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A Gemologist's Dream: Wilensky Gallery's Extraordinary Rare Minerals

January 7, 2019 by **KRISTIN YOUNG** ([HTTPS://WWW.JCKONLINE.COM/WRITER/KRISTIN-YOUNG/](https://www.jckonline.com/writer/kristin-young/))

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Even non-gemologists can get caught up in **[the Wilensky gallery's \(https://www.wilenskyminerals.com\)](https://www.wilenskyminerals.com)** incredible display of rare, natural minerals and stones. Stuart and Donna Wilensky, internationally renowned fine mineral collectors and dealers, have amassed this collection for more than three decades. Their sons, Troy and Connor, are also a part of the family business, and together they opened their first space in New York City's Chelsea art district this past spring. If you're in the neighborhood, this place is worth a visit.

The location in an art district is no accident. Stuart, president of Wilensky, describes the study and procuring of rare minerals like collecting the works of Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollack, and Pablo Picasso. To him, the minerals are natural works of art and having the gallery in Chelsea is so that the art world can be exposed to

these pieces.

“It was really the artistic aspect of minerals that attracted me,” Stuart explains, noting he graduated with a master’s degree in art history. “It wasn’t the scientific one or the metaphysical one. It was really that these things were really objects of beauty and I just said this is something I want to pursue. Honestly, the reason this gallery exists is that we came to a point where we wanted to expand the mineral world. We want more people to know what it’s about and more people to experience it.”

Pieces include very large tourmalines that, when sliced, reveal natural geometric shapes like the perfectly symmetrical triangle. A breathtaking massive aquamarine specimen shows us the natural state of this gorgeous mineral. There is even a dark meteorite slice dotted with an almost transparent amber-colored pattern—gems from space, if you will.

“All of art comes from nature, and it’s that simple,” says Stuart. “That’s where all inspiration comes from, whether it be flowers whether it be minerals. Like art, there is an emotional reaction to the mineral specimens.”

Collectors, too, are not unlike art collectors. Mineral collectors can start purchasing miniature mineral specimens for several hundred dollars. But on the whole, this is not a hobby for the amateur: Averages prices are \$50,000 and can reach hundreds of thousands of dollars for extremely rare specimens.

Stuart says the gallery is allowing him to slowly expand into other things such as gem-quality minerals, too. Wilensky currently houses three of the finest examples of grandidierite, the blue-green natural mineral that’s arguably the rarest gemstone in the world. Only about 25 stones of quality exist, Stuart explains, and they never exceed 10 cts.

As part of its role in the art world, Wilensky is currently holding its first gallery exhibition entitled “Medvedev: Master of Intarsia,” the work of award-winning master craftsman Nicolai Medvedev. The exhibition explores intarsia, the art of stone inlay for which Medvedev is considered one of the craft’s masters. The display primarily focuses on Medvedev’s intarsia boxes. “Medvedev: Master of Intarsia” runs through Feb. 28.

“I have admired Nicolai’s brilliantly colored and meticulously crafted intarsia boxes,” says Stuart. “During his exhibition at the Smithsonian [in the early ’90s], I had envisioned that someday we could do a similar display in New York.”



Quartz over chrysocolla, \$7,500



*Rhodochrosite and chalcopyrite stalactites,
\$675,000*



*Aquamarine with orthoclase and
manganotantalite inclusions, \$295,000*

Top: Liddicoatite tourmaline slice, \$185,000

Note: Kristin Young is writing the Off the Chain blog while Victoria Gomelsky is on maternity leave.

