



TIME OFF

MINERALS CAN BE ROCK-SOLID INVESTMENTS

MARGIE GOLDSMITH | DECEMBER 2019

Minerals have been popular collectibles for centuries but they're particularly in vogue now, at least partly because they've often proven to be such good investments. "I've seen ones selling for a hundred times what they were selling for 20 or 30 years ago," says Daniel Trinchillo, founder, CEO, and president of Fine Minerals International. "And I've seen collections worth five and 10 times what they cost five or 10 years earlier."

Collecting minerals started to become more popular in the 1960s and 1970s, when buyers began focusing less on their scientific significance and more on their aesthetic beauty. (New York City's American Museum of Natural History is opening a minerals wing next year that will reflect this trend.) "What is important to collectors," says Trinchillo, "is how the object makes them feel and the impact when they recognize that it hasn't been cut or polished or manipulated by man. It came out of the ground like this."

Stuart Wilensky, founder and president of New York's Wilensky Exquisite Minerals, considers minerals to be works of art. "Like diamonds," he says, "all minerals are unique and must be judged by several criteria." Wilensky ranks specimens on a one-to-10 scale, based on factors such as crystal size, quality, form, and definition; color; contrast; luster; transparency; and the "wow factor."

“There are specimens so vastly superior, so amazingly wondrous, and of such shocking beauty and quality that they rate above all others,” says Wilensky. “They are the nearly unobtainable holy grails I call the 11s, the finest-known examples.”

If you plan to collect minerals, do your research. Go to galleries, museums, and gem shows to discover what’s in demand and what resonates with you. When you’re ready to buy, find an experienced dealer to help you and to make sure your mineral has the attributes that will allow it to appreciate. And bring money: prices for collectible minerals, which typically start above \$1,000, can go as high as \$5 million.

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