



Société Française de Minéralogie et de Cristallographie

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FRANÇOIS FONTAN SYMPOSIUM



François Fontan (1942–2007)

A tribute to François Fontan (1942–2007) was held on 15 April 2009 at the Natural History Museum of Toulouse (MHNT). François passed away unexpectedly at the age of 64, only a few weeks before his retirement. He had been working at the Laboratoire des Mécanismes et Transferts en Géologie (LMTG, CNRS) of Paul Sabatier University and the Observatoire Midi-Pyrénées in Toulouse for nearly 40 years, and he had been collaborating with MHNT since 1984. A rare mineral was named for him (fontanite; see Deliens and Piret 1992, *European Journal of Mineralogy* 4: 1271).

François' commemorative day, in recognition of his research and his devotion to enhancing the mineralogical patrimony of both the museum and the university, was organized by his colleagues at LMTG and MHNT, under the SFMC auspices.

The opening talk by Bernard Dupré (OMP Head) was devoted to the varied scientific life of François. This was followed by a very moving slide show presented by his friend P. Monchoux and an evocation by P. Dalous of the fruitful collaboration between the museum and François, of his passion for minerals and of his knowledge of plants, birds and other aspects of nature.

Scientific lectures given by François' friends, colleagues, and past students from around the world underlined his influence in mineralogical research, conducted mainly on phosphates and REE minerals in pegmatites. The speakers were R.C. Wang (Nanjing University), A.-M. Franolet and F. Hatert (Liège University), E. Roda-Robles and F. Velasco (Basque Country University), J.C. Melgarejo (University of Barcelona), and B. Moine and S. Salvi (LMTG). Robert Martin (McGill University, Montreal) presented the last major work of François, a book referencing minerals discovered in France or named after French individuals (to be published by the Mineralogical Association of Canada). Three public talks were presented: Y. Moëlo (IMN, Nantes) on the discovery of new minerals; G. Calas (IMPMC, Paris) on the mysteries of mineral colours, forms and properties; and G. Giuliani (LMTG, Toulouse and CRPG, Nancy) on the fascinating economic and scientific aspects of emeralds.



Dedication to François Fontan at the Natural History Museum of Toulouse.
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François was a very generous and passionate person. The large attendance at his tribute showed how much he is missed, as much as for his scientific skills as for his kindness. The successful evening session, which proved that the general public is strongly interested in mineralogy, would have pleased him.

**Frédéric Béjina, Philippe de Parseval,
Pierre Monchoux, and François Martin**

L'OR DES AMÉRIQUES, A WONDERFUL EXHIBITION AT THE MUSÉUM NATIONAL D'HISTOIRE NATURELLE IN PARIS, FRANCE • APRIL 8, 2009 – JANUARY 10, 2010

The Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris is currently hosting the French-Canadian exposition *L'Or des Amériques*. While the exhibition held earlier in Quebec City was more archeologically focused, the MNHN show emphasizes the natural history of gold. The quest for gold has left a deep imprint on the history of the Americas. Five main topics are on display:

- **THE NATURE OF GOLD**, WITH SPECTACULAR SAMPLES FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM, THE PARIS MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS
- **THE FLESH OF THE GODS**, WITH PRE-COLUMBIAN ARTIFACTS FROM PERU, ECUADOR AND COLOMBIA
- **DREAM TRACKERS**, AND THE GOLD RUSHES IN CALIFORNIA, THE KLONDIKE, YUKON AND BRAZIL
- **GOLD IN FRENCH GUYANA**, AND THE IMPACT ON GEOTOPES AND BIODIVERSITY
- **GOLD, KING OF METALS**, WITH ALDWIN'S GOLD HELMET AND GOLD-BASED JEWELRY, COINS AND MEDICINES



The main specimens are loaned from Museo del Oro in Bogotá; Museo Arqueológico Rafael Larco Herrera of Lima, Peru; Museo de América in Spain; Smithsonian in Washington; Oakland Museum of California; British Museum in London; Dawson City Museum and other museums in Canada; and many private collections, such as the Wayne Leicht and Ian Bruce collections. Exceptional native gold specimens from Nevada, California, British Columbia, Venezuela, Peru, and French Guyana are displayed for the first time in Europe. From crystals to wires, from veins to nuggets, gold presents a spectacular, fascinating geo-diversity.

Feather of native gold crystals on quartz, Donatia mine, California, possibly collected at the end of the 19th century (ca. 12 × 10 × 5 cm, MNHN-155.64). The specimen is likely the best of only three recovered from this mine and was donated in 1955 by Louis Vésignié, one of the greatest French collectors. ©F. FARGES/MNHN

For more information, see www.mnhn.fr/museum/front/medias/dossPresse/18170_OR_DP.pdf



For all SFMC and FFG joint activities visit the website
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