

Minerals Uncovered

Nature's Treasures Revealed

Hello Friends,

During a recent conversation with some friends about the Mardani galleries, we were asked what first-time visitors were most curious about. Without a doubt we found the overwhelming initial visitor inquiry to be,

"Are they (the minerals) natural?"

Of course, if you are receiving this, you already know that we travel around the globe in search of outstanding natural specimens. They may have the qualities of spectacular color, precise geometry, and brilliant luster (as well as anything else that will propel them to be the best of their kind), but they are indeed treasures to be discovered, not created.

Our second most common question is a lot less straight-forward and one we thought would make for interesting reading for both mineral lovers and novices alike,

"(The minerals) they're beautiful now, but is that how they look when you first find them?"

Typically, those who have never had the opportunity to go mining imagine enormous caves, floor-to-ceiling caverns encrusted with brilliant, sparkling, perfect crystals. Although these magical environments do exist, they are actually quite rare. More often than not, pockets of material are small in size and limited in output. Furthermore, extracting specimens intact requires patience, perspiration, and a skillful hand. An overzealous tap could completely alter the appearance of a specimen, so it is important to remove them with great care. As for their initial appearance, more often than not, they're covered in mud or secondary mineral coatings that need to be cleaned away to reveal the beauty that has been buried in the earth for millions of years. To show you what we mean, we're sharing with you some of our favorite "before and after" photos – images of the minerals captured soon after extraction, and then again after a proper cleaning (and sometimes further trimming). We think they'll lend some insight into how some minerals appear at first discovery and what must be done before they're ready for a collector's shelves. We hope that you enjoy these extraordinary transformations and, as always, welcome you to visit the New York and Vail galleries to see these incredible treasures in person.

Best,

Danil & Maus

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Here is a pocket of brilliant yellow wulfenite crystals from the Rowley Mine of Arizona, USA. As you can see, its entirety can fit into the palm of a hand! Not many minerals are found in such pristine, remarkably clean condition but these wulfenite crystals are already resplendent because they've formed in a small air pocket without disruption. The only improvement to be made to this piece is for its matrix (host rock) to be trimmed of bulky excess. Once trimmed, the resulting specimen will have a more balanced ratio of crystals to matrix which will highlight the bright yellow wulfenite crystals as the primary focus.



More commonly, crystals are found in pockets thoroughly coated in debris (usually the result of millions of years of geologic activity or sometimes the mining process). This is a breathtaking amethyst from the Jackson's Crossroads mine in Georgia. It hinted at its beautifully formed crystals right at the point of extraction but did not reveal how truly outstanding it was until it was cleaned and allowed to exhibit its sumptuous coloring and excellent luster.



This is another example of how debris can conceal a mineral's true potential. It is an outstanding fluorite on quartz specimen named, The Eyes of Africa and is an example from the famous Alien Eye pocket, so named for its stunning green color zones, outlined in black color zones. The overall effect resembles a pair of otherworldly glowing eyes in the dark. The Alien Eye pocket was a one-time find from the Erongo Mountains of Namibia. Fluorites from the pocket are distinct in aesthetics, relatively few in number, and have achieved cult-collecting status in the mineral world. The Eyes of Africa was acquired by Lyda Hill and is currently on display as the signature piece of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science at the Lyda Hill Gems and Minerals Hall, so please go and see it – at almost 36" tall, it is magnificent!

(It also underwent an incredible journey before it was ever cleaned, alluded to in D Magazine: <https://www.dallasnews.com/arts/visual-arts/2017/07/12/lyda-hills-rare-alien-eye-mineral-unveiled-perot-museum-dallas>)



Some minerals aren't found in pockets at all, but entirely embedded within the host rock in which they formed. These azurite suns (found exclusively in Australia) are one of many types of minerals that are fully encapsulated at the point of discovery. Once extracted, the white kaolinite will often fracture and break away from the discs of azurite, but with enough patience and luck, some of the pieces are able to retain enough of their matrix to create a striking juxtaposition for the vibrant blue suns. This example was wonderfully preserved and resembles a piece of modern art.



And finally, here is a breathtaking fluorite from Nagar, Pakistan. Of course, it would take some prior mineral knowledge and a little creativity to think of this piece as "breathtaking" in its current state, but because of our years of experience we were convinced this specimen had a place among the best from the region.



Here is the same fluorite after being cleaned and trimmed of any matrix that was considered in excess to its presentation. By keeping some matrix, we anchor the fluorite and give it a complementary, textural contrast. On the same token, by trimming much of it away, we allow the fluorite to take center stage. With incredible optical clarity, vitreous luster, gorgeous color, and a unique crystal form, this fluorite is now perfectly balanced on the host rock it grew upon. Its final form has both efficiency and balance. Furthermore, its condition is pristine, adding to its overall outstanding quality. A natural treasure that was carefully preserved – it is considered to be the finest example of this crystal habit for the species in the world.

Whether easily dusted off by the breath of a miner, deep cleaned of millions of years of mud and debris, or trimmed to create an alternative orientation, the innate beauty of mother nature's marvels is undeniable. Discover them for yourself at the Mardani galleries in New York City, NY and Vail, Colorado.

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