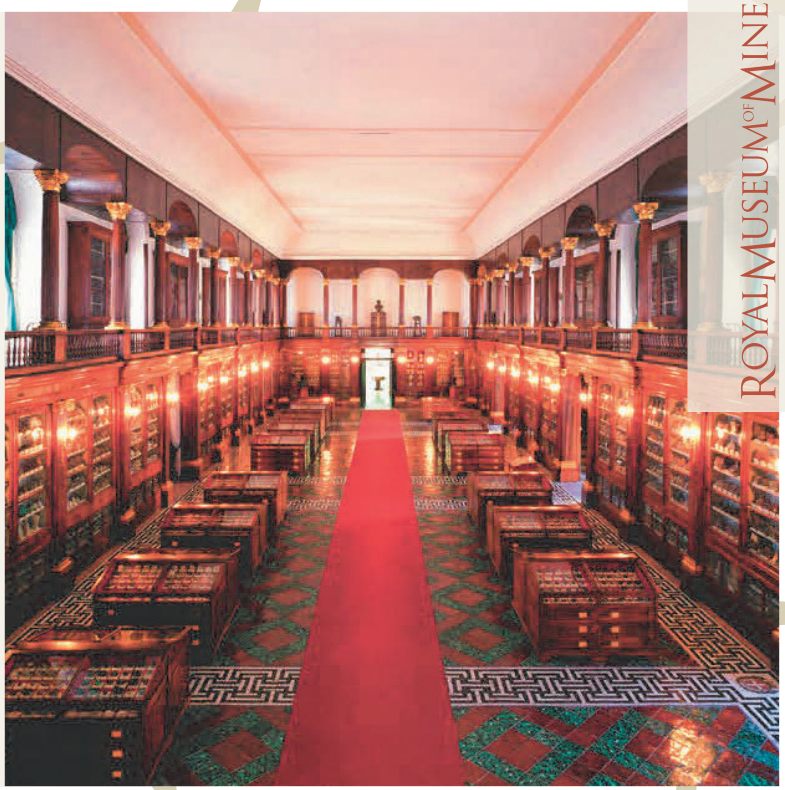
ROYAL MUSEUM OF MINERALOGY



Monumental Hall
of The Royal Museum of Mineralogy

History

The ***Real Museo Mineralogico*** (the Royal Museum of Mineralogy) located in the premises once belonging to the *Biblioteca del Collegio Massimo della Compagnia di Gesù* (the Library of the College of the Society of Jesus) was founded in 1801 by King Ferdinando IV of Bourbon as a research centre for the discovery and identification of the mineral resources of the Kingdom of Naples and as a place of instruction of the younger generations. Among the Kingdom's scholars who contributed to the creation of the Royal Museum of Mineralogy one must mention the six mineralogists who, at the end of the 18th century, collected numerous mineral specimens from around the most important mining sites in Europe, as well as Arcangelo Scacchi, the renowned crystallographer and volcanologist, who was Director of the Museum from 1844 to 1892. The Royal Museum also fulfilled an important cultural and socio-political role in the history of Southern Italy. Of the scientific events organised in the magnificent Monumental Hall, one must recall the Seventh Congress of Italian Scientists of 1845 attended by 1600 scientists. Among the most significant of the socio-political events to take place in the Hall was the inaugural session of the House of Deputies of the Parliament of Naples set up in 1848 after the concession of the Constitution by King Ferdinando II, and its use as one of the 12 polling stations for the vote on the annexation of the Kingdom of The Two Sicilies to the Kingdom of Italy in 1860. The great historical and scientific value of the collections and the extraordinary building where it is housed, make the *Real Museo* one of Europe's leading museums of mineralogy. Its exhibition space of about 800 square metres includes a wide access corridor, a *vestibule*, the Monumental Hall and the galleries dedicated to Arcangelo Scacchi and to Antonio Parascandola.

Pictured:
Arcangelo Scacchi (1810-1893)

Collections

The *Real Museo Mineralogico* houses around 46,000 specimens subdivided into different Collections. The Great Collection consists of minerals originating from a wide range of different geological areas from around the world, many of which, for their size and beauty, are extremely rare, if not unique. Numerous specimens, collected between 1789 and 1797 at the most important European mining sites are of special value to scientists and collectors, coming as some of them do from mining localities no longer in operation. Particularly noteworthy are the manganite specimens originating from the famous Harz mining district in northern Germany, the hauerite crystals, unusually large for this mineral species, found at Destricella, Catania, the liroconite specimens from Cornwall, the whitherites from Alston Moor in England, the calcites from Fontainebleau, France, whose shapes seem to have been sculpted by man, the pair of tourmalinated quartz crystals from California, and the malachite stalactites from Zaire. Particularly remarkable is the satire's head sculpted in marble, attributed to Canova, which has a splendid hyaline quartz crystal protruding fang-like from its mouth. The Great Crystals Collection contains exceptionally sized perfectly formed minerals, outstanding among which are the pair of hyaline quartz crystals from Madagascar weighing 482 kilograms, a gift to King Carlo III of Bourbon in 1740.

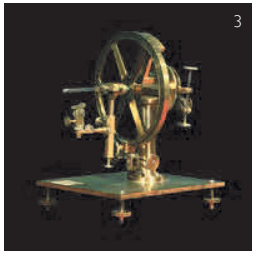
The Vesuvius Collection was assembled by Arcangelo Scacchi in 1844, although the first items were collected in 1807 at the behest of Vincenzo Ramondini, Director of the Royal

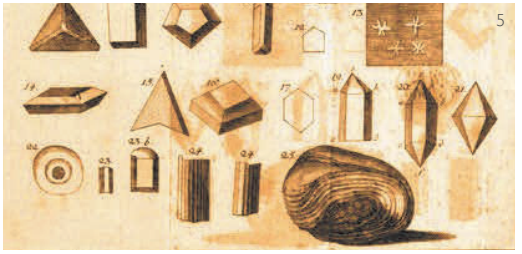
Pictured:
Azzurrite
Place of origin: Tsumeb, Otavi (Namibia)

Museum until 1811.This Collection is unique both for its scientific importance and for the rarity and beauty of some of the specimens, among which fine exemplars of unusually large thomsonite and sodalite crystals, of sarcolite, a crystal species found only around Vesuvius, and some exquisite, perfectly transparent vesuvianite crystals. Among the twenty-two mineral species identified for the first time by Arcangelo Scacchi, microsommite, eriocalcite and eritrosiderite are particularly worthy of mention. The Artificial Crystals Collection is composed of crystals synthesized by Arcangelo Scacchi himself which won awards at the Universal Exhibitions of London (1862) and Paris (1867).

The Collection of Tuff Minerals from Campania whose first specimens were gathered in 1807, includes rare minerals such as fluoborite and hörnesite. The Meteorite Collection is small but of considerable interest; the specimen of siderite weighing about 8 kg found in Mexico in 1784 is particularly noteworthy. The Medallion Collection consists of 50 medallions coined from fluid lava emitted by Vesuvius. Of these, the oldest and most attractive include those featuring the profiles of King Ferdinando IV and Queen Maria Carolina created by Duke Nicola Filomarino, Duca Della Torre in 1805. Finally, among the historical scientific instruments also on display here, mention must be made of the single vertical circle reflection goniometer which Arcangelo Scacchi had constructed by a Neapolitan craftsman in 1851.

Pictured:
Erythrosiderite
Place of origin: Vesuvius (Italy)





1) *Spinel*
Place of origin: Monte Somma (Italy)
2) *Amethyst*
Place of origin: Las Vigas (Mexico)
3) *Reflecting goniometer*
(1851)
4) *Armotomo*
Place of origin: Sankt Andreasberg (Germany)
5) *Drawings from life by A. Scacchi*
(1855)