

CRITERIA SCORING SYSTEM

T H E

W I L E N S K Y

A P P R O A C H



Mineral specimens are not like collecting stamps, coins or baseball cards – these are basically judged on rarity and condition.

Unlike other collectibles, minerals are in fact closer to fine art, each mineral is totally unique and must be judged by several criteria. These criteria can often be subjective (as in; “the eye of the beholder”) or more concrete. We have designed this point system to help collectors more accurately assess how any given specimen ranks among its peers and how it compares to the finest known. This provides some reference points, while leaving open the possibility that a specimen can be beautiful and important simply due to the fact that you enjoy its appearance or that it impacts your senses.

It has always been my personal habit to rank specimens on a 1-10 scale, considering the factors stated below. I recommend all collectors to strive to own “10’s”. Then, there are always specimens that are so vastly superior, so amazingly wondrous, of such shocking beauty and quality, that they must rate above all others; those are the nearly unobtainable holy grails I affectionately call – The “11’s.” An “11” is truly the finest known example of any species, and, you will know one when you see it – I assure you.

- Stuart Wilensky

1

AESTHETICS

This includes the overall appearance or beauty of the specimen. Aesthetic appreciation will vary from eye to eye but some basic parameters are universal; Crystal isolation and/or well defined individual crystals, crystallized matrix, contrasting colors and textures, crystals of differing size and height, three dimensional viewing angles, specimens which (to quote our friend and master collector, Steve Smale) have “good horizons”, or in other words, interesting and well developed top edges where your eye is drawn initially. Just like any work of art it must have a pleasing aesthetic arrangement to your eye. This is simply a visual reference to the appeal of the mineral as one would look at any three dimensional sculpture. The intrinsic value of aesthetic minerals is the pleasure you get from viewing them.

Very Subjective.



2

BALANCE

Very related to aesthetics. How do the crystals and matrix relate to each other in size, ratio and form. How do they interact with space. Consider angles, length, thickness and arrangement. Crystals should look proportional to each other, juxtaposed in an interesting and eye appealing way, or on a matrix in such a way as to be harmonious and counter-balanced.

Subjective





CRYSTAL QUALITY, FORM & DEFINITION

3

This assesses crystal sharpness, termination, and form. For this judgment, crystal faces should form without interruption, angles and planes intersect with clean definable lines. Take into account the sharpness of edges (depending upon the species). Ask if the terminations are symmetrical, proportionate, well defined, and attractively shaped. The sides and faces of each crystal should be well developed. Terminations that are complex are usually more desirable, they should attract your eye, and not distract.

Somewhat Subjective



COLOR

4

Saturation, vivid, bright, intense, colorful, these are all considered positive descriptions for most species. How does the specimen compare in color to other known examples. Normally deeper more saturated color is desirable. Minerals which are transparent can actually be less valuable if too dark and light does not transmit through the crystal. This criteria is somewhat subjective, primarily due to the type of lighting when viewing the mineral. You will see differences in color when viewing specimens in daylight, incandescent, LED or fluorescent. Color perception is directly related to lighting but still measurable in relation to other known examples under the same lighting conditions.

Somewhat Subjective

5

CONTRAST

How do the crystals, and matrix, contrast with each other in color and texture. This is fairly straight forward in definition. Examples; Dark on light, clear on opaque, smooth on coarse, etc. Contrast delineates crystal edges, sets boundaries and outlines, creating a visual perception which is more three dimensional and thus more eye appealing.

Not Subjective

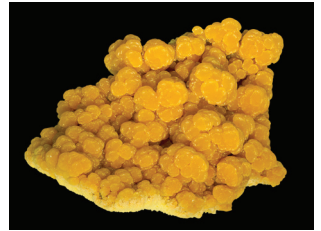


6

LUSTER

Analyzes the surface of every crystal and how it interacts with light and reflection. There are many descriptive terms for luster; glassy, resinous, reflective, metallic, wet, shiny, etc. Radiance, or reflected light, is highly appealing to the eye, like the gleam of Gold, a glint of light or the shimmer of water. While these are all very good for descriptions I am more interested if a luster catches my eye, my attention, and makes a specimen more appealing. Dull luster is always a negative on main crystals, but in some instances on a matrix it can enhance contrast.

Somewhat Subjective



7

TRANSPARENCY

This obviously only applies to those species which are transparent. It takes into account varying degrees of transparency from "water clear" to opaque, within the context of what is known about the specific species. Any species not commonly found clear is far more valuable in crystals that are. The commonly used term; "Gem", or "Gemmy", implies the piece has a gem like appearance. That is the highest form of transparency and sought after in all species. The property of a solid object being transparent has for millennium intrigued and fascinated humans. We are drawn to objects that glow. The light shining through a crystal should create a luminescent glow.

Not Subjective



PERFECTION



This relates primarily to the physical condition, lack of damage, or appearance of damage. I often say, “if it looks like damage...then it is damage”. There are different categories of damage; “Wilbur’s” (named for one of America’s greatest mineral collectors, and our good friend, Dave Wilbur – not because his minerals had “Wilbur’s”, but, because they did not). Dings, nicks, breaks, or cleaves, on a crystal are part of the reality of collecting minerals, very few are truly perfect. Damages which are noticeable and interrupt the beauty of a specimen are not acceptable. Often a crystal will have what is known as a “contact”. Contacts are where a crystal was up against, or grew next to, another crystal or matrix. This is natural and as long as they are not unsightly are acceptable. Included in this criteria is repair and restoration as well. We are of the opinion that repair and restoration is acceptable both when it is invisible, or nearly invisible, does not impact the beauty or aesthetics, and/or when the specimen is considered the finest, or among the finest, known examples. This must be considered when assessing specimens that are so magnificent, rare and important, that repair/restoration is unavoidable to preserve a specimen of this significance.

Not Subjective

CRYSTAL SIZE



This can be significant; in the mineral kingdom large perfect crystals are valued due to rarity in relation to smaller examples. A large crystal in and of itself is not significant. This criteria is only for large crystals that are equal or superior to smaller examples of the same mineral. For example: An Aquamarine crystal that is 2" tall, gem clear, top color and on a beautiful matrix, is less important than one of exactly the same

quality that is 8" tall. 2" tall fabulous Aqua's are not uncommon, 8" tall examples are very rare. This criteria becomes more important in species that are not often found in large sizes. We limit this to Somewhat Important due to the fact that not all collectors want larger specimens.

Not Subjective

10

WOW FACTOR!

Yes, the "Wow Factor", perhaps the most important of all criteria, and the least scientific. This one is both visual and visceral - the indefinable essence of any work of art, how it affects you and moves you emotionally and artistically. Here is how one judges the "Wow Factor"; When you open the box, or walk into a room, and see the specimen for the very first time in person and you utter the word - "WOW!". That's it. Basically you are saying everything you need to know about the specimen. If it passes the "Wow" test then you begin applying the other 9 criteria stated above.

Very Important • Very Subjective • Very Personal



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