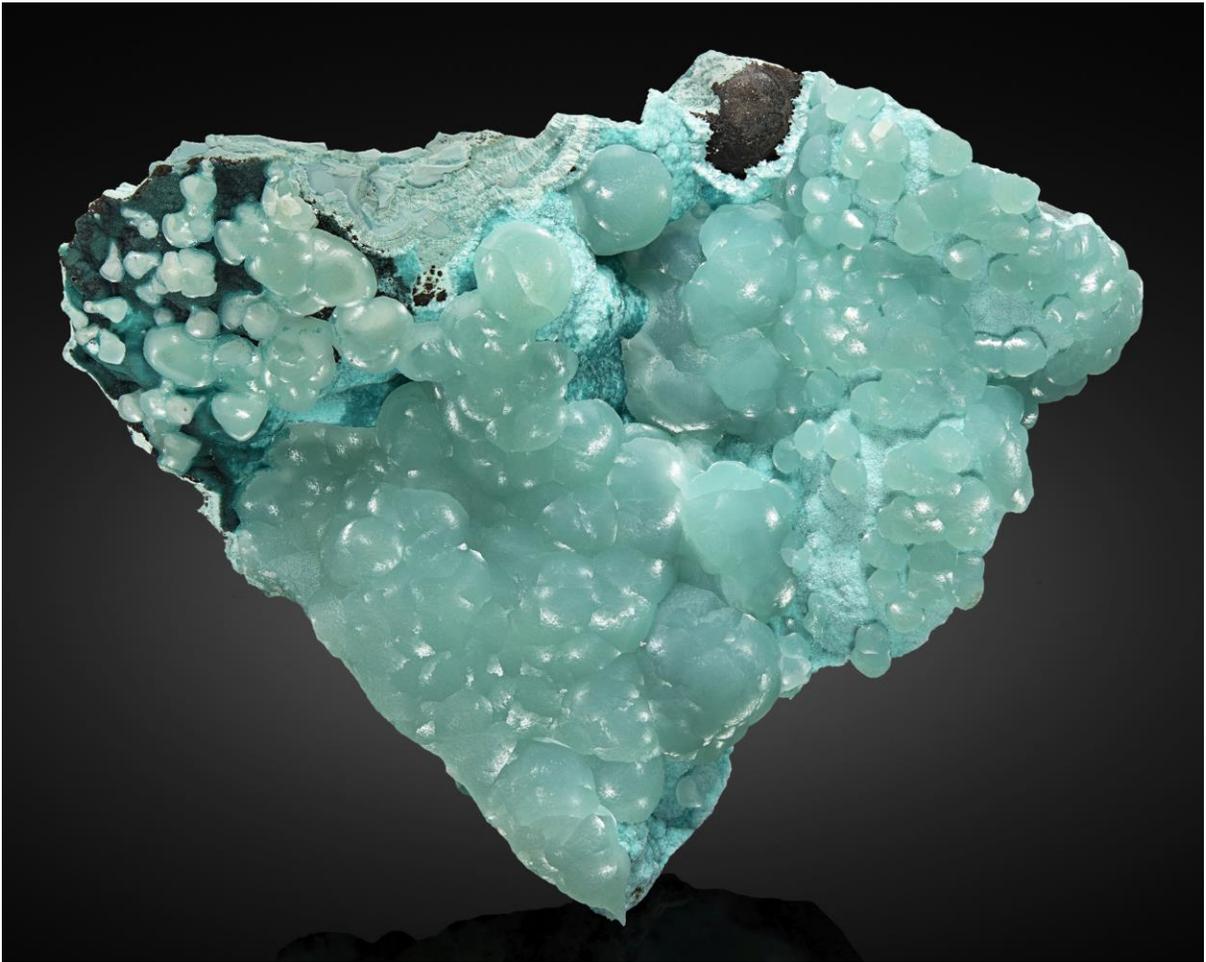
the best specimens from the 2021 find, with individual calcite crystals from 5 to 8 cm in starbursts, flowers or cacti to more than 30 cm in diameter. As usual, the *Spirifer* website has a thorough article on the occurrence and on the Spirifer crew's adventures traveling from Poland to check it out.



Calcite, 14 cm, from Guning Keriang, Alor Star, Kedah State, Malaysia. Spirifer Minerals specimen and photo.

Tomasz Praszkiar and the *Spirifer* team have also put in a lot of work recently in the belt of exciting localities which runs from Renéville through Mindouli and to M’Fouati, along the southern edge of the Republic of Congo (former French Congo). Besides this region’s world-class specimens of veszelyite, which are well known by now, and besides the new helpings of classic diopside from Renéville and Sanda (see the Tucson 2021 report in July-August 2021), excellent **smithsonite** specimens have emerged from a group of quarries called Yanga Koubenza, very near M’Fouati and near the Palabanda

quarry, from whence the veszelyite comes. The Yanga Koubenza quarries in carbonate rocks are now being worked by a Chinese company for industrial-grade material, but specimen-worthy gray to blue-green to deep blue smithsonite began to show up in July 2021. The Spirifer entrepreneurs have latched on to some fine examples of the blue-green stuff up to cabinet size, with smithsonite spheres reaching 3 cm over smithsonite crusts of the same vivid color—almost the same color as for the best of the classic smithsonites from the old Kelly mine in New Mexico. Associations of aurichalcite, kipushite, azurite and hemimorphite add to the colorful fun, and the specimens of this material now being prepared for sale at the Tucson Show should be dazzlers. Meanwhile you’ll find some good ones on the *Spirifer* website, together, of course, with the usual Spirifer travelog-essay about “being there.”



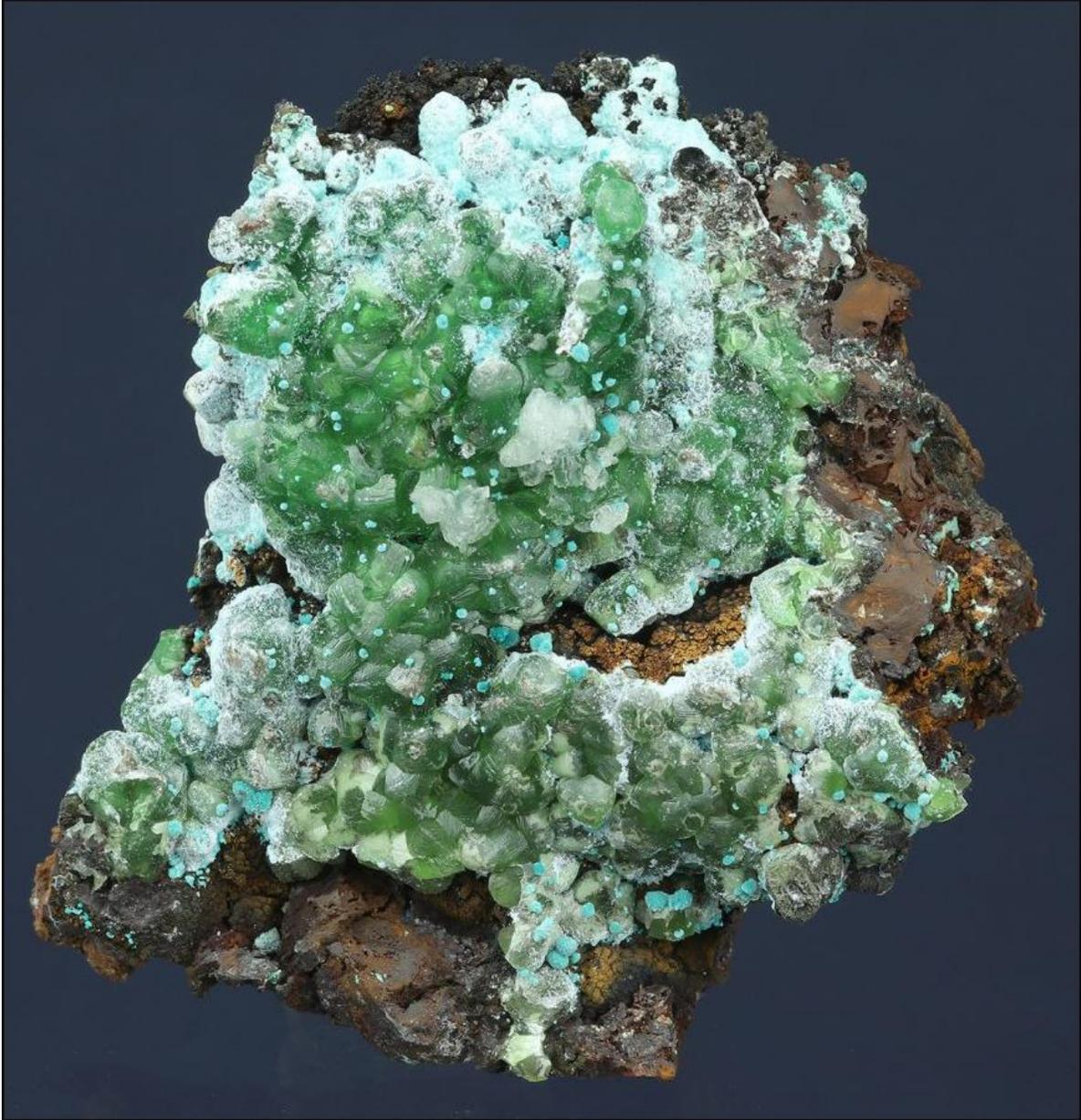
Smithsonite, 10.2 cm, from the Yanga Koubenza quarries, Bouenza Department, Republic of Congo. Spirifer Minerals specimen and photo.

Speaking of the popular zinc carbonate, some fine specimens of green copper-rich **smithsonite** have come from a recent find in Sounion mine #6 (also known as the Exi mine, “Exi” being Greek for “six”) in the ancient Laurium mining district of Attika, Greece. On the website of his always-interesting *Greek Rocks* dealership (greekrocks.com), Christos Spiromitros has a December 24 update with a “Christmas sale” on Laurium and other Greek items, with prices reduced by up to two-thirds. Just a week after being posted many of these specimens are already marked “sold,” but still available are some glowing thumbnails and miniatures of the new smithsonite showing bright apple-green, translucent spheres set individually or in clumps over matrix: the price of the thumbnail shown here has been reduced from 200 to 110 Euros (~ \$130).



Cu-rich smithsonite, 2.7 cm, from Sounion mine #6, Laurium district, Attika, Greece. Greek Rocks specimen and photo.

The same discovery in Sounion mine #6 has also produced larger specimens which show the candy-like green smithsonite associated with blue aurichalcite, colorless calcite and white hemimorphite, all on brown, gossany matrix. Christos has reduced the price of the miniature shown below from 550 to 300 Euros (~ \$360).



Cu-rich smithsonite with aurichalcite, calcite and hemimorphite, 5.5 cm, from Sounion mine #6, Laurium district, Attika, Greece. Greek Rocks specimen and photo.

In a December 7 update on the *Fabre Minerals* website (fabreminerals.com), Jordi Fabre offers nine miniature to cabinet-size specimens showing **pyrite coating barite, and pyrite perimorphs after barite**, from a summer 2020 find in the Bou Nahas mine, Oumjrane mining area, Alnif Commune, Tinghir Province, Drâa-Tafilalet region, Morocco (nobody can accuse Jordi of skimping on locality data). The specimens are parallel groups of corroded, white, tabular barite crystals, some of the crystals still there, others almost entirely gone, with shiny shells of minute cubic and octahedral pyrite crystals completely covering them. Some of the specimens are marked “reserved” but most are available at prices from \$90 to more than \$700.



Barite coated by pyrite, 10.5 cm, from the Oumjrane mining area, Alnif Commune, Tinghir Province, Drâa-Tafilalet region, Morocco. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

In the same December 7 posting, Jordi has very nice thumbnails (still in their Perky boxes) from the Robert Noble collection, as well as “duplicates” from his personal collection. The latter reveal Jordi’s excellent taste and bespeak his collecting history, as all are from his four favorite proximate mineral countries: Spain, Portugal, France and Morocco. Here is the prettiest of the group: a **cobalt-rich calcite** with pyrite from the Aghbar mine, Bou Azzer district, Drâa-Tafilalet Region, Morocco. Jordi writes that the specimen “has been with me for many years, reminding me of those trips to Morocco so full of sunshine and adventure.”



Co-rich calcite, 7.5 cm, from the Aghbar mine, Bou Azzer District, Drâa-Tafilalet region, Morocco. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

But here is another *new* item from Jordi: small, fairly attractive specimens of the very rare borate-carbonate **imayoshiite**, newly found in the “Shijiang-Shalonggou deposits” (usually denoted just as the “Shijiangshan mine”), Hexingten Banner, Inner Mongolia, China. Jordi had a couple of Shijiang imayoshiite specimens at the Munich Show—see the Munich report in the upcoming issue—but the four thumbnail and small-miniature specimens now on the website are better than those Munich harbingers. Imayoshiite is seen as sharp, hexagonal-tabular crystals to a few millimeters, transparent and colorless to slightly yellow, with associations including bultfonteinite, tobermorite and andradite. The Shijiang mine has been on a roll for the past few years, producing the world’s only collector-quality specimens of borcarite, olshanskyite, roweite, pentahydroborite and

others—see the article on the locality in the September-October 2021 *Rocks & Minerals*, and see Bert Ottens' fine new book called *China II* (described briefly in the Munich report). For the small-miniature specimen of imayoshiite pictured here Jordi asks \$553.



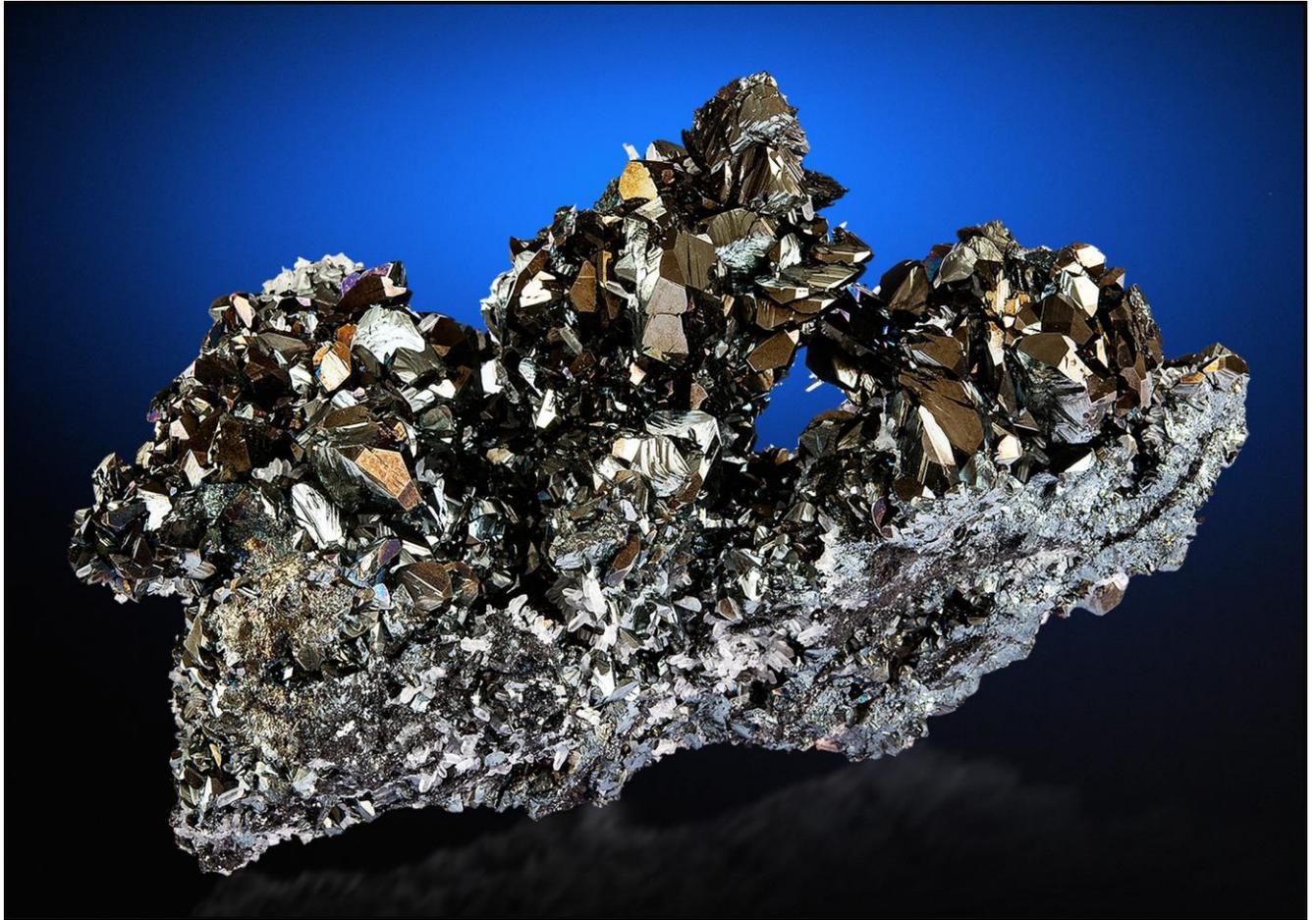
Imayoshiite, 3.2 cm, from the Shijiangshan-Shalonggou Deposits, Hexigten Banner, Inner Mongolia, China. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

I said that China's "Shijiang mine" is now on a roll, and yes indeed, there are more recent finds from this intriguing locality on a December 29 update of Ibrahim Jameel's *Khyber Minerals* website (khyberminerals.com). Some of the new items in the update amount to a repeat performance of the inky blue fluorite-on-quartz specimens from the nearby Huanggang mine, but more interesting are the new specimens of **bultfonteinite on plombierite** from the Shijiang mine. Quite unlike the locality's earlier-known (and much less attractive) bultfonteinite specimens, which are jackstraw groups of chalk-white acicular crystals, these new ones show softly peach-colored spheres of bultfonteinite resting demurely on white coatings of plombierite over matrix. Ibrahim has five miniatures, the one shown here being the largest: a pretty 7.4-cm piece priced at \$580.



Bultfonteinite on plombierite, 7.4 cm, from the Shijiangshan mine, Hexigten Banner, Inner Mongolia, China. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

On November 26, Rudolf Watzl of *Saphira Minerals* (saphiraminerals.com) posted a 15-page “Christmas sale” of miscellaneous superb specimens, mostly from the European Alps but some from other well mineralized places worldwide. Rudolf will take 10% off the price for any single specimen and up to 50% off for buyers of five or more. The Alpine pieces, though all are fine, are unsurprising; the real surprises come with the one-of-a-kind items from elsewhere, and the three examples shown here remain unsold as of New Year’s Day. One of them is a very large, very busy Elba hematite specimen, like a metallic black coral reef almost 16 cm across, touched with high iridescence, for 8500 Euros (~ \$10,200).



Hematite, 15.7 cm, from the Isle of Elba, Tuscany, Italy. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.

And if that’s too much for your budget, here is a beautiful miniature of transparent, palest purple **albite** from the Tatar mine, Khyber Agency, FATA, Pakistan, for 350 Euros (~ \$420):



Albite, 3.7 cm, from the Tatarra mine, Khyber Agency, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.

Finally, Rudolf offers a handsome, classic, old-time specimen of well crystallized **native bismuth** from Niederschlema, in the Erzgebirge (“Ore Mountains”), of Saxony, Germany, for 2000 Euros (~ \$2400).



Bismuth, 5.5 cm, from Niederschlema, Erzgebirge, Saxony, Germany. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.

Hard-working Dan Weinrich of *Weinrich Minerals, Inc.* (WeinrichMineralsInc.com), who updates his website *at least* once a week, has a last-week-of-December installment with dozens of large crystal groups of green (hedenbergite-included) **quartz** from the Huanggang mines of Inner Mongolia, China. The lustrous, green, well-terminated prismatic crystals which stick out in all directions have odd, accordion-pleated sides which give them a stacked or even scepter-like look; the typically fulsome specimen pictured here costs \$1100.



Quartz with hedenbergite inclusions, 11 cm, from the Huanggang mines, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, China. Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.

Further, Dan Weinrich continues to mete out thumbnails from the former Martin Jensen collection, just a few of these in each new update, all fine, all tempting to eager thumbnailers such as Martin himself was in his collecting heyday. Many of these specimens were field-collected by Martin around the American West, e.g. this fetching **barite** which he dug in July 1997 from the 3525 stope, 975-foot level of the Meikle mine, Carlin Trend, Elko County, Nevada. As for all of Martin's old specimens offered today by Dan, these full data have been preserved carefully with the specimen (see Martin's full article on the Meikle mine in the May-June 1999 issue of the *Mineralogical Record*).



Barite, 3 cm, from the Meikle mine, Carlin Trend, Elko County, Nevada. Ex Martin Jensen collection. Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.

From Tucson's satellite show at Mineral City last April I noted (in the July-August 2021 issue) that earlier in the year a major find of transparent **gypsum** ("selenite") specimens had occurred in the Naica district, Chihuahua, Mexico, and that a Mexican dealer had brought in numerous splendid specimens of the material. Well, there is now a website—that of *Earthquest Minerals* (earthquestminerals.com), never noted before in one of these online reports—which offers cabinet-size specimens from the same "recent 2021 find," the text adding that the specimens came from the Naica mine proper, where mining had been suspended for a year but where "new production is an encouraging

sign”—whether this refers to production of collector specimens or to full renewal of commercial mining remains unclear. Anyway, the site pictures only three of a “large lot” obtained by *Earthquest*; each is a single, lustrous, loose crystal, entirely colorless and transparent, and their respective prices are \$200, \$225 and \$500. Yes, big “selenite” crystals were once quite common around the market and much less expensive, but times change, you know, and certainly these are beautiful objects—although I wish, in my pedantry, that dealers who have them would routinely call them by their real name, i.e. their species name, *gypsum*, instead of always headlining them with the varietal term “selenite.”



**Gypsum variety selenite, 11.5 cm, from the Naica mine, Chihuahua, Mexico
Earthquest Minerals specimen and photo.**

One of my favorite websites to visit is that of Kevin Ward's *Exceptional Minerals* (exceptionalminerals.com), not only because nearly all of the specimens to be seen there are, yes, exceptional, but also because Kevin takes excellent photos, and moreover he shares with me a special fondness for silver-bearing species. A November 27 update on the site is loaded with nice silvery things and especially with specimens of **native silver**: dramatic examples, one after another, in miniature to full-cabinet sizes and in a full range of habits, of silver from Kongsberg and Freiberg and Příbram through Bou Azzar, Batopilas, Keweenaw, Cobalt-Gowganda, Guanajuato...and China. One Chinese specimen seems to me the most striking of the whole array: it's a 7.2-cm mass of bright wires of different thicknesses but all clearly, cleanly articulated, from the Hongda mine in Shanxi Province. Kevin prices this ex-Terry Szenics specimen at \$4850.



Silver, 7.2 cm, from the Hongda mine, Lingqiu County, Datong, Shanxi Province, China.
Ex Terry Szenics collection. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Another star of the late November update on *Exceptional Minerals* is a single 7.2-cm specimen of **rhodochrosite** from what they call Deano’s Pocket, in the new Detroit City Portal workings of the Sweet Home mine, Park County, Colorado. Ever since Bryan Lees and his *Collector’s Edge* crew began this new mining project a few years ago, everyone of course has been wondering whether the best of the new “Detroit City” rhodochrosites would actually rival the best of the old Sweet Home showboats—and Kevin Ward’s specimen signifies that the answer as of today is something like “yes—almost.” The *Exceptional Minerals* specimen is a well-balanced piece with rhombohedral crystals of rhodochrosite to 3 cm on edge grouped, not too tightly, on metallic matrix of crystallized pyrite and tetrahedrite, with little garnishes of quartz and blue fluorite crystals. The rhodochrosite rhombs are sharp, apparently undamaged, and a medium rose-pink, but they are cloudy, with no gemmy areas showing—and I should add that *Collector’s Edge* itself (CollectorsEdge.com) offers many comparable pieces. This \$28,500 specimen is superb, and nearly up to the highest standards of old.



Rhodochrosite, 7.2 cm, from Deano’s Pocket, Detroit City Portal, Sweet Home mine, Park County, Colorado. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* (irocks.com) has several interesting and creative New Galleries including one, posted on October 28, called "San Diego Classics," with tourmalines, kunzites and other good things from California which Rob has acquired from Bill Larson. These are from old mining projects, and their high quality and desirability are typified by the piece shown here, a loose, gem-quality, 6.8-cm crystal of **spodumene variety kunzite**, extracted at some time between 1974 and 1986 from the short-lived locality called the Beebe Hole mine (or Crystal Gem mine), Jacumba District, San Diego County. The crystal is color-zoned in very pale green and very pale lavender-pink, and is priced at \$4,500.



Spodumene variety kunzite, 6.8 cm, from the Beebe Hole mine, Jacumba District, San Diego County, California. Ex Bill Larson collection. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.

From the gemmy and beautiful to the very homely but very rare and in fact world-class for its species, we turn now to a handful of miniatures of **ludwigite** brought to market by Jack Crowley on a recent update on the website of his dealership, *The Crystal Mine* (crystal-mine.com). This update has 25 generous pages of miscellaneous minerals, specializing in out-of-the-way things, many of them (including the ludwigites) field-collected by Jack. Collectors have almost exclusively seen ludwigite (a Mg-Fe borate) as humble-looking, usually flat-lying bundles or fans of black, acicular crystals, though it is most familiar as hair-like inclusions in very small numbers of the gemmy green forsterite (peridot) crystals from Sapat Gali, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan (see Wendell Wilson’s article on that locality in November-December 2020: there are photos therein of peridot crystals showing inclusions of long ludwigite needles). Well, the ludwigite crystals that Jack Crowley collected at a remote site in Idaho are actually free-standing, fairly thick prisms in jumbled groups, associated with dull black, octahedral magnetite crystals; to heighten their homeliness the ludwigite crystals are somewhat altered superficially to a brown, amorphous, unknown mineral. But here is a 7-cm ludwigite crystal group with individuals to 1 cm— “some of the finest ever found,” Jack writes—with magnetite crystals and massive white calcite, for which Jack asks the modest sum of \$65. Oh yes, the locality: Mindat calls it the Bruce Estate deposit, Quartzite Canyon, but Jack calls it the Spring Gulch/Valley View mine, Quartzite (or White Rock) Canyon, Spring Mountain District, Lemhi County, Idaho.



Ludwigite with magnetite, 7 cm, from the Spring Gulch/Valley View mine, Quartzite Canyon, Spring Mountain District, Lemhi County, Idaho. The Crystal Mine specimen and photo.

In the last two online reports I lavished attention on the new, greatly expanded website of *Tyson's Fine Minerals* (tysonsfineminerals.com), which offers Canadian (and some worldwide) goodies straight from the Tysons' big white house in Nova Scotia. And now I'll salute the dealership for a third time, as Rod and Helen keep adding *new* goodies to the Canadian sections of this somewhat eccentric but chummy website. Canadian mineral offerings are alphabetized as to species (A-H, I-P, Q-Z), and in each section are four further sections arranged by specimen prices (up to \$25; \$25-\$100; \$100-\$500; and over \$500). There is no mistaking the *most* recent items, as each announces itself as a NEW POST (as seen in the barite and wardite photos below); Tysons also provide size-measurement bars below each specimen image. Now that you've been briefed, here are four typically fine things from Canada which are up on the site this New Year...

A locale on Lynn Road, Colchester County, Nova Scotia has been producing quite handsome **barite** specimens, with blue, translucent to transparent, chisel-terminated crystals in parallel groups. Several attractive miniatures are available; this 5.6-cm one appears in A-H, \$100-\$500:



Barite, 5.6 cm, from Lynn Road, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, Canada. Tysons Fine Minerals specimen and photo.

Some outstanding thumbnails and miniatures from the Rapid Creek area, Yukon Territory, showing gray-white to pale green pseudo-octahedrons of **wardite** dusted with brown eosphorite, are available in three of the four price categories. Here is one of the better thumbnails: a stacked group of sharp, lustrous wardite crystals with partial eosphorite coatings from the Stoneman Camp, Rapid Creek area, for \$350:



Wardite with eosphorite, 2.2 cm, from Stoneman Camp, Rapid Creek area, Yukon Territory, Canada. Tysons Fine Minerals specimen and photo.

And then there's this swanky, buffed-looking (but it's not) miniature of botryoidal **hematite**—one of several on the site—from Old Barns, Nova Scotia—for \$40.



Hematite, 5.2 cm, from Old Barns, Nova Scotia, Canada. Tysons Fine Minerals specimen and photo.

Mike Keim's *Marin Minerals* (marinmineral.com—don't forget to *not* put an "s" on "mineral") is always a good surfing destination, as Mike is a fine photographer who favors beauty in specimens and who updates his site very frequently (and doesn't set up at the major shows). His December 7 update offers four sharp, loose, tetrahedral crystals of **chambersite**, three of them measuring 5 mm and one measuring 6 mm, from the salty brines which are byproducts of oil-well drilling around the Venice Salt Dome, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. This manganese chloride-bromide, known to thumbnail collectors only as miniscule loose pseudo-tetrahedrons, is highly prized by many of those same collectors; specimens of it appear on the market but rarely. All three *Marin Minerals* chambersite crystals were collected by Fred Pough in 1970 and resided

subsequently in the Chuck Trantham collection before coming to Mike, who prices them now at \$140 to \$180.



Chambersite, 6 mm, from the Venice Salt Dome, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. Ex Fred Pough, Chuck Trantham collections. Marin Minerals specimen and photo.

Last on the roster comes an Austrian dealership which I've mentioned a few times before: *Via Mineralia* (viamineralia.com), operated by Robert Kunze and Martin Grill. Naturally, Austrian specimens are among the specialties here; thus Robert and Martin offer eight pieces from a place where they have gone digging themselves—the Hohenems-Unterklien quarry, Vorarlberg, in the western extremity of the country. In these specimens, spherical aggregates of very bright **pyrite** crystals are at least half exposed in matrix chunks of a hard, dark limestone. A short article on the website tells us that quarrying at the site began in 1610 but has now largely ceased, the best pyrites having been taken out by collectors around the year 2000. These pretty specimens range in size from “toenail” to small-cabinet, and all but the one toenail are priced at 220 to 240 Euros (~ \$265 to \$290)—the toenail, a lustrous, loose pyrite sphere, is priced at 100 Euros (~ \$120). The specimen pictured here, though, is from Robert's private collection

and is not for sale (“never sell your soul,” the article quotes a collector as saying, “only people who experienced [this] will understand”).



Pyrite, 5 cm, from the Hohenems-Unterklien quarry, Vorarlberg, Austria. Robert Kunze specimen and photo.

But the wider distinction of *Via Mineralia* these days results from Robert and Martin’s apparently excellent sources of new minerals from Iran. The scroll-down selection of “Latest Updates” on the website includes swarms of top-notch Iranian specimens of hemimorphite, wulfenite, calcite, analcime and the gemmy spodumene from Hamadan Province I’ve mentioned before in this space, and the same scroll-down includes many fine examples of the by now familiar brick-red, razor-sharp modified-tetrahedral crystals of zunyite, both loose and in hematite matrix, from Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province. But wait! “Latest Updates” also presents a handful of Iranian **zunyite** specimens of a new type, from a place given as Larak Island, “a small island in the Persian Gulf [and] a new location for zunyite in Iran”—although it’s a good bet that this occurrence, like the one at Bandar Abbas, is hosted by a salt diapir. Matrix plates to small-cabinet size are littered

abundantly with sharp, simple, pale yellow-brown tetrahedral crystals of zunyite, the crystals lacking entirely the brick-red tinting of their earlier brothers, although the matrix itself is infused by red hematite. In their divergent way these also are world-beating zunyite specimens, and of substantial size, bearing prices—modest, I think, all things considered—from 145 to 210 Euros (~ \$175 to \$250).



Zunyite, 6.5 cm, from Larak Island, Persian Gulf, Hormozgan Province, Iran. Via Mineralia specimen and photo.

Then there are the 15 or so specimens of **native copper** from the Qaleh-Zari mine, South Khorosan Province, Iran, which are likewise available now from the *Via Mineralia* website. These miniatures from a 2021 find show somewhat flattened dendritic growths of crystallized copper, some in delicate isolation, some rising stoutly from gray-green rock matrix. According to Mindat, the Qaleh-Zari mine has exploited this polymetallic deposit since 1972, but “the minerals of the mine were not displayed [i.e. saved as specimens?] for more than three decades.” Mindat mentions “fine and aesthetic specimens” of calcite, hemimorphite and quartz, but not of copper; maybe the 2021 find is a first. Prices run from 60 to 300 Euros (~ \$70 to \$360).



Copper, 5 cm, from the Qaleh-Zari mine, South Khorosan Province, Iran. Via Mineralia specimen and photo.

Readers of these online reports will have noticed by now that I like to conclude by showing off a single specimen which stirs my soul profoundly. All right, keep it secular, and be specific: I'm talking about the specimen which, in view of its size, appearance, rarity, special characteristics, provenance, etc., I would most like to add to whatever collection I might imagine having; for me this is, to use Wayne Thompson's term, an "Ikonic" specimen that I would unreservedly treasure (we all know the thrill of spotting such things unexpectedly, online or elsewhere). This time around, the specimen happens to fit two important criteria that I favor for my *real* collection: it's a thumbnail, and it's from a classic German locality. It is a 2.4-cm specimen of **scorodite on fluorite** from the old, famous, species-rich Clara mine, near the village of Oberwolfach in the Black Forest, in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, showing about six vibrantly deep blue, flowerlike clusters of scorodite crystals blooming from the flat faces of an incomplete, cubic fluorite

crystal. Robert and Martin of *Via Mineralia* priced the piece at 2100 Euros (~ \$2500), and it is already sold—just as well, the Good Angel intones, you really can't afford it anyway.



**Scorodite on fluorite, 2.4 cm, from the Clara mine, Oberwolfach, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.
Via Mineralia specimen and photo.**

Come to this year's TUCSON SHOW! Despite Omicron (wear that mask!) it should be its usual soul-stirring extravaganza.

Tom Moore