

What's New in the Mineral World?



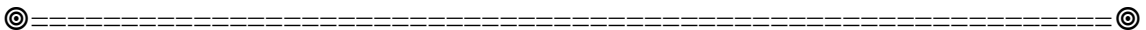
Report #70
June 11, 2024

by **Thomas P. Moore**
The Mineralogical
Record
TPMoore1@cox.net



Faithful followers of these online reports (if any such there be) will observe that this report, number 70, follows fairly hard on the heels of its predecessor, number 69. That is chiefly because some excursions of mine which will limit my online-reporting time are now pending, these including not only a vacation visit to Oregon but also a venture (with Chris Stefano) to Alsace, France, where the Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show, always a fun reporting-and-shopping venue, will take place as usual in the last week of June. Yet there are, of course, now as ever, plenty of fine minerals to be seen in dealers' postings online; let me tell you about a few I have noted since barely two months ago...

Beginning in the 1970s, flamboyantly beautiful specimens showing gemmy pale green, tetragonal-prismatic, sharp-pointed crystals of "apophyllite"—actually the species is **fluorapophyllite-(K)** — have appeared on the mineral market from quarries in the Pashan Hills of the Deccan Plateau basalts around the city of Pune (formerly "Poona"), Maharashtra State, India. There were numerous dealers' offerings of these specimens, with gorgeous green crystals to 10 cm long, in the last decades of the 20th century, but since the turn of the millennium they have grown much more elusive (even more so the still rarer Pune pieces with sprays of acicular white mesolite perched on the sides of the apophyllite crystals). Well, Dave Bunk has scored about a dozen fine miniature to cabinet-size specimens of Pune fluorapophyllite-(K), and at the end of May he posted them on his website (davebunkminerals.com), whereon a handful are still up for sale at prices from \$850 to \$12,500. Dave says that the specimens are "original," i.e. they date to the 1970s—and so this is your chance to acquire a spectacular item not markedly older, most likely, than you are, but nearly enough a "contemporary classic." See just below:





Fluorapophyllite-(K), 5.5 cm, from the Pashan quarries, Pune district, Maharashtra, India. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen



Fluorapophyllite-(K), 7.5 cm, from the Pashan quarries, Pune district, Maharashtra, India. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

Earlier in May, Dave Bunk also posted about a dozen good thumbnails and miniatures of **rhodochrosite** from the old Urad molybdenum mine (closed since 1974) near Empire, Clear Creek County, Colorado, with medium-pink and opaque but sharp rhombohedral crystals reaching 2.5 cm. Some of Dave's specimens are single, loose crystals of rhodochrosite while others show the pink rhombs sitting nicely on matrix with white drusy quartz and black sphalerite in understated attendance. There are also a couple of Urad mine miniatures with smallish green octahedral fluorite and lustrous pyrite crystals on matrix.



Rhodochrosite, 4 cm, from the Urad mine near Empire, Clear Creek County, Colorado. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

Luis Burillo Minerales (luisburillominerales.com) has always been well stocked in fine Panasqueira, Portugal minerals, and currently, if you click on “Source” in the locality menu, then on “Panasqueira,” you will see excellent ferberite, siderite, fluorite, cassiterite, and green and purple fluorapatite specimens, all in diverse sizes (the prices are shown in euros, but these days the euro-dollar exchange rate is nearly one-to-one). On that same Panasqueira page are some thumbnails of **fluorapatite** which show the species in radically different aspects than we are used to seeing, and two are shown here: (1, just below) a parallel group of fluorapatite crystals which are sharply color-zoned, dark purple near the bases and creamy *white* in the prisms above (€315), and (2, next page) a delicate spray, rising from a shard of matrix, of transparent, colorless to very pale yellow, thin-prismatic crystals (€75). These specimens would seem to open new vistas for Panasqueira fluorapatite—affirming that this great locality, though many decades old, remains prolific, and is even up to producing some *new* things from time to time. (For a thorough article on Panasqueira by Carles Curto Milà and Jordi Fabre, see the January-February 2014 *Mineralogical Record*.)



**Fluorapatite, 2.9 cm, from the Panasqueira mine, Covilhã, Castelo Branco, Cova da Peira, Portugal.
Luis Burillo Minerales specimen and photo.**



**Fluorapatite, 2.9 cm, from the Panasqueira mine, Covilhã, Castelo Branco, Cova da Peira, Portugal.
Luis Burillo Minerales specimen and photo.**

Speaking of **fluorapatite**, a much lesser-known source of fine specimens of that popular species is the Foote mine, Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, North Carolina—this is a century-old, commercially valuable exploitation for lithium in a body of lithium-rich pegmatite (an article on the locality will appear in a future issue of the *Mineralogical Record*). The very numerous Foote mine species include the world’s best specimens of fairfieldite and bikitaite, plus many super-rare phosphates, but fluorapatite has always been the major desideratum. The fluorapatite crystals come in several colors, the prettiest of which are pale lilac to medium-purple, although most Foote fluorapatites are of a distinctive orange-brown-purple hue and appear as lustrous hexagonal-tabular crystals, exceptionally to 3 cm on edge, intergrown or sprinkled on white pegmatitic matrix. Recently, Geoff Krasnov of *Geokrazy Minerals* (geokrazy.com) acquired a part of a large collection of Foote mine minerals assembled by the late Jack Eaker, a former mine foreman there. Geoff, as well as his partner Isaias Casanova of *IC Minerals*, now has Foote mine fluorapatite specimens up to cabinet size, for example the one shown here, with 1-cm crystals of that peculiar “Foote” color set nicely on matrix. Geoff says that he intends soon to offer many more pieces like this on his website, as well as “in person” at Denver and Tucson, so stay (as they say) tuned.



Fluorapatite, 8 cm, from the Foote mine, Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, North Carolina. Ex Jack Eaker collection. Geokrazy specimen and photo.

The French dealership *SZ Mineraux* offers worldwide minerals on its website (*SZ-Mineraux.com*), but with special emphasis (naturally) on those from France. We learn on this site, or are reminded, that, like Colorado, France boasts many localities for first-rate **barite**: some of these mines and quarries go back a number of decades or centuries but many are still producing fine barite today, in a wide range of habits, colors and associations. Of the “modern” French barites seen now on the *SZ Mineraux* website, those which most catch my eye are the several big, gleaming groups of orange, semi-gemmy, tabular crystals from Chatel-Guyon, Riom, Puy-de-Dôme, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes—like the piece shown here, priced at €200. According to Mindat, these beautiful orange barites come from a number of small barite veins which crop out around the town of Riom, in the Chatel-Guyon commune, where they are tapped by many small quarry workings. The barite specimens strongly recall, and at their best nearly equal, the much better-known German ones from the Pöhla mine in the Saxon Erzgebirge.



Barite, 6.4 cm, from Riom, Chatel-Guyon commune, Puy-de-Dôme, France. SZ-Mineraux specimen and photo.

As often noted before in these online reports, Dan Weinrich updates his website (WeinrichMineralsInc.com) once a week—every Thursday, to be precise—and so we must keep looking in regularly at the very extensive, eclectic offerings there. In this early June, Dan has a miscellany of copper minerals up on the site, especially including dozens of splendid azurites and malachites from Morenci—Bisbee—Chessy—Tsumeb—Oumjerane—Yangjiang—and so on. Here, though, I will show you two of Dan’s “coppers” which are unusual, striking to look at, and prime representatives of their respective occurrences. First there is this 9-cm specimen showing a solid, bright blue-green encrustation of **pseudomalachite** over a mass of botryoidal malachite, from the famous and long-lived L’Etoile du Congo (“Star of the Congo”) mine, first worked in 1907 for cobalt and in subsequent decades for copper as well. Look hard at such pieces so as not to confuse the bluer green pseudomalachite, a fairly rare phosphate, with its associated green malachite, the prosaic carbonate cousin which it closely resembles.



Pseudomalachite crust on malachite, 9 cm, from L’Etoile du Congo mine, Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga, Democratic Republic of Congo. Weinrich Minerals specimen and photo.

Also on the *Weinrich Minerals Inc.* website at present is a 3.5-cm example of—I almost wrote “distinctive,” but that seems an understatement—**chalcopyrite** from a find in 2019 in the Tonglushan mine, Daye District, Hubei Province, China. Blue-black, almost perfectly spherical aggregates of chalcopyrite microcrystals are loosely attached in grape-cluster-like groups without matrix. Such specimens were very briefly available on the market around 2020, most notably from Rob Lavinsky’s *The Arkenstone*, but they sold quickly, no more appeared, and now it has been quite a while since I’ve seen an example—let alone one as fine as this—for sale. For this supremely weird-looking specimen of the world’s most common copper ore species, Dan asks \$1500.



Chalcopyrite, 3.5 cm, from the Tonglushan mine, Daye District, Hubei Province, China. Weinrich Minerals specimen and photo.

Another website well worth keeping up with is that of Mike Keim's *Marin Mineral Company* (marinmineral.com), whose last five updates are dated May 9, 17, 21, 27 and 31 (hey, it's June 11; must be time for *another* one soon). Mike's "Mixed Minerals" update of May 31 offers three fine cabinet-size specimens of **diopase** from a heretofore unfamiliar (to me at least) mine, the Kapata mine near Kolwezi, Lualaba, Democratic Republic of Congo. In these lush-looking specimens, sharp, typically deep green diopase crystals to 1 cm or so line vugs in goethite-infused matrix, with velvety crusts and smears of much paler green malachite showing up here and there; prices range from \$950 to \$2,250.



Diopase, 12.5 cm, from the Kapata mine, Kolwezi, Lualaba, Democratic Republic of Congo. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.

In the same May 31 update, Mike Keim offers three fine-looking, lustrous miniatures which are loose groups of sharp red-brown tetrahedral crystals of **helvite**, from the Huanggang deposit in Inner Mongolia, China. These are certainly world-class representatives of their species, and pretty too; they are priced between \$240 and \$450.



**Helvite, 3.3 cm, from the Huanggang deposit, Hexington Banner, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, China.
Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.**

The three other May updates on the *Marin Mineral Company* website show specimens that Mike Keim has acquired from the Carl Acosta collection, and one of the updates is devoted exclusively to things, all quite superb, from Tsumeb, Namibia. Tsumeb-minerals fans would have a hard time, as I did, in choosing a single exemplary piece to show here, but I hope that you will approve my eventual choice: a 4-cm chunk of metallic black matrix (tennantite? *germanite*?) with sharp rhombohedral pink-orange crystals of manganese-rich **smithsonite** all over its top (\$2000).



Manganese-rich smithsonite, 4 cm, from Tsumeb, Namibia. Ex Carl Acosta collection. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.

Finally for the Marin updates, here is a dull black but very imposing thumbnail from Guanajuato, Mexico: a flaring group of pseudocrystals of **acanthite after pyrargyrite** (\$1,200). In the article by T.P. Moore (me) and Wendell Wilson on the centuries-old Guanajuato silver mines in the September-October 2016 *Mineralogical Record*, you can read, in Peter Megaw’s contributed section on “Ore Vein Mineralization,” about why it is that such pseudomorphs of silver minerals after each other are common at Guanajuato—it’s to do with regular waves of hydrothermal activity in “low sulfidation epithermal vein deposits.” This is, anyway, one of the snazziest thumbnails of anything from Guanajuato I have ever seen.

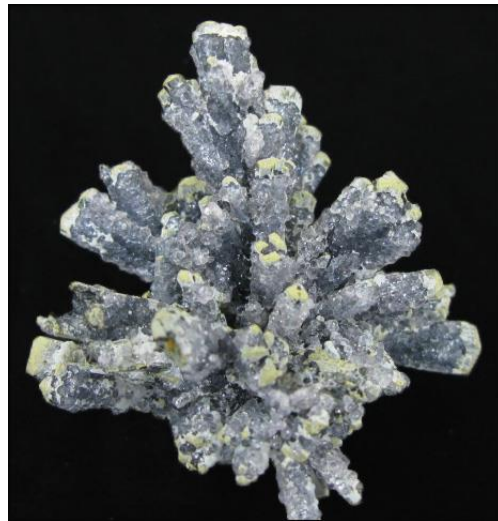


Acanthite pseudomorph after pyrargyrite, 2.2 cm, from Guanajuato, Mexico. Ex Carl Acosta collection. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.

A May 31 posting on Ibrahim Jameel’s *Khyber Mineral Company* website (khyberminerals.com) features 16 small-miniature to small-cabinet-size specimens showing **fluorite coating stibnite** from the Banpo mine, Dushan County, Qiannan, Guizhou Province, China. This mine, where exploitation for stibnite ore began in 1959, has given up specimens like this before, but Ibrahim writes that his specimens represent a “new find.” Each jackstraw group of stibnite crystals is solidly coated on one side by small, colorless to faintly purple, cubic crystals of fluorite, while on the uncoated sides of the groups the stibnite crystals exhibit odd corkscrew twists. The specimens are rendered still more distinctive by scattered stains of something yellow, probably stibiconite. For the 4-cm example shown here on its uncoated side, Ibrahim asks \$345; the 7.1-cm piece shown on its fluorite-coated side would set you back \$800.



Stibnite, 4 cm, from the Banpo mine, Dushan County, Qiannan, Guizhou Province, China. Khyber Mineral Company specimen and photo.



Fluorite encrusting stibnite, 7.1 cm, from the Banpo mine, Dushan County, Qiannan, Guizhou Province, China. Khyber Mineral Company specimen and photo.

Then there is Rudolf Watzl's *Saphira Minerals* dealership, whose website (saphiraminerals.com) customarily offers one-of-a-kind high-enders, mostly from Alpine localities such as Rudolf's family of Austrian *Strahlers* likes to keep under surveillance, but sometimes, too, from localities farther afield, indeed worldwide. The May 29 update of *Saphira Minerals* consists of three pages of very classy things of the "worldwide" persuasion, including the two shown below, one "old" and one "new." The "old" specimen—perhaps the best term is "contemporary classic"—is a gleaming 4.8-cm spray of bladed pink **rhodonite** crystals from the San Martin mine in Peru, a locality which turned out beauties like this in 1989, 1998, and 2006-2007 but where all mining and related specimen-gathering ceased in 2008. These Peruvian rhodonites rank with the much older classics from Franklin, New Jersey and Broken Hill, Australia (only the best of the big, gemmy rhodonites from Conselheiro Lafaiete, Brazil may be said to surpass them), and they seldom get any better than this example, which Rudolf prices at €2500.



Rhodonite, 4.8 cm, from the San Martin mine, Chiurucu, Huallanca District, Bolognesi Province, Peru. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.

Rudolf Watzl’s “new” specimen features a big, sharp, blocky crystal of **ilmenite** which is exposed three-dimensionally on a cluster of schorl and smoky quartz crystals; the locality (vaguely stated as usual for this region) is the Erongo Mountains, Namibia, and the price of the piece is €2200. Erongo ilmenite crystals like this one have appeared on the market only during the past two years or so, and what is peculiar about them is that, although properly black within, they are filmed with an orange-brown patina of some as yet unidentified species. Rudolf’s excellent floater specimen measures 4.5 cm, and the ilmenite crystal on top, which seems to offer itself whole-heartedly to the admiring viewer, comes in at a healthy 2.4 cm.



**Ilmenite on schorl and smoky quartz, 4.5 cm, from the Erongo Mountain, Namibia.
Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.**

If you like Alpine-cleft minerals, and if you fancy visiting Europe-based dealerships wholly devoted to them, check out *MinerAlps* (mineralps.com), which now has three generous pages of specimens from the Alpine regions of France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy—as well as some from Alpine-type clefts in the Himalayas and Polar Urals. Here, for example, is a lovely 5.3-cm floater group of transparent, twinned, colorless crystals of **adularian orthoclase** from Val Curnera, Tujetsch, Graubünden, Switzerland, for €160:



Adularian Orthoclase, 5.3 cm, from Val Curnera, Tujetsch, Graubünden, Switzerland. MinerAlps specimen and photo.

And here from *MinerAlps* is a brilliant, gemmy **smoky quartz gwindel** nestled up next to a “regular” but just as gemmy smoky quartz crystal, from the Dodo mine, Saranpaul, Subpolar Urals, Russia (see the article on this locality by E.V. Burlakov in the November-December 1999 *Mineralogical Record*). This 12-cm Russian showboat is marked “sold” but still is worth a thorough, respectful ogle:



Smoky Quartz gwindel, 12 cm, from the Dodo mine, Saranpaul, Subpolar Urals, Tyumen Oblast, Russia. MinerAlps specimen and photo.

Surprisingly, it turns out that the proprietor of *MinerAlps* is not a native of Alpine places at all but rather of a much flatter place: “My name is Laurent,” he tells us, “and I’m from Belgium.” Elsewhere on the website there is a small but fine “Gallery—Our Collection,” where Laurent shows off a few beautiful specimens, not only from Alpine clefts but also from limestone quarries, active and inactive, in his home country. Very infrequently I have seen examples of the fine **calcite** which trickles out occasionally from those simple quarries, but I have never seen **faden quartz** from anywhere in Belgium...so here are

lovely photos of each of these not-for-sale Belgian things from Laurent's Gallery. Don't say I have never taken you to a *museum*.



Calcite, size unspecified, from the Gralex quarry, Mont-sur-Marchienne, Charleroi, Hainaut Province, Belgium. MinerAlps specimen and photo.



Quartz fadens, largest 3 cm, from Sarolay, Liège Province, Belgium.

As perhaps you have noticed, I like to conclude these reports by showing a single, exceptional, probably (for most of us) unaffordable, specimen of something dazzling—a glimpse at the peak of some Olympus of wonder for mineral collectors. This time, you must make some allowance for my own specialty, for I'm a thumbnail collector, and what I celebrate here is, all right, a thumbnail, but it lives on Olympus all the same. On the website of *Andy Seibel Minerals* (andyseibel.com) is a 2.7-cm cluster of thin, iridescent **covellite** crystals from the long-out-of-action Leonard mine, Butte, Silver Bow County, Montana. For this specimen, once in the Al McGuinness collection, Andy asks (and who can blame him?) \$3,750.



**Covellite, 2.7 cm, from the Leonard mine, Butte, Silver Bow County, Montana.
Ex Al McGuinness collection. Andy Seibel Minerals specimen and photo.**

Happy Summer

Tom Moore