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## ALLISON AND ROBERTO MIGNONE HALLS OF GEMS AND MINERALS TO OPEN AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY ON JUNE 12

JOYFUL RETURN OF THE DAZZLING NEW HALLS MARKS A CELEBRATORY MOMENT IN THE REOPENING OF NEW YORK CITY



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A PREVIEW VIDEO FOR THE NEW HALLS CAN BE VIEWED [HERE](#)

The American Museum of Natural History today announced that one of its most popular and beloved spaces will return to public view on June 12, completely redesigned and reinstalled, with the opening of the Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals. Reservations to visit the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals, which, as a permanent gallery, will be included as part of a General Admission ticket, are available now at [amnh.org](http://amnh.org).

A showcase for one of the greatest collections of its kind and an engaging guide to current scientific knowledge about our dynamic planet, the 11,000-square-foot halls will include:

- a gallery of dazzling gems, including the legendary 563-carat Star of India sapphire, the 632-carat Patricia Emerald, and the 110-carat diamond Organdie necklace designed by Michelle Ong for Carnet

- fabulous new specimens, many never before exhibited, including a pair of towering, sparkling amethyst geodes that are among the world's largest on display, a slice of a 35-million-year-old metasequoia – a petrified dawn redwood from the Cascade Mountains – the 9-pound almandine Subway Garnet discovered under Manhattan's 35th Street in 1885, and the Tarugo, a 3-foot-tall cranberry-colored elbaite tourmaline that is one of the largest intact mineral crystal clusters ever found
- interactive displays illustrating the science of mineralogy, including a dynamic periodic table of chemical elements that demonstrates how they “make minerals”
- and a temporary exhibition space, the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery, opening with *Beautiful Creatures*, a first-ever exhibit of exquisite historic and contemporary jewelry inspired by animals.

“New Yorkers and visitors have long embraced these Halls as one of the City's treasures,” said Ellen V. Futter, President of the American Museum of Natural History. “Now, with this complete redesign made possible by Allison and Roberto Mignone, the Halls are more spectacular than ever and an even greater resource for learning about the processes that shape our changing planet and make it so endlessly fascinating. With their reopening, we not only mark a signal moment in the resurgence of New York City and the renewal of its cultural life, but also, we hope, accelerate its pace.”

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals are named in honor of Roberto and Allison Mignone, longtime Museum supporters and volunteers. Roberto Mignone is a Museum Trustee and Allison Mignone is vice chair of the Museum's Campaign.

“When you enter the Halls, you truly feel as if you've walked into the world's jewelry box,” said Allison Mignone. “These Halls, and others in the Museum, take science off the page of textbooks and into the real-life experience of countless families and students. Now more than ever, equal access to education is paramount. We look forward to the time when large numbers of students and school groups and their teachers can visit. Halls like these are crucial and tangible tools that communicate the incredible variety of minerals on Earth and how they relate to our lives.”

Organized by Curator George E. Harlow of the Museum's Division of Physical Sciences, the Halls' redesigned exhibits tell the fascinating story of how the vast diversity of mineral types arose on Earth, how scientists classify minerals and study them, and how humans have used them throughout the millennia for personal adornment, tools, and technology.

The scientific framework for the Halls is mineral-forming environments, focusing on the five conditions and processes in which minerals form: igneous, pegmatitic, metamorphic, hydrothermal, and weathering. As part of this construct, the Halls introduce a concept that has developed over the past 15 years: mineral evolution. Recognizing that there were no minerals at all for hundreds of millions of years after the Big Bang, the concept explains how our planet today came to host more than 5,500 mineral species. The process began with supernovae infusing the universe with more and heavier elements, which could combine into minerals. The formation of planets enabled their differentiation, mostly in the form of molten rocks heading to the surface. On Earth, as new mineral-forming environments arose – with the accumulation of liquid water, for example, or the introduction of free oxygen into the atmosphere by the first photosynthetic organisms –

minerals diversified in color, texture, and chemical composition. Organisms contain, produce, and use minerals, and new minerals have formed because of life.

“When I started at the Museum, there were probably 2,000 minerals described – and now there are more than 5,500 minerals,” said George E. Harlow. “The enhanced Halls will present up-to-date science, which has progressed significantly. I look forward to seeing visitors delight in remarkable gems and mineral specimens from across the globe and our own backyard, like those in the Minerals of New York display featuring specimens from all five boroughs.”

### **Hall Highlights**

The redesigned Halls will feature more than 5,000 specimens sourced from 95 countries. In addition to those already mentioned, highlights will include:

- the Singing Stone, a massive block of vibrant blue azurite and green malachite from Arizona, first exhibited at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago,
- a wall-sized panel of fluorescent rock that glows in shades of orange and green, sourced from Sterling Hill in New Jersey,
- an ancient block of orbicular granite featuring unusual ball-shaped, radial clusters of crystals, sourced from one of Earth’s oldest enduring landmasses, the 2.7-billion-year-old Yilgarn Craton in Western Australia,
- a spectacular piece of yellow fluorite discovered in the Moscona Mine in the Asturias region of northwest Spain, which grew as hot water dissolved layers of limestone, replacing them with the cubic crystals coated with glistening pyrite,
- a slab of amphibolite rock containing huge almandine garnet crystals that formed more than a billion years ago, sourced from Gore Mountain in upstate New York,
- a 1.8-billion-year-old assemblage of large dravite tourmaline crystals, one of the oldest pieces in the Hall, which formed in present-day Western Australia in metamorphic rock,
- and a massive 5-foot beryl crystal section, sourced from the Bumpus Quarry in Albany, Maine.

### ***Beautiful Creatures* Inaugural Temporary Exhibition**

Inaugurating the Halls’ first temporary exhibition space, the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery, *Beautiful Creatures* presents some of the world’s most spectacular jewelry pieces inspired by animal forms, curated by jewelry historian Marion Fasel.

Marion Fasel said, “*Beautiful Creatures* is devoted to animal-themed jewelry designs created over the last 150 years. The timeframe dovetails with the founding of the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1869. The institution, and others like it around the world, actively contributed to the public’s exposure to and subsequent fascination with the study and science of nature, particularly the animal kingdom, which, in all its remarkable diversity, has promised never to lose its allure for jewelry designers.”

*Beautiful Creatures* features imaginative designs by the world’s great jewelry houses and artisans – from Cartier’s iconic panthers to Suzanne Belperron’s butterflies. The sparkling pieces on view range in date from the mid-19th century to the present. Displays are arranged into categories of animals observed in the air, water, and on land.

## Exhibition Design

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals are designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates together with the American Museum of Natural History's award-winning Exhibition Department under the direction of Lauri Halderman, vice president for exhibition.

The three main divisions of the layout are the Gems Hall, the Minerals Hall, and the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery for temporary exhibitions.

The Gems Hall includes a display of more than nearly 2,500 objects from the Museum's world-class collection of gems, minerals with natural beauty fashioned to enhance their appearance. These include precious stones, carvings, and stunning jewelry from around the world. In addition to the Star of India sapphire and the Patricia Emerald, specimens on view will include the DeLong Star Ruby, a 100.3-carat ruby from Myanmar; the Brazilian Princess topaz, a 221-facet, 9.5-pound pale-blue topaz that was once known as the largest cut gem in the world; and a jadeite jade incense burner fashioned during the late Ching Dynasty.

The Mineral Hall comprises four sections. *Mineral Forming Environments* is a set of cases in the center of the Hall dedicated to the environments and processes by which minerals form: igneous, pegmatitic, metamorphic, and hydrothermal, and weathering. At the four corners, *Minerals Fundamentals* displays explore the overarching concepts of mineral science, from the evolution and diversification of minerals to their properties to how they've been used by humans from prehistory to present day. *Systemic Classification*, a display running along the west wall, contains 659 specimens that represent the chemical classification system that scientists use to organize Earth's more than 5,500 mineral species, as well as an interactive feature in which visitors can explore forming minerals from the elements on the periodic table. Finally, *Minerals & Light*, a room off the east wall, explores the optical properties of minerals – their interaction with light.

## Earth and Planetary Science at the Museum

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals will be a striking complement to the David S. and Ruth L. Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth and the Hayden Planetarium in the Rose Center for Earth and Space, and the Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites. The Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth illustrates the evolution and inner workings of our dynamic planet with outstanding geological specimens and interactive exhibits on climate change, while the Hayden Planetarium educates visitors about the latest space science through immersive presentations such as the Museum's new Space Show [Worlds Beyond Earth](#). The Ross Hall of Meteorites – which is immediately adjacent to the Mignone Halls – explores the origins of our solar system through holdings from the Museum's world-class collection of meteorites, which contain some of the same minerals found on Earth.

This public-facing work is overseen by curators in the Museum's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, who conduct research in the fields of mineralogy, petrology, geochemistry, ocean science, and cosmochemistry. The department's researchers study topics that include the origin of rubies in Southeast Asia; using corals to reveal how our oceans have changed over time; and the mineral and chemical origins of solar systems, especially the transformation of interstellar minerals into the building blocks of asteroids,

comets, and meteorites. The collections of the department, which include minerals, gems, and meteorites, hold more than 120,000 specimens.

### **The Mignone Halls as an Educational Resource**

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals were designed as a vital educational resource for school and camp groups, educators, and students of all ages to learn about the mineral sciences of our dynamic planet. The reimagined Halls were developed to support New York State and national science education standards, which recognize the interdisciplinary nature of evidence-based science. The scientific disciplines manifested through the Halls' exhibits include Earth science (with content about how minerals form), chemistry (including an interactive periodic table), physics (with a gallery focused on the interaction between light and minerals), biology (including the role of life in the evolution and abundance of Earth's minerals), and more.

These Halls will play a key role in the Museum's [Master of Arts in Teaching program](#), which prepares highly qualified Earth science teachers for grades 7-12 in high-needs schools in New York City and throughout the State. Participants in the program will utilize the Halls throughout their instruction and tap into it as a tangible teaching tool for their own classes upon graduation. Since the MAT program launched in 2012, 124 MAT teachers have graduated from the program and teach thousands of students each year.

### **American Museum of Natural History 150th Anniversary Projects**

The Halls have undergone renovation as part of the physical and programmatic initiatives undertaken in conjunction with the 150th anniversary celebration of the Museum, which was founded in 1869.

These projects will culminate in the opening of the [Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation](#), a major new facility, designed by Jeanne Gang of Studio Gang. The spectacular 230,000-square-foot facility will add exhibition galleries, state-of-the-art classrooms, an immersive theater, and a redesigned library, reveal more of the Museum's scientific collections, and link 10 Museum buildings to improve visitor flow throughout the campus. The section of the Museum that houses the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals had long been a cul-de-sac, which could be entered and exited only from the south end. In the future, the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals will be linked to the new Gilder Center, allowing visitors to circulate with greater ease and less congestion.

The Museum is also working on updating, restoring, and conserving the [Northwest Coast Hall](#) to enrich the interpretation of the gallery's exhibits.

### *Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals*

*The Museum gratefully acknowledges Allison and Roberto Mignone for their leadership support of the redesigned Halls of Gems and Minerals.*

*Generous support has been provided by Melissa and Keith Meister, the Arthur Ross Foundation, and Kenneth C. Griffin.*

*Additional support has been provided by the John & Amy Griffin Foundation and the City of New York.*

## Worlds Beyond Earth

*Worlds Beyond Earth is dedicated to the memory of Charles Hayden in celebration of the 150th anniversary of his birth and made possible by the generous support of the Charles Hayden Foundation.*

*Proudly sponsored by Bank of America.*

*Generously sponsored in loving memory of Wallace Gilroy.*

## Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program

*With deepest appreciation, the Museum acknowledges Kathryn W. Davis for her generous founding support of the Master of Arts in Science Teaching (MAT) Program. Leadership support for the MAT program is provided by The Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund.*

*Generous support has been provided by the Bezos Family Foundation.*

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*Additional support has been provided by The Rice Family Foundation and Nancy B. and Hart Fessenden.*

## The Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation

*The American Museum of Natural History gratefully acknowledges Richard Gilder and the Gilder Foundation, Inc., whose leadership support has made the construction of the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation possible.*

*The Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation is also made possible thanks to the generous support of the City of New York, the Council of the City of New York, the Manhattan Borough President, the State of New York, the New York State Assembly, and the New York State Senate.*

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## Northwest Coast Hall

*The Museum gratefully recognizes the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust, Lewis Bernard, and the City of New York, whose leadership support has made the restoration of the Northwest Coast Hall possible.*

*Critical support has also been provided by the Selz Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*

*The conservation of painted monumental carvings has been made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under grant number MA-30-17-0260-17.*

*The contemporary art gallery is supported by the Henry Luce Foundation.*

*Additional support has been provided by the Family of Ned Hayes, Bank of America, the Stockman Family Foundation, and the Gilbert & Ildiko Butler Family Foundation.*

## **AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH.ORG)**

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses more than 40 permanent exhibition halls, including those in the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. The Museum's scientists draw on a world-class permanent collection of more than 34 million specimens and artifacts, some of which are billions of years old, and on one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, the Museum grants the Ph.D. degree in Comparative Biology and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree, the only such freestanding, degree-granting program at any museum in the United States. The Museum's website, digital videos, and apps for mobile devices bring its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions around the world. Visit [amnh.org](http://amnh.org) for more information.

### **Hours**

The Museum is open Wednesday-Sunday, 10 am–5:30 pm. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

### **Admission**

Museum admission is free to all New York City school and camp groups.

New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut residents (with ID) have the option to pay what you wish, which applies only to General Admission; the reservation must be made online and the transaction must be completed at a Museum ticket counter.

General Admission, which includes admission to all permanent exhibition halls and the Rose Center for Earth and Space but does not include special exhibitions, giant-screen 2D or 3D film, or Space Show, is \$23 (adults), \$18 (students/seniors), and \$13 (children ages 3–12). All prices are subject to change.

General Admission Plus One includes general admission plus one special exhibition, giant-screen 2D or 3D film, or Space Show: \$28 (adults), \$22.50 (students/seniors), \$16.50 (children ages 3–12).

General Admission Plus All includes general admission plus all special exhibitions, giant-screen 2D or 3D film, and Space Show: \$33 (adults), \$27 (students/seniors), \$20 (children ages 3–12).

### **Health Protocols**

The Museum has instituted [new protocols](#) to protect the health and safety of visitors and taken steps to maintain a safe environment, including requiring facial coverings for visitors ages 2 and up, checking temperature at entry, limiting capacity to allow ample room for physical distancing, and upgrading ventilation.

In order to safely manage capacity while allowing visitors to experience the new Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals, the Museum will use a virtual queueing system to allow visitors to reserve time in the gallery while maintaining physical distance from other groups of visitors.

### **Public Information**

For additional information, the public may call 212-769-5100 or visit the Museum’s website at [amnh.org](http://amnh.org).

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*Image: The new Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals at the American Museum of Natural History. D. Finnin/© AMNH*