



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY TO DESIGN ALL-NEW HALLS OF GEMS AND MINERALS

**DESIGNED TO REFLECT NEW SCIENCE AND TO ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE,
THE NEW HALLS WILL BE NAMED FOR ALLISON AND ROBERTO MIGNONE**

12-FOOT-TALL AMETHYST GEODE UNVEILED AS ONE OF THE NEW HALLS' FEATURED SPECIMENS

The American Museum of Natural History announced today that it will undertake a complete redesign of its popular Morgan Memorial Hall of Gems and Harry Frank Guggenheim Hall of Minerals to transform the 11,000-square-foot space into a gleaming showcase for a world-renowned collection. With new large-scale specimens, the redesigned exhibits will tell the fascinating story of how approximately 4,500 different types of minerals arose on our dynamic planet, how scientists classify them, and how humans have fashioned them into gems and used them throughout history for personal adornment, tools, and technology. The halls will be named for Roberto and Allison Mignone, long-standing Museum supporters and volunteers. Roberto Mignone is a Museum Trustee and Allison Mignone is Vice Chair of the Museum's Campaign.

To celebrate this historic redesign, the Museum unveiled one of the new halls' featured specimens: a sparkling 12-foot-tall amethyst geode, recently acquired from Uruguay, which will be on temporary view in the Museum's Grand Gallery through the 2017 holiday season. The geode, which will be a centerpiece in the new halls, is among the largest amethyst geodes in the world.

The renovation of the Halls of Gems and Minerals, which are being designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, is part of a series of physical and programmatic

enhancements to historic parts of the institution leading up to its 150th anniversary and the opening of the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation, a major new facility that will house resources for education, exhibition, research, and reveal modern science to visitors of all ages. On September 25, the Museum announced a multi-year project to update, restore, and conserve the [Northwest Coast Hall](#) and to enrich the interpretation of that gallery's exhibits.

"Whether you're talking about the spectacular 563-carat Star of India sapphire or the unique almandine 'subway garnet' unearthed in New York City in 1885, the American Museum of Natural History is known for having one of the most spectacular and comprehensive collections of gems and minerals in the world," said Ellen V. Futter, Museum President. "Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Allison and Roberto Mignone, we will now highlight these specimens in new exhibits illuminating the latest scientific thinking and revealing the spectacular beauty of objects from cultures across the globe."

George E. Harlow, curator in the Museum's Division of Physical Sciences, is curating the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals. "Forty-plus years ago, when the current galleries were designed, scientists had not yet begun to explore the concept of mineral evolution," said Harlow. "Today, we work within a different framework, where much of the diversity of minerals on our dynamic planet is directly connected to the evolution of life. Our new exhibits will allow us to tell how the story of minerals is linked with their natural environment and biology on the one hand and with culture and technology on the other."

"Our involvement in the Museum's educational programs has had a transformative impact on our family, how we see the world, and how we understand our place in it," said Allison Mignone. "We're thrilled to support the next generation of visitors in their explorations of the natural world, understanding of cutting-edge science, and discovery of the stories behind the spectacular specimens of gems and minerals drawn from the Museum's world-class collections and newly added exhibits for this gallery."

While the Halls of Gems and Minerals previously formed a cul-de-sac, they will feature a dramatic link, via a stunning Crystalline Pass on the north side of the halls, to the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation, the new facility designed by Studio Gang Architects. Construction on the new Mignone Halls of Gems of Minerals will begin with the closure of the current halls on October 26.

Gems and Minerals at the Museum

The American Museum of Natural History is home to a collection of about 105,000 minerals and 5,000 gems, which is acknowledged to be one of world's greatest. Minerals and gems have been displayed in several different galleries over the years. Until 1974, the J. Pierpont Morgan Memorial Hall of Minerals and Gems on the fourth floor was the primary display and storage area. In May 1976, the current Guggenheim Hall of Minerals and Morgan Memorial Hall of Gems opened on the Museum's first floor.

Inside the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals will feature new large-scale acquisitions, including two amethyst geodes, visitor favorites such as the Star of India sapphire and the Patricia Emerald, and treasures from the collection that have not been on view for decades. These exhibits will tell the stories of how minerals form, how scientists interpret them, and how they are used by humans for decoration and personal adornment as well as for science and for technology.

Elements currently planned for the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals include:

- A **"Crystal Garden" main exhibition area** with signature large-scale specimens collected from around the world, including **two towering amethyst geodes from Uruguay**, a **12-foot-tall geode** and a **9-foot-tall geode**. Mineral formation zones highlighting a variety of processes and environments that shape mineral formation will frame these iconic specimens

- A **gem gallery** with a case containing the Museum's most precious gems, including the Star of India (the world's largest and most famous blue star sapphire) and the 632-carat Patricia Emerald (a rare example of a large, gem-quality emerald to be preserved uncut)
- A **systematics display wall** showing the classification of minerals and highlighting the breadth of the Museum's collection
- A case dedicated to the **minerals of New York City**, including the "**subway garnet**" – a 9-pound almandine garnet unearthed during a sewer dig on 35th Street in 1885
- **Large-scale media projections** and interactive displays with time-lapse imagery, colorful animations, and dramatic shifts in scale to introduce key ideas about mineral and gem properties
- A dedicated space for **temporary exhibitions** with the potential to highlight humanity's fascination with particular minerals and gems as well as the fact that the same atmospheric conditions made possible both the diversity of minerals and the diversity of life
- A **fluorescence and phosphorescence gallery** featuring a **massive panel of fluorescent rock** from the Sterling Hill Mining Museum in Ogdensburg, New Jersey, that glows in shades of orange and green under ultraviolet light

The exhibits also will explore the conditions on our planet, throughout time, that have made possible the extraordinary variety of mineral forms found on Earth. In addition to the role of plate tectonics and fluids responsible for the formation of crystals, the exhibits will reveal how the introduction of free oxygen into the Earth's atmosphere more than 2 billion years ago triggered an explosion not only in biological life but also in mineral diversity. The oxygenated atmosphere – produced by cyanobacteria, a group of photosynthetic organisms – made it possible for the few essential elements formed after the Big Bang to be transformed into the approximately 4,500 minerals we know today.

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals are expected to be a striking counterpart to the David S. and Ruth L. Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth and the Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites. The Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth, which opened in 1999, illustrates the evolution and inner workings of our dynamic planet with outstanding geological specimens, while the Ross Hall of Meteorites, which features holdings from the Museum's meteorites collection, depicts the dynamic formation and evolution of our solar system. With exhibitry that supports New York State and national science education standards, these halls serve as a vital resource for school and camp groups, educators, and graduate students in the Museum's Master for Arts in Teaching program, which provides a specialization in Earth science for teachers of grades 7 through 12.

The Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals are expected to open in 2019, as part of the Museum's 150th anniversary celebration.

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 the Arthur Ross 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 45 permanent exhibition halls, including those in the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. It is home to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, New York State's official memorial to its 33rd governor and the nation's 26th president, and a tribute to Roosevelt's enduring legacy of conservation. The Museum's five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support approximately 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 34 million specimens and artifacts, as well as specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, and one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the only American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree. Beginning in 2015, the Richard Gilder Graduate

School also began granting the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree, the only such freestanding museum program. Annual visitation has grown to approximately 5 million, and the Museum's exhibitions and Space Shows are seen by millions more in venues on five continents. The Museum's website, mobile apps, and MOOCs (massive open online courses) extend its scientific research and collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to additional audiences around the globe. Visit amnh.org for more information.

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