The King of Kashmir: Unearthing the World's Greatest Mineral Specimen

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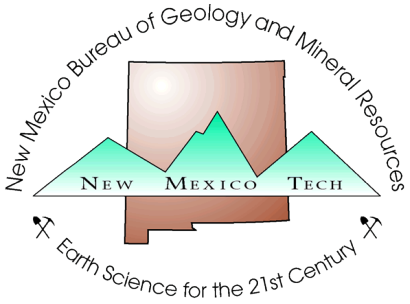
The annual New Mexico Mineral Symposium provides a forum for both professionals and amateurs interested in mineralogy. The meeting allows all to share their cumulative knowledge of mineral occurrences and provides stimulus for mineralogical studies and new mineral discoveries. In addition, the informal atmosphere encourages intimate discussions among all interested in mineralogy and associated fields.

The symposium is organized each year by the Mineral Museum at the New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources.



Abstracts from all prior symposiums are also available: https://geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/nmms/abstracts

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The King of Kashmir: Unearthing the World's Greatest Mineral Specimen

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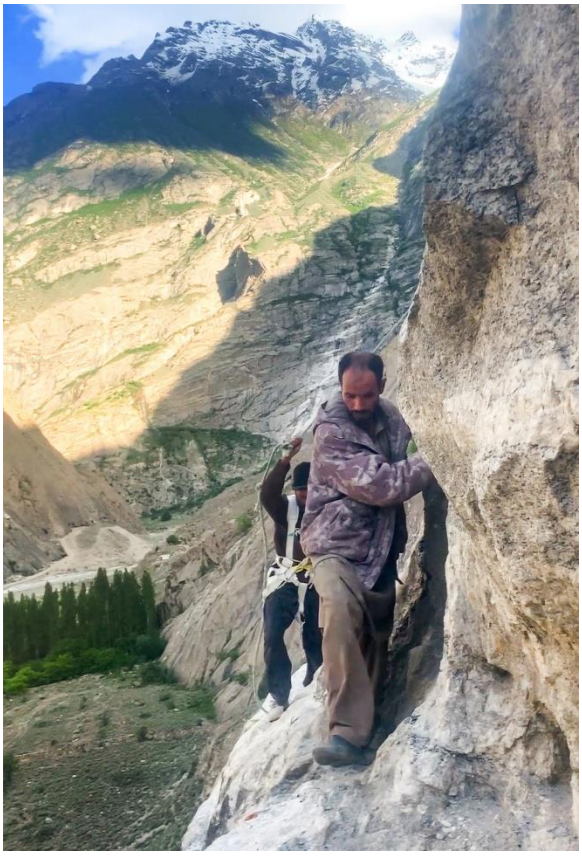
Aquamarine has been widely known and collected for millennia, yet, the most iconic and defining examples of its species have largely been discovered in the last 50 years, with each benchmark piece moving the needle towards new standards for mineralogy and crystallography. These discoveries are not just thanks to an accepted trend towards the preservation of fine specimens but indicate a shift in technology and modernization. The "King of Kashmir," a breathtaking aquamarine discovered in 2019, has widely been hailed as the greatest specimen of the modern age—if not all time. It is celebrated not just for its spectacular beauty, size, and quality but also for what it represents: a modern phase of mining increased global cooperation, and the next level of mineral collecting, all unlike anything seen before.

Miner with King of Kashmir in situ

The Shigar Valley, home to many of the world's most beautiful aquamarine specimens, is located in the remote and rugged terrain of the Karakoram Mountain range. Notoriously difficult to surmount, its steep, rocky landscape and high altitudes have long presented a formidable challenge to miners. Although arduous, the promise of specimens draws the local tribes to the steep rock face from year to year.



Braldu Valley climbing the wall up to the mine

Despite generations of mining, nothing could prepare the miners for what they would find—the "King of Kashmir" surpassed all expectations. It consisted of over a dozen stunning aquamarine crystals dispersed along the ceiling of a pocket. Its density of perfect crystals was unlike anything ever before found. Given its massive size and obvious quality, the miners understood that they were ill-equipped to

attempt its extraction alone. Calling upon mineral dealer, Daniel Trinchillo, they sought help in its recovery, and a fair price worthy of the piece. Trinchillo, working in partnership with Marco Amabili negotiated with the owners. Once the deal was finalized, they brought in trusted friends and mining experts Marco Lorenzoni, and Dr. Federico Pezzotta to begin the recovery process. Not without its own trials and tribulations, the mining team worked onsite for over a month, diligently removing the single piece, all at nearly 300 meters up on a sheer cliff face and 30 meters straight into the mountain. Eventually, the King of Kashmir was finally unearthed. It was then wrapped in blankets and brought down the mountain on ropes like a cable car. It was then sent to the MCP lab in Milan for inspection and professional cleaning.

Daniel Trinchillo with the King of Kashmir

Weighing approximately 140 kilograms and measuring 80 centimeters in length, the preservation of the King of Kashmir is not just a stroke of luck but the result of a convergence of factors that could only occur at this point in history. Such a perfect and large-scale specimen could only exist at a time when mining knowledge and technology have reached their current heights, allowing for precision extraction and preservation. For collectors and mineral enthusiasts, this specimen is not just a remarkable piece—it is a symbol that mineral discovery and recovery have reached a new age.